International Relations in Historical Perspective

Master's Thesis (Practice Track)

Climate Security Discourse in the UN Security Council: Echoes of Malthus?

Abstract

While climate change has experienced prominence on the international policy agenda for a longer time, its security implications have only recently drawn significant attention – most notably in the UN Security Council since 2007. Many states initially opposed debating climate change in this institution, but a decade later little of this resistance remains. From outside the council, however, many scholars have criticized the council's debate for its neo-Malthusian character, supposedly leading to a depoliticized discussion. They specifically warn of the notion commonly expressed by Western states that climate change causes instability and scarcity conflicts in the developing world (and Africa in particular). Other academics find that the policy objectives pursued by those pushing the climate security issue are relatively inconsequential. Who pushed climate security as a priority issue on the Security Council agenda, and more importantly, why? A first discourse analysis conceptualizes 'neo-Malthusianism' based on the writings of authors typically associated with this ideology. A second discourse analysis then reveals that especially European states have pushed climate security onto the council's agenda, often defining the issue in neo-Malthusian fashion. Small island developing states too appear to have played an important role in pushing and legitimizing this climate security discourse. Curiously, however, the measures proposed by these two groups of states rarely unambiguously appear neo-Malthusian in nature.

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1. Introduction: The Power of Ideas

Climate change has been on the international policy agenda for a long time, and despite unfortunate initial controversy, a broad and strong consensus has now formed around its causes. However, the security implications of a warmer planet have only recently made it to the highest of policy forums. The most prominent of international security institutions – the UN Security Council – only started debating the issue in 2007, but actively so since that year. At a rapid pace, climate change has been securitized in this institution, though not without considerable controversy. In the earlier stages, many states voiced concern for the expansion of the council's mandate while others expressed frustration towards those states most responsible for causing the climate crisis in the first place. Meanwhile, from outside the council, some scholars have characterized the council's debate as highly neo-Malthusian in nature – a term used to describe modern viewpoints resembling or recycling the ideas of demographer and economist Thomas Malthus at the turn of the 18th century.[1] They specifically warn of the common belief among Western intelligence and security policy circles that preparation is necessary for instability and scarcity conflicts in the developing world (and Africa in particular) as a result of climate change.[2] Still other academics maintain that the policy objectives pursued by those pushing the climate security issue are relatively inconsequential, advocating instead for the 'climatization of security'.[3] These varied takes on what purpose climate security really serves suggest reason to question the motives behind the push to keep the issue on the UNSC agenda. At the same time, in a field strongly shaped by academia, the arguments of scholars must too be treated with scrutiny. Who pushed climate security as a priority issue for the Security Council, and more importantly, why?

In the field of IR, continuity and change are often explained by building on rational choice, of which realism is a key example, or materialist views of political dynamics, such as

1. Betsy Hartmann, "Converging on Disaster: Climate Security and the Malthusian Anticipatory Regime for Africa," *Geopolitics* 19, no. 4 (2014); Harry Verhoeven, "Climate Change, Conflict and Development in Sudan: Global Neo-Malthusian Narratives and Local Power Struggles," *Development and Change* 42, no. 3 (2011); Jan Selby and Clemens Hoffmann, "Beyond Scarcity: Rethinking Water, Climate Change and Conflict in the Sudans," *Global Environmental Change* 29, (2014).

2. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 759-760.

3. Angela Oels, "From Securitization of Climate Change to 'Climatization' of the Security Field: Comparing Three Theoretical Perspectives," in *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict,* ed. Jurgen Scheffran et al. (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2012) 185, 201-202.

historical materialism.[4] Even the liberalist view – the very predecessor of which had the word 'idea' in its name – has eventually embraced the notion that decisions are made through rational thinking in a 'positive sum game'. Yet, as Harvard sociologist professor Jal Mehta explains, these approaches largely neglect the impact of ideas, of which he considers three types based on Kingdon (1984): policy solutions, problem definitions, and 'public philosophies' and 'zeitgeist'.[5] Public philosophies and zeitgeist refer to mood and opinion among the larger public, and are thus not truly applicable in the case of states among themselves.[6] The former two concepts, however, certainly are useful in order to make sense of the worldviews that underlie the interests and dynamics involved in international relations.[7] The concept of 'human security', for instance, is itself quite broad and ambiguous in its meaning, but as Roland Paris points out, Norway and Canada pioneered and relied on the term to build a coalition to achieve concrete policy goals.[8] Climate security should be studied as a similar development, the understanding of which demands attention to the ideas and the purpose they serve. After all, as Mehta states: "[i]deas, broadly defined, are central to questions about agenda setting … policy choice, the conceptual categories that underlie politics, path dependency and path-shaping change, institution building, institutional stability, institutional change … interestgroup formation and political coalition building".[9] Finally, the strongest criticism of the climate security discourse is based on the rejection of an old ideology: Malthusianism. Understanding the rise and criticisms of climate security, therefore, is a matter of studying ideas and their implications. This research employs discourse analysis based on agenda-setting concepts to examine two Security Council debates – the 5663rd (2007) and the 8451st (2019) – in detail to uncover the accuracy of the assertions of authors critical of the climate security debate.

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4. Jal Mehta, "From "Whether" to "How": The Varied Roles of Ideas in Politics," in *Ideas in Politics in Social Science Research,* ed. Daniel Béland and Robert Henry Cox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23.

5. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 27; Peter A. Hall, "Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain," *Comparative Politics* 25 no. 3 (1993): 279

6. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 27

7. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 24.

8. Roland Paris, "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?" *International Security*, 26 no. 2 (2001): 87-89. One of his examples is the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

9. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 25.

2. Historiography of the Environmental Security Field

While 'climate security' is a relatively new term, the use of which really started since the start of the 21st century, it is preceded by a long history of literature and debate on humanity's complicated relationship to its natural environment.[10] It would not be inaccurate to regard Thomas R. Malthus' magnum opus, released in 1798, as the first modern scholarly work in this field. In his 'An Essay on the Principle of Population', he asserted that a linearly growing food production coupled with an exponentially growing population would inevitably lead to what is currently referred to as the 'Malthusian Catastrophe', involving hunger, disease and vice on a mass scale.[11] Though Malthus' expectations turned out misplaced, for this scenario never truly occurred, his idea never died. In 1972, for instance, strikingly similar reasoning was used in the highly controversial research report 'Limits to Growths', which featured computer simulations suggesting that if nothing changes, global population numbers would exceed the earth's capacity to support life by 2072, leading to mass population and industrial decline.[12] Responding to the securitization of climate change of the present, many authors have pointed out similar Malthusian tendencies.[13] Their criticisms are often fierce, as they deem these types of views neglecting of underlying power inequalities.

According to Jacob Darwin Hamblin (2013), historian of environment, technology and science, what he terms 'catastrophic environmentalism' is by most scholars explained by pointing at the growing concern for a rapidly growing global economy and population on the one hand, and improvements in environmental science on the other.[14] These developments

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10. A search using Google Scholar suggests that in academia, the term has only really been conceptualized since the start of the 21st century. One of the first works that did so is 'Climate Change as a Security Issue', by Johannes Stripple in 2002.

11. Peter M. Haas, "Constructing Environmental Conflicts from Resource Scarcity," *Global Environmental Politics* 2, no. 1 (2006): 4; Nancy L. Peluso and Michael Watts, *Violent Environments* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 7.

12. Maria J. Trombetta, "Climate Change and the Environmental Conflict Discourse," in *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict*, ed. Jürgen Scheffran et al. (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2012), 151-164.

13. To name a few, Maria J. Trombetta, "Environmental Security and Climate Change: Analysing the Discourse," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 21, no. 4 (2008): 592; Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 769; Verhoeven, "Climate Change, Conflict", 681; Peluso and Watts, *Violent Environments*, 3, 13; Geoffrey D. Dabelko, "An Uncommon Peace: Environment, Development and the Global Security Agenda," *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 50, no. 3 (2008): 38.

14. Jacob D. Hamblin, *Arming Mother Nature: The Birth of Catastrophic Environmentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 8.

supposedly triggered a new awareness that the earth's resources are finite and its ecosystems fragile.[15] Environmental and international historian Stephen Macekura (2015) appears to side with this explanation in his discussing the emergence of the sustainable development regime. Namely, he emphasizes the impact of concerned world leaders, such as Julian Huxley, the first director of UNESCO.[16] In the second half of the 20th century, the modern notion of 'development' in the form of material abundance arose as an appealing objective, both with respect to post-war reconstruction as well as to the ideological battle between East and West.[17] The pursuit of this goal worried Huxley, who was shocked by the environmental destruction of the World War II and the prospect of further population growth, exploitation of resources and urbanization.[18] Huxley, along with other experts sharing his view, responded by founding the World Wildlife Fund and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.[19] According to Macekura, these organizations initiated advocacy for the idea of sustainable development as a compromise between environmental protection and development.[20] Eventually the UN would also get involved to promote this cause. A major example is how UN Environment Programme gathered states around the issue of climate change through its 'Earth Summits', starting in 1972.[21] Through this explanatory lens, it was mainly the (re)birth of modern global civil society which legitimized and globalized alarming environmental narratives through deliberate strategy and use of language.[22]

Hamblin, however, emphasizes different factors. According to his thesis, *Limits to Growth* (and other instances of catastrophic environmentalism) were informed by a strategic and military perspective on the environment that was shaped by Cold War geopolitical considerations.[23] The US Defense Department in particular had an interest in studying the ecosystems that support humanity, and how to weaponize them.[24] For this reason, they began

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15. Jacob D. Hamblin, "Environmentalism for the Atlantic Alliance: NATO's Experiment with the 'Challenges of Modern Society'," *Environmental History* 15, no. 1 (2010): 8.
16. Stephen Macekura, *The Rise of International Conservation and Postwar Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 17-53.
17. Macekura, *International Conservation*, 19, 26-27.
18. Macekura, *International Conservation*, 17-18.
19. Macekura, *International Conservation*, 18.
20. Macekura, *International Conservation*, 6.
21. Hamblin, *Atlantic Alliance*, 8.
22. Macekura, *International Conservation*, 1-3, 20-21 & 91-92; Darwin Hamblin, *Atlantic Alliance*, 8.
23. Hamblin, *Atlantic Alliance*, 8-9.
24. Hamblin, *Atlantic Alliance*, 4-6.

researching ecological warfare, leading the military to consider the linkages between the environment and society and resulting in intensive cooperation between defense strategists and scientists.[25] With respect to climate change, Hamblin finds that already in 1955, the US military and scientists considered 'climate control' a potential weapon.[26] Another of his examples of military-scientific cooperation occurs in the 60s, when NATO set up a scientific committee to explore for the next ten years, the most profound manner in which military technology would evolve.[27] Many of the scenarios brought up, including the introduction of technology to modify local climates, involved severe alterations of the environment and illustrate that in both Western research and science, environmental apocalypse was considered a serious possibility.[28] Informed and legitimized by nuclear warfare, Hamblin believes the increasing military interest in environmental warfare to have had a primary role in the formation of a new discourse on environmental issues characterized by an apocalyptic outlook on the future.[29] Similarly, this explanation criticizes the notion that solely global economic and population trends and the comprehension thereof was at the core of 'catastrophic environmentalism'.

Examining the other side of this coin, some scholars have noted that Cold War geopolitics inspired 'environmental diplomacy'.[30] Harper and Ronald (2010) emphasize that the US invested in weather technology after World War II, and how Lyndon B. Johnson's administration considered using weather control to mitigate negative climatic impacts on South Asia's agriculture and food security and strengthen its influence over India.[31] Meanwhile, Kai Hünemörder (2010) argues how common environmental problems were used by both blocs especially from 1968 to 1975 as an opportunity to enact a policy of détente, which as a byproduct generated a particular type of alarmist environmental rhetoric

25. Hamblin, "Arming Mother," 4-6.
26. Hamblin, "Arming Mother," 6-7.
27. Hamblin, "Arming Mother," 6.
28. Hamblin, "Arming Mother," 6-8.
29. Hamblin, "Arming Mother," 8-9.
30. Kai Hünenmörder, "Environmental Crisis and Soft Politics: Déetente and the Global Environment, 1968-1975," in *Environmental Histories of the Cold War,* ed. Corinna R. Unger and John Robert McNeill (Washington D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 257; Kristine C. Harper and Ronald E. Doel, "Environmental Diplomacy in the Cold War," in *Environmental Histories of the Cold War,* ed. Corinna R. Unger and John Robert McNeill (Washington D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 116-117.
31. Harper and Doel, "Environmental Diplomacy," 116-117, 119.

which demanded global cooperation.[32] In an earlier paper from 2010, Hamblin explains how the Nixon administration even brought environmental concerns to NATO, not so much to stimulate cooperation within the organization, but to communicate to the Soviet Union the vision that environmental issues are not limited by borders and hence should be tackled globally.[33] Nixon apparently even caused tension with other NATO members to achieve this objective.[34] In the Budapest Appeal of 1969, the Soviet Union, on their part first communicated its willingness to cooperate on environmental problems.[35] The link with conflict remained largely absent in this dynamic, however, for as IR scholar Maria J. Trombetta (2012) explains, it was found too controversial and would risk the goal of defusing tensions.[36] Nearing the end of the Cold War, when the Brundtland Commission published its report *Our Common Future* in 1987, environmental security concerns truly settled as an issue within the UN framework.[37] Also known as the Brundtland Report, this influential document spearheaded calls to broaden traditional understandings of security to include threats of an environmental character.[38] The Brundtland Report even features discussion on environmental stress as a source of conflict, and refers to global warming as the most worrisome security threat among all environmental problems – though not in the same section.[39]

Reflecting on the writings of these authors, it is not difficult to notice that the (geo)political views and interests as well as scientific-military cooperation triggered by the Cold War elevated and altered the environmental security discourse over the course of the last century. Surely, improvements in environmental science allowed for new understandings of environmental problems and opportunities. Similarly, the mere scientific knowledge that global population and economic growth were causing severe environmental damage on a planet finite in resources has undoubtedly been foundational to the type of apocalyptic scenario's that were imagined. Yet, at the backdrop of the Cold War, these factors have produced outcomes hard to explain without considering temporal context. Similar contextual

32. Hünenmörder, "Environmental Crisis," 257-258.
33. Hamblin, *Atlantic Alliance*, 54-55.
34. Hamblin, *Atlantic Alliance*, 58-59.
35. Hünenmörder, "Environmental Crisis," 259-260.
36. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 153.
37. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 152-153; Dabelko, "Uncommon Peace", 34.
38. Dabelko, "Uncommon Peace," 34.
39. Gro Harlem Brundtland and the World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 289-290.

influence could of course be shaping the climate security debate currently unfolding at the UN Security Council. In this light, Trombetta notes that as the appeal for détente disappeared following the fall of the Berlin Wall, so did much of the alarmist environmental rhetoric.[40] From this point onwards, she continues, researchers, diplomats and military strategists would mainly have eyes for environmental security issues insofar that they endangered the global order.[41] Threats to this order would soon come up in the form of more localized conflicts, leading researchers to study the effects of environmental factors on these phenomena. In this period, she argues, climate change would still primarily be regarded as long-term problem without significant, direct effects on conflict risk.[42]

Instead, in what many have described as Malthusian fashion, the main proposed conflict dynamic held that as human activity degrades the environment, resources become scarcer with violent resource competition as a potential result.[43] Major efforts were spent studying these alleged conflict dynamics, especially within the boundaries of the research project set up by Canadian complex systems analyst Thomas Homer-Dixon.[44] He initially hypothesized that the scarcity of 'physically controllable environmental resources' would lead resource conflicts, displacement-linked 'group-identity' conflicts, and 'deprivation' conflicts that would result from shortcomings of the state following environmental degradation.[45] Though his eventual research would lead him to revise and limit his hypotheses, it was Homer-Dixon's initial hypotheses that would end up being popularized and exaggerated by the media and especially in Robert D. Kaplan's *The Coming Anarchy* published in 1994.[46] Trombetta supposes the success of this new strand of thinking lied in its ability to explain precisely those more localized conflicts that emerged after the Cold War, and were hence difficult to rationalize on ideological grounds.[47] Consequently, Homer-Dixon's initial suspicions that he would later demonstrate to be at least partially inaccurate, began to live a life of their own,

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40. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 153.
41. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 153.
42. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 154.
43. Trombetta, "Environmental Security," 592; Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 769; Verhoeven, "Climate Change, Conflict," 681; Peluso and Watts, *Violent Environments,* 3 & 13; Dabelko, "Uncommon Peace," 38.
44. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 154.
45. Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 6-7.
46. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 154-155.
47. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 153.

monopolizing attention in the environmental security field and pushing climate change to the background.[48]

Then, in 2007, the nexus of climate change, energy and security was debated in the UN Security Council for the very first time. Two years later, climate change would be termed a 'threat multiplier' in a report of the Secretary General to the UN General Assembly. In 2018, the UN's Department of Political Affairs, Developmental Program and Environment Program all entered a partnership termed the 'Climate Security Mechanism' (CSM) to actively monitor the relationship between climate change and security and report back to the UNSC and other UN organizations.[49] These developments illustrate the speed with which the climate crisis has suddenly emerged on the international security agenda, as well as the degree to which it has been depicted as a security threat. Though other (non-)UN organizations might deviate from this development in discourse, the ongoing climate change debate in the Security Council signals that the five veto powers either find the phenomenon to pose a security threat in some form or another, or at the very least, refrain from actively banning the issue from the Council's agenda. Put differently, the fact that climate security is a concept within the Security Council signals a certain legitimization of the term. Given its supreme position within the UN framework, the way in which the Security Council adopts climate change to its agenda will have major implications for whether and how the international community will define and deal with the security implications of a warmer planet. For instance, though the principle of nonintervention has regained strength following the Iraq invasion, Robyn Eckersley finds that 'multilateral ecological interventions' out of self-defense from ecological spill-over effects are not out of the realm of possibility.[50] Similarly, the 'responsibility to protect' could be extended to include biological diversity.[51] Therefore, it is important to understand why climate security has appeared as one of the council's priorities. Furthermore, the lack of major Security Council action so far, apart from the established CSM and acknowledgement of climate change as *a* factor in conflict in several council resolutions, inspires even more to ask for what purpose the climate security

48. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 153-154.

49. Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security at the UNSC – A Short History", (n.d.) accessed January 11, 2021.

50. Robyn Eckersley, "Ecological Intervention: Prospects and Limits," *Ethics & International Affairs* 21, no. 3 (2007): 311-312.

51. Eckersley, "Ecological Intervention," 312.

discourse was created. The discourse may have reached the council, but major resolutions or interventions pertaining only or even primarily to climate security have yet to appear. In this paper, then, I will seek to provide answer to why climate security is appealing as a concept and discourse to the Security Council.

3. Explaining the Emergence of 'Climate Security'

Studying climate security, many scholars have theorized about *how* climate change has been transformed into a global security issue – often by employing securitization theory – without paying much attention to *why* the issue has become so prominent.[52] Fortunately, the writings of several authors can act as a basis for producing hypotheses for this question. Exploring the role the UNSC could play in protecting climate security, Stephanie Cousins argues that the poorly implemented Kyoto Protocol and lacking UN climate negotiations has sparked 'calls' for the Security Council to play a role as one of the only remaining viable alternatives to address the threats of climate change.[53] In this manner, the securitization of climate change is a strategy to elevate this problem for increased attention. While on the surface a plausible motive, Cousins does not specify the actors promoting this strategy and is more engaged in exploring the possible roles for a UNSC-centered approach herself. In fact, she admits that at the time of writing, the potential for the council to take action on this front is rather limited.[54] Further in her analysis, Trombetta (2012) does find that as the science on climate change and its societal implications solidified during the second half of the 2000s, governments became more concerned with its security dimension.[55] She specifically mentions the Stern Review published at the end of October 2006 for the UK government, and the fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC shared in February 2007.[56] Both notably

52. See for instance, Jeroen Warner and Ingrid Boas, "Securitization of Climate Change: How Invoking Global Dangers for Instrumental Ends can Backfire," *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 37, no. 8 (2019); Franziskus Von Lucke, Zehra Wellmann and Thomas Diez, "What's at Stake in Securitising Climate Change? Towards a Differentiated Approach," *Geopolitics* 19, no. 4 (2014); Michael Brzoska, "Climate Change as a Driver of Security Policy," in *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict: Challenges for Societal Stability*, ed. Jürgen Scheffran et al. (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2012).

53. Stephanie Cousins, "UN Security Council: Playing a Role in the International Climate Change Regime?" *Global Change, Peace and Security* 25, no. 3 (2013): 191.

54. Cousins, "UN Security Council," 210.

55. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 156-157.

56. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 156.

preceded the first UN Security Council debate on the matter in April 2007. Simultaneously, in film as well as in Pentagon reports such as that written by Schwartz and Randall (2007), climate change was depicted as a more dangerous, urgent and volatile phenomenon than before.[57] Appealing to the imagination of both the public and security communities, these factors would catalyze discussion on the security implications of climate change. Her previous, more compelling point that the appeal of the post-Cold War environmental security narrative lied in its power to make sense of new conflict dynamics – consisting of civil and other intrastate wars – might also apply to climate security. After all, the writings of Kaplan and Homer-Dixon were soon followed by 9/11 and the response thereto in the form of the war on terror.

Betsy Hartmann, critical writer on environmental, security and population development, offers inspiration for a more elaborate hypothesis in her normative evaluation of the securitization of climate change.[58] She claims that within US and European military and intelligence circles, the fear dominates that a population boom in Africa combined with climate change will result in severe climate conflicts and migration in the near future.[59] Making the link with 'post-9/11 politics', Hartmann finds that particularly the American Defense Department is preparing strategies to address the threat of climate change increasing instability in vulnerable countries that are simultaneously key to US material interests and the expanded war on terror.[60] In Europe, climate security adds additional urgency onto ongoing efforts to securitize African migration by investing in border control in Northern-African states. Supposedly, underlying this paradigm is the assumption – whether subconscious or explicit – that particularly poor African men are more likely to resort to violence based on their nature.[61] Women, meanwhile, are the target of seemingly humanitarian empowerment efforts that in reality also serve to limit population growth on the continent.[62] Combined, these beliefs and their implications would constitute a 'Malthusian Anticipatory Regime for Africa', abbreviated as 'MARA'.[63] Due to its

57. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 157.
58. Hampshire College, *Betsy Hartmann*, n.d.
59. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 759.
60. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 772-773, 775.
61. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 759, 772.
62. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 759, 764.
63. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 759.

deterministic nature, this regime would depoliticize the African development debate by emphasizing impersonal factors (i.e. climate, migration, and population), while playing into the hands of African elites trying to cling onto power and money.[64] Put differently, Hartmann believes that the rise of climate security is the result of the transatlantic belief that the Western hemisphere must prepare for a continent that is supposedly always on the verge of chaos.[65] Like Hamblin, she stresses the impact of especially American military thinking, and like Trombetta, she paints Homer-Dixon and Kaplan as an ideationally influential duo; the mundane scientific findings of the scholar paired with the dramatic storytelling of the travelling foreign affairs author would help shape and legitimize at least the American understanding of environmental conflict. [66]

However, the chaos that was to follow intensified global warming, Hartmann stresses, never really arrived, leading many scholars to start to question the bold claims predicting migratory patterns and conflict dynamics.[67] Likeminded authors, for instance, include Jan Selby and Clemens Hoffmann (2014), who describe the larger part of the diplomatic and academic debate on climate change, security, and conflict as "resolutely Malthusian, in both substance and tone".[68] They too notice the similarities between Malthus singling out the poor as the most likely source and victims of the climate-conflict dynamic, and the scholars and diplomats referring to Sub-Sahara Africa as the most likely setting for conflicts sparked by climate change.[69] Yet, even as past predictions of population and resource crises are widely believed to be misguided, Hartmann points out that it is in the nature of Malthusianism to assume the future to work out differently, allowing the theory to persist over time.[70] Harry Verhoeven also criticizes the securitization of climate security, arguing that it is informed by 'Northern fears about the state of planetary ecology' and a product of both local and global power inequality.[71] In his essay, he too makes the point that the globalized African elites are

64. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 760; Verhoeven, "Climate Change, Conflict," 679, 687, 702-703.
65. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 759-760.
66. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 769-770. As a figure of speech. In her article, Hartmann does not mention any collaboration between the two authors.
67. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 771-772.
68. Jan Selby and Clemens Hoffmann, "Rethinking Climate Change, Conflict and Security," *Geopolitics* 19 (2014): 748.
69. Selby and Hoffmann, "Rethinking Climate," 748.
70. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 771-772.
71. Verhoeven, "Climate Change, Conflict," 679-680.

profiting from the MARA narrative by acting in the name of sustainability, leaving local communities on the continent neglected.[72]

Altogether, the MARA lens can be translated into the following hypothesis:

The climate security discourse serves a neo-Malthusian agenda to limit particularly African population growth and bring stability to the African continent, based on the notion that climate change is bound to trigger conflict especially among poor African men, causing instability in the Western world by extension. Essential context to this hypothesis is the expanded war on terror coupled with increasing migratory pressure on Europe.

The test of time supports criticisms of Malthusian analyses and predictions. Namely, while Malthus' proposition might have been a tempting one in his time, the Industrial Revolution introduced technology necessary to improve on agriculture. The Malthusian narrative would not cease to capture minds, however; from the mid-19th century onwards, it gained a new purpose as a tool for theorizing about a potential energy crisis resulting from the increasing exploitation of non-renewable resources.[73] Then, in the early 1970s, reports to the Club of Rome – most notably the earlier mentioned *Limits to Growth* report – warned against the dangers of pollution and resource scarcity in yet another wave of Malthusian thinking.[74] As Peter M. Haas points out, however, the early predictions and later expressions of Malthusian fears never materialized, for human ingenuity has managed to intervene every time before they could.[75] Neglection of the impact of human agency on the societal effects of scarcity, Haas argues, is the main problem with Malthusian theory.[76]

With respect to the more recent academic debate over the links between scarcity and conflict, Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts emphasize a different problem with the Malthusian perspective. Namely, they find that military interests were strongly involved in the development of this updated set of ideas, as environmental considerations were relevant to Cold War geopolitical strategy.[77] When the Berlin Wall fell, and militaries had to justify their

72. Verhoeven, "Climate Change, Conflict," 679-680.
73. Haas, "Constructing Environmental Conflict," 4.
74. Haas, "Constructing Environmental Conflict," 4; Trombetta, "Climate Change," 152.
75. Haas, "Constructing Environmental Conflict," 5.
76. Haas, "Constructing Environmental Conflict," 5.
77. Watts and Peluso, *Violent Environments*, 7-11.

well-funded existence, they looked to resource scarcity as a new threat to be tackled.[78] Since the US Defense Department already spent significant portions of its resources on researching 'environmental warfare' during the Cold War, the notion of 'environmental conflict' fit well within this already existing frame of thinking.[79] Peluso and Watts find that the emergence of a deterministic narrative about scarcity was partially due to the military's involvement, resulting in the 'depoliticization' of the discussion on the linkages between scarcity and conflict.[80] In other words, this narrative marginalized the decision-making processes involved in conflict. Therefore, Peluso and Watts promote an alternative approach, in which the local history, social relations and broader power structures all play an essential part.[81] They stress the importance of *how* parties win over natural resources, by looking at social change and political economy.[82] Peluso and Wats also make the point that not merely scarcity, but also abundance holds potential to cause or contribute to conflict.[83] Selby and Hoffmann stress this point too, in addition to emphasizing the role of militarization of the state and international economic structures.[84] There is some evidence that backs up a focus on abundance. For instance, abundant rainfall has been found to be more conflict-inducing than low rainfall patterns.[85] However, Selby and Hoffmann then suggest the dichotomy between abundance and scarcity to be theoretically problematic, since natural resources in one place can only be meaningfully considered 'in abundance' if they are scarce in another.[86] The dynamic of local and global demand and supply are thus of major relevance to the concepts of scarcity and abundance, rendering the problem political if not ideological.[87] Additionally, the type of political system can also more locally determine how resources are managed, and in turn dictate who do and do not benefit from particular goods or pay the price of resource degradation. In short, the effects of scarcity depend strongly on human ingenuity and

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78. Watts and Peluso, *Violent Environments,* 11.
79. Jacob Darwin Hamblin, 2013, pp. 4-6
80. Watts and Peluso, *Violent Environments,* 14.
81. Watts and Peluso, *Violent Environments,* 5.
82. Watts and Peluso, *Violent Environments,* 5 & 19.
83. Watts and Peluso, *Violent Environments,* 18.
84. Jan Selby and Clemens Hoffmann, "Beyond Scarcity: Rethinking Water, Climate Change and Conflict in the Sudans," *Global Environmental Change* 29 (2014): 360-362.
85. Nils P. Gleditsch, "Wither the Weather? Climate Change and Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 49, no. 1 (2012).
86. Selby and Hoffmann, "Beyond Scarcity," 361-362.
87. Tara Garnett, "Food Sustainability: Problems, Perspectives and Solutions," *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* 72, no. 1 (2013): 34-35; Selby and Hoffmann, "Beyond Scarcity," 362.

decision-making, and this crucial point is marginalized if not overlooked in neo-Malthusian analyses. If the current climate security debate taking place at the UNSC is indeed dominated by neo-Malthusian ideas and reasoning, concern is justified.

The Security Council's concern with climate security might also be explained through this lens, though Hartmann's explanation largely lacks an answer to what those supposedly propagating the neo-Malthusian view hope to achieve in bringing the matter to the council. Jeroen Warner and Ingrid Boas (2019), on the other hand, argue that up until now climate change has yet to be successfully securitized.[88] By this they mean that it does not occupy the apolitical, norm-setting position that the MARA narrative suggests it holds, that allows for extraordinary measures to secure the referent object – in Hartmann's case loosely referred to as Western society. To the contrary, Warner and Boas find that most climate security policy demands are 'relatively mundane'.[89] Discussing the cases of the Dutch Delta Commission and British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the two authors find that alarmist narratives were primarily used to advocate for a degree of adaptation and preparation, but not to structurally 'pre-empt' climate disasters.[90] In addition, they find that rather than trying to institutionalize climate change within the Security Council – a more extraordinary measure in their eyes – the FCO only treated the council as a platform on which to raise awareness.[91] Additionally, Warner and Boas also believe the nature of the climate security problem to limit potential UNSC action; climate change does not constitute a clear common enemy, nor can it really be addressed with a few concrete solutions by a 'heroic' actor.[92] Likewise, Angela Oels finds that climate change has not been securitized, but instead that security has been 'climatized', referring to the adaptation of the security, defense, migration and development sectors to the realities of climate change, more than the installment of extraordinary measures.[93]

These views and findings are intriguing, for they appear to contradict the MARA hypothesis. Namely, the neo-Malthusian position typically involves major policy interventions to

88. Warner and Boas, "Securitization of Climate."
89. Warner and Boas, "Securitization of Climate," 1472.
90. Warner and Boas, "Securitization of Climate," 1472-1473, 1476.
91. Warner and Boas, "Securitization of Climate," 1482.
92. Warner and Boas, "Securitization of Climate," 1475.
93. Oels, "'Securitization' of Climate Change," 185, 191, 201-202.

reducing birthrates and the likelihood of resource scarcities. A possible explanation more in line with the MARA proposition might lie in the power of language, ideas, and framing. Though concrete results might still be missing, it is plausible that the climate security discourse itself already limits and steers the debate towards a particular worldview that has subtle yet influential long-term policymaking implications. As Mehta notes, for instance, defining a problem often happens subconsciously, yet it is a crucial process for it limits potential solutions.[94]

While studying the development of ideas is a difficult task, it is essential if one is to understand the origins and implications of policy regimes. For assistance in this process, I will use agenda-setting theory. This discipline of research seeks to explain why and how certain issues end up on the policy agenda. Though predominantly applied in the context of the EU and individual countries (the US in particular), agenda-setting theory offers several useful insights which help with studying the ideational development of the climate security debate in the UNSC.[95] One strand theorizes about how and why some policy solutions are successful, while others are not. According to Mehta, the most widely used is that of Kingdon (1984), who proposes that for an idea to be adopted, three factors must align: problems, policies and political circumstances.[96] Political circumstances not only refer to the public mood and media attention, but also to the significance of (typically) influential and motivated actors – policy entrepreneurs – advocating particular ideas to address policy problems.[97] Another strand seeks to explain how problems are defined, and why some problem definitions dominate while others do not.[98] These questions are crucial, for problem definitions restrict the array of possible solutions.[99] Convinced by other scholars, Mehta finds that problems are socially constructed, often in the background of discussion on policy solutions, without much explicit thought.[100] He discusses six determinants:

94. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 32-33.
95. Sebastiaan Princen, "Agenda-setting in the European Union: A Theoretical Exploration and Agenda for Research," *Journal of European Public Policy* 14, no. 1 (2007); 21-22.
96. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 29.
97. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 29.
98. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 33-34.
99. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 33-34.
100. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 34-35.

> "(1) the power and resources of the claimants, (2) how claimants portray the issues (framing), (3) the venue or context in which the problem is heard, (4) which claimants establish ownership over the problem, (5) whether there is a policy solution for a given problem definition, and (6) the fit between the problem definition and the broader environment."[101]

Mehta further specifies that perfectly successful framings also use causality, numerical indicators, effective storytelling, good metaphors, symbolic boundaries, and link the problem to cultural symbols or values.[102] Additionally, he states that power can also exist in morality.[103]

The notion that problem definitions are socially constructed is found also in securitization theory of the Copenhagen School, which arose out of the criticism that security threats do not exist naturally, but are indeed constructed by people.[104] However, central to this school is the belief that securitized issues legitimize extraordinary measures to the degree that they at least appear a realistic possibility.[105] Shaped by normative concerns for the securitization of certain issues, the Copenhagen School uses these measures to detect reason for concern.[106] Unfortunately, this approach can also *overlook* injustices. Oels did not find many calls for extraordinary measures, and Hartmann neither specified what measures are commonly called for within the Malthusian Anticipatory Regime for Africa. This could have to do with neo-Malthusian ideology simply rarely producing concrete policy measures, but that does not necessarily mean that this discourse cannot have major, though more subtle implications; Oels, for instance, finds that from a *human* security lens, one has reason to be pessimistic, as since 9/11 Western countries have become more protective of the homeland than of humanity at large.[107] Neo-Malthusian convictions can still inform non-extraordinary measures that are more subtle yet still powerful. Hence, Mehta's six determinants will be used.

Paying attention to these concepts will aid in making sense of climate security rhetoric. The question that then remains is how impactful an idea is. A useful measuring stick for this purpose is the notion of a 'paradigm shift' – a fundamental change in policymaking caused

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101. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 35-36.
102. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 36-37.
103. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 36-37.
104. Trombetta, "Environmental Security," 558.
105. Oels, "'Securitization' of Climate Change," 191.
106. Oels, "'Securitization' of Climate Change," 185.
107. Oels, "'Securitization' of Climate Change," 185.

by circumstances that are difficult to explain or address under the previous policy paradigm.[108] Peter Hall (1993) explains that in this light, policymaking might best be thought of as consisting of three elements: policy goals, instruments that are meant to achieve those goals, and the manner in which such instruments are used.[109] Changes in these elements would occur through a process termed *social learning*.[110] A change in the use of a policy instrument would constitute a minor 'lesson', while the redefinition of policy goals would indicate a paradigm shift. In the case of climate security, the Security Council only started debating it since 2007, before which discussion was simply absent. It is tempting to view this development as a paradigm shift, but agenda-setting theory inspires to ask first why the pre-2007 policy regime was insufficient, and which order of change was necessary to address the shortcomings. Have policy instruments only been tuned, or have entire policy goals been redefined?

To summarize, using agenda-setting theory, and informed by two conflicting accounts, this research is specifically aimed at investigating the MARA hypothesis, for its claims sound bold and imply extreme policy implications. Using this hypothesis as a point of departure, I will seek to answer *why the climate security discourse has come to dominate the Security Council's debate on climate change*. To reach the position from which this question can be answered, however, the following line of inquiry must be pursued. First, testing the hypothesis that neo-Malthusian narratives are driving the climate security debate, requires first and foremost clarity on what is understood as 'neo-Malthusian' in the first place. *What are the key characteristics of this ideology?* This information, in turn, enables the categorization of the actors involved in the UNSC's climate security debate based on their expressions in relation to neo-Malthusianism. *How have debate participants engaged in the climate security debate positioned themselves with respect to neo-Malthusian ideology?* Still, discovering the presence of neo-Malthusian ideas does not necessarily mean that they influence or shape altogether the objectives pursued under the climate security umbrella. In other words, merely this information provides no insight into whether neo-Malthusian ideas also impact policy outcomes. For example, neo-Malthusian narratives might subconsciously

108. Carter A. Wilson, "Policy Regimes and Policy Change," *Journal of Public Policy* 20, no. 3 (2000): 262 & Hall, "Policy Paradigms," 279.
109. Hall, "Policy Paradigms," 279.
110. Hall, "Policy Paradigms," 279.

impact one's use of words, yet not shape their core problem definition. Agenda-setting theory can assist in uncovering the degree to which this ideology was instrumental to the purpose of climate security. The final step, therefore, is to use agenda-setting theory to reveal *to what degree climate security serves neo-Malthusian ends.*

With the previous three steps taken, the MARA hypothesis can be assessed for accuracy. Were major neo-Malthusian interests involved in putting the climate security issue on the agenda, or was the matter raised to stimulate adaptative policies of a less radical nature? Alternatively, is there profound disagreement between the two sides on what constitutes a 'radical' in this context?

4. Methodology: Detecting Malthusianism

Since this research concerns the development and success of ideas, all steps within this research will be taken using discourse analysis. Defining the essence of neo-Malthusianism and examining and assessing its influence in the Security Council debate on climate change are all at their core matters of uncovering definitions of problems and solutions. These definitions will therefore serve as core indicators throughout. The last step, for it is an explanatory one, also requires the use of agenda-setting concepts (see section 4.3).

4.1 Identifying the Key Characteristics of neo-Malthusianism

Testing the MARA hypothesis requires that Malthusian ideology and argumentation are clear and concrete, which can be achieved by formulating the main characteristics of neo-Malthusian ideology. At first glance, one potential method to identify neo-Malthusianism could be to investigate allegations of Malthusian language being used by particular authors. What arguments are central to these accusations? However, while this approach appears useful on the surface, it is inherently problematic as it assumes that the 'accuser' is a spectator to the climate security debate and an impartial source of information. Yet, as has become clear from the previous chapters (most notably from the case of Homer-Dixon), scholars too have an impact on, or might even be (in)directly involved in policymaking. The position they have already taken might impose a bias on their judgement on what is and is not 'neo-Malthusian'. Since this research involves falsifying a particular author's hypothesis, conducting research on their terms would risk circular reasoning.

At the same time, academic controversy is a good indicator for debate. Namely, those works described by opponents of Malthusian thought as belonging to this ideology, can be used as typical cases with which to identify the main characteristics of neo-Malthusianism. Still, to safeguard a sufficient degree of independence from the scientific dispute, these cases will be compared to and contrasted with Malthus' *An Essay on the Principle of Population,* which will serve as a point of reference. To establish this reference point, traditional Malthusianism will also be broken down into key characteristics, after which comparison to the alleged neo-Malthusian works becomes easier. Malthus wrote the first edition of his essay in 1798, though it should be noted that he released several more nuanced versions over the following two decades.[111] However, as sociologist Donald Gunn MacRae writes, none of these would include a clear set of premises, complicating the process of identifying the key characteristics of Malthusianism.[112] Because it is the most widely known and read, then, these characteristics will be identified based on a read-through of the initial essay. Inspired by Jal Mehta (2010) and his literature review on problem definitions and policy solutions for additional guidance, key Malthusianism characteristics will be determined based on these same concepts.[113]

Whether the writings accused of neo-Malthusianism do indeed belong to this ideological strand can then be assessed by comparing their common traits to the Malthusian characteristics. Two of these neo-Malthusian readings are Kaplan's *The Coming Anarchy (1994)* and Homer-Dixon's *Environmental Changes a Causes of Acute Conflict (1991)*, for both are often framed as neo-Malthusian rhetoric, and have had major influence on public perception.[114] As explained earlier, though Homer-Dixon's nuances his initial hypotheses in his subsequent paper, his first work supposedly kick-started a narrative that would become hard to undo. While Kaplan and Homer-Dixon address the larger environmental security debate, however, Selby and Hoffmann argue that climate security specifically was mainstreamed by defense policymakers.[115] Hence, an influential and supposedly neo-Malthusian policy report depicting a catastrophic climate change scenario – a leaked

111. Donald Gunn MacRae, "Thomas Malthus," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last modified December 25, 2020.

112. MacRae, "Thomas Malthus."

113. Mehta, "Varied Roles," 27.

114. Trombetta, "Environmental Security," 592; Hartmann, "Converging Disaster," 769; Verhoeven, "Climate Change, Conflict," 681; Peluso and Watts, *Violent Environments,* 3 & 13; Dabelko, "Uncommon Peace," 38.

115. Selby and Hoffmann, "Rethinking Climate," 749.

confidential report for the Pentagon from 2003 – will also serve to identify typically neo-Malthusian thinking.[116]

However, while surely neo-Malthusianism should resemble Malthus' analysis, it has its own name for a reason. What makes the newer strand deserve a new title? According to Oxford Reference, neo-Malthusianism constitutes "a pessimist view of the relationship between population, economic growth, and resources …" based on Malthus' analysis on resource limits, as well as on the empirical evidence suggesting "… that continued population growth and the environmental stresses associated with economic development could cause irreversible damage to the environmental systems that support life".[117] Of course, this evidence has convinced an increasingly larger number of thinkers, rendering it somewhat meaningless for defining neo-Malthusianism. What makes this ideology stand out, then, is its determinist and 'pessimist view' that environmental catastrophe in the near future is virtually unavoidable. What makes it stand out from the 'classical' Malthusian view is an expanded problem definition away from merely a matter of limited resources among a growing population, and towards the problem of degrading ecosystems as a product of both the endless pursuit of economic development as well as the population growth and movements that are linked to it. These distinctions are essential to distinguish between signals of neo-Malthusian argumentation and the noise of 20th and 21st century language and world events.

4.2 Mapping the Positions of Debate Participants on a Malthusian Scale

The most obvious source of information with which to identify actors and coalitions along with their positions, are relevant UNSC meetings. To clarify, the purpose of studying council's meetings is not to thoroughly examine every statement issued, but to outline the positioning of debate participants, the ideas that inform those positions and their development over time. Due to the scope and purpose of this research, only two out of all council meetings on climate security will be subject to the discourse analysis. To identify relevant UNSC meetings, a list is used which is maintained by the Climate Security Expert Network (CSEN),

116. Trombetta, "Climate Change," 157; Selby and Hoffmann, "Rethinking Climate," 749; Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall, "An Abrupt Climate Change Scenario and Its Implications for United States National Security," Pentagon Report (2003).

117. Oxford Reference, "Neo-Malthusian: Quick Reference," accessed December 15, 2020.

an organization that tracks developments in climate security research, debate, and policymaking. The assumption is that an organization with this mission would select accurately debates and meetings based on their substantial relevance to the climate security debate. The selection of the two case studies from the CSEN list is done based on the following criteria:

- The strength of the link with climate change;
- thematic relevance, to ensure that the subject matter discussed enables insight into the accuracy of the hypothesis;
- temporal relevance, referring to the importance of the context in which the debate was held. If a debate occurred during particular world events or developments which are theoretically relevant to the hypothesis, important council dynamics could be emphasized or revealed;
- temporal diversity, to ensure that the development of the debate can be studied;
- representation, referring to the amount and diversity of the participating members to obtain an accurate image of the views expressed;
- significance, referring to meetings that constitute major milestones in the climate security field.

Informed by these criteria, the 5663rd and 8451st Security Council meetings were selected. The 5663rd, which took place on the 17th of April in 2007 at the initiative of the UK, was the first debate ever held on the matter, specifically delving into the linkages between energy, security and climate change. As the start of the overall phenomenon studied, its *significance* and *temporal diversity* alone should constitute sufficient reason for selection. It is, however, also a key debate to study if one is to understand the initial context and purposes which 'climate security' was first brought to the UNSC table (*thematic and temporal relevance*). Lastly, many non-council members joined in to participate, leading to a diverse group of participants (*representation*). The 8451st debate, which transpired on the 25th of January in 2019 following the initiative of the Dominican Republic, is the second most recent debate held on climate and security (*temporal diversity*) and pertained to "the impacts of climate-related disasters on international peace and security".[118] While other debates focused more

118. Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security."

on conflict or climate security in general, it is precisely this different lens that could nuance the debate and ensure a more *representative* understanding of the overall debate, functioning as a 'least-likely' case study. Further, the time gap between the debates, allows for comparison between two debates each at one end of the financial crisis, Arab Spring, growing populist movements around the world, more extreme climatic phenomena and growing attention for climate change (*temporal relevance*). Lastly, according to CSEN, a historic number of UN-member states (many of which non-UNSC members), provided a statement, highlighting its *significance* and *representation*.[119]

While these debates do not cover the entirety of the debate, they should give sufficient insight into core ideas and positions expressed by direct debate participants. However, using only this approach risks overlooking major *external* influences on the debate. Think tanks, for instance, can exert major influence yet are often neglected in social science research.[120] Likewise, as has become clear from the historiographical chapter, it is essential to trace back in what field ideas originate, to identify those sectors in society driving a particular discourse. Mapping all stakeholders involved in or with the climate security debate at the Security Council would paint the clearest picture, but the limited scope of this research demands a more efficient approach. Therefore, references made in the meetings to external sources, actors, events, and developments will be investigated and potentially subjected to further discourse analysis. Similarly, to bridge the contextual gap between the two debates, the Climate Security Expert Network's timeline will be consulted.[121]

Naturally, the sources – the two UNSC meetings, sources referred to in those meetings, as well as CSEN's timeline – will be discussed in chronological order. Debate participants will be analyzed based on their positions in relation to the key characteristics of neo-Malthusianism. This process facilitates scrutiny of the alleged presence of neo-Malthusian ideology in the council's debates and can reveal criticisms and alternative views.

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119. According to CSEN, this meeting "…saw an unprecedented number of Member States take the floor, many at ministerial level." Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security".

120. Andrew Rich, "Ideas, Expertise and Think Tanks," in *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research*, ed. Daniel Béland and Henry Cox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 196.

121. Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security".

4.3 Assessing the Objectives of Climate Security

The final step is interpreting the dynamics and developments of the climate security debate through an agenda-setting lens, to assess how influential neo-Malthusianism is in determining outcomes, compared to its criticisms and ideational alternatives. As explored in the previous chapter, the concepts that will be used for this analysis include Kingdon's criteria for successful solutions as interpreted by Mehta (2010), Mehta's own determinants of successful problem definitions, and Hall's (1993) notions of policy paradigms and social learning. With the two debates explored and prominent ideas identified, these concepts will be employed to explain why particular ideas were influential.

5. Identifying Malthusian Language

5.1 Key Characteristics of Malthusianism

Malthus wrote his first version in a time of turbulent societal change.[122] In the late 18th century, much political discussion occurred in British society on how to deal with severe poverty, with the debate reaching a peak during the Poor Laws debates.[123] Responding to more optimistic scenarios for the future, Malthus instead painted a rather pessimistic picture for development without population constraints.[124] Specifically, his fear was that exponential population growth combined with a linearly growing food production would inevitably lead to vice and misery – including, indeed, war.[125] While initially supportive of the Poor Laws proposal, this fear would lead him to criticize their implementation in his essay, for supposedly stimulating population growth.[126] Yet, his argument relied much on speculation. In his main example, for instance, he speculates on British population growth and food production from 1800 onwards, without regard for potential agricultural innovation – even as his lifetime would later widely be considered to belong to the British Agricultural

122. MacRae, "Thomas Malthus"; Thomas R. Malthus, "An Essay on the Principle of Population, as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers," (London: J. Johnson, 1798 & Electronic Scholarly Publishing Project: 1998): 29.
123. MacRae, "Thomas Malthus."
124. Malthus, "Principle of Population," 3.
125. Malthus, "Principle of Population," 15-16.
126. MacRae, "Thomas Malthus."

Revolution.[127] He also argued that because all the Chinese farmland is already in use, this country could hardly expect any population growth, which conflicts with the Chinese population explosion that would soon follow.[128] These cases illustrate well Malthus' neglect for human agency, a commonly mentioned flaw yet a key characteristic to Malthusian theory. In fact, Malthus himself, in reference to the lower classes of society, explicitly states "… the pressure of distress on this part of a community is an evil so deeply seated that no human ingenuity can reach it." Aside from revealing his strongly negative view of the poor, this sentence also exposes Malthus' worldview, which might best be described as a type of environmental determinism in which humanity is completely at the mercy of the natural world. Other examples of this type of thinking are more subtle. For instance, Malthus believed that limited room to expand the means of subsistence forces a society to 'give in' by naturally adopting cultural practices that act as checks on population growth.[129] If those checks are absent, he claimed, human vice (i.e. violence, war) or natural limits (i.e. disease, hunger) would inevitably step in and do the job.[130] In other words, Malthus believed that there is no way for humanity to escape the population trap. Not by innovation and not by cooperation.

Another recurring theme in Malthus' writing is a tendency to project onto the future based on a speculative understanding of population dynamics. For instance, he wrote "[t]hat population does invariably increase where there are means of subsistence … every people that have ever existed will abundantly prove".[131] Of course, this dynamic is proven incorrect when observing industrialized nations such as Japan, which currently experience a shrinking population. Though in his time probably a rather plausible assumption, Malthus could have found reason for caution before making this bold claim; he himself wrote about the lower birthrates among more wealthy populations of England as a result of the aforementioned 'preventative checks' on population growth.[132] Yet, Malthus neglected the degree to which one's socioeconomic situation can determine their behavior, and similarly how the type of

127. Malthus, "Principle of Population," 7; MacRae, "Thomas Malthus"; Jeff Wallenfeldt, Gloria Lotha and Heather Campbell, "Agricultural revolution," *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* last modified December 4, 2015.
128. Malthus, "Principle of Population," 19.
129. Malthus, "Principle of Population," 36-37, 40, 19-20.
130. Malthus, "Principle of Population," 36.
131. Malthus, "Principle of Population," 11.
132. Malthus, "Principle of Population," 20-21.

economic system can impact societal behavior at large. Especially at present-day, it is hard to deny that north-south relations and the global economic system strongly determine the location and severity of environmental degradation. Malthus, however, focused on the poor's high birthrates as the source of the problem. Specifically discussing the fate of the British poor, Malthus claimed that providing the poor with more money would simply raise food prices due to high demand in a strictly limited agricultural capacity.[133] The result would be that the poor could not in any way be alleviated from poverty in what is now often referred to as the 'Malthusian trap'.[134] This reasoning too was clearly incorrect, especially with respect to Great Britain, and highlights Malthus' obsession with population over policy.

Malthus' writing can be summed up as follows. Firstly, his problem definition is that unchecked population growth would unavoidably lead to human vice involving violence and conflict, and/or disease and starvation – and specifically so among the poor. This message is the very product of his rigid, determinist premises that leave little room for human intervention, whether that be in the form of innovation or policymaking. The result is two possible outcomes: a violent catastrophe or, alternatively, his solution in the form of forced 'population checks'. Secondly, Malthus uses certain language and terminology to paint a deeply ominous and catastrophic picture, while communicating his message in a is highly alarmist and prophetic tone. However, closer inspection reveals this framing to rely virtually only on speculation, which shows in its empirical inaccuracy.

5.2 Exploring Alleged Neo-Malthusian Writings

On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict

Thomas F. Homer-Dixon (1991)

In one of his most influential articles, Homer-Dixon theorizes about the link between environmental change and conflict. From the start, it quickly becomes clear that Homer-Dixon's approach to studying this link is much unlike Malthus' approach in his essay. For one, Homer-Dixon is much clearer and more precise in his argumentative structure, starting with a conceptualization of the type of conflict and environmental change he concerns himself with in the article.[135] In fact, the larger part of his article is devoted to defining

133. Malthus, "Principle of Population," 24-25.
134. Malthus, "Principle of Population," 24-25.
135. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 77-78.

different environmental changes, and hypothesizing about the effects they can have on the social world and, by extension, conflict.[136] This approach demonstrates his pursuit of conceptual clarity and interest in generating falsifiable hypotheses as opposed to mere speculation. Of course, scientific norms have changed since Malthus wrote his essay, but the difference remains significant. Homer-Dixon even uses charts to represent his hypotheses visually, ensuring full transparency on his proposed hypotheses.[137]

However, the author does not appear to dissociate himself from the (neo-)Malthusian worldview. In fact, his reasoning often sounds familiar to Malthus' analysis. For example, one of his propositions is that "… poor countries will in general be more vulnerable to environmental change than rich ones; therefore, environmentally induced conflicts are likely to arise first in the developing world".[138] Though much less extreme than Malthus expressions about the poor, this line does show his primary concern to be the fate of the developing world, and not so much the power relations between the developing and developed world. Similarly, Homer-Dixon explicitly distances himself from what he terms the realist and state-based worldview of his peers, to focus on transboundary environmental developments, which again fits with better with Malthus' worldview.[139] Like Malthus, this view leads Homer-Dixon to explicitly dismiss the importance awarded by others to the role of states and the relations between them.[140]

Where Homer-Dixon deviates from Malthus' writing is his less deterministic tone, or at least, so he argues himself. "I do not hypothesize that the causal links between these variables will be tight or deterministic", he writes, followed by an acknowledgement of humanity's intervening capacity.[141] Not much later, however, he argues that following further environmental destruction and growing populations, the degree to which human agency can intervene becomes smaller.[142] Further on, Homer-Dixon discusses multiple previous studies on the linkages between environmental factors and conflict, the authors of which concluded

136. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 85-86.
137. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 86.
138. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 78.
139. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 84-85.
140. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 84-85.
141. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 78.
142. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 79.

that in their case studies, many social variables intervened in these linkages.[143] Homer-Dixon, nevertheless, makes the argument that due to the large scale of the case studies mentioned, there are too many variables present overall to draw any definitive conclusions, leaving the matter open to interpretation.[144] With this comment, he subtly but surely brings additional doubt to the view that human agency constitutes a key intervening factor in the environment-conflict relationship. His research agenda reflects this position. His overarching question is "… how will environmental change lead to conflict?", the answer to which supposedly necessitates clarity on the type of social effects resulting from environmental changes, and subsequently on how those social effects would cause conflict.[145] This line of questioning tends to depoliticize the matter, implying that all humans groups and society would respond in the same manner to any given environmental change, therefore rendering such a response unaffected by political, cultural, socioeconomic, and other societal factors. Yet, again somewhat ambiguously, Homer-Dixon then soon acknowledges the importance of such societal factors in determining the outcome. However, he terms one of the conflict types he hypothesizes to result from environmental scarcities, 'simple scarcity conflicts', implying that in some cases, scarcity can indeed directly lead to interstate conflict.[146] Other conflicts he expects to find are 'group-identity conflicts' that would emerge out of major environmentally induced displacements, as well as 'relative-deprivation conflicts', referring to shortcomings of the state in times of resource scarcity.[147]

In a different section, Homer-Dixon discusses the positions of cornucopian thinkers – optimists who believe scarcity problems can be solved with human ingenuity – and neo-Malthusian ones who believe in hard natural limits.[148] Though accepting of the accuracy of the cornucopian analysis in the past, he names seven reasons for why the future will likely turn out different, by which he aligns himself more with the neo-Malthusian position.[149] For example, he argues that unlike the scarcities of the past, those of the future will emerge on multiple fronts and interact with each other to increase the unpredictability and difficulty to

143. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 82-83.
144. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 84.
145. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 87.
146. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 106.
147. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 108-109.
148. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 99-100.
149. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 100-102.

respond effectively.[150] Furthermore, due to the current unprecedented population size and consumeristic behavior, future scarcities would emerge far more rapidly. [151] At the same time, addressing those scarcities would become more difficult because of the social friction they would cause, as well as a global economic system that depends on high levels of consumption.[152] Perhaps most tellingly, Homer-Dixon states that while 'we must be careful not to slip into environmental determinism', he also finds no theoretical reason to believe that the success of human ingenuity in the past will hold in the future.[153] Therefore, it makes sense that the author would conclude his paper by urging both the developing and developed world to deal with environmental degradation before it is too late.[154]

To summarize, whereas Malthus simply rejected the role of human agency in the relationship between humans and their environment, Homer-Dixon sees the environment as the independent variable, with human agency as an intervening variable that will grow less impactful as consumption and population grow. Fierce opponents of the Malthusian ideology would likely argue that the function of these two variables are in fact flipped, transforming the overarching question to 'under what *social and societal conditions* can environmental change *contribute* to conflict?' Hence, Homer-Dixon's analysis can be interpreted as all but adopting Malthus' determinism. As for an ominous, prophetic tone, Homer-Dixon does write about what 'will' happen, stating "tomorrow will be full of extreme events and surprises" that will make social tension and conflict more likely.[155] He also insists on the future turning out different from the past in terms of the severity and frequency of the resource scarcities that will appear, and the degree to which they can be tackled by human policymaking and innovation. These notions fit well the description of the concern that the Earth's life-support system irreversibly being damaged will cause conflict. On the other hand, while his analysis depends on it to a degree, Homer-Dixon appears less specifically concerned with population growth and more with environmental degradation. Combined with his nuanced though

150. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 100.
151. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 100-101.
152. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 100-102.
153. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 101, 103.
154. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 116.
155. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities," 100.

slightly ambiguous stance on environmental determinism, these findings leave him partially in the grey area.

The Coming Anarchy

Robert D. Kaplan (1994)

Compared to Homer-Dixon, Kaplan comes across as less moderate in his views. Starting with a somber anecdote about the 1992 coup d'état in Sierra Leone, he paints a bleak picture of the situation in the country, which he describes as suffering from severe crime and 'increasing lawlessness, that is far more significant than any coup, rebel incursion, or episodic experiment in democracy'.[156] In the rest of his article, ominously titled 'The Coming Anarchy', he loosely extrapolates the conditions of West-Africa to much of the Global South. For instance, he writes that "(…) the Ivory Coast, once a model of Third World success, is becoming a case study in Third World catastrophe".[157] In similar fashion, Kaplan explicitly sides with Malthus, writing "(…) it is Thomas Malthus, the philosopher of demographic doomsday, who is now the prophet of West Africa's future. And West Africa's future, eventually will also be that of most of the rest of the world."[158] Unsurprisingly, then, his analysis appears a lot like the modern version of Malthus' essay. As is the case for Malthus' argument, Kaplan is mainly concerned with high population growth among the poorest peoples, coupled with crime, conflict and the 'unchecked spread of disease'.[159]

What Kaplan crucially adds to this is narrative, however, is environmental degradation resulting from this spiking population growth, which would only contribute more to conflict.[160] To make this argument, Kaplan relies heavily on Homer-Dixon's article as examined earlier.[161] Apart from this reference, his arguments are built predominantly around anecdotes from his own travel experiences, and quotes from state officials. Another element Kaplan adds to the Malthusian mix is the merging of crime and conflict as a consequence of

156. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation, Tribalism, and Disease are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of Our Planet," introductory section. [Page numbering absent].
157. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "A Premonition of the Future".
158. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "Premonition".
159. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "Premonition", "The Environment as a Hostile Power" and "A New Kind of War."
160. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "The Environment," and "Skinhead Cossacks, Juju Warriors."
161. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "The Environment."

national borders losing their meaning.[162] The practical deterioration of national borders and identities is another cornerstone of his analysis. The outcome of this supposed trend, he finds, is a world troubled by more region- and localized, low-intensity conflicts fought by groups belonging to opposing tribes, religions, political affiliations and other identities unrestrained by national borders.[163] However, Kaplan does not consider all identities to have the same separating effect, singling out Islam as the religion most appealing to the 'downtrodden'.[164] "A political era driven by environmental stress, increased cultural sensitivity, unregulated urbanization, and refugee migrations is an era divinely created for the spread and intensification of Islam (…)", he writes.[165]

Noteworthy is how Kaplan ties the fate of Africa to the US, as chaos in the former would allegedly trigger renewed racial tensions and instability in the latter.[166] Though he does mention conditions in other developing regions, his magnifying glass undeniably mainly hovers on Africa, beginning and ending with this 'dying region'.[167] The Muslim world comes in second. Combined with his insistence that the poor are attracted to war and the lifestyle it creates, Kaplan's unapologetically neo-Malthusian analysis is not far off from the narratives promoted according to the MARA hypothesis proposed by Hartmann.[168] Unlike Malthus, however, Kaplan does not provide a solution to his suggested looming global catastrophe in the form of something akin to Malthus' preventative checks.

Altogether, *The Coming Anarchy* fits well into the Malthusian way of thinking. Kaplan too his highly deterministic in his essay, perhaps even more so than Malthus himself. Kaplan, after all, did not mention any way in which to prevent or mitigate the disastrous circumstances much of the developing world would inevitably endure. It only makes sense, then, that Kaplan's tone and vocabulary also strike as prophetic and deeply ominous. Yet, similar to Malthus, Kaplan uses little scientific evidence to support his claims apart from a few demographic numbers and does not clearly explain his argumentative structure, a feature more common to the genre of classical Malthusianism. Among non-scientific writers,

162. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "The Last Map."
163. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "Last Map."
164. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "The Past is Dead."
165. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "Past is Dead."
166. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "Last Map."
167. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "Last Map."
168. Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy," under "New Kind."

however, this style of writing is of course more usual. The article, however, also includes new propositions. First and foremost, the author believes that population growth will continue to severely degrade the environment, resulting in more crime and conflict. In other words, in Kaplan's analysis, the natural environment is more explicitly regarded as a security problem. Additionally, he argues that as many national borders are becoming obsolete, crime and conflict will merge along virtually any but national identities. With this modern take on the Malthusian worldview, it only makes sense that Kaplan is referred to as a neo-Malthusian thinker.

An Abrupt Climate Change Scenario and Its Implications for United States National Security

Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall (2003)

This policy paper, prepared for the US Defense Department, starts off with the disclaimer that the scientists interviewed for its contents are uncertain about the severity and location of the scenario about to be described.[169] In the first paragraph of the executive summary, Schwartz and Randall write that new evidence on global warming suggests that major environmental changes could occur that would degrade large chunks of agricultural land, and by extension reduce the "human carrying capacity of the Earth's environment".[170] This sentence is a classic Malthusian statement, involving food shortage as a limit on population size. Then, soon after briefly describing further their extreme climate change scenario, they explain the purpose of the paper: exploring how this scenario would "destabilize the geopolitical environment, leading to skirmishes, battles, and even war" as a result of a limited food and freshwater supply, and/or energy access.[171] Schwartz and Randall go on to state that these conditions could stimulate the formation of "unlikely alliances" based around "survival rather than religion, ideology or national honor".[172] These terms also strongly remind of Malthus and his population trap that would lead the poor to turn to vice. While explaining more about their scenario, Randall and Schwartz interestingly mention their goal is not to forecast future climate patterns, but to "… dramatize the impact of climate change could have

169. Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall, "An Abrupt Climate Change Scenario and Its Implications for United States National Security," Pentagon Report (2003): 1.
170. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 1.
171. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 2.
172. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 2.

on society if we are unprepared for it" and "… to further the strategic conversation".[173] Together with their disclaimer at the start of the paper, they do appear to be interested more in preparing for the worst through a brain exercise, than in sketching the most likely scenario. Here, the two authors are partly unlike Malthus, who was certain about *his* scenario.

Then again, Randall and Schwartz do paint a gloomy picture; up until 2010, climate changes would cause dams to break through, flooding to occur, major and frequent storms to wreak havoc, and the Himalayan glaciers to melt, killing and displacing people around the world, disturbing food supplies and rendering large areas of the planet uninhabitable.[174] These developments would trigger tensions, and cause major societal destruction especially in developing countries.[175] Then, starting in 2010, a cooling event would occur, much like the one taking place around 8200 years ago, disrupting the global economy and food supply.[176] Though mentioning the uncertainty involved in such a scenario – not least because there is no precedent for how humanity would respond to it – Schwartz and Randall suggest that military confrontation is not out of the picture.[177] Though peaceful means would be chosen first, they believe mere demand for resourceful land and water could lead states to eventually confront other states with their militaries.[178]

Switching gears, the duo then argues the world is already exceeding its carrying capacity – a phrase that reminds of the neo-Malthusian concern for a diminishing life-support system.[179] The two authors even suggest that conflicts, starvation and disease will force populations to shrink in size and adapt to a new carrying capacity.[180] This framing too is used by Malthus', and is a clear example of his 'population trap'. They further find that while human ingenuity and adaptive capacity have often enabled humanity to expand carrying capacity which created space for progressive values, this pattern would likely cease to exist in their extreme,

173. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 7.
174. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 9.
175. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 9.
176. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 9-12.
177. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 14-15.
178. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 15.
179. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 15.
180. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 15.

zero-sum game scenario.[181] Hence, they do assert a strict limit to human innovation and cooperation, but one that is far removed from current conditions.

In sum, the scenario sketched by Schwartz and Randall is highly Malthusian and ominous in nature, though they do not describe it as the most likely scenario. Hence, they lack the prophetic tone of Malthus, as well as his strict deterministic viewpoint; the pair does not deny the force of human agency in the past but do expect it to be limited in extreme scenarios.

5.3 Similarities as Key Characteristics of Neo-Malthusianism

The largest (and perhaps most obvious) similarity between three readings is the notion that environmental degradation and scarcity will lead to social unrest and conflict. This relationship is thought to be – at least in some cases – direct, with scarcities serving as the independent variable as opposed to an intervening variable. Whether this relationship really is set in stone differs based on author. Homer-Dixon believes the environment-conflict link will express itself stronger the longer the current situation holds, while Kaplan offers no way out of an anarchic, conflict- crime- and disease-ridden crisis. Schwartz and Randall primarily warn against the *possibility* but are not prophetic in tone. Kaplan and Homer-Dixon are more ominous and prophetic in this respect. Kaplan particularly mirrors Malthus and shows no shame in taking that position. Furthermore, all authors are primarily concerned with the developing world as the main stage for scarcity-induced conflicts, though Kaplan is focused on Africa and predominantly Muslim countries. This focus is where he differs from Homer-Dixon, who is concerned with the developing world more generally, as well as the duo, who sketched out their scenario for roughly the entire globe. What 'scarcity conflicts' look like is a matter of disagreement. Whereas Kaplan maintains that as borders are becoming irrelevant, and crime and conflict start to merge into localized low-intensity conflicts, Homer-Dixon and Schwartz and Randall are also interested in interstate conflict. Schwartz and Randall then believe that national, religious, or ideological identities could become less important as mere survival will keep most nations busy in their extreme scenario. Yet, both Kaplan and Homer-Dixon see identities as a key mechanism by which scarcity could lead to conflict. Finally, though all authors mention population size as key to their analyses, Kaplan appears most

181. Schwartz and Randall, "Abrupt Climate Change," 15-17

concerned with it, while the other authors also mention consumeristic behavior as a cause of environmental degradation.

Clearly, there exist major apparent disagreements between the authors in question. However, significant similarities remain. Particularly, all 'neo-Malthusian authors' focused primarily on describing the problem while discussing little the solutions. To the degree that these narratives are similar in reasoning to Malthus' original essay, this problem and its framing generally look as follows:

- Unsustainable population growth and overconsumption have led humanity to overburden the Earth's carrying capacity, leading to climate change and environmental degradation, and as a result, resource scarcities;
- Resource scarcities, as an independent variable, can cause conflict, and at least in some cases in a direct manner;
- The foreseeable future, at the very least, is highly likely to contain some form of such environmental conflicts, and this scenario deserves urgent attention;
- These conflicts are most likely to occur in poor, developing countries;
- Human agency is significantly limited in its ability to intervene in this process; the problem is in principle of material, not political nature.

6. Climate Security Language in the Security Council

In the analysis below, two Security Council debates, along with additional contextual sources, are analyzed for key neo-Malthusian characteristics in the positions of debate participants.

6.1 The 5663rd Meeting: Climate Change Reaches the Security Council

The 5663rd meeting was attended by many non-council members, among which many small island developing states (SIDS).[182] To set the agenda, the UK circulated a concept paper in which it expressed concern for the potential security implications of climate change, directing attention to several indirect conflict pathways: border disputes, migratory pressures, societal

182. U.N. SCOR, 62nd Sess., 5663rd mtg., U.N. Doc. S/PV.5663 (April 17, 2007): 2.

stress, humanitarian crises and energy, food and water resource competition.[183] While the paper mentions humanitarian emergencies – on the surface typically a *human* security issue, the framing used primarily points to how such crises can contribute to instability and conflict.[184] Likewise, the British analysis offers a familiar problem statement: economic development is the key to peace and security among a growing global population, yet it requires higher energy usage mainly provided through fossil fuels, triggering climate change and, by extension, higher conflict risk and insecurity.[185] The country emphasizes that climate change only acts as an exacerbating effect on more direct causes of conflict, and does not mention degrading ecosystems in particular detail in relation to the suggested conflict pathways.[186] Proposed debate questions included how the council can prepare best for the outlined scenario and which role the Secretariat can fulfill to inform the council and UN at large.[187]

Two (overlapping) collectives, the Non-Aligned Movement represented by Cuba, and the Group of 77 represented by Pakistan, responded to the paper with letters prior to the debate, emphasizing that the Security Council should not tread on the domain of other UN institutions which unlike the council, have a mandate to debate and address climate change.[188, 189] This view was also supported by many other non-Western states including Russia and China.[190] Russia requested for the council not to 'panic' and 'overdramatize' the security implications of climate change, while China bluntly disapproved of the council as a forum any discussion on climate change.[191] Sudan, speaking for the African Group[192], also joined the two collectives and especially disapproved of establishing climate security as an issue in an institution representing only a few member states.[193] Furthermore, many of the states'

183. U.N. SCOR, 62nd Sess., U.N. Doc. S/2007/186 (April 16, 2007): 3-4.
184. U.N. SCOR, S/2007/186, 4.
185. U.N. SCOR, S/2007/186, 2.
186. U.N. SCOR, S/2007/186, 3-4.
187. U.N. SCOR, S/2007/186, 5.
188. U.N. SCOR, 62nd Sess., U.N. Doc. S/2007/203 (April 12, 2007); U.N. SCOR, 62nd Sess., U.N. Doc. S/2007/211 (April 16, 2007).
189. The Non-Aligned Movement was established in 1961 by countries to formally reject alliances with either of the Cold War ideological blocs. The Group of 77 was originally established in 1964 to unite developing countries and improve their UN negotiating power. Currently, this group consists of 134 states.
190. U.N. SCOR, 62nd Sess., U.N. Doc. S/PV.5663 (April 17, 2007, Resumption 1), 4-5.
191. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 17.
192. One of the UN's five regional groups.
193. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1), 11-12.

individual views problematize the lacking action from industrialized states to mitigate climate change, specifically pointing to the failure of the Kyoto Protocol of 1997.[194] Congo especially gave off an unambiguous signal, stating that "… it will be the poor who will be paying for the excess consumption and carefree attitude of the rich."[195] Also highly critical was Namibia, which suggested that mainly developing states have been exposed to "low intensity biological or chemical warfare".[196] Apart from describing this north-south dynamic and disapproving of the UNSC as the institution discussing climate security, however, African countries did not seem to challenge or indeed agreed on the conflict pathways suggested by the UK paper.[197] Curiously, non-African states – most notably India and Brazil – were more critical stating that scientific uncertainty and conceptual issues weaken climate-conflict linkages, which for Brazil was reason to reject the relationship altogether.[198] India, meanwhile, was critical in particular of the scientific uncertainty present in the Stern Review, a report published in November of 2006 on the economic implications of climate change that was widely cited during the debate as a reason for concern.[199] Its conclusions were that climate change could severely complicate growth and development, and that quick and decisive measures would be far less costly than inaction.[200] Similarly, the report mentioned there was short, though still, time.[201]

Eventually, the UK elaborated on its position, recognizing that climate change is not an issue of only "narrow national security" but also one of collective security, and warning of the issue "driving us apart" – likely in reference to the heated responses of developing countries.[202] In the UK statement, the term 'threat multiplier' also came up for the first time, and was cited from a report by CNA, a non-profit research organization specialized in national security affairs.[203] A day prior to the debate, CNA released a report stressing climate

194. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 32; U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1), 5.
195. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 8.
196. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 31-32.
197. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 31-32.
198. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1), 20.
199. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1), 22.
200. Nicholas Stern, "The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review," (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xv.
201. Stern, "Economics Climate Change," xv.
202. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 19.
203. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 18; Gordon R. Sullivan, Frank Bowman, Lawrence Farrell Jr. et al., "National Security and the Threat of Climate Change," *CNA Corporation* (2007): 3.

change as a serious national security issue for the US, ticking nearly all boxes of the neo-Malthusian problem statement. It mentioned eroding economic and environmental conditions in Asia, Africa and the Middle East as cause of mass displacement, and further decay of already fragile states which would increase the risks of "… internal conflict, extremism, … authoritarianism and radical ideologies".[204] There even is a full sections on the links between climate change and terrorism, and another discussing prospects of 'chaos' in Africa that will require major US attention and action.[205] Apart from the Middle East, the scenario's for other regions are not painted nearly as grim as for Africa. Europe, meanwhile, is considered under threat from "massive migrations" from precisely these regions.[206] Solutions suggested include American assistance to improve resiliency of vulnerable countries before climate impacts inevitably strike, but also for the US to do more internationally to limit climate change to acceptable levels.[207]

Surprisingly, however, the American statement resembled this report very little, instead focusing on their accomplishments in green energy and on an approach to security and stability based on "… education, rule of law, human freedom and economic opportunity".[208] Speaking on behalf of EU members and candidates, the German statement appeared much more like the CNA report, though more moderately toned.[209] Using the examples of threats to SIDS, low lying coastal regions and water needs in Africa, the EU showed concern for human security threats but mainly insofar that they link to water, food and arable land scarcity conflicts.[210] While sometimes using less determinist language such as "[w]e can imagine…" and "… could contribute…", as temperatures warm the bloc expected climate change to act increasingly as a root cause of conflict.[211] The EU also singled out small island nations and low lying coastal and arid regions as those most severely affected by climate change, while having contributed least to it.[212]

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204. Sullivan et al., "National Security," 6.
205. Sullivan et al., "National Security," 17, 20-23.
206. Sullivan et al., "National Security," 28.
207. Sullivan et al., "National Security," 6-8.
208. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 11.
209. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 19.
210. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 20.
211. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 20.
212. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 20.

As for the potential for solutions, the bloc used a line likely drawn from the Stern Review: inaction is more expensive than action.[213] In terms of policy implications, the bloc introduced two pillars – adaptation and mitigation – with which to address climate security risks, the former referring to limiting climate change through sustainable development and the latter to collective, holistic, preventative diplomacy.[214] Most individual EU countries did not deviate much from the core of the EU statement and often explicitly sided with it. However, there was variation in framing and emphasis. Most notably, Italy appeared particularly concerned about an "exodus of entire populations" from sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.[215] Meanwhile, the Netherlands delved more into protection from sea level rise. Many EU states based their concern or even alarm onto the Stern Review and Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC.[216] Interestingly, two non-EU European states *did* provide a different take; Switzerland and Norway both suggested a stronger research capacity for the UN, with the Norway model resembling much the eventual Climate Security Mechanism.[217]

The small island developing states also unified themselves. Papua New Guinea, speaking for the Pacific Island Forum, emphasized that SIDS face an existential threat, both economically and in the most literal sense, due to extreme weather events and rising sea levels.[218] The main solutions this group suggests is for industrialized and industrializing states to limit global warming, and for the council to discuss international legal and sovereignty implications of climate change.[219] The island of Tuvalu comes with a particularly strong framing, suggesting that in its case climate security is not a matter of guns but of "chimney stacks and exhaust pipes".[220] Australia, Iceland and New Zealand all recognized the threatened small island nations, with the second of the three pointing to consequences for indigenous communities, and the third to local ownership in the adaptation process.[221] Especially Tuvalu and New Zealand promote a human security approach, focusing on environmental disasters as a

213. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 20.
214. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 20.
215. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 4.
216. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 6.
217. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 26; U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1), 24.
218. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 26-29.
219. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 29.
220. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1) 8.
221. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1) 6-7, 15.

humanitarian problem in itself and not as a conflict factor.[222] This view differs significantly from the UK's preoccupation with conflict. However, as is evident from the Marshall Islands' concern for rivalries over oceanic resources among growing populations, Pacific states are not immune to neo-Malthusian language.[223]

To summarize, mainly European states defined climate change in a considerably neo-Malthusian manner, referring often to resource scarcity and depicting it as an indirect but urgent threat that could become a *root cause* of conflict, especially in fragile and developing countries. While the UK did not, many other European states also put this conflict dynamic in a context of environmental degradation. Attention to population growth largely lacked, however, and the actions proposed sounded not quite militaristic or interventionist. Furthermore, European and small island developing states appear to have been the strongest promotors of climate security as an issue for the council. Only a few countries were mainly preoccupied with human security latter notion of security. Through the two political collectives, African, Asian and South American developing countries expressed their rejection of climate change as an issue for the Security Council and emphasized the responsibility of industrialized states. With the notable exceptions of Brazil and India, developing countries did not contest the proposed conflict dynamics of the UK. The United States, curiously, seemed not too engaged in the debate, simply reiterating its foreign policy based liberal ideals, a major characteristic of George W. Bush's administration. but most not contest the proposed conflict dynamics.

6.2 Relevant Developments Between the Debates (2007 – 2018)

Following the 2007 debate, the SIDS turned to the General Assembly, where they proposed a successful resolution tasking the Secretary-General to deliver a report on the security aspects of climate change.[224] The considerably neo-Malthusian text, released a few months later, also framed climate change a 'threat multiplier' in an answer to limited research on direct climate-conflict causality.[225] Openly focusing in on Africa, this continent would in particular fall prone to climate conflicts due to its existing instability and population

222. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1) 7.
223. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1) 17.
224. Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security,"
225. United Nations, General Assembly, *Climate Change and its Possible Security Implications: report of the Secretary-General*, A/64/350 (September 11, 2009): 17.

growth.[226] Two years later, the German Council Presidency called for another UNSC debate, to build coalitions, common understanding and momentum on climate security.[227] Most notably, the Obama administration offered a response much more like the European view compared to the first debate, while the EU highlighted the threat that environmental degradation poses to the food supply for a growing global population.[228] The eventual product was agreement on a more cautious presidential statement, depicting climate change as *potentially* stimulating *other* conflict drivers in the *long-term*.[229] The period that followed (2013-2017) saw six Arria Formula debates on climate security organized predominantly by European and Asian states, one of which was tellingly titled 'Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier'.[230] As the exception, New Zealand hosted an Arria Formula debate about security threats faced by small island developing states.[231] In 2018, the Netherlands organized a council briefing on Lake Chad, and Sweden initiated a council debate to set the agenda for the future.[232] Nearing the end of this decade, the council would also start incorporating climate security analyses in its resolutions (regarding virtually only African conflict contexts).[233] All these developments indicate that European and small(er) island states, there is no doubt, have constituted the vanguard on climate security, resisting institutional objections. Meanwhile, the 'threat multiplier' analogy has grown more popular, but for what purpose?

6.3 The 8451st Meeting: The Debate Matures

The second case study debate was called for by the Dominican Republic, who then held the council presidency. Like the UK, it circulated a paper to set the agenda. As expected from the debate's subject matter (climate-related disasters), the Dominican Republic's problem definition held a different emphasis compared to the British, prioritizing climatic "existential threats" in the forms of natural disasters, sea-level rise, undermined livelihoods, food insecurity, disease and displacement, and emphasizing the urgency of action for SIDS in

226. United Nations, General Assembly, "Climate Change," 18-19.
227. Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security."
228. U.N. SCOR, 66th Sess., 6587th mtg., U.N. Doc. S/PV.6587 (July 20, 2011): 6-7, 30.
229. Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security."
230. Arria Formula meetings are more informal council meetings, without perspective on concrete council outcomes.
231. Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security."
232. Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security."
233. Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security."

particular.[234] Conflict too was included, it should be noted, but much less so.[235] The proposed questions for debate crystalized this prioritization, as they all related to the role of the council in disaster prevention and response, and extremely little to conflict.[236] Common rhetoric among nearly all debate participants included calls for improving coordination among UN organizations and agencies, the incorporation of regional and other relevant organizations into a coherent response and the development of stronger early capacity.[237] Additionally, virtually all types of countries referred to Lake Chad and the Sahel, often approving the resolutions passed in the years before, which demonstrates a stronger focus on Africa since 2007.[238] Another new, widely used framing concerned climate impacts on women, young people, and more occasionally disabled and indigenous people as well, suggesting that human security considerations were widely considered.[239] These aspects were completely absent in 2007.[240] To be sure, focus on the gender component was rarely linked to birth control, which would give a neo-Malthusian twist to such views. Notable too was the number of non-state parties offering a statement, which many states then referred to legitimize their concerns, and gave a platform for views otherwise neglected.[241] The ICRC, for instance, focused particularly on human security and how it is threatened by the "… double impact of climate change and armed conflict."[242]

Particularly the SIDS agreed with the Dominican emphasis on climate-related disasters as security issues in and of themselves, but many also explored climate-conflict linkages substantially more compared to 2007, and in different manners.[243] Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, for instance, noted that the climate threat should not replace efforts to address existing conflicts and historical injustices, referring specifically to repairing damage from colonization in the African case.[244] Haiti emphasized human security unambiguously,

234. U.N. SCOR, 74th Sess., U.N. Doc. S/2019/1 (January 2, 2019): 3-5.
235. U.N. SCOR, S/2019/1, 5.
236. U.N. SCOR, S/2019/1, 5-6.
237. U.N. SCOR, 74th Sess., 8451st mtg., U.N. Doc. S/PV.8451 (Jan. 25, 2019): 10, 11, 12, 18, 19, 20, 46, 54, 58, 69, 73, 74, 75 & 78.
238. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663, 3, 4, 7 & 8; U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1), 34; U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451.
239. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 69, 33, 73, 79, 33, 35, 45, 57, 59, 66.
240. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.5663.
241. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 2.
242. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 67-68.
243. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 29.
244. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 58.

framing climate security as a matter of "… improving living conditions and respecting the dignity of all human beings".[245] Nauru highlighted more political factors in general, suggesting improvement of human-made food production and distribution systems, which fell short during the 2007 and 2008 food crises.[246] More in line with the European view was Sri Lanka's statement, which underlined conflict potential of climate change in more neo-Malthusian fashion, drawing attention to humanity's dependence on its ecosystems and scarcity conflicts.[247] Solutions from these types of states often related directly to building resilience to extreme weather events and sea level rise. An often-mentioned document is the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, adopted at the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Japan in 2015. This document highlights a dimension of the climate security debate that has rather little connection to neo-Malthusianism, focusing purely on how to prepare and respond best to disasters.[248] To the contrary, the report even suggests migrants and "… their knowledge, skills, and capacities …" as valuable to societies' resiliency.[249] Other solutions from small island states included cleaner energy, a mechanism to address loss and damage from climate change and most concretely, the appointment of a new special representative of the Secretary General on climate and security, to develop analyses and improve coordination between UN organizations, a proposal already made in 2011.[250, 251] This proposal was mentioned and explicitly supported by several non-SIDS too, namely Canada, Norway, Ireland and Costa Rica.[252] Generally, the island states positioned themselves quite similarly to 2007, but also discussed more the potential conflict dynamics, more often than not in a markedly neo-Malthusian manner, while their proposed solutions lacked in neo-Malthusian framing.[253]

European states offered analyses much resembling the first debate, included many neo-Malthusian components more strongly related to Africa.[254] Some views also implied a human

245. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 29.
246. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 60-61.
247. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 50.
248. U.N., *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (March 18, 2015).
249. U.N., *Sendai Framework*, 23.
250. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 61 & 79-80.
251. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 78.
252. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 30, 33, 58-59 & 73.
253. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 28-29, 31-32, 45-46, 50-51, 52-53, 62-63 & 78-79.
254. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 10, 11-12, 12-13, 13-15 & 19-20.

security approach, evident from France's concrete policy example of protecting the livelihoods of farmers when faced with extreme weather events through insurance mechanisms, though the explicit underlying objective was preventing displacement.[255] This statement was also part of a general European attitude of adaptation and mitigation, another continuation from the previous debate, as ambiguous as it is. It should be noted that the EU could have been *more* neo-Malthusian, considering the refugee crisis it experienced.[256] Italy underlined less migration concerns in comparison to 2007, and the Greek position was no more neo-Malthusian.[257] Yet, it was Côte d'Ivoire that pointed specifically to population growth, Algeria that highlighted the lives lost in the Mediterranean, Turkey that drew attention to the prospect of hundreds of millions of climate refugees and Sudan that called climate change the "main cause" underlying the Darfur conflict.[258] The one European exception is Hungary, which offered a severely neo-Malthusian narrative from an unambiguously self-interested point of view.[259] The US position strikingly focused only on disaster relief without regard for climate change, likely a result of the Trump Administration's position on it.[260] It is certainly noteworthy how responsive the American position appears to have been to domestic politics.

Unlike in 2007, larger developing countries in 2019 were much less unified and critical of the European push to put climate change on the UNSC agenda, with no single reference made to the position of the Group of 77 or the Non-Aligned Movement.[261] Most united were African countries. The African Union for instance, expressed some hesitancy about linking climate change directly to conflict, but also recognized that climate change could occasionally act as a threat multiplier.[262] This recognition was also true for virtually all African states, but compared to European solutions, they urged more development and poverty eradication as keys to conflict prevention, as well as the global transition to cleaner energy.[263] With similar

255. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 19-20.
256. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 44-45.
257. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 38 & 36.
258. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 17-18, 80-82, 47 & 68.
259. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 26-27.
260. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 20-21.
261. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451.
262. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 23, 55-56.
263. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 21-22, 23, 55-56 & 57.

restraint, Equatorial Guinea stressed that "the world already has the tools."[264] Further, common positions of non-European and -African states included emphasis on sustainable development, in addition to environmental protection.[265] Clear exceptions were Brazil and Russia, which remained highly skeptical of climate change as an issue for the council, while China seems to have accepted it.[266] Indonesia, meanwhile, promoted noninterference and peace-promoting activities, as opposed to military operations.[267]

6.4 Core Developments in Climate Security Discourse

It appears that two narratives have come to dominate the climate security debate. The first, driven primarily by European states, concerns the scarcity-conflict and fragility-displacement scenarios under the banner of climate change as a 'threat multiplier', which has increasingly been applied to the Sahel. Neo-Malthusian language and reasoning is predominantly prevalent in the latter context, but increasingly also in the former, signaling a conceptual fusion. Consistently mentioned neo-Malthusian notions include highly likely scarcity conflicts as an indirect result of climate change and environmental degradation, which were virtually only considered in relation to developing countries, and were accompanied with considerable urgency, if not alarmism. Rarely mentioned is the notion that the earth is reaching its carrying capacity, however, and while some statements were highly pessimistic, the majority were better described as realistic, offering hope through coordinated UN action (and hence human agency). The second is driven by small island developing states, and points to the existential threats they face in the form of climate-related disasters. These states focus less, though increasingly so, on conflict, and more on climate change as a direct survival threat. A less prominent, but still notable framing originates out of a human security lens, which accepts to some degree the climate-conflict linkages of the first narrative but problematizes the impact of climate change on particular types and groups of people. Especially compared to 2007, this framing has become more articulated and specific. The major framing that has not stuck in the council, is the problematization of the UNSC as an institution in which to discuss climate change, which initially came from the Non-Aligned Movement, Group of 77 as well as China are no longer disputing climate security in the

264. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 21-22.
265. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 25-26, 72 & 70.
266. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 61-62, 15-16 & 16-17.
267. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 11.

council. While there were other criticisms offered, especially by Russia, Brazil and Hungary, these views often differ in emphasis or are unrelated, rendering them difficult to consider under the same umbrella.

As for solutions, few concrete policies were suggested. The UNSC resolutions and presidential statements could be considered successful milestones in the recognition of climate change as a security threat, but they do not address those threat themselves.[268] A special representative of the Secretary General on climate security was a more concrete proposal, which saw mainly SIDS and developed states as backers. Other policy proposals were more ambiguous, such as the calls for early warning systems and coordination with regional organizations, though both saw widespread support.

In any case, there has been a stronger development in the definition of problems, than solutions.

7. Assessing the Influence of Neo-Malthusian Ideas

Acknowledging that a neo-Malthusian problem definition is indeed among the most prominent and successful narratives in the UNSC debate on climate change, it is still unclear why it has succeeded, while another major narrative has. More importantly, what are the implications of neo-Malthusian ideas in this institution? Mehta's six determinants, as previously outlined, can assist in explaining these developments. The European problem definition, namely, ticks many of Mehta's boxes. Most obvious to discuss is power. Europe is well represented in the Security Council, with France and the United Kingdom permanently seated. It is no coincidence, then, that the UK first brought up the issue on this platform. Europe is, of course, also one of the most affluent regions on the planet and its unity through the EU, as imperfect as it is, seems to have allowed for consistent coordination of foreign policy, illustrated by the bloc making its own statement during the second debate. As for moral power, this is where the human security lens comes in. Many European states and others who embraced the region's problem definition, also occasionally applied this lens.

268. Climate Security Expert Network, "Climate Security."

Though not problematic per se, the danger is using this lens as a *means* for national security interests, and not as an end in itself.

Second is framing. The 'threat multiplier' asserts a clear causality between the incredibly large problem of climate change, and conflict, and this confusing, indirect relationship allows one to make many claims and shift the burden of proof to those who disagree, such as Brazil and Russia. Moreover, 'threat multiplier' also describes well how complex the problem is. Regarding problem ownership, this term is also ambiguous enough in its application that though it was brought up in a conflict context, it fits virtually every climate security scenario so that every country could claim ownership over it. Japan used the term to describe natural disasters, Fiji related it to forced migrations and the stress it puts on societies, and Norway linked it to conflict – the most typically neo-Malthusian framing.[269] It is important to note where this framing came from: a report by a research organization rooted in a military background (CNA).

With respect to the venue in which the European narrative was introduced, one could ask why it has succeeded. Indeed, developing states' response to the first debate constituted a clear rejection of climate change as a UNSC issue. The answer might lie in what Mehta describes as the *fit between problem definition and environment*. Since 2007, the issue of climate change more generally has attracted enormous attention and momentum. Similarly, to adapt to and mitigate the problem, enormous funds have been generated. Especially for developing countries, there could be large benefits to appealing to powerful developed states on this issue. Likewise, there could be severe diplomatic ramifications when rejecting the issue on this platform. This is merely a hypothesis, however, and certainly deserves more in-depth research.

Not discussed yet is the importance of available policy solutions to the success of a problem definition. While many larger objectives have been communicated, the European problem definition does not imply any specific policy goals, other than investing in sustainable development (to prevent the effects of climate change), or at the other extreme, intervention based on environmental grounds. The 'existential threat' problem definition of small island developing states allows for more concrete policy solutions, in this regard, as natural disasters

269. U.N. SCOR, S/PV.8451, 31, 34 & 35-36.

are often clearly demarcated threats, successful preparation for which can obviously save lives. Similarly, since at most policy instruments are being finetuned to adapt somewhat to climate change, according to Hall's theory, there is not much *social learning* to speak of yet. Looking at Kingdon's criteria for appealing solutions, it is evident that the very *problem*, has not yet been demarcated well enough, let alone the solutions.

Still, the climate security debate is likely just getting started, for climate change is only going to get worse. Hence, it is of the essence to keep an eye out for the which problem definition will eventually dominate. Will it be that of European states, that of small island developing states, a mix or perhaps none at all?

8. Discussion

Climate change is a highly political issue, and rightly so. Dealing with it concerns incredibly difficult political questions the neglect of which risks marginalizing those least powerful, and most vulnerable. It is tempting to depoliticize climate change to build momentum for change, but vague framings such as the 'threat multiplier' analogy leave in the middle what this change is. This particular framing is so broad that it can be legitimized for the objectives of any party – including those with malintent or acting out of pure self-interest. In that sense, critical authors have a point. Europe *has* been preoccupied with Africa pushing narratives that overstep the science, without doubt due to the fear for large migration flows, and this perverse stimulant must be monitored closely. However, among the hard-political questions of climate change are also those such as 'how will small island developing states cope with sea-level rise and more extreme weather events?', an undeniable concern and an overlooked aspect in the arguments of those critical of the climate security debate. Indeed, neither Hartmann, nor Selby and Hoffmann, nor Verhoeven even mention small island developing states.[270]

Further, Chapter 5 reveals that major differences exist between an unrestrained author such as Kaplan on the one hand, and Homer-Dixon on the other, who appears much more interested in the conceptual accuracy of determinist Malthusian logic. For that matter,

270. Hartmann, "Converging Disaster"; Verhoeven, "Climate Change, Security"; Selby and Hoffmann, "Rethinking Climate."

humanity is treading onto unknown territory; we simply have a poor understanding of the hard limits of our species. Can unbearable temperatures not drive millions from their homes? Can such displacement not disturb the social fabric in countries of destination? Furthermore, not all key characteristics of neo-Malthusian ideology have been adopted by debate participants, with population *growth* not nearly as prominent an issue as population *movement*. This point especially suggests that states do not purposefully act out of Malthusian ideological conviction, but often out of perceived threats to national security.

Going back to the core question, then: has the climate security debate in the Security Council served 'MARA' ends? Not yet in the most concrete of ways. However, while environmental interventions *appear* far away, it is essential to keep monitoring the purposes that climate security narratives serve. The climate security discourse has already come a long way to legitimize and depoliticize attention and concern specifically for environment-conflict linkages in African countries when they should be highly political. Hence, tracking money flows and any actions undertaken even partially under the climate security mandate is recommended. So is an emphasis on protecting people's livelihoods and security as a goal in and of itself, and ensuring this emphasis is not used as a *means.* Future research may well delve into the degree to which moral arguments are used for neo-Malthusian purposes. Similarly, the legitimizing impact of small island developing states on the larger climate security narrative certainly deserves attention.

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