

Earthpolitik vs Realpolitik: Complements or Contradictions?

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We are living in times of existential threat. The worst scenarios for anthropomorphic climate change see humanity experiencing catastrophic casualties –and possibly extinction –as a consequence of its own emissions. It may be that Earth hits an environmental tipping point, beyond which its further deterioration as a life-support system is unavoidable. At the same time, the resurgent spectre of great-power war risks compressing the pace of climate change from decades to mere seconds: if states' nuclear arsenals are employed in anger for the first time since 1945, especially if such a conflagration escalated to an all-out retaliatory exchange, other concerns about environmental degradation would be rendered moot. This roundtable will therefore consider whether 'Earthpolitik' or 'Realpolitik' is a more useful lens through which to view contemporary international politics, with a particular –but not exclusive –focus on calls to 'green the military'. The implications of such a call are radical: that even the state's shield against the potential predations of an anarchic system should itself be reformed –and potentially weakened –in hope of lessening future planetary danger, thus representing the subordination of realpolitik to a more expansive Earthpolitik.

Track Classification: Security Policy and Practice