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Global Warring: How Environmental, Economic and Political Crises Will Redraw the World Map

by Cleo Paskal

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From regional states where drought and food insecurity place untenable demands on the political system to Africa, where oil recovery has created wastelands of arable land and given rise to insurgencies that are contributing to the loss of over one million barrels a day in oil production, environmental issues are creating instability and affecting America's national security. An exponential increase in global population has made resource issues increasingly important, to the point they may become the deterministic variable.

Global Warring, by security expert and journalist Cleo Paskal, is a "must read." Divided into four sections, the book is a clearly written explanation of why the Director of National Intelligence included environmental security and climate change in his 2009 threat brief to Congress. *Global Warring's* first section examines the West's vulnerability to environmental change and how nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom are especially vulnerable to natural disasters. The second section examines the importance of vital water transportation routes and choke points, demonstrating how climactic change affects the geopolitical importance of these routes. The third part is an analysis of the changing precipitation patterns and their impact on various regions, with particular focus on China, India, and Russia. The final section provides a particularly interesting perspective on rising sea levels and geopolitics in the Western Pacific (e.g., the increase of Asian influence in the world and particularly China's increased influence in the Pacific region while attempting to disenfranchise US influence there).

According to United Nations statistics over the past 60 years, at least 40 percent of all intrastate conflicts have been linked to natural resource exploitation. Thus, it was no surprise when on 12 February 2009, the US Director of National Intelligence and former United States Pacific Command commander, retired Admiral Dennis Blair, included environmental security and climate change in the Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, stating "Climate change, energy, global health and environmental security are often intertwined, and while not traditionally viewed as 'threats' to US national security, they will affect Americans in major ways." These environmental issues affect national security and are an increasingly important element of 21st century geopolitical calculus.

A broad spectrum of security analysts, as well as those seeking to better understand China's geopolitical strategy, will also find the book intriguing. Paskal

provides an in-depth view of China's "Go Out" strategy (the Chinese government subsidizing private enterprises to expand outside China into resource rich

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areas such as Central and South America and Africa). She then examines effects of this expansive strategy locally (on the host nation) and regionally, a truly comprehensive review. The author voices caution that, left unchecked, nations such as China will create a monopoly on the natural resource markets, rendering the US strategy of

depending on the "open market" in danger of becoming obsolete.

Climate change and changing precipitation patterns is another important topic examined, and the author provides a short history of the origins of the study of climate change and analyzes how scientific inroads gave rise to meteorological offices in England and elsewhere. Paskal asserts "our environment is the foundation upon which we graft all other infrastructure. Our transportation systems, cities, defensive capabilities, agriculture, power generation, water supply and more are all designed for the specific parameters of our physical environment and climate—or, more often, the physical environment and climate of the Victorian or post Second World War periods in which they were originally built."

Essentially, the author does not argue the cause of climate change, but offers a common sense strategy to plan for and mitigate its effects. Her analysis of the associated problems of changing weather patterns is spot on and correctly correlates environmental instability to governmental legitimacy and national and regional stability. For example, if a government is unable to supply the population with basic needs, such as continued access to food and potable water, there will be dire consequences as evidenced by 33 countries who faced civil unrest because of high food prices in 2008.

Global Warring establishes a clear link between geopolitics, environmental issues, and regional stability. Unfortunately, societies have not adapted to the environmental changes that have occurred during the last half century and continue to maintain population centers close to shorelines, while failing to build "climate proof" buildings and infrastructures. Perhaps, if enough policy makers read *Global Warring*, governments may fully grasp the importance of changing climates and precipitation patterns, and adopt measures to avoid or at least recover more quickly from natural disasters.