

Plenary Lecture: Climate change and security in reality and in academia

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Abstract

As the level of understanding about climate change has increased, the term “climate change and security” or “climate security” has been increasingly used in the rapidly growing literature on this subject. This term has also been used by political leaders around the world. However, different interpretations and uses of the term “climate security” in the existing literature as well as within political discourse have been one of major factors for increased confusion and misunderstanding regarding this issue [1, 2].

This plenary lecture aims at explaining how notion of climate change and security has been brought about in academia in the field of social science, and how it has been utilized in the real world. Interpretations in academia have been evolving dramatically as impacts of climate change became more intensive in the last decade. Meanwhile, actions to avoid or to minimize damages due to climate change have been explained by other terms such as climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, and therefore, differentiation between these terms should be sought for.

Traditional security studies often use two aspects to categorize variety of notions concerning security: (1) type of threat, and (2) what is to be protected from threat. Based on these two aspects, Table 1 categorizes four types of “climate change and security” discourse. Based on the four types of definition, we are able to explain how discourse around this term is evolving. With increasing frequency of climate-related extreme weather events, all the four types of notion on climate change and security will further become important in future years.

Table 1. Four types of security notions, and climate change aspect in red italic fonts

		(2) What is to be protected from threat?	
		Nation state	Individual
(1) Type of threat	Military (physical) attack from external	Traditional national security <i>Conflict between nation states due to water and food scarcity</i> <i>Social instability</i>	Protection from terrorism <i>Displacement of people due to climate change impacts</i> <i>Increase in social crime</i>
	Other type of risks	Digital security, Food security Energy security <i>Extreme weather events</i> <i>Scarcity of basic need such as water and food</i> <i>Sea level rise, leading to loss of territory and of megacities at waterfront</i>	Human security <i>Increase of loss of life and of property due to extreme heat and other extreme weather events</i> <i>Biosecurity, as diseases increase in warmer climate</i>

References

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- [2] J. Busby (2019) The field of climate and security: a scan of the literature. The Social Science Research Council (SSRC), April 2019.