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TOPIC OVERVIEW

ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND RESOURCE SCARCITY

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Overview

Global trends in population growth and increasing economic prosperity will place increasing demands on natural resources for the foreseeable future. Among these are the essential resources of food, water, and energy that shape people's survival and quality of life. Current and projected demands for these essential resources lead to complex problems at what has been called *the food-water-energy nexus*. As a consequence, issues of food, of water, and of energy can no longer be addressed in isolation because of that inter-connectivity. Actions we take to address one resource will likely have unintended consequences for the others. Climate change will be a "threat multiplier," potentially reducing the supply of natural resources at a time of increasing demand.

Ensuring access to essential natural resources is a key aspect of human security with strong implications for national and regional security. The United Nations Environmental Program, in 2015, asserted that, "Resolving natural resource conflicts is a defining peace and security challenge of the 21st century. The geopolitical stakes are high as the survival or authority of states may depend on securing access to key natural resources." It is thus in the interests of the security sector to attend to these non-traditional security issues and to establish security governance that can anticipate, innovate, and cooperate to manage potential conflict over resources.

Objectives

- Understand global trends affecting environmental security
- Understand the complex interactions at the food-water-energy nexus
- Analyze the implications of resource complexity and trends for security governance

Recommended Readings

Sherri Goodman. 2012. "What is Environmental Security?" in *Yale Insights* (April 15)(5 pp.). Available at: <http://insights.som.yale.edu/insights/what-is-environmental-security>

For those interested in the scientific context of resource supply, centered on climate change:

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 2019. "Climate Change and Land. Summary for Policy Makers." (7 Aug). and "The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate. Summary for Policy Makers." (24 Sep) Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/reports/>