

The Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change: *Preliminary Results*

National Security Perspectives on Climate Change from Around the World

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KEY POINTS:

- Climate change is real and it is happening now. Its effects are having an impact on the security and stability of virtually every country around the world.
- The governments and militaries of an overwhelming majority of countries – at least 110 – have identified climate change as a threat to their security. Many have fully integrated it into their defense and national security planning documents.
- Defense documents and statements by Heads of State are important signifiers of a country's priorities. The importance of climate change in these documents show that the world is demanding action to address this issue.

Introduction

The American Security Project's Climate Change and Global Security Defense Index seeks to detail how governments around the world, and militaries in particular, plan for and anticipate the strategic threats of climate change.

This project is seeking to determine to what extent governments around the world consider climate change to be a national or international security threat, and how have they enshrined such a concern in their official documents and statements.



The Index centralizes the varying attitudes of national militaries and security establishments toward climate change in the hopes of providing unique insight into national, regional, and multilateral security approaches to the issue. In many nations, the armed forces are the most respected arm of government, and their action on climate change can raise awareness throughout the country.

The Index will be published on the internet so that all interested around the world can read and debate. All quotes and references within this preliminary results paper will be available within an online report.

The Link Between Climate Change and Security

Climate change is a risk to global security because it increases vulnerability in infrastructure, agriculture, energy and other factors. The security consequences of climate change will be determined by how it affects and interacts with local political, social, and economic conditions as much as by the magnitudes of the climatic shift itself.

Academic researchers have been debating the links between climate change and conflict for decades. The academic consensus is that climate change alone is unlikely to be a primary cause of conflict, but it is an important secondary cause.

A changing climate will increase vulnerability by exacerbating tensions related to water scarcity and food shortages, natural resource competition, underdevelopment and overpopulation. It acts as an accelerant of instability, which may lead to violence. These disruptions will burden civilian and military institutions around the world.

Layout of the Index

The report divides countries into four groups:

1. Countries which definitively state that climate change is a national security threat. For these countries, climate change has been identified as a threat in either official government documents or in statements by high ranking government officials.
2. Countries that label climate change as an environmental issue. These countries tend to label climate as an issue of concern for humanitarian or disaster response, but are not comfortable with labeling it as a “security” threat.
3. Countries that have not defined it as a concern. These countries are often smaller, and lack security planning documents or apparatus all together.
4. Countries for which there is no information available. These countries are often lacking basic government services – many of them are post conflict, and do not have defined defense strategies at all.

By its nature, this exercise is subjective. Placing countries into specific categories is always going to involve judgments. Instead of seeing all these categories as definitive, it is important to understand that these are all necessarily slightly vague.

Preliminary Results

Climate Change is a National Security Threat

110 out of 155* - 71% of countries

Climate Change as an Environmental Concern

32/155* - 21% of countries

Climate Change is Not a Defined Concern

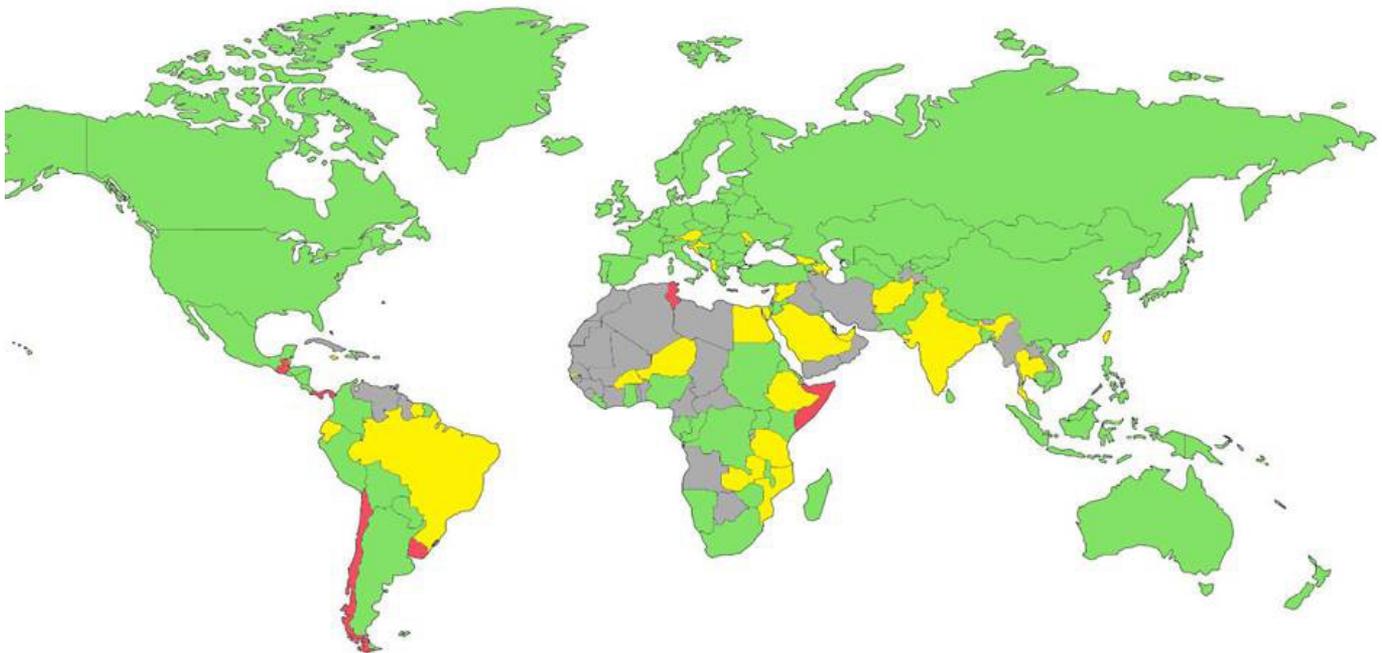
13/155* - 8% of countries

No Information Available

41/196* - 21% of countries

**for which information is available*

Level of Concern about how Climate Change Threatens Security



Green – Climate is a national security threat

Yellow – Climate is an environmental issue

Red – Climate is not a defined concern

Grey – No information available

Regional Examinations

Central Asia

Central Asian countries are divided about whether climate is a security threat or an environmental issue, with three labeling it as an environmental issue and four labeling it as a national security threat. The countries all place climate change firmly within the problems of water security and the impacts that climate change will have on food production, as is apt for an arid region who's main water sources are transboundary rivers. For Central Asia, this is an issue which each country must work with its neighbors.



The Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev showed this sentiment in a 2009 conference by noting how the weather in Central Asia was becoming more unpredictable and severe, and linking that with the on-going environmental, social and economic crisis in the Aral Sea Basin. He stressed the importance of international cooperation in resolving these problems.

East Asia

Balance of power dynamics in East Asia means that every country in the region already has a full slate of traditional national security challenges, including nuclear weapons proliferation, contested maritime and land borders, and greatly expanding conventional military forces. Nevertheless, the countries of the region overwhelmingly identify climate change as threat to security, often placing it among other 'non-traditional' national security threats as potential causes of conflict.



Perhaps because the countries of East Asia have sophisticated national defense establishments, their official documents are full of references to climate change.

The 2011 Japanese Defense White Paper, for instance, says that "Climate change could also constitute a cause of conflict" while the 2010 Chinese White Paper mentions climate change as a "security threat" along with other non-traditional threats. The South Korean 2010 White Paper likewise identifies climate change as a new type of security threat, and specifically blames the rise in natural disasters in Asia on climate change.

Europe

As befitting their leadership on climate and environmental issues in general, most of the nations of Europe, as well as the European Union government, have actively integrated climate change into their national security strategies. Only a handful of smaller countries like Moldova, Albania, or Cyprus do not take into account the threats of climate change.



The most interesting divide in Europe comes between larger countries with global interests, like the United Kingdom, France, or Germany, who see climate change as a threat to security because of its effects on conflict around the world, and more locally-focused nations like Finland, the Ukraine or Greece that see climate change as a local threat. The Finnish 2009 Defense Whitepaper, for example, says “Climate change shall be taken into account in land use planning and other activities related to zoning as well as in training” while the German Defense White paper states the climate change can lead to “state failure and uncontrolled migration” which can have a “lasting, negative effect on international security.”

Middle East and North Africa

The MENA region appears to be the most agnostic about the threats of climate change to security, perhaps unsurprisingly given the many pressing challenges faced by every country of the region. Only 5 of 19 countries explicitly state that climate change is a national security threat, and we can find no evidence of a statement within official defense policy papers. Meanwhile, many countries actively oppose the ‘securitization’ of what they see as an environmental issue.



The plurality of states in the region, however, have no defined position.

Turkey, Israel, Qatar, Jordan, and Kuwait have expressed concern about the security threats of climate change, with the Turkish government stating that “Climate change posed a severe risk to political and social stability, especially in overpopulated and underdeveloped regions.” The Egyptian government’s statement shows their opposition to ‘securitization’ of the issue, saying “Climate change and its adverse impacts had to be addressed from the perspective of sustainable development, promoting a comprehensive approach to confront the root cause of the problem.”

North America

The governments of Canada and the United States strongly link climate change to security, citing the links between climate change and conflict. The Canadian government exhibits a concern about the link between climate change and development, while American documents stress the threats of climate-related conflict. Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean are all included in the Latin America section below.



The American statement in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review that “Climate change is an accelerant of instability or conflict” is one of the world’s earliest and best-expressed examples for how to link climate change and conflict.

Southeast Asia and Oceania

The regions of Southeast Asia and Oceania are two of the areas most at risk from climate change.

The Pacific Island States have probably been the most vocal of all countries in expressing the threat of climate change, with some of them preparing for their land masses to cease to exist. The more developed militaries around the periphery of the region, like Australia, Singapore, Vietnam, and New Zealand expect that the effects of climate change will hit the Pacific particularly hard, and are preparing for disaster response and conflict prevention throughout the region.



The highest levels of government for many small Pacific island states have expressed that climate change is an existential threat to security. For example, Anote Tong, President of Kiribati, says that “Rising sea levels, which have already brought pools of brackish water to the doorsteps of many homes, are consuming our tiny islets, contaminating our vegetable gardens and poisoning our freshwater wells.” Meanwhile, countries like Australia state, with a clear eye to their Pacific backyard, that an “increase in frequency and severity of natural disasters... may contribute to instability and tension around the globe, especially in fragile states.”

Latin America and the Caribbean

The islands of the Caribbean and the smaller states of Central America overwhelmingly fear that climate change, featuring sea level rise and more frequent storms, poses an existential threat to their countries. However, the larger countries of South America continue to express an opposition to the ‘securitization’ of climate change. For these countries, climate change is a domestic environmental issue.

In the Caribbean, the fear of climate change has been expressed by the highest levels of government, with Freundel Stuart, Prime Minister of Barbados saying “The very existence of small islands States like those in the Caribbean and the Pacific could be imperilled” and Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines saying “The islands of our planet are at war against climate change, warming temperatures and rising seas.”

On the other hand, Brazil shows the predominant view in South America, expressing direct opposition to labeling climate change a security threat by saying “The possible security implications of climate change were far less obvious, as environmental impacts did not threaten international peace and security on their own.”



South Asia

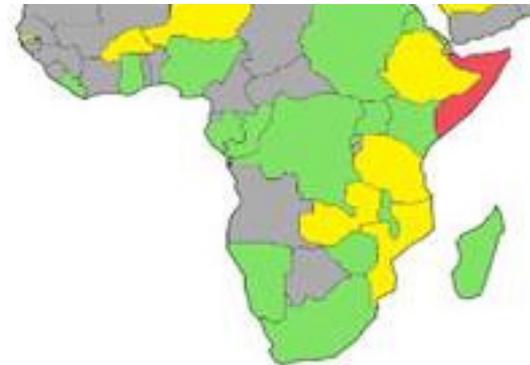
South Asian countries as a whole clearly see climate change as a threat to their national security, with the notable exception of the largest country, India. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and others have detailed strongly worded statements about the threats of climate change. They express it most commonly through threats to their own internal security. However, perhaps because of their historical leadership of the non-aligned movement, the Indian government sees climate change through the prism of UN negotiations. Consequently, any expression of ‘securitization’ of climate change is a threat to move the issue from the UN General Assembly to the Security Council.



Bangladesh, long thought of as ‘ground zero’ for climate change, states it best by saying “Climate change-induced food insecurity, the uprooting of populations and related adversity threatened international peace and security. Sea-level rise was another concern for Bangladesh, as it could displace 30 to 50 million people from the country’s coastal belts by 2050.”

Sub-Saharan Africa

Africa south of the Sahara is often described as one of the regions most at risk from climate change because of the confluence of poverty, extreme environments, and a history of conflict. As befitting a large region with 45 countries, there is a diversity of views. The countries split almost evenly into three parts, with an almost equal number of countries who list climate change as a security threat, those who see it as a purely environmental issue, and those for whom no information is available.



Rwanda explicitly acknowledges the environmental component of conflict, with Secretary of Defense James Kabarebe saying that “Most conflicts in Africa are caused or triggered by environmental issues.”

A number of states define climate change as a threat to security in order to use it as a weapon to blame the developed world for their plight, with Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe stating that climate change is caused by the West and harming Africans. Countries like Ethiopia and Mozambique show the other side, expressing concern about how climate change will impact development.

Authors' Discussion

In examining the preliminary results of the Index, it is clear that the majority of states (over 100) have made either an explicit reference to the direct security dangers caused by climate change or, indirectly through the security challenges that it creates (i.e. flooding, lack of water resources, over-pollution, natural disasters, etc.).

Most countries with a more detailed national security planning apparatus and with more resources for planning, such as the United States, Great Britain, China, and Scandinavian states, have specifically listed climate change as a threat to national security in official National Security Strategies, Defense White Papers, or other official government documents.

For example, the United States' Quadrennial Defense Review says that climate change "may act as an accelerant of instability or conflict." The Chinese 2010 Defense White Paper list climate change as one of several global challenges for which "non-traditional" security threats are on the rise. In the Russian 2009 National Security Strategy, global climate changes are said to negatively affect "the depletion of world reserves of mineral, water and biological resources."

For many of the countries that have not enshrined climate change within similar documents, this appears to be because they simply do not have such documents and processes, and not necessarily because they deem it less of a security threat. For these countries, we have substituted statements from Heads of State or Government or other high ranking officials. For example, Prime Minister Spencer Baldwin of Antigua and Barbuda summed up the views of many likeminded small island states in a speech to the UN in 2009, saying "Our fate, our very existence, hangs on the outcome of such a [climate] agreement."

Most were less strident than this, but almost all countries were comfortable listing climate change as an emerging, "non-traditional" threat, along with global pandemics, transnational crime networks, and terrorism.

Of those countries linking climate change to security, the most common label is to call climate change a "threat multiplier" capable of intensifying established threats like forced migration and natural disasters. An excerpt from Australia's 2012 Defense White Paper sums up this view well:

"The more severe effects of climate change, in particular the increase in frequency and severity of natural disasters, compounded by competition over scarce natural resources, may contribute to instability and tension around the globe, especially in fragile states."

There was no country for which information was available that challenged the facts or the science of climate change. A vocal minority of states have contested the direct relationship between national security and climate change. Importantly, they still affirm the importance of the issue, but they object to a "securitization" of what they view as an environmental problem. Special Representative Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti of Brazil outlined this view in last month's push to have the Security Council address climate change:

"The possible security implications of climate change were far less obvious, as environmental impacts did not threaten international peace and security on their own. However, that

indirect relationship between security and climate change in no way diminished the urgency of supporting the most vulnerable countries. Those challenges required political, economic and humanitarian approaches, not necessarily a security response.”

Those countries skeptical of the link between climate and security were far more comfortable stressing the need to protect the environment in order to avoid natural disasters or training for disaster response. Opposition may also stem from political disputes within the UN about the proper jurisdiction for discussing climate change – with those opposed to bringing it up in the UN Security Council opposing a linkage with national security.

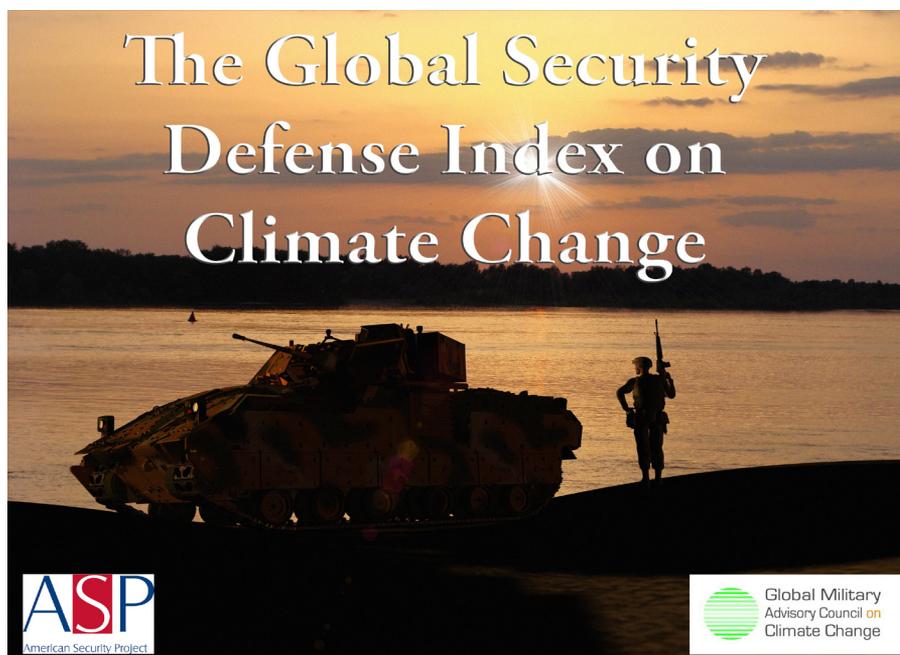
Next Steps: Taking the Index Forward

Currently, this index only exists as an internal document within ASP. We intend to link to its results on our website, and have a ‘clickable’ map in which all interested from around the world can click on their country to learn how their governments has identified the threats of climate change.

We anticipate, in the future, that we will be able to define in more detail which part of each nation’s government identifies the threat of climate change.

Importantly, this index will be a ‘living document’ that will be continuously updated as governments update their policies and positions over time.

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Building a New American Arsenal

The American Security Project (ASP) is a nonpartisan initiative to educate the American public about the changing nature of national security in the 21st century.

Gone are the days when a nation's strength could be measured by bombers and battleships. Security in this new era requires a New American Arsenal harnessing all of America's strengths: the force of our diplomacy; the might of our military; the vigor of our economy; and the power of our ideals.

We believe that America must lead other nations in the pursuit of our common goals and shared security. We must confront international challenges with all the tools at our disposal. We must address emerging problems before they become security crises. And to do this, we must forge a new bipartisan consensus at home.

ASP brings together prominent American leaders, current and former members of Congress, retired military officers, and former government officials. Staff direct research on a broad range of issues and engages and empowers the American public by taking its findings directly to them.

We live in a time when the threats to our security are as complex and diverse as terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, climate change, failed and failing states, disease, and pandemics. The same-old solutions and partisan bickering won't do. America needs an honest dialogue about security that is as robust as it is realistic.

ASP exists to promote that dialogue, to forge consensus, and to spur constructive action so that America meets the challenges to its security while seizing the opportunities the new century offers.



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