

Gorges project may be considered a discreet event with a major migratory impact.³³ These movements may be called "environmentally motivated population movements",³⁴ as the term "environmental refugee" has no internationally accepted definition. But other examples are less clear with regard to the cause of the population movement.

Even when there is a bona fide case of environmentally motivated population movement, which is rare, an explicit linkage with violent conflict does not necessarily follow. China has a comprehensive policy for the resettlement of displaced populations, relocated due to projects such as hydroelectric development. The framework of policy guidelines includes providing for the social and economic reestablishment of affected communities, compensation and resumption of original employment, or training for alternatives.³⁵ A World Bank assessment concluded that China paid more attention to compensation measures and resettlement planning than most developing countries.³⁶ Thus, the incidence of environmentally motivated population movement in and of itself in the Chinese context is a poor indicator of how the displaced population will react.

More generally during this century, it appears that people generally have not undertaken domestic migrations or emigrated because of environmental degradation. This also appears to be the case for China. Political and social oppression, as well as militarily induced movements, clearly have played a role in domestic migration and

³³See The China Letter, Number 260, December 1993, p.2 and Tang Shubiao, "Three Gorges Project: Relocating People", China Today North American Edition, Vol. XLIV, No.3, March 1995, p.25. For a through assessment of the Three Gorges Project, see Shiu-Hung Luk and Joseph Whitney, eds., Megaproject: A Case Study of China's Three Gorges Project, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1993.

³⁴The term "environmental refugee", while often used, is misleading. The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines refugees as "persons who are outside their country because of a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." Emigrants motivated by environmental concerns are by definition not refugees.

³⁵According to Shubiao: "The government subsidizes this exodus and quality of individual houses left behind. For the farmland taken over by the state, the farmers get compensation for their crops and similar patches of earth in their new village. All of the relocated people receive, in addition, a subsidy from the government every month. Every migrant is given 10,000 yuan to find a new job, and this money is allocated to enterprises which provide employment. Anyone over 50 enjoys a pension as well." Tang Shubiao, "Three Gorges Project: Relocating People", China Today North American Edition, Vol. XLIV, No.3, March 1995, pp. 26-7.

³⁶World Bank, "China Environmental Strategy Paper," Report No. 9669-CHA, 1992, p.9.