Editorial Afterword

Opening a Discussion

Reap what they sow.

The journal *Pollution and Diseases* presents this article not as a completed statement, but as an invitation to a necessary and long-overdue discussion. A substantial number of unresolved questions has accumulated in this field, and they require open expert debate. A new journal provides an appropriate and flexible space for such discussion.

The editorial board explicitly welcomes contributions to this debate. Discussion materials may be submitted for publication ***free of charge***, will be reviewed and published within ***minimal timeframes (up to seven working days)***, and will not be subjected to editorial interference in their substantive content. All submissions must comply with formal publication standards, but these requirements do not concern the author's analytical or conceptual positions (see: *https://pollution-diseases.org/discussions*).

The environmental consequences of war are often treated as secondary effects—technical problems to be assessed after the cessation of hostilities, quantified for compensation, and gradually forgotten. This approach is fundamentally flawed. Warfare does not merely damage ecosystems incidentally; it actively reshapes environments in which human populations must continue to live. Freshwater systems, due to their dynamism and vulnerability, reveal this reality with particular clarity.

The logic underlying these processes is deceptively simple: societies ultimately **reap what they sow**. Decisions taken in pursuit of short-term military or political objectives generate long-term ecological transformations, within which disease, scarcity, and instability emerge not as anomalies, but as predictable outcomes. Once initiated, these processes acquire a degree of autonomy from human control and unfold over decades.

Expert communities possessing detailed knowledge of the long-term ecological consequences of military activity should not remain on the sidelines. Even more importantly, they should not participate—directly or indirectly—in the production of new environmental problems. Some of the most striking contemporary examples of the linkage between military activity, ecocide, and long-term ecological consequences are found in Ukraine. However, this is by no means the only case deserving attention.

Equally compelling are the histories of freshwater crises in Iran and Turkey. Hundreds of additional examples can be identified in other regions of the world. These cases are not always directly linked to warfare, but they are consistently connected to errors in decision-making regarding water use and resource management. In many instances, such decisions were made decades ago. Their consequences—severe freshwater scarcity—are manifest today and will continue to shape the future.

This contribution challenges the prevailing fragmentation of scientific inquiry, in which war-related environmental damage is reduced to isolated technical questions. It calls for a systemic perspective—one that recognizes warfare as a recurring environmental process with cumulative consequences for ecosystems and public health.

Equally important, the article raises uncomfortable questions about the role of scientific communities themselves in enabling, legitimizing, or ignoring these processes. Particular attention is given to examples drawn from the activity of the Russian scientific geographical community. Once again, this represents only one case among many, but it illustrates a broader and deeply troubling pattern that demands critical examination.

By publishing this text, the journal seeks to initiate an open discussion across disciplinary, institutional, and national boundaries. We invite researchers to engage critically with the concepts introduced here, to challenge them where necessary, and to expand them where they prove insufficient. ***Silence, fragmentation, and post hoc rationalization are no longer viable scientific positions.***

Editorial Board
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