

# Preface

It is my great pleasure to contribute a preface to this book—an important contribution to the emerging climate security discourse. Like Michael, as a military practitioner I have witnessed the ravages of conflict up-close and personal. In 1992 I served in Somalia as a junior US Marine and have conducted missions all over the world since.

Frequently though, I return to thinking about Somalia.

Walking through the streets of Mogadishu was like entering the pages of Robert D. Kaplan's *Coming Anarchy*. For me at least, it seemed clear that the convergence of environmental degradation and political dysfunction had rendered an entire population of people to the fate of a famine which claimed over 220,000 lives. The juxtaposition of modern militarised hovercraft laden with relief supplies gliding smoothly but noisily onto the coastline of a community that in many aspects was stuck in the eighteenth century is one that is hard to forget—a different kind of clash of civilisations that was a harbinger of what lay ahead.

As I progressed in my military career I became acutely aware that a common underlying thread amongst many such combat missions was the element of environmental degradation leading to turmoil and conflict. Increasingly though the military also became first-responders in the event of natural disaster, providing humanitarian aid, reconstruction and leadership as the security situation beckoned. In recent times this appears to have accelerated—climate change emerging as a twenty-first century mega-trend that is re-writing the rule book: 'Mega Typhoons', 'super storms', 'once-in-500-year' droughts, floods, wildfires and 'extreme weather' are now commonplace in the Anthropocene. The military is at the forefront in responding to these events. As the US Navy asks: 'If not us, then who?'

Dr. Thomas carefully researched book not only does a fine job zeroing in and explaining the geo-security and political impacts of the world-wide changes in the environment but he also expertly frames and elucidates how the phenomenon has already begun to impact armed forces' missions sets, facilities and operational readiness. His findings such as the "potential for increased tension over changes to resource availability, access and use may flare into low-level and wide-scale conflict involving national, regional and international military intervention" meshes

squarely with my own conclusions as well as those of other climate security researchers and is a warning that should be heeded. The science driven findings found in his work connects dots that create an outline of the challenge that lie ahead for military organisations, most specifically, the new forces that will continue to not only degrade operational readiness, but that will also create entirely new mission sets. Beyond this, Dr. Thomas also poses a deeper question: what role does the military have in hastening societal and political action on climate change?

Lastly, Michael's message is a clarion call for action directed at Armed Forces across the world; alerting them to prepare for a time where the non-traditional joins the traditional at the centre of national security concern and action. We would all be wise to heed the call in the face of the slow moving emergency—*climate change*.

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