

resources, government corruption, crime, tyranny, overpopulation, tribalism, disease and poverty are all identified as contributing factors. A reference is made to stick-and-gun wielding guards in Abidjan walking restaurant customers to their cars, and that this gives "you an eerie taste of what American cities might be like in the future."⁵⁵ This is a huge leap in logic, and certainly says nothing directly about environmental stress-national security linkages. Environmental stress may well have some role to play in generating intrastate violence in West Africa, but statements such as this are essentially assertions based on unclear causation, and do nothing to increase our understanding of how the transition from environmental stress to violence works.

Moreover, the article over-extrapolates. Kaplan sees the article as his "report on what the political character of our planet is likely to be in the twenty-first century"⁵⁶; and "West Africa's future, eventually, will also be that of most of the rest of the world."⁵⁷ This Paper's discussion of the conceptual framework for understanding environmental stress-national security linkages, and the case specific nature of the linkages, must cast grave doubt on this view. Moreover, Kaplan offers no empirical evidence to support his conclusion that "in the developing world environmental stress will present people with a choice that is increasingly among totalitarianism (as in Iraq), fascist-tending mini-states (as in Serb-held Bosnia), and road-warrior cultures (as in Somalia)."⁵⁸ On the contrary, it is more likely that few would support the assertion that Saddam Hussein's rise to power and rule, the fragmentation of Yugoslavia, or the long history of Somalia's warlords were principally brought about by environmental stress, or that these examples are typical of a developing world that has become increasingly diversified, including many countries in Asia and Latin America which have achieved some notable successes in economic, political and social development over the past ten to twenty years. In short, we should be thankful for Mr. Kaplan bringing public and political attention to the environmental stress-national security issue, but be sceptical of the extreme conclusions he draws.

⁵⁵Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy", The Atlantic Monthly, February 1994, p. 45.

⁵⁶Ibid. p. 45.

⁵⁷Ibid. p. 48.

⁵⁸Ibid. p. 59.