

# Environmental insecurity and fortress mentality

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Shortages of food, water and non-renewable energy sources can trigger nefarious activities involving organized criminal networks, transnational corporations and governments at varying political levels. Illegal and excessive fishing, sidestepping of regulations on disposal of hazardous waste, water and land theft, fraudulent manipulation of alternative energy subsidies and policies, and transference of toxicity and contaminated products across national borders are driven by a variety of motivations and involve a wide range of actors. The consequences of such activities contribute to even more ruthless exploitation of rapidly vanishing natural resources, as well as the further diminution of air, soil and water quality, thereby exacerbating the competition among individuals, groups and nations for what is left.

This article explores the political, economic and ecological context within which preoccupations with environmental insecurity emerge and how they feed back into a fortress mentality. The pursuit of security based upon a fortress mentality simultaneously fosters global crimes such as ecocide, contributes to the proliferation of specific conventional environmental crimes and hampers the exercise of justice. The net result is insecurity and injustice, a consequence that further bolsters the fortress mentality. A pernicious spiral of harm is thus reproduced over time.

The accompanying insecurities and vulnerabilities ensure elite and popular support for self-interested 'security'. Accordingly, the 'fortress' is being constructed and reconstructed at individual, local, national and regional levels—as both an attitude of mind and a material reality. The net result is that security is being built upon a platform of state, corporate and organized group wrongdoing and injustice, in many instances with the implied and/or overt consent of relevant publics.

The intention of this article is to explore these propositions in greater depth. The aim is to explain why it is that collectively so many are implicated in the destruction of a particular way of life, under the rubric of doing so for the sake of enjoying and defending it. The paradoxes embedded in the gross exploitation of nature are explored through consideration of the historical appropriation of natural resources and the scramble today to carve up what is left. A primary concern is to examine critically notions of environmental security, the fortress mentality, and social and ecological insecurity.

Policy development that goes beyond this fortress security agenda will necessarily be based upon a global vision of universal human interests and ecological citizenship. To do anything less is to invite ecocide—itsself the greatest environmental crime of all.

## Environmental insecurity

The notion of environmental *insecurity* is usually tied to actions and conditions that undermine the ability to exploit or use nature sufficiently to meet human needs. Hall observes that definitions of ‘environmental security’ differ, but generally the concept tends to link environmental degradation and associated scarcity of resources with human conflict at individual, group and state levels.<sup>1</sup>

Scarcity is tied to the overexploitation of natural resources. It is also increasingly linked to the consequences of global warming.<sup>2</sup> The choices ingrained in environmental exploitation stem from systemic imperatives to exploit the planetary environment for production of commodities for human use.<sup>3</sup> The means by which humans produce, consume and reproduce their conditions of life are socially patterned in ways that are dominated by global corporate interests and those of the hegemonic nation-states. The power of consumerist ideology and practice manifests in the way in which certain forms of production and consumption become part of a taken-for-granted common sense, the experiences and habits of everyday life.

One result of the regimes and routines that sustain contemporary social life, especially in the global North (or ‘the West’) is the systematic transformation of nature. Elements of this transformation include, among others:

- *resource depletion*—extraction of non-renewable minerals and energy without development of proper alternatives; overharvesting of renewable resources such as fish and forest timbers;
- *disposal problems*—relating to waste generated in production, distribution and consumption processes, and pollution associated with transformations of nature, burning of fossil fuels and using up of consumables;
- *corporate colonization of nature*—genetic changes in food crops; use of plantation forestry that diminishes biodiversity; preference for large-scale, technology-dependent and high-yield agricultural and aquaculture methods that degrade land and oceans and affect species’ development and well-being;

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Hall, *Victims of environmental harm: rights, recognition and redress under national and international law* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Global warming* describes the rising of the Earth’s temperature over a relatively short time span. *Climate change* describes the interrelated effects of this rise in temperature, from changing sea levels and changing ocean currents, through to the impacts of temperature change on local environments that affect the endemic flora and fauna in varying ways (for instance, the death of coral owing to temperature increases in sea water or the changed migration patterns of birds). *Weather* is the name given to the direct local experience of phenomena such as sunshine, wind, rain and snow, and the general disposition of the elements. It is about the short-term and personal, not the long-term patterns associated with climate in general. See Constance Lever-Tracy, *Confronting climate change* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Stretesky, Michael Long and Michael Lynch, *The treadmill of crime: political economy and green criminology* (London: Routledge, 2014).

- *species decline*—destruction of habitats, privileging of certain species of grains and vegetables over others for market purposes; super-exploitation of specific plants and animals, due to presumed consumer taste and mass markets.<sup>4</sup>

The moral and material universe within which these trends occur is one that is generally supportive of this sort of natural resource exploitation. In other words, the ravaging of nature takes place with the *consent* of its beneficiaries, among whom are the general populaces of advanced industrialized countries.

Nonetheless there are limits to this exploitation, as evidenced by the increasing scarcity of both non-renewables (e.g. oil and minerals) and renewables (e.g. fresh water, forests, fertile soils). Sustainable use occurs when the underlying stock is not depleted in quantity or degraded in quality; this is rarely the case today. Scarcity can arise from:

- depletion or degradation of the resource (supply);
- increased demand for it (demand);
- unequal distribution and/or resource capture (structural scarcity).<sup>5</sup>

As Homer-Dixon comments, these three factors are interrelated: ‘Deforestation increases the scarcity of forest resources, water pollution increases the scarcity of clean water, and climate change increases the scarcity of the regular patterns of rainfall and temperature on which farmers rely.’<sup>6</sup>

The centrality of resource issues has been examined at length by Klare, who points out that they are especially important for those states that depend on raw material imports for their industrial prowess.<sup>7</sup> Demand is escalating worldwide for commodities of all types (energy, consumer goods, food), accompanied by huge population growth and rising affluence via economic expansion in places such as China and India. Increasingly there are scarcities of specific resources (e.g. forest cover, marine fisheries, freshwater systems and fossil fuels), leading to a proliferation of ownership contests (e.g. disputes over islands involving China, Vietnam, the Philippines and Japan; redrawing of boundaries in the Arctic among border states such as Russia, Canada, Norway and the United States).<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile: ‘To guard against immediate food shortages, government-backed agricultural firms in China, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are already buying vast tracts of arable land in Africa and elsewhere to provide food for consumption at home.’<sup>9</sup> Security is being sought through the appropriation of resources in specific biosocial locations.

Simultaneously, global warming is transforming the biophysical world in ways that are radically and rapidly reshaping social and ecological futures. A recent

<sup>4</sup> Rob White, ‘Transnational environmental crime and eco-global criminology’, in Shlomo Giora Shoham, Paul Knepper and Martin Kett, eds, *International handbook of criminology* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, *Environment, scarcity, and violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Homer-Dixon, *Environment, scarcity, and violence* p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> Michael T. Klare, *The race for what’s left: the global scramble for the world’s last resources* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Avi Brisman, ‘Not a bedtime story: climate change, neoliberalism, and the future of the Arctic’, *Michigan State International Law Review* 22: 1, 2013, pp. 241–89.

<sup>9</sup> Klare, *The race for what’s left*, p. 11.

report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that:

- Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased.
- Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth's surface than any preceding decade since 1850.
- Ocean warming dominates the increase in energy stored in the climate system, accounting for more than 90% of the energy accumulated between 1971 and 2010.
- Over the last two decades, the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have been losing mass, glaciers have continued to shrink almost worldwide, and Arctic sea ice and Northern Hemisphere spring snow cover have continued to decrease in extent.
- The rate of sea level rise since the mid-19th century has been larger than the mean rate during the previous two millennia.<sup>10</sup>

Scientific data continue to demonstrate the depth and scale of the problem.

According to those who advocate making 'ecocide' a new crime against peace, the failure to act now to prevent global warming can be considered 'criminal'. Ecocide has been defined as 'the extensive damage, destruction to or loss of ecosystems of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished'.<sup>11</sup> Where this occurs as a result of human agency, then it is deemed to be a crime. The failure of nation-states and large corporations to act sensibly and prudently with regard to climate change can be framed as criminally culpable behaviour within this framework. Economic and social interventions that sustain the status quo (and that include maintaining the viability of 'dirty' industries) are currently favoured over those that might tackle the key drivers of climate change and that could diminish the burgeoning threats to ecological sustainability worldwide. The harms are known, and the acts leading to the generation of the harms are intentional. This, therefore, is ecocide.

The mainstream or generic sense of environmental insecurity speaks to issues such as 'food security' and related social ills, such as riots and social conflict and/or the illegal harvesting of fish, animals and plants. Insecurity relates to the biophysical and socio-economic consequences of various sources of threat and damage to the environment including pollution, resource degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change.<sup>12</sup> In the midst of these insecurities a range of new and old crimes is apparent. For example, drought-induced food scarcity is associated with the rise of illicit markets, climate-induced migration with human trafficking and the exploitation of children by gangs and militias, and fraud with carbon emissions trading schemes.

<sup>10</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Working Group I Contribution to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2013: the physical science basis*, 'Summary for policymakers', 27 Sept. 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Polly Higgins, *Earth is our business: changing the rules of the game* (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 2012), p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Nigel South, 'Climate change, environmental (in)security, conflict and crime', in Stephen Farrall, Tawhida Ahmed and Duncan French, *Criminological and legal consequences of climate change* (Oxford: Hart, 2012).

Security is substantially constructed around the notion of control over resources, enforced by the viewpoint that ‘might makes right’. For example, South observes that: ‘A new world of hydropolitics emerges in situations where water sources are currently accessed by several nations but could potentially be controlled—or indeed monopolised—by one nation or by private water and power consortia.’<sup>13</sup> Environmental security is basically defined in relation to specific corporate and national interests, and threats to these interests. This is reflected in the literature dealing with these issues. Hall, for example, also makes the point that as natural resources become restricted by various impacts of climate change and wider environmental degradation, such resources will become increasingly precious to states and therefore increasingly attractive to terrorist groups seeking to achieve symbolic victories.<sup>14</sup>

Here, a shift can be observed in the notion of ‘security’ towards a conception in which the primary evil is not environmental destruction as such, but the politics and corruption surrounding such destruction. In a similar vein, Wyatt, in a book on wildlife trafficking, argues that: ‘It can threaten national security because wildlife trafficking is carried out through corruption at various levels, organised crime and possibly terrorists and insurgents.’<sup>15</sup>

National security is conceptualized here as being more than just military, encompassing territorial inviolability, and economic and political interests that protect the value and stability of the state. According to Wyatt, there are three major problems that states and the international community have to come to grips with in relation to national security: *corruption* (entailing ‘corruption of the officials in origin, transit and destination countries as well as corruption of the employees of transportation agencies involved along the smuggling chain’); *organized crime* (involving wildlife trafficking in conjunction with trafficking in weapons, drugs and human beings, and including criminal enclaves which, in some circumstances, supersede the state’s monopoly on use of force); and *terrorism and insurgency* (involving natural resource theft, such as wildlife trafficking and engagement in black markets for ‘blood ivory’ or ‘blood diamonds’). Wyatt also makes mention of the possible use of the illegal wildlife trade as a vector for transferring disease, that is, as a form of environmental terrorism.<sup>16</sup>

Security, in the light of an international reconfiguration of wealth and resources, power and dominance, can be understood in geopolitical terms as containment and exclusion. This is also reflected in the so-called ‘climate divide’ associated with global warming:

Climate change is producing a new set of global dividing lines, now between those at most risk and those at least risk. This ‘climate divide’ is recognised in many ways but arguably not on a widespread basis or with full appreciation of what it really means. In essence, the climate divide represents a further extension of the inequitable state of the affairs of

<sup>13</sup> South, ‘Climate change’, p. 100.

<sup>14</sup> Hall, *Victims of environmental harm*, pp. 36–7.

<sup>15</sup> Tanya Wyatt, *Wildlife trafficking: a deconstruction of the crime, the victims and the offenders* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> Wyatt, *Wildlife trafficking*.

humanity, one in which the conditions producing climate change are contributed to most overwhelmingly by rich consumer societies but which will impose the greatest costs and resultant miseries on the already poor and newly developing nations.<sup>17</sup>

Environmental security is thus basically about security for very specific and particular social interests. To put it differently, the 'national interest' usually reflects specific sectoral business interests, not universal interests. This is evidenced in the manner in which climate change contrarianism is pushed by particular industries and acceded to by dominant nation-states such as the United States.<sup>18</sup> Humanity has certain shared interests—universal human interests—such as the survival of the human race in the face of phenomena including global warming and climate change. These common human interests need to take priority over any other kind of interests if we are, as a species, to survive. Yet this is not occurring. This failure to act forms part of the conundrum of environmental *insecurity* and the fortress mentality that sustains it.

In essence, 'environmental security' is not so much about the environment as it is about security. Consider, for example, the relocation of the environmental crime unit at Interpol into the 'Environmental Security Sub-Directorate' under the 'Counter Terrorism, Public Safety and Maritime Security Directorate'. The equation now seems to go something like this:

Environmental crime + security, terrorism and organized crime = natural resource protection

This represents a narrowing of the definition of environmental harm in ways that do not focus on intrinsic harms to the environment as such. Instead, such conceptions reflect militarized notions of 'security', rather than those premised upon either universal human interests (such as food security, air security and water security for all) or the intrinsic worth of animals, plants and specific eco-systems as such.

Environmental security is thus about protecting one's turf and one's resources from those who threaten them through criminal appropriation, political contestation or terrorist intervention.

## Constructing the fortress

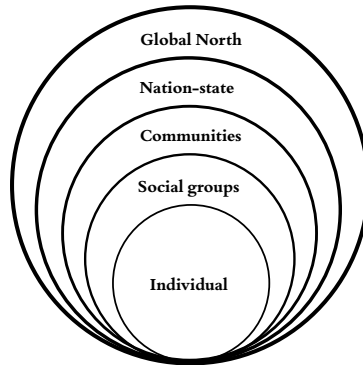
How 'environmental security' is understood mirrors the notion of the 'fortress' and how this is constructed and reconstructed at individual, local, national and regional levels.

Tiers of fortification are built step by step, level by overlapping level (see figure 1). We build walls around ourselves to shield us against the vicissitudes of unkind economic circumstance. Our social groups—families, friends and local neighbours,

<sup>17</sup> South, 'Climate change', p. 109.

<sup>18</sup> Avi Brisman, 'The violence of silence: some reflections on access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in matters concerning the environment', *Crime, Law and Social Change* 59: 3, 2013, pp. 291–303.

**Figure 1: Tiers of fortification**



our workmates—band together to protect immediate interests and exclude those who potentially disrupt any advantages to which we might be clinging. Communities with commonly held beliefs and values extol the importance of their survival, their interests, their integrity—and the city enclave reproduces identity and exclusivity in the same moment. The nation-state erects ever stronger border controls, and entry–exit criteria are elaborated in ever-increasing detail at the same time that surveillance is stepped up. The global North (a metaphor for privilege and wealth based upon the western ideal) sets out its security plans and charts how best to carve up new territories, new opportunities for exploitation, new ways to extract from the Earth its final pounds of (non-renewable) flesh, and new exclusions.

Environmental crime is increasing on a world scale, in terms of variety, volume and value, mainly because of scarcity and conflict.<sup>19</sup> This trend directly affects access to essentials, such as safe drinking water, food sources and shelter. Table 1, based on recent information about transnational environmental crime, provides a snapshot summary of the worth (dollar value) and damage (ecological impact) caused by illegal trade and trafficking.

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute has reported a considerable expansion of transnational environmental crimes in recent years, largely due to the actions of organized criminal groups across borders.

Led by vast financial gains and facilitated by a low risk of detection and scarce conviction rates, criminal networks and organized criminal groups are becoming increasingly interested in such illicit transnational activities. These phenomena fuel corruption and money-laundering, and undermine the rule of law, ultimately affecting the public twice: first, by putting at risk citizens' health and safety; and second, by diverting resources that would otherwise be allocated to services other than crime. The level of organization needed for these crimes indicates a link with other serious offences, including theft, fraud, corruption, drugs and human trafficking, counterfeiting, firearms smuggling, and money laundering, several of which have been substantiated by investigations.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Avi Brisman and Nigel South, 'Resources, wealth, power, crime and conflict', in Reece Walters, Diane Solomon Westerhuis and Tanya Wyatt, eds, *Emerging issues in green criminology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), pp. 57–71.

<sup>20</sup> United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, *Environmental crimes*, 2013, <http://www.unicri.it/print.php>, accessed 18 May 2014.

**Table 1: Worth of environmental crime—selected commodities**

<i>Type of crime</i>	<i>Annual value, US\$</i>	<i>% of world activity</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Wildlife crime	15–20 billion		Birds, ivory and rhino horn, reptiles and insects, tigers, wild game
Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing	10–23.5 billion	Est. 20% of world catches	Abalone, caviar, shark fin, sturgeon
Illegal logging	30–100 billion	15–30% of global trade	Timber production, land clearing, crop substitution

*Source:* United Nations Environment Programme and One World South Asia, *Theft of natural resources is a new challenge* (Nairobi: UNEP, 2013), <http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/theft-of-natural-resources-is-a-new-challenge-unesp>, accessed 15 May 2014.

It is not only traditional criminal networks and syndicates that are implicated in transnational environmental crimes. There are also links between terrorist groups and particular types of environmental crime. For example:

The recent terror attack on the popular Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, has placed environmental crimes like the ivory and rhino horn trade under increased scrutiny. Al-Shabab, the Islamist militant group that has taken credit for the attack, is widely believed to fund as much as 40 percent of its activities from elephant poaching, or the ‘blood ivory’ trade.<sup>21</sup>

Not surprisingly, agencies such as Interpol have stepped up their activities in response to the nature and dynamics of contemporary environmental crime and its perpetrators as defined in conventional legal terms.

Yet there is also to be considered the larger ‘crime’ associated with private and state ownership where land is utilized for profit-making activities (e.g. biofuels, mining, logging, flex crops<sup>22</sup> and agriculture for export) rather than to meet social need. There is nothing particularly new about this; the history of colonialism is in essence a history of resource extraction and exploitation. Globalization is but a more intensive and intrusive extension of an imperialism that has always been oriented towards exploitation of people and natural resources in the global South, perpetrated by the transnational corporations and hegemonic nation-states of the global North.

<sup>21</sup> Irin, ‘Environmental crimes increasingly linked to violence, insecurity’, 3 Oct. 2013, <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=98872>, accessed 18 May 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Flex crops refer to a single crop, such as soybean, that has multiple characteristics and uses (food, feed, fuel), and as such are highly valued commercially.



### *Social inequality and social conflict*

Out of this mix emerge a series of related environmental conflicts, as Brisman and South note:

The environment and natural resources can be a *source of conflict* (for example when groups fight over access to or use of natural resources), can *fuel or fund existing conflicts* (for example when warring groups extract diamonds or metals or timber that are then sold to finance conflicts), and can be a *casualty of conflict* (for example, in the Vietnam War, when deforestation chemicals, such as Agent Orange, caused crop destruction; in the first Gulf War, when oil wells were set ablaze).<sup>23</sup>

Defending economic interests and preserving a certain way of life are far too often deemed to be in the 'national interest'. Contrary to this, any shift towards international environmental sustainability tends to be shunned or actively hindered as sectional interests prevail.

The divide between North and South, geographically and metaphorically, is already deepening as crises related to food production and distribution, energy sources and pollution, and changing climates reconfigure the established world order. Social inequality and environmental injustice will undoubtedly be the drivers of continuous conflict into the future, as the most dispossessed and marginalized of the world's population suffer the brunt of food shortages, undrinkable water, climate-induced migration and general hardship in their day-to-day lives. Women will suffer more than men, people of colour more than the non-indigenous and the non-migrant, the young and the elderly more than the adult, and the infirm and disabled of all ages. Social conflict linked to climate change is as much as anything a reflection of social inequality, and not simply determined by changes in environmental conditions.<sup>24</sup>

When subsistence fishing, farming and hunting wither due to overexploitation and climate change, then great shifts in human populations and in resource use will take place. The forced migration of environmental refugees poses a whole new set of questions for public policy and social justice.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the relationship between environmental change, climate-induced displacement and human migration is already generating anxiety in some western government circles and is reinforcing the development of a fortress mentality within certain jurisdictions (whether among groups of countries such as the European Union or discrete nation-states such as Australia).

Global warming, meanwhile, will continue to accelerate, given the privileged position of the oil and coal industries, the advent of coal-seam 'fracking' and its threats to prime agricultural land, the extensive use of deep-drill oil exploration and exploitation, the reliance upon and preference for mega-mines and open-cut mining, and changes in land use, such as deforestation in favour of cash crops,

<sup>23</sup> Brisman and South, 'Resources, wealth, power, crime and conflict', p. 58.

<sup>24</sup> Dan Smith and Janani Vivekananda, *A climate of conflict: the links between climate change, peace and war* (London: International Alert, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Refugees Studies Centre, *Forced Migration Review*, no. 31: *Climate change and displacement* (Oxford: Oxford Department of International Development, Oct. 2008).

biofuels, mining and pastoral industries. As the IPCC points out:

- The atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have increased to levels unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years.
- Carbon dioxide concentrations have increased by 40% since pre-industrial times, primarily from fossil fuel emissions and secondarily from net land use change emissions.
- Human influence has been detected in warming of the atmosphere and the ocean, in changes in the global water cycle, in reductions in snow and ice, in global mean sea level rise, and in changes in some climate extremes.
- Continued emissions of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and changes in all components of the climate system. Limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Most aspects of climate change will persist for many centuries even if emissions of carbon dioxide are stopped. This represents a substantial multi-century climate change commitment created by past, present and future emissions of carbon dioxide.
- As indicated, climate change will likewise add further stress to specific environments and general planetary ecological wellbeing that is already under pressure from over-exploitation and systematic pollution of air, water and land.<sup>26</sup>

All this and more is built upon the backs of dirty industries and the scramble for natural resources. In the process someone's, indeed everyone's, security is compromised.

### *Fortress Earth*

As we modify, degrade and destroy the lifeblood of this planet, the tendency is to retreat into a fortress mentality that is protective of immediate perceived personal and community interests. From the point of view of international affairs we appear to be looking at a future of scarcities and fortresses: of social conflicts over resources, many of which are increasingly culminating in expressions of public anger. These types of issues are cutting much closer to the bone than perhaps they used to; they are affecting real people in our time, and real people are making their voices heard, especially through street-level protest and social media. All this is a consequence of the pressures that are collectively being put on the environment. Climate change will only exacerbate these tendencies as supplies of food, energy (i.e. oil) and water dwindle, and climate-induced migration increases as a result of these and other pressures.

Using the analogy of the 'gated community', putting the fortress in place frequently embodies the very thing that it is designed to prevent—namely, insecurity. Building the fortress opens the door to gross violations of human rights within and between communities and societies and nation-states. It feeds into and gives rise to extremist politics and bolsters the view that social and ecological

<sup>26</sup> IPCC, Working Group I Contribution to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2013: the physical science basis*, 'Summary for policymakers', 27 Sept. 2013.

problems are caused by perceived 'enemies' externally (as well as internally), not by our own actions.

Shortages of food, energy sources and water are, in turn, associated with particular national interests as governments struggle to fill the pantries of their people and enable them to turn on their computers and iPads. The tendency, therefore, is to stretch sovereignty beyond national borders, as in the case of land grabs on the part of countries such as China and transnational agribusinesses keen to acquire food-producing territory located in politically, socially and economically peripheral areas of the world (such as parts of Africa). The extension of sovereignty beyond borders is also apparent in some countries' response to asylum-seekers: for example, Australia's mainland is now off limits to those who arrive in boats, with all asylum-seekers now to be processed offshore or simply forced back where they came from. Insecurities and vulnerabilities within the 'fortresses' are therefore opening up new channels of exploitation and the externalization of solutions that involve other nations (in some cases unwillingly and/or without due regard for their specific interests). The problem is that both 'security' and the 'fortress' are constructed on the basis of the notion of 'us' versus 'them'. Too often prescriptive patriotism defines social and ecological justice in terms of exclusion and the plunder of scarce resources in the short term to maintain the 'American/Australian/British/Chinese way of life'. But the world cannot sustain this; nor can protection of specific sectoral interests forestall universal harms and victimization.

The difficulty in addressing the problem is not simply or solely one of 'compassion fatigue'. Certainly, if Australia is anything to go by, aggressive anti-asylum-seeker policies are popular; indeed, they are vote-winners. As South observes in another context: 'In this case, ideals of cosmopolitanism and tolerance may fall out of line with the preoccupations of nationalist policies and the priorities of national security, turning those who should be seen as "deserving victims" into "transgressors" and "threats".'<sup>27</sup> How true this is, especially in contemporary Australian society. As environmental insecurity worsens, we can expect that human rights will continue to be devalued and subjugated to other imperatives. Limited notions of nationalism and survivalism appear to be carrying the day.

An especially salient issue in this respect, from the point of view of national interests and international security, is the mass movement of peoples, which is generally presented as a significant problem.<sup>28</sup> In particular, there is a popular inclination to view Third World ecological ruin as first and foremost a threat to First World stability and existing wealth. The reaches of national security are expanding beyond state borders through varying forms of pre-emptive action in order to restrict the migration process.<sup>29</sup> The so-called 'Pacific Solution' in Australia, for example, refers to the detainment of asylum-seekers offshore in neighbouring

<sup>27</sup> South, 'Climate change', p. 102.

<sup>28</sup> See Javier Solana and Benita Ferrero-Waldner, 'Climate change and international security', paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council (Brussels: European Union, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Sharon Pickering, *Refugees and state crime* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2005).

island states, rather than allowing them entry into Australian territory proper. Today this country ‘turns back the boats’ by force, using the Australian Navy, much to the displeasure of its Indonesian neighbour. As environmental conditions deteriorate owing to global warming, the size and extent of migration will be shaped by geography, global power relations, local community backlash and the defence of human rights.

For the privileged within both South and North, the law and order agenda tends to dominate over and above the contingencies of food or environment. Criminalization and securitization are close bedfellows, and policing takes many forms, including increasingly militarized ones (witness the fight against rhino and elephant poachers in Africa). Protecting the fortress has its costs as well, contributing to the overarching problems of environmental degradation and global warming. From greenhouse gas emissions to environmental degradation, the operational demands and impacts of the military are enormous. The US military, for example, relies heavily upon energy-inefficient equipment and vehicles. It also makes extensive use of depleted uranium in weapons and armour. The Pentagon is the single largest consumer of oil in the world. In this, it contributes to the very problem to which it is designed to respond.<sup>30</sup> The militarization of environmental security takes money out of education, welfare and other parts of the social wage, and relocates it to armed forces and border controls. This is not about equity or environmental justice; it is selective protection of particular interests.

In another cruel paradox, countries and communities with less capacity than most of those of the global North will end up exhausting their limited resources as they deal with the effects of climate change—such as droughts, floods and storms. In responding to environmental insecurity, but doing so without adequate resources, countries and communities will open the door to both mass movements of people away from scarcity (i.e. environment-related migrations) and lawlessness at home (i.e. breakdowns in law and order, in part owing to a lack of state policing resources).

### *Beyond compassion*

The fortress is constructed at all levels from the individual through to that of the global North. It is actively made, from the top down and from the bottom up. Many individuals and institutions are implicated one way or another in its construction. Importantly, the fortress has been and continues to be constructed under the ideological and material conditions of global neo-liberalism. This is a policy and practice that assigns responsibility for welfare, employment, consumption and resource use to the individual, that views accountability through the lens of the market, and that assumes privatization to be a greater good than universal and state-provided services. It is about freedom to do, but only for some; power and wealth are highly concentrated in a few hands, and the rest have to endure

<sup>30</sup> Rob White, ‘Climate change and paradoxical harm’, in Farrall et al., eds, *Criminological and legal consequences of climate change*, pp. 63–78.

the privations of dog-eat-dog economics. Compassion is structured out of social policy and state intervention. Even the Scandinavian ‘exceptions’ are under threat as they, too, undergo challenges to traditional social democratic structures and collectivist choices.

The scramble for what is left in terms of both renewable and non-renewable resources (minerals, fish, water, trees), in the context of climate-related scarcity and the accelerating limits to ecology (rapid species decline and inability of eco-systems to reproduce), heightens the sense of foreboding and insecurity in each fortress domain and at each level of fortification. It also means that unscrupulous methods may be used in order to satisfy immediate (rather than long-term) self-interests—as in the case of illegal fishing and the use of horsemeat as a substitute for beef for human consumption. Environmental crimes such as these are, in effect, generated by global systemic pressures on the world’s ecology. These pressures include global warming via carbon emissions, superexploitation of natural resources via global systems of transport and worldwide chains of production and consumption, and the substitution of ecologically benign practices by those that reduce resilience and biodiversity, such as standardized mass agricultural and pastoral production.

The global picture is looking pretty grim and will most certainly continue to generate considerable social conflict (around resources, and around movement of people). It will also witness varying types and levels of criminality, ranging from corporate illegality in shipping contaminated products through to the role of organized criminals in disposing of toxic waste, in illegal fishing and in trafficking of persons. Politically, though, it is what ends up on the dinner plate that counts (i.e. feeding citizens), and so ‘fortress’ security may well be built upon a platform of state-level wrongdoing (plundering of other people’s lands and resources), corporate wrongdoing (cutting corners to ensure product delivery at affordable costs) and organized criminal wrongdoing (that still guarantees a ‘result’ for those who subcontract out or who purchase the fruits of the criminal endeavour). Ordinary members of the public are thus implicated in fortress-making and in the techniques of neutralization (denial strategies) that allow survivalist ideologies and practices to flourish, no matter how immoral, criminal and illegal they are: those who have, want to keep having what they have and to have even more. This view is largely substantiated in recent criminological work undertaken by Agnew.<sup>31</sup> At a structural level, the practices that sustain environmental degradation and global warming are justified on the basis that ameliorative action could jeopardize corporate profits or even survival, as well as the economic prosperity and/or economic development of particular nation-states. It is also known from where ‘environmental issues’ sit in opinion polls that the average everyday citizen does not want to hear about policies and practices that will penalize their lifestyle in the here-and-now.

Agnew has thoughtfully considered the implications of the proposition that ‘ordinary acts’ contribute to ecocide: ‘These ordinary acts have several characteristics:

<sup>31</sup> Robert Agnew, ‘The ordinary acts that contribute to ecocide: a criminological analysis’, in Nigel South and Avi Brisman, eds, *The Routledge international handbook of green criminology* (London: Routledge, 2013).

they are widely and regularly performed by individuals as part of their routine activities; they are generally viewed as acceptable, even desirable; and they collectively have a substantial impact on environmental problems.<sup>32</sup> For example, he explains how the livestock grazing that supports meat consumption is a major source of deforestation, water pollution and climate change—accounting for 18 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. For many in the West, the contribution to ecocide takes the form of living in large climate-controlled homes, using petroleum-based cars, eating a lot of meat and continually purchasing consumer products.

Why do we kill ourselves in this way? Part of the explanation, Agnew suggests, is that we can: because those in affluent western countries, such as the United States, have the resources and opportunity to engage in such harms. Conversely, there is a corresponding lack of sufficient resources to undertake responsible use of natural resources (the costs associated with the purchase of a hybrid car, for instance). Second, the risk of incurring any sanction for engaging in ordinary harms is low, while the risk of sanction for engaging in environmentally responsible behaviours is higher (witness the social response to ‘hippie lifestyles’, veganism and so on). Third, the disposition for engaging in ordinary harms is strong, while that for engaging in environmentally responsible behaviours is low.<sup>33</sup> The bottom line is that: ‘The harms increase one’s stake in conformity, since they provide a range of possessions and a lifestyle that most are reluctant to relinquish.’<sup>34</sup> This is precisely about protecting the fortress.

This is, of course, the view from the metropole. The view from the periphery may well be quite different—perhaps: for the global North sets an example that is hard to ignore, or resist. Profound inequalities and marginalization are being exacerbated by conditions of climate change. But awareness of social difference at a global level is readily visible to virtually everyone in the world today, thanks to modern communication technologies like mobile phones and the internet. Who is doing what to whom is public knowledge—from protests and arrests in Iran through to repression in Uzbekistan. So, too, is the knowledge of who holds the wealth and how the social contingencies of birth determine who experiences the privileged lifestyle. Images of the cars and houses of the global North are brought into everyone’s home regardless of where they live. Global communications technology is revolutionizing people’s expectations as well as shaking the foundations of the status quo, everywhere.

For those still relatively privileged people in the global North, or for those who aspire to be among the privileged, there are many ways in which to ‘externalize’ the problem—and the possible guilt. Consider, for example, the problem of waste. Waste disposal is big business that today involves large transnational corporations as active players.<sup>35</sup> As such, it is about profit-making and keeping costs down. This is associated with several different ways in which the costs for waste management have been externalized.

<sup>32</sup> Agnew, ‘The ordinary acts’, p. 58.

<sup>33</sup> Agnew, ‘The ordinary acts’, p. 62.

<sup>34</sup> Agnew, ‘The ordinary acts’, p. 69.

<sup>35</sup> Sharon Beder, *Suited themselves: how corporations drive the global agenda* (London: Earthscan, 2006).

Externalizing harm frequently takes the form of transferring this waste from Europe, the United States and Japan to non-metropolitan countries and regions such as Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and South and South-East Asia. The specific mechanisms for the transfer of hazardous waste from the North to the South vary, and are ostensibly governed by international conventions and protocols. The dynamic nature of hazard transfer, however, is enabled both by the inbuilt limitations of domestic or national laws and through the sidestepping of existing international regulation through strategies such as the renaming of the process as recycling.<sup>36</sup>

Another form of externalizing harm occurs at the point of production rather than via transfer of waste *per se*. Several decades of neo-liberal ideology and free-market politics have provided the groundwork for the transfer of production from the centre to the periphery. This kind of free trade may lead to the alteration of a country's relative production of pollution, that is, production of clean goods relative to production of dirty goods (the latter produce more pollution per unit than the former).

Harm is also externalized through the disconnection between production and consumption in ways that sustain unequal trade and waste-producing relations. Indeed, the nature of contemporary global production and consumption tends to sever the connection between consumption and waste. The commodity appears as outside human agency, as alien to production as such. This is evident in a culture of disconnection that marks the relationship between consumer and producer, dissociating the harm derived from the production and later disposal of a commodity, from the act of consumption—a process in which 'every good and service is, in its material totality, a link in an economically infinite chain of harms'.<sup>37</sup> Thus, there is no sense of communal ownership in relation not only to the benefits of the exploitation of human and natural resources but also to its costs.

The disconnect between the relative affluence and environmental benefits of the global North and the poverty and environmental degradation of the global South rarely takes hold in the minds and hearts of people in the former. In part, this is owing to a habit of denial that applies to environmental insecurities as it does to atrocities.<sup>38</sup> We know, but somehow we do not want to know either. We are the bystanders. Denial is made easier when accompanied by hostility to the Other. Defending 'our' lifestyle and 'our' way of life is built upon notions of entitlement and in-group benefit that have historically been shaped from the European colonial era onwards. Hurting others does not hurt if the Others are deemed less than human, less than worthy, less than capable. Besides, in the neo-liberal universe, it is the top dog that gets the reward, and little consideration is given to the rest.

<sup>36</sup> See Jennifer Clapp, *Toxic exports: the transfer of hazardous wastes from rich to poor countries* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2001); Craig Collins, *Toxic loopholes: failures and future prospects for environmental law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Martin O'Brien, 'Criminal degradations of consumer culture', in Ragnhild Sollund, ed., *Global harms: ecological crime and speciesism* (New York: Nova Science, 2008), p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> See Stanley Cohen, *States of denial: knowing about atrocities and suffering* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).

It is thus not lack of compassion that is the problem. It is the contemporary form of 'human nature', shaped by three decades of neo-liberal individualism, that basically tells us to look after ourselves first and protect the fortress (whatever form it takes), because no one else will. This is reinforced by the pressures and limits on the ordinary acts that collectively spell ruin. To put it succinctly: no one really cares as long as other people's garbage or hardships do not wind up in their protected spaces.

## Future imperfect

'Green criminology' tries to frame these general issues pertaining to environmental crime, harm and security in terms of transgressions against humans, eco-systems and animals.<sup>39</sup> The concept of eco-justice embodies this, as it refers to the inter-related fields of environmental justice (humans and equity), ecological justice (intrinsic value of ecosystems) and species justice (rights and needs of animals).<sup>40</sup> The tendency towards the 'fortress' society (again, at all levels) undermines the possibility and practice of eco-justice in its various manifestations.

Going beyond the fortress mentality requires a global vision, one that views universal human interests as achievable through global ecological citizenship. If self-interest is defined solely in terms of corporate profit and the 'national interest', then basically we are doomed to a life that is, to quote Thomas Hobbes, 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'.<sup>41</sup> Sectional interests of this sort can only serve to divide the world into 'winners' and 'losers', an arrangement that has marked the advance of human history to date—but which cannot be sustained in the light of the cataclysmic circumstances posed by climate change and continued environmental degradation. The future is barbarism and privation. And that future is approaching rapidly. The message of climate science is unequivocal, and damning.

The superexploitation of natural resources, through both legal and illegal means, and the continued reliance upon energy sources that we know contribute to global warming, are instances of 'ecocide'. There is foreknowledge of the harm, and we know who the perpetrators are. Yet the global political community continues to do very little about it (the failure of nation-states such as the United States to act on climate change has led some critical criminologists to label this a form of state–corporate crime.<sup>42</sup>) From a green criminology perspective, this can be analysed as morally bankrupt and criminally negligent. The end result is our mutual and collective demise.

<sup>39</sup> Rob White, *Transnational environmental crime: toward an eco-global criminology* (London: Routledge, 2011); and Rob White and Diane Heckenberg, *Green criminology: an introduction to the study of environmental harm* (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> Rob White, *Environmental harm: an eco-justice perspective* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: or the matter, forme, and power of a common-wealth ecclesiasticall and civill*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010; first publ. 1651).

<sup>42</sup> See e.g. Ronald C. Kramer and Raymond J. Michalowski, 'Is global warming a state–corporate crime?', in Rob White, ed., *Climate change from a criminological perspective* (New York: Springer, 2012); Ronald C. Kramer, 'Carbon in the atmosphere and power in America: climate change as state–corporate crime', *Journal of Crime and Justice* 36: 2, 2013, pp. 153–70.



## *Environmental insecurity and fortress mentality*

The environmental justice framework seeks to prevent environmental threats and is premised upon a series of interlinked propositions and principles.<sup>43</sup> These principles emphasize values such as social equity (asserting that all individuals should have a right to be protected from environmental degradation) and harm prevention (focusing on eliminating a threat before harm occurs). Each of these areas requires that considerable resources be devoted to measuring important factors such as human exposure to environmental harms and insecurities, and sociological analysis of harm and risk distributions among diverse population groups.

A critical element of the environmental justice framework is ideological and practical support for the adoption of the precautionary principle. The preferred emphasis when it comes to precaution is to err on the side of human safety and well-being rather than the pursuit of industrial development. As Bullard observes:

It asks ‘How little harm is possible?’ rather than ‘How much harm is allowable?’ This principle demands that decision makers set goals for safe environments and examine all available alternatives for achieving the goals, and it places the burden of proof of safety on those who propose to use inherently dangerous and risky technologies.<sup>44</sup>

This approach is about tearing down the fortress, brick by exploitative brick, so that environmental security becomes a reality for all. The alternative is still, for many of us, unthinkable. Yet the fortification continues apace, thereby contributing to varying levels of insecurity for us all.

<sup>43</sup> Robert D. Bullard, ‘Environmental justice in the twenty-first century’, in Robert D. Bullard, ed., *The quest for environmental justice: human rights and the politics of pollution* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> Bullard, ‘Environmental justice in the twenty-first century’, p. 28.

