Lines in the Shifting Sand:

The Strategic Politics of Climate Change, Human Security and National Defense

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Focusing primarily on the U.S., this paper explores evolving defense and intelligence approaches to climate change and human security. This is a particularly pressing concern as a new administration in Washington reconfigures national security policies and priorities. Preliminary indications are that the Obama administration views development assistance as an important strategic complement to direct military engagement in Africa and elsewhere. At the same time the National Intelligence Council's *Global Trends 2025* study as well as the reports of think tanks close to the administration (e.g. the Center for a New American Security) are highlighting the threats of climate-related migration and conflict to U.S. interests. Their depiction of climate conflict derives in large part from the key neo-Malthusian narratives of the environmental security field. Do these developments pose a danger to progressive attempts to link climate change and human security in vulnerability reduction? How might development scholars, practitioners and policymakers resist the militarization of climate change, development assistance and human security?

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> Indications of changes in the earth's future climate must be treated with the utmost seriousness, and with the precautionary principle uppermost in our minds. Extensive climate changes may alter and threaten the living conditions of much of mankind. They may induce large-scale migration and lead to greater competition for the earth's resources. Such changes will place particularly heavy burdens on the world's most vulnerable countries. There may be increased danger of violent conflicts and wars, within and between states.
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> -- Norwegian Nobel Committee press release on awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to Al Gore, Jr. and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, October 12, 2007

Introduction: A World Awash

The U.S. National Intelligence Council's (NIC) recent report, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, presents a fictionalized scenario of what might happen in 2020 should global inattention to climate change cause major unexpected environmental and social impacts (NIC 2008). Writing in his diary, a contrite American president not only frets about how Wall Street and the New York Stock Exchange have been inundated by a terrible hurricane, but how the timing couldn't be more embarrassing – half the world's leaders are in town to attend the UN General Assembly. The scene borrows heavily from the apocalyptic climate thriller *The Day After Tomorrow* with a touch of the morality of *Incovenient Truth* thrown in. Entertainment value aside, however, the scenario contains other observations that speak more directly to the present moment when U.S. defense and intelligence interests are trying to figure out how to integrate climate change into the national security agenda.

"The poorest countries have suffered the most from our hands-off approach to globalization," the president reflects. "I think we thought it best that Bill Gates, NGOs, and others handle the problem. Of course, everyone has to get involved. NGOs can't mount peacekeeping operations. States at some point have to take responsibility. *Most of these countries did not have a chance without strong outside intervention.* The fact that we had clean water technology and could not find a way to get it delivered to the most needy only made the bad impacts of climate change worse" [my emphasis] (59). These bad effects, as further elaborated in the document, include the potential for large migrations and intrastate armed conflict triggered by resource scarcities.

This impulse to help poor countries prepare for the effects of climate change is of course a good one, but when combined with national security objectives, the waters get significantly muddied. U.S. development assistance and humanitarian aid have long been strategically deployed as an element of defense policy. USAID-initiated agricultural reforms in Vietnam, for example, were a vital tool of counter-insurgency (Fitzgerald 1972), and food aid has been used to stabilize potentially restive populations (McHenry

and Bird 1977). On the eve of his transition from U.S. Secretary of Defense to World Bank president, Robert S. McNamara wrote that affluent nations needed to realize that in poor conflict-prone countries "a dollar's worth more of military hardware will buy less security for themselves than a dollar's worth more of development assistance" (McNamara 1968:162).

In recent years, the humanitarian mission has become increasingly politicized and militarized. The emerging international norm of 'responsibility to protect' justifies intervention by military force if necessary if states are grossly violating the human rights of their citizens (Foley 2008). Explaining his rationale for sending the Marines into Somalia, George Bush Sr. stated in a public address: "Let me be very clear: Our mission is humanitarian, but we will not tolerate armed gangs ripping off their own people, condemning them to death by starvation…Only the United States has the global reach to place a large security force on the ground in such a distant place quickly and efficiently and thus save thousands of innocents from death" (cited in Hammond 2007).

Of course, in hindsight the mission to Somalia was neither quick nor efficient, and its disastrous consequences helped give rise to the Clinton-era strategy of preventive defense -- the need to address the multiple roots of political conflict *before* it explodes into all-out civil war. In the build up to the Iraq War, the administration of George Bush Jr. significantly widened the concept of preemption to justify 'preventive' attacks even when an imminent threat cannot be decisively proven. Scholars point to how the military's emphasis on prevention and preemption mirrors environmental discourses of risk, a sort of militarized precautionary principle. According to Hammond, however, contemporary war is not just a "pragmatic exercise in risk management" but also "an attempt to recover a sense of historical purpose" (Hammond 2007: 122, also see Matthew 2005).

Climate change is becoming the great connector between environmental risk and security risk. As one of the most urgent global issues of our time, it also possesses a universal appeal that could help to provide a sense of historical purpose to a U.S. defense establishment weary from the protracted wars in Iran and Afghanistan. Does that mean climate change is destined to become the next major threat after terrorism? Highly doubtful. But it does have the potential to become a rationale for U.S. intervention, especially in the 'failed states' and 'ungoverned spaces' of Africa.

The dangers this poses to those concerned about human security and climate change are not just definitional. The boundaries between human security, environmental security and national security have often been fuzzy. More important, though, is the possibility that in the name of mitigating climate change and preventing climate conflict, the Obama administration will increasingly link development and humanitarian assistance to the military's stability operations, including counterinsurgency.

The goal of this paper is to raise a warning flag about this possibility. Section One explores the evolution of emerging security narratives about climate change and conflict, focusing in particular on those that emphasize the risk of violent conflict by poor and

displaced people. Here content not only matters, but the identity of those generating and promoting the narratives. Section Two looks at current U.S. defense strategies and how climate change could factor, rhetorically and practically, into future military and development interventions, especially in Africa. The conclusion offers my own precautionary thoughts on how best to respond to these challenges in order to forge effective and just international climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

I. Operation Enduring Narrative

From environmental conflict to climate conflict

Although long in the making, climate conflict narratives burst decisively onto the world stage in 2007. First the *Atlantic Monthly* (Faris 2007), then the UN Environment Programme (UNEP 2007), then even UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon (2007) attributed violence in Darfur to a combination of demographic pressures, resource scarcities and climate change. Along with the Darfur stories came other dire predictions about the threat of so-called "climate refugees" spilling across the globe and wreaking havoc, and according to a Christian Aid report, *Human Tide*, creating "a world of many more Darfurs" (Christian Aid 2007a,b). Well-known security pundits like Jeffrey Sachs (2007) and Thomas Homer-Dixon (2007) jumped on the theme with apocalyptic opinion pieces in popular media.

In April that year the British government brought the issue of climate change before the UN Security Council for the first time with then foreign minister Margaret Beckett identifying climate change as one of the main causes of conflict in Darfur (Harvey 2007). In the U.S., the defense think tank, CNA, gathered a team of 11 retired U.S. generals and admirals to produce a report *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change* which argued that global warming could help trigger widespread political instability in poor regions and large refugee movements to the U.S. and Europe (CNA 2007).[1] Toward the end of the year, the Norwegian Nobel committee (2007) warned of the threat of climate-induced violent conflict and war when it awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Al Gore, Jr. and the IPCC.

Why did climate conflict narratives gather such momentum? The construction of such inflated threats is typically a multi-faceted process, involving discursive technique, public performance, media packaging and the intentionality of institutions and individual actors who stand to gain politically, financially and/or professionally by driving or jumping onto the proverbial bandwagon (Hartmann et al, 2005). This does not mean that their aims are purely selfish and cynical. Some no doubt believe that linking climate change to national security is a way to get the issue more attention at the highest levels of government.[2] "The glum reality is that governments tend to take security threats more seriously than any other kind," writes British journalist Jonathan Freedland. "So this makes political sense: cast global warming as an environmental or science issue, and it will be given a budget to match. Cast it as a problem for the big boys, on a par with

nuclear proliferation or international terror, and then it should get a big-boy budget and attention" (Freedland 2007).

It would be comforting to read the 2007 climate conflict blitz in purely pragmatic terms: journalists and pundits wanted to make headlines; NGOs and researchers were looking for new winds to shake the money trees; the Nobel committee needed a rationale to link peace and climate change; national security interests wanted in on the game too; the UN decided to divert attention from their own peacekeeping failures in Darfur by shifting the focus to a shortage of rainfall rather than a long drought of political will. While all these factors may have played a role, the pragmatic explanation is not sufficient. Missing from the picture is the fact that many people *believe* climate conflict narratives because they are based on old, widely accepted assumptions about poverty, scarcity, overpopulation and migration that in many Western policy and academic circles are virtual articles of faith.

Elsewhere I have written about how climate conflict narratives draw on neo-Malthusian environmental security discourses of the 1980s and 90s, in particular the concept of environmental conflict developed by Canadian political scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon (Hartmann forthcoming 2009). He maintains that

> Population growth and unequal access to good land force huge numbers of people onto marginal lands. There, they cause environmental damage and become chronically poor. Eventually, they may be the source of persistent upheaval, or they may migrate yet again, helping to stimulate ethnic conflicts or urban unrest elsewhere (Homer-Dixon 1999:155)

According to him, this conflict can potentially fragment states or make them more authoritarian, destabilizing the international order. At the root of Homer-Dixon's model of environmental conflict, and others closely related to it, is an unquestioned acceptance of old colonial and neo-colonial stereotypes of destructive, over-breeding peasants and herders. Meanwhile, there is very little attention paid to the resource degradation caused by powerful economic and political interests, such as extractive industries. The rich only make cameo appearances in a tragic play where poor people get a few roles as victims, but are cast mainly as villains.[3]

Add climate change to the mix, and you get the next iteration of environmental conflict. UNEP's 2007 report on Sudan, for example, draws on Homer-Dixon's model to make claims that overpopulation of both people and livestock, coupled with environmental stresses such as water shortages related to climate change, is at the root of conflict in Northern Darfur. Thus, it doesn't take much to make the leap, or rather small step, from environmental to climate conflict. The same is true in the case of the step from environmental to climate refugees.

Also with a problematic neo-Malthusian history, the term 'environmental refugee' gained widespread currency in the international policy arena in the 1980s and 90s (Saunders 2000). In 1995 a report by Norman Myers for the Climate Institute in Washington, D.C. made the claim that globally there were 25 million environmental refugees, "persons who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their traditional

homelands because of environmental factors of unusual scope," including water shortages, desertification, natural disasters, and climate change (Myers 1995:18-19). Although the 25 million figure was arrived at more by conjecture than scientific method, and the term 'environmental refugee' is analytically flawed, the figure became 'fact', (still) widely cited in policy documents (Black 1998, Nordas and Gleditsch 2007).

Now Myers claims there will be 200 million climate migrants by 2050, a figure which is similarly making the rounds in policy documents even though Myers himself acknowledges that the estimate is based on "heroic extrapolations." As Oli Brown notes, "The simple fact is that nobody really knows with any degree of precision what climate change will mean for human population distribution" (Brown 2008:8).

This is not to deny that climate change is likely to cause displacement, but the extent of that displacement will not only depend on how much the temperature rises and affects sea-levels, rainfall patterns and the severity of storms, but on the existence and effectiveness of adaptation measures that help individuals and communities cope with environmental stresses. Whether or not such measures are in place in turn depends on political economies at the local, regional, national and international levels that are often conveniently left out of the discussion of so-called 'climate refugees.' And as one report points out, larger climate-related humanitarian emergencies may be in places "where people *cannot* afford to move, rather than the places to which they do move" (GECHS 2008:24).

In the end, migration is too complex a process to label simply as environmental or climate-induced, with the possible exception of those displaced by sea-level rise (Morrissey 2008:28). It is also too complex to link *ipso facto* to violent conflict. Yet that is the overwhelming message of the climate conflict literature: Poor and displaced people are dangerous and threaten our security. In Muslim regions of the world, such as Bangladesh, the message is even starker: destitute people displaced by climate change are potential Islamic terrorists (Black 2008).

Today, a research industry is starting to grow up around climate change and violent conflict. On the more critical side, scholars are trying to assess whether there is or could be an actual causal relationship or not, and what methodologies, e.g. case studies or empirical analysis, are the best approach to studying the question (Buhaug et al 2008). Less critical approaches such as those found in the SIDA and International Alert report, *A Climate of Conflict*, start from the premise that the connection exists, and then elaborate what can be done to prevent or mitigate potential conflicts in a development and peace-building agenda (Smith and Vivekananda 2008). A message common to both approaches is that more research needs to be done. Indeed, Buhaug et al (2008) call for the IPCC to take the lead in investigating the security implications of climate change with the same degree of seriousness with which they approached the natural science of it.

I would argue that such calls run the danger of further legitimizing the climate conflict narrative and embedding it more firmly into climate and security policy. This is not only an intellectual question of whether the subject matter is worthy of further

research or not.[4] There is a strategic dimension too. Raising the profile of climate conflict could pave the way for appropriation of the human security agenda by military interests. The warning signs are already here.

A few degrees of separation

While 2007 may have represented the high water mark of climate conflict alarm, the waves were already washing in several years before. In 2003 a Pentagon-sponsored scenario of the impacts of abrupt climate change painted a neo-Malthusian nightmare of poor, starving populations overshooting the reduced carrying capacity of their lands, engaging in violent conflict over scarce resources, and storming en masse towards U.S. and European borders (Schwartz and Randall 2003). There are many problems with scenario-making, of course, the most obvious ones being the impossibility of predicting the future and the quality of the data, models and other forms of evidence used in projections. Less obvious is the question of who controls the design of the scenario and contributes to its findings. In the case of the publicly available version of the Pentagon scenario, we are only told by its authors that they interviewed "climate scientists", who interestingly considered the findings too extreme.

A next round of scenarios on the foreign policy and national security implications of climate change was undertaken in 2006-7 by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, DC. Those involved were supposedly "a diverse group of experts" from "a daunting range of disciplines," yet from a reading of the list there appear to be very few, if any, international development or environment scholars representing perspectives from the Global South. Instead on the foreign policy side, the list reads like a who's who of former Clinton era officials and advisors waiting in the wings for a Democratic presidential victory (Campbell 2008:1-3). Indeed, the *Wall Street Journal* described CNAS in November 2008 as a "top farm team" for the incoming Obama administration's national security apparatus; the *Washington Independent* dubbed it "Obama's Pentagon in Waiting" (Ackerman 2008). Michele Flournoy, co-founder of CNAS, was named Undersecretary of Defense for Policy in January 2009.

The project generated three scenarios: (1) an *expected* scenario based on a global temperature increase of 2.3 degrees F by 2040; (2) a *severe* scenario based on an increase of 4.7 degrees F by 2040; and (3) a *catastrophic* scenario based on an increase of 10.8 degrees F by 2100. The national security implications of the first include "large-scale migrations" as well as "conflict sparked by resource scarcity, particularly in the weak and failing states of Africa" (Campbell 2008:19). The climate conflict narrative goes uncontested.[5]

Presented by Leon Fuerth, former national security advisor to Al Gore and an early proponent of environmental conflict, the second scenario is another Malthusian nightmare very similar to the Pentagon study (Fuerth 2008). Blurring the distinction between natural science and social science, Fuerth claims that "nonlinear climate change will produce nonlinear political events" (135). In Africa, in particular, turbulence and

destruction will reign, with severe climate change ironically providing for the first time "the missing element of connectivity" between states (142). Globally, governments with resources will have to decide who among the poorest are worth saving; triage will be the moral order of the day. Echoing the Reverend Malthus himself, Fuerth writes that war and disease could restore an "environmentally sustainable relationship" between people and nature (144). The alternative to this die-off would be "demographic management" in which reproductive choice is seriously curtailed, as in China (152).

Predictably, the final catastrophic scenario is even worse as "hundreds and millions of thirsty, starving people" either flee or die, and all countries are beset by violent conflict induced by migration (Burke 2008:156). It's New Orleans and Somalia, rolled into one, everywhere. ("If New Orleans in one harbinger of the future, Somalia is another" (161). The overall message of the project is that climate change may be the biggest security challenge the U.S. faces, and that it presents "surprisingly similar" challenges as terrorism, a powerful reason why "groups whose interests center on either the environment or on national security have cause to come together and act in tandem" before the world turns into a harrowing, Hobbesian dystopia (Campbell and Parthemore 2008:19-20). In a nutshell, it's journalist Robert Kaplan's "The Coming Anarchy" (1994) meets climate change. Kaplan, incidentally, is a senior fellow at CNAS.

I am not privy to the kind of inside information which could help determine just how influential these scenarios, or ones like them, are in U.S. national security circles, but the rising star of CNAS is worrying. Besides climate change and security, CNAS' other main claim to fame is counterinsurgency strategy (Ackerman 2008)..[6] On June 11, 2009, CNAS is set to launch a new project on *Natural Security*: "National Resources + National Security = Natural Security" (CNAS 2009b).

Natural or not, the kinds of linkages being made between climate change and national security could figure into the DOD's growing shift towards Vietnam era-style counterinsurgency, particularly in Central Asia and "ungoverned spaces" in Africa where officials fear the spread of terrorist formations. As Michael Klare wrote recently in the *Nation*, "The recent establishment of the U.S. Africa Command (Africom) and the growing presence of Special Operations forces in places like Mali, Chad and Somalia hint at what might be in store" (Klare 2009). The following section looks at what might be in store should the concept of climate conflict be mobilized to support the wedding of humanitarian and development assistance to counterinsurgency, especially in Africa.

II. The Counterinsurgency Climate

All Terrain Security

In May 2009 the Center for American Progress (CAP), another think tank closely related to the Obama administration,[7] released a report *A National Strategy for Global Development* which calls for protecting America through "sustainable security" (Brigety and Dewan 2009). The report recommends that the Obama administration model its global development policy after the National Military Strategy in order to further the

goals of the National Security Strategy. In other words, it seeks to tie U.S. development policy and assistance much more closely to strategic defense and intelligence objectives.

Among the report's recommendations are a three-fold increase in the number of USAID staff to approach staffing levels during the Vietnam War and the preparation of a cadre of civilian development professionals for deployment with Army and Marine Corps units. Development assistance, the report argues, has a three-pronged mission: to support national security, human security, and collective security. (Human security is defined as "improving the lives of individuals around the world in order to promote stability" (ii).) Not surprisingly, "climate-induced resource conflicts" are cited as a potential "significant source of political instability and violence" (14).

Whether or not such recommendations are translated into actual policy remains to be seen, but there are clear signs that they are not so off the mark. Several weeks before the report's release, for example, at a CSIS forum Undersecretary of Defense Michele Flournoy spoke about how climate change is going to accelerate state failure, mass migration, the spread of disease and possibly insurgency. She argued for a "whole-of-government" approach towards national defense, including more investments in civilian capacity in a world of irregular and hybrid warfare (CSIS 2009).[8]

The direction the Obama administration appears to be taking in terms of defense policy is a less a significant break with the past than a hybrid mix of Vietnam-era counterinsurgency and the strategic stability operations of the Bush defense team, with Clinton/Gore's environmental conflict turned climate conflict thrown into the threat mix so that security can now be rendered "natural" and "sustainable". For those in the climate change field concerned about maintaining a boundary between human security and national security and between development assistance and defense objectives, it is a time to pay close attention to where the lines could become increasingly blurred. The following list is more speculative than conclusive and is offered as a way to begin a larger conversation.

Stability Operations and Phase Zero Campaigns: In 2005 the DOD issued a directive that harkened back to the preventive defense strategy of the 1990s. It states that "stability operations" shall be given equal priority to combat operations.

> The immediate goal often is to provide the local populace with security, restore essential services, and meet humanitarian needs. The long-term goal is to help develop indigenous capacity for securing essential services, a viable market economy, rule of law, democratic institutions, and a robust civil society (DOD 2005:2).

To this end, the U.S. military should mainly work through "indigenous, foreign, or U.S. civilian officials" or "military-civilian teams" which shall be open to representatives of International Organizations, NGOs, and the private sector (3). The Army's 2008 manual on stability operations cites climate change as a driver of conflict. It advocates the "whole of government approach" where there is a integration and unity of effort between civilian and military government agencies and a "comprehensive approach" where there is

fundamental agreement on the "end state", but where some groups, such as NGOs, can maintain independence of action" (Department of the Army 2008).

Phase Zero Campaigns are related to preventive defense and stability operations in the sense that they are designed to prevent conflicts and terrorism from "developing in the first place" through a variety of tactics including humanitarian assistance, "hearts and minds" engagements, and psychological operations including propaganda (Wald 2006). In a recent speech at the Marine Corps War College, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said that Phase Zero Operations are one of the department's "big themes," reflected in significant new funding (Kruzel 2009).

Human Terrain System: The subject of considerable controversy within U.S. academic circles, the Human Terrain System (HTS) is part of a $200 million U.S. Army program to embed social scientists, especially anthropologists, in combat units in Afghanistan and Iraq in order to develop a better understanding of the "human terrain." i.e. the local civilian population (Redden 2009, Rohde 2007). Although the Army has tried to downplay the program's counterinsurgency dimension, the official HTS overview states: "In a counterinsurgency – such as the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan – one of the military's objectives is to influence the population through non-lethal means (such as economic development)" (Department of the Army 2009). HTS is in fact modeled in many ways on the Johnson administration's counterinsurgency-cum-development program in Vietnam, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), which sought to win "the hearts and minds" of the South Vietnamese people. Some defense analysts now believe that if the U.S. had devoted more resources to CORDS, it could have won the Vietnam War (Kipp 2006).

Ungoverned Spaces: The concept of "ungoverned spaces" is emerging as a key theme in U.S. defense policy circles. It derives from a 2007 study of "ungoverned territories" done by the Rand Corporation for the U.S. Air Force, which identified these areas as failed or failing states, poorly controlled borders, or locations within "otherwise viable states where the central government's authority does not extend' (Rabasa and Peters 2007:1). As critics point out, many of these spaces are actually governed, but not by groups favorable to U.S. interests (Clunan and Trikinus 2008). Ungoverned spaces are perceived as a threat because they can serve as recruiting and organizing grounds for terrorists, criminal networks and other illicit activities. Discursively and strategically, the concept of ungoverned spaces provides a point of convergence for anti-terrorism efforts, stability operations and development assistance.[9] In a recent speech Defense Secretary Gates called for more non-military means to stabilize deteriorating situations in other countries:

> How do you identify a problem early and put in the resources – whether it's train or equip or other partnership initiatives – so that American men and women in uniform don't have to go fight, that we build indigenous capabilities that provide for stability operations, rather than having to go in and do it ourselves in ungoverned spaces in countries that are under stress (Kruzel 2009)?

This is part of the logic behind AFRICOM.

Back to Africa

From 2007 on, Africa has been the primary focus of climate conflict discourse.[10] Coincidence or not, this development has coincided with the establishment of the new U.S. military command for Africa, AFRICOM. The reasons for the creation of AFRICOM are multi-faceted and include the protection of U.S. access to African oil and other strategic resources, the War on Terror, and countering increasing Chinese influence in the region (Volman 2008). Popular resistance within Africa has meant that the U.S. has not been able to locate AFRICOM's headquarters on the continent; it is currently stationed in Stuttgart, Germany.

By its very institutional structure, AFRICOM represents the blurring of military/civilian boundaries. Among its staff AFRICOM includes senior USAID officials to "help us plan our own military tasks supportive of USAID efforts" (*Frontlines* 2009). In general, AFRICOM seeks to integrate U.S. military objectives more firmly with economic and political ones, an approach that has come under fire in some quarters. Writing in the military journal *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Ambassador Edward Marks called AFRICOM's creation "a retrograde move" that threatens "the increasing militarization of our foreign relations" (Marks 2009).

Constructing climate conflict as a particularly African security threat meshes well with these objectives. CNA's 2007 report on *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change* specifically linked potential insecurity caused by climate change to the proposed mission of AFRICOM (CNA 2007). The same year Woodrow Wilson Center's Environmental Change and Security Project sponsored a training workshop for military officials on population, environment and security with support from the U.S. Army War College's Center for Strategic Leadership (CSL). The workshop focused on AFRICOM and stability operations, highlighting the destabilizing role of climate change in the region. "Countries essential to U.S. strategic objectives and regional stability are put at risk by resource scarcity and other destabilizing issues that will be exacerbated by changes in climate" (Butts and Bradshaw 2007:3).

While it is highly unlikely that the U.S. would send in the troops or base counterinsurgency measures and strategic development assistance solely on a perceived risk of climate conflict, the promotion of that risk helps to make such interventions more palatable, especially in liberal environmental policy circles. In the past environmental security concerns have also been deployed by the U.S. military as a tool of engagement with foreign militaries, academics and NGOs. A senior Africa analyst for the Department of the Army has written that "Developing a robust environmental security engagement strategy would be one of the most constructive ways for AFRICOM to implement a human security approach." This could include building "nontraditional alliances" with environmental organizations such as UNEP and World Wildlife Fund as well as training African militaries on emergency disaster response (Beebe 2007).

What is emerging is a rearticulation of Clinton/Gore style liberal stewardship, a vision of a win-win world where the U.S. not only makes the world safe *for* democracy

and free markets and *from* terrorism, but protects the environment and helps poor people too. This time around, however, the ideological and institutional convergence between military and civilian objectives is more complete, and the ungoverned spaces of Africa are the new, and perhaps last, frontier.

Conclusion: Drawing the Line

In the end, I may be proven guilty of painting too alarmist a scenario of what could transpire if the concept of climate conflict helps to further the militarization of development assistance to serve the needs of U.S. counterinsurgency efforts. But I have seen too often how problematic neo-Malthusian ideas take easy root in policy circles and then grow like rhizomes, popping up in multiple places. In U.S. population circles today, for example, the latest fashion is to blame global warming on population growth as a reason to push for increases in international family planning assistance (Hartmann and Barajas Roman 2009).

On the simplest level, the deployment of climate conflict and associated discourses is a great distraction from the urgent need for the U.S. to get serious about climate policy by drastically reducing carbon emissions and joining with the rest of the international community in coming up with effective measures that increase the resilience of the most vulnerable people. It does those people no favor to portray them as potentially dangerous and violent threats to our security.

On a deeper level, it is time to draw a sharp line between national security and human security, if the latter term is still worth using. We do not live in a win-win world. The real battle ahead is not for the hearts and minds of people in enemy territory, but for the heart and soul of development itself in an era of climate change.

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Endnotes

[1] The German government has also been considering these links. See (WGBU 2007).
[2] There are also other ways to view the linkages between climate change and security that do not draw on alarmist neo-Malthusian narratives about the Global South. See, for example, Briggs (2009). My intent here is to critique climate conflict, not all discussions about climate change and security.
[3] For a critique of environmental conflict, see Hartmann (2001) and Fairhead (2001).

[4] I dare say *not*, given the problematic assumptions on which it is based, such as prior neo-Malthusian models of environmental conflict, and the complicated, multi-causal nature of most conflicts that does not fit well into neat models, empirical calculations or generalizable case studies.
[5] The scenarios were supposedly based on the best current evidence and scientific data. In the case of the first scenario, this includes the 25 million environmental refugee figure generated by Myers.
[6] Former CNAS fellow Colin Kahl, for example, whose previous research focused on environmental conflict issues, is a regular consultant to the Department of Defense (DOD) on stability operations and counterinsurgency (CNAS 2009a)
[7] John Podesta, president and CEO of CAP, was White House Chief of Staff to Bill Clinton and co-chair of Obama's transition team. He has also been closely affiliated with CNAS' climate work.
[8] Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in February 2009 that climate change alone was unlikely to trigger state failure but could worsen exiting problems and threaten domestic stability, "potentially contributing to intra- or, less likely, interstate conflict, particularly over access to increasingly scarce water resources" (Blair 2009:42).
[9] The Rand study cites development assistance as one way to make ungoverned territories more governable (Rabasa et al. 2007:xix).
[10] For an interesting discussion of the construction of climate change in Africa as a security threat, see Brown et al. (2007).

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