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CHINA AND IT'S ECOLOGY: A STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

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“Should the making live a better life and enjoy sound development, they must do a good work in combating desertification.”¹

- Xi Jinping

Introduction

Forests, grasslands, deserts, mountains, and marshes are just some of the environments that make China one of the world's most biologically diverse countries. Over 34,000 plant species and 6,300 terrestrial animal species call this country home, and so do many endemics. China's economy and society rely heavily on the goods and services stemming from the country's thriving ecological system. It helps reduce the impact of climate change and sustain a booming tourism business.

With over 1.4 billion inhabitants, China easily surpasses most countries in terms of population. In terms of total land area, it is the fourth largest country in the globe. Ranging from the Himalayan foothills to the tropical rainforests of the south, China has a wide variety of ecosystems. China's fast economic development in recent decades has had severe consequences on the country's natural resources. Industrialisation and urbanisation have been key factors in China's economic growth. As a result of these actions, air, water, and land pollution have all worsened. The production of greenhouse emissions in China has surpassed that of any other country. The Chinese government has taken several measures to safeguard the environment in response to these threats. China has committed to reaching carbon neutrality by year 2060, with a peak in emissions by the year 2030. The government has also enacted several other regulations to improve environment quality and decrease pollution. However, a great deal of effort is still required. The environmental challenges faced by China are complex and call for long-term, concerted action. The government's long-term strategy for protecting the environment is still in development, and its prospects for success are uncertain.

Ecological Challenges

The state of environment in China is detrimental to human health and quality of life. Air, water, and soil pollution are major issues in China, making it one of the most polluted countries in the world. China has a serious problem with air pollution, which is blamed for more than 1 million deaths annually. Inhaling polluted city air has been linked to most of health issues, including but not limited to; respiratory infections, heart disease, and cancer. Coal-fired power stations, industrial pollutants, and cars are the biggest contributors to air pollution in China. Respiratory infections, heart disease, stroke, and cancer are among

¹ Delivering a Speech at a symposium in Bayannur, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, June 6, 2023.

the disastrous effects of air pollution. Water contamination is another big problem since it can make water sources unfit for human consumption. Over 70% of China's rivers and lakes are contaminated, according to estimates². Wastewater from factories, runoff from farms, and human waste are the main causes of water contamination. This has led to diseases like typhoid, cholera, and diarrhoea. Deterioration of land quality occurs when soil fertility and productivity decline. Many human activities, such as clearing land for farming or grazing animals, contribute to this problem. Erosion, desertification, and flooding are all potential outcomes of land degradation. Food insecurity and water scarcity are two ways in which land degradation negatively affects human health. Over 100 million Chinese citizens are said to be subjected to unsafe noise levels due to the country's rapidly expanding noise pollution problem. Transportation, building, and manufacturing are major contributors to ambient noise levels. Hearing loss, disturbed sleep, and increased stress levels are a result of ambient noise pollution.

Another serious threat to China's ecosphere is climate change. More severe weather, higher sea levels, and receding glaciers are just a few examples of how climate change is already having an impact on the country. In the future decades, climate change is predicted to have a major effect on China's water supply, agricultural output, and biodiversity. The overexploitation of China's natural resources is having a negative impact on the country's ecosystem. Deforestation is a serious issue due to forest clearance for agricultural, construction, and logging purposes. Since China has one of the world's greatest fishing industries, overfishing is also a major issue. Loss of habitat, pollution, and overexploitation are factors that threaten China's unique biodiversity. There is a serious threat to the survival of many of indigenous species of China.

China's environmental challenges are causing significant harm to human health. The government has taken some action, but more is needed to solve these issues. China relies heavily on coal, which is also a key polluter in the country. The government has committed to cutting coal use and is funding alternative energy projects. The government has established requirements for air quality, although these are rarely met. The government should invest in pollution control measures and strictly enforce these regulations. The government has also begun an initiative to reduce water contamination. Investment in wastewater treatment plants and enhanced industrial wastewater management are two key components of this initiative. The government should take action to stop further soil deterioration. Some suggestions include reforestation, organic farming, and other methods of soil preservation. Noise pollution can also be mitigated if the government takes regulatory action. This involves regulating and controlling noise levels.

What's New in China's Environmentalism

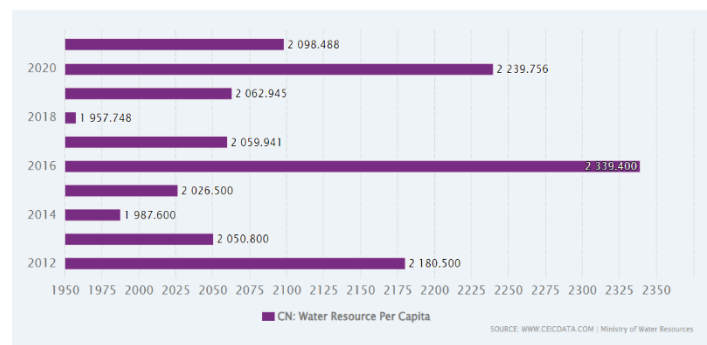
In a report on air pollution issued in August 2023, the Chinese Ministry of Ecology and Environment noted a remarkable improvement in the state of air throughout the country. PM2.5, a key air pollutant, saw a 34% decrease in average concentration between 2013 and 2022, according to the research. Air pollution is still a major issue in China, especially in major cities, according to the research. Only 37% of Chinese cities had acceptable air quality in 2022. Closing coal-fired power plants and investing in renewable energy are two of the many actions the Chinese government has implemented to help meet its aim of reducing air pollution.

In July 2023, the Chinese government initiated a new initiative to curb water pollution. The goal of this initiative, known as the "Water Ten Plan," is to boost the standard of water in China's most important waterways by the year 2030. Reducing industrial wastewater discharges, upgrading sewage treatment facilities, and rehabilitating degraded wetlands are some of the goals of the Water Ten Plan. China still has

² Webber, K. (2022, November 28). How fast fashion is killing rivers worldwide. EcoWatch. <https://www.ecowatch.com/fast-fashion-riverblue-2318389169.html#:~:text=In%20China%2C%20the%20factory%20of,produced%20by%20the%20textile%20industry>

significant water pollution problems, but a new government-led initiative shows the country is taking action.

Figure 1: Water Resource Per Capita.



China Water Resource Per Capita form 1999 to 2020 (Source: Ministry of Water Resources <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/china/water-resource/cn-water-resource-per-capita>)

China's new national climate action plan was unveiled in June 2023. The plan details the nation's strategies for mitigating climate change and adjusting to its repercussions. The plan calls for China's emissions of carbon dioxide to peak by 2030 and for the country to become carbon neutral by 2060³. Several steps are included in the plan to increase the use of renewable energy sources, boost energy efficiency, and lessen the rate of deforestation. As a reflection of the country's dedication to combat climate change, China's new climate action plan is among the most ambitious plans in the world.

Concerning biodiversity depletion, China hosted COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in May 2023. The world community had a promising chance at this summit to settle on a new global framework to safeguard biodiversity. The Chinese government committed \$1.5 billion over the next five years to biodiversity conservation during COP15. The administration has also promised to decrease illegal wildlife trafficking and create more protected zones. While the Chinese government's efforts to protect biodiversity are encouraging, the country still faces significant obstacles like habitat loss and pollution.

There have been other ecologically relevant occurrences in the recent past. The new Chinese national park system was opened to the public in April 2023. Eleven national parks make up this system, and together they span more over 100,000 square kilometers. The purpose of China's national park system is to preserve the country's most valuable ecosystems while also encouraging ecotourism. In addition to this, China outlawed the sale and consumption of wild animals for human purposes in March 2023. The prohibition is an effort to lower the incidence of zoonotic diseases like COVID-19.

Literature Review

The ecology has suffered as a result of China's rapid economic expansion. Some of the biggest problems the country is having to deal with right now are pollution and depletion of natural resources (Liu and Diamond 2022). Closing coal-fired power plants, investing in renewable energy, and creating additional protected areas are a few examples of the measures the Chinese government has taken to solve the country's environmental concerns (Chen et al. 2022; Wang and Fang 2022). More work is required, however, to adapt to the impacts of climate change, minimize pollution, and safeguard biodiversity (Li and Bai 2022). To truly safeguard China's environment, the corporate sector and civil society must pitch in as well. Both businesses and customers need to become more environmentally conscientious for this to be a reality (Chen and Gao 2022).

³ Xie, C., Xia, L. Q., & Bian, A. (2022, July 25). *How is China tackling climate change?* Grantham Research Institute on climate change and the environment. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/how-is-china-tackling-climate-change/>

The decline in public health is intrinsically linked to economic growth, environmental deterioration, and increased prosperity. Academics have taken a strong interest in examining the connection between pollution levels and economic growth, so they've taken a close look at how these two factors interact with one another. The impact of economic growth on the natural environment is a topic that has engaged the minds of many researchers. Growth in the economy and improvements in public health have been the subject of a great deal of research, and this study aims to provide light on both topics. The effects of pollution on the general public's health is the topic at hand. Researchers have looked into how pollution levels impact GDP growth. Various quantitative approaches, including Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA), Granger causality test analysis, and the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis, have been used by researchers interested in the correlation between pollution and economic growth. The super efficiency general direction distance function model was used to assess resource-efficient urban areas by Zhang et al. (2018). This study made use of panel data from 2011-2015 from 197 Chinese cities. Accelerating urban economies are associated with increased pollution, according to the study's authors, who propose solutions to this problem. Economic policy uncertainty and environmental pollution in the United States were investigated by Jiang et al. They found strong evidence of a link between the two variables. The Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) was studied by Chang et al. (2021) using panel data from 284 prefecture-level cities in China. To investigate the impact of pollution on economic growth, they employed a spatial dynamic panel data model. They found convincing evidence that the link between these two variables in China takes the form of an inverted U. Numerous studies have examined the correlation between a flourishing economy and better public health. Several aspects of public health, including access to care, health outcomes, and health inequities, have been investigated in relation to economic development.

The improvement of public health has a positive impact on economic growth and vice versa. When economies grow, more people are able to afford healthcare, education, and other necessities, which is good for the public's health. However, public health can have an impact on GDP by influencing productivity and absenteeism in the workplace. Guhn et al. (2020) looked at how parental income was related to children's health. A database detailing Canadian health care and economic expansion served as the study's major data source. High positive association was discovered between the two, leading the researchers to conclude that socioeconomic position is a major determinant of public health issues. Using a separate random effects model for each of China's 31 provinces, Wang et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive empirical investigation across the country. The plans for both economic growth and public health followed a U-shaped structure. Long et al. (2020) developed a health damage model to examine the link between environmental pollution and human health. It was shown that monetary losses increased in tandem with deteriorating health. The effects of pollution on the general public's health is the topic at hand. The effects of pollution on people's health have been the subject of a large number of academic research, many of which have drawn important conclusions. The analytical approach and the econometric model are frequently the first things a scholar considers when conducting an investigation.

In academic and scientific research, the analytical approach is used to examine and make sense of collected data. The ideas of dose-response relationship and exposure response are commonly used by researchers. Researchers Klepac et al. (2018) looked at the effects of air pollution on pregnant women. According to their findings, being exposed to air pollution during pregnancy raises the probability of preterm birth. In their research, Manisalidis et al. (2020) investigated the process of drug exposure. The elderly, small children, and persons with asthma are particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of increased environmental pollution, according to their study. Findings further suggest that these effects may not be instantaneous but may be long-lasting and ultimately fatal.

Economists use econometric models to investigate and quantify causal relationships between economic variables. In econometrics, the Grossman health production function is a standard tool for theoretical research. Hao et al. (2018) looked at the correlation between pollution and health care costs at the province

level in China. The group employed the Gaussian Mixture Model (GMM) to examine the information. Medical visits and healthcare expenditures were both shown to be higher in areas with higher levels of environmental pollution. Qu et al. (2021) used the Stochastic Impacts by Regression on Population, Affluence, and Technology model (STIRPAT) to demonstrate that haze pollution is negatively associated with public health. They also found that increased disposable income and better medical services were linked to better public health and reduced death rates.

This body of evidence suggests that the aforementioned arguments are valid. There are several factors at play in the interplay between pollution, economic growth, and people's health. Numerous academic works have been written on the subject, each of which has significant practical and policy ramifications. The link between pollution and health problems is undeniable. This is especially true for the most defenseless members of society, such as infants, the elderly, and those with chronic illnesses. If more resources, such better medical care and more educational opportunities, become broadly available as a result of economic growth, this could have a beneficial effect on people's health. It is important to remember, meanwhile, that expanding economies often lead to increased environmental degradation, which has a deleterious effect on human health. Before taking any action, policymakers and practitioners must carefully analyse the intricate web of connections between environmental degradation, economic growth, and public health.

Conceptual Framework

Forests, grasslands, deserts, and mountains are just few of the ecosystems that may be found in China. The Chinese people rely heavily on the food, water, clean air, and climate regulation that are all provided by China's ecosystems. However, China's ecological resources have been stressed by the country's rapid economic development in recent decades. China is currently facing significant difficulties due to environmental pollution, global warming, and loss of natural resources. China faces a serious problem of pollution in its environment. Many Chinese cities have extremely high levels of air pollution, which causes many deaths annually. Many of China's rivers and lakes have also been tainted due to water pollution. Polluted soil is another issue of concern because it hinders agricultural production in some regions. China has a hard time keeping up with the ever-increasing amounts of solid waste that contribute to the country's pollution problems. Pollution in China's environment is being exacerbated by the country's rapid economic expansion. Air, water, soil, and solid waste pollution are all made worse by industrialization, urbanization, transportation, and agriculture. The effects of global warming pose a serious threat to China's economy. Droughts, floods, and typhoons are becoming more common as a result of global warming. China's coastal cities are likewise vulnerable to rising sea levels. China's public health is suffering as a result of environmental pollution and climate change. Many deaths from respiratory disorders, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer can be traced back to air pollution. Diseases and other health issues are some of the results of water pollution. The negative effects of pollution on human health are being compounded by climate change. Environmental resources in China are also in danger. China's forests, water supplies, and biodiversity are dwindling as a result of deforestation, overfishing, and unsustainable agriculture practices. China faces significant environmental concerns that can only be overcome with effective policy and governance. In recent years, China has enacted a number of environmental rules. These rules, however, are not always strictly enforced. China is also considering the use of financial incentives to encourage green behavior. China recognizes the value of having its population actively participate in environmental protection efforts.

Research Objectives

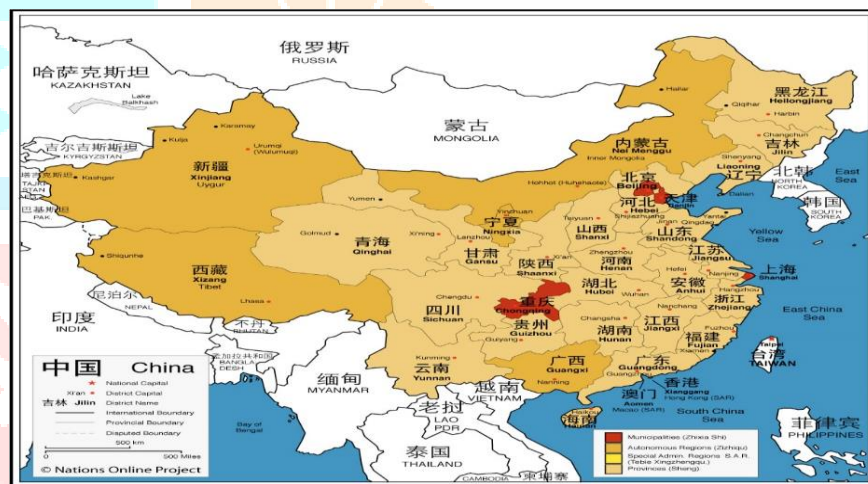
1. What are the most pressing problems in China's environment?
2. What measures has the Chinese government taken to deal with these issues?
3. What will happen to China in the face of these difficulties?

Study Area

Approximately 9.6 million square kilometers in size, China ranks fourth among countries worldwide in terms of landmass. Situated in East Asia, it shares land borders with 14 other nations: Mongolia to the north, Russia and Kazakhstan to the northwest, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India to the southwest, Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar to the south, Laos and Vietnam to the southeast, and North Korea to the east. Including the Yellow Sea, Bohai Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea, China's coastline is more than 14,500 kilometers long.

Twenty-two provinces, five autonomous regions, four municipalities, and two special administrative regions make up China's 33 administrative regions. There are a total of 23 provinces in China: Anhui, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Guizhou, Hainan, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Qinghai, Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuan, Yunnan, and Zhejiang. Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Tibet Autonomous Region, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, and Tibet Autonomous Region. Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai, and Tianjin are the cities in question. Hong Kong and Macao are the two SARs (special administrative areas; see Map 1).

Map 1: Administrative Map of China



The Nations Online Project

(https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/china_administrative_map.htm)

Mountains, plateaus, deserts, and plains can all be found in China. Along China's southwestern border is the Himalayas, the highest mountain range in the world. The Tibetan Plateau in western China is the world's largest and highest plateau. Northern China is home to the Gobi Desert, the world's sixth-largest desert. The North China Plain in eastern China is often regarded as one of the most productive farmlands in the world.

Forests, grasslands, deserts, and marshes are a few of the many habitats that may be found in China. China is home to more than 6,000 species of animals and 30,000 plant species. More over 10% of all plant and animal species are found in China, making it one of the world's most biodiverse countries. Over 18% of the world's population lives in China, which is home to more than 1.4 billion people. The giant panda, the South China tiger, and the Chinese alligator are the rare and threatened animals that call China home. The woods of China are crucial to global efforts to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. China's rivers and lakes are an important source of water for human consumption, agriculture, and manufacturing. The coastal regions of China are home to several significant fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Forests make up 20% of China's total land area. Ten percent of the world's freshwater is located in China. The problems plaguing China's ecology are all interrelated. Pollution in the air, for instance, can end up in the water supply and the land. When it comes to coal, steel, and cement, China dominates global production. When it comes to oil and natural gas production, China ranks second globally. When it comes to energy usage, China ranks first

in the world. When it comes to producing greenhouse gases, China leads the pack. China has the highest levels of pollution in the world.

A multitude of environmental problems, including air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, and climate change, are, nonetheless, affecting China. In China, air pollution is a serious issue that causes many premature deaths annually. Pollutant emissions from vehicles, factories, and other sources account for the majority of China's air quality problems. China likewise has a severe problem with water contamination. Pollutants from factories, farms, and homes all contribute to the degradation of water quality in China's waterways. Another serious issue is soil pollution in China. Heavy metals, herbicides, and fertilizers all contribute to soil pollution in China. China too faces serious threats from climate change. Droughts, floods, and typhoons are becoming more commonplace in China. China's coastal cities are likewise vulnerable to rising sea levels.

Numerous programs, including investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency, are being implemented by the Chinese government to combat the country's environmental problems viz. reducing pollution from factories and cars, preserving natural habitats such as forests, enhanced water and sewage treatment systems, educating people about environmental problems and seeking solutions. The environmental problems in China are serious and could not be solved overnight. The Chinese government, however, is dedicated to green initiatives and sustainable growth.

Research Methodology

In order to learn more about China's ecological situation, this study will conduct a descriptive content analysis of secondary sources of information. Analysis of textual data via lens of content analysis is a common research technique. It is a common technique in the social sciences and may be applied to the analysis of many different things, such as news reports, government papers, and online discussions.

Secondary resources like scholarly publications, government papers, and the media will be mined for this study's data. Purposive sampling will be used to select participants for this investigation. Purposive sampling is an alternative to probability sampling in which a representative sample of the population of interest is intentionally chosen. In this study, we focus on the population of secondary sources that explore ecological issues in China.

Descriptive content analysis will be used to examine the data. The goal of descriptive content analysis is to provide an in-depth account of the information included within the dataset. In this situation, the researcher will summarize the data by describing the most salient topics and themes.

Findings and Discussions

China's Ecological Challenges

China's economic expansion has come at a great cost to the environment, as it is one of the world's fastest developing countries. Air pollution, water scarcity, deforestation, and biodiversity loss are just a few of China's major ecological challenges.

In China, air pollution is a serious issue that causes many premature deaths annually. Pollutant emissions from vehicles, factories, and other sources account for the majority of China's air quality problems. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that China has the world's worst air pollution. Over 99% of the Chinese population in 2019 was exposed to PM2.5 levels beyond the World Health Organization's threshold for safety. PM2.5 is a type of small particulate matter that can be inhaled deeply into the lungs, where it can wreak havoc by contributing to respiratory infections, cardiovascular illness, and even cancer. China's

economy is suffering as a direct result of air pollution. The World Bank estimates that China loses over \$1 trillion annually due to air pollution-related healthcare expenditures and decreased productivity.

The lack of available water is a problem in China as well. China is home to 20% of the world's population yet only 6% of its freshwater resources. This means that China has only a quarter of the average global water availability per person. Northern China already has severe water shortages, which are being made worse by global warming. Droughts and floods are becoming increasingly common as a result of climate change. This complicates efforts to control water use and provide the population's demands.

China is a major contributor to global forest loss. Forests in China have been cut down to make way for farming, industrialization, and timber harvesting. The forest cover in China decreased by nearly 10% between 1990 and 2020. There are several harmful outcomes associated with deforestation. It results in global warming, land erosion, and water shortages. Wildlife habitats are lost as a result of deforestation, which furthers the decline in species numbers. Recent research has shown that the pace of deforestation in China is on the rise. Increased demand for agricultural goods and timber is one reason for this (Liu et al., 2023) among others.

The biodiversity in China is unparalleled. China is home to more than 6,000 species of animals and 30,000 plant species. Unfortunately, China's biodiversity is at danger due to human activities including habitat destruction, pollution, and overfishing. Several key species, such as the South China tiger, baiji dolphin, and Chinese paddlefish, have vanished from China over the previous few decades. The giant panda, the snow leopard, and the red panda are among the endangered animals that call China home. According to a new study⁴, the number of wild animals in China has dropped by more than 60 percent since the 1970s.

“Planting trees is a noble cause of great significance which creates benefits for not only our generation but also future generations.”⁵

- Xi Jinping

Some measures have been taken by the Chinese government to deal with the country's environmental problems. The government has taken several measures, including funding renewable energy, cutting emissions from coal-fired power plants, and increasing tree. However, there needs to be more investment of effort into solving these problems. A number of instances in recent years have brought to light the seriousness of China's ecological concerns. For several weeks in 2013, for instance, Beijing was shrouded in a heavy layer of haze. Schools were closed and flights were canceled because of the haze. Northern China experienced a severe water scarcity in 2017, prompting the authorities to institute water rationing.

The following table presents some of the most important facts and figures concerning China's environmental problems:

<u>Ecological Challenge</u>	<u>Data</u>
Air pollution	PM2.5 levels in China exceed the WHO's recommended safe limit in over 99% of the country.
Water scarcity	China has a per capita water availability that is only one-fourth of the global average.
Deforestation	China lost over 10% of its forest cover between 1990 and 2020.
Biodiversity loss	China has lost a number of important species in recent decades, and it is home to a number of endangered species.

⁴ Living Planet Report (WWF) 2022. <https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-US/>

⁵ Attending a tree-planting activity in Dongba Central Park, Beijing, April 4, 2023. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202304/05/WS642d436ba31057c47ebb8725.html>

Ecological Policies and Initiatives

Over the past few years, China has launched a variety of environmental protection programs and laws. Air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, global warming, biodiversity loss, all of these and more are addressed by these measures.

Air pollution in China has decreased dramatically in recent years. To combat air pollution, China unveiled its Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan in 2013. Over 30 percent of PM2.5 reduction in several large cities can be attributed to the plan's performance. Closing coal-fired power facilities is a fundamental component of the Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan. Over the past few years, China has shut down more than a thousand coal-fired power stations, and it plans to shut down even more in the future years. China has also made significant investments in green energy. By 2021, China has more renewable energy capacity than any other country. In recent years, renewable energy sources have surpassed coal as China's primary source of electricity production. China still has a major problem with air pollution. The World Health Organization's acceptable threshold for PM2.5 has still not been reached in most major cities. An estimated 1.8 million Chinese citizens would lose their lives to air pollution-related causes in 2020.

Water pollution reduction efforts in China have also achieved strides in recent years. To combat water pollution, China released its Water Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan in 2015. Some of the nation's largest rivers and lakes have seen significant improvements in water quality. The building of sewage treatment plants is a crucial component of the Water Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan. China has constructed thousands of sewage treatment facilities in recent years, and the country plans to construct even more in the near future. China has also spent considerably on water quality monitoring and control systems. When it comes to methods of reducing and preventing water pollution, China is today considered the global leader. Water contamination is still a major issue in China. Water pollution continues to be a serious problem, endangering the health of residents near many contaminated rivers and lakes.

To combat soil pollution, China has tried similar measures. To combat soil contamination, China released its Soil contamination Prevention and Control Action Plan in 2016. Soil pollution has decreased in several locations due to the persistent efforts. The cleaning up of polluted soil is a fundamental part of the Soil Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan. In recent years, China has remedied millions of acres of polluted soil, and it plans to do significantly more in the years to come. Also of great importance to China is the development of innovative methods for reducing soil pollution. In terms of methods for preventing and controlling soil contamination, China is now a global leader. Combating soil pollution, however, will require enormous investment and many years of work in China.

Although it is a major contributor to global warming, China has taken action to combat the problem. The Paris accord is a global accord to address climate change, and China signed it in 2015. The country has promised to reach carbon neutrality by 2060, with a peak in emissions by 2030. China has made progress in developing renewable energy sources as part of its climate change policies. When it comes to the capacity of renewable energy, China is now the world leader. China is also a major investor in carbon capture and storage and other energy efficiency technology. Nonetheless, China's carbon dioxide output continues to rise. To fulfill its climate change promises, China needs to further reduce its emissions.

Although China has a wealth of biodiversity, it is also under attack from a variety of human activities. China's National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, released in 2019, includes lofty objectives for the country's conservation efforts. The creation of protected areas is an essential part of the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan. In recent years, China has constructed thousands of protected areas, and the country has promised to create even more in the future. China has also made substantial investments in the development of methods and tools for protecting biodiversity. When it comes to studying and developing methods to protect biodiversity, China is currently a global

frontrunner. It is premature to judge the success of the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan at this time. More effort and money should be put into protecting China's biodiversity, and the government should take steps to mitigate threats like pollution and habitat loss.

When it comes to protecting China's ecosystems, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment is the go-to department. The ministry is responsible for a variety of tasks, including environmental legislation, enforcement, and quality monitoring. Several Chinese leaders have taken the lead on environmental protection in the country. Leaders like Premier Li Keqiang, Vice Premier Han Zheng, Minister of Ecology and Environment Huang Runqiu, and Special Representative for Climate Change Affairs Xie Zhenhua are all on board. Several prominent environmentalists in China have been instrumental in the country's push to solve environmental concerns. Directors such as Ma Jun (Institute of Public & Environmental Affairs), Wang Yongchen (Center for Environmental Education and Communication), Xu Jiandong (Green Watershed), and Zhang Kai (Environmental Defense Fund China) are among those actively involved.

Geopolitical Implications

Air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, climate change, and the loss of biodiversity are just a few of China's environmental problems. The environmental and economic costs are significant, but these problems also have strategic ramifications for China and the rest of the world. The environmental problems in China are having serious consequences for the countries bordering China. Air pollution from China, for instance, is spreading over international borders and making it difficult for people in neighboring countries to breathe. Water pollution in China eventually reaches rivers and lakes in neighboring nations. Environmental problems in China also threaten peace and stability in the region. For instance, China's water shortage is fueling regional tensions over allocation. The risk of floods and droughts in neighboring nations is being exacerbated by China's climate change. Many countries throughout the world are feeling the effects of China's environmental problems. For instance, China is a major contributor to global warming due to its production of greenhouse gases. Global warming is exacerbated by China's output of greenhouse gases. Environmental problems in China have an adverse effect on biodiversity worldwide. Numerous plant and animal species call China home, but many of them are in danger because of human activities like pollution and overfishing. There are several strategic ramifications of China's ecological issues for China, its neighbors, and the rest of the globe.

Environmental problems in China pose a danger to the country's safety. Millions of individuals in China are experiencing health issues as a direct result of air pollution. China's food supply is in jeopardy due to the country's water pollution problems. The increased likelihood of natural disasters in China is being exacerbated by the country's warming climate. The environmental problems that China is facing pose a danger to the country's economy. China's air pollution is causing transportation problems and decreasing output. Polluted water in the country is bad for agriculture and cattle. Adaptation and disaster relief expenses in China are rising as a result of climate change. The safety and prosperity of China's neighbors are jeopardized by its environmental problems. People in neighboring nations are experiencing respiratory difficulties due to China's air pollution. Rivers and lakes in neighboring nations are being polluted by China. Natural disasters are becoming more likely in neighboring nations as a result of climate change in the country. The economic growth of China's neighbors is jeopardized by China's environmental problems. The air pollution coming from China is causing problems with transportation and lowering output in countries nearby. Crops and cattle in neighboring nations are suffering because of China's water pollution. As a result of China's climate change, neighboring countries will have to spend more money on disaster relief and adaptation. Environmental problems in the PRC pose a danger to international stability and growth. Greenhouse gas emissions from China are among the highest worldwide. Global warming is exacerbated by China's output of greenhouse gases. The ecological problems in China pose a risk to the entire planet. The oceans are being tainted due to China's water pollution. Overfishing in China has contributed to a

worldwide shortage of seafood. China's deforestation is a major cause of climate change. Strategic implications abound on a local, national, and international scale as a result of the country's environmental problems. The national security of China, its neighbors, and the international community are all at risk because of these difficulties. For the sake of national security, regional stability, and global prosperity, China must immediately begin to solve these ecological difficulties. Tensions between China and its neighbors, namely Japan and South Korea, have risen in part due to China's air pollution. China's degradation of its water supplies has led to disagreements with its neighbors over the use of the Mekong River and other water sources. Natural disasters, such as floods and droughts, are becoming more likely in neighboring countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam due to climate change in China. Emissions of greenhouse gases in China contribute to global warming, which threatens national and international stability and prosperity. China's excessive fishing is threatening international fish supplies, which threatens international food security. For the sake of national security, regional stability, and global prosperity, China must immediately begin to solve the ecological difficulties it faces.

Case Studies

Here are two examples of ecological events or projects in China that have received widespread media attention around the world:

Case Study 1: The 2013 Beijing Air Pollution Crisis

A serious air pollution crisis hit Beijing in 2013 and persisted for weeks. Schools were shut, flights were canceled, and people were forced to wear masks because of the dangerous levels of pollution in the air. Coal burning, car emissions, and industrial pollution all contributed to the air pollution catastrophe. Increased pollution levels as a result of increasing urbanization and industry in China were also brought to light by the crisis. Due to its severity and location in one of the world's most populous cities, the 2013 Beijing Air Pollution Crisis received widespread media coverage around the globe. The problem has brought up questions about how the world's health and the environment are being affected by China's air pollution.

The air pollution crisis in Beijing in 2013 had a profound effect on the city and its inhabitants. An estimated sixteen thousand people in Beijing lost their lives in 2013 because to the issue. Tourism and commerce were both negatively affected by the crisis, which had a knock-on effect on the city's economy. There were several global repercussions of the crisis. The effects of China's air pollution on human health and the environment were called into question. It also brought attention to the fact that China needs to do something about its air pollution problem.

Case Study 2: The South-North Water Transfer Project

The idea of South-North Water Diversion was initially propagated by Mao Zedong in 1952. It deals with internal rivers. As the water scarcity increased in the Northern regions the Chinese formally commenced the project in 2002 with an aim to divert 44.8 million cubic metres of water from Yangtze River in the South to the Beijing and Tianjin regions in the North. It planned to construct three arteries, viz. Eastern, Central, and Western routes to the Northern Region across the high-altitude Qinghai Tibet Plateau. The Eastern and Central routes have already successfully diverted water from the Yangtze and Han Rivers, respectively, to the Yellow River in 2014, resulting in increased water supply to Beijing and Tianjin and the provinces of Henan and Hebei. The Western Route, being the most challenging, is yet to fructify.

To alleviate water scarcity in the north of China, a huge engineering project known as the South-North Water Transfer Project is currently underway. It will take more than 50 years and about \$600 billion to finish the project. Since its inception in the 1980s, the South-North Water Transfer Project has been met

with strong opposition. Some say the project will hurt the environment and is unnecessary due to the high cost. There are, they say, better ways to solve China's water shortage than with this scheme. The Chinese government has continued with the South-North Water Transfer Project despite the backlash. The project's first stage was finished in 2014, and the second stage is nearing completion.

“A Sound ecosystem is essential for the prosperity of civilization.”⁶

- Xi Jinping

There will be serious consequences for China's ecosystem as a result of the South-North Water Transfer Project. The project's diversion of water from rivers and lakes has resulted in damage to southern ecosystems and populations. Pollution of northern water sources has also increased due to the project. There are a variety of economic and social effects of this endeavor. Thousands of southern Chinese have been relocated as a result of the project, and tensions have arisen over the allocation of scarce water supplies among many regions in China. Southern tourism is also likely to suffer as a result of this initiative. China's ecology, society, and economy are all being affected by the South-North Water Transfer Project. Since the project will have an effect on water resources and ecosystems in other nations, it is also expected to have a variety of international repercussions especially for India, Bhutan, Bangladesh.

International Collaborations

China has worked with a variety of partners on environmental issues, including other nations and international organizations. These partnerships have been essential in assisting China in resolving its environmental difficulties and expanding international cooperation on these matters.

Some of China's partnerships with other nations and international groups on environmental issues are listed below.

- The United States and China are the two largest producers of greenhouse gases in the world; therefore, it makes sense for them to work together on this issue. Together, the United States and China signed a climate change cooperation declaration in 2014, committing to cooperative efforts to curb carbon emissions and advance renewable power.
- The European Union and China are two of the world's largest economies, and they are also among the world's leaders in taking action on climate change. To help implement the Paris Agreement and advance sustainable development, China and the European Union issued a joint statement on climate change cooperation in 2015.
- Environmental cooperation between China and Japan is necessary because both nations are severely impacted by air pollution and are among the major economies in Asia. To combat air pollution and advance sustainable growth, the Chinese and Japanese governments signed an environmental cooperation statement in 2018.
- Environmental cooperation between China and India is crucial because both nations are among the most vulnerable to the effects of global warming and have significant middle classes. To combat climate change and advance sustainable development, China and India have committed to working together in a joint statement on environmental cooperation inked in 2019.

⁶ Delivering a video message to the opening of the high-level segment of the second part of COP15, Dec 15, 2022.

- Multiple environmental programs, such as the China-UNEP South-South Cooperation Programme on Environmental Management and the China-UNEP Partnership on Climate Change, are the result of cooperation between China and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

China's environmental problems have been significantly alleviated because of these partnerships. Increased investment in renewable energy has happened in both nations as a result of the China-US Climate Change Cooperation. Increased collaboration on climate change research and technology development is a direct result of the China-EU Climate Change Cooperation. The environmental cooperation between China and Japan has helped both countries clean up their air. Increased collaboration on climate change adaptation and catastrophe risk management has resulted from the China-India Environmental Cooperation. The capacity of China's environmental management has been bolstered and sustainable development has been aided by the China-UNEP Cooperation. China has made great strides in recent years towards solving its environmental problems. China's emissions of greenhouse gases have leveled out and are presently falling. When it comes to the capacity of renewable energy, China leads the world. The air quality in China has greatly enhanced. In terms of global climate action, China is likewise a frontrunner. Greater investment in environmental protection is a direct result of China's greater awareness of environmental challenges, and it is all due to its collaboration with other countries and international organizations. The environmental cooperation between countries has been greatly aided by China's participation. Together, China and other countries and international organizations have made great progress in addressing environmental concerns. These partnerships have facilitated international cooperation on environmental issues and helped China address its environmental concerns.

Strategic Perspectives

The strategic approach taken by the Chinese government to protect the environment is consistent with a number of important ideas. Sustainable development is a priority for the Chinese government, which acknowledges that economic progress and environmental conservation can and should coexist. This guiding principle exemplifies the belief that a "green economy" may be successful over the long term. This viewpoint recognizes that sustainable management of ecosystems and natural resources is essential to the prosperity of economies in the long run. The Chinese government, which generally adheres to a market-oriented worldview, endorses the employment of market-based systems for environmental protection. Carbon pricing and emissions trading are examples of policies that fall under this category since they offer financial incentives for businesses to lessen their environmental effect. The government hopes to persuade businesses to adopt ecologically sound procedures by utilizing market forces. Public participation in China's environmental policymaking is highly valued by the government. Policies such as environmental impact assessments and public hearings demonstrate this dedication to public involvement. The thought that people and groups should have a say in decisions that can affect their surroundings is consistent with this philosophy. It improves environmental governance by increasing openness and responsibility. The Chinese government recognizes the interconnectedness of environmental problems and stresses the value of working with other nations. China's involvement in multilateral agreements like the Paris Agreement shows its dedication to tackling environmental concerns on a global scale. This viewpoint recognizes the importance of working together across national boundaries to solve environmental concerns.

Strategic implications

There are a number of strategic ramifications of China's approach to environmental conservation. First, it demonstrates China's determination to solve environmental problems. Furthermore, this demonstrates China's openness to utilizing market-based methods to further environmental protection initiatives. Thirdly, this demonstrates China's openness to global environmental cooperation. Several factors highlight the significance of these strategic ramifications. To begin, China is not alone in facing environmental difficulties. When it comes to air and water pollution, China is among the worst offenders. Therefore, the

international community should support China's efforts to solve its environmental problems. Second, the Chinese government's policy of proactive environmental conservation may have a beneficial effect on international trade. Opportunities for employment and expansion of existing markets could result from China's spending on clean energy and pollution prevention technologies. The adoption of market-based systems to combat climate change in China has the potential to lower overall costs. Third, if China takes a strategic stance on protecting the environment, it may be able to strengthen its international relationships. Chinese participation in international environmental cooperation is indicative of the country's commitment to being a good global citizen. This has the potential to increase mutual trust and collaboration between China and other countries.

Future Outlook

Air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, climate change, and the loss of biodiversity are persistent threats to China's ecological system. The ecology, economy, and people's health in China are all suffering as a result of these problems. Several elements, such as the Chinese government's environmental regulations, the rate of economic development, and the effects of climate change, will determine the future course of China's ecosystem. The ecological situation in China is expected to worsen if the country continues down its current path. There will likely be significant issues with air, water, and soil pollution. Water scarcity and extreme weather occurrences are two problems that are already plaguing China, and climate change is only expected to make matters worse. The country's ecological trajectory can be improved, though, provided China takes decisive action to solve its environmental concerns. The Chinese government has begun to address these issues by investing in pollution prevention and alternative energy sources. However, additional effort is required.

When it comes to the capacity of renewable energy, China leads the world. The Chinese government is making significant financial commitments to alternative energy technologies like solar and wind. This is contributing to cleaner air in China and a decrease in emissions of greenhouse gases. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and electric vehicles are two examples of the new environmental technologies that have received significant funding in China. These innovations may aid China in combating air pollution and climate change. Increasing public consciousness about environmental issues is equally important. The Chinese populace is becoming more cognizant of the environmental difficulties the country faces. The Chinese government is under increasingly intense pressure as a result of this.

Strategically, China's future ecological trajectory could have major ramifications. China's national security, economy, and international relations are all at risk if environmental degradation goes unchecked. The public health issues caused by air pollution and water pollution could diminish China's worker productivity and raise healthcare expenses. The instability of China's economy and society could be exacerbated by the effects of climate change, which include water scarcity, food insecurity, and extreme weather occurrences. China's international standing may suffer as a result of domestic environmental problems. Air pollution from China, for instance, is spreading over international borders and making it difficult for people in neighboring countries to breathe. Water pollution in China eventually reaches rivers and lakes in neighboring nations. Climate change poses a threat to national and international security on a global scale, and China is contributing to this problem. There could be several strategic benefits for China if it takes decisive action to solve its environmental problems. It's possible that China may soon be at the forefront of green technologies and renewable energy. China's international standing might also enhance if it joins forces with other nations to combat global environmental issues.

The ecological future of China is a murky one at best. The environmental policies of the Chinese government, the rate of economic development, and the effects of climate change are important variables

that will determine the outcome. However, it cannot be denied that China's ecological difficulties have major geopolitical ramifications for China, its neighbours, and the rest of the globe.

Conclusion

China is currently confronted with a range of ecological issues, encompassing air and water pollution, soil contamination, climate change, and the loss of biodiversity. These challenges are exerting adverse effects on China's environment, economy, and the health of its populace. The future course of China's ecological landscape hinges on several factors, including the environmental policies set by the Chinese government, the pace of economic advancement, and the impact of climate change. These ecological challenges in China hold substantial strategic importance, not only for the country but also for its neighboring nations and the global community.

If China persists along its present trajectory, its ecological situation is likely to deteriorate further, leading to detrimental consequences for its environment, economy, public health, and national security. Conversely, if China undertakes robust measures to tackle these ecological challenges, it could enhance its ecological path, emerge as a leader in renewable energy and environmental technology, and foster better diplomatic relations with other countries. It is imperative to recognize that China's ecological issues transcend national boundaries and pose a global security threat due to their contribution to global climate change, a challenge that affects the entire world.

China's ecological challenges are intricately intertwined with other global predicaments such as poverty, inequality, and conflict. Given that China stands as the world's second-largest economy and a prominent trading partner for numerous nations, its ecological challenges and policies carry significant implications for the global economy. Furthermore, these challenges and policies may also impact global security by potentially instigating resource shortages, population migrations, and conflicts. Thus, addressing China's ecological challenges represents a pivotal strategic concern that extends beyond the country itself to affect its neighbors and the entire world. It is incumbent upon China to take resolute action to tackle these issues, not only for its own benefit but also for the well-being of the international community. These challenges also offer an opportunity for global cooperation to combat a shared threat, with China and other nations collaborating to develop and implement solutions that yield benefits for all.

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