



Climate change threats to international peace and security

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Abstract:

Climate change is one of the unconventional sources that pose a real threat to international peace and security, in addition to traditional sources such as aggression and armed conflict. The victims of climate change now outnumber the victims of wars and conflicts. Climate change is considered the major challenge of our time and its negative impact on national, regional and global stability. This requires us to explore the international tools available to confront these threats. Therefore, the international mechanism responsible for maintaining international peace and security, represented by the UN Security Council, cannot be ignored by defining its relationship to the security threats resulting from climate change.

Keywords: climate change, UN Security Council, international peace and security, security threats, rules of international law.

ملخص:

الواقع أن التغير المناخي هو أحد المصادر غير التقليدية التي تمثل تهديدا حقيقيا للسلم والأمن الدوليين، إضافة إلى المصادر التقليدية والمتمثلة في العدوان والنزاعات المسلحة، فضحايا التغيرات المناخية أضحت تفوق ضحايا الحروب والنزاعات، إذ يعتبر تغير المناخ التحدي الكبير في عصرنا وتأثيره السلبي على الاستقرار الوطني والإقليمي والعالمي، مما يتطلب منا إلى البحث في الأدوات الدولية المتاحة لمجابهة هذه التهديدات، لذا لا يمكن تجاهل الآلية الدولية المسؤولة عن الحفاظ على السلم والأمن الدوليين والمتمثلة في مجلس الأمن الدولي من خلال تحديد علاقته بتهديدات الأمنية المترتبة عن تغير المناخ.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تغير المناخ، مجلس الامن الدولي، السلام والامن الدوليين، التهديدات الامنية، قواعد القانون الدولي.

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Introduction :

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the international security environment has changed significantly, although the risks of major armed conflicts and wars between states are now declining, and the world increasingly faces a number of security challenges that are not military in nature¹, and at the forefront of these threats and the most dangerous of them is climate change, which is considered the decisive challenge of our time due to the threats it creates, such as rising sea levels, food and water insecurity, loss of biodiversity, increased health risks, migration, etc., which negatively affects national, regional and global stability (international peace and security).

Climate change was previously an environmental problem, and now climate change is being reframed as a security threat. The political momentum behind the idea of climate change as a security threat has developed rapidly, even reaching the United Nations Security Council, which prompted us to clarify the relationship of the UN Security Council to climate change issues, i.e. to identify the links between climate change and security, which paves the way for the Security Council's mandate for the security threats of climate change, which is considered one of the relevant bodies, given the Council's possession of strong legal tools to serve its mission to support the maintenance of international peace and security. In light of the increasing clarity of the effects of climate change on peace and security, many questions have been raised, including the subject of our study, which is the following problem: To what extent does climate change affect international peace and security, and how has the UN Security Council addressed these threats? The importance of this study lies in answering the aforementioned problem, by clarifying the relationship between climate change and international peace and security. If this relationship exists - the threat to international peace and security - we will try to shed light on the role and responsibilities that the UN Security Council has taken upon itself as the body authorized according to the UN Charter to maintain international peace and security to confront the threats of climate change. This prompted us to divide this study into two sections: In the first section,

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¹ Human Security Centre, Human Security Report 2005: War and Peace in the 21st Century New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.



I addressed the security implications associated with climate change, while in the second section, we devoted it to the Security Council's dealing with the security risks associated with climate change.

THE FIRST TOPIC

Security implications associated with climate change

The concept of national security was traditionally synonymous with protecting the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of the state from external military aggression², but with the end of the Cold War (1990), this traditional concept was expanded through multiple sources of threats to global security, including those related to our study, represented by security threats related to the potential physical effects of climate change from global warming, represented by the phenomenon of global warming that exceeded 1.5 degrees Celsius³, which leads to increased rainfall worldwide due to increased evaporation, which results in more frequent floods, and also causes sea levels to rise due to the rise in water temperature, which will submerge many islands, and natural disasters may contribute to being multipliers that may lead to accelerating traditional security threats (armed conflicts).

Climate change and environmental degradation lead to many security risks that threaten basic human rights as stipulated in the United Nations human rights conventions, particularly basic human rights such as the right to life, the right to adequate food, health, personal freedom and security, which are guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The security impacts of climate change are many, and we will focus on two threats because they are the most severe and widespread. The first is related to the impact of climate change on conflicts and armed conflicts, which we will discuss in the first Requirement. The second Subheading related to climate change and its relationship to migration and displacement (the Second Requirement).

FIRST REQUIREMENT: The relationship between climate change and armed conflicts

² Tariq Muhammad Dhunun Al-Taie, *Security in the Twenty-First Century (Its Nature, Global Intellectual Approaches, Unconventional Challenges, and Future Prospects)*, Dar Al-Akademoon Publishing and Distribution Company, First Edition, Jordan, 2021, at 90.

³ Musab Qasim Azawi, *Renewable Energies: Energy Generation Options for a Humanity Not Doomed to Extinction*, Dar Al-Akademaa for Publishing and Distribution, First Edition, 2021, at 203-204.



Social and political tensions continue to fuel armed conflicts around the world, although each conflict is the result of a combination of interconnected factors, some of which are related to the subject of our study, namely climate change, which has dire repercussions on the security of societies, due to increased drought, global warming, etc. All of these changes may cause natural disasters, which have security implications such as conflicts and armed conflicts, especially in fragile states whose societies suffer from divisions, especially ethnic ones. Threats may also be factors that may exacerbate conflicts. This type of conflict is referred to as climate or environmental conflict⁴, in which environmental changes resulting from climate change play a role in provoking or exacerbating conflicts. Some local and regional conflicts develop into large-scale wars, which are often rooted in the increasing competition over diminishing natural resources such as water or arable land. These conflicts are more likely to occur in areas where livelihoods are closely linked to climate-sensitive activities such as agriculture and fishing, with climate change acting as a multiplier of conflicts, or creating breeding grounds for terrorism.

Firstly: Climate change as a multiplier of conflicts

Extreme weather conditions resulting from climate change and associated disasters, especially harm countries whose economies depend on agricultural and livestock production, by reducing their production, which results in a worsening of inequality between social groups. These climate-related factors, when combined with other drivers of conflict, may lead to an increase in the risks of violence. Accordingly, climate change can lead to an increase in the future risks of violent armed conflicts within fragile countries. This means that climate change exacerbates existing risks and vulnerabilities in societies, making conflict more likely due to the exacerbation of existing social, economic and political tensions. Pressure on natural resources such as water and arable land, which are essential for survival and economic stability, leads to some tensions turning into armed conflicts. The effects of climate change do not directly cause conflict, but in most cases are considered a multiplier factor that increases the chances of conflict⁵, i.e. climate change increases the intensity of conflicts and makes future conflicts more likely, for example, the outbreak of conflict over water as a vital resource, where in the event of its scarcity it is the root cause of future insecurity.

⁴ Norma Rossi, Malte Riemann(2024) , Security Studies: An Applied Introduction, Publisher: SAGE, Publication Sage UK: London, p173.

⁵ Stephane Hallegatte et al., “Threat multiplier: Climate change, Disasters, and Poor People”, World bank group, November 2015, available at, https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/epdf/10.1596/978-1-4648-0673-5_ch3.



1- The increasing risk of civil wars

According to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, climate change not only exacerbates threats to international peace and security, but also poses a threat to regional peace and security of countries. Scientific forecasts have determined that climate change causes direct changes and damage to the environment; which indirectly affects humans in the long term, especially when human adaptation to climate change is ineffective, leading to conflicts within a single region as a result of the scarcity of livelihoods, especially in countries whose economies depend on agriculture and fishing, which are directly affected by climate change, which forces the affected population to adapt to the situation, or in some cases leave for a more suitable environment for living - migration.

Such migration is a result of the direct negative effects of climate change on the environment, which may lead to conflict within some societies, as a result of the population competing for diminishing resources, as the United Nations Environment Program highlighted the causal relationship between climate change and armed conflict, describing that water scarcity resulting from changing rainfall patterns resulting from climate change contributed to fueling the civil war in the Darfur region of Sudan⁶.

2- Creating environments that incubate terrorism

The effects of global warming often lead to geopolitical changes; their effects are clearly evident when they occur in fragile areas such as the Horn of Africa, for example, where the impact of climate change on natural resources undermines the ability of nations to govern themselves and increases the chances of conflicts; the likely result here is the transformation of these areas into a fertile environment for terrorism, especially in light of the state of instability and rising poverty rates, as stated by the young Chadian activist Hindou Ibrahim in deliberations in the Security Council on: How does climate change lead to the outbreak of conflicts and joining terrorist groups?, that climate change threatens international peace and security, as when water and food resources become scarce, people conflict, and these conflicts may develop from the local to the national and then regional level, and she gave an example that when the head of the family is unable to feed his children, due to the shrinking natural resources on which he depends, he becomes vulnerable to joining terrorist and extremist groups, and these areas turn into a

⁶ Buhaug, Halvard, Tor Benjaminsen, Espen Sjaastad, and Ole Magnus Theisen. "Climate Variability, Food production shocks, and Violent conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Environmental research letters* 10 (20December, 2023).



fertile environment for terrorism because terrorist groups, in addition to their ideologies, exploit the poverty of the people in these areas⁷.

Secondly: Historical Examples of the Relationship between Climate Change and Conflicts

There are many examples of conflicts that were directly or indirectly caused by climate change and the pressures associated with it. These conflicts and the losses they inflict on human life highlight the seriousness of the threat, which confirms the reason why climate change is often referred to as a threat multiplier, intensifying these conflicts due to the pressures resulting from climate change. There are many examples, we will only discuss three of them in the following points:

1- The Darfur Crisis

The conflict in Darfur is one of the most cited examples of climate conflict, which some have described as the first climate change war. In 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described the conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan as the world's first climate change conflict⁸, as this region of Sudan became the center of a devastating conflict in 2003. The roots of the Darfur crisis can be traced back to environmental changes resulting from long-term droughts and desertification due to climate change, which resulted in scarcity of arable land and water resources. This environmental degradation has intensified competition and tension between nomadic herders and settled farmers, which ultimately led to an escalation of violent conflict. The case of Darfur thus highlights how changes in environmental conditions exacerbated by climate change can contribute to societal divisions and thus conflicts.

2-The Syrian conflict in 2011

Syria witnessed the worst drought ever, which intensified between 2006 and 2011, due to climate change and had devastating effects on agriculture, leading to widespread crop shortages and the mass migration of agricultural families to urban areas. The challenges associated with climate variability and change and the availability and use of fresh water played a direct role in the deterioration of the

⁷ - Security Council: How does climate change lead to conflicts and the joining of terrorist groups? Available on the official page of the United Nations, available at <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2018/07/1012541>

⁸ Ki-moon, B. (2007). A Climate Culprit in Darfur, Washington Post, 16, A15. Retrieved from: available at, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/articles/2007-06-16/climate-culprit-darfur> (Accessed on 5 March 2024).



economic situation in Syria⁹, which contributed to climate disruption intensifying the political crisis that was accumulating in Syria, which turned into a comprehensive civil war. The Syrian conflict is an example of how the scarcity of resources resulting from climate can act as a catalyst for conflict in a politically and socially fragile environment.

3- Lake Chad Basin in Africa

This region, which includes parts of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, has witnessed major environmental changes due to the phenomenon of global warming, most notably the significant shrinkage of Lake Chad, as this environmental degradation has led to economic difficulties, food insecurity and water scarcity, forcing many to be displaced. The influx of these climate-driven migrants to new areas has led to competition for scarce resources such as land and water, which has exacerbated existing tensions and conflicts, especially between farmers and herders. In addition, there is a link between the drought caused by climate change in Lake Chad and Boko Haram, which has its roots in the region¹⁰, which exploits the region's vulnerabilities that increase the complexity of the conflict, which illustrates the multifaceted nature of climate-induced cross-border conflicts. In 2017, the Security Council adopted Resolution No. 2349¹¹, regarding the conflict in the Lake Chad region, which explicitly identifies climate change as a contributing factor to instability.

SECOND REQUIREMENT: Climate change and its consequences related to migration

Migration has been a strategy followed by humans for thousands of years in order to adapt to poverty, scarcity of resources, ethnic or religious tensions, violent conflicts, or other factors. Local environmental change is another factor in migration. Although economic and political factors are currently the predominant causes of displacement and migration, climate change is already having an impact, with involuntary population movements expected to increase. Projections of the number of people who may be forced to migrate due to climate change and

⁹ Peter H. Gleick, Water, Drought, Climate Change, and Conflict in Syria, Vol. 6, No. 3 (July 2014), pp. 331-340 (10 pages) Published By: American Meteorological Society.

¹⁰ The UN Security Council and Climate Security: Reflections on the Unsuccessful Draft Resolution, available at:

<https://opiniojuris.org/2022/02/14/the-un-security-council-and-climate-security-reflections-on-the-unsuccessful-draft-resolution>.

¹¹ UN Security Council Resolution 2349 on Peace and Security in Africa of 31 March 2017, UN Document S/RES/2349



environmental degradation by 2050 range from 50 million to 350 million, a staggering number¹².

It has become clear that climate change contributes to so-called slow-onset events such as desertification, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, air pollution and changes in rainfall patterns. The loss of biodiversity will exacerbate many humanitarian crises and may lead to the displacement of more people. Climate change is an important driver of migration, forcing people to leave their homes in search of more suitable habitats. This displacement not only affects local populations, but often crosses borders, leading to international migration and refugee crises¹³. The movement of climate refugees poses challenges to national and international policies, straining the capacity of humanitarian assistance and migration systems. As climate change continues to affect more areas worldwide, the scale of migration and the associated social, economic and legal challenges are expected to increase.

Clarifying the relationship between climate change and migration is not easy, as the International Organization for Migration has explained, as there are so many other social, economic and environmental factors at play that it is difficult to establish a linear causal relationship between human-induced climate change and migration. However, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations refugee agency, estimates that the number of people forcibly displaced due to sudden weather-related hazards is largely due to floods (19.2 million), storms (10 million) and drought (2.2 million)¹⁴. So we will discuss the concept of climate refugee and identify the security implications of this migration.

With the increase in the number of people displaced due to disasters caused by climate change as a catalyst and driver, the number of climate refugees will continue to rise despite the steps taken to reduce this phenomenon, national and international responses to this challenge are still limited, and the protection provided to displaced victims is still insufficient despite the existence of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which did not refer to the term climate refugee, and only

¹² IOM report on: Policy Brief Migration, Climate Change and the Environment (2009), available , available at : www.worldbank.org

¹³ UNHCR “Forced displacement in the context of climate change: challenges for States under international law”, paper submitted by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2009.

¹⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre Geneva, Report on Internal Displacement and Food Security 2023 , available at: https://api.internaldisplacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC_GRID_2023_Global_Report_on_Internal_Displacement_LR.pdf#page=9



included people exposed to persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, belonging to a particular social group or political opinions, and who are unable or unwilling to seek protection from their countries of origin, which means that climate cannot currently be cited as a reason for seeking asylum or refugee status, so in this section we will address the definition of climate refugee and identify the forms of migration.

Firstly: The Concept of Climate Refugee

With the increase in the number of people displaced due to disasters caused by climate change as a catalyst and driver, the number of climate refugees will continue to rise despite the steps taken to reduce this phenomenon, national and international responses to this challenge are still limited, and the protection provided to displaced victims is still insufficient despite the existence of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which did not refer to the term climate refugee, and only included people exposed to persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, belonging to a particular social group or political opinions, and who are unable or unwilling to seek protection from their countries of origin, which means that climate cannot currently be cited as a reason for seeking asylum or refugee status, so in this section we will address the definition of climate refugee and identify the forms of migration.

1- Definition of climate refugees

Refugees were defined in the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, but migration resulting from climate change was not addressed, as millions of people facing this problem were excluded, because there is no regulation that addresses it yet, and accordingly there is still no legal definition for people moving due to environmental motives, and there is no internationally accepted definition. However, many actors in the field of migration are working to develop an accurate definition for this category, foremost among them the International Organization for Migration, as the International Organization for Migration put forward in 2007 a broad working definition of environmental migration, stating that environmental migrants are: "Persons or groups of persons who, often for reasons related to sudden or gradual change in the environment that adversely affects their lives or living conditions, are forced to leave their usual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad"¹⁵.

¹⁵ International Organization for Migration Paragraph 6 of Document No. MC/INF/288 of 2007 Available at:



Climate migration also refers to “the movement of a person or group of persons who, for reasons of sudden or gradual change in the environment due to climate change, are forced to leave their place of habitual residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, within a country or across international borders”¹⁶ and thus climate migration is a subcategory of environmental migration.

2- Images of climate migration

Climate migration occurs in two ways: internal or external. Internal migration covers all movements within a country from rural to urban areas, while external migration simply means that which is outside the borders of a country to another country near or far from their country of origin. However, at the present time, external migration does not occur as much as internal migration, since few people have the means to live in a foreign country for a longer period of time. In climate migration, people initially choose areas within their own countries, but with the intensification of the global effects of the climate crisis, there may be more frequent international migration in the future. There were cases of asylum applications related to the climate crisis in 2013 from the Republic of Kiribati () to New Zealand, but they were rejected by the latter¹⁷, as well as what the countries of North Africa are witnessing, from a large displacement of the peoples of these countries to the countries of the Maghreb, and this is due to the combination of a group of factors, including climate change and the natural disasters it leaves behind - drought.

Secondly: Security Implications of Environmental Migration

Evidence and data highlight the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation, which reshape human mobility patterns that can take the form of internal and regional migration, on a temporary or long-term basis, by individuals, families and communities, who move voluntarily or are forcibly displaced, due to the security implications of this migration, which can be summarized in the following two points:

1- Social and Economic Challenges

Environmental migration can pose a security risk in the short or long term, in countries of origin, transit and destination. What exacerbates the situation is that migration due to climate change is closely linked to social and economic factors, and it is mainly related to the issue of increasing scarcity of resources, especially in

https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/about_iom/en/council/94/MC_INF_288.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The Republic of Kiribati is an archipelago located in the tropical central Pacific Ocean.



countries of destination for migration with weak economies. This has led to increased competition between indigenous populations and immigrants, which increases the likelihood of conflicts over resource distribution. Developed countries may also find it increasingly difficult to absorb immigrants into their economies and maintain their well-being. Fear of environmental immigrants may also threaten them through increased xenophobia and nationalist movements, as witnessed by racist violence against immigrants in the Russian North Caucasus in Moscow in 2010¹⁸.

2- Conflicts

Environmental migration has caused tensions and conflicts, due to the negative effects it leaves on the receiving country, such as burdening its economy, especially countries with limited capabilities, which causes competition between immigrants and the indigenous population, which leads to violence in order to secure the increasing basic and increasingly scarce resources, and may sometimes turn into tensions when the immigrants are of a different race than the indigenous population, especially in the case of the presence of ethnic minorities in the host country that can form hegemony, separation or unity with immigrants of the same race, and in the face of the fear of the indigenous population, ethnic tensions result and threaten the stability of the receiving countries, and sometimes migration causes violent conflicts that may be armed, and an example of this is the case of Darfur when millions of Chadian refugees fled to it¹⁹, which contributed to increasing tensions in the Darfur region of Sudan and turning it into a civil war.

THE SECOND TOPIC

The Security Council's Response to Security Risks Associated with Climate Change

In recent decades, the United Nations Security Council has faced increasing challenges with new and non-traditional security threats. Such matters pose a challenge to the Council, which used to address only traditional security threats, but also to events resulting from economic and/or societal and/or political instability, which threaten livelihoods and increase the risks of conflict. For example, in 2020, the United Nations Security Council faced one of these threats, represented by Covid-19, which spread rapidly throughout the world, causing widespread deaths and social and political instability, as the Secretary-General of

¹⁸ Andrew Foxall, *Ethnic Relations in Post-Soviet Russia: Russians and east European Studien*, London: Routledge, at 145.

¹⁹ Since Chad gained independence from France in 1960, Darfur has been a haven for Chadian rebels.



the United Nations declared that the epidemic also poses a major threat to the maintenance of international peace and security²⁰.

Among the threats facing the world, the subject of our study is climate change, and the security implications it causes for international communities, such as global warming, rising sea levels that threaten the Pacific Islands, and other threats. The international community has committed to combating the phenomenon of climate change, and we find at the forefront of this is the issuance of international instruments for the same purpose through the issuance of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 1994, and other relevant international instruments. However, the security threats arising from climate change have become a threat to international peace and security, which raises the question of whether the United Nations Security Council should also act on this issue. This study calls for understanding the current ability of the United Nations Security Council to deal with non-traditional issues resulting from security threats, especially climate change threats, by analyzing the decisions of the United Nations Security Council and responding to such threats.

FIRST REQUIREMENT: The mandate of the Security Council in non-traditional threats

The idea of collective security is based on the indivisibility of peace and security, and is based on the principle that the collapse of peace anywhere constitutes a threat to everyone and everywhere, and thus requires collective action to respond to the threat and restore stability to the system, as the United Nations was established in 1945 to institutionalize this idea, after the unsuccessful collective security experiment carried out by the League of Nations, and the collective security model of the United Nations dealt primarily with traditional forms of military security, such as armed conflicts and violence between states, however, over the past three decades the mandate (powers) of the Security Council in non-traditional matters has been expanded by expanding the interpretation of Article 39 of the Charter, in the event of any threat to international peace and security, by introducing new threats outside the traditional threats - acts of aggression - represented by non-traditional threats (terrorism, nuclear weapons, ...), by clarifying how the Security Council deals with this type of threat, and to provide some models of the Council's response to these non-traditional threats

Firstly: The UN Security Council and Non-Traditional Security Threats

²⁰ Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, on the appeal for an immediate scientific ceasefire, available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2020/sgsm20041.doc.htm>



Under Article 24 of the UN Charter, the UN Security Council has “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” In order for the Council to consider a matter, it must do so as a matter affecting the maintenance of international peace and security. In the context in which the UN Security Council was established at the end of World War II, this mandate was initially envisioned to cover traditional security threats (issues that threaten the territorial integrity or sovereign equality of States), in particular conflict between States. However, the mandate of the UN Security Council was never explicitly limited.

Article 34 of the Charter allows the Council to investigate “any situation” that might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute in order to determine whether the continuance of such dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security. Thus, although the wording of Article 34 was drafted with traditional security threats in mind, it left it open for the UN Security Council to act on new threats²¹.

1- The beginnings of non-traditional security threats

Since the late 1990s, wars between states have become rarer and their security nature has become recognized in light of the changing threats, and the mandate of the United Nations Security Council has evolved to include "non-traditional" security threats, moving away from a purely state-centric security perspective²², non-traditional security threats represent challenges arising from non-military sources, such as resource scarcity and natural disasters, that hinder the development, survival and well-being of societies. The threat to security stems from economic and social factors and/or political instability caused by such challenges, which undermine people's well-being and increase the likelihood of armed conflict²³, the resulting increase in tensions is the reason for the emergence of such challenges. They are often referred to as "threat multipliers", because they increase the risks of traditional threats or make them more serious security threats. The transnational scope of many non-traditional security issues is such that a coordinated international response is required, since unilateral action by one state will often not suppress the threat if no action is taken by the other states where the

²¹ Charter of the United Nations, art 34; Erin Pobjie "COVID-19 and the Scope of the UN Security Council's Mandate to Address Non-Traditional Threats to International Peace and Security" (2021) ZaöRV 117 at 127.

²² - Siti Nurhasanah, Marthen Napang and Syaiful Rohman "Covid-19 As A Non-Traditional Threat to Human Security" (2020) 3 Journal of Strategic and Global Studies , volume 3 Number 1 Janury, 54 at 59.

²³ Caballero-Anthony, above n 1, at 6; and Ningthoujam Koiremba Singh and William Nunes "Nontraditional Security: Redefining State-centric Outlook" (2016) 20 Jadavpur Journal of International Relations 102 at 109.



threat exists²⁴. It is the transnational threat that triggers the mandate of the UN Security Council to maintain international peace and security. The Council may then resort to its powers under Chapters VI and VII to address the threat.

Secondly: Models of the UN Security Council's response to non-traditional threats

There are many practices of the UN Security Council regarding expanding the scope of its work that allows it to address a growing list of non-traditional security threats such as global health threats (HIV, Ebola, and recently Covid (19), which are considered emerging security threats before climate change threats, which were disputed in the UN Security Council, which we will discuss in detail in the second section of this topic, as we will focus in this section on the threats of epidemics to global health and thus to international peace and security, as the UN Security Council discussed this type of threat during its meetings, starting with the spread of HIV in 2000, as well as the spread of the Ebola virus, and finally the spread of the Corona virus, which we will discuss in the following points:

1- The UN Security Council's response to the HIV threat

The UN Security Council first addressed health threats in 2000 with HIV, when the Council first issued Resolution 1308 on this health threat, noting the virus's potential to pose a threat to stability and security, focusing on its impact on social instability and the risks to the health of international peacekeeping forces. This resolution explicitly referred to the Council's primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

2- The UN Security Council's response to the Ebola virus threat

The UN Security Council addressed the public health crisis again in 2014, issuing Resolution 2177 on the Ebola virus outbreak, where the resolution unequivocally declared that: "The Ebola virus outbreak in Africa constitutes a threat to international peace and security." It is clear that the threat of the Ebola virus as a threat to international peace and security demonstrated a consensus within the international community regarding the seriousness of the matter, which requires action by the UN Security Council.

3- The UN Security Council's response to the threat of the Coronavirus

²⁴ Caballero-Anthony, above n 1, at 6; and Reuben Wong and Scott Brown "Stepping up EU-ASEAN Cooperation in Non-Traditional Security" in Olivia Gippner (ed) *Changing Waters: Towards a New EU Asia Strategy* (LSE Ideas, 2016) 79 at 80.



On December 31, 2019, as the novel coronavirus disease, COVID-19, spread worldwide, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a “public health emergency of international concern.” UN Secretary-General António Guterres was quick to acknowledge the incident and the potential security implications of the pandemic. He called for an immediate global ceasefire on March 23, 2020, and when the UN Security Council finally convened on April 9 to discuss the effects of COVID-19, it declared the pandemic a “major threat to the maintenance of international peace and security.”⁵⁰ However, in the face of this declaration, the UN Security Council failed to agree on any action even after many months. Due to political differences among the five permanent members, it was not until July 1, 2020 that the Council’s first resolution on COVID-19 was adopted²⁵.

This resolution was reached based on the UN Security Council's primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security and within the framework of the purposes of the United Nations. This resolution was laden with expressions of concern and fear about the impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic on world peace. This resolution also stressed the need for international cooperation and solidarity at the national, regional and international levels, within the framework of comprehensive and integrated coordination. The Security Council also called for a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all cases on its agenda and a humanitarian truce for 90 consecutive days, in order to deliver humanitarian aid as stated in paragraph 12/1 of UN Security Council Resolution No. 2532, including health aid - vaccines - based on its fear that the unprecedented scale of the Covid-19 pandemic could endanger international peace and security. It is noteworthy that the Security Council reached a consensus that the pandemic represents a potential threat to security, despite China and South Africa's initial challenge to this.

SECOND REQUIREMENT: The mandate of the UN Security Council on climate change issues

The UN Charter is the starting point for assessing whether the Security Council is able to play its role in relation to climate change and security. The founders of the UN Charter did not anticipate the threat posed by climate change, as this threat has become an obstacle to human security, which raises the question of whether the Security Council can exceed its powers by delving into issues that have no incidental links to the conflict? And does the Council have the right to decide what should be done in non-traditional issues, including climate change threats?

²⁵ UN Security Council Resolution 2532 on the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Document S/RES/2532 .



Based on the Charter, it appears that the various organs of the United Nations are able to address climate change issues simultaneously, spanning across the different pillars of the United Nations' work (peace and security, development, and human rights). While the Charter defines the responsibilities of the various organs of the United Nations system, the Charter links different parts of the United Nations system, indicating that the various organs and bodies of the United Nations were intended by the drafters of the Charter to work together to address complex problems. For example, under Article 11 of the Charter, the General Assembly may bring to the attention of the Security Council situations which are likely to endanger international peace and security, while the Economic and Social Council may provide information to the Security Council and be assisted by the Security Council upon its request under Article 65 of the Charter. In practice, although the Council often relies on the expertise and advice provided by the Secretariat, it also sometimes benefits from the input of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and other United Nations entities.

In this regard, the President of the Economic and Social Council has briefed the Security Council on various occasions over the past two decades; the last such briefing was in November 2020 during a high-level open video conference session on "Contemporary Drivers of Conflict and Insecurity", entitled "Contemporary Drivers of Conflict and Insecurity". The agenda for building and sustaining peace, in a meeting that focused largely on the impacts of climate change and COVID-19 on peace and security. This resulted in the inclusion of the issue of climate change threats in the discussions of the UN Security Council, and the establishment of a UN and international institutional framework within the framework of protecting international peace and security from the threats of climate change.

Firstly: Developments in the Security Council's discussions on climate change

The beginnings of introducing the issue of climate change threats into the UN Security Council's discussions appear since 2005, when the Council took only very limited action regarding the changing climate; where the Security Council issued a resolution at the 2005 World Summit; in which it stressed the importance of preventing conflicts and proactively addressing the root causes of armed conflicts, in addition to other social and political crises²⁶. This resolution was the basic starting point for human rights defenders and the beginning of the role of the UN Security Council in the field of climate change²⁷. In light of the increasing

²⁶ 2011 Security Council session on the maintenance of international peace and security "Impact of climate change", UN document No.: S/PV.6587

²⁷ Letter dated 5 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Security Council, UN document S/2007/186.



recognition of climate change as a "double threat" by jurists and political representatives of civil society around the world, the UN Security Council held several discussions that can be summarized according to the years in the following points:

1- The UN Security Council Discussions of 2007

It is worth noting that the UN Security Council's dealing with climate change dates back to 2007, where the discussion focused almost exclusively on whether the Security Council was the appropriate body to consider the security implications of climate change. Several small island developing states in the Pacific argued for the need to increase the role of the Council in the field of climate change, claiming that climate change represents an active and present threat to peace and security, and that the Security Council should be committed to addressing this issue under its mandate, although Russia, China, and the Group of 77 strongly opposed the Security Council considering climate change at all. The Group of 77 said that this action by the Security Council was an encroachment on the mandate of other UN bodies that were more appropriate to address climate change (i.e. the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)²⁸.

2- UN Security Council Discussion in 2009

In 2009, under pressure from the small island developing states in the Pacific, the General Assembly issued resolution 63/281, in which it expressed concern about climate change and security issues. It reaffirmed the role of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the main tool for addressing climate change, and called on all United Nations bodies, each within its mandate, to consider this matter, the potential security implications of climate change²⁹. Under this resolution, the Secretary-General submitted a report on the potential security implications of climate change, concluding that climate change acts as a "threat multiplier". He also submitted a report to the Secretary-General urging the Security Council to reconsider its role in addressing climate change³⁰.

3- The 2011 UN Security Council Debate

²⁸ Letter dated 16 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council. S/2007/211

²⁹ General Assembly resolution on climate change and its potential security implications, 2009, UN Doc. A/RES/63/281.

³⁰ -Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on climate change and its potential security implications, dated 11 September 2009, UN Doc. A/64/350



In 2011, Germany and the Pacific Island States organized a second open debate focusing specifically on the threat of sea level rise and food insecurity³¹. Much of the debate covered the issue of climate change, as the Security Council is the appropriate forum for discussing such cases. However, Russia, China, and the Group of 77 remained opposed to the Security Council considering the issue of climate change. We note that there were some tangible shifts between 2007 and 2011, as the United States remained neutral in 2007, until it changed its view on climate change by saying that it was time for the Security Council to enter the twenty-first century and assume its primary responsibilities³². Some members of the Group of 77 (Lebanon, Costa Rica, and Singapore in particular) broke away from the group's overall view, and recognized at least a limited role for the Security Council in addressing climate change. At the end of the 2011 debate, the Security Council voted unanimously to issue a presidential statement affirming:

- On the status of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as a key tool for addressing climate change.

- The Council's concern about the potential negative long-term impacts of climate change, through the exacerbation of some existing threats to international peace and security, and the Security Council's concern about the potential security implications of the loss of some States' territories due to sea-level rise, particularly in low-lying small island States³³, In addition, the Presidential Statement requested the Secretary-General to provide "information context" on the above issues in future reports, While the language of the Statement was less than many had hoped.

4- Security Council discussions for the years (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)

During this period, the Council held five thematic meetings (four open discussions and one debate) with a particular focus on climate change and security. Since climate change is not an official item on the agenda with the periodic reporting cycle, these meetings were held at the initiative of the Security Council Presidents who considered the relationship between climate change and security important enough to highlight it in the discretionary events during their presidency of the climate-related security risks debates initiated by Sweden on 11 July 2018; where an open debate was held on the relationship between climate change and global conflicts, and to deepen the understanding of climate-related security risks.

³¹ Letter dated 1 July 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, UN document S/2011/408.

³² Security Council discussions on the impact of climate change on the maintenance of international peace and security, 20 July 2011, UN document S/PV.6587.

³³ Statement by the President of the Security Council on the Council's consideration of the impact of climate change, UN Document No.: S/PRST/2011/15



This session was the Council's first debate on climate change and security in seven years. While participants agreed that climate change and its impacts pose serious security threats, they differed on the extent of the Security Council's responsibility to address climate change, with some arguing that the Council should address climate change as a security risk, and others warning against expanding the Council's mandate or encroaching on the mandates of other bodies.

On 25 January 2019, the Dominican Republic called for an open debate on "Climate and Security", which was held on 24 July 2020 and initiated by the representative of Germany; With an open debate on the humanitarian impacts of environmental degradation and peace and security, an open debate was held on 23 February 2021 on "Addressing climate-related security risks to international peace and security through mitigation and resilience-building", hosted by the United Kingdom. On 13 December 2022, the UN Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution presented by Nigeria and Ireland, which included considering climate change a threat to international security, as a result of the Russian veto, as 12 countries agreed to it, India opposed it, and China abstained from voting, despite the fact that 113 countries in the General Assembly supported it. The three countries - Russia, India, and China - considered that the UN Security Council is not the appropriate forum for discussing climate change, and that this issue should remain within the scope of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and that climate change is a scientific and economic issue, and that linking it to security is not the Council's domain because it is subject to politicization, and it overlaps with the work of the United Nations and the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

5- Recent developments in the discussions of the UN Security Council (2023-2024)

Held on February 14, 2023, on sea level rise and its effects on international peace and security, and although the members of the Council are united on the need to combat the harmful effects of climate change, the members remain divided on whether the Security Council should play a role in this regard and under what circumstances, and most members of the Council support the body's more systematic engagement in climate, peace and security issues, as for the concerns of Brazil, China and Russia regarding the approach adopted by the Council in dealing with the issue of climate change, which they view primarily as an issue of sustainable development, and not a threat to international peace and security, these members constantly express their concerns about the Council's encroachment on other United Nations entities and processes, most notably the United Nations



Framework Convention on Climate Change designed to deal with the harmful effects of climate change³⁴.

As for the last formal meeting of the Council on climate, peace and security, it was the open debate on 13 February 2024, where the UN Security Council convened at the initiative of Guyana³⁵ to discuss the interconnectedness between the global issue of climate change, the increasing number of armed conflicts, and the alarming growth of global food insecurity.

Cooperation in this area has in fact been hampered not only by the lack of a common mindset on how to address the problem, but also by deep disagreements over the role that the UN Security Council can or should play in this issue. Especially since permanent members of the Security Council such as China and Russia are generally reluctant to deal with these issues at the UN level, as they consider them issues of national security and therefore within the purview of member states, where the Security Council concluded on climate change and food insecurity, in which speakers called for urgent action to address the profound impact of these escalating crises, especially on fragile and conflict-affected states³⁶.

Secondly: International Institutional Mechanisms for Addressing Security Issues Related to Climate Change

There have been major institutional developments since 2018 that have supported the work of the Security Council, and more broadly the United Nations system, in addressing climate-related security threats. Among these mechanisms are the establishment of Climate Security (CSM), the Group of Friends on Climate and Security, and the Informal Expert Group of Security Council Members on Climate and Security. In addition to the research initiatives that have been launched that support the United Nations' engagement on security issues related to climate change, the role of the Secretary-General of the United Nations is increasing in focusing on the threat of climate change, including its negative effects on international peace and security. These efforts have been reflected in the establishment of practical mechanisms to address the risks arising from climate change, which can be summarized as follows.

1- Climate Security Mechanism

³⁴ Open debate at the ministerial level of the Security Council on sea level rise and its implications for international peace and security, UN Doc. S/PV.9260

³⁵ - Guyana, officially called the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, is a sovereign state on the northern coast of South America.

³⁶ Security Council meeting No. 9547 on open debate on climate change and food insecurity, available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15591.doc.htm>



The Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) is an important component of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs' efforts to understand and address the links between climate change, peace and security. Established in 2018 as a joint initiative of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the CSM seeks to help the United Nations system address climate-related security risks more systematically, by harnessing information and analysis on climate change and security³⁷.

The CSM, which is supported through voluntary contributions, consists of a small team of the three participating entities and works closely with a wide range of UN agencies, funds and peace operations, as well as with external partners from the UN system. It has developed a "toolbox" of concise guidance documents designed to help the UN system address the challenges posed by climate-related security risks.

The Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) has also created a toolbox – which provides a broad audience of UN and non-UN practitioners through webinars and workshops – emphasizing that climate-related security threats are context-specific; that they interact with various political, social, economic and demographic challenges that contribute to instability; and that climate change has dire humanitarian implications. The toolbox is a climate security risk prevention and management mechanism to consider existing adaptation capacities in countries and build on them for effective societies.

2- Informal Expert Group of Security Council Members on Climate and Security

During 2019 and early 2020, several Security Council members informally discussed the idea of establishing an Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security to facilitate more systematic Council engagement on climate-related security issues. An Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security was established in July 2020 when ten Security Council members (Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Niger, Tunisia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, United Kingdom, and Viet Nam) and Kenya and Norway, along with Ireland, issued a joint statement confirming that an Informal Expert Group will be convened to help the Council achieve a more comprehensive and

³⁷ Letter dated 5 June 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, concerning threats to international peace and security "Climate change and peace and security", UN document: S/9345.PV.



systematic approach to climate security risks in situations on the ground³⁸. The Council's Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security is therefore a useful forum to help the Council improve its awareness and understanding of the issues that need to be supported³⁹.

The Security Council's approach to collective security has been evolving since the UN was founded. While collective security has historically been seen as a matter of protecting states from external military attack, the Council has used its authority to identify "threats to the peace" under Article 39 of the UN Charter. Refugee flows, the spread of infectious diseases, and challenges to democracy are just some of the threats to peace that the Council has identified in the post-Cold War era. It has begun to consider climate change and its implications for international peace and security, by assessing the relationship between climate change and other traditional threats. This has made significant progress in linking climate change to international peace and security as an issue of the utmost international concern at the UN level, although differences of opinion among states, especially those with veto power, continue to hinder more proactive responses by the Security Council.

Conclusion:

Climate change is leading to profound global change, and these changes may pose real risks to international peace and security. Managing these changes well will require strong action within the United Nations system, specifically within the corridors of the UN Security Council as the body authorized to maintain international peace and security, especially since climate change results in major security threats, such as contributing directly or indirectly to violence and armed conflicts, in addition to large-scale humanitarian disasters resulting from drought, floods, climate-related crops, mass migration, and other threats.

Accordingly, during this study, we reached some of the following results and recommendations:

1- Results:

A- No one can reasonably expect the Security Council to play a major role in confronting the threats of climate change, which is also highly unlikely, and that

³⁸ Lucile Maertens, « Changement climatique au Conseil de sécurité : reconfigurations du débat Nord-Sud », Informations et commentaires, 172, 2015, p. 17-24. 25 Mission permanente de la France auprès des Nations unies, « The Security Council Must Address Climate-related Security Risks », 24 juillet 2020, available at <https://onu.delegfrance.org/The-Security-Council-must-address-climate-related-security-risks>

³⁹ Security Council discussions on the maintenance of international peace and security "Climate and security" for 2021, UN document No.: S/8864.PV.



the Council will impose sanctions on the countries most responsible for carbon emissions, especially since the five permanent member states are among the largest emitters in the world.

1- Through the discussions of the UN Security Council, we note that it is difficult at the present time to involve the Security Council in issues of climate change as a threat to peace, due to the difference in the views of the permanent member states, which requires seeking to form an alliance in the United Nations in order to confront this threat.

2- There is currently no internationally accepted term or legal framework regarding people who migrate voluntarily or are forced to leave for environmental reasons, despite the use of the term “environmental refugee” or “climate change refugee”, it has no legal basis.

3- Developing a new legal framework based on climate considerations to protect those displaced due to climate change, especially in cases where there may be no homeland to return to, such as the case of submerged island states.

2- Recommendations:

1- The Council should use its authority under Article 39 of the UN Charter to unequivocally declare that climate change constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

2- The normative concept of the Council’s role in supporting peace and security should be redefined.

3- The 1951 UN Convention should be amended to include the category of environmental refugees due to climate change.

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