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# Trends. Some Security Lessons from Kyoto

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If anyone still needs reminding, "the environment" is no longer a fringe Issue championed by starry-eyed dreamers and psychodynamic deviants, and perennial misfits who have little understanding of or orientation to reality. In fact, the relevance of "the environment" for policies of political security has become quite significant.

(1) An isolationist position on national security is now extremely difficult to defend. Natural and man-made disasters and change too easily transcend boundaries. This can happen proximally through the smoke of an Indonesian conflagration causing transport and medical threats to security or distally through a local drought affecting the availability of a desired commodity for some faraway country in an increasingly globalized economy. (2) Environmental threats to life and ways of life can only be solved through influencing cumulative absolute values, percentages of change, and increasing or decreasing trends. This creates a cognitive tension amongst typical political attributions of cause and blame. For example although the United States (US) is now contributing more carbon dioxide and other products implicated in global warming than any other country, global warming solutions can involve reductions of these products from many combinations of polluters. In other words, Nature doesn't care who's right and who's wrong and engaging in the blame game too often impedes global security. (3) Nation-state and other political entities that often are adversaries are finding venues of cooperation concerning environmental problems that are affecting or can and will affect everyone. These venues of cooperation may possibly decrease the probabilities of violent political conflict. (4) There is increasing documentation that establishes the noxious relationship of environmental problems and physical and psychological functioning. Much as acquired immune deficiency syndrome in a number of African countries, environmentally induced physical and psychological change can deleteriously affect political infrastructures, the very viability of countries, and can well lead to security implosion and resulting mass migrations. (5) On a purely militaristic note, environmental problems can influence the effectiveness of policies, strategies, and tactics--also the very notion of what "winning" a political conflict through force really means. (6) The skills needed to resolve military and other variants of political conflict may be very different from those needed to resolve environmental problems. In fact, the notion of security expertise for environmental problems that not only envelops understanding of the Issues and implications but also compromises requisite skills to develop and implement plans and programs may at present be unknown. (7) Environmental problems present significant challenges for economic security and attempts at solving these problems may themselves threaten this security. (8) Environmental problems present significant challenges to the reliability and validity of state-of-the-art predictive systems that are the foundation of many security formulations from the personal to the global. (9) The political Issues raised by environmental problems present significant challenges to political authorities desiring to stay in power and fearing that handling the Issues in an impolitic manner will lead to the loss of power.

Much has been written by political security experts about the ineluctable search for a new enemy by the West in the post-Cold War era. Will it be China? The Islamic countries of the Mideast? A resurgent Russian empire? Perhaps, the enemy is already here. The most dreaded of all. It is Nature. Nature is everywhere. And Nature has been wronged and needs to be righted. Before we all lose in a manner in which there'll be no one left to understand.

## International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Although this may seem straightforward, one might ponder a quote attributed to the US Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan-"there is significant bias in political systems of all varieties to substitute hope for possibly difficult pre-emptive policy moves. (See Axelrod, L.J., & Suedfeld, P. (1995). Technology, capitalism, and Christianity: Are they really the three horsemen of the eco-collapse? *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 15, 183-195; Horwitz, W.A. (1996). Developmental origins of environmental ethics: The life experiences of activists. *Ethics & Behavior*, 6, 29-54; Oskamp, S. (1995). Applying social psychology to avoid ecological disaster. *Journal of Social Issues*, 51, 217-238; Stevens, W.K. (December 2, 1997). Talks on global warming open in Kyoto. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Stevenson, R. W. (December 3, 1997). Greenspan urges more aid to Third-World banks. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>.)