

succession questions all contribute to uncertainty about how China will be governed and what China is becoming. Given the heightened uncertainty involving the coherence and direction of the social mediation factors illustrated in Figure 1, it is even more difficult than normal to draw firm conclusions on how environmental stress or non-renewable resource scarcity will be addressed.

While a significant policy reversal of economic reforms is highly unlikely, China is undergoing a major change in leadership. With the succession, leadership will pass to a post-revolutionary generation. It is highly doubtful that with Deng Xiaoping's death a more powerful leader will initially emerge. The unanswerable leadership questions are whether serious political and social upheaval will occur, and if so how long it will last. A complete collapse or disintegration of China into regional fiefdoms is an unlikely outcome. More realistically, China may well find itself in a state of policy uncertainty and paralysis, until a dominant faction in the communist party emerges. Should a prolonged power struggle ensue, the economy and environment would inevitably suffer negative consequences.

The cohesiveness, ability and willingness of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to respond to domestic and international crisis is also a factor to consider in environmental stress-national security linkages. Even if China is a major contributor to global warming or depletion of fishery resources in the future, a powerful military coupled with the lack of international precedent involving intervention related to global commons "policing" will certainly deter foreign countries from taking actions that would lead to interstate violent conflict.

For intrastate conflict, however, the story is more complicated. The transfer of military expenditures into more benign activities, "swords into ploughshares", is universally held as a noble objective. But there are practical difficulties, and not just those related to the massive transfer of funds from one to another portfolio over the likely protests of an entrenched military bureaucracy. In China's case, the role of the military in maintaining political stability is apparent. On the one hand, increased funding for environmental protection would be desirable. But if such funding came at the expense of the PLA's ability to contribute to maintaining political stability, ironically the long-run environmental returns could be greatest from a robust level of military expenditure.⁸⁸

⁸⁸In practice, as the PLA has considerable political leverage and has been successful in creating a number of enterprises to finance part of its activities, it is unlikely that increased funding for environmental concerns would threaten the military.