Environmental Security in the Americas

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Defining Environmental Security

- **Traditional view**: state security is concerned with maintaining territorial integrity and domestic peace. The state is the point of reference.

- **Modern perspective**: state security also values economic prosperity, stability and the health and well being of populations. Citizens become a central concern and point of reference along with the state. This broader view of security is consistent with the interest in “human security”.


# Summary of Human Induced Environmental Stressors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource Claims</td>
<td>Claims of right to (or efforts to access) territory or resources through interstate border claims through the operation of informal or formal systems (such as land tenure rules), or the denial of access through economic or social structures that place resources beyond the capacity of specific individuals or populations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource Depletion</td>
<td>The reduction of available resources through agricultural, industrial or domestic activity leading to increased scarcity of resources or commodities (including food and water), or in extreme cases to the utter destruction of resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource Degradation</td>
<td>The degradation of resources through agricultural, industrial or domestic activity leading to direct or indirect human health threat or ecosystem stress (such as the discharge of untreated human or industrial waste to air, water or terrestrial systems).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note that any of these three causal factors can be gradual or acute, and can be aggravated by natural conditions and/or events, as well as by social, economic and political effects.
Dynamics of Environmental Security

Causes of Environmental Stress

Aggravating Factors

Natural Conditions

Natural Events

In combination with

Policy Challenges

Resource Claims
Resource Depletion
Resource Degradation

In combination with

Influential Factors
social, political, economic

may lead to

Security Consequences*

State Failure

Territorial Loss

Human Harm
Violent Conflict

Economic Loss

Dispute

Instability

Governance frameworks may intervene to address consequences or prevent escalation

* - Note that these consequences may arise and interact independently, and the relationship is not necessarily linear
Environmental Security in the Western Hemisphere

- The security of states in the Americas is increasingly threatened by:
  - growing range of environmental challenges from development patterns, that place communities at heightened risk of natural disaster,
  - long-term impact of population growth and,
  - land use decisions.

- A number of national constitutions in the region guarantee a right to a clean, safe and/or healthful environment.
Summits have recognized the basic principles underlying environmental security, but to date its treatment as a clear regional priority has been somewhat peripheral and ill defined.

- First Summit of the Americas in Miami (1994)
- Santa Cruz Summit on Sustainable Development (1996)
- Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec (2001)
- World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002)
In response to Santiago, OAS/CHS has begun to evaluate new and non-traditional threats:

- Special Meeting of The Committee on Hemispheric Security
- The small island states in the Caribbean in particular have recognized the link between environmental conditions and the security of their populations.
- Environment experts have begun to assess the security implications of resource degradation and depletion
- USDE has taken specific actions (FIDA, NHP, IACNDR)
Sound environmental security policies will serve to protect the resource base for much of that trade, promote investor confidence in legal and political systems that manage environmental risk, and advance more competitive businesses by encouraging efficiency and waste minimization.
Recommendations for Action

Environmental security concerns warrant the attention of policy makers at the regional and domestic level throughout the Americas.

- At a national and local level a more strategic vision of environmental issues is needed.
- At a regional level, further study, dialog and cooperative effort is called for.
Recommendations for the OAS

- Work directly with USDE to ensure that areas like health and environment, transboundary water management, public participation, vulnerability reduction, etc., continue to receive high-level support from the Secretariat and its political bodies within the context of environmental security.

- Consider revising FEMCIDI rules to act as a seed fund for leveraging additional funds from external sources.

- Prioritize issues such as resolving border disputes, security for water resource infrastructure, and institution-building for integrated natural resource management.

- Provide the financial support required for the technical units to work in a more pro-active fashion with the Secretariat for Summit Processes in following up mandate to the Summits.
While prior summits have spoken to concerns of sustainability in development, environmental protection, and regional security, no clear call has been made to link these issues in a way that will promote meaningful risk assessment, economic analysis and strategic planning. The time has come to make this priority clear, and to outline concrete actions to promote environmental security in the region that can lead to measurable results.
THANK YOU