

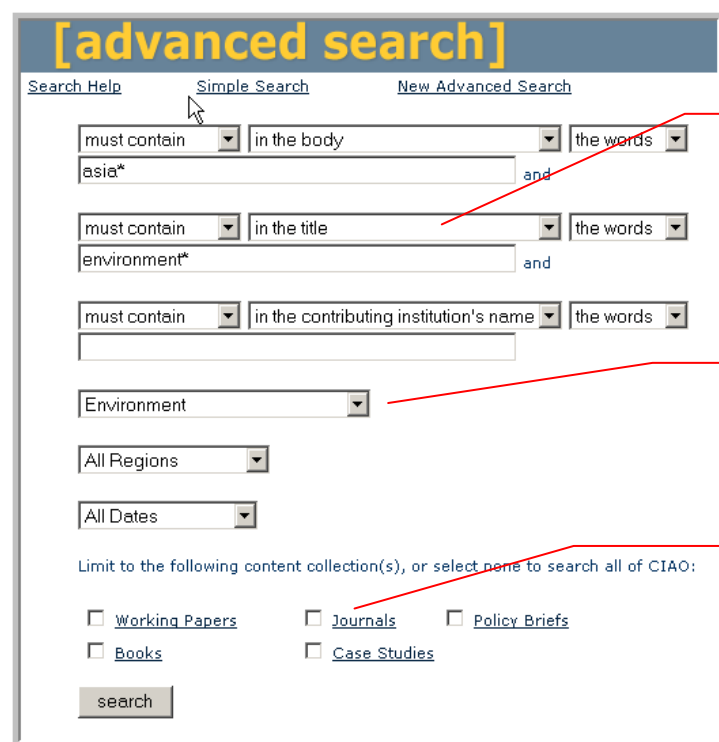
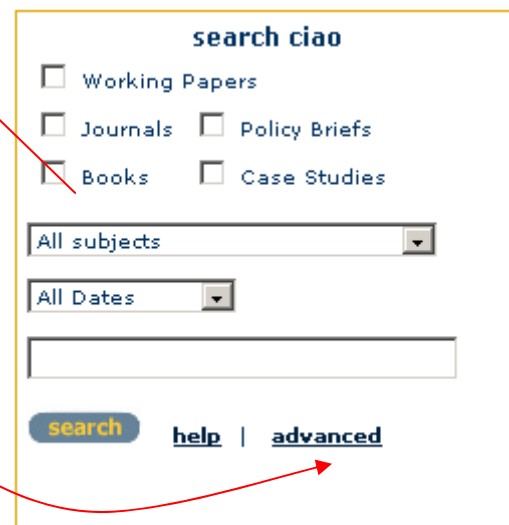
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**What Is the Problem?**

Environmental problems—the overuse of natural resources and the degradation of ecosystems—are increasingly understood to play an important role in increasing human vulnerability, undermining livelihoods and human well-being, creating instability, and potentially generating or exacerbating violent conflict. The depletion of water resources, overfishing, degradation of arable land, decimation of forests, and alteration of natural cycles and ecosystems are among the principal concerns. Climate change is likely to exacerbate these challenges. Different

ous roots, but common underlying causes typically include overconsumption in the world's richer nations and communities, demographic pressures in poorer societies, and distributive inequities in both the global North and South.

Although environmental change threatens all of humanity, people living in the developing world are often the most vulnerable to its effects, as large portions of these populations are directly dependent on activities such as agriculture, forestry, and fishing for their well-being and survival. These activities depend on healthy ecological systems, and there are few buffers to protect the poor from the repercussions of envi-

**MICHAEL RENNER and HILARY**

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