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## **ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY: AN APPENDAGE TO GEO-POLITICAL WORLD ORDER OF THE UNITED STATES?**

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### **Abstract**

Environmental security is an appendage to US and its allies' conventional understanding of security based on realist paradigm. The Western pattern of development, economy, life style and consumption contributed largely by science and industrial revolution, resulted in a masculine understanding of power to exploit the nature at the peril of others and to have access to resources by the use of force where these are available in total ignorance of sovereign state system and principles of intergenerational equity, justice and responsibility. It is due to the exercise of this power by the US and its allies that vast damages were done to the nature and environment in terms of global warming, sea level rise, ozone layer depletion and other natural hazards. These non-military threats were posed to the entire humanity, more particularly to the people of South, as they lack the necessary scientific, technological and financial wherewithal to withstand the brunt of environmental hazards. So the very realist paradigm of security to provide security to the people came in for questioning about its relevance after the end of Cold War. So the need for redefining security in terms of environmental security was seriously felt. But American security think-tanks continued to define security in its old style and, conventional wisdom and logic in order to give fulfilment to its domestic imperatives of over consumption, inordinate life style and amassing of wealth shaped by its liberal political-economic thinking. From a Post Cold War perspective it redefines environmental security not in terms of what it is required of – for example, rethinking life style, pattern of development, respecting intergenerational equity and accountability – but in terms of an extension of its conventional geopolitical interests. This paper questions the

American logic and wisdom and tries to put the concept of environmental security in its right perspective.

## **1. Introduction**

The Cold War understanding of security was largely premised on the threats that states pose to each other in a system supposed to be fundamentally anarchic in the sense that political life therein is pontificated by states not subject to any authority superior to their own sovereignty. The concept of security is closely tied with the enhanced military capability of states making them impregnable against external or outside threats to maintain their independent identities, as well as their physical and functional integrity. Since there is a lack of international sovereign authority to circumscribe the ambitious and aggressive designs of other states, the states used to depend on themselves building up their own military capabilities to achieve security. These self-security concerns of states often result in a destabilising arms race and hostile or potentially hostile interstate relations or organised international state directed violence through military means. In an unequal world, these self help security concerns could lead to the emergence of an international system characterised by super power rivalry, dominance, bipolarity, balance of power and arms race among the states.

With the demise of the Cold War and disappearance of the Soviet Union there has been much debate about how to reformulate concepts of national and international security, since the super power rivalry no longer occupies the centre stage of policy decisions and global politics. What was overlooked and unheeded were the potential future threats of politico-socio-economic disruption springing from the environmental degradation. Advocacy of environmental degradation as non-military threats by Norman Myers, Jessica Tuchman Mathews, Richard Ullman and Michael Renner added grist to the already going on debate on rethinking

security in the current changing international scenario.<sup>1</sup> Giving primacy to the environmental dimension in the security agenda in a more comprehensive fashion is what is termed as environmental security encompassing all in a global scale. This has questioned the very traditional military thinking, and put forth a strong argument for linking certain environmental problems with the prospectus for political frictions and tensions or even war and peace. At the centre of the ongoing debate is the growing assertion that environmental scarcity or degradation is an important factor contributing to political instability or violent conflicts at local, regional and international levels. This kind of rethinking of security in terms of environment has emanated from a growing admission to the fact that a plethora of new and large scale environmental threats with political ramifications are beginning to dominate international discourse, debates and policy decision about environmental concerns.

The thesis that environmental degradation is a far greater non-military threat to entire human kind with consequences more devastating than the military threats even the nuclear has assumed a considerable rhetorical force. All these arguments emphasise the need to give primacy to environmental issues and include them at the top of the security agenda of national and international politics. As adduced by the scholars, the ramification, perils and social effects of environmental scarcities and degradation such as land degradation, soil erosion, deforestation, desertification, ozone layer depletion, industrial pollution and climate change in terms of political and economic difficulties such as economic decline, poverty, displacement of people, disruption in political institutes, are suggestive of the imperative to think in terms of environmental security and its worldwide applicability to the global environmental

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Myers, "Environment and Security", *Foreign Policy*, (No.47, 1989), pp.23-41; Jessica Tuchman Mathews, "Redefining Security", *Foreign Affairs*, (Vol.68, No.2, 1989), pp.162-177; and Michael Renner, *National Security: The Economic and Environmental Dimensions* (Washington, D.C.: World Watch Paper, 89, 1989).

problems which seem to be threatening all state and people.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the military threats requiring a bayonet to face a bayonet, the environmental security needs on the other hand international co-operation and efforts to tackle these impending environmental problems.

This article makes out a strong case aiming at fundamentally rethinking the entire ambit of security as a strategy and policy as well as overhauling the ethnocentrism of Western political and economic metaphysic. Against this backdrop, while launching a broadside at the geopolitical edifice of the environmental security, what it imperatively adduces is a fundamental critique of the world under as fashioned by the US and its allies' political and economic thinking. Unless and until in the new situations created by the demise of Cold War, environmental security is understood in these new ways, it is quite possible that "environmental security" may turn out to be just another chapter adding to the pages of traditional Cold War security concerns of US and its allies with maintaining the global political and economic status quo.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Environmental Security: Meaning and Nature

The concept of environmental security is more comprehensive and all encompassing. The Cold War understanding of security was confined to the geopolitical, economic and military interests of the dominant powers. What environmental security suggests is a transcendence of the narrow focus on geopolitical interests of the dominant players. It is not just an addition to national and international security like political, economic or military. It envisages a transfiguration of the very substructure of what

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas F. Homer Dixon, *Environment Security and Violence*, (Princeton: New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> See Simon Dalby, "Contesting an Essential Concept: Reading the Dilemmas in Contemporary Security Discourse" in Keith Krause and Michael Williams (eds.), *Critical Security Studies: Concept and Cases*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp.3-31.

constituted the political and economic order of the superpowers created during the Cold War. The above arguments rely on the environmental causes as the key to rethinking the political and economic metaphysics of the superpowers. "The term environmental security has become part of a framework for advocating new conceptions of how the international political order should be understood and what normative aspirations are appropriate in the post Cold War period".<sup>4</sup>

The 1994 Human Development Report of the UNDP listed environmental security as one of the seven components of its formulation of global human security. In 1995, the Commission on Global Governance followed this line of argument to add planetary security to its reformulation of the Post-Cold War security agenda.<sup>5</sup> In 1997, the Clinton administration adopted environmental themes as a focus of its foreign policy. The Woodrow Wilson Centre had undertaken a major project to examine the environmental dimensions of foreign policy.<sup>6</sup> These suggest clearly a political exercise about whose issues are part of the international policy agenda. These intended just to add environmental dimensions to their respective foreign policy agenda. It is said, environmental security or ecological security is imprecise and ambiguous. It is too much based on broad generalisations without having established sometimes the clear-cut links between environment and specific entities that may be rendered insecure. Thomas Homer Dixon, a widely known authority on environmental degradation and conflict, points out how scarcity of resources or their degradation has led to violent conflicts within or among states in some specific cases. The emphasis Homer Dixon

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<sup>4</sup> Simon Dalby, "Threats from the South? Geopolitics, Equity, and Environmental Security", in Daniel H Deudney and Richard A. Matthew ed., *Contested Grounds: Security and conflict in the New Environmental Politics* ( New York : State University of New York , 1999), p.156

<sup>5</sup> Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> On Clinton Administration's Policy, see, Geoffrey D. Dabelko and P. J. Simmons, "Environment and Security: Core Ideas and U.S. Government Initiatives", *SAIS Review*, (Vol.17 No. I, 1997), pp.127-146.

tries to put is on causes and consequences of environmental scarcity of resources that have led to such violent conflicts but surely not on the basis and existing pattern of economic and political thinking – the sole cause of the environmental degradation and consequent the conflict.

The debate on environmental security while continues, emphasising the need to redefine the conventional security “is in danger of overlooking important political issues unless analysts are alert to the persistent dangers of the traditional ethnocentric and geopolitical assumptions in Anglo-American security thinking”.<sup>7</sup> Analysts have wakened the policy makers to the impending dangers of the linkage between environmental degradation and conflict citing many cases in the countries of the South, and putting forth a strong case for rethinking security after the end of Cold War. But nowhere is seen among the policy makers the efforts to rethink the ethnocentrism of Western security paradigms. Environmental security is just tagged on to the traditional security thinking. A high-pitched argument for environmental security continues without the traditional Anglo-American security thinking being asked for an overhaul. The debate remains part of academic discussions as well of international politics and foreign policy of nations. Environmental security has been emphasised upon to extend the foreign policy agenda of nations, just by another item, a part of their foreign policy and, not their security agenda, a part of the environmental security. Environmental security has been held as synonymous with North’s political economic or resource security, nothing more.

During the Cold War, the US and its allies’ interests were carried as the interests of the entire globe. Any kind of threat to their interests was considered as threat to the entire globe. Much narrower and parochial geo-political interests of the US and its allies were justified in the name of global interests. Much of the policy literatures and debates linking environmental issues and security

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<sup>7</sup> Simon Dalby, “Threats from the South?”, *op.cit.*, p.157.

have been oblivious of and impervious to the danger of what so far the traditional ethnocentric and geopolitical assumptions in US and its allies' security thinking, have defined the world order and global security.<sup>8</sup> This means, understanding of new concerns about environment within the traditional framework of security marks a deflection from what the original proponents of environmental security have had in their mind. If the direction of tide of debates on security concerns is an indication, then in recent years security thinking has become much more importantly part of the process of international politics and the formation of US foreign policy.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Environmental Security: A Security to US Geopolitical Order, Social System and Way of Life**

No sooner had the Second World War ended than the United States, the dominant player, started pontificating to the world its own version of what world political and economic order would usher in. The language and idioms the United States used to spell out its own script of world political and economic order seemed to be largely ingrained in its own domestic and, capitalist political and economic structure which has been built by the consent of its people for a liberal market based polity and economy. This liberal market oriented polity and economy founded on Hobbes and Locke's possessive individualism aimed at ensuring abundant economic growth, wealth production and providing a luxurious, materialistic and commodious living to its people. On this metaphysical anvil, the United States shaped its world order and foreign policy behaviour. For this, the US embarked upon massive military build up and nuclear weaponisation which would enable it to have unimpeded

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<sup>8</sup> See, Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, (London: Routledge, 1990); Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security: American Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

access to resources and to countervail the outside forces in general and the geographical expansion of Soviet influence in particular. These geopolitical strategies of the US built on the foundation of its domestic imperatives of providing abundant wealth production and inordinate life style to its people deterred outside challenges to its shaping of what political and economic order was best conducive to its national interest. This meant dividing up the world and containment of Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> These particularistic and domestic imperatives of the US resulted in domestication of the entire globe and subjecting it to US beck and call. The military development and economic assistance, military alliances and foreign interventions resulted in some degree of control of global economy by the US to ensure the flow of key resources to the United States and its allied powers like Europe and Japan.<sup>11</sup>

So long as the Western pattern of development is based on extraction of non-renewable resources by fossil fuel technology, unimpeded flow of resources from the South would remain key to the geo-political understanding of security prevalent during the Cold War. Any discourse on environmental security can, thus, be explicated as merely an extension of conventional security to have the continuance of the resource flow from the South to the US and its allies. Whether it is at Rio, Kyoto, Johannesburg or other international forums on environment, the blame is not put on the US and its allies – the villain of the piece who have caused nuisance to the environment by their own pattern of development and inordinate life style. The culprit admonishes the South and the poor to slow down population growth, to curtail dependence on use of natural resources and suspend economic activities and development process. To the Southern critique, these are mere political gimmicks on the part of those on North who find in the maintenance of their control

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<sup>10</sup> Bradley S. Klein, *Strategic Studies and World Order: The Global Politics of Deterrence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Ronnie D. Lipschutz and John P. Holdren, "Crossing Borders: Resources Flows, the Global Environment, and International Security", *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, (Vol.21, No.2, 1990), pp.121-133.



over global politics and resources, the assurance of security to their sovereign state system and their people against external challenges to wealth production, economic growth and inordinate life style. The nuances of environmental security not throwing focus on this conventional understanding of security appear to reinforce what the US and its allies have considered as fundamental to define their geopolitical order and global security on their own idioms.

It is alleged, the North is using the fear of environmental disaster as a weapon to limit Southern development, or to control its political arrangements to ensure that Northern economic interests continue to have access to the traditional cheap flow of labour and resources.<sup>12</sup> Thus, environmental security is understood as securing the environment to the North – the resources of the nature from the Southern countries at their perils. Questions confronting any discussions of the themes of environmental security as raised by Southern critique remain unanswered: what is being rendered secure, by what means and for whom and what the threat is to this security? In the Cold War and conventional parlance, what is threat to the security of the environment is not the Western pattern of development, its political and economic thinking and luxurious life style, but the outside or external powers or states challenging the dominant role of the US and its allies in defining the global geopolitical order and security. Unless and until this Western determined geopolitical security thinking surviving this day even after the eclipse of Cold War is rethought, attaching the term environment to security will be a misnomer conveying nothing substantial and meaningful different from what is conventionally understood as security.

The idea of the protection of national sovereignty and territorial integrity in a state system is what gave birth to security in the conventional sense. In its logic, it is always understood in

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<sup>12</sup> Alvaro Soto, "The Global Environment: A Southern Perspective", *International Journal*, (Vol.47, No.4, 1992), pp.679-705; N. Moddleton, P. O' Keefe and S. Moyo, *Tears of the Crocodile: From Rio to Reality in the Developing World*, (London: Pluto, 1993).

geopolitical decisions of insides or outside, internal US and the external others.<sup>13</sup> During the Cold War it is understood as spatial distancing others and deterring and counteracting the external threats emanating from other states by resorting to military forces. Here, the state remains as the referent point around which all domestic political resources are mobilised to face the external threats. It means the externalisation of the ethnocentric images of state as the sole legitimate authority in the form of constellation of all its military forces to not only define what constitutes the threat but also countervail it. This conventional security is based on the assumption that the outsiders, or external others are always threats to the internal us. Thus, the externalisation of its internalised domestic and political forces in the form of military has always been reactive and passionately responding. Thus, in the traditional definition of security, the state remains the main focal and referent point. But this state centric ascent of traditional concept of security is supposedly to be absent in the definition of what constitutes the environmental security.

Since the focus is on environmental scarcity or degradation of natural resources, and its social effects in terms of poverty, economic decline, population displacement and growing incapability of state, the security threats are certainly non-military. Arguing for a military response by the state to these non-military threats means juxtaposing the traditional concept of security to the environmental security in the new situation of the global environmental crisis. Thus, tagging on the environmental security again to the state as the main referent point to face the non-military threats means denuding the former of its foundation. The danger with this tagging on to the traditional state centric security is that the response to environmental problems will be militarised.<sup>14</sup> Critics often cite Homer Dixon's study of the

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<sup>13</sup> Simon Dalby, *Creating the Second Cold War: The Discourse of Politics*, (London: Pinter and New York: Guilford, 1990); see, also R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Deudney, "The Mirage of Ecowar: The Weak Relationship Among Global Environmental Change, National Security and Interstate Violence" in I. H. Rowlands and

linkage between environmental degradation and violence in various parts of the globe, to justify their point.<sup>15</sup> What is not understood in Dixon's analysis of the main thrust is that the environmental scarcity or degradation of resources coupled with its social effects can even lead to situation, response to which has often been violent. This is not an apologetic of the violent or military response but wary of the likelihood of military and violent response, if environment is not put in order. That is what he tries to drive home the problem, which the critics and analysts do associate with the definition of environmental security.

The geo-politically determined security of the Western powers headed by the US was in the context of a legitimacy they sought from their respective people on the ground that they would follow the liberal market oriented polity and economy strictly to its nuances which means pledging abundant economic growth, wealth production and an exorbitant life style to their people. For the achievement of this goal the military security apparatus of these Western states were geared to secure the procurement of resources from the South at a price the former wanted even at the cost of the latter's economy, survival and environment. When the consequences of Western powers' adherence to this politico economic logic have been the catastrophic destruction of the environment in terms of climate change, ozone hole, desertification, global warming, sea level rise, bringing the environmental security to the centre-stage of policy making, the question is how would the Western politico-economic logic determining the traditional framework of security would again be the foundation of environmental security? No where this paradox is more visible than in international forum on environment where the Western powers led by the US try very

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M. Greene (eds.), *Global Environmental Change and International Relations*, (London: Macmillan, 1992); Lothar Brock, "Security through Defending the Environment: An Illusion?", in E. Boulding (ed.), *New Agenda for Peace Research: Conflict and Security Re-examined*, (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1992); and Jyrki Kakonen (ed.), *Green Security or Militarised Environment*, (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> Thomas F. Homer Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity and Violence*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

successfully to disown any historical responsibility for what so far has been done to the environment by their politico-economic logic.

Further, to stress on such a logic in a different and changed context to be the guiding nuances of environmental security means to divert away attention from internal matters of inordinate consumption, luxurious life style and resource usage in the rich industrialised North where a small minority of world's population consumes a disproportionate amount of world's resources not only producing large quantities of pollution and green house gases but also subjecting the majority poor in the South vulnerable to the vicissitudes of nature. According to the 1994 World Development Report, during the period from 1960 to 1991 the ratio of the percentage of the world's wealth held by the richest 20 percent of world population to that by the poorest 20 percent spiralled from 30:1 to 61:1.<sup>16</sup> Any kind of pointer to the internal matters of consumption and life style is considered as a threat to the rich industrialized North headed by the US. The very basis of environmental security should have been to rethink the internal consumption life style and pattern of development of Western powers. To the contrary, for example, on climate change talks, negotiations and discussions, the focus is not on rethinking the Western consumption and politico-economically determined military security and on owning the historical responsibilities rather on dragging the victims – the developing countries to clear the mess for which they are not responsible. The United States now reneged on its commitment to reduce emission of CO<sub>2</sub> by 7.5 percent agreed to at Kyoto, on the ground that it would affect its economy and life style of its people.

That means, any plan or efforts to define environmental security as rethinking the politico-economic logic or metaphysics of the traditional security of Western powers comes a cropper with the latter not prepared at all to cause any economic hardship to its people

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations, *World Development Report 1994*, p.35.

and seek legitimacy from its people on grounds other than promoting economic growth and luxurious life style at the cost of nature and the other people in the South. Thus, the problem to the North is any kind of threat to its internal consumption and focus is divagated to the possible political disruption from environmental refugees and migrants caused by external environmental degradation. Instead of looking to the internal causes, the attention of the North is glued to the consequences of external environmental degradation as threats to its traditionally understood military security apparatus.

Violent conflicts, political disruption and turmoil in Homer Dixon's analysis, for example in Africa, are portrayed by the Western powers as independent and unrelated to their control and dominance of global economy and pattern of living promoting underdevelopment and poverty.<sup>17</sup> Environmental security understood in these traditional terms has been justified as a part of wider design of the Western powers led by the US to secure the resources to its people and economy, manage the environment and control the international environment, and reinforce their geopolitical logic even after the collapse of the Cold War.<sup>18</sup>

The security of the US and its allies during the Cold War was, thus, to maintain their supremacy in the world economic structure and to stall any kind of external disruptions of the supply of raw materials.<sup>19</sup> The most recent example is the role of the US in the Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s and American attack on Iraq in the 1990s and at present in attempting to secure access to supplies of oil against Iranian or Iraqi threats. The most glaring example is, however, the attack and occupation of Iraq on flimsy

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<sup>17</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy", *The Atlantic Monthly*, (Vol. 273, No.2, 1994), pp.44-76. For a detailed critique, see, Simon Dalby, "The Environment as Geopolitical Threat: Reading Robert Kalplan's Coming Anarchy", *Ecumene*, (Vol. 3, No. 4, 1996), pp.472-96.

<sup>18</sup> Wolfgang Sachs, "Global Ecology and the Shadow of Development", in Wolfgang Sachs (ed.), *Global Ecology: A New Arena of Political Conflict*, (London: Zed, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Beverley Crawford, "The New Security Dilemma under International Economic Independence", *Millennium*, (Vol. 23, No.1, 1994), pp.25-55.

pretexts. The geopolitical strategic security understanding of the US having arrogated to itself the exclusive right to these supplies of resources from any part of the globe and the right to militarily intervene for the exercise of that right.

Persistence of focus always by US and its Western allies on reducing vulnerability of their political – economy, industrial production, luxurious life style of their people to the changing international situation, say oil crisis or environmental crisis, is what constitutes security as mere external response in military terms to the changing international circumstances and not internal changes or rethinking their politico-economic logic. Without bringing changes in their politico-economic metaphysics to give attention on the environmental changes in the South is what the US and its allies do to define environmental security for reinforcement of their politico-economic logic and superimposition of their own view of world order on the entire globe as universal one. It was true as much during the Cold War as now with the end of Cold War. This kind of persistence of constancy in North's economic and political thinking despite changes in the environment is solely the result of its thinking that environmental security is just an appendage to Western conventional understanding of national security.

There is no gainsaying the fact that it is a select few managing the world's political economy to their exclusive advantage. If environmental security means forestalling deforestation in the South, making its forests as carbon sinks for the industries of North, and stressing on South's meaningful participation to obviate the misdoing of the North to the environment and close down its industries even for survival, then the North wants to supposedly give protection to its economic and political thinking, way of life and pattern of development what can be generally christened as its civilised life or modernity or social system. This is the crux of the matter while defining environmental security. What is missing is if the environment is to be secured, preserved and protected, then the Northern pattern of development, way of life and pattern of

consumption are to be modified. In other words, environmental security is stressed on or added to conventional understanding of security in order to give protection to North's view world order shaped on the anvil of its domestic imperatives and way of life.

#### **4. Dilemmas of Environmental Security: Problem of Equity, Historical Responsibilities**

The questions of global equity and issues of intergenerational responsibilities remain crucial to environmental security and the pertinent question of whom and exactly what are to be secured remains tied with environmental security. Every human being contributes to the carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere, though the person's lifestyle decides the amount that is emitted. The more prosperous a country's economy, and the higher its per capita income, the higher its fossil fuel consumption for power generation and transport, and the higher its green house gases (GHG) emissions.<sup>20</sup> Southern critiques point out that industrialised countries owe their current prosperity to years of historical emissions, which have accumulated in the atmosphere since the start of industrial revolution, and also to a high level of current emissions. Developing countries meanwhile, have only recently set out on the path of industrialisation, and their per capita emissions are still comparatively low. The GHG emissions of one US citizens, for instance, were equal to 19 Indians, 30 Pakistanis, 17 Maldivians, 19 Sri Lankans, 107 Bangladeshis, 134 Bhutanese or 269 Nepalis in 1996.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore the argument runs, as pointed by the Southern critique, Southern emissions, and the contribution of tropical deforestation to carbon dioxide and methane production, are often a result of survival activities rather than the luxury emissions that

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<sup>20</sup> T. A. Boden *et. al.*, *Emissions of Global Regional and National Annual CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions from Fossil-Fuel Burning, Hydraulic Cement Production, and Gas Flaring: 1950-1992*, (Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge: Tennessee, 1995); See, also UNDP, *Human Development Report 1998*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.140-42.

<sup>21</sup> Anil Agrawal, Sunita Narain and Anju Sharma (eds.), *Global Environment Negotiations I: Green Politics*, (New Delhi: Centre for Science and Environment, 1999) pp.17-18.

come from Northern lifestyle.<sup>22</sup> Methane produced from a peasant plot is much more immediately necessary to human welfare than an equivalent discharge from an industrial unit in a Northern state producing some luxury consumer items. Whether it is deforestation in Amazon or more gas production in Algeria emitting a large amount of methane, all these are only to meet the Northern demands. Hence, the South objects to being asked to pay the price for fixing the problem that North defines as global. Terming the global environmental degradation as of common interest requiring global solution, the North is skirting its own historic responsibility and shifting it to the South for the protection of the economic interests of the former. This obscures the specific environmental insecurities that the people in the South face due to the industrial and economic activities of the North.

Again, environmental security provides a scapegoat to the North to jettison its responsibility in the name of common interests and global solution. The environmental security, thus, remains saddled with rich countries unwilling to compromise their life styles and poor countries unwilling to accept a premature cap on their right to basic development. The atmosphere is a common property resource, to which every human being has an equal right. The people of industrialised countries have more than used up their share of the absorptive capacity of the atmosphere, through their high emission levels in the past and in the present. So it is time that they should take the initial responsibilities of reducing emissions while allowing developing countries to achieve a basic level of development. If environmental security means asking developing South to reduce carbon emissions levels now, it amounts to asking them to freeze their standards of living at their current stage of development and freezing global inequality by accepting that some countries will always be more developed than others in the world. Determined not to compromise in any way its consumption pattern, life style and

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<sup>22</sup> Anil Agrawal, Sunita Narain (eds.), *Global Warming in an Unequal World: A Case of Environmental Colonialism*, (New Delhi: Centre for Science and Environment, 1991).



economic development, the North finds in environmental security an extension of its conventional security to control the South through the use of term global concerns which "create the normal base for green imperialism".<sup>23</sup>

### 5. Environmental Security: An extension of North into South's National Sovereignty

Global atmospheric change and ozone layer depletion, which are mainly due to North's ethnocentric pattern of development and way of life, have become global in their consequences. No single state owns or has jurisdiction over atmosphere or Antarctica or ocean – a global common property but also few states corner the benefits. Can the forests in tropical and underdeveloped areas be treated as global common to ensure the survival of global biodiversity as suggested by the North in Rio Earth Summit?<sup>24</sup> The argument suggests that the precious and unique resource inherent in these forests can benefit commercially and medically the future generations, if administered globally. Besides, forests can serve as carbon sinks for the stabilisation of climate for the North countries. South's vast biodiversity is widely used in West's agricultural system and biotechnological industries. Ascribing such concepts as free access to biodiversity, global commons or common heritage of mankind to forests of the developing world by the developed North not only redounds to the latter's economic interests but runs directly into the question of the political remit of sovereignty.<sup>25</sup> Industrial countries have mainly put emphasis on measures for *in situ* conservation, demanding the setting aside of protected areas, especially in tropical forests. The economic reason behind this is that they want to ensure a

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<sup>23</sup> Vandana Shiva, "Conflict of Global Ecology: Environmental Activism in a Period of Global Reach", *Alternative*, (Vol.19, No. 2, 1994), pp.195-207.

<sup>24</sup> Rachael M. Mc Cleary, "The International Community's Claim to Rights in Brazilian Amazonia", *Political Studies*, (Vol. 39, No.4, 1991), pp.691-707.

<sup>25</sup> Ken Conca, "Rethinking the Ecology Sovereignty Debate", *Millennium*, (Vol.23, No. 3, 1994), pp.701-11; See, also Andrew Hurrell, "A Crisis of Ecological Viability? Global Environmental Change and the Nation State", *Political Studies*, (Vol. 42, 1994), pp.146-65.

continued supply of actual and potential raw materials for plant breeding, for new medicines and for the wider biotechnology industry. Many developing countries, on the other hand question why should they forgo development of their own territories simply to guarantee conservation for the benefit of the North. They argue that they have sovereign rights over their biological resources, and that they should restrict access to commercial interests in the North, and develop the resources for their own national benefit. They feel the pressure for forest protection in the South for the development of the North as threats to development of the former that would enrich the state and provide jobs for the growing population. International environmental agreements that constrain development are then seen as a threat to the national security of the state.<sup>26</sup>

Much before the concerns about the consequences of devastation of forests by the North were on the political agenda, the latter became highly wealthy and rich through a complete deforestation of territory. Nowhere such unjust and dubious logic is seen than in North admonishing to South to stop cutting trees even for their own survival. What is more glaringly a gross denial of equity and justice is the exploitation of South's biodiversity as well the genetic knowledge of its indigenous people without paying any compensation to the people and state to which the North owe the resources.<sup>27</sup> International agreements on environment such as Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) as agreed to in Kyoto forbidding the South from hewing down trees in the name of environmental security are meant, to make North entirely scot-free in emitting CO<sub>2</sub> as before without a chance of being blamed for causing climate change, and deny the South the right to follow the Northern route to development and prosperity. "A Southern response using the same logic might suggest that the American green belt be made a global

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<sup>26</sup> Bruce Albert, "Indian Lands, Environmental Policy and Military Geo-Politics in the Development of the Brazilian Amazon: The Case of the Yanomami", *Development and Change*, (Vol. 23, No.1, 1992), pp.35-70.

<sup>27</sup> Franz Broschimmer, "Botanical Imperialism: The Stewardship of Plant Genetic Resources in the Third World", *Critical Sociology*, (Vol.18, No.1, 1991), pp.3-17.

common resource under an international regime for meeting the improved nutrition needs of the South. Such a proposal would no doubt receive disapproval from the people. The analogy is imperfect, but heuristic exercise is useful in exposing the North's conventional environment thinking to its limitations, dubious logic and gross injustice.<sup>28</sup>

The structure of the contemporary global economy founded by the North is a very important cause of environmental degradation. Development defined by the domestic imperatives of wealth production, luxurious life style and exorbitant consumption of the North has been universalised as a model of development. Extracting resources from the South to meet the demands of the North has resulted in the shadow economy of degradation beyond the boundaries of the states in which ultimately these resources are consumed.<sup>29</sup> There has been no end to the damage wrought to environment by the conventional Northern modes of development.<sup>30</sup> Dams flood fertile valleys to provide hydro electricity to distant urban dwellers. Forests are logged for the benefit of the urban-based industries many of them foreign owned. Rich and precious biological diversities are destroyed. Green revolution may have increased the overall production in specific states that are wealthy enough to bear the cost of expensive chemicals, seeds and equipment. Its impact in terms of soil erosion, fertility loss, pollution of water and diseases has been disastrous. The agricultural export model of development promoted by North and initiated by the South in order to provide foreign exchange to pay for international debts has aggravated the situation. With large enclosure of land for commercial production, the poor move on to marginal lands and steep slopes only to destroy the environment. The environmental deterioration and decline of the

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<sup>28</sup> See, Simon Dalby, "Threats from the South?...", *op.cit.*, p.169.

<sup>29</sup> Jim MacNeill, Peter Winsemius, and Taizo Yakushiji, *Beyond Interdependence: The Meshing of World's Economy and the Earth's Ecology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> Bruce Rich, *Mortgaging the Earth: The World Bank, Environmental Impoverishment and the Crisis of Development*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

economy have fed on one another. Ironically, the fate of the poor and the fate of the planet have become inextricably intertwined. There is something fundamentally ironical in treating the earth as if it were a business in liquidation.

The fundamental question arises, is the environmental security understood in Western economic-political idioms meant for the security of resources from the South to the North at the cost of the former's environment and economy? If security is reformulated to give priority to the environment, it also requires in the same vein to rethink the world economic structure and philosophy of life of the North based on luxurious life style and profligate consumption of resources.

## **6. Post-Cold War American Perspective of Environmental Security**

A detailed glance over the points raised above suggests that the World economic and political order is the reinforced manifestation of North's political economy. The world during the Cold War or after its eclipse has never been based on democratisation of the world economy and trading system, equity in participation and access to resources, equality of sovereign states, collective security, nuclear free world or sweeping powers to the United Nations. The ephemeral euphoria about a New World order associated with the demise of Cold War fades away into a religious acquiescence in things as they are or still worse into a slavish adulation of the North versed world order. Internet or personal computer (PC) may have acquired death of distance or end of geography but it enables the North to have a uni-linear occupation of space and time in terms of universalising its model of development and initiating others into its economic-political thinking. The entire globe has been, at the behest of the North to serve its economic and political interests. Geo-political foundation of North's security is based on securing the resources from the South at the cost of latter's economy and environment. Securing these resources has been North's right, realisation of, which

is defined as masculine exercise of military power. The Berlin wall has been tumbled down, but the permanent geopolitical walls in terms of North and South, West and the rest have been reinforced. North's understanding of the post-Cold War world security is the persistence of Northern institutions and their core political-economic values as the podium from which the world can be managed. The logic of such thinking is clear in a speech given by Manfred Wornier, the then Secretary General of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO):

The immense conflict potential that is building up in the Third World countries, characterized by growing wealth differentials, an exploding demography, climate shifts and the prospect of environmental disaster, combined with the resource conflicts of the future, cannot be left out of our security calculations, no matter how we translate our broader analysis in operational aspects in the longer term.<sup>31</sup>

According to Dalby, the traditional geopolitical notions of security emphasised territorial control, superior alliance systems, and technological superiority in military matters. In so far these geopolitical themes dominate discussion and debate about US global political roles, coupling these themes to environmental security is likely to perpetuate patterns of violence and domination rather than work to protect environments and their people.<sup>32</sup> Military action and intervention may be justified in seeking compliance from rouge Chloro Fluoro Carbon (CFC) plants. The economic and political metaphysics of the North contributing to its geopolitical security requires to be reconsidered. Fundamentally, rethinking international politics, the role of militarisation, externalisation of attention to outside changes, global economy and the presupposition of a limitless nature to be exploited, will constitute the parameters on

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<sup>31</sup> Manfred Wornier, "Global Security: The Challenge to NATO", in E. Grove (ed.), *Global Security: North American, European and Japanese Interdependence in the 1990s*, (London: Brassey's, 1991), pp.103-104.

<sup>32</sup> Simon Dalby, "Threats from the South?...", *op. cit.*, p.175.

which environmental security is to be defined. The traditional and realist self-help paradigm of security is to be replaced by a cooperative, mutual and consensual acceptance of a diminished national sovereignty. Fundamental and crucial to environmental security is the requirement of readiness on the part of the rich North people to restricting their life style and exorbitant consumption. There needs in the North a reordering of its domestic imperatives such as wealth production, economic growth and life style, which have contributed to the foundation of its geopolitical understanding of security.

### **7. Economic Rethinking: The Basis of Environmental Security**

Other challenges to environmental security remain important. Economic rethinking is essential to making environmental security a future possibility. Economy has dominated the entire societal space. The laws of the economy try to dominate the society and not the rules of the society, the economy. The term market economy reduces all the societies or the entire globe to mere an economy ignoring the basic thing that every society has an economy. Economy has assumed a deterministic character imprinting its rules and rhythms upon the society and even dictating the drama and role in it of individuals. The approach "economy is everything and all" is to be reviewed so that other considerations and values like frugality, selflessness, moderation in consumption and a humanistic concern for security remain equally important to rebuilding economic structure of the world.<sup>33</sup>

The universalisation of ethnocentric Western model of development is not the appropriate means of development for all others but supercession of political categorisation like, North, South, West and rest, and acceptance of diversity, coexistence and a holistic view on co-operation among all states, in transcendence of territories of the world and exploring pluralistic and alternative ways to

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<sup>33</sup> Wolfgang Sachs, "Development: A Guide to the Ruins", *New Internationalist*, (June 1992), p.5.

Western model of development and thinking are necessary to define environmental security in terms beyond the geopolitical domination of the West. In the absence of the rethinking of fundamental political and economic metaphysics of the West and its associated institutions, arrangements and international politics, the prevalence of liberal market economy and faith of all including the South in the market driven change as a mark of modernity and civilised way of living, makes the prospects of environmental security a remote possibility. The carving of the entire planet into a patchwork of mutually exclusive territorial states is modernity's rendering of nature.<sup>34</sup> Not all territorial sovereign states synchronise with eco-geographical regions. This asymmetrical incongruity between ethnic, religious, territorial states and ecological entity accounts for many of the disputes and conflicts between and among states over the issue of environmental security pertaining to water, fish or other resources.<sup>35</sup> Since environmental problems are transboundary and do not end with territorial exclusiveness, the environmental security suggests rethinking of political categories like, state sovereignty, and territorial exclusiveness to solve and manage the grave problems of environment.

The global climate change science presents a challenge to a key source of state's sovereign authority, its role as guarantor of wealth production and inordinate life style and consumption. Given the close correlation between wealth production and fossil fuel consumption, explanations of the climate change based upon North's traditional economic interests cannot account for the general willingness of industrialised countries to commit themselves to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. That willingness even for the most reluctant countries like, the US, can only be explained on the

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<sup>34</sup> Karen T. Litfin, "Environment, Wealth, and Authority: Global Climate Change and Emerging Modes of Legitimation", *International Studies Review*, (Special Issue, Vol.2 No.2, Summer 2000), p.127.

<sup>35</sup> Arthur H. Westing (ed.), *Comprehensive Security for the Baltic: An Environmental Approach*, (London: Sage Publication, 1989), pp.1-13; See, also N. Gaan, "Comprehensive Security for South Asia: An Environmental Approach", *BISS Journal*, (Vol. 20, No. 2, 1999), pp.103-105.

basis of climate change science's certainty of predictions about the disastrous consequences of following the Western pattern of development based on fossil fuel technology. Hence, environmental security makes the Western economic and political logic redundant in view of what climate change science predicts.

## **8. Conclusion**

As seen from the above analysis, the US understanding of security is based on traditional realist framework. It is wont to defining environmental security in terms of its unimpeded access to resources available anywhere in the world, even without hesitation to exercise military force against the recalcitrant state unwilling to toe the American line. It tends to put the blame on the countries of the South for what has been done to the environment, so also the responsibility on them to clear the mess for the rich countries of the North. The North headed by the US defines environmental security as being just an appendage to their conventional security. These countries have underrated or downplayed their own nuisance to the environment in terms of climate change, global warming and ozone layer depletion. The US and its allies' inordinate consumption, exorbitant and profligate life style and production of wealth remain an important basis of their concept of security. The entire planetary resources are to be exploited to the promotion of these interests of the US and its allies. The ubiquitous acceptance of Western pattern of development, liberal market economy and economic thinking has been an extension of American geopolitical understanding of security. What has been at the root of the environmental crisis is not the burgeoning population growth in the South, rather the domestic imperatives of the North in terms of their life style, pattern of living and limitless consumption.

In order to ensure environmental security to the entire humanity, the policy makers need to keep in their mind the following parameters:



The future generation's – living non-human and human beings – right to environment have to be included within the term environmental security. Inter-generational accountability and equity is to be given primacy. The very arrogation of sovereign state system to exploit the resources at the cost of others and future generation is to be substituted by the principles of equity and accountability to the future generation.

While defining development, it is not the blind imitation of Western pattern but the entire interests of the states, humanity, future generations and living and non-living beings are to be weaved into the framework of what is meant by environmental security.

The inordinate consumption, profligate life style and production of wealth of the North countries headed by the US are to be rethought so that environmental security can be ensured to all, otherwise environmental security as understood by the US will remain an addition to what its conventional understanding of security. So the over consumption on the part of the North is ethically indefensible. Are the people of US ready to come down to the levels of Cuba or Bangladesh to ensure intergenerational equity? Are they ready to reinvent their established pattern of development and life style to ensure a sustainable world? Undoubtedly not – “the American life style,” said the US President at Rio, “is not subject to negotiation”. But are they happier? Not necessarily, liberty and happiness are subjective pursuits and must answer to intergenerational equity. Certainly, humanity cannot live at the North American level on prevailing technology; it would take many planets to sustain this. It is often claimed that, as in the past, technological fixes applied by an ingenious species will overcome global resource constraint. But unlike in the past, the planet's natural resource base is now deteriorating rapidly. “Playing global roulette, with future generations as the stake, is a moral inequity of historic proportion”.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Kennedy Graham, "Leadership Ethics for the Future: Tread Lightly on the Planet", *UNU Nexions*, (April 2002), p. 4.

Answer to these questions remains pivotal to defining environmental security in a broader sense that will remove the causes of environmental conflict as well the causes of environmental scarcity that inflicts on the individuals in terms of health hazards, suffering, economic deprivation, poverty or starvation as undergone by them as a part of adaptation. Thus, at the confluence of the morally and ethically required nuance of sustainable development, economic rethinking, new planetary principles and new vision of and approach to life, strands the environmental security. Thus, the very basis of environmental security challenges the established frame of mind about what so far has been defined as development, pattern of life style and geopolitical security of the sovereign state system. It is not the national security in terms of military but the planetary security that will be the foundation of environmental security on this confluence.

The very definition of environmental security requires new modes of thinking that rest on a newfound compassion for the integrity of the planet and for one another. It needs a recasting of human responsibility for planetary stewardship. The notion that the Earth must be seen as a living organism – in the sense of a homeostatic equilibrium that demands respect from humanity and other terrestrial life-forms – has a spiritual dimension on what was initially conceived as a strictly scientific hypothesis and external mechanic structure to be exploited to satisfy the inordinate lifestyle of the North people. A comparable rethinking of the human-earth-cosmos relationship is necessary to found the very basis of environmental security.