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Tracing the Truths Behind Yangtze's Changed State: How Did the Yangtze's Ecosystem Become Severely Altered?

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Who Killed the Yangtze River? (Excerpt)

Tracing the Truths Behind Yangtze's Changed State: How Did the Yangtze's Ecosystem Become Severely Altered?

Gaurav I. Toor

Cable News Network (CNN)

- *"Yangtze River's Rare Dolphin 'Probably' Extinct"*

British Broadcasting Company (BBC)

- *"Pollution Risks Yangtze's 'Death'"*

Introduction

Why do humans knowingly pursue activities that have a direct impact on the environment? A possible answer is – well why not? By sacrificing a small part of nature, a wrong which may someday be made right, humans can get countless benefits. Another answer may point out the sheer inevitability of ecological changes. While a third answer would simply say – who cares? The Yangtze has been a victim of all these answers. Misguided planning of “pollute first, clean up later,” obliviousness towards the possible effects on the environment, and willful exploitation of natural resources have maltreated the Yangtze River. While the Three Gorges Dam might seem to present the obvious evidence of real damage to the river, the Yangtze has been a target of repeated misuse throughout its history. The river has been misused through exploitative practices during times of pressing circumstances as well as normal scenarios. Thus, on one hand, the Yangtze has been a victim of unintentional externalities during volatile times. On the other, the river has suffered from deliberate exploitation by the state, conscious externalities in the name of progress, and popular indifference towards issues of national importance.

Courtroom

Dubbed as the “Case of the ‘River Dragon’,” the Yangtze River has knocked at the doors of the Supreme People’s Court to bring its victimizers to justice. The scope of this paper will trace the river’s condition through historic examination with a strict adherence to time periods. To better understand a particular time period’s level of impact on the Yangtze’s situation, scrutiny of some general environmental policies will be necessary. This paper will first examine the traditional Chinese philosophy to deal with nature. Then, it will delve into Maoism’s contribution to the Yangtze’s current state exemplified by the CNN headline about the Baiji’s “extinction.”¹ Deng Xiaoping’s “socialism with Chinese characteristics” that fed today’s pollution rates as highlighted by the BBC headline, will be next. Then this paper will focus on contemporary Chinese environmental thought together with the effects of urbanization initiated during the reform era. To conclude, the Supreme Court’s judge will pronounce the verdict after hearing the last argument on the Three Gorges Dam which has been the most decisive cause of Yangtze’s alteration.

¹ Baiji is a ‘functionally’ extinct Yangtze River dolphin since 2006

The courtroom approach² is used as a method only to escape the temptation to sentimentalize the river's current state and history. Although the title might suggest otherwise, this research paper will not play down the human benefits or follow in the footsteps of technocrats who shun the human losses³. A defendant from the Government, a prosecutor representing the Yangtze River, and the Supreme Court judge will be the protagonists in the "Case of the 'River Dragon.'"

The word "killed" is used metaphorically to highlight the changed nature of the Yangtze and not the actual 'death' of the river. Though the Yangtze flows through China for about 4,000 miles, contains water, supports life, provides power, and allows transportation, its purpose as a river system has been reduced⁴. "There is no baseline from which to measure a 'lost' natural world,"⁵ but this does not mean that a process of cumulative degradation cannot be registered. Water-borne pollution, habitat destruction, species loss, metal contamination, agricultural run offs, industrial effluents, urban discharges, dam construction, channelization, canalization, and watershed degradation are imprints of human intervention in natural processes to make the Yangtze a completely changed entity. As mentioned above, there is no set "baseline," so it is imperative to understand that "killed" means a level of damage that prohibits the Yangtze to fully sustain its ecosystem and provide ecological services to humans and non-humans alike. A possible *Humpty-Dumpty effect*⁶ is outside the scope of this paper because it will involve an opinion and a speculative approach. In short, this paper will pursue a study of Yangtze's journey through time and explain its metaphorical "killing."

Judge: *Let the proceedings begin.*

Prosecutor: *The Yangtze is a victim of deliberate state exploitation, conscious externalities by the Chinese, and widespread indifference of the people.*

Defendant: *The Yangtze is a victim of time. It is natural for humans to reap the benefits from a river. Moreover, it is given there will be pollution, degradation, and quality drop, but this does not mean the river is "killed." Nothing "murderous" has been done, and the only crime the Yangtze has put forth is of doing "wrong" to it.*

Judge: *Prosecutor, you may begin.*

Shackles of the Past

Prosecutor: *The Yangtze killing is part of an exploitative network that was first mandated by Confucian thought, and then carried on by different empires and governments.*

Contemporary environmental degradation did not transpire itself; it is a product of China's past. Firstly, Taoist and Buddhist philosophies expected man to be one with nature.

² Dean Chen: The courtroom approach may not be required but it does complement my argument and my personal style. I really think it gives the paper an extra flare.

³ Mauch, Christof, and Thomas Zeller. "Time Is a Violent Torrent." *Rivers in History: Perspectives on Waterways in Europe and North America*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 2008. 7-14. Print. 14

⁴ To answer Dean Chen's comment: The Yangtze has been a multi-purpose river since time immemorial. Revered by in many cultures, having spiritual significance, supporting wildlife, providing drinking water, giving water for irrigation, supporting China's security interests, providing navigation, cooling-heating surrounding areas, giving access to fish, supporting aquatic life, and other ecological services that were possible only in the Yangtze's true state, the Yangtze has definitely been one river with many purposes. The Yangtze's functions might have increased in the fields of human benefits, but they have been definitely reduced for ecological reasons as this paper will argue.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Loss of habitat can be permanent or reversible

While Taoism preached accommodating in nature's way and leading a simple life⁷, Buddhism promoted "reverence of nature by introducing the notion of equity between human and other creatures."⁸ However, Taoism and Buddhism were neither dominant nor influential enough to eclipse Confucianism. For instance, it is believed that Taoist philosophy might save the environment, but it will delay economic development, a must for China's progress in any political regime. Therefore, Confucianism inadvertently became the most dominant philosophy that "actively sought to manage, utilize, and control nature"⁹ to put China on a path to *Eldorado*. Although abstract Confucianism thought "emphasized regulation and ordering"¹⁰ of nature, scholars prescribed "wise use"¹¹ of the natural world, i.e., "only to a 'reasonable extent.'"¹² Yet, pre-Mao era has been wrought with evidence of environmental mismanagement.

The South China Tiger became "inactive" in the Southern reaches of China¹³; China's most fertile and arable land had been transformed into deserts; land was eroded due to deforestation and soil erosion; and migratory farming became an "acute problem as people were continuously relocated to find better land."¹⁴ Even environmental law was missing from the vaults of the empires from the time of empires in the B.C.E. era till the Kuomintang penned the first contemporary laws in 1932¹⁵. Equally, prosperity in China also led to environmental degradation. Han Dynasty (202 B.C.E – 220 C.E) officials led the exodus to the South due to population growth in the North by reclaiming more than 20 million acres of land¹⁶. For instance, during the Han period, lower Yangtze Delta was rendered to be in "economic, environmental, and social stress."¹⁷ Similarly, as China's economy flourished during the Tang (618-906 C.E.,) Song (906-1279 C.E.,) and Yuan dynasties (1279-1367 C.E.) settlers were pushed southwards, causing widespread deforestation and soil erosion in the resettled areas.¹⁸ In another case of Yangtze degradation, a massive increase in China's population led Han Chinese to migrate from Central China to the drainage area of the Upper reaches of the Yangtze. This movement called for "intensive agricultural development that led to massive deforestation" in hilly areas that also led to extensive soil erosion fed by retreating vegetation.¹⁹ Thus, "Imperial China also saw intense periods of deforestation and erosion, encroachments on waterways through wetlands drainage, and land reclamations that degraded ecosystems, destroyed wildlife habitat, and threatened indigenous people."²⁰

⁷ Economy, Elizabeth. *The River Runs Black: the Environmental Challenge to China's Future*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004. Print. 35

⁸ Opt. Ct. 36

⁹ Shapiro, Judith. *Mao's War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge UP, 2001. Print.

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¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Economy, Elizabeth. *The River Runs Black: the Environmental Challenge to China's Future*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004. Print.

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¹² Opt. Ct. 29

¹³ Shapiro, Judith. *Mao's War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge UP, 2001. Print.

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¹⁴ Economy, Elizabeth. *The River Runs Black: the Environmental Challenge to China's Future*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004. Print.

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¹⁵ Muldavin, Joshua. "The Paradoxes of Environmental Policy and Resource Management in Reform-Era China." *Economic Geography* 76.3 (2000): 244-71. Print. 251

¹⁶ Economy, Elizabeth. *The River Runs Black: the Environmental Challenge to China's Future*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004. Print.

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¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Kim, Nanny. "River Control, Merchant Philanthropy, and Environmental Change in Nineteenth-Century China." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52.4 (2009): 660-94. Print. 10

²⁰ Shapiro, Judith. *Mao's War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge UP, 2001. Print.

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As a result, the whole environment, including the Yangtze's, was deliberately exploited during the creation of China as we know it now. Confucian principles directly shaped Chinese thought process and policies till Communist China was born, and afterwards indirectly. Since Mao declared 'War on Confucianism,' it might seem problematic to attach contemporary environmental problems to Confucianism, but its legacy was still intact. Rallied on by Confucian principle of rule by mandate; first it was through the Heaven, and now by the people, it was easy for Mao to act undisputedly even under the banner of 'War on Confucianism.' Thus, even though Mao distanced himself from the past, he did take advantage of it and carried on the gore indifference towards man's actions in destroying nature that was first promoted by Confucianism. Nature became mankind's game-board where man had to perfect its game-plan in order to beat the game.

Defendant: *Ancient philosophies speak of "Harmony between the Heavens and Humankind,"²¹ and not of controlling nature. Moreover, as far as the lessons from the past are concerned, they are expected outcomes of insignificant proportions, and do not lead to a mammoth "killing" of the environment or in this case, river. Even the Confucian ideals do not prove why the Yangtze has reached its current state!*

Prosecutor: *Supreme judge, the defendant fails to understand that the quote he speaks of has been corrupted in practice as evidenced by the above details. In addition, I agree, principles do not damage nature but policies do. Principles are just motivating factors for policy-making. To prove my point, it is absolutely necessary to show Mao's environmental atrocities.*

Judge: *You may continue.*

Nightmare on Mao Street

Mao's environmental earthquake shook the basic tenants of man's approach towards nature and its own nature. The Communist Party advocated "human mastery and reconfiguration"²² of the natural world to an "extreme form of philosophical and behavioral tendency that has roots in the Confucian culture."²³ Evidently, Confucian thought that mandated the environmental degradation of the past added fuel to Mao's idea of "Man Must Conquer Nature."²⁴ The legacy that Mao inherited accelerated the process of "Continuing revolution"²⁵ but in this case it was rapid transformation of nature rather than the country's political set-up that actually initiated revolutionary elements during the Kuomintang period for socialism.

Socialism, by its very nature, "would release the forces of production that all are provided for."²⁶ This view presumed that no population problem persists in socialism and it also catered to Mao's idea: "it was good to have more people because more people will succeed in bending nature to their will."²⁷ Demographer Ma Yinchu did not agree. According to his academic work, *New Demography*, on China's growing population and its unsustainability, Ma Yinchu found that China's progress will slow in light of added population pressures on consumption. However, in Mao's era (1949-76,) any argument for population control was regarded as a form of

²¹ Opt. Ct. 9

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Shapiro, Judith. *Mao's War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. 9

²⁵ Opt. Ct. 97

²⁶ Opt. Ct. 29

²⁷ Opt. Ct. 48

Malthusianism, a capitalistic theory of population control. As a result, Ma became a counterrevolutionary, a sin during the Mao years. Simply put, Mao believed that “every mouth has a pair of hands”²⁸ that will be used for cultivation. Thus, more farmland was acquired through transformation of lakes, rivers, mountains, and grasslands of China as population grew without restraint. The environment was devastated in this endeavor of “conquering nature.” This is a classic example of political repression of the Mao years after the five-month *Hundred Flower Campaign* that allowed for freedom of expression. Therefore, the environmental degradation of the first three decades of Communist China was largely uncontested. Moreover, this theme of political repression gets resounded, amongst other instances, during the lead-up to the announcement of the Three Gorges Dam.

A tight-lipped approach gave rise to Mao’s uncontested attacks on nature in a “More, Faster, Better, More Economical”²⁹ way. Mao’s *Great Leap Forward* (1958-61) transformed industrial and agricultural practices across China, let alone in the Yangtze Valley. Industrially, China became poised to produce 10,700,000 tons of steel in order to overtake Britain in steel production³⁰. More than a hundred million people were involved in smelting iron in backyard furnaces. For this purpose, wood was a necessary fuel to smelt the iron. However, heat generated from wood never reached a temperature required for iron smelting; resulting in tons of worthless steel. This worthless steel left a destructive legacy behind in the arena of forestry. Massive deforestation was encouraged and undertaken during this time of a utopian urgency to catch up to the British world. Furthermore, deforestation for agricultural fields was deemed necessary to feed the growing population, left unchecked because of political repression of cautioners. In agriculture, close planting and deep plowing techniques were conscious efforts to modify the land’s capacity and force it to produce more. Efforts to produce more grain sometimes uprooted tea and fruit trees in river valleys and destroyed fragile grasslands. Widespread digging of wells sometimes caused water tables to drop and land to become salinized and alkalinized³¹. However, grain choked, failed to grow, and rotted³² and afterwards, left the land dented with hydrogen sulfate that killed the fertility. Clearly, Mao wanted China to become a global power and for that, China needed to grow fast in terms of economy and military. This philosophy did not even leave the animals of China. The ‘War on Sparrows’ became a priority in China’s daily life during this period as part of the “*Wipeout the Four Pests Campaign*.”³³ Nonetheless, while Chinese crops were infested with pests due to decline in the pest-feeding Sparrow population, “erosion, sedimentation, desertification and changes in the microclimate severely affected arable land in China.” This led to a *catch-22* where loss of arable land led to multiplied deforestation practices and even more environmental degradation. Most importantly, this whole climate of utopian urgency paved the road for starvation even in the fertile Yangtze valley as evidenced by the decimated numbers of *Baiji* (Yangtze River Dolphin) after the Great Leap Forward. Mao Zedong’s ‘War on Confucianism,’ “declared that there were no more Heavenly Emperors and Dragon Kings: nothing was too revered for inclusion in the great maw of China’s great Communist engine-work.”³⁴ “Overnight, whatever protection with which history and myth had

²⁸ Opt. Ct. 43

²⁹ Opt. Ct. 92

³⁰ Opt. Ct. 75

³¹ Opt. Ct. 76

³² Opt. Ct. 77

³³ Opt. Ct. 87

³⁴ Winchester, Simon. *The River at the Center of the World: a Journey up the Yangtze and Back in Chinese Time*. New York: Picador/Henry Holt, 2004. Print. 98

invested the Yangtze River Dolphin was peremptorily stripped away”³⁵ or “the Goddess of the Yangtze became lunch.” As a result, *Baiji* meat became swiftly abundant and every time a *Baiji* came out from the nets of fishermen, “it was cut to pieces by the hooks.”³⁶ However, fishermen are not to blame for this unintentional externality that was due to conscious actions of a revolutionary; Mao had done terrible things to the environment that people had to scourge for food. People in the Yangtze valley became desperate to such a point that “it was either dolphins, or it was our [fishermen’s] children.” Moreover, even after this devastating utopian urgency, a dogmatic formalism was adopted as the state approach to remedy the problems raised during the Great Leap Forward.

Was Mao a peasant? He did have a peasant background but he had little to no farming experience. This might be a reason to promote the “Taking Grain as the Key Link” campaign that promoted “Learn from Dazhai” model of cultivation³⁷. Dazhai, a remote village, had successfully sustained by transforming its surrounding through struggle. Every region had to adopt this way of cultivation. The problem was, topographically, China is extremely dissimilar. If Mao was a farmer, he would have known that a dogmatic uniformity was not possible in every area of China. This period of a *Cultural Revolution* (1966-76) where the Old Fours – Ideas, Culture, Customs, and Habits were eliminated, people were forced to grow grain in order to be self-reliant via new ideas. By “encircling the river and building land,”³⁸ the environment was doomed, and rightly so, because it was during the Cultural Revolution that arable land became worthless. This led to reclamation of more land and as a result, massive deforestation. Unsurprisingly, the Cultural Revolution is famous for its notorious felling of trees, “environmental degradation, and wanton exploitation of nature.”³⁹ Another case of wanton exploitation in China was experienced in the Dianchi Lake, Kunming in the Yangtze watershed. A campaign to “Establish the Will of the Foolish Old Man, Resolve to Turn Dianchi into Good Farmland” was initiated as part of a larger “Encircle the Lakes and Build Land”⁴⁰ campaign. Dianchi was reduced to half its size and its evacuated area was put under cultivation. As expected, nothing but losses sprouted out of the lake but it did contribute extensively. Disruption of Dianchi’s ecological balance severely damaged its biodiversity and it was evident in the lake’s dwindled percentage of fish population. However, it is important to note that this preparation for famine was just one aspect of “Prepare for War, Prepare for Famine, for the Sake of the People.”⁴¹

War on China! Mao was convinced of its neighbor’s hawkish interests in China. He wanted to prepare the Chinese in the wake of deteriorating relations with Soviet Union, India, and other countries, and thus, started the *Third Front*. This *Third Front* prepared for war but who would have thought that it will be a roaring slogan for Mao-era environmental degradation. Mao’s “*Third Front*” “called for moving production away from coastal regions to protect against

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Opt. Ct. 99

³⁷ Shapiro, Judith. *Mao's War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. 115

³⁸ Opt. Ct. 107

³⁹ Edmonds, Richard Louis. "The Environment in the People's Republic of China 50 Years On." *The China Quarterly* 159 (1999): 640-49. Print. 640

⁴⁰ Shapiro, Judith. *Mao's War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. 107

⁴¹ Opt. Ct. 147

an attack from a foreign power.”⁴² The previously “coastal factories” were made to sit “near the mountains, scattered and into the caves.”⁴³ As expected, officially constructed factories following the “Learn from Daqing”⁴⁴ method, spewed toxic “discharge in the mountains, polluting the atmosphere and water.” Interestingly, these remote mountains with difficult terrains which would provide protection from an event of military attack were all situated in the Yangtze watershed⁴⁵. The river itself was used as a transportation passage, as evident in the movie *Chengdu 21*, as well as a dumping ground for the unscrupulous industrial pollution. The Yangtze’s fate in the coming years was sealed by the industrial developments during the Mao’s policy of state sponsored relocations in Panzhihua, Southwest Sichuan. Panzhihua was abundant in vanadium and titanium that the “Panzhihua Iron and Steel Mill” was at the forefront of defense production. Rich in mineral resources, the city was subjected to widespread mining and population swelling; due to added human pressures, the Yangtze turned yellow.⁴⁶ The pollution was deadly enough to make three percent of the workplace suffer from chronic lung cancer. Just imagine the four hundred factories, out of which fifty-one had heavy industrial output, dumping their untreated wastes into the Yangtze River. Together with deforestation due to a need for cultivable land to feed the migrant population, the area around Panzhihua became a dead zone. Furthermore, the use of chemical pesticides increased as well, which posed severe environmental problems such as high toxicity in water.⁴⁷ Similarly, vast plans for industrial growth implemented with little heed of the impact on the ecosystem were forerunners of the plan that emerged later for not only other Yangtze cities but also for damming the Yangtze.

The moral of the story is that Mao was nature’s sorrow. His political repression, utopian urgency, dogmatic formalism, and state-sponsored relocation became the pillars of environmental degradation in China. While the Yangtze was the center of this craze, Mao left a legacy of deliberate exploitation by the state, directly through state owned enterprises or indirectly by private factories, and conscious externality of “pollute first, clean up later.” Of course, the Yangtze has never been “cleaned up,” and has been far from achieving any respite from the ongoing industrial pollution. Most importantly, this “pollute first, clean up later” policy has not been successful in practice, and shows the damage it can do to a river system as demonstrated by the experience of Ganga Action Plan to ‘clean-up’ the Ganga River in India. More than \$25 million⁴⁸ have already been spent without any success due to lack of industrial incentive, corruption, and ecological irreversibility. The Government of India recently announced a \$175 million fund for the Ganga Action Plan in the wake of World Bank’s loan announcement of \$1 Billion for the same purpose. However, it is still unclear if the Ganga River, the holiest of all rivers for the Hindus numbering over 900 million, will ever be “clean” again. Peculiarly, in most respects, the Ganga is similar to the Yangtze in its status, benefits, and proportions in terms ecological damage. However, one theme is clear – the damage to the ecological services is massive when a policy of “pollute first, clean up later” is adopted. Lastly, in terms of conscious externality, Mao’s comment after swimming in the acutely polluted Pearl

⁴² Economy, Elizabeth. *The River Runs Black: the Environmental Challenge to China's Future*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004. Print. 55

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. New York: Norton, 1990. Print. 738

⁴⁵ Shapiro, Judith. *Mao's War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge UP, 2001. Print. 146

⁴⁶ Opt. Ct. 155

⁴⁷ Sanders, Richard. "The Political Economy of Chinese Environmental Protection: Lessons of the Mao and Deng Years." *Third World Quarterly* 20.6 (1999): 1201-214. Print. 1204

⁴⁸ 1 Dollar = Rs. 45(1 Crore Rupees = \$225,000)

River,⁴⁹ followed by his historic and famous swim in the Yangtze at Wuhan, says it all – “If you put a fish in distilled water, how long do you think it will live?”⁵⁰

Defendant: *The prosecutor fails to recognize the issue of contemporary degradation of the Yangtze. By demeaning Chairman Mao, the prosecution will prove the generally ‘accepte’d degradation for the growth of any nation around the world, even the developed ones.*

The truth is that whatever Chairman Mao did, it was due to the circumstances. First of all, the wrongly termed ‘political repression’ of the first years of the PRC was a necessity. Communist China was taking its first steps as a nation with remnants of the highly corrupt and vicious Kuomintang regime. Counter-revolutionary, rightist, and reactionaries were still present in the system that had to be flushed out. During those volatile times, if some people were branded as such, Mao Zedong should not be criminalized for that. It was a mistake acceptable for those times. Moreover, at that point of time, there was an urgent need for workers and cadres so a population control measure was rightfully deemed inconsistent with revolutionary China.

China was indeed surrounded by enemies and issues of security during Mao Zedong’s time. First, the Taiwan issue was at the crux of China’s worries. Taiwan became the Republic of China after the Kuomintang fled to the island. Expectedly, issues of sovereignty and power in the international arena became causes for Mao Zedong’s long-term worries. In 1949, PRC was defeated in its attempt to take over the island of Jinmen from the Republic of China (Taiwan.) While the United States was successfully keeping PRC out of the United Nation due to its ideological commitment to Taiwan, the Korean War did not make matters better⁵¹. From 1950-53, China’s involvement to ultimately create the North and South Korea from the 38th Parallel prompted the United States to brand China as a hostile nation. President Eisenhower even considered using the Nuclear Bomb to subdue China. Thus, the 1954 US mutual-defense agreement with Taiwan together with reports of rearming the Japanese who had massacred millions during the World War II, were legitimate reasons for China’s fears⁵². In 1957, the United States announced its plans to install Matador Missiles in Taiwan. During the same year, Sino-Soviet rift began to take shape that would result in aid withdrawal, intellectual callbacks, and ultimately, a border conflict in 1969. The theme of self-reliance resounded clearly during these times of heightened security issues with new problems arising from Laos, India, and Vietnam. Conflict with India started in 1958 with an all-out war in 1962. The Vietnam War was threatening to spread into China during 1964 while the United States had allegedly helped to install a right-wing government in Laos which was hostile to Communist China. Even internal security was a big question in times of violent protests by ethnic Tibetans in Tibet during the 1960s. Therefore, Mao Zedong was right in following any policy that protected the nation, even if it meant sacrificing the environment for it. Maybe policies could have been better, but just like the knowledge of an absolute necessity of Sparrows in containing pests was absent before Mao Zedong realized their importance, there is no point in debating such issues. Thus, “forced relocations” and “utopian urgency” were required for the survival of the country.

The government recognizes the faults in Mao’s “Learn from Dazhai” and “Learn from Daqing” modes of agricultural and industrial production, respectively.⁵³ What is termed as a “dogmatic uniformity” was in fact a desperate measure to feed the growing population. More

⁴⁹ He swam both, the Pearl and the Yangtze rivers

⁵⁰ Winchester, Simon. *The River at the Center of the World: a Journey up the Yangtze and Back in Chinese Time*. New York: Picador/Henry Holt, 2004. Print. 190

⁵¹ Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. New York: Norton, 1990. Print. 670

⁵² Opt. Ct. 681

⁵³ Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. New York: Norton, 1990. Print. 857

cultivable land was needed to feed the people for survival, while industrial products were needed to materially equip the people together with building a defense network for the country. The environment was just at the wrong place and at the wrong time, and thus, doing the wrong thing.

If Chairman Mao damaged the environment for the betterment of this nation, he also took steps to conserve it. During the 1950s, the Soviet idea of an “environmental hygiene” was introduced into the mainstream policy-making setup. Echoing the growing importance of this ideal, the First Five Year plan recognized the polluting effects of industrial and put in place provision for the creation of industrial waste-water plants. Continuing with this trend in 1956, legislation was passed to deal with water pollution and provide clean water to the residents of urban areas. Even wildlife protection was evident during the Mao years as the first Panda Breeding Center to conserve the rare mammal was inaugurated during the first decade of Chairman Mao’s leadership. Moreover, the campaign to save the environment got a boost in the early 1970s when the idea of “environmental hygiene” was replaced by “environmental protection.” Chairman Mao’s second in command, the president of the country, Zhou Enlai, was sent to the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972. Zhou Enlai used the principles highlighted in the meet as a springboard to initiate “environmental protection.” As a result, the first National Environment Conference was convened in 1973 followed by the creation of the Environmental Protection Leading Group of the State Council in 1974. Most importantly,” it must be remembered that, in the 1950s and 1960s, concern for the natural environment and concepts of environmental protection were hardly flourishing even in economically rich countries.”⁵⁴

Intention to pursue ecological loss was never an option. Chairman Mao’s policies produced externalities that did not go well with the environment. Thus, this was an era of pressing times that had unintentional externalities. Most importantly, even during these times, Chairman Mao had a balanced view. He must be categorized in a different league of leaders who tried to protect the environment, and who provided a framework for future leaders to follow in his footsteps and continue saving the environment.

Prosecutor: *“No other world leader had looked down with such disdain on great mountains and powerful rivers,”⁵⁵ than Mao Zedong did. If the defendant is so naïve to think that Mao initiated those reforms to actually reform the state led approach to “conquer nature,” then it is absolutely necessary to prove that the initiatives were mere rubber stamp approaches to save face in the international and domestic arenas. If Mao was even remotely interested in forming a decisive environmental framework, a lag of forty two years since the 1932 Kuomintang laws would not have existed. Most importantly, Deng Xiaoping was just another Mao, who did more harm to the environment than ever.*

Defendant: *Unbelievable lies. Deng Xiaoping was a messiah of environmental protection during times of growing awareness, initiated by Chairman Mao, to conserve the environment. Moreover, whatever the prosecution will argue about Deng Xiaoping, I will first create a setting for the Judge to scrutinize his actions.*

The People’s Republic of China’s government was “trying to pull hundreds of millions of its people out of crushing poverty.”⁵⁶ China was a developing country with all the problems

⁵⁴ Sanders, Richard. "The Political Economy of Chinese Environmental Protection: Lessons of the Mao and Deng Years." *Third World Quarterly* 20.6 (1999): 1201-214. Print. 1203

⁵⁵ Winchester, Simon. *The River at the Center of the World: a Journey up the Yangtze and Back in Chinese Time*. New York: Picador/Henry Holt, 2004. Print.192

⁵⁶ Prof. Lestz comment on draft I

associated with progress through economic development. Rising population had to be catered by increased agricultural produce. Opening up of borders to the West was a necessity that brought in FDI – Foreign Direct Investment to feed the growing industrial sector, which of course was given priority over environment. Still, Deng Xiaoping could not reach national goals of produce. While, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) did not encourage foreign investment to Xiaoping’s expectations during the early years of the “Open Door” policy, the Cold War did not help China to successfully apply the ‘Four Modernizations’⁵⁷ of Zhou Enlai for China’s progress.⁵⁸ Therefore, it is imperative to understand that China was still suffering from problems even during the reform period that prompted the government to undertake decisive measures that did have some collateral damage or unintentional externalities. Still, the reform period provides ample evidence to prove that China was concerned about its environment.

A golden age for the development of environmental protection highlighted Paramount Leader Xiaoping’s era.⁵⁹ Deng Xiaoping (1978-92) did not waste any time after coming to power in 1978 to continue the preservation works started during Chairman Mao’s years. In 1982, the Environment Protection Law was enshrined in Article 26 of the People’s Republic of China’s – “the state protects and improves the environment in which people live and the ecological environment. It prevents and controls pollution and other public hazards.”⁶⁰ While in 1983, “the then Vice-Premier Li Peng [following in Xiaoping’s footsteps] used the Second National Conference on the Environment to declare environmental protection, alongside family planning, ‘a fundamental state policy.’”⁶¹ By 1990, the environmental protection policies were based on three principles of “‘putting protection first and combining prevention with control,’ ‘making the causer of pollution responsible for treating it,’ and ‘intensifying environmental management.’”⁶² A *Discharge Fee System* was installed in order to empower state and local agencies to levy fines and collect fees from polluting factories. On a larger scale, China adopted the ‘Agenda 21’ in 1994 in response to Premier Peng’s participation in the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Continuing Xiaoping’s legacy, in the Ninth Five Year Plan, “sustainable development as an important strategy for modernization”⁶³ was adopted to promote the “far-reaching network of 8400 environmental agencies, bureau, and offices at a variety of administrative levels, from province through city, county, and township, employing a total staff of 96,000 people together with tough regulations in place.”⁶⁴ Moreover, the population explosion reminded in the previous paragraphs was rigorously addressed through China’s *One-Child Policy* that successfully symbolized the changed attitude and approach towards an enhanced environmental protection scheme. Therefore, critics should be careful in demonizing a government that was doing everything possible to save its people from disaster, and still trying to save the environment.

Prosecution: *I cannot believe my ears! Instead of acknowledging Mao’s and Xiaoping’s devastation, the Defense is showing them in a heavenly light. All the arguments made by the Defense become meaningless when protection is basically on paper and not in practice. Even the ‘One-Child Policy’ was a step towards food security and not environmental protection. The Defense should not claim a positive externality of a completely disassociated policy. I will prove*

⁵⁷ Agriculture, Industry, National Defense, and Science and Technology

⁵⁸ Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. New York: Norton, 1990. Print. 834

⁵⁹ Sanders, Richard. "The Political Economy of Chinese Environmental Protection: Lessons of the Mao and Deng Years." *Third World Quarterly* 20.6 (1999): 1201-214. Print. 1206

⁶⁰ Opt. Ct. 1206

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Opt. Ct. 1207

⁶⁴ Ibid.

that Deng Xiaoping was nothing but another Mao.

Judge: *Treading dangerous waters. Proceed.*

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Conclusion

China's future is clogged with environmental uncertainty if contemporary practices continue to shape the nation. As far as Yangtze is concerned, its state is an open secret. Everything associated with the river has been disregarded and disrespected to such an extent that it is safe to say that although China has developed, the Yangtze has suffered. While the future holds promise in China's attempts to crack down on the culprits, the country's economic development might hinder the process; the creation of the Three Gorges Dam speaks volumes about China's "Getting Rich is Glorious" approach. If the state allows this ceaseless exploitation of resources, lets both conscious and unintentional externalities hamper ecological systems, and rides on popular indifference towards the state of environment, just as it did throughout the Yangtze's history, the Yangtze will only look at 'faceless'⁶⁵ culprits behind the damaging TGD, Mao's policies, Deng Xiaoping's approach, and China's circumstances. While the faceless unscrupulously damage the river, the Yangtze will only remember the judge's verdict.

Judge: *The Yangtze's demise was an inevitable outcome of the country's needs during the years of struggle. Of course, "someone" or "something" initiated, pursued, and still continues the use of the river's potential. However, who should I blame for modifying the Yangtze? Thus, the verdict in the light of circumstances that recognizes the mistake of "someone" or "something" is:*

"No One, But Everyone Killed the Yangtze River"

⁶⁵ Faceless means values, ideas, the nitty-gritties of thought process behind every move

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