

CLIMATE SECURITY AND SURVIVAL DISCOURSE: EMERGING ERA OF NON-TRADITIONAL THREATS TO THE NATIONAL STATE SYSTEM

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Abstract

The changing climatic trends within just last one decade have compelled the global security analysts and climatologists, to start discourse on the emerging non-traditional security scenario. The climate was and would remain the life-line of the inhabitants on the planet earth that reside inside national boundaries. Broadly, climate change has been recognized as the broad-spectrum threat multiplier with grave security implications. The successive extreme events across the globe such as mega-flooding and repeated cyclones besides tsunamis have raised alarms amongst the security analysts globally. These events have disastrous impacts on the very survival of many states and call for climate security focused research work. The policy makers and climate experts thus need to fully comprehend the climate security implications. The emerging climate security and survival discourse would be of immense value for national defence and strategic planners. The article argues that climate change has turned out as matter of existential issue for the survival of the state and humanity at large as it does not recognize traditional national boundaries. Thereby the political leaders, policymakers especially strategic planners need to design new pathways to respond to challenges of future sustainable development and pursue a proactive climate diplomacy.

Keywords: Climate Change, Climate Security, Disaster Management, Global Warming, Non-Traditional Threats.

Introduction

Climate change is emerging as the gravest security threat the humanity has ever faced. The leading scientific bodies have found global warming as a basic cause behind longer droughts, series of storms, and seasonal variations acting as unusual and unprecedented threat multiplier for developing and developed nations. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹ and projections have successively pointed to the rising levels of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere that would lead to the higher levels of global warming, so the need for resilience efforts at all possible levels is much more now for all the nations.² Contemporary literature on

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climate security is more focused on exploring climatic impacts, like that of heat waves, floods, droughts and sea level rise on the vulnerable states and does not pay much attention to the survival discourse that factors in next order of climatic impacts on the very survival of the vulnerable states and their institutional system. If not dealt appropriately, these climate security issues may cause vulnerabilities in the wider political, social and economic pathways for the national state system.³ Consequently, the rising climatic disasters would produce greater number of national and international climate refugees, creating some extraordinary global situation, where climate migrants will be heading towards developed countries. In particular, the heavily populated regions under disastrous impacts may generate mass displacement.⁴ The national state system and local institutions will require help of global organizations under United Nations (UN) to cope with the domestic and regional climate threats to their vulnerable population. This article looks into evolving discourse on climate security and argues that national defence demands that climate experts help the political leaders and defence organizations in devising better policy parameters to counter the impacts of climate change on the national state system.

Climate Security and Survival Discourse

The climate security has slowly emerged as the survival issue for many nation states. The unprecedented series of severe climatic havocs and misery of the defenseless population, loss of infrastructure, with heavy financial burdens of rescue, and rehabilitation issues have stimulated survival concerns. The concerned scholars world over have turned towards analyzing the modern connection between climate and national security. The key questions are; how the national security may help in survival of the nation state and for how long the state institutions can withstand to emerging climatic threats.

Apart from usual security discourse at national and regional forums, the leading forum for global discourse, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has repeatedly considered the climate as the security agenda in 2007, 2009, and 2011 deliberations. The thoughtful discourse showed the seriousness of the global community. Further, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has continuously made serious efforts for climate stabilization (lessening greenhouse gases emissions by mitigation and adaptation activities for stable climate) in the form of Kyoto Protocol⁵, and then Paris Climate Agreement⁶ so as to minimize the severity of climatic impacts. Both of these generally sensitized the need of convincing global leaders to make collective efforts for the survival of future generations. The climatic impacts have sensitized world leaders to initiate debate on the atmospheric changes, global warming impacts and vulnerabilities of the small island nations and developing states.⁷ But strangely, the security issues like terrorism and regional wars have got more focus than climate change in recent decade.

The discourse so far underscored that developing states, such as Pakistan, are at climate risks due to poverty, illiteracy, poor governance and heavy debts. The global cooperation may be good for the developing country to face the challenges of climatic changes but these may not be at the cost of the national sovereignty and interest of the developing world. The argument helps in climate security and disaster management by building resilience of the nation and national spirit of self-reliance. The developed nations have the capacity to some level, while developing nations obviously may suffer the most due to the lack of governance capacity. Huysmans while arguing about the EU role in emerging security arena, also critically analyzed possibility of climate migrants/refugees from various parts of the world in search of shelter and survival.⁸ The huge displacements from developing countries would lead to security issues in EU region and developed parts of the world. Therefore, it would be of vital interest for the developed world to adjust their roles in solving the problems of climate security for the most vulnerable nations (mostly developing) of the global village. The transfer of technology (renewable) without any direct or indirect conditions may work well for mitigation and adaptation efforts especially in the developing world, thus slowing the issue of climate change.

In the same survival discourse, the UNFCCC in the Paris Climate Agreement has marked the essentiality for reducing the levels of GHGs emissions by all member countries.⁹ There is a need to do so as Global Warming Potential (GWP) is linked with the levels of the emissions from the world over political economies. Therefore, the policy makers and political heads have to take serious action for the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), by voluntarily adopting to some kind of mitigation plans in the national state can offer unique role in climate change era. The national state and global climate regime thus may need proactive cooperation to address the issue of survival, as climate change may be putting pressure on the secured access to the water, food and energy in non-traditional security sense.

Climatic changes may be causing scarcity and conflict over the natural resources for survival.¹⁰ Buhaug in *Implications of Climate Change for Armed Conflict* highlighted climatic impacts on the resources leading to the frequent agitation, civil protests and even rise in armed conflict spilling over to regional conflicts.¹¹ Barnett and Adger in *Human Security and Violent Conflict* analysed abrupt and volatile climatic impacts on human security that may lead to unrest and violence in the nation state.¹² Further, the national disasters would be driving the state resources away towards rescue and rehabilitation, therefore, causing scarcity of resources in some other parts of the state.¹³ The preemptive climate security discourse and climate oriented security measures with respect to water, food and energy would thereby be helpful in moderating the chances of conflicts among population segments of the

nation state in peaceful manner. The resilience level of the population corresponds commonly with the national role and common social environment.

The national defence may come under stress and would need new orientation. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)¹⁴ of the US Department of Defense indicated emerging non-traditional security issues mainly due to the climatic vulnerabilities. The transforming non-traditional national as well as regional security issues would be new arena of defence in the future, so research findings in the emerging range would enable the experts to work in fronting the disasters. In last one decade, climate change has totally transformed the previous concept of national security, therefore, the national state system would need to adapt to the climatic impacts and at the same time develop long term resilience capabilities. The rates at which the climate events are putting stress on the national security show that there would be worsening survivability situation for the next generation. The survival of the humanity may be at stake, so the present governance mechanism may have to adapt to the emerging non-traditional security issues without further delay. Surely all these expert arguments, based on the world over evidenced apocalyptic havocs of climate change, demand the concerned scholars to look climate change as the security issue for present and future generations.

Climate Change as Threat Multiplier

Climate change is increasingly viewed as a threat multiplier. It can change the severity level and reduce the resilience and adaptive capacity of the communities and developing nations. It may be stressful and shocking for the common population, as the poor people would be especially affected by the climatic changes. The already poverty stricken regions would be put under stress, with other types of associated stresses, as the previous issues for need of water, hunger and energy would be interrupted more severely, and new chain reactions due to climate impacts may paralyze the developing and developed national governmental systems, i.e. the water scarcity would lead to the less food production and access to the segments of society, thus causing the stress within the levels of social arena and may do the political call for changes in the governments. The same situation has been viewed many times in the several parts of the world.¹⁵ The developing national state system in the critical circumstances would have to put all resources to cope with the vulnerable climate security situation. The developing states although may have strong cultural values, but demand for the basic necessities gradually would cause social unrest.¹⁶

The climatic threats may compel the leadership to seek cooperation to build proper resilience beside mitigation and adaptation strategies. The geo-political situations in the new climate security era would be dynamic, as the countries would make alliances with the neighbors and friendly states, keeping in view, the demand

and supply of the essentialities of the daily living.¹⁷ It would be no wonder, if the future economic, social, and defence pacts would revolve around the climate security aspects. Visualizing the series of catastrophes, the climatologists would be asking the political leaderships and security professionals (from military, air force and navy) to join new dynamic thinking about ways and strategies to respond to the climatic security issues and possible conduits of survivability.

Crucial Pillar of Future National Defence

In the contemporary decade of unusual disasters, governments have learnt that climate change is going to be a security issue for national state system, its institutions and general population. Thus role played by climate change to the national security would be gaining momentum. Globally the new trends in climate change are slowly emerging as crucial pillar of the national security system. The new assessments about national defence policy mark the need to take care of the climatic impacts in all future debates. The Defence Science Board in the *Trends and Implications of Climate Change for National and International Security* has outlined the strategic analysis and properly framed inferences for the climate security operational mechanisms.¹⁸ The rate and frequency of the climatic disasters would be impending beyond the common developing state capacity, thus needing the global cooperation and assistance again and again. The mega floods of 2010 in Pakistan, with 20 million population displacement, loss of critical infrastructure and agricultural produce was a lesson for the world leaders. Thus other developing states would be exposed to climatic issues more than the developed states. Many of the national states with population, borders and defence system would stand miserable, therefore the vitality of regional and global cooperation would be highly regarded by the policy makers and defence experts.

The non-traditional security issues would need new orientation of the state defence strategies and alliances, so the new defence alliances may be based on climate security aspects. These would be the new lines, where the policy makers and defence analysts argue across the board. Feeling the future requisites of state survival and national defence policy, Brzoska¹⁹ in *Climate Change as a Driver of Security Policy* indicated that combat troops would need to be trained in line with the new emerging realities of climate security to protect their own population. Developed states may have to share know-how with the vulnerable developing states. Moreover, the climate data and calculated/tested maneuvers would be needed as available to the easy access of the combat troops and security apparatus for timely responding to the disaster management activities. Apparently, these climate security data would allow the personnel to work on the need based operations, saving the resources and man-hours, thus minimizing the dangers of disasters to some extent and allowing chances of survival for state segments in critical times.

The rate at which the climatic changes are happening has put worrisome burden on the defence analysts. Correspondingly, Simeone indicated for policy decisions regarding the non-traditional defence orientation in climatic changes, because the dangerous impacts would be alarming for the defence community and climate experts²⁰. Therefore, there is demand from the leadership to wisely tackle the climatic issues and build capacity to address the catastrophic impacts and vulnerabilities of national defence. As a matter of fact, the non-traditional security issues would be consuming the capacity and resilience of the nation-state in multiple ways. Due to the climatic havocs across the global village, the capacity building for the climate security has become the central point in non-traditional defence consideration. Likewise the developed nations have taken the preemptive steps, like the defence organizations in USA have established the “Center on Climate Change and National Security” in the year 2009 to visualize the impacts of climatic changes on national defence. The climate oriented research and development activities would be critical for transforming national defence in the near future. Thus the experts having understanding and versatility to cope with future climate dangers would be there, as the success in national defence would allow operation and extension to the regional and global allies and needy countries for enhancing state survival, institutions and possible stability.

Dynamic Climate Security Pathways

The future climate security policy would need the consultation among stakeholders; and the most important stakeholder in climate era being the common man. The common man is the central point of attention of the global policy makers and institutions; it is so because the climatic changes would be making the life of the common people to suffer in number of ways. The people would be thinking of life in new terms, and the social security dynamics would also be influenced in multiple ways. The poor, needy and desiring communities would call for the families and communities to adapt to climate change. The all-encompassing dialogue among the stakeholders involving climate security operations would allow different parties to come across various issues and diagnose the problems in true spirit. The major catastrophic events in the world have already prompted the demand for the mission oriented task forces and authorities to do the needed work.²¹

The national defence demands from the climate experts to devise better policy parameters for the common population. The climatologists may help the political leadership and defence organizations to forecast the climate data and intensity of the possible impacts. The actionable information would allow the task to be completed in more specific terms. The political and military analysts would need the best calculated points for consideration in proactive way in global warming scenario, so the better understanding of diversified climate issues would be a blessing.

The making of the policy decisions while implementing the climate security related code of action would help in numerous ways.²² It is inferred that the previous discourse on the national defence would be transformed. The global village in the dynamic security scenario would look for new defence strategies. Thus the emerging strategic pathways would be paved by climatologists, political leadership and defence analysts together by devising adaptive systems.

The national defence operations would be needed new non-traditional orientation to the new climatic challenges and survival oriented realities.²³ The early warning climate radars with proper climate models would be applicable for forecasting of rain patterns, hydrological variations and intensity of the extreme climatic events. The defence analysts would need to know, about the precipitation levels, raining tendencies and water security measures specifically for the any single country in the specific year. It may also need to know where the insecurity of water and food would be causing the conflicts among communities of states within a few years' timeline of 10 to 20 years.²⁴ The destabilization in the flood affected areas may cause food shortages coupled with the worsening law and order situation. How the nation state may deliver the food and water supplies to the needy population, whether the military troops would be called for the distribution of food items to the disastrous locality with affected population and paralyzed civil administration in the emergency scenario. The regular troops engaged in the rescue operation raise new concerns as these would hamper them to do the defence oriented works. The engagement of defence personnel in rescue and rehabilitation activities thus may become another task and responsibility in climate change era.²⁵

Climate change with complex impacts demand new approach to security discourse and the vulnerabilities in numerous scales (globally) require attention of the defence organizations. The nation state system may be facing the climate stress so there would be need to take measures for state survival and socio-economic stability. With passage of time, the climatic trends would be catalytic in more severe impacts, thus require building up of resilience, so the policy framework for climate change would be needed to be integrated in future states' planning and development. The catastrophic climate projections provide evidently the risks of heat waves and intensive seasonal variations, so necessary precautionary measures would be needed and therefore, the scientific help in analyzing the climate security scenario would be critical for determination of proper defence mechanism by nation state. The state response would also be suited to the state stability and sustainability. In the future, state diplomatic operations, the state machinery (civil and military) that have the resolve to respond to the impacts would survive and withstand the severities of the climate security.

Building Resilience through Climate Diplomacy

The climate security poses questions that are national/domestic but have global linkages and influences, thus likely to see them in the same way. The global dialogue on the climate security would allow the policy makers to work on new state governance frameworks together. There would be no sole response except the need of emerging global strategy for climate security. Gleditsch pointed to the climate induced conflicts. These would lead to wide spread civil unrest and regional disputes²⁶. For the domestic/national security experts, it may need meaningful dialogue with the global climate governance regime, as it would allow them to take wider arena for climate security related stresses. There may be possible transformation of threats into opportunities, as all these endeavors would be applicable for the nation-state developmental needs and stability. So for climate change experts, the new working environment for the climate security would be designed on such lines to cater the needs of security professionals. The new projects and the programs would be on feasible basis for the climate security operations, so as to properly display and understand the second or third order questions about future climate change impacts. The climatic changes are pressing the nation states with the passage of time, demanding pathways to transform dangers into innovative opportunities for the human existence and wellbeing. It would be helpful in establishing the new era of human development in following sustainable green practices.

Sustainable Conduits

Although climate security poses serious challenges, yet adaptation efforts are likely to work. The human civilization has seen many events and dangers, yet the conservation has always been seen as the key to face the climatic impacts and scarcity of resources in the reasonable manner.²⁷ The wellbeing of the nation state and the masses has always been the essential part of the national defence, so the national defence is getting new meaning in climate security challenges. The environmental regards for the clean air, fresh water and healthy food was and remain the basic need of the humanity. If a state can produce enough food for the poverty stricken public, with security of the fresh water and hygienic food then that state may withstand the climatic impacts.²⁸ In addition, national role in applying the global climate agreements is much significant. Climate security would be possible with mutual help and strategic cooperation across the emerging diversified trends and horizons.²⁹ The new epoch demands new strategies with careful observance of the basic principles of human rights, socio-economic wellbeing and proper national defence alignment to cope with the grave trials of climate security.

Conclusion

The climate security and survival discourse shows that climate change certainly is a threat multiplier. The non-traditional threat of climate change would be catastrophic for the national state system and its defence mechanisms. The new climate security era demands new understanding of the realities by the political and defence analysts. It is also evident, although climate security challenges may present impression of something new at the first glance, but serious analysis of the historical records show that the old civilizations remained prospered due to the welfare and good endeavors, inspite of the grave threats and vulnerabilities.

The adaptation of the human living at local and national level as per the sustainable choices would be helpful and crucial for survival of humanity on the planet earth. The nation-state along with global partners thus would be able to deal with the climate security for the win-win situation, but proper discourse would be much needed to address the ever changing scenario. If the climate security challenge is emerging, then the spirit to deal with it must be higher than ever before. As with positive actions the achievement of wining over vulnerabilities would be always possible. The collective efforts of all stakeholders and sharing of know-how would suffice the climate security and survival discourse for positively reaching the sustainable pathways for incoming generations on the planet earth which is a common abode for whole humanity.

NOTES

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