Climate Change, Security and Migration: From Vicious to Virtuous Cycles

Jon Barnett
Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies

Marx

(Groucho)
1. What we know
2. Rethinking climate and security
3. Rethinking climate and migration
4. Conclusions
On armed conflict, there is general agreement (among scholars) that:

- climate change is highly unlikely to cause armed conflict between countries
- institutional processes are more influential than environmental processes in causing armed conflicts
- the debate is about the strength of influence of climate change on sub-state armed conflicts
1. What we know

On migration, there is general agreement (among scholars) that:

- extreme events displace people, and will likely do so more
- long-term environmental changes seem likely to have a significant impact on future migration
- migrants may be more vulnerable to climate risks
- but robust estimates of future outcomes are impossible
1. What we know

- The disagreements are about:
  - 1. Approach, methods, evidence and analysis
    - what to study?
    - how to know?
    - cases and field based data, secondary data, historical analogues, retrospective analysis
    - in statistical studies: controlling for other variables, problem of variables that are correlated with explanatory variables, problem of time
2. Rethinking climate security

1. A new kind of evidence

Climate security research examines cases of violence, retrospectively, looking for a climate signal among multiple causes.

To understand the causes of peace we need to examine cases where violence is likely, but does not occur.

Suggests a program of *monitoring* changes in social and ecological conditions to learn what amplifies and reduces violence as it happens.
Republic of the Marshall Islands
2. Rethinking climate security

Timor Leste

Dili Rainfall 1952-97

- Mean
- 82-83 El Nino
- 91-92 El Nino
- 97-98 El Nino

Dry season has below average rainfall

Late onset of wet season by 2-3 months
2. Peace-building and climate adaptation are interdependent

Recruitment into armed groups arises when people have little to lose, and a sense of something to gain

Vulnerability to climate change arises when people have no options to adapt

Both arise from a lack of choices (to choose peace and/or to adapt to climate change).
Peacebuilding and adaptation can both be advanced through practices that expand people’s freedoms (Sen)

- Economic opportunities, political freedoms, social opportunities, transparency, social protection

Adaptation, peace and development are more about livelihoods and social opportunities than they are about ribbon cutting
3. Confidence building through cooperation on climate change

E.G there is strong evidence of significant formal cooperation among river basin riparian states → enhances adaptation and reduces risk of armed conflict

Climate change is an area of cooperation

• UNFCC is a well establish regime with regular meetings, has targets, allocates funding

Regional agreements on energy and disasters
Maybe climate change will increase the risk of violence, albeit indirectly.

The more important issue is how to make peace resilient to climate change:

- through knowledge about peaceful responses to climate change
- through policies and programs that give people choices to adapt to changing social and environmental conditions
- through strengthened international cooperation on mitigation and adaptation
3. Rethinking climate and migration
1. People don’t often want to leave

“we are proud…. we may be in a swamp, but we have our freedom. We are not under the control of any nobles, we are not obligated to anyone.”

“its good here. It is my paradise..”

“God created this place, and what for? .. So we could live here”

“leaving part of your identity behind”.

A right to remain

A right to adaptation
2. Vulnerability is inversely correlated with mobility
3. Migration and mobility are widely used to reduce risks in vulnerable places

Mobility contributes to the capacity to adapt:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Mobility helps by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Enabling remittances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Establishes knowledge networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Better access to schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Better access to health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Returnees are change agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Portfolio of social resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are reasons for concern about climate change and unwanted migration, but also opportunities:

- Migration and mobility are adaptation strategies in all regions of the world that experience climate variability.
- Expanding opportunities for mobility can reduce vulnerability to climate change.
There is a high degree of uncertainty about the effects of climate change on armed conflict and forced migration:

- causality is complex, the magnitude and timing and geography of climate impacts is uncertain, human responses are uncertain

But precautionary and evidence based responses are necessary and possible:

- Involves fostering the evident synergies between adaptation, peacebuilding, and migration