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<https://www.wsj.com/us-news/chinese-billionaires-surrogacy-pregnancy-7fd0c3>

The Chinese Billionaires Having Dozens of U.S.-Born Babies Via Surrogate

Videogame executive Xu Bo, said to have more than 100 children, and other elites build mega-families, testing citizenship laws and drawing on nannies, IVF and legal firms set up to help them

ong, Ben Foldy and Lingling Wei
: 9:00 pm ET

sed Los Angeles courtroom, something wasn't right.

ing for family court Judge Amy Pellman were reviewing routine surrogacy petitions when they spotted an unusual pattern: the same n

illionaire was seeking parental rights to at least four unborn children, and the court's additional research showed that he had already f
rocess of fathering at least eight more—all through surrogates.

ian called Xu Bo in for a confidential hearing in the summer of 2023, he never entered the courtroom, according to people who attende
e maker of fantasy videogames lived in China and appeared via video, speaking through an interpreter. He said he hoped to have 20 or s
rough surrogacy—boys, because they're superior to girls—to one day take over his business.

is kids were being raised by nannies in nearby Irvine as they awaited paperwork to travel to China. He hadn't yet met them, he told the
rk had been busy.

s alarmed, according to the people who attended the hearing. Surrogacy was a tool to help people build families, but what Xu was descri
like parenting, the people said.

enied his request for parentage—normally quickly approved for the intended parents of a baby born through surrogacy, experts say. Th
dren he'd paid for to be born in legal limbo.

eclined to comment on Xu's case.

ie megaposter but real-life recluse, has rarely spoken with reporters and hasn't been photographed in public for nearly a decade.

ative of Xu's company, Duoyi Network, didn't respond to specific questions about the hearing or Xu's use of surrogacy. "The boss does n
equests from anyone for any purpose," the representative said in an email to The Wall Street Journal, adding that "much of what you d
e representative, who didn't provide a name, didn't respond to repeated requests to clarify what was inaccurate.

ecision in the confidential case, which has never been reported, was a rare rebuke to a little-known trend in the largely unregulated U.S.
hinese elites and billionaires who are going outside of China, where domestic surrogacy is illegal, to quietly have large numbers of U.S.-

court proceedings for surrogacies are usually private, often taking place without even a mention on the court's public docket, oversight

ese parents, inspired by Elon Musk's 14 known children, pay millions in surrogacy fees to hire women in the U.S. to help them build fami
ze. Xu calls himself "China's first father" and is known in China as a vocal critic of feminism. On social media, his company said he has r
a born through surrogacy in the U.S.

althy Chinese executive, Wang Huiwu, hired U.S. models and others as egg donors to have 10 girls, with the aim of one day marrying th
en, according to people close to the executive's education company.

<https://www.wsj.com/us-news/chinese-billionaires-surrogacy-pregnancy-7fd0c3>

undated photo. Wang Huiwu seen in 2018. TAN DAMING/VCG/GETTY IMAGES

se clients, usually seeking more typical numbers of babies, are high-powered executives lacking the time and inclination to bear their children. Other parents or same-sex couples, according to people who arrange surrogacy deals and work in surrogacy law. All have the wealth to go to the U.S. for maintaining the privacy needed to manage potential logistical, publicity and legal issues back home. Some have the political clout to a

has grown so sophisticated, experts say, that at times Chinese parents have had U.S.-born children without stepping foot in the country. The multi-industry of American surrogacy agencies, law firms, clinics, delivery agencies and nanny services—even to pick up the newborns from the U.S.—has risen to accommodate the demand, permitting parents to ship their genetic material abroad and get a baby delivered back, at a cost of \$100,000 per child.

The Asian market for international fertility services has drawn the attention of American investors, including Peter Thiel, whose family owns a chain of IVF clinics across Southeast Asia and a recently opened branch in Los Angeles.

Some states don't bar international parents from working with American surrogates. Chinese law doesn't strictly prohibit its citizens from going to the U.S. for surrogacy, but officials have criticized it. Stories of Chinese celebrities or government officials working with overseas surrogates have caused scandal among the public at home, which tends to view surrogacy as ethically dubious and exploitative.

Children born in the U.S. are U.S. citizens by virtue of the 14th Amendment. The idea of foreign nationals using the Constitution's guarantee of citizenship has become a political flashpoint.

The State Department moved to curb so-called birth tourism, tightening visa rules for women suspected of visiting the U.S. to give birth. In May, Trump issued an executive order denying citizenship to children born in the U.S. unless one of their parents was a citizen or permanent legal resident, which is being reviewed by the Supreme Court. It's unclear if either regulation would apply to foreigners working with surrogates who are in the U.S.

U.S. Sen. Rick Scott, the Florida Republican, introduced a bill in the Senate to ban the use of surrogacy in the U.S. by people from some foreign countries, including China. He cited an ongoing federal human trafficking investigation into a Chinese-American couple in Los Angeles who have nine children, nearly all born through surrogacy within the past four years, as reported by the Journal.

n trafficking investigation is looking into a Chinese-American couple who have more than two dozen all born through surrogacy. Above, their Arcadia, Calif., mansion. PHILIP CHEUNG FOR WSJ

ment is more broadly looking at some Chinese parents working with American surrogates. Investigators with the FBI and Department security have interviewed some surrogates who have worked with Chinese parents, according to the surrogates, though the purpose of ns is unclear. The FBI declined to comment, and DHS didn't respond to a request for comment.

Costco'

ng, the founder and CEO of IVF USA, a network of fertility clinics in the U.S. and Mexico that cater to wealthy Chinese and partner with uid his clientele in the past were largely parents trying to bypass China's one-child policy. Babies brought back to China, as U.S. citizens zens, fell outside the country's penalty system. The one-child policy was abolished in 2015.

tly, a new clientele has emerged. "Elon Musk is becoming a role model now," said Zhang. An increasing number of "crazy rich" clients a ing dozens, or even hundreds, of U.S.-born babies with the goal of "forging an unstoppable family dynasty," he said.

y businessman in China, who like Wang is also in the education business, wanted more than 200 children at once using surrogates, envi rprise, Zhang said. "I asked him directly, 'How do you plan to raise all these children?' He was speechless," said Zhang, who said he refu

gacy professionals described similarly head-spinning numbers. The owner of one agency in California said he had helped fill an order f rent seeking 100 children in the past few years, a request spread over several agencies.

les surrogacy attorney said he had helped his client, a Chinese billionaire, have 20 children through surrogacy in recent years.

California surrogacy agency that markets to Chinese and other international clients, had a booth at the Beijing Medical and Health Exhibition in October, which focused on travel to ot edical treatment. GILLES SABRIÉ FOR WSJ

embryos at the Beijing health exhibition. GILLES SABRIÉ FOR WSJ

roxler, a Los Angeles-based surrogacy lawyer, said her firm consulted with a hopeful Chinese parent who said she wanted eight or 10 surrogates at a discount. “I was like, ‘No, we’re not Costco,’” said Troxler, who didn’t take the client because she rejects those looking for more than one at once.

If the industry is so scant that it’s almost impossible to figure out whether parents are working with multiple surrogates, across different agencies, people in the industry said.

Surrogacy agency owner Joy Millan said she was approached by a single father in China seeking to hire four surrogates. She agreed to contract with one, only to learn later that he had gone to another agency to find more.

When he contacted him saying this is your due date, the baby is on the way, he panicked and was like, ‘We’re already taking care of two babies!’” Millan said. “If you can’t have four kids, there are families that have four or five, but if you regret, there’s no way back.”

Medical groups recommend that agencies and IVF clinics not work with parents seeking more than two simultaneous surrogacies, because of the ethical and legal challenges, and the risk that it will increase the perception that surrogacy commodifies pregnancy. But Millan said the suggestion that the most severe penalty for failing to follow the groups’ recommendations is to be removed as a member.

Lughes, a surrogacy agency owner and board member of the Society for Ethics for Egg Donation and Surrogacy, acknowledged the difficulty of ensuring those recommendations are followed. The group has been discussing ways to more proactively detect when parents are pursuing multiple surrogacies across different agencies without violating patient privacy laws, she said.

Agencies don’t hesitate. Hu Yihan, the CEO of New York IVF clinic Global Fertility & Genetics, who helps connect Chinese parents with surrogates, said that when one of her clients wants three or four simultaneous surrogacies, the reaction is often enthusiastic. “I’m getting positive feedback from surrogacy agencies, they’re like, ‘This is a big one! I want to do this!’” she said.

Surrogate mothers typically receive \$40,000 to \$50,000 per surrogacy, separately from payments made to the surrogate carriers.

CEO of New York IVF clinic Global Fertility & Genetics, spoke at the Beijing health exhibition. GILLES SABRIÉ FOR WSJ

Future world leaders

the government usually turns a blind eye to citizens who pursue surrogacy abroad, even allowing foreign agencies to quietly market their Chinese parents who work with surrogates sometimes face blowback.

the spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in the U.S., said in a statement to the Journal that the government's health authorities believe a number of negative outcomes, including "serious family and social ethical crisis."

fathered the 10 girls through U.S. surrogacies, purchased dozens of eggs from models, a finance Ph.D. and a musician—at a cost of between each, according to the people close to his company. He is the president and CEO of Sichuan-based education group XJ International Holdings, known as Hope Education Group, which owns and operates universities and technical colleges.

married girls, the people said, and hoped they would grow up to marry world leaders.

as purporting to be of messages from a person claiming to share a nanny with Wang, discussing Wang's use of surrogacy in the U.S., went viral in 2021.

China criticized the executive, saying that commercial surrogacy exploits women and violates Chinese public order and morals. Shares at the company plunged around this time.

International Holdings, which previously dismissed the claims as rumors, didn't respond to requests for comment.

At the start of 2019, Zheng Shuang, an actress and model who briefly signed with Prada, hired two U.S. surrogates with her boyfriend, Zhang. After their children were born, the couple's relationship began to deteriorate, and Zheng had second thoughts, according to documents in a Colorado court case. She gave up the two children after their births.

Initially, she considered asking one of the surrogates to terminate the pregnancy, but the baby was too far along, according to email correspondence with a fertility agency included in the court documents.

Zhang, the father, flew to the U.S. to attend births in Colorado and Nevada, and stayed in the country to care for the two babies. After he was exposed on a social-media site Weibo that Zheng had contemplated seeking abortions, the Chinese Communist Party released a statement criticizing the couple.

Zheng Shuang, left, and her boyfriend, Zhang Heng, arrive at a Beijing airport in 2019.

ALAMY

ie citizens to exploit legal loopholes and flee to the United States simply because surrogacy is prohibited in China is by no means abiding, a statement from the party's Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission said.

dropped by fashion labels. The couple were investigated for tax evasion; she was ordered to pay a nearly \$46 million fine and he was fined in the tax case. Zhang, the boyfriend, eventually received sole parenting responsibility for the children, according to court documents, and a California surrogacy agency focused on Chinese parents.

Chinese government officials have turned to the U.S. for surrogacy, industry lawyers and agencies say.

was a key component in the scandal surrounding the 2023 disappearance of Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang. Qin, once a trusted aide of Xi Jinping, fell from grace after a Communist Party investigation found that he had been having an affair with prominent newscaster Fu Ying.

born in the U.S. via surrogacy in late 2022. While the Chinese government never disclosed the child's paternity, the incident fueled speculation about a father and prompted wider scrutiny within the party regarding whether other top officials had used surrogates to have children overseas. Dozens of officials were briefed on the matter. Both Qin and Fu vanished from public view when the scandal erupted.

For some older Chinese parents, who were restricted in their younger years by the one-child policy, are looking to surrogacy to expand their family and fulfill their ideal child-raising years.

For those in that's middle-upper income, any guy who's 60 years old, they're having one-child policy revenge," said Hu, the New York fertility clinic founder. "By trying to make up for something that they wanted when they were young but it was severely restricted, there was no way out, the tech market was not there."

I walked in a park in Tianmen, China, in March. GILLES SABRIÉ FOR WSJ

years has tried to boost the country's birthrate. A sign in Tianmen reads, 'One more child, one more joy.' GILLES SABRIÉ FOR WSJ

arbitrage

s at Emory University found that international parents' use of U.S. surrogacy quadrupled from 2014 to 2019, when IVF clinics started 3, te carriers working with international parents, making up almost 40% of the U.S. total. The number dipped during the pandemic amid g ictions. Of international parents between 2014 through 2020, 41% were from China.

tors are betting those numbers will continue to rise. In 2018, Jinxin Fertility Group, based in Sichuan and publicly traded in Hong Kong, y, a chain of fertility clinics in Southern California whose doctors already had a substantial Chinese client base.

nered with a U.S. surrogacy consultant in 2020, according to a corporate filing. Wang Bin, Jinxin's chairman between 2018 and 2021, ha een a high-ranking official at Chinese state-owned enterprises, and the company's investors have included state-owned banks.

't respond to a request for comment.

office of Thiel, who voiced concerns about falling birthrates on Joe Rogan's podcast last year, has participated in two fundraising round for Rhea Fertility to open a chain of international fertility centers in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines focused on Asia. Margaret Wang said Rhea, which opened an IVF clinic in Los Angeles late last year, targets parents interested in what she called "regula o access fertility and surrogacy services that may be illegal in their home countries.

main the destination for people who have the resources and need to go down that path," Wang said. A representative of Thiel Capital a request for comment.

ality sons'

ese online gaming billionaire, has for years broadcast his ambitions to build a sprawling dynasty of children.

ccounts linked to Xu have written that "Having more children can solve all problems" and fantasized about Xu's children marrying Elo

liar Weibo account verified as being operated by Xu wrote in 2023 that he hoped to have “50 high-quality sons.”

ear, Judge Pellman denied Xu’s parentage petition in Los Angeles. But a later post on one of the Weibo accounts linked to him said he s

several children (all of mixed Chinese and Jewish descent) who were taken away in the United States due to sabotage by feminists and female judge,” the account posted in April 2024, seeming to refer to the confidential hearing that Xu had attended the year before. “La re filed, and all the cases that went to trial were won. I heard that another case was won today, and one child was awarded to Xu Bo; he l e child.”

s denied being Xu, but a Journal analysis linked this and another Weibo account to him. Xu’s company’s Weibo account has reposted or ounts shared details of the confidential U.S. court hearing attended by Xu, a cropped photo of Xu’s passport, photos and videos of Xu’s c ersonal documents. The children are shown in the company of nannies or in daycare-like settings eating meals, playing or reciting hom S.

The Journal couldn’t find any public records of Xu appealing the judge’s decision. Such an appeal would nor public in Los Angeles.

Surrogacy attorneys say it is possible that if Xu were denied parental rights in Los Angeles courts, he could filing the same paperwork in a different jurisdiction—choosing from among the locations of the surrogate, t treatment or the baby’s birth. Courts in different jurisdictions don’t necessarily have visibility into parenta applications filed elsewhere.

Last month, Xu’s ex-girlfriend, Tang Jing, alleged in a post on Weibo that he had 300 children, living across properties in multiple countries. Xu has previously accused Tang of theft and the two have ongoing lawsuit didn’t respond to requests for comment.

In a statement on Weibo at the time, Duoyi Network said the 300 figure was wrong but confirmed a stunnin “After many years of effort” through surrogacy in the U.S., Xu has “only a little over 100” children.

Later in November, the user linked to Xu posted a video of more than a dozen toddler or early grade-school- children playing on an outdoor patio in an unknown location. “What the truth is, everyone can see for them user posted.

I to Xu on Weibo have posted showing groups of children rson with the camera with cries of a video in 2022 was captioned, h of babies rushing towards you— eel? Take a look. Besides your ‘s cuter than children?’

As the camera panned around the patio, the children—who appeared to be mostly boys—began running to “Daddy!” they yelled. “Daddy!”

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