

war, possibly along with biological weapons, has the greatest potential for harming the environment. The end of the Cold War has reduced the risk of the use of nuclear weapons, but the threat has not disappeared. Proliferation of nuclear weapons states continues to be a major concern. Besides the five long-time nuclear powers (China, France, Russia¹³, the U.K. and the U.S.), three other countries (India, Israel and Pakistan) are presumed to have nuclear weapons, while several other countries (Algeria, the Democratic Republic of Korea, Iran and Iraq) have a strong interest in nuclear weapons development.¹⁴ The threat of criminal or terrorist organizations gaining control, through sale or theft, of nuclear weapons must also be taken into account. A further type of environmental degradation associated with military activities is the deliberate damaging of the environment, such as Iraq's destruction of oilwells in Kuwait and its pumping of oil into the Persian Gulf during the Gulf Conflict.¹⁵

In short, although defence policy is seldom directed explicitly towards influencing the environment, it does have an effect on the environment. And it behooves policy makers to understand better the nature and extent of the effects. Nevertheless, the environmental impact of war and the preparation for war should not be overstated. These activities are not the major causes of environmental degradation.¹⁶ Nor is this "reverse" causation, while an important linkage, the principal element of the environment-national security linkage as the issue is now evolving. While military activities pose a threat to the environment and are an ongoing policy concern, it is the issue of environmental stress contributing to a threat to national security that is likely to become increasingly important in policy considerations.

¹³Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Ukraine are not nuclear powers. The three countries were former Soviet Union states and hold Russian-controlled nuclear weapons on their territory. These weapons are in the process of being decommissioned and returned to Russia.

¹⁴United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report 1994, p. 49.

¹⁵See Adam Roberts, "The Laws of War in the 1990-91 Gulf Conflict," International Security, Winter 1993/94, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 164-8; James S. Robbins, "War Crimes: The Case of Iraq", The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, Summer/Fall 1994, Vol. 18, No.2, pp. 53-4. In addition to pumping more than 100 million barrels of oil into the Persian Gulf, Iraq also intentionally ignited oil fires.

¹⁶A major nuclear war that brought about large scale environmental disruption, such as a "nuclear winter," would, of course, be in a class by itself.