
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

9239/12

Paper 1 Written Examination

February/March 2019

1 hour 30 minutes

INSERT (RESOURCE BOOKLET)

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Resource Booklet contains Documents 1 and 2 which you should use to answer the questions.

You should spend approximately 10 minutes reading the documents before attempting to answer the questions. This is allowed for within the time set for the examination.



This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

The following documents consider issues related to industrial pollution. Read them **both** in order to answer **all** the questions on the paper.

Document 1: adapted from *China's Environmental Crisis*, an article written by Beina Xu in January 2016. The author is an editor for the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), which published her article. CFR performs research and provides support, specializing in U.S. foreign policy and international affairs.

China's air pollution crisis is mainly caused by the country's rapid industrialization. The government has a five year plan of ambitious environmental objectives for 2020, but experts say the plan has not been carried out consistently. The evidence seems to confirm this.

China consumes about half of the world's coal supply and coal provides around two thirds of China's energy. This worsens its air quality, so China is committed to reducing the use of coal. However, this commitment is questionable, because in 2015 155 new coal-fired plants were approved, increasing capacity by 55%. Also, China admitted that it had underreported its annual coal consumption since 2000. Additionally, China has a national priority of rapid urbanization. The government aims to have more than 60% of its population living in cities by 2020, up from 36% in 2000. This policy requires new centers of manufacturing and industry, which worsens air pollution, as it increases the energy demand.

Experts highlight that public enterprises run by local governments and based in townships and villages generate almost a third of national GDP*. Unfortunately, these local governments remain difficult to monitor. They rarely maintain environmental standards, as officials often prioritize hitting economic targets over environmental concerns.

In 2013, the concentration of dangerous air particles in Beijing was forty times the level considered safe by the World Health Organization. In 2015, a Greenpeace East Asia report claimed that of 367 cities monitored in China, at least 80% failed to meet national small-particle pollution standards. Evidence suggests that this industrial pollution presents China with challenging situations, primarily in public health. Air pollution contributes to an estimated 1.2 million premature deaths in China annually. It causes serious health complications, including breathing problems and heart disease. Chinese environmental organizations, such as Friends of Nature and Global Village, try to persuade the government to maintain its environmental policies and ask for transparency. Despite state support, these organizations could face restrictions from government, who fear that these activities might prompt democratic social change.

Industrial pollution has indeed threatened domestic stability. China seems to have shown more concern in stopping public protest than implementing environmental measures. In 2013, Chen Jiping, of the Committee of Political and Legislative Affairs, blamed environmental pollution for "mass incidents" in China. These ranged from peaceful protest to riots, e.g. in Guangdong, Shanghai, Ningbo, and Kunming.

Environmental pollution has also damaged China's international reputation. Experts say China is the world's largest producer of greenhouse gases and is responsible for 27% of global emissions in 2014. Recent studies have reported that emissions from China's industries worsen air pollution as far as the western United States. China's neighbors, including Japan and South Korea, have also expressed concern over acid rain and smog which affect their populations.

East Asia's Greenpeace China campaigner, Li Shuo, claims that China deserves credit for its ambitious plan to limit its own environmental crisis. However, the evidence here shows a different side. So, it cannot be assumed that the government of China will follow through on its promises.

* Gross domestic product (GDP) is the monetary value of all goods and services produced in a country in a specific time period.

Document 2: adapted from *China's northern megalopolis could see 'significantly cleaner air in three to five years'*, an article written by Li Jing in March 2016. The author is a journalist with the South China Morning Post, Hong Kong, which published her article online.

A new study on air quality in five major mainland cities in China between 2013 and 2015 was recently released by Peking University. It found that national standards for air quality were only met 12% of the time in Chengdu and 24% in Beijing. However, it is clear from their comments that government officials are confident that China could see significantly cleaner air in three to five years.

Beijing has adopted a temporary policy to take half of the city's 5.6 million vehicles off the road, based on their number plates. Odd numbers can drive one day, even numbers the next. This is used during political events, such as military parades, as well as during red alert days for air pollution. In a media briefing the Beijing deputy mayor, Li Shixiang, said, "Of course we will not rashly make this temporary measure a permanent policy." He said the capital was revising its rules for emergency response to pollution. Instead, they will first consider banning high-polluting vehicles when a red alert is triggered. This will minimise the impact on private cars.

Meanwhile, the Hebei provincial governor, Zhang Qingwei, was reassured that smog could be cut substantially in the neighbouring cities of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei. This would require heavy investment to reduce industrial emissions. He said Hebei could see a "remarkable improvement" in three to five years, because the province would stop building new coal-fired industrial units, and also close down polluting factories this year (2016). "I'm very confident on this, but nearby cities also need to join the efforts." He added that the province had invested more than HK\$28.6 billion (US\$ 3.7 billion) over the past two and a half years to clean up the air. Also, the levels of PM2.5, the tiny particles most damaging to health, had dropped by 18.9% from a year earlier.

Officials from Hebei confirmed that a number of coal-fired industrial units would be closed and existing cement factories would be merged. Additionally, iron and steel capacity will be cut by 18 million tonnes this year. Chen Guoying, the provincial environmental chief, said that although cutting capacity in iron and steel could lead to job losses, it would be "worth the pain" for cleaner air. In the *Beijing Times*, Chen was quoted as saying, "Twenty years is too long, the public could not wait that long... We're getting more confident as everyone is joining the efforts now."

Wu Xiaoqing, a deputy environmental minister, however, was less optimistic about the country's new air quality goal in the five-year plan. He said making cities meet clean air standards on 80% of days by 2020, was not an easy task. At a press conference in Beijing he gave a warning. If future economic growth is fueled by polluting industries, even those cities with best air quality at this stage will face the risk of worsening air pollution.

Despite these fears, it would seem that the government is totally committed to tackling industrial pollution.

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