

bureaucracy may resort to coercion.²⁴ China's family planning and "one-child" policies will influence the size of China's population in the future. This policy and other factors have reduced fertility rates, but the government is concerned with the continuing strong cultural desire to have a son²⁵, and that increased material well-being will encourage couples to have larger families.

It is generally recognized that a large and growing population is a contributor to the three major types of environmental stresses discussed in section 3.2.²⁶ This is not a biased Western assessment. Chinese scholars echo this view and have stated:²⁷

In short, China's large population has become a heavy burden both to agricultural resources and to the overexploited mineral, forest, grassland, and oceanic resources. High consumer and industrial product demands contribute to the damage and degradation. At the same time, poor population characteristics counteract policy efforts to adjust population levels and environmental quality. Although overpopulation is not the only cause for China's environmental problems, it clearly plays a substantial role.

Precisely how China's future population will influence the environment is dependent upon many variables. Technology will play a key role, both in the creation of environmental threats, such as the increased ownership of motor vehicles and rising emissions from their use, and in the technologies developed and deployed to reduce environmental stress, such as waste management. In light of this, the further in the future population projections are made, such as forecasts of population figures for China in the years 2100 and 2150, the less reliable they become as indicators of potential contributors to environmental stress. The reason for this is technological

²⁴Wu Naitao, "How China Handles Population And Family Planning", Beijing Review, August 1-8, 1994, p.11.

²⁵The desire to have a son may contribute to other non-environmentally related social problems. See Jonathan Manthorpe, "Shortage of Women Feeds Female Slave Trade in China," Ottawa Citizen, November 18, 1995, p.B1.

²⁶See World Resources Institute, World Resources, 1994-95: A Guide to the Global Environment, New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, Chapter 2, "Population and the Environment", for some case studies (Philippines, Costa Rica and others) on the environmental impact of population growth.

²⁷Qu Geping and Li Jinchang, translated by Jiang Baozhong and Gu Ran, Population and the Environment in China, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994, p.2.