

factored into national security interests. In all fairness, it must also be said the China's Agenda 21 is a step in the right direction.

This Paper goes some way in illustrating that it is misleading to emphasize environmental stress as a single cause of violent conflict. To avoid misunderstanding, environmental stress must be placed in a specific social, economic and political context: conversely, social, economic and political issues require that the environment be taken into account. The environmental stress-national security linkage may not immediately or significantly alter Chinese decision-making priorities. It should, however, cause decision-makers to reassess the relative merits of economic development and the environment in broad terms. With the prospect of conflict and possible political instability, China may see that its interest in maintaining a clean environment should have a higher priority.⁹⁴ Although it is not likely that large-scale environmentally-induced violent conflicts will occur before the year 2000, the following fifteen to twenty years may be challenging.

The prospects for violent interstate conflict with China are considerably less than for intrastate domestic conflict within China. Brock suggests that "countries or international organizations may resort to military action in order to enforce certain environmental standards or to ward off dangers to the environment."⁹⁵ On reflection, this policy is probably at best only viable toward countries with relatively weak military forces. It is certainly not a viable course of action to take toward China, which is a nuclear power with considerable conventional military forces. Moreover, for environmental degradation to reach such a state in China that countries would resort to military action, we must ask what would the environmental conditions in other developing countries be like, and would we not be speaking of a complete breakdown of international relations and some general north-south military confrontation or serious threat of confrontation. This scenario is so remote as to be discardable.

⁹⁴This also has an international dimension. It has been suggested that developing countries may consider that the developed countries are the "demandeurs" on the environment file, and that this gives the developing countries some bargaining leverage. With this logic, certain developing countries, including China, may hold the view that, if the developed countries want a clean environment, then the latter should pay for it, while all countries would to some extent benefit. The environmental stress-national security linkage weakens this argument, by emphasizing the domestic destabilizing potential.

⁹⁵Lothar Brock, "Peace Through Parks: The Environment on the Peace Research Agenda", Journal of Peace Research, Vol.28, No.4, 1991, p.408.