



Public Daily Brief



Week: 11 July – 17 July 2006

Forecast

this week: Environment

Near-Term

Mid-Term

Long-Term

The Environment became a mainstream political issue only ten years after “environmentalist” was a pejorative term for fringe trouble-makers. Political environmentalism can be traced more than ten years, to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) which after a long and bitter battle led to the restriction of DDT. Then the 1970s saw new terms such as “agent orange” in every newspaper and pictures on every television of wildlife habitats obliterated by oil spills. Public opinion shifted slightly. With the environment as a new factor – as lip-service or hard policy – environment debates were now not just academic. Profitability or oblivion suddenly depended on a percentage point in government emission/pollution standards. But even though the environment, like crime, is an issue there are no obvious *a priori* rules. At bottom there is always a Faustian test – a few billion in personal wealth today in exchange for the *chance* your grand-children will be homeless or be born limbless. Nothing is black or white. To further confuse things -- DDT remains one of the best weapons against the world's greater killer – malaria.

Clarify the Now

Most developed nations now factor environmental impacts into decision-making. Big-stakes cases hinge on contradictory evidence of each party's expert witnesses and judgements often depend on an intellectual coin-toss, manipulation of public opinion, or corrupted officials. Only the creation of disinterested expert jurisdictions removes important environmental issues from the dread grasp of short-term political vision. Also, only public education (or opinion-leaders at least) can give a better grasp of *cost*. Discussion of cost in environmental debates is often deceitful, often on both sides.

Clarify the Future

Rachel Carson was called a liar and alarmist by opponents but history proved she was a prophet. The same problem remains today – early warnings are always so early that well-financed inertial mass of vested interests are able to discount and ridicule them. If early warnings on *tobacco* or *asbestos* had been investigated, no-one smoking today would have started smoking, no-one dying of asbestos would be dying. Because government does not see beyond five years or the next election, only statutory agencies that outlive governments can be trusted to observe the public environmental interest into the conceivable future..

Globalise the Public Interest

Initial excitement about globalization lost its innocence when nations realized that everyone really meant “my globalization: not yours”. But the underlying premise of globalization – interconnectedness of all nations is inescapably true. Nations will realize that environmental problems in one sovereign state are also eventually a problem for all. The rapid destruction of the Amazon is not Brazil's problem but a factor of global climate. My Chernobyl is your Chernobyl. Governments and their electorates will soon realize all nations are in the same boat.

World Crises	based on monthly assessments by <i>International Crisis Group</i> .
!!! Alert	Israel/Occupied Territories, Somalia, Sri Lanka
↓ Deteriorated	Afghanistan, Chad, Ethiopia, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Guinea, Israel/Occupied Territories, Macedonia, Morocco, North Caucasus (non-Chechnya), North Korea, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan
↑ Improved	Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Peru

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4194&l=1>

LEGEND

Hazard Level	Change Codes
	↓ Deteriorated
	• Steady
	↑ Improved
	!!! Alert



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Threats

Summary

see daily items on the web at

<http://meta2.com/PDB/pdbDetail.asp?THREATS>

Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The World Bank says the US needs make the first move to break the deadlock on the Doha Round; Tony Blair says making the G8 into G13 may help tackle global poverty; climatologists say climate change may erode any advances against poverty in Africa. One ray of hope comes in a plan to trial a “one village at a time” approach bypassing entirely any top-down aid model.
Infectious Disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [nothing significant to report]
Environment	<p>↓ The objective evidence for <i>climate warming</i> – irrespective of the possible cause -- is in: the first half of 2006 was 3°F to 4°F above the 20th century average.</p>
Inter-State Conflict	<p>↓ Hate-filled Semitic tribes unworthy of running water again sought to drag their region back to the bronze age; the conflict began with alleged Israeli shelling of a beach, or with the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers, depending on which tribe one belongs to.</p>
Civil War	<p>↓ Massacres by rival groups were reported in Congo, Chad and Haiti; in comparison the continuing Islamist take-over of Somalia was diplomatic and organized.</p>
Genocide	<p>↓ Russia defied the world to force Serbia to let go of Kosovo's Albanian majority; unexpectedly, in a Buddhist country frequented by the West, there are more stories indicating years of extra-judicial executions Thailand [early reports].</p>
Other Atrocities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> China, as a member of Greater Mekong Sub-region, assured its efforts to fight <i>human trafficking</i> in this key area; Amnesty says Algeria is routinely using <i>torture</i> in interrogating Islamist dissident suspects.
Proliferation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The US and Russia signed a significant agreement on disposal of weapons-grade Plutonium in fast-breeder reactors; Turkey ratified an agreement with the US on civilian nuclear cooperation; South Africa added its support to Iran's right to (peaceful) nuclear development.
Terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A paper at a Malaysian conference argued that western atheistic capitalism is certain to continue the crusade against Islam that destroyed the Caliphate in 1924; Kyrgyzstan had some counter-terrorist successes, as did Yemen with Russian help. The U.S. army chief ominously cautioned that the “war on terror” is closer to the beginning than the end.
Transnational Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [nothing significant to report]
<p>↓ deteriorated • steady ↑ improved !!! ALERT</p>	



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Policy Summary

see daily items on the web at
<http://meta2.com/PDB/pdbDetail.asp?POLICY>

Debt	• [nothing significant to report]
Diplomacy	↓ Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld continued diplomatic groundwork in Central Asia with a visit to Tajikistan ; some said that US policy in the Middle East was suddenly in a “perfect storm”; moderate Islamic Malaysia expressed regret not only for Israel ’s actions, but also for the US position.
Economy	• UN said the world economy was set to grow 3.6% this year but there are imbalances - a mountainous US deficit and OPEC mountains of cash.
Education	• A study says that outcomes for public school and charter schools are much the same; the charter schools say their result would be better if not weighted downwards by pupils that public schools can’t help.
Energy	• A study says soy oil as <i>biodiesel</i> is more efficient than <i>ethanol</i> additives but – in an obvious <i>gotcha</i> -- neither can significantly supplant petroleum without impacting food-growing capacity; DARPA is seeking new biofuels for military use; the EU reported a 66% increase year-on-year in use of biofuels, but this is still far short of the 2005 target of 2% total biofuels.
Family	• The administration said it will veto any stem-cell bill.
Immigration	↓ National Guard personnel were still deploying with glacial haste to duties on the Mexico border; there were reports of systematic big-time bribery of US border officials; enforcement officials said that in recent years 30,000 illegal immigrants with criminal records were not deported due to lack of resources.
Justice	• The Administration and the Pentagon acknowledged that the Supreme Court Guantanamo judgement would mean some modification of processes.
Revenue	• [nothing significant to report]
Security	↓ The DHS <i>National Asset Database</i> -- the basis for anti-terrorism grants – revealed Indiana to be the most target-rich state and included a petting zoo and an Amish popcorn factory as national weak-spots; US agencies lamented that they are behind on positive vetting <i>security clearances</i> for staff.
Social Security	• [nothing significant to report]
Water	• [nothing significant to report]

↓ deteriorated

• steady

↑ improved

!!! ALERT



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Challengers

Summary

see daily items on the web at

<http://meta2.com/PDB/pdbDetail.asp?CHALLENGERS>

Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brazil continues its bitter struggle against the criminal insurgency <i>First Command of the Capital</i>.
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's all go in China -- huge gas reserves have been proven in deep water in the Pearl River Mouth Basin; Kazakh oil has started arriving through a new pipeline; two plants were announced in the north-west that will produce oil-from-coal at a cost of around \$27 per barrel. With continued growth at around 10% and an annual trade surplus of \$134 Billion, the trick will be to stop overheating. China continues to lock down access to the internet, and -- doubtless for complex reasons -- does not want to join the G8. A serious riot erupted over a trivial reason, indication perhaps of troubles to come. And as ultimate proof that China in some ways is becoming like the West, the burgeoning middle class has begun to complain about mortgage repayments and taxes.
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ India – not new to bombings – had its “Madrid” when multiple coordinated bombs struck trains in Mumbai (colonial: Bombay); as days went by India increasingly suspected a Pakistani connection but no firm facts came to light.
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ <i>Asia Times Online</i> indicated [probably incorrectly] that President Yudhoyono and Vice President Kalla are on a collision course; the state news agency quoted Islamist references to "the terrorist state of Israel".
Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia said that Iran is decades away from nuclear weapons.
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After weeks of hints, Russia claimed the right to make pre-emptive strikes anywhere in the world in its national security interests, largely a consequence of the recent murder of Russian diplomats in Iraq. President Putin showed off his home-town and one of the capitals of old Europe, St Petersburg, to the G8 who suddenly realised that in today's currency – <i>energy</i> – Russia is rich.
Venezuela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ The US accused Cuba of imperialism funded by Venezuelan oil; Venezuela accused the US of continued subversion in the region; Cuba said the US blockade has now been extended to Venezuela; flush with oil money, Venezuela almost retired its World bank debt; CARICOM said it may not agree with Chavez on everything, but it is not surprising to support him on some regional issues. [CARICOM -- Caribbean Community and Common Market -- Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago]
[wild-card]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [nothing significant to report]
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> ↓ deteriorated • steady ↑ improved !!! ALERT </div>	

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