

<http://lipietz.net/Collective-Security-and-Environment>

# Collective Security and Environment

- Député européen (Verts, France) - Mes initiatives - Sécurité collective et environnement -



Date de mise en ligne : Thursday 12 June 2008

---

Copyright © Alain Lipietz - All rights reserved

---

**Conflicts have always had as goal the seizure on resources. Wars have always had as consequences the destruction, at least temporally, of large parts of territories. Yet can we say that nothing has changed? Yet can we affirm that we can still handle the collective security and the laws of war without taking into account the damages on environment?**

Neither the Ecologists, nor the Militaries, nor the European Union agree. The High Commissioner Javier Solana's recent report attests of it. Although it focuses only on climate crisis, it lists, on a regional base, the new problems raised by the ecological crisis. More and more international conventions are drafted in order to add some new rules to the classical Geneva Conventions on laws of war. Those new rules aim at protecting territories from conflicts' consequences, even when it came to an end: prohibition of anti-personnel mines, attempt of prohibiting cluster bombs and even more impressing, the ENMOD Convention aiming at banning the irreversible modifications of environment as a arm of war.

The increasing popularity of this topic is linked both to a reality (perils are increasing) and to a new collective state of mind: the attempt of substituting collective rules of security to the classical balance of powers.

The "new facts" are on the one hand the renewal of tensions to access the natural resources due to their rarefaction and to emerging countries claiming a better sharing out of the loot (China, India, Brazil, etc.); and on the other hand the rise of the ecological crisis itself which is becoming a key element of geopolitical tensions. In the first place, climate change with its economical, demographical, and migratory consequences but also the attacks on biodiversity which reduce the stability of the world ecosystem.

Concerning the "post-war" attempts to environment, let's quote the proliferation of new arms with lasting effects, such as mines and cluster bombs. It is also the use of arms which, even so they are not as destructive as nuclear weapons, have enough harmful effects to be considered as an ecological problem. The "Gulf war syndrome" is thus a good example (pulverization of heavy metals like depleted uranium, bombs with kerosene etc.). Confronted to this increase of perils, and to quote the distinction made by the neo conservator Robert Kagan, the European Union tries to avoid or to regulate the conflicts by the debate on the rules of collective security, according to a "Kantian" tradition; whereas other powers as the USA content themselves to the bearing of a balance, even an unfair one, according to a "Hobbesian tradition".

Thus, European troops are increasingly committed in humanitarian emergency operations whereas the USA give preference to military interventions in force.

From this two double observation, we propose you to launch a set of conferences, calling together Ecologists, Militaries and Specialists on international relations in order to raise the question of the links between collective security and environmental crisis. A first meeting is due to take place in the European Parliament in Brussels on June 12 to outline the problems according to two directions:

Impacts of ecological tensions on collective security

Impacts of new arms and of new military conflicts on environment

This meeting will take place on the eve of the French presidency of the European Union. Indeed, the President

Sarkozy stated that collective security would be one of the topics of the French presidency. However this country is one of those which had not ratified yet.

Moreover, the Lisbon Treaty might come into effect on the 1st of January 2009. From then, the Common Foreign and Security Policy will have a new dimension, more easily identifiable, more dynamic and let's hope more democratic.

It is time to launch a large debate on this topic at a European scale.

*Post-scriptum :*

Photo [James Gordon](#), sous licence [CC](#).