

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN SECURITY OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract

The article explores the relationship between climate change and human security, within the context of Bangladesh, a climate vulnerable nation. It examines how far and in what ways climate change poses security risks to Bangladesh. This study applies a non-traditional security approach, specifically human security, in the context of the effects of climate change in Bangladesh. It looks at the climate change scenario of Bangladesh and analyses it through the lenses of this theoretical framework. It argues that the effects of climate change increase the human insecurities of the people of Bangladesh as most of them are dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods.

Keywords: Climate change, human security, global warming, floods, droughts, extreme weather.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to world peace and security in the 21st century. The term “security” generally refers to the protection from any sort of danger.¹ With the effects of global warming, there is likely to be more conflict over water, food, and energy, and many people will be displaced from their homes. There is an emerging global consensus that climate change threatens human safety and well-being.² It is the ultimate “threat multiplier”, aggravating the existing security risks by posing both direct and indirect threats to human, national, and international security. This article attempts a comprehensive analysis of the climate change and

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¹ J. Barnett, “Security and climate Change,” *Global Environmental Change*, Vol.13, 2003, pp.7-17.

² A. Murphy, “Climate Change is a Security Threat – So Where is the UN Security Council?” *The Conversation*, May 15, 2018, available at: <<https://theconversation.com/climate-change-is-a-security-threat-so-where-is-the-un-security-council-96658>> (accessed on July 20, 2018).

human security nexus from the experience of Bangladesh - one of the most climate vulnerable nations.

Scholars like Adger and Barnett claim that climate change undermines the human security and that it will increase in the future. The effects of climate change decrease the quality of natural resources and limit access to those resources, which are important to sustain livelihoods. They also claim that in certain situations these indirect impacts on human security potentially increase the risk of violent conflict.³

Bangladesh has been frequently experiencing the adverse effects of climate change caused by global warming⁴. Situated in the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Meghna (GBM) river basin, it suffers from a range of climate variabilities, including floods, tropical cyclones, storm surge, droughts⁵. These environmental events often cause loss of lives, properties, economic assets and displace people from their homes. It is expected that the effects of climate change will compound the scenario in the near future. The country also faces many climate change- induced challenges related to the greater crisis beyond its borders⁶. Hence, it is likely that climate change poses threats to the security of Bangladesh.

This article investigates the following research question: 'How far and in what ways climate change pose threats to human security in

³ J. Barnett and W.N. Adger, "Climate Change, Human security and Violent Conflict," *Political Geography*, Vol.26, 2007, pp.639-655.

⁴ S. Anwer, "Climate Refugees in Bangladesh: Understanding the Migration Process at the Local Level," *Climate Refugees* 30, available at: <https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fileadmin/mediapool/2_Downloads/Fachinformationen/Analyse/analyse_30_englisch_climate_refugees_in_Bangladesh.pdf> (accessed on June 1, 2018); Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, "National Strategy on the Management of Disaster and Climate Induced Internal Displacement (NSMDCIID)," Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP II), 2015, available at: <https://www.preventionweb.net/files/46732_nsmdcidfinal_version21sept2015_withc.pdf> (accessed on May 25, 2018); World Bank, "The Cost of Adapting to Extreme Weather Events in a Changing Climate," *Bangladesh Development Series*, Paper No. 28, 2011, available at: <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/716231468014361142/The-cost-of-adapting-to-extreme-weather-events-in-a-changing-climate>> (accessed on June 2, 2018).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Bangladesh? From academic perspective, the article aims to contribute to the knowledge for researchers, exploring the relationship between climate change and human security. On a policy making level, both national and international, the findings of this article will help understand the effects of climate change on the human security of Bangladesh more comprehensively.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

This paper aims to find out how far and in what ways climate change poses security threat to Bangladesh by using the non-traditional security perspective, particularly the human security perspective. It starts by giving a background of human security approach and the rationale for using that approach. It then provides a description of the methodology used.

Climate Change

Climate change refers to the change of climate that is created by human activities directly or indirectly, particularly through the burning of fossil fuels. Consequently, it changes the composition of the global atmosphere by adding heat-trapping gases. Hence it increased global temperature, known as global warming, affecting the weather, land quality, sea levels, the spread of diseases and a significant redrawing of the world map⁷.

IPCC, the international body to assess the science related to climate change, was established by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 1988. It provides policymakers with a regular assessment of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and potential risks, and possibilities for adaptation and mitigation.⁸ The IPCC's latest report, the fifth assessment report concluded that climate change is real and

⁷ C. Abbott, P. Rogers and J. Sloboda, *Global Responses to Global Threats: Sustainable Security for the 21st Century*, Oxford: Oxford Research Group, 2006; R. Dannreuther, *International Security: The Contemporary Agenda*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007; M. Kimble, "Climate Change: Emerging Insecurities," in *Human and Environmental Security: An Agenda for Change*, edited by F. Dodds and T. Pippard, London: Earthscan, 2005, pp.103-114; NASA, available at: <<https://climate.nasa.gov/resources/global-warming/>> (accessed on June 2, 2018).

⁸ IPCC, *IPCC Factsheet*, 2013, available at: <http://www.ipcc.ch/news_and_events/docs/factsheets/FS_what_ipcc.pdf> (accessed on July 15, 2018).