



Best of the Beat: Highlights From the First Year newsecuritybeat.blogspot.com

The *New Security Beat*, ECSP's blog, was launched in January 2007 to shed light on some of today's broader security issues, including water scarcity, environmental degradation, and population growth. The posts below are selected highlights from the first year of the *New Security Beat*, which won a 2008 Global Media Award for Excellence in Population Reporting in the category of "Best Online Commentary." We invite you to become part of our global readership by visiting us on the web at <http://newsecuritybeat.blogspot.com>.

Guest Contributor Colin Kahl on Kenya's Ethnic Land Strife

By Colin Kahl, Assistant Professor, Security Studies Program, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service

January 8, 2008

<http://newsecuritybeat.blogspot.com/2008/01/guest-contributor-colin-kahl-on-kenyas.html>

A story in yesterday's *New York Times* describes an expanding campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Kikuyu tribe in western Kenya. We've seen this story before. In my 2006 book *States, Scarcity, and Civil Strife in the Developing World*, I explained how rapid population growth, environmental degradation, and historical land grievances collided with multi-party elections in the early 1990s to provide opportunities for Kenyan elites to gain power and wealth by violently mobilizing ethnic groups against one another. The ensuing violence pitted the Kalenjin and other smaller tribal communities engaged in pastoral activities against the Kikuyu, Luo, and other traditional farming communities in the fertile Rift Valley, leaving more than a thousand Kenyans dead and hundreds of thousands homeless.

Sound familiar? Demographically and environmentally induced ethnic land competition—at the heart of the 1990s conflicts—remains problematic today. Deep-seated grievances



Georgetown University Professor Colin Kahl (Courtesy Heidi Fancher, Wilson Center)



Broadcast journalist and Global Media Award-winner Melclaire R. Sy-Delfin (Courtesy Heidi Fancher, Wilson Center)



Without focused efforts to improve degraded resources and reduce population growth, the Filipino philosophy “Bahala na”—roughly equivalent to “que sera, sera”—may let the wells run dry.

emanating from struggles over scarce farmland provide ample opportunities for elites across the political spectrum to mobilize tribal supporters to engage in violence and ethnic land cleansing during times of electoral instability—especially in rural areas, where strong group identification facilitates such mobilization. This didn’t happen during the last presidential election, in 2002, because elites bought into the democratic process and the elections were viewed as fair. In addition, the Kenyan Electoral Commission and the international community, in an effort to prevent a repeat of the strife in 1992 and 1997, closely scrutinized electoral behavior in 2002.

This time, the apparent rigging of the election by the Kibaki regime—which many minority tribes view as having used its political power to unfairly benefit its own Kikuyu tribe—unleashed the latent grievances against the Kikuyu still present in Kenyan society. “You have to understand that these issues are much deeper than ethnic,” Maina Kiai, chairman of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, told the *Times*. “They are political...they go back to land.”

Sources: *New York Times*, Woodrow Wilson Center, Princeton University Press

“Bahala na”? Population Growth Brings Water Crisis to the Philippines

By *Meaghan Parker, ECSP*

January 4, 2008

<http://newsecuritybeat.blogspot.com/2008/01/bahala-na-population-growth-brings.html>

A report by Filipino TV journalist Melclaire R. Sy-Delfin—recent Global Media Award winner and subject of an ECSP podcast—warns that a water crisis could threaten the 88 million residents of the Philippines as early as 2010. According to Delfin, 27 percent of Filipinos still lack access to drinking water, despite successful government programs to increase supply.

Why? “There has been too much focus on developing new sources of supply rather than on better management of existing ones,” said Department of Environment and Natural

Resources Secretary Angelo Reyes at a January 2007 conference. Almost all of the country’s watersheds are in critical condition, devastated by logging, erosion, sedimentation, mining, overgrazing, and pollution.

Population growth is also erasing the government’s gains. “From 1995 to 2005, the government has successfully provided water for an additional 23.04 million. However, the population increased by 24.5 million over the same period,” National Water Resources Board Director Ramon Alikpala told a UNDP meeting.

Growing by more than 2 percent annually, the Philippines’ population could top 90 million next year. Delfin told a Wilson Center audience she has met “women with eight children who want to stop giving birth but no knowledge of how to do it,” and decried the “lack of natural leadership” from President Gloria Arroyo.

The Philippines House of Representatives’ version of the 2008 budget—currently in conference—includes almost 2 billion pesos for family planning programs. “We cannot achieve genuine and sustainable human development if we continue to default in addressing the population problem,” Representative Edsel Lagman said in the *Philippine Star*.

However, current Environment Secretary Lito Atienza said at the Asia-Pacific Water Summit that population growth should not be considered part of the country’s water problem. But his opposition to family planning is well-known: Advocates in the Philippines recently launched a suit against him for removing all contraceptives from Manila’s clinics when he was mayor.

“We must not leave things to fatal luck when we can develop the tools to prevent harm,” said President Arroyo at the launch of the UNDP’s report on water scarcity. That’s an encouraging attitude, but without focused efforts to improve degraded resources and reduce population growth, the Filipino philosophy “Bahala na”—roughly equivalent to “que sera, sera”—may let the wells run dry.

Sources: GMA News, *Philippine News*, Population Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center, ABS-CBN News/*Philippine Star*, Inter Press Service TerraViva, MSN, Office of the Press Secretary of the Republic of the Philippines

Role-Playing—For a Serious Purpose

By Gib Clarke, ECSP

December 10, 2007

<http://newsecuritybeat.blogspot.com/2007/12/role-playingfor-serious-purpose.html>

“The country of Arborlind is in bad shape. It falls in the bottom quarter of countries on the Human Development Index, and much of the majority-rural population lives on \$1 a day. In addition, Arborlind is experiencing rapid population growth, and 40 percent of the population is under the age of 15. Deforestation and environmental degradation continue unabated in Arborlind, as families depend on natural resources for their livelihoods, and agriculture is often carried out unsustainably.

Nevertheless, there is hope that Arborlind’s natural beauty, impressive landscapes, and unique flora and fauna will translate into an adventure tourism market that will help turn around the country’s economy. This is particularly true in Floriana National Park, home not only to unique plants and animals, but also to the indigenous Sedentaire and—for part of the year—Wandran tribes.

The future of Floriana is a topic of much debate in Arborlind. The Conservonly Foundation of California wants to preserve it, but demands that all people be removed and prevented from re-entering. Civil society prioritizes poverty alleviation and livelihood generation, and is also fighting for improving human health and the environment. The private sector wants a positive regulatory environment that allows the tourism and agribusiness industries access to land and water resources. Finally, the government of Arborlind wants to improve the economy and protect the tribes, but more than anything else wants to prevent the conflict between these groups from turning into an embarrassing scene just two months before it hosts soccer’s African Cup.”

The situation above was presented to health and environment practitioners, policymakers, scholars, and journalists at a recent conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The participants in the



Role players in the Arborlind simulation at the “Population, Health, and Environment: Integrated Development for East Africa” conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, negotiate integrated solutions. (Courtesy Geoff Dabelko)

Arborlind simulation—written by ECSP’s Geoff Dabelko and Gib Clarke, along with Shewaye Deribe Woldeyohannes of the Ethio Wetlands and Natural Resources Association—switched roles for an afternoon, as they sought solutions to the problems in Arborlind. Wearing different hats—a health minister playing the part of a hotelier, for example—participants reported gaining new perspectives and increased understanding of sustainable development challenges and potential solutions.

The simulation exercise was part of the “Population, Health, and Environment: Integrated Development for East Africa” conference, attended by more than 200 people from Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, and 17 other countries. Participants presented real-world solutions to problems very similar to those in Arborlind, explaining how all parties can—and must—come together to address people’s multifaceted needs.

I have attended more conferences than I care to remember. But this conference was unique: There was tremendous excitement about the potential of integrated programs to address population, health, environment, and other challenges in East Africa. There was also a palpable sense of community, as different organizations from different countries realized that there were others like them, also seeking to solve complicated problems with integrated solutions. Hopefully, the lessons learned and the networks formed will sustain the energy that came out of the conference, and lead to an increase in the number and sophistication of integrated programs in East Africa.

Sources: Woodrow Wilson Center, *New Security Beat*, Population Reference Bureau

Discovery of Oil Destabilizing Great Lakes Region

By Rachel Weisshaar, ECSP

November 16, 2007

<http://newsecuritybeat.blogspot.com/2007/11/discovery-of-oil-destabilizing-great.html>

The unearthing of significant oil reserves in 100-mile long Lake Albert—shared by Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)—has already led to violence, and the conflict could easily escalate further. Tullow Oil and Heritage Oil Corporation, which have drilled wells in the lake, recently estimated that it contains at least 1 billion barrels of oil. Uganda and the DRC both want the lion's share of this treasure, and their competing ambitions have already spurred violence in parts of the disputed Uganda-DRC border.

Uganda and the DRC deployed troops in the area once the discovery of oil was reported, and on August 3, 2007, Congolese soldiers attacked one of Heritage Oil's exploratory oil barges, killing a British contractor working for the company. The Ugandan army retaliated, killing a Congolese soldier. Following the incident, Congolese President Joseph Kabila and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni met in Tanzania and agreed to pull back their troops. But later in September, an incident between the two sides resulted in the deaths of six civilians.

The discovery of oil is causing outright violence in the region, but it is also harming local communities' health and livelihoods. Rukwanzi Island, located in Lake Albert and claimed by both countries, was partially evacuated earlier this week by DRC authorities due to a cholera outbreak. Oil-related security concerns prevented health workers from treating patients effectively, so DRC police evacuated children and the elderly—two particularly vulnerable populations.

Congolese and Ugandan fishermen who depend on Lake Albert for their livelihoods have been caught up in the hostilities. A Ugandan fisherman told Reuters, "Congolese soldiers have started arresting us, saying we are

in their waters. It's not safe to fish anymore." Congolese soldiers arrest Ugandan fishermen, and Ugandan police retaliate by arresting Congolese fishermen, making fishing a dangerous and less-profitable enterprise.

The discovery of oil—and the destabilization it can bring—could also involve other Great Lakes countries. Vangold Resources Ltd. recently signed an agreement with the Rwandan government to conduct an extensive geophysical study of a portion of Rwanda's East Kivu Graben basin, which, structurally, is the southern extension of the Albertine basin. The survey will be completed—and its results released—within 18 months.

Africa's Great Lakes region—particularly the DRC—has a history of natural resource-driven conflict. Trade out of the DRC in gold, diamonds, copper, cobalt, coltan (used in cell phones), and timber has contributed to devastating internal violence, corruption, and poverty, as well as conflict with other countries. We can only hope that the discovery of oil in Lake Albert does not follow the same path.

Sources: Tullow Oil, Heritage Oil Corporation, Business Daily Africa, IRIN News, Vangold Resources Ltd., All Africa, Woodrow Wilson Center

A Word of Caution on Climate Change and "Refugees"

By Geoff Dabelko, ECSP

July 18, 2007

<http://newsecuritybeat.blogspot.com/2007/07/word-of-caution-on-climate-change-and.html>

Scholars, policy analysts, and even military officers are breaking down climate change's impacts into what they hope are more manageable topics for examination. The migration that climate change could cause is one such topic. For instance, the Center for American Progress recently posted a piece entitled "Climate Refugees: Global Warming Will Spur Migration." The International Peace Academy analyzed "Climate Change and Conflict: The Migration Link" in a May 2007 *Coping With*

Crisis working paper. Climate change-induced migration also figured prominently in the security perspective offered by the CNA Corporation's Military Advisory Board in its *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change*.

In many respects, these pieces are careful in their discussion of the topic. But allow me a few words of caution on climate change and migration based on what we learned from a series of programs on the topic in the late 1990s here at the Environmental Change and Security Program.

First, the use of the term “refugee” is convenient but problematic. In order to achieve refugee status, people must be fleeing persecution or violence and must cross a national border. Countries are then obligated by international law to admit them, provide shelter, and so forth. Notably, then, the definition of “refugee” is based on political boundaries and has nothing to offer internally displaced persons. It also does nothing for people who are “pulled” for economic reasons or “pushed” for environmental reasons. Because not all people displaced by climate change will be fleeing violence or cross a national border, it is critical to avoid referring to them as refugees if one wants to be taken seriously by the United Nations, lawyers, academics, and governments. Governments in particular have a fairly strong interest in keeping the definition narrow because of the obligations they have to refugees. For this reason, the “knee-jerk” reaction for most of them will be to resist granting refugee status to a new large group of people.

The second problem is that the motivations for migration are many, and distinguishing between economic pulls and environmental pushes is very difficult. A farmer suffering from prolonged drought is both pushed to move from his land and pulled to an urban area or to more fertile ground by the promise of greater economic opportunity. This is self-evident, of course, but when the situation is reduced to “climate migrants” versus “economic migrants,” the response from climate change skeptics will always be: “They are just economic refugees.” One can easily see this classification problem with Mexican migrants coming across the bor-



The key to getting climate on the table as a principal driver of migration is to carefully trace how it interacts with the many other factors that cause people to move.

der to the United States to work. Are they climate migrants because their homes have experienced prolonged drought that may have been exacerbated by climate change? Or are they economic migrants who are “just coming for our jobs”? The multi-causality of the motivations for moving makes labeling a migrant with any single adjective (political, economic, environmental, climate, etc.) problematic.

The third difficulty—which follows from the challenge of multi-causality—is that it is extraordinarily difficult to develop and defend a methodology for calculating the number of climate migrants. A prominent biologist who spoke at the Wilson Center in the mid-1990s claimed that the number of climate refugees could be in the tens of millions. When one participant asked him how he determined who was in and who was out of his total, his response was basically: I read a lot of reports and this is my best guess. Naturally, the air went out of the room, and we might as well have ended the meeting right then. This is the danger of asserting that there are millions more climate migrants than political refugees from war or persecution. For starters, is the number of climate migrants being compared with the legal category of refugees, or does the comparison also factor in the millions of war-induced internally displaced persons? If this kind of comparative analysis isn't done carefully, some will believe that the climate change migration numbers have been exaggerated by a flawed methodology. This issue will then be in danger of being unfairly marginalized.

I say “unfairly” because I believe climate change could have a tremendous effect on human migration. Even though we cannot parse out a single cause, climate changes are still critical pushes that cause people to move. Migration—like conflict and other social phenomena—is by definition multi-causal. Just as “environmental conflict” theories that privileged environmental scarcity as the explanation for civil conflict were criticized, so too is the “climate refugee” argument open to critique.

The most nuanced conflict work now being done focuses on how environmental scarcity or abundance can exacerbate more proximate causes of conflict such as ethnic difference or relative deprivation. Likewise, the key to getting climate on the table as a principal driver of migration is to carefully trace how it interacts with the many other factors that cause people to move.

Climate and migration links may prove to be effective arguments in the larger political discussions of climate change mitigation. That is clearly the way the Center for American Progress article is deploying them. Raising migration (and its potentially negative impacts on security, which the CNA report highlights) as an additional cost of inaction may be effective in some political settings. But to maintain a focus on improving the lives of people on the ground, it is crucial to translate this larger theoretical and political argument into a variety of specific interventions. Then, when donors, NGOs, and host governments become convinced of the challenges presented by climate and security linkages, there will be a full menu of responses to offer and implement.

Sources: Center for American Progress, International Peace Academy, CNA Corporation, Woodrow Wilson Center