

BOOK REVIEWS

***The Environment and Security in Pacific Asia.* By Alan Dupont.** Adelphi Paper No. 319. London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998. 94pp.

Recent events in Pacific Asia cannot help but have changed traditional ways of viewing security. The case of Indonesia, where the effects of international finance flows brought down the region's longest-standing regime, will inevitably broaden the category of what are thought to be security threats in the region. In such a climate it is timely to begin to discuss issues of "non-traditional security".

Alan Dupont's Adelphi Paper examines the security implications of the environmental causes of confrontation and tension between the states of Pacific Asia. He sets out to "analyze how and under what circumstances environmental factors interact with other sources of conflict to exacerbate, prolong, or complicate existing disputes and national security problems" (p. 10). The Paper's five chapters examine, in turn, the issues of pollution, population growth, energy scarcity, food scarcity, and water scarcity; and the tensions they have caused. Dupont's examination yields mixed results. He concludes that environmental factors do not directly lead to conflict in the region, but are secondary factors, interacting with other, "more traditional security issues" to shape the region's security.

While there is a significant case to be made regarding security threats deriving from environmental degradation, this case does not emerge clearly in the Paper despite the impressive research that underpins it. This derives from a lack of clarity on three levels. The first is a

definitional confusion over the concept of environmental security; the second, the absence of a causal link between environmental degradation and inter-state violence, coercion, or threats; and the third, an uncertainty about whether transnational environmental problems are more likely to lead to co-operation or conflict.

Dupont defines environmental security “in terms of ‘acute’ sub-national or international conflict with a substantial probability of violence or the prospect of serious political and social instability stemming from human activities which reduce the environment’s capacity to sustain life” (p. 8). This definition is used to embrace two sources of security implications of environmental damage: growing competition for increasingly scarce resources (population growth, energy, food, and water); and the direct impact of environmental damage on the quality of human life (pollution).

The former are not new security threat types in themselves. Rather, environmental degradation has become a new source of the timeless inter-state conflict for territory and resources. Whether caused by population growth, environmental damage or just plain avarice, security threats arising from a demand for resources that exceeds their supply are not new. However, it is important to highlight — as Dupont’s Paper does — that the sources of resource competition have changed: from aggrandisement and expansionism, to a shrinking of resources available in comparison to the demand for them as a result of human-inflicted damage to the natural environment.

In terms of environmental damage that directly impacts to a significant extent on the quality of human life — such as the haze crisis or the Chernobyl disaster — we are dealing with an entirely new security phenomenon. Yet Dupont minimizes the significance of this departure: “Pollution should be seen more as a reflection of the economic, social, political, environmental, and demographic forces shaping Pacific Asia’s security environment, rather than a fundamental cause of them” (p. 16). Instead of suggesting, as in his conceptual definition, that this type of environmental degradation can have major security, economic and political ramifications for the region, Dupont suggests instead that pollution is an unpleasant side effect of much deeper forces, with little independent impact of its own.

By failing to establish a clear causal link between the direct impact of environmental degradation on the quality of human life, on the one hand, and security challenges, on the other, Dupont misses a vital aspect of this new source of instability. The direct impact of serious, health- or lifestyle-threatening pollution on individual human beings represents one type of a new class of security threats. These can be

termed “micro-security” threats, as opposed to more familiar “macro-security” threats and conflicts.

Traditionally, international security threats have been directed by states at states; transmitted and mediated to individuals through their states. For example, the threat posed by Nazi Germany in June 1940 was not individualized towards each French citizen; rather, the danger for each French person was a consequence of the desire of Nazi Germany to forcibly subjugate the French state. The resulting level of violence waged against each French citizen was a direct consequence of the choices made by the French state: total surrender or completely effective defence would have spared most from violence; while protracted resistance as a policy of the state would have eventually exposed most individuals to physical violence or coercion. Let us call these state-to-state patterns of coercion and violence “macro-security”.

In contrast, environmental threats are one type of a new class of security threats that have emerged only recently, which can be termed “micro-security” threats. These are threats that emanate from outside the state but which significantly threaten the physical and/or economic security, or well-being, and/or the individual freedoms, and/or the position or status of each of its citizens without being mediated or transmitted through the state. (These facets of “individual security” are taken from Barry Buzan’s book *People, States, and Fear*.) They are problems that citizens have traditionally looked to the state to resolve, but which states find impossible to resolve by independent public policy action, given that they emanate from outside their jurisdictions.

When viewed this way, it should come as no surprise that many of the environmental security “threats” that Dupont identifies read more like a list of pressing public policy issues than as a series of “shots heard around the world”. He speaks variously of “the energy choices of governments” (p. 39); the rise in price of food (p. 45); the need for “political will” and the “eradication of bureaucratic inefficiencies” (p. 46); trade protectionism (p. 47); the growing need to police fishing grounds (pp. 51–7); and the ability to guarantee potable drinking water (p. 63). Yet, this is no reason to conclude, as he does, that “[t]hose who see a close connection between environmental degradation and military conflict exaggerate their case” (p. 75).

The simple fact of acid rain, the Chernobyl disaster, and the “haze” is that unintended side-effects of one state’s policies (or mishaps) are beginning to seriously affect the individual security of human beings in other states who have had and can have no part in promoting or averting the conditions that gave rise to them. States, in turn, have to respond to the demands of their citizens that they do something about

these challenges to their micro-security. When the calls to avert or mitigate these pressures on their micro-security reach critical levels, these “public policy” issues will (and to some extent already have) become foreign policy issues. When co-operation is not forthcoming from the sources of the environmental damage, micro-security issues could easily translate into macro-security tensions and conflict.

North Korea, and perhaps China, represent cases where fragile micro-security situations have translated much more directly into tense macro-security structures. In an article in the journal *Political Studies*, Paul Bracken observed:

The fragility of [North Korea's] internal position — food shortages, economic deprivation and the lack of legitimate succession — becomes a perverse strength when linked to nuclear weapons and an army capable of destroying some significant part of the South... Outsiders had better not pressure North Korea where it may implode, or they will cause it to explode.

Fostering low levels of micro-security could therefore be used by states in Pacific Asia to increase their macro-security safety, along the same logic as Thomas Schelling's “manipulation of shared risk”. An internally fragile state could increase or maintain a significant magnitude and uncertainty of disaster, while at the same time imbuing it with significant costs to other states (say, for example, massive refugee flows out of China), in order to deter these other states from exerting pressure on it.

As micro-security challenges, such as environmental damage, move from what Arnold Wolfers calls “pole of indifference” towards the “pole of power”, they will of necessity become international issues. Because such issues are externalities, the need to mitigate or avert them will make them the sources of either co-operation or conflict between states. If they are to prompt co-operation, it will require the assignment of Coasian property rights (and responsibilities) of liability for and commitment to addressing the sources of environmental damage. (See R.H. Coase, “The Problem of Social Cost”, *Journal of Law and Economics*, 3 October 1960.) Once shares of liability have been assigned and accepted, environmental damage can become the subject of interstate bargaining over addressing the issue and compensating the affected states. As the Kyoto negotiations of December 1997 showed, large disagreements can occur over liabilities and contributions to greenhouse gas abatement, but such disagreements are kept within the co-operative bounds of an emerging international regime, and are not likely to lead to macro-security conflict.

Conflict arising from environmental externalities is most likely to result from an unwillingness to accept responsibility for environmental problems, or to take part in addressing them. Here, pre-existing economic or developmental rivalry can imbue the issue of environmental damage with a dangerous competitiveness. Rising demands within one state to address the external causes of micro-security distress, when met by non-cooperation from the source(s) of the environmental damage, may cause serious macro-security tension and even conflict between states.

This Adelphi Paper is useful in drawing attention to a new array of environmental security challenges in Pacific Asia. Further analysis and theorizing must be done on this subject, however, before assessments of the real implications and possible (negative or positive) impact of these developments can be made about the future of the region.

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***Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism: National Identity and Status in International Society.* By Christopher Hughes.** London and New York: Routledge, 1997. 186pp.

This book is a well-written historical analysis of political developments in Taiwan from the 1950s to 1994 (taking into account some developments up to early 1996). The book began life in 1990 as a doctoral dissertation for a degree in international relations at a British university. Although the author does not seem to have stated explicitly the aim or objective of the book, he says in the Preface that "one of the things this work set out to do was to keep track of [the] helter-skelter developments and to understand how they are interrelated" (p. xi). With this goal in mind, he has indeed produced a readable narrative, highlighting major events that concern issues of nationalism, identity, democratization, and the international status of Taiwan.

The book is divided into seven chapters, dealing with the Taiwan and China nationalism issue; the one-China principle; the process of democratization; the development of a "post-nationalist" identity; and Taiwan's "intermediate" state in international society, with a conclusion drawing all the threads together.