ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY IN A WORLD OF PERPETUAL WAR

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"It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness", a Chinese proverb

1. Introduction

Today, the phrase "environmental security" has a special poignancy. With the rubble in New York still smoldering and that in Afghanistan jolted daily by new bombing campaigns, American environmental organizations and their supporters must address the interrelationships between local and global environmental issues as never before.   Three conclusions are now unavoidable:

1) Domestic and international environmental work are interrelated and must be tackled together;
2) War and insecurity threaten the environment in ways that cannot be ignored;
3) Partnerships--between donors, between environmental groups, and between donors and environmental groups—are the most effective way to protect the planet in conditions of insecurity and instability.

September 11 drove home a point that environmentalists have argued since before the first World Conference on the Human Environment was convened in 1972 in Stockholm—at a time when war was raging still in Indochina, and the Cold War was still frozen solid.   There is Only One Earth.   The conservation, restoration, and preservation of this lonely planet are our most sacred duties because it is the source of all life.

In the decades since Stockholm, nuclear war threatened the extinction of most life forms. As we emerged from the Cold war, our attention turned to other global threats. Climate change due to the pollution of a global commons already undermines the life, prosperity and liberty of all people on the planet.   Wanton destruction of global biodiversity via habitat loss destroys the capacity of ecosystems to deliver environmental services that everyone needs simply to survive.

In short, it is now beyond dispute that the Earth is not disposable, that there are no spare planets. Ever since I directed the establishment of the non-governmental Environment Liaison Center in Nairobi in 1975 to work with the UN Environment Programme, I have

observed American environmentalists at the forefront in arguing that global is local.   As Dave Brower used to say, there is no such thing as a foreign environment.

September 11 and October 7 also underscore that war, the threat of war, and the related global insecurity threaten all life on this fragile, lonely planet.   Of course, in times of relative peace, human demography and a world of unregulated globalized markets creates disparate winners and losers-- the single bottom line over the public good and the right to unleashed free trade and investment over the right to a clean environment. Opposition to transparency and disclosure has left us with a financial architecture, which enables global insurgency to flourish. These values are violent to the poor, our children, and to generations yet unborn

War, the preparation for war, the aftermath of war, and the costs of contained conflict that are not resolved, all impose enormous direct and indirect environmental costs that could be avoided.   Well-tested means of conflict avoidance, conflict resolution, and consensus building are available with which to build international and domestic partnerships to increase environmental security. Thus, environmentalists must attend to building the foundations of peace and security in order to secure the environment. This is an imperative, not a choice.

In this paper, I outline the basic concept of environmental security. I describe the origins of this phrase and how its meaning has evolved over the last three decades.   I do not trace every byway and detour—and I apologize in advance to anyone whose work or thinking has been neglected.   However, I believe that this overview is a fair summation of the concept.

I also suggest that cooperative engagement and partnerships to create environmental security have been implemented in five different ways.   These start at the top of the international system with intergovernmental organizations and from the bottom-up with global actions by national environmental groups. In between are three ways that environmentalists operate—via common cause, international non-governmental organizations, and building capacity of environmentalists in the Global South. Thus, there is an array of opportunity for donors of any size and orientation to enter the field of domestic and international environmental security work.   I conclude with suggestions about how the events of September 11 and October 7 may affect work on environmental security.

2. Environmental Security During the Cold War

The phrase "environmental security" has evolved to have very different meanings at different times.   After the Stockholm Conference, much attention was given to the laws of war as it related to environmental issues, not least because of the environmental abuses of the war effort underway in Vietnam. Arthur Westing, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, and UN Environment Programme led this work, which strove to clarify how environmental constraints limited how war could be conducted—for example, with regard to climatic modification or the use of persistent toxic sprays to

denude whole ecosystems.   This work led to the framing of some new concepts including *comprehensive security* (later picked up by Japan), the *environmental hazards of war*, and *environmental refugees.* In particular, it led to a UNEP project to initiate *Peace Parks* or environmental cooperation in conflict zones, specifically on contested border regions where migratory or endangered species and habitats flourished due to the war preparations (mines kept people out). (see
http://www.wcmc.org.uk/protected_areas/transboundary/)

In the eighties and early nineties, the threat of nuclear war and nuclear winter—the precursor to the whole climate change issue—led many environmentalists to either join peace coalitions aimed at ending superpower dominance in a given conflict zone (such as the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement); and/or to support anti-nuclear organizations that expanded their focus from nuclear power and fuel cycle issues to nuclear weapons and support infrastructure (such as www.ieer.org)   This work took some national environmental groups such as NRDC into the inner sanctum of nuclear war planning and policy work, exemplified in the extraordinarily important Nuclear Weapons Databook series—work that continues in the NRDC's work on nuclear targeting today.

At the other end of the spectrum of state-orchestrated violence, Earth Island Institute and its partners in Central America tackled the ecological costs of US military intervention and the contra-strategies of scorched earth counterinsurgency.   And to not forget an important issue, some began to express concern about space junk and the militarization of space.

3. Security and Sustainable Development

The meaning of the word *environment* also was stretched in this period.   Years of tackling the problems of poverty and sustainability in development work during the seventies and early eighties in developing countries led to the convening of the Bruntland Commission in 1989.   The Commission's famous report, *Our Common Future*, included a chapter on militarism and the environment.   The Commission asserted unambiguously that a world characterized by grinding poverty for most humans and afflicted by war was not sustainable.   Thus, *sustainable development* requires peace and security for humans, implying a vastly less state-centered concept of security than was associated with the world of superpowers and the nuclear balance of terror that stressed the outer limits of the planet.

A decade of debate ensued on implementing strategies of sustainable development as enshrined in the text of *Agenda 21* hammered out at the second Earth Summit held in Brazil in 1992.   At the same time, the bipolar world forged by the superpowers collapsed, and along with it, the debate over environmental security opened up.

Peter Gleick of the Pacific Institute staked out one position that argued carefully that there was an overlapping area where environmental concerns affected the military deeply, and vice versa, but not all military issues could be reduced to environmental dimensions and not all environmental issues have bearing on the military. Others argued that the

military were only about war or avoiding war via deterrence and were singularly badly equipped to tackle environmental agendas.   This dichotomy soon dissolved as the issue of environmental security emerged in many dimensions and places and proved more complicated than anticipated in the early nineties.

4. Environmental Security in the Post-Cold War

In those ten years, security issues as a whole fractionated in many directions, and environmental security went along for the ride. A small cottage industry led by sociologist Ted Homer-Dixon took the western (especially American) security agencies by storm, arguing that *environmental conflicts* were the source of acute social conflicts that could either escalate to or spillover into inter-state conflicts, and that resource scarcity and environmental degradation underlie such environmental conflicts (see http://www.library.utoronto.ca/pcs/print.htm).   Put another way, this was the perfect intellectual foundation for the security agencies in search of new rationales and missions as the Cold War collapsed to move into the field of environmental security. A raft of studies appeared on sub-national conflicts and environmental issues as far afield as the Philippines, Central America, and South Asia. Centers for Environmental Security, Cooperative Security, or Environmental Conflict were set up in the US Department of Energy (http://www.pnl.gov/ces/,

Cynics noted that the focus at DOD and the CIA's environment centers almost always was on conflict, not on cooperation to prevent conflict (in contrast to the work on environmental diplomacy emanating from academics such as Peter Haas, Ken Conca and others).   However, the intellectual push did have some positive outcomes.   The Pentagon took environmental issues seriously—in part because they were being sued over base contamination as they shut down bases at home and abroad; in part because they had to clean up their daily operations or risk being sued; and in part because it was cheaper to run a green military than an inefficient one.   In only a few years, the Pentagon became the largest single employer of environmental control personnel in history. And, the Environmental Change and Security Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center (http://ecsp.si.edu/) initiated an important forum and journal that began to cross-fertilize the dozens of case studies and policy analyses on environmental security from around the world.   Others such as the International Peace Research Organization in Oslo also undertook less US-centric research studies on the relationship between war, peace and environmental issues.

Indeed, the State Department found itself pursuing a vigorous new environmental diplomacy not just on whaling (an issue that environmentalists forced onto the US government by bottom-up legislative pressure in the seventies) but on an array of global environmental threats including climate change, ozone depletion and dozens of other multilateral environmental conventions. In addition to the Oceans, Science and Technology Bureau, a new office of global issues was set up, headed by then Senator Tim Wirth.

Many US environmentalists found themselves simultaneously advising and pushing against US delegations to international environmental negotiations such as NAFTA, APEC, WTO, or participating in advisory groups such as the US Trade Representative's Trade and Environment Advisory Committee. Lines were often drawn between insider- and outsider-NGOs, and some of the crossfire was not friendly. Not to be outdone by the State Department, the Pentagon began to conduct regional and bilateral environmental security discussions and negotiations with allies and friends in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region with their military counterparts.

At the same time as multilateral diplomacy was unfolding on many environmental issues, so the full breadth and depth of the toxic residues left by the Cold War arsenals began to emerge, especially in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, but also on overseas and domestic US bases, at Hanford, and in local sites such as Hunters Point in San Francisco Bay—where the issue was framed as one of *environmental justice* for communities of color. The Gulf War against Iraq unleashed awful flames of wrath on the Kuwaiti oil wells and highlighted the criminal aspect of such *environmental terrorism*.

Yet another cottage research industry emerged that emphasized *the environmental insecurity* associated with the new means of asymmetric warfare including biological agents, chemical warfare as conducted by Hussein against the Kurds, and radiological warfare (for those unable to make nuclear weapons but able to get their hands on irradiated material). The risks not only of proliferated light weapons to whole ecozones (such as mines spread across swathes of countryside that blow up people in their fields and megafauna in heavily mined demilitarized zones) but of biotechnological and nanotechnological strategies of warfare are only now becoming apparent.

Meanwhile, complex humanitarian emergencies and protracted development campaigns in conflict zones—especially those conflicts characterized by ethnic conflict, cleansing, and genocide—blurred many traditional boundaries between the work of green organizations, human rights groups, development aid, and the international agencies that traditionally addressed the urgent needs of humans caught in conflict zones such as UN High Commission on Refugees. Many environmental groups began to recognize that wasteful use of biomass energy in rural areas was not only destructive to the local forests, but also polluted women and children to more carcinogenic, teratogenic, and mutagenic compounds (in smoke) than all the other urban-industrial air pollution exposure combined. Responding to these daily assaults is itself an important part of what some women's organizations have called *inclusive security.*

Thus, environmental quality and *human security* became indissolubly linked and many projects involving US and other national and international non-governmental agencies emerged to tackle these and similar dilemmas in poor regions of the world. In parallel, in the United States, environmentalists began to draw out the links between race, class and environmental inequality and exposure to hazardous materials in the *environmental justice* movement (a similar framework known as *kogai* has long been used in Japan to

challenge corporate environmental assaults on communities, beginning with the Minamata mercury pollution struggle).

Human rights issues also became a key concern at this time for environmentalists. The atrocity committed by corporations at sites such as Bhopal on a scale with the killing at the World Trade Center on September 11 are one example among many. The studies commissioned by the Earth Council on transgressions of environmental human rights ((see *Human Rights and the Environmnent: Conflicts and Norms in a Globalizing World* to be published shortly by Earthscan), the Nigerian example of Shell and the killing of environmental leaders, or the support work for international environmental struggles for survival by minorities groups are examples of non-governmental pursuit of environmental security agendas.

Recently, Pacific Institute has drawn our attention to the potential for large-scale, non-state *environmental terrorism* aimed either at destroying iconic environmental assets or at exploiting technological risk such as large scale dams or other human constructions (http://www.pacinst.org/environment_and_terrorism.htm)

5. Types of Non-Governmental Projects and Donor Support

In this section, I outline five basic ways that environmental non-governmental organizations can or have implemented strategies of environmental security. In each approach, I have also spelled out a "lesson learned."

The common theme in these lessons learned is the centrality of supporting partnerships between civil society groups in the United States with analogous groups overseas. I argue that these partnerships are the key to success at each level. Relatedly, I suggest that with some exceptions, it is generally mistaken to set out to fund directly overseas organizations without first meeting stringent conditions required for success.

5.1 Inter-governmental Organizations (IGOs): This approach originated in the early seventies as the UN agencies and other issue-specific international organizations began to be established. At this time, the older, bigger, national non-governmental environmental organizations began to focus on the new international agencies and related negotiations. Consequently, environmental security strategies began to be implemented with partner international agencies such as UNEP, UNDP, UN University, UNIDIR, UNITAR, Global Environment Facility, World Bank, Asian Development Bank etc. These strategies reflected the concepts outlined above and in play at the time—especially those topics related to state conflict (wars, laws of war) and interstate negotiations over issues such as long-range transboundary pollution regulation and management. Examples include:
- Training and capacity building in technical and institutional environmental work, for example, UNEP regional oceans management program.
- Policy research and applied policy work on environmental conflicts, for example, South Asia and southern Africa inter-governmental frameworks

- Organization of international workshop and symposia related to environmental conflict resolution, for example, Tumen River between China, DPRK, Russia; acid rain in Asia (UNDESA with Nautilus Institute)
- **Creation of Peace Parks in contested border zones (UNEP, see for example, Korean DMZ Peace Park, http://www.dmzforum.org/)**

Lesson Learned: American and overseas environmental groups that do this work on a contract or grant basis with international agencies often gain immensely due to their official-level of access in the country involved; and because the non-governmental organization is less constrained that the IGO, they can be agile and flexible to get the job done. Being able to wear the IGO/UN hat is particularly important for enabling environmental groups to tackle transboundary conflicts involving environmental issues that are sensitive or involve burden-sharing by governments.

5.2 International Non-Governmental Organizations: At the same time that the traditional international non-governmental organizations active around specialized UN agencies in New York, Vienna, and Geneva entered the intergovernmental field in a consultative status, new and hungry international environmental groups and transnational environmental networks entered the field.   They tended to pursue environmental security strategies implemented via global or regional NGO networks

- Friends of the Earth International international campaigns and related campaigns against nuclear testing, uranium mining and nuclear power
- Greenpeace global direct actions
- Environment Liaison Center (Nairobi)—south-south cooperation especially in Africa and communication of key issues to proactive UN agencies, for example, Environment Liaison Center International (www.elci.org) to UNEP in Nairobi which then takes up issues with governments. NRDC, Sierra Club and Audabon Society all played important roles in this initiative.

Lesson Learned: Building global and regional institutions of collaboration between internationally active environmental organizations that then work with IGOs is powerful. By creating habits of dialogue and collaborative work, this approach can overcome long-standing distrust and hatred that otherwise blocks environmental cooperation. The investment repays itself many times over at the national level. In the long run, building direct transnational grass roots networks is important to keep pushing the agencies and staid international non governmental organizations moving ahead of the governmental curve.

5.3 Funding directly in the Global South: Starting in the late seventies, hundreds of local, national, and regional networks of green groups emerged in developing countries. Some northern donors sought to implement environmental security strategies implemented via organizations located in the global South with direct US support, bypassing American non-governmental organizations including green groups:

- Pacific Environment Resource Center and Russia, China, Japan (RBF, Hewlett)
- Focus on the Global South , Bangkok (http://www.focusweb.org/
- Ford Foundation in China
- Energy Foundation/Hewlett Foundation in China

Lesson Learned: It is very difficult for small donors to become effective in directly funding environmental security strategies in developing countries. What is required is long-term commitments (10 years+) to capacity building; critical mass of funding to make a difference with an unstinting focus on overcoming limiting conditions for change at all levels; a recognition of the overarching constraints set by political and distributional and allocational regimes in a given country; and the fact that such investments meeting these conditions can have very high payoffs in terms of impact per dollar over time. Partnerships with established overseas donors such as Ford make a lot of sense. Some US groups can also act as intermediaries to disburse funds via small grant programs to partners with great impact.

- **5.4 Common Cause:** In the eighties and nineties, global, regional, and bilateral environmentalist partnerships, alliances, and alignments emerged as part of the globalization process. Many environmental security strategies were implemented via US NGO-overseas NGO partnerships and collaborations.   During the Cold War, many grass roots efforts were made to address environmental aspects of militarism and colonialism in developing countries as parts of broad coalitions and networks: DPRK Renewable Energy Project (Nautilus in North Korea/China)
- **Southwest Center for Environmental Research and Policy/US-Mexico Border Zone**
- International watersheds/riverrine conflicts and cooperation: Natural Heritage Institute in Eastern Europe; International Rivers Network and Mekong
- Chinese International Council for Environmentally Sustainable Development

Lesson Learned: Simple frameworks that suggest one can bring about international cooperation and overcome deeply rooted conflicts via "environmental common interest" projects are misleading. In reality, environmental common interests are very difficult to activate against multi-dimensional conflicts. However, with persistence, it is possible to get behind demilitarized zones, create new perceptions of what is possible, initiate reconciliation processes. It is also feasible to orchestrate effective oppositional campaigns to large-scale projects on a global scale from bottom-up although again, funding true collaborations over the long haul rather than hit-and-run contacts with southern partners is the key to successful mobilizations.   The essence of both the pro-active, policy-oriented work, and the constructive oppositional work is to fund partnerships between American organizations and overseas organizations. This strategy rests on activating the political muscle of US-based organizations in partnerships.

5.5 Global Reach: : In an era of full-fledged globalism, some environmental organizations have become global players in their own right.   Thus, they seek to implement environmental security strategies on their own, exploiting legal, media, or other political strategies. Others identify ways to do local work that sets global standards via market mechanisms or by building capacities in civil society to implement common principles of social and environmental accountability around the world. Some examples are:

- Greenpeace and Kwajalein/missile testing for national missile defense
- NRDC and NEPA-based lawsuits on international activities of US government
- Environmental human rights—Goldman awards, Amnesty and Human Rights Advocates with Nautilus Institute; Earthrights International
- Definition of a sustainable investment rules regime such as the International Investment Rules Project
- Efforts to impose new accountability and corporate social responsibility from the global to the local via grass roots advocacy and proactive consensus-building strategies, such as the California Corporate Accountability Project.

Lesson Learned: It is an American prerogative—albeit one challenged directly on September 11 and often one loaded with ethical and political dilemmas—to take global leadership on global issues. This comes with a heavy burden to consult and be sensitive to cross-cultural issues and differential perceptions of common interest.   Specifically, it is very problematic to work on or to fund international environmental security issues without authentic overseas NGO partners who can gently, or not so gently, nudge the American side to recognize differences in perspectives, definitions, and strategies.

Conversely, local actions in the United States that aim to set global rules via increased local accountability of global players (such as home-headquartered global corporations) offer important ways for domestic environmentalists to contribute to global shifts in environmental rules and practices. The trick in such strategies is to explore with overseas partners the common principles that will ensure that all multinationals face the same basic demands about their overseas performance rather than simply assuming that what serves the local US interest also conserves, restores or preserves international environments.

6. Concluding Comments

As I write today, October 8, it is a bleak world. Bombs are falling in Afghanistan. Global environmental diplomacy has been damaged severely due to the Bush Administration. .The United States and its allies have embarked upon war without end to exterminate international terrorism "root and branch." From my experience, this approach will result in more despair, more rage, more atrocity, and more insecurity of every type, including environmental insecurity.   This war will accelerate ecological damage the world over.

In many ways, the ground is moving under our feet.   Our old paradigms of environmental security are crumbling and we have not discerned the new patterns. Yet, although there is no "right answer" on how best to respond, there are likely to be many partly right answers.   For those who are interested, we have prepared a more complete analysis of responding to the Brave New World of War Without End.[1]

Here, I want to mention some questions that are grounded in an ecological insistence on the seamless interrelationship of every ecosystem, from the global to the local. These are:

- How can civil society shift from organizing and funding single problem, mono-maniacal organizations to multiple-problem, wide-angled lens missions—dialogues, collaborations, cross disciplines? Can we build precursors of this approach (see, for example, www.oneworld.org) in ways that draw upon and preserve the specific strengths of single-issue organizations?

- How do we work to defuse the current crisis, to de-escalate the conflicts at each level, and commence the long-term reconstruction of the regions already devastated by decades of war?

- Should we explicitly seek to identify diasporic potential to respond to this crisis, especially in global cities? Diasporas are viewed mostly as a source of conflict and threat; whereas they are equally contributors to global problem-solving and high cosmopolitan in nature, albeit an unrecognized resource by many NGOs and donors. Should we be seeking explicit relationships, quid pro quos with diasporic cosmopolitan citizens and problem-solving organizations such as environmental organizations, especially in the global cities?

- One of the major moves by the Bush Administration to respond to September 11 may be to cut back on migration and border movements.   Do environmental organizations have common cause to make on this issue with migrant labor and other affected groups, for example, in Mexico, while also tackling the cross-border water, air, and energy issues that are so urgent?

Thank you very much.