

Lack of baby girls could destabilize China: report

Millions of men who will never marry may lead to increased crime, academics warn

BY RICHARD SPENCER

BEIJING — China will have more than 23 million men unable to find wives by 2020 because so many more boys are being born than girls, according to a study.

The widespread practice of aborting female fetuses is being blamed for creating a generation of bachelors who will pose increasing social problems, it says. These men are known as “bare branches” because they will never bear fruit.

History suggests that they will give rise to higher crime rates and political instability. Their number might encourage China to become more authoritarian or seek an outlet for their energies through war.

Study authors Dudley Poston and Karen Glover, of the University of Texas, said: “The country’s slow progress toward democracy could be stalled if not halted.”

In nature, the ratio of births is about 105 boys to every 100 girls — a difference assumed to be evolution’s answer to higher male mortality rates. But in China the ratio at the time of the last

study in 2001 was 118 to 100. Last year, two other American academics published a book, called *Bare Branches*, arguing that the gender imbalance in several Asian societies, including China and India, which make up 40 per cent of the world’s population, threatened domestic stability and international security.

The new research refers to a bloody 17-year uprising in Shandong province in the 19th century. It was ascribed to the fact that there were 100,000 more men than women, caused by a previous generation practising female infanticide in a famine.

“If 100,000 excess males were a thorn in the side in the 19th century, imagine the level of rebellion that could be instigated by 23.5 million Chinese bachelors,” it says. Researchers blame the imbalance on the availability of sex-selective abortions, where boys are favoured and couples are only allowed one child.

China banned doctors from telling parents their babies’ sex from ultra-sound scans, but the law is widely ignored.

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