

emigration from China. But the principal motivator appears to be the prospect of increased material well-being elsewhere, with "pull" factors predominating over "push" factors. Like elsewhere, Chinese people migrate domestically or emigrate because they want and expect to attain higher levels of personal consumption. Recent Chinese migration patterns do not suggest that environmental "push" factors are the most significant.³⁷ The recent mass migration of rural workers to urban centres has been caused by rapid economic growth in the coastal region.

Lack of new agricultural lands and demand for agricultural workers are "push" factors. The hope of a better life in a major urban centre is the "pull" factor. Coupling population growth with these push and pull factors, millions of rural labourers will continue to be drawn to the economically vibrant cities in the next decade. This has caused social tensions. In 1993, Guangdong tried to restrict the numbers of workers from outside the province.³⁸ With a "floating population" of rural migrant workers currently estimated at 80-120 million people, it is extremely unlikely that this surplus labour will soon be fully absorbed into China's more industrialized areas given even the most optimistic economic growth forecast. Income inequalities between the coastal regions and the interior will likely continue to widen, increasing social tensions and leading to further west-east migration.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that domestic Chinese migrants do pose some threat to security. It has been reported that "a survey in 1993 showed that outsiders were responsible for 80 percent of criminal offenses in the capital. Similarly, it was found that 80 percent of the people arrested in the southern Pearl River Delta and other coastal regions came from other provinces."³⁹ But the social tensions that arise from an inflow of large numbers of migrants should be attributed, *inter alia*, to population growth and uneven economic development. In an environmental context, the most that can be said is that potential Chinese migrants may now be more willing to move on the basis of environmental hardships. But the migration is essentially an economic phenomenon and to represent the movement of Chinese labour as being environmentally motivated is a gross distortion.

³⁷Robert Livernash, "The Future of Populous Economies: China and India Shape Their Destinies," *Environment*, Vol. 37, Number 6, July/August 1995, pp. 25-6. On the broader issue of environmental degradation and migration, see Astri Suhrke, "Environmental Degradation and Population Flows," *Journal of International Affairs*, Winter 1994, Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 473-96.

³⁸Gerald Segal, "China Changes Shape: Regionalism and Foreign Policy", *Adelphi Paper 287*, March 1994, p.17.

³⁹Li Tan, "Population Flow Into Big Cities", *Beijing Review*, August 1-8, 1994. p.17.