# I-A. Foreword

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Conflict over natural resources, whether driven by need or greed, has always been a part of human society. There is also strong evidence that social tensions driven by past climatic change destroyed many advanced societies; such as the long-wave droughts which drove the collapse of early civilisations in Mesopotamia and Peru.

The coming decades will see rising resource scarcity, greater environmental degradation and increasingly disruptive climatic change. In fact, in an increasingly uncertain world these trends are disturbingly predictable. The question is whether increasing environmental and resource pressures will reduce security and stability, or will our political, governance and security systems be able to manage them peacefully?

The lack of focus on environmental security issues found by the research in this volume could suggest that security professionals in the major developed powers hold the more optimistic view. More disturbingly it could indicate that these new realities have yet to be integrated into security strategies and policy frameworks.

However, these issues are fast rising up the global political agenda. Geopolitical competition for fossil and mineral resources has become the main source of 19th century-style "great power" tensions in today's interdependent world. By empowering autocratic rulers in Africa and Central Asia against their people, this competition is also setting the stage for violent internal crisis and the consequent disruption of energy supplies.

Security issues where resource and environmental factors play key roles are the stuff of day-to-day foreign policy: from land conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists in Darfur; to the role of oil in fuelling and sustaining of separatist conflict in the Niger Delta and Aceh. Many countries already face significant challenges in coping with existing climate variability; for example, the World Bank estimates that floods and drought in Kenya in the late 1990s resulted in direct economic costs of $4.8 billion, or 22% of GDP per annum

Though each particular crisis or conflict has its own unique dynamic based on local politics, economics and history; strong patterns are clear. The corrupting influence of point source revenues – whether from natural resources, drugs, pipelines or weapons - on elites is the most powerful source of underdevelopment and failing economies. The World Bank estimates that over the last 40 years developing countries without major natural resources have grown 2-3 times faster than those with high resource endowment. Politicised revenue allocation from natural resources based around ethnic, religious or regional lines has been a major driver of internal conflict. Natural resource revenues are feeding corruption and organised crime, which destabilise governments and at the extreme finance conflict and provide a logistical infrastructure for international terrorism.

Politicised allocation of water and land is constantly driving low level conflict, which can spark into major violence when linked to ethnic, national and other divisions. Migration

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away from environmentally degraded regions causes confrontation across borders and inside countries, from Africa to Latin America.

There is no lack of tools and policy options to address these issues. A wealth of experience exists on managing environmental disputes, designing governance systems, anti-corruption measures, resource allocation mechanisms and participative resources management that could be used to reduce instability risks. There are also a wealth of international agreements – on forests, water, environmental democracy, desertification, conflict resources – which could be strengthened as foreign policy tools.

However, despite a few high profile exceptions such as the action to control trade in "conflict diamonds", there has been a lack of concerted international effort to address the resource and environmental roots of instability. Cases which have been addressed have required extensive campaigning from non-governmental groups to secure action.

In a world of rising scarcity this reactive approach will not preserve security and stability. Strategists always caution against fighting the last war, and the need to explore future threats away from the biases of current priorities. However, despite a plethora of recent reports - from the Africa Commission, the UN High Level Panel and even the Pentagon - identifying competition for oil and gas supply, resource scarcity and climate change as key drivers of political stress and conflict; the impact on practical action has been weak.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the identification of a new threat does not by itself result in an effective response. It takes time for countries to understand the strategic importance of new threats on their vital interests, and to reorder existing priorities. It takes even longer to develop effective instruments to respond. Security systems formed in the strategic certainties of the Cold War have struggled to respond to a new fluid strategic environment where the source of threats is constantly shifting.

But this is changing. The lessons of the past decade and in particular the Balkan Wars, Rwanda and 9/11 have radically transformed national security priorities. Across the major powers these now focus less on the strength of other countries, and more on the need to tackle instability and failing states; to achieve energy security; prevent the development of "ungoverned spaces" open to abuse by terrorists and organised criminals; and address the internal conflicts which can breed and support international terrorism.

Tackling these threats requires a very different type of security apparatus typified by three core approaches:

- **Preventive**: greater emphasis on effective governance, prevention of conflict, and stabilisation of countries after conflict and crisis have emerged.

- **Integrated**: the need for "whole government approaches" which combine military, diplomatic, developmental and justice system capabilities.

- **Convergent**: ensuring the complementarities between different policy objectives and instruments are assessed when in setting priorities; for example, the economic, developmental and security benefits of tackling illegal logging.

These principles are also familiar as forming the core of "sustainable development" policy approaches, and in many ways security policy is becoming more like other areas of international policy. At the core of the challenge is how to motivate consistent investment of financial and political capital into long term prevention of conflict and reduction of instability.

This is a major task of strategic and public sector reform, and will take years to complete. There is also a chance that the emergence of more traditional military threats could

reverse this progress. Assuming this reversal does not happen, these trends will make it easier to incorporate environmental and resource issues into security policy, but only as one driver of future risks. Security strategies also need to better integrate other rising structural risks of instability driven by HIV/AIDs, religious fundamentalism, economic dislocation from trade shifts, rapid urbanisation and drug trafficking and use. Understanding how these different issues interlink and re-enforce vulnerability to crisis and conflict is at the core of defining effective responses. For example, how will commodity dependence, trade liberalisation, organised crime, youth unemployment and climate change evolve to impact the stability of the Caribbean? How will this affect organised crime and the drug trade, and what can be done to lower the risk of crisis?

This survey shows that many countries are currently undertaking reforms to improve their conflict prevention and crisis response architectures. However, there is a need for much more radical and concerted change if security objectives are to be met.

Work carried out by UK Prime Ministers Strategy Unit ("Investing in Prevention", 2005 available at www.strategy.gov.uk) showed that despite recent improvements, government systems have significant weaknesses in developing strategic approaches to reducing structural risks of instability and conflict in the medium to long term. These weaknesses are deeply rooted in all parts of government systems, and not confined to commonly discussed issues of deficient early warning and insufficient political will to act.

There is a critical opportunity to accelerate the process of systemic reform in the next few years. The political imperative for better systems to tackle crises is growing, not least in the European Union and its neighbourhood. The experience of DRC, Afghanistan and Iraq has further strengthened the cost-benefit case for investing in prevention. The increased emphasis on poverty reduction has liberated larger financial resources to be invested in fragile states, particularly in Africa; most of which are economically dependent on natural resources. Rising awareness of the future impacts of climate change is increasing attention on the environmental drivers of instability.

Experts on the environmental and resource aspects of security can help drive these changes in governments, along with actors from the development, health and conflict prevention communities. A joined-up approach outside governments will help drive joined-up action from governments.

This is probably best done through a focus on critical "problem clusters", rather than in a "grand theory" of system redesign, and there are many candidate areas. Progress is already being made to strengthen international processes to prevent the use of natural resources to fund conflict, but more could be done to extend and deepen this approach. More effort could be given to managing the negative cycle of natural resource mismanagement, corruption, underdevelopment and instability, especially in energy exporting countries in Africa and Central Asia. A much more detailed picture of the impact of climate change on stability, and the links between climate security and energy security, is needed to drive medium to long-term security and energy policy.

Though progress may be slow it is happening, and it is critical that the opportunities of the coming years are taken. The growing impacts of climate change will multiply all these tensions, and the experience of the last decade is that climatic changes will happen faster than we currently expect. If effective systems for preventive action are not built the international community will face multiple re-enforcing crises, and be left trying to patch up societies with an expensive combination of humanitarian and military intervention, but little chance of sustainable success.

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