

STRATEGIC MINERAL: ITS REAL IMPORTANCE IN THE THIRD MILLENIUM

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We analyze the evolution of the definition of strategic mineral in function of geopolitical changes since World War II: the strategic mineral issue prior to the 1990s and in the 1990s and beyond. In the history of man there were always conflicts about mineral resources, but now new problems are surging, in special resource scarcity and economic gap between affluent and poorer nations. About strategic minerals, some argue that they are of vital importance, others say that their importance are mitigated by the fact that world economy is in an integrated economic unit. In this context, the relative importance of strategic minerals is analyzed. We emphasize some aspects such as: differences in the importance of each mineral, degree of substitution, uneven geographic substitution, technology and changing lifestyles. Five main problems about strategic minerals are referred and discussed: dependence, sources, internal problems, external problems and trade routes. The problem about strategic mineral stockpiles is analyzed in a changing international context characterized by an economic warfare. We analyze also other problems about stockpile such as: surpluses and market effects (political and foreign policy influences). Finally we conclude emphasizing the main aspects about the future of strategic minerals in a context of global economy and resources scarcity.