

China – economic development essay

Economics



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BUSTER**

Kimberly Remijan MWH Mr. Harvey The Pros Outweigh the Cons When one thinks of a major Chinese city such as Shanghai or Beijing, images of sidewalks overcrowded with pedestrians, thousands of bicycles lined on the streets and litter spotted throughout public areas may come to mind. However, with the modernization and industrialization China has gone through, urban citizens are now more frequently using public transport, automobiles are increasingly being used more and people are hired to keep streets as clean as possible.

With a little over three decades having past since the major industrial development, China has industrialized at an astonishing rate. This is especially apparent when comparing its much higher industrializing rates to Japan, the UK and the US. With such high rates of growth, there are both negative and positive aspects that come out of such development. Although general health in China is not at its best, post 1980 industrial development has improved the average Chinese citizen's life tremendously both personally and publically.

Through the rush of industrialization, Chinese industry and production has had a negative effect on the health of citizens because of their pollution from coal, water pollution from factory emissions and the inhumane working conditions for some people. The production of coal, a major industry in China, emits sulfur compounds, carbon and other byproducts into the air, which increases the risks of cancer, lung and heart issues. "Sulfur dioxide produced in coal combustion poses an immediate threat to the health of China's citizens, contribution to about 40, 000 premature deaths a year" (Bradsher and Barboza).

This not only affects the physical welfare of workers but anyone who is exposed to this tainted air. Sulfur dioxide emitted from coal combustion also contributes to acid rain, poisoning bodies of water and vegetation. “ Nearly 500 million people lack access to safe drinking water” (Khan and Yardley). With people running the risk of being dehydrated, it is hard to imagine that they can have a healthy immune system and enough energy to function properly. Also, it is much more difficult to move forward in life without having clean water for hygiene and food purposes. Lastly, the horrendous working conditions for some workers in factories are destroying their health. People work where there are no regards to human safety, and live in overpopulated housing and do not have common household appliances, resulting in about 5, 000 deaths annually (“ Great Leap Backward”). This affects the comfort and safety of workers, resulting in physical and emotional unhappiness. However, even though it true that the health of many is at stake, there are many other effects of industrialization that citizens are benefitting from as well.

In the past few decades, citizens have been experiencing the personal benefits of higher income, a growing middle class and wider choice and availability of household appliances and comforts. Many citizens, especially those living rurally, are seeing an increase in income. “ The number of rural poor people decreased from 49. 6 million to 28. 2 million in 2002” (“ China Sees Improvements”). With more money to spare, many people are now able to spend on more, better quality food, hygiene, business, education for their children and other factors that create a life with more opportunities for the present and the future.

Also, the middle class has recently been growing and developing. "China's growing middle class has made it to the second largest luxury good market in the world" (Rapoza). A growing middle class means that the general economy is improving, and there is higher demand for goods. Factories then need to be created, more jobs are available and there is more production. The lower class gets smaller and the middle and upper class grows, which benefits everyone. This then leads on to household appliances becoming more affordable and available to the population. Household appliances such as TV sets, washing machines and refrigerators became more common, and an increasing number of families acquired computers and cars" ("China Sees Improvements"). With such comforts being more widely used than in the past, people are able to live more comfortably and happily. The benefits for the common people do not stop here. On a public level, public transportation is now being frequently used and education as well as health-care is more available and accessible to citizens.

Public transport such as buses, trains, airplanes and boats are being developed and utilized by many. "China will build or renovate 150 airports... harness water routes along major rivers...build 20 thousand kilometers of roads...and 6, 000 kilometers of railways" ("China to Witness Development"). Going back a few years ago when China mostly used bicycles to get to and from places, this burst of transportation development is huge. Not only is it available to many now but the government also continues to improve such means of transport, which will make business, travel, trading and communication much easier.

It gets even better as the government focuses much of its time and money on spreading opportunities for education throughout the country. " In the nine-year compulsory education, the central government remitted 52 million students from underdeveloped western and central regions their tuition fees and extras" (" China Economic Growth"). With education being available to all social and economic classes in China, there is opportunity for a great social leap in the future. With proper schooling, young adults are able to be exposed to more job opportunities and are able to support their families and work their way out of poverty.

Similarly, there have been efforts made to increase availability and quality of common medical care throughout the nation. " As conditions of medical care continue to improve, people's health has come to a higher level with the average life expectancy reaching 71. 8 years in 2002" (" China Sees Improvements"). With healthcare conditions getting better and people living longer, it is apparent that people's life standards are improving. Increased life expectancy generally means that there is better hygiene, health and environment than in the past.

Through these three effects that have come out of industrialization, it is apparent that the public is affected positively in many ways. Even though the health situation with some Chinese citizens is not at its peak, post 1980 industrial development in China has colossally increased living standards of many on both a personal and public level. People have and are earning more salary, a middle class is emerging and developing and household applications are now more accessible. Additionally, public transportation is

more developed and utilized and education and healthcare availability and quality is improving.

All these benefits are wonderful, but there is still the matter of people's health being negatively affected by coal production and the conditions workers go through to produce coal and other goods in factors. Before coming up with conclusions, one must look at this issue in context. First of all, the rate at which China is industrializing is much higher than nations in the past, such as the UK taking 150 years and Japan taking 40 years to completely industrialize. With China's growth spurt being so huge, there are bound to be some consequences in order to achieve all the other benefits stated previously.

Additionally, while still comparing China to past industrial development periods, the UK used to also have bad working conditions in the cities with factories emitting outrageous amounts of pollution. With some time and effort, these conditions improved and more ecofriendly factories and machinery was used. The same goes for Japan and the US. The odds point to China doing the same as well because of the following reasons. With increased education and income, citizens young and old are becoming more aware of their environmental and health situation.

Also, with all the efforts the government is putting into healthcare for its people, it is apparent that their wellbeing is being put into consideration. Hopefully this will lead to actions for the long term by eliminating inhumane working conditions and harm to the environment. If China continually seeks the example of other leading countries and keeps in pace with their efforts for the environment, one can see that the benefits of post 1980

industrialization will continue to and grow in outweighing the negatives of the harmful conditions and factories.