BOOK REVIEW

Climate change and armed conflict: hot and cold wars, by James R. Lee, Routledge Series in Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abingdon, Routledge, 2009, xi + 180 pp., index, £80.00 (hardback and e-book), ISBN 9780415 778695 and 9780203872208, £24.95 (paperback), ISBN 9780415592512

In recent years, international relations (IR) scholars have discovered the increasing relevance of environmental crises for their field. In particular, research into the possible consequences of climate change has given rise to a long and quite confusing list of research projects and centres, publications and theories. James Lee's aim is to bring some order into this chaos: his book offers a general model of the relation(s) between the concepts of conflict and climate change, which should allow IR-and-climate scholars to situate their own research within the broad picture sketched by Lee, and to discern blank spots on the map.

In Lee's view, climate change as predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and virtually all the rest of the climate research community is a given, an independent variable. Armed conflict (subdivided in types, as is climate change, by the way) is the dependent variable, and all the familiar factors that further influence the likelihood, type and depth of conflict are the intermediary variables. This allows Lee not only to offer a very well organised, clear, convincing and quite helpful model for IR research; it also allows him to formulate predictions. Lee is well aware that climate change is not, in real life, an independent variable – for instance, climate policies may well (still) alter the course of climate change – but he does believe that climate change is inevitable, and he does believe that climate change will cause a long series of conflicts over the next century, the causes of which will be irreducible to other explanations.

He expects two types of conflict: hot and cold wars. Hot wars are already with us: they are the continuation and expansion of existing long-term conflicts due to drought making land uninhabitable, conflicts around the equator from North Africa and the Mediterranean through southern Russia, north and middle China and Central America. Cold wars are relatively new, and will occur where, due to a rising temperature, new land, new areas of sea bottom, and new sea routes are becoming available around the Polar Circle. Later this century, we may also expect conflicts over the sovereignty and exploitation of Antarctica, as its ice cover slowly melts.

As a model for mapping present and future academic research, Lee's scheme is quite convincing; while now only catering to realism and liberal idealism as the dominant schools in IR, the model can easily be adapted to include (say) constructivist and institutionalist approaches, and to cover internal conflicts (now ignored for the sake of simplicity). Lee's case studies, used to illustrate the link between past climate change and conflict, are not all equally convincing – the worst example being the role of climate factors in the supposed struggle between homo Neanderthalensis and homo sapiens: new research on the end of Neanderthal man radically changes our perspective almost every month.

Serious problems in *Climate Change and Armed Conflict* rise only when Lee starts to predict conflicts, awakening the spirit of the Climate Change Denier in his reader. For the countless 'wills' in the book (a conflict 'will' occur and 'will' take this or that form), little proof other than intuition is offered. On the one occasion that data are discussed (IPCC predictions mapped onto the US Department of Defence ACTOR system using SIPRI data), there actually appears to be an inverse relation between climate change and conflict – but that does not stop the Lee who cried Wolf from claiming that climate change will exacerbate existing conflicts. Then again, this weakness may also be the strength of the book: it really makes you yearn for more.

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