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RETHINKING AND REORGANIZING ROLE OF MILITARY

Abstract: Existing environmental challenges are seriously threatening the survival of humankind and peaceful coexistence on Earth. Climate change effects are adversely affecting natural resources, such as the quantities of usable water and food. Such adverse effects cause and/or amplify the loss of biodiversity, which is of fundamental value for various human needs. The traditional notion of security as the protection of state from an external enemy has developed competitive and confronting capacities of military power that are no longer adequate for finding effective resolutions for existing environmental risks. Environmental security is the organic part of comprehensive international security and it can be addressed exclusively through collective actions and cooperation.

The centuries-long conflicted world should change to the cooperative one and such change would require efforts on many levels. The transition would not be light. The development of environmental security sector and successful securitization of environmental risks should be a valuable and strong catalyst towards this change. The recognition of universal and transnational risks by most humankind will inevitably deliver an integrated approach to the notion of security. Such an approach would allow humankind to create the mutual trust and willingness among all stakeholders, which would be essential for the future genuine cooperation.

Key words: *Securitization; Environmental Risks; Climate Change; New Role of Military; Cooperation*

1. INTRODUCTION

The number of environmental risks is amplifying each day and represents an imminent and actual treat to the survival of our life on Earth. The very

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latest UN Report on Climate Change (UN Climate Change Report)¹ underlines that “*more than one million plant and animal species are now at risk of extinction, posing a dire threat to ecosystem that people all over the world depend on for their survival*”.² The world population growth creates an unsupportable demand for water, food and energy resources, while (at the same time) the dominant lifestyle of consumption and overspending of growing middle classes has not changed. The direct and indirect drivers of environmental degradation (such as pollution, land and sea use, climate change, direct exploitation of organisms and invasion of alien species) have accelerated tremendously during the most recent 50 years. During the same period, environmental laws have been poorly developed. In the same vein, environmental international cooperation and the education required to comprehend the modern world environmental risks has seen little progress too. If quick and effective measures are not taken, the prospective of stopping and slowing down those trends is quite weak. UN Climate Change Report³ underlines the importance of transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological sectors (among the drivers of transition towards “green-er world” and overall achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals).

The factor of security is not mentioned in this report. What is more, no known public authority has recognized that environmental issues should take a higher priority on security agendas. The idea of securitization (or qualifying environmental risks as security risks) is somewhat controversial and raises suspicion among both security elites and ecologists. Changes to economic sectors and the economic paradigm are critical for being prepared best to fight those risks; yet, the strongest mobilizing power and readiness for an action occurs once an issue is qualified as a security risk.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

The notion and definition of security, its referred objects, as well as their existing and recognized risks have always been the key drivers that have shaped foreign policies and, generally, international relations. The

¹ Sandra Diaz, Josef Settele, Eduardo Brondizio, “Summary of the policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services”, (May 2019)

² Humans Are Speeding Extinction and Altering the Natural World at an ‘Unprecedented’ Pace, New York Times, Brad Plumer, (May 2019)

³ Sandra Diaz, Josef Settele, Eduardo Brondizio, “Summary of the policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services”, (May 2019)

foundation of the Organization of United Nations in 1945 has brought to life (and later strengthened) the idea of global cooperation and governance as the most reasonable scheme to preserve peace; yet, those ideas faded away in the wake of the bipolar world, where two blocks were directly conflicted and divided through different ideologies, cultures and military perspectives. The two-block conflict and the omnipresent fear of potential nuclear strike induced and accelerated nuclear weapons proliferation. This process created the new key type of global risk — a potential nuclear disaster.

From the start of new millennia, environmental issues (such as climate change, pollution, loss of biodiversity) have become one of the key discussion topics around academic, political and (to certain extent) global business community (that might be the key stakeholder for the transition towards the world of ecologically friendly progress). The new global multipolar structure mitigated the fear of nuclear confrontation and, at the same time, has projected new security patterns. The end of the Cold War allowed expansion of militaries into unsuspecting areas of security. It has also shifted security objectives from a nation state to an individual. Those developments influenced the Copenhagen School of Security Studies to develop three new security sectors (and a new security discourse). Those sectors are: economic, societal and environmental. Among those, the environmental security sector has encountered the most controversy; both environmental activists and security elites have failed to fully comprehend and support the development of such sector.

During the most recent thirty years, the discourse of environmental security has developed significantly, and the environmental perspective has become the integral part of most of the defense programs around globe. Still, this perspective is not a leading one, and certainly not the one the idea of security and protection is built upon. Both world leaders (or the vast majority) as well as their constituencies have failed to fully grasp and recognize those environmental threats; they perceive them as distant and insignificant to their everyday lives.

Several reasons have hampered the idea of including the environment and environmental risks into security agendas.

Firstly, environmental risks are usually unintentional; while, generally, the security is constituted around relationship of will.⁴ People usually do not develop a wider perspective, and, absent the will-factor, they feel no responsibility for the degradation of environment. Secondly, the lack of unique

⁴ Ole Waever "Securitization and Desecuritization", Colombia University Press, New York, (1995)

and well-elaborated political discourse of environmental challenges among politicians “from both sides of the aisle” usually leads towards more divisive left and right, more skepticism and finally rejection of the paradigm. Thirdly, neither are defense systems and security sectors positioned nor designed to address majority of environmental problems. Fourthly, the notion of security is constituted and understood in the way that makes division among us vs. them. Furthermore, the militarization of environmental risks can be used as a “dangerous tool” of totalitarian left.⁵ Finally, the constant fear of enemy and mistrust among international community members deprives states of time and budget each they need to develop their environmental perspective.

3. NEW ROLE OF MILITARY

During centuries, militaries have been one of the key engines of technical progress and development of nation states. Wide scientific researches for military purposes yielded some of the greatest inventions (and discoveries) up to today. One of the most recent and most notable among those is the Internet, which has been invented as a byproduct of the research program the U. S. Secretary of Defense financed in the late 1960s. Many other times too, the preparation of war and development of defense strategies produced remarkable inventions and brought humankind to the new frontiers of scientific research, development and technical progress.

Now, the traditional role of militaries around the globe has suffered a lot due to the proliferation of nuclear weapons (the weapons of mass destruction). The possession of those by an exclusive club comprising up to ten UN members has completely changed the relations and interaction of military powers and the overall scene of military forces. Today, nuclear military powers through their nuclear arsenal have fully subordinated non-nuclear military powers, making the latter either ineffective or irrelevant. This fact has further changed the core purpose of military powers and produced a gigantic gap between the effectiveness of the nuclear states’ and non-nuclear states’ defense systems and programs. Such state of military affairs, combined with the conventional approach to security agendas, has locked the vast potential of (non-nuclear) states. This potential remains to be unlocked and used to solve the problems and eliminate the risks the modern world is faced with — environmental threats and climate change. The adequate

⁵ Ole Waever “Securitization and Desecuritization”, Colombia University Press, New York, (1995)

management of natural resources turns out to be essential for this endeavor to succeed.

A nation state still remains the principal object of security spending, planning and efforts around the globe (though political and security theory has moved forward from a nation state towards an individual as the principal object of security actions). Yet, nations around the globe are all facing risks that are more profound and critical than the risk of borderline, regional or world-scale conflict. As mentioned in the introductory part of this paper, the UN Climate Report contends that “a million species could become extinct within a few decades, and that human life itself may be imperiled as well.” The risk of life on Earth being extinct has thus never been more actual and imminent and affects both allies and foes alike.

One of the most important UN documents produced recently has further confirmed the actuality of the environmental risks and climate change. The Sustainable Development Goals (*SDG*) (relevant for the solution of the real and contemporary issues) have been elaborated in the Agenda 2030 (or United Nations *SDG*’s program). Among 17 milestone goals and 169 targets, more than 80 % of those are environment related.⁶ Pursuant to Agenda 2030, to avoid conflicts and preserve peace on Earth, the attainment of the milestone goals and targets is directly correlated to the sound, efficient and equitable management of natural resources.

If natural resources (which are fundamental for everyday life and human needs) are not well managed, different conflicts may arise. Inefficient and non-coordinated management of abundant natural resources could lead to conflicts for control over such resources and appropriation of wealth created by and through such control. In the same vein, the excessive exploitation of scarce natural resources would lead to their complete depletion; such outcome would inevitably lead to conflicts and mass migrations. The proper management of natural resources is thus essential in securing peace and protecting and preserving environment and biosphere. If natural resources are well managed, they could represent the connective tissue that would help bring a sustainable peace and mutual feeling of trust (regional and global alike).

The proper management of natural resources requires thus environmental cooperation and collaboration across borders and regions and mandates nations to put together all resources they have at their disposal (including their security systems potentials). This type of collaboration has been launched

⁶ Sandra Diaz, Josef Settele, Eduardo Brondizio, “Summary of the policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services”, (May 2019)

by the initiatives such as ENVSEC (*The Environment and Security Initiative*), which has been also recognized and supported by international organizations such as OSCE, UNDP, UNEP, UNECE, REC and NATO. Until today, this initiative has launched more than 150 projects, raised more than USD 60 million and, the most importantly, established collaboration among 30 countries. Yet, the effectiveness of those initiatives will be contingent to the level of success those risks are securitized and the ability of international community members to come together based on the idea of sustainable, peaceful, cleaner and greener world.

In this sense, we will have to *rethink and reorganize the roll of military* so militaries around the globe could unlock their potential (which has been locked due to processes described above) and provide us with an effective response to challenges of the 21st century. If the environment-related SDG goals are made objects of new securitization process and added to the security and defense agendas around globe, the above-mentioned locked military power potential (in the sense of multi-polar world divided between nuclear power states and non-nuclear power states) could be unlocked and put to use to reach, secure and protect those SDG goals. Both nuclear and non-nuclear military powers could leverage their vast financial resources, human capital and military might to help the international community successfully battle the decades of mismanaged process of climate change. This process of securitization of environmental risks and threats would help turn around a conflicted globe into a cooperative one, since “enemy” would be shared among all stakeholders. A world where former allies and foes are all cooperating and coordinating would help eliminate conventional conflicts and create the chance for synergy effects stemming from the concerted actions of all international community members.

4. CONCLUSION

The majority of challenges, risks and opportunities of the 21st century is transnational. One nation alone cannot solve those. Environmental security challenges are transnational more than any other challenges humanity is facing today.

The life on Earth is governed by the Laws of Nature. Unlike laws enacted by legislatures and lawmakers around the globe, the Laws of Nature are enforced without exceptions. If humankind does not pursue and establish a new model based on the global governance and cooperation in tune with those laws, the battle for the life on Earth would be finally lost.

The effective resolution of the clear and present threat of the climate change and underpinning environmental risks mandates a long-term

perspective and major change of the existing economic, political and security systems. The dominant world culture must be changed too. The paradigm of the new world culture should be constructed for a long-term and based on the values promoting environmental responsibility as the integral part of every human identity and the “Green Growth” as the only acceptable.

The part of this effective resolution is the new model of security system and the role of militaries. The new model of security systems must adopt and pursue the process of securitization of environmental risks through borderline, regional and global cooperation. Security agendas must task their militaries to secure those risks. The international community (and all relevant stakeholders) must further establish promote the new and integrated approach to the global security and encourage the shift towards this cooperative security system. Such system should be open to all nations, where each nation should shift “from the negative concept of peace as the absence of war to the positive conception of peace as the essential condition for the fullest development of the human potential”.⁷

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