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peace.” Traditionalists everywhere, including most of the U.S. policy establishment, no doubt took succor from such self-righteous indignation and resolved to perpetuate the received truths of the past that have made real peace so elusive and illusory to date.

Beyond the Peace Prize, two other events ten months apart served as defining bookends for what could turn out to have been the undeclared Year of Environmental Security. The first was an attention-grabbing article, “The Pentagon’s Weather Nightmare,” that appeared in the February 9, 2004 issue of *Fortune* magazine. Describing a report two futurists—Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall of Global Business Network—had recently prepared for the Defense Department on the national security implications of abrupt climate change, the article generated a flurry of intense but short-lived excitement and speculation on whether, why, and to what extent the Pentagon was finally taking climate change seriously.

The second bookend event came at the end of the year with the issuance of the final report of the internationally distinguished, 16-member High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had appointed in November 2003 to examine the major threats and challenges the world faces in the broad field of peace and security.

These two particular events, potentially significant enough in their own right, should be viewed in the
larger context of several other magnifying events that occurred over the course of the year.

For starters, Sir David King, chief science adviser to British prime minister Tony Blair, raised eyebrows and hackles with a controversial article in the January 9, 2004 issue of *Science* magazine. King cited climate change as “the most severe problem that we are facing today—more serious even than the threat of terrorism,” and accused the U.S. government of “failing to take up the challenge of global warming.” In a subsequent speech to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, he added: “Climate change is real. Millions will increasingly be exposed to hunger, drought, flooding and debilitating diseases such as malaria. Inaction due to questions over the science [a thinly veiled reference to Bush administration foot-dragging] is no longer defensible.”

In March, former UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix added further fuel to the fire in a BBC television interview with David Frost: “I think we still overestimate the danger of terror. There are other things that are of equal, if not greater, magnitude, like the environmental global risks.” This statement reinforced an equally pointed one Blix had made a year earlier: “To me the question of the environment is more ominous than that of peace and war…. I’m more worried about global warming than I am of any major military conflict.”

In May, the blockbuster 20th Century Fox disaster movie *The Day After Tomorrow*, portraying the cataclysmic global consequences of accelerated climate change, was released to theaters nationwide (with European release scheduled for October). Some, such as Sir David King and former vice president Al Gore, promoted or endorsed the movie, clearly not because of its admittedly unrealistic compression of time and exaggeration of catastrophic effects, but because of its potential for awakening and sensitizing the public to the plausibility and seriousness of abrupt climate change. Others fiercely criticized the movie for trivializing such a vital issue. Anti-doomsayer Gregg Easterbrook, senior editor of *The New Republic*, assailed the “cheapo, third-rate disaster movie” for its “imbecile-caliber” science: “By presenting global warming in a laughably unrealistic way, the movie will only succeed in making audiences think that climate change is a big joke, when in fact the real science case for greenhouse-gas reform gets stronger all the time.”

In a major September address in London, Tony Blair, faced with continuing criticism from his oppo-
sition, called climate change “the world’s greatest environmental challenge...a challenge so far-reaching in its impact and irreversible in its destructive power, that it alters radically human existence.” “Apart from a diminishing handful of skeptics,” he said, “there is a virtual worldwide scientific consensus on the scope of the problem.”

Then in October, the United Nations Environment Programme’s Division of Early Warning and Assessment issued a thought-provoking new report, Understanding Environment, Conflict, and Cooperation, that resulted from the deliberations of participants in a new initiative to leverage environmental activities, policies, and actions for promoting international conflict prevention, peace, and cooperation. The subject matter of the report is not new, but the question it implies is: whether new life can be breathed into what was, throughout most of the 1990s, a lively debate over whether and how the environment and security are related and interact. Since the Kyoto negotiations of 1997, that debate has been largely moribund, to the detriment of both U.S. policy and strategic discourse more generally.

**Revivifying Environmental Security**

Even if the events recounted above had not occurred this past year, the findings and recommendations of the UN High-Level Threat Panel and the introduction into the public imagination of abrupt climate change as a matter of prospective national security concern would stand as forceful stimuli for policy practitioners, scholars, and the general public to accord environmental security more serious and immediate attention.

This article goes to press before the actual release of the High-Level Panel’s final report; but publicly available preliminary work by the United Nations Foundation’s United Nations & Global Security Initiative, in cooperation with the Environmental Change & Security Project of the Woodrow Wilson Center, prefigures how the Panel’s thinking is likely to be guided on environmental matters. This introductory passage from a discussion summary presented to the Panel is indicative of that thrust:

> Environmental changes can threaten global, national, and human security. Environmental issues include land degradation, climate change, water quality and quantity, and the management and distribution of natural-resource assets (such as oil, forests, and minerals). These factors can contribute directly to conflict, or can be linked to conflict, by exacerbating other causes such as poverty, migration, small arms, and infectious diseases. For example, experts predict that climate change will trigger enormous physical and social changes like water shortages, natural disasters, decreased agricultural productivity, increased rates and scope of infectious diseases, and shifts in human migration; these changes could significantly impact international security by leading to competition for natural resources, destabilizing weak states, and increasing humanitarian crises. However, managing environmental issues and natural resources can also build confidence and contribute to peace through cooperation across lines of tension.

Add to this Secretary-General Annan’s own words in announcing the High-Level Panel to the UN General Assembly in September 2003, and it seems clear that the Panel will endorse the environment-security linkage and acknowledge that environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and climate change are threats or challenges that face the world and demand collective response:

> All of us know there are new threats that must be faced—or, perhaps, old threats in new and dangerous combinations: new forms of terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. But, while some consider these threats as self-evidently the main challenge to world peace and security, others feel more immediately menaced by small arms employed in civil conflict, or by so-called “soft threats” such as the persistence of extreme poverty, the disparity of income between and within societies, and the spread of infectious diseases, or climate change and environmental degradation.

The February 2004 *Fortune* article was a dispassionate but revealing summary of a Pentagon-commissioned study that, though unclassified, ordinarily wouldn’t have received much—if any—public exposure. Substantively, the article did two things. First, judging from the volume and intensity of follow-on commentary it generated, it clearly raised expectations—positive and negative—about the content and ramifications
of the Pentagon report. Was the military actually interested in climate change? Why? Enough to do something about it? To what end and with what effect (especially on the military’s principal mission)?

Second, the article—and the report it reported—upped the ante in the continuing debate over climate change. In addressing abrupt climate change, it accentuated an emerging thesis that gives urgency to what otherwise is considered (by some, perhaps many) to be a long-term, gradual phenomenon that, if real, can be passed off, without present political or economic regret, for future generations to deal with. And in tying abrupt climate change to national security, the article and report give added—ultimate—importance to the subject. National security is, after all, the public-policy holy of holies—the iconic totem that takes precedence over all else. National security is about endangerment and survival, the thinking goes. So if something can be shown to have national security implications (however defined), then perhaps it too is about such things; perhaps it too, therefore, warrants serious attention and the commitment of resources.

For people familiar with the U.S. military’s normal modes of communication, the release of the Schwartz-Randall report to Fortune was unusual enough to cause speculation about whether the man who commissioned it, Andrew W. Marshall—the Pentagon’s director of net assessment for the past 30 years—may have been signaling concerns that went well beyond the report’s scientific message: first, that the institution he works for is intractably parochial and resistant to change; second, that the Pentagon is particularly inbred and close-minded about matters as esoteric and ideologically encumbered as the environment; third, that since imaginative futurists had prepared the report, it could more easily be dismissed as speculative fantasy by bureaucratic pragmatists who prefer to think they are grounded in reality; fourth, that however long he (Marshall) may have served in the Pentagon, he has little clout in influencing the military to actually take action based on his office’s analytical products; fifth, that going public therefore offers more hope for forcing internal Pentagon awakening (if not change) in response to external pressure from arguably less parochial outside parties such as Congress and the media; and sixth, that perhaps the most potent force for movement on this particular front is the business community, which has the most to both gain and lose from climate change—especially when the political regime in power opts for dogmatic inaction in deference to the cosmic invisible hand of the marketplace.

The importance of this episode, as well as its relevance for the future, lies in both the message and the method of the Schwartz-Randall report itself. The implicit message is that even worse than climate change is the not unrealistic possibility of abrupt climate change. For those who had not heard of it, the article made clear that abrupt climate change is not just global warming speeded up, but a wholly different kind of event triggered by the baseline climate change we already know. In brief, the global warming now taking place could conceivably lead to a halting of the ocean currents that now keep Europe temperate—global warming thus ironically leading to regionally much colder conditions and widespread accelerations of the catastrophic effects already commonly associated with “normal” climate change: floods, droughts, windstorms, wave events, wildfires, disease epidemics, species loss, famine, and more. The explicit message is that the concatenation of such effects could then lead to additional, national security consequences—most notably military confrontations between states over access to scarce food, water, and energy supplies, or what the authors describe as a “world of warring states.”

Paradoxically, portraying what is relevant to national security as essentially that which invites or involves military force is perhaps necessary to grab the attention of purported experts on the subject, but it thereby also betrays the shallowness and narrowness of the canonical security paradigm most of us have unthinkingly bought into. This state of affairs is reinforced by the methodology of the Schwartz-Randall report, which seeks not to predict whether, when, or how abrupt climate change and its attendant effects would occur, but merely to present a plausible scenario of what might happen if and when it does. In the authors’ words, “The duration of this event could be decades, centuries, or millennia and it could begin this year or many years in the future.” Despite this caveat, the theme of abrupt climate change as a national security concern may be sufficiently eye-opening and provocative that, in conjunction with the other motivating forces of the year just past, it could take public consciousness of environmental security to a new level.

**Rethinking Security, Reassessing the Threat**

However many people there may now be who recognize that environmental conditions precipitate or contribute to other conditions—violent conflict, civil unrest, instability, regime or state failure—regularly associated with security as usually defined, they are vastly out-numbered by those who either openly oppose the environment-security linkage or ignore it as irrelevant or inconsequential.

These oppositionists come from two different but overlapping camps: ideological conservatives and the mainstream traditionalists who dominate the national security community. This distinction is crucial because the latter—the technocratic mandarins inside and out-
side government—have the final exegetical say about what security is and what therefore is allowed to be a legitimate part of the security dialogue.

Oppositionists treat the environment as a purely ideological issue, and climate change as the most ideological of all—accordingly as dismissible as feminism, the homosexual agenda, or any other reflection of “political correctness.” This despite the fact that, in a purer ontological sense, the environment is an inherently strategic matter, and climate change the most strategic of all. The environment is everywhere. It respects no borders, physical or otherwise. In its reach, its effects, and its consequences, it is truly global. And, fully understood, it brings into question all of our prevailing notions of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and even aggression and intervention. Nonetheless, just as to a hammer everything looks like a nail, to an ideologue everything looks ideological—to be accepted or rejected on the basis not of reason but of internalized dogma.

One of the major issues that has most divided those who debate the environment-security relationship is how broadly or narrowly to define security. Oppositionists invariably take the narrow road—basically equating security with defense, just as they similarly equate power with force. To them, security has axiomatic meaning that derives from its historical roots. Ironically, on this particular count the oppositionists are abetted by a shadow contingent of like-minded liberal environmentalists, who believe that linking the environment to security is dangerous because it will inevitably militarize the former and relinquish vital resources needed for environmental protection to an already bloated, profligate military establishment. In their fear of militarizing the environment, they risk getting into bed with besets noir who are fully committed to militarizing our entire strategic posture.

The counterpoise to this narrow construction of security begins with the recognition that security is, at root, a psychological and sociological phenomenon that starts—and ends—with the individual. To be secure is, literally, to be free—from harm and danger, threat and intimidation, doubt and fear, need and want. In the hierarchy of human needs, security is one of the most basic impulses—exceeded in its primacy only by the even more basic physiological needs for food, water, shelter, and the like, each of which is dependent on environmental well-being. Such primal needs translate into the natural rights that all human beings deserve to enjoy and that governments, as we have learned from America’s founders, are instituted to secure.
Individual or human security, then, is the necessary precondition for national security, not merely its residual by-product. Accordingly, assured security stands as the primary overarching strategic aim a democratic society such as ours must seek to attain. In this supernal sense, security is something much more robust than defense. It encompasses the totality of conditions enumerated in America’s security credo, the Preamble to the Constitution—not just the common defense, but no less importantly, national unity (a more perfect union), justice, domestic tranquility, the general welfare, and liberty. Only where all of these conditions exist in adequate measure is there true security. Where even one—liberty, say, or the general welfare—is sacrificed or compromised for another—say the common defense—the result is some degree of insecurity. Thus, in the final analysis, everything is related to security; everything is related to national security.

However broadly or narrowly security is defined, whatever endangers it or places it at risk is a threat; and whatever constitutes or qualifies as a threat is crucial because, in the idealized protocol of traditional national security planning, threats are the ostensible starting point for determining the requirements that produce capabilities and programs for countering these threats. (In reality, of course, capabilities and programs acquire their own bureaucratic life and thus are more likely to determine than to derive from threats.)

Oppositionists generally accept as legitimate threats only those parties or phenomena that, beyond their perceived potential for harm, are considered capable of or the product of malevolent intent. Intentionality is the key legitimizing element. Terrorism fills this bill, just as state-based adversaries traditionally have. Weapons of mass destruction seem to qualify because, though inert entities in themselves, in human hands they can be ominous instruments of harm. Climate change and assorted forms of environmental degradation, though, typically don’t pass muster as credible threats, no matter how much death and destruction they can wreak. Instead, they are implicitly written off as pure acts of nature, assuming metaphysical proportions that place them beyond human control and therefore outside the bounds of either preventive or retributive concern.

Such blinkered threat assessment is entirely characteristic of the policy establishment. To cite just a few notable examples:

- The 2002 White House national security strategy, in 34 pages of text, mentions the word environment in only one short paragraph about U.S. trade negotiations.
- In his February 2004 “Worldwide Threat Briefing” to Congress, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet devoted five pages of testimony each to terrorism, Iraq, and proliferation, three paragraphs to global narcotics, a paragraph each to population trends, infectious disease, and humanitarian food insecurity, but nothing at all to environmental matters.
- The much ballyhooed, future-oriented Hart-Rudman Commission, whose members extolled their own pre-science for adumbrating 9/11-type terrorist attacks on the United States, gave only the most cursory treatment to 21st-century environmental challenges in its initial September 1999 report. Arguing innocuously that pollution can be—and implicitly will be—counteracted by economic growth and the spread of remediation technologies, the commission essentially dismissed the subject with this (dare we say, ideological) statement: “There is fierce disagreement over several major environmental issues. Many are certain that global warming will produce major social traumas within 25 years, but the scientific evidence does not yet support such a conclusion. Nor is it clear that recent weather patterns result from anthropogenic activity as opposed to natural fluctuations.”
- Somewhat in contrast, the National Intelligence Council’s Global Trends 2015 report, issued in December 2000 (before the following year’s 9/11 attacks), identified natural resources and the environment as one of the most important “drivers and trends that will shape the world of 2015.” Focusing principally on food, water, and energy security developments, the experts who collaborated on the report acknowledged the persistence and growth of global environmental problems in the years ahead, a growing consensus on the need to deal with such problems, and the prospect that “global warming will challenge the international community.”

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Typifying the thinking of policymakers and other members of the national security mandarinate, such assessments also seem more representative than not of general public sentiment. A particularly revealing indication of this is the most recent Chicago Council on Foreign Relations study of U.S. public opinion on international issues, Global Views 2004. Asked to iden-
tify the most critical threats to U.S. vital interests, the
public ranks global warming a distant seventh (37% of
respondents), behind the likes of international terror-
ism (75%), chemical and biological weapons (66%),
unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers (64%),
immigration into the United States (58%), and other
developments. Another recent (February 2004) poll by
Gallup found that environmental concerns don’t even
make the public’s top-eleven list of possible threats to
U.S. vital interests—international terrorism and the
spread of weapons of mass destruction far outpacing
all other prospective threats.

That environmental matters should be of such lit-
tle overall public concern is a reflection of how limited
and unstrategic our thinking about security actually is.
Perhaps if we were to pay more attention to the doc-
umented effects of particular conditions and events,
rather than to the nebulous, abstract notion of intentionality implicitly embedded in our prevailing standards
of threat-worthiness, we could see the world differ-
etly—and more accurately.

Look, for example, at comparative fatalities from
the highly credible threat of terrorism and the highly
dubious threat of natural disasters. Since 1968, there
have been 19,114 inci-
dents of terrorism world-
wide, resulting in a total of 23,961 deaths and 62,502
associated injuries. However disturbing these figures
may be, they pale in comparison to those resulting from
natural disasters.

The average annual death toll over the past cen-
tury due to drought, famine, floods, windstorms, tem-
perature extremes, wave surges, and wildfires has been
243,577. Thus, even if we ignore earthquakes, vol-
canic eruptions, and disease epidemics, and don’t count
injuries or other harmful effects (such as homeles-
sness), three times as many people die each year on
average in natural disasters that could be linked to—
and exacerbated by—climate change as have been killed
and injured together in 37 years of terrorist incidents.
And lest the use of a century-long average seem skewed,
consider that just since 1990, there have been more than
207,000 fatalities from the foregoing types of disasters
in South Asia alone, more than 23,000 in Central
America and Mexico, and tens of thousands more in
other parts of the world.

These figures are startling in their empirical exac-
titude, more so if one accepts estimates that average

annual economic losses to such disasters were on the order of $660 billion in the 1990s. They lead us to consider a final argument that ideological conservatives invoke to discredit environmental and climate concerns—the need for sounder, more defensible science—and the associated argument national security mandarins use to deny or ignore the environment-security linkage—the lack of unequivocal evidence that environmental conditions actually cause diminished security in the form of violence.

Both arguments are excuses for denial and inaction; and both are suffused with hypocrisy. Those who demand conclusive proof that environmental conditions cause violence set a disingenuously unattainable legitimizing standard that permits them to perpetuate their own established preference for dealing with visible, immediate, politically remunerative symptoms. Terrorism is a cardinal example of this—singularly symptomatic, never causative, except at some advanced, derivative level, where violence produces further violence.

Those who call for science as the only proper basis for public policy—at least climate policy—pretend to be motivated by a rigorous quest for objective (non-political, non-ideological) truth. Yet they shamelessly accept or reject truth claims, labeling them “scientific” or not, based on whether those claims support or contradict their pre-established ideological beliefs. President Bush, for example, has repeatedly stated that climate policy must be based on better science (that is not yet available). But when asked about embryonic stem-cell research in this past year’s second presidential debate, he stated that science is important, but it must be balanced by ethics. So, when the issue is stem-cell research—or perhaps abortion or homosexuality or capital punishment—ethics can take precedence over non-cooperative science; but when the issue is climate change or the environment more generally, not so. Maybe the earth really is flat.

Of more immediate relevance to this discussion is the practice common to many who call for better climate science. Paradoxically, they are perfectly content to unquestioningly accept and espouse demonstrably
unscientific assertions from the military—especially concerning the degradation of military readiness that allegedly results from the so-called “encroachment” of environmental restrictions (e.g., species protection) on military installations. This despite the fact that the General Accounting Office has strongly criticized the military for failing to document whether and how much encroachment has actually degraded readiness.

Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) and the Senate Republican Policy Committee both exemplify this particular hypocrisy. Inhofe has said that “catastrophic global warming is a hoax”—“alarmism not based on objective science”—even as he has said that “readiness problems…are caused by an ever-growing maze of environmental procedures and regulations in which we are losing the ability to prepare our patriot children, our war fighters, for war.” Similarly the Senate Republican Policy Committee claims that “what scientists do agree on [with regard to climate change] is not policy-relevant, and on policy-relevant issues, there is little scientific agreement,” while also asserting: “Among the most burdensome [examples of encroachment] are environmental laws and lawsuits that hinder or even ban military training and testing—thereby impairing readiness…. The evidence of detrimental impact is ample.”

Searching for a Strategic Response

What the foregoing contradictions suggest, among other things, is that the prevailing paradigm of security, according primacy as it does to the military and the use of force, long ago hijacked us intellectually and continues to hold us hostage; and, moreover, that in the absence of countervailing strategic thought of any consequence, ideology inevitably rushes in to fill the intellectual void, as it has in the case of environmental security, thereby forcing out rationality and blinding us to the future. The only remedy for this state of affairs, the only hope that the environment, climate change in particular, and, for that matter, other unconventional threats and challenges might be taken seriously as matters of serious security concern, is for fundamental strategic transformation to take place.

It seems insultingly obvious that strategic threats demand strategic response. But let us grasp the magnitude of this statement, for in the media age in which we live, there is virtually nothing—however obscure, however remote—that is without almost instantaneous strategic consequence. Let us further understand why being strategic is therefore so intrinsically important. First, it is a moral obligation of government—to take the long view, to grasp the big picture, to anticipate and prevent, to appreciate the hidden, residual consequences of action or inaction, to recognize and capitalize on the interrelatedness of all things otherwise seemingly discrete and unrelated.

Second, being strategic inoculates us against crisis. Where crisis occurs, be it a terrorist incident or a natural disaster, strategic thinking has failed—with the unwanted result that decisionmaking must be artificially compressed and forced, and resources diverted from their intended purposes. Thus does crisis prevention stand alongside assured security as an overarching strategic aim of democratic society.

Third, being strategic provides the intellectual basis for both the strategic leadership expected of a superpower and the enduring, broad-based consensus necessary to galvanize a diverse, pluralistic society in common cause in the face of uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

Four strategic imperatives should guide our future. The first let us call targeted causation management—focusing our thinking and our actions on identifying and eradicating the underlying causes of insecurity, thereby curing the disease rather than treating the symptoms. Environmental degradation and climate change take us much farther along the path to ultimate causes than terrorism ever could, especially if we acknowledge that the social, political, economic, and military conditions we prefer to deal with and attribute violence to may mask disaffection and unrest more deeply attributable to an environmentally degraded quality of life.

A second strategic imperative, institutionalized anticipatory response, calls for institutionalizing—giving permanence and legitimacy to—the capacity and inclination for preventive action. This would enhance the prospects that conditions and events can be dealt with when they are manageable, before they mutate out of control and demand forceful response. Examples could range from a Manhattan Project-like effort to develop alternative energy sources and technologies, to
greater inter-jurisdictional intelligence sharing, to massive disaster-resistant infrastructure development in the developing world.

A third strategic imperative is appropriate situational tailoring—dealing with conditions and events on their own geographic, cultural, and political terms rather than, as we are wont to do, inviting failure by imposing our preferred capabilities and approaches on the situations at hand. In a purely institutional sense, such tailoring might take the form, for example, of new multilateral collective security regimes in each region of the world, with major environmental preparedness and enforcement arms.

The fourth strategic imperative is comprehensive operational integration—achieving fuller organizational, doctrinal, procedural, and technological integration across military-nonmilitary, governmental-non-governmental, and national-international lines. In a conceptual policy sense, this might assume the form of an overarching strategic architecture for unifying the activities of five organizational and cultural pillars—sustainable development, sustainable energy, sustainable business, sustainable consumption, and sustainable security. In a purely structural sense, the recognition that reorganization may be required to give birth and life to needed rethinking might produce such measures as the addition of a new Cabinet-level secretary of energy and environmental affairs to formal National Security Council membership, the creation of a UN under secretary-general for environmental affairs (or environmental security), or the expansion of the United Nations Environment Programme into an organization with operational capabilities and enforcement authority. In any event, all such measures would have to be underwritten by a firm commitment to more thoroughgoing transparency and multilateralism.

Finally, let us turn to the military. On the one hand, military action represents the least strategic option available for addressing environmental security (or virtually anything else for that matter). At least this is true so long as the military continues to be configured and oriented as it is and always has been—that is, for warfighting. On the other hand, the military is so central to our governing conception of security that true strategic transformation can take place only if it includes, or perhaps is preceded by, far-reaching military transformation—making real what until now has been only tiresome rhetoric from the Pentagon.

If the military has shown itself serious to date about environmental matters—even to the extent of creditting itself with being an excellent steward of nature—it is entirely a reflection of a distinctly engineering and management orientation dedicated principally to installation cleanup and remediation. Environmental security—the stuff of operations and intelligence, rather than of engineering and logistics—has been largely alien to the military ethos and identity. One need only consider the military’s efforts under President Clinton to seek and gain selected exemptions from the Kyoto Protocol, or its tiresless (if not entirely successful) attempts under President Bush to seek exemption from an array of environmental laws alleged to degrade readiness.

Two overriding considerations must guide military transformation. The first is the realization that what we ought to want is a military that is not just militarily effective—an instrument of force that serves the state—but that is strategically effective—an instrument of power that serves the larger aims of society and even humanity. The second overriding consideration is the concomitant realization that the military must be, and be seen to be, not a warfighting machine so much as a self-contained, self-sufficient enterprise that is capable of being projected over long distances for sustained periods of time to effectively manage all stages of a full range of complex emergencies.

Such considerations, taken to heart, ideally would produce a completely revamped military organized, manned, equipped, and trained primarily for nation-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response, and only residually for warfighting. Such a military not only would possess the requisite capabilities for fulfilling the strategic imperatives enumerated above; it also would project the all-important imagery of a force truly committed to the pursuit of peace rather than to the enduringly illogical proposition that peace can be purchased by practicing war.

If we are to think and act strategically, which we must, we do well to recall the declaration from the Gayanashagowa, the Great Law of Peace of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy: “In our every deliberation we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.” And in applying this strategic precept to the matter at hand, which we must, we do no less well to take up the challenge issued recently by former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. Interviewed some months ago, he was asked what he thought of the American doctrine of preemption. To which he responded:

Those who talk about leadership of the world all the time ought to exercise it. Rather than develop strategic doctrines of military preemption—as we’ve seen in Iraq, where no weapons of mass destruction have yet been found—let’s act where the intelligence is clear: on climate change and other issues such as water, where today 2 billion people in the world don’t have access to clean water. Let’s talk instead about preempting global warming and the looming water crisis.

Indeed. Words for the self-proclaimed world’s only superpower to act on.