

# **CLIMATE CRISIS AND NON \_ TRADITIONAL DILLEMMA OF ENVIROMENTAL SECURITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Climate change has become a critical global issue that poses significant challenges to human security, particularly in regions with pre-existing political instability and conflict. The Middle East is one such region, and climate change impacts exacerbate existing security issues in the region. This paper reviews the current knowledge on climate change impacts in the Middle East and explores how these impacts threaten the region's security, particularly with respect to water and food insecurity, migration and displacement, and geopolitical conflicts. The paper examines how climate change is a threat multiplier that intensifies the risk of conflict and instability, making it a matter of global concern. The paper concludes by emphasizing the urgent need for comprehensive strategies that address climate change impacts in the Middle East, including cooperation among nations to promote sustainable and adaptive approaches to mitigate these impacts and ensure long-term security and stability

## **KEYWORD**

Crisis, Environmental, Dilemma, Global Issue, Emphasizing

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Middle East is an area of great geopolitical importance, and one of the most challenging security environments in the world.

In recent years, the region has faced a growing number of security challenges, many of which are directly linked to climate and resource politics and changes. These challenges are driven by a complex web of environmental, economic, and political factors, including the region's increasing population, urbanization, and growing demand for water, food, and energy.

Climate change is one of the most pressing environmental challenges facing the Middle East. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and more frequent and severe droughts are putting immense pressure on the region's already limited water resources. This is particularly true in areas like the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula, where water scarcity is already a major issue. As water becomes scarcer, it is likely to exacerbate existing tensions between different communities and create new conflicts over access to water resources.

At the same time, the Middle East is home to some of the world's largest oil and gas reserves, making it a key player in global energy markets. The region's dependence on oil and gas

exports has made it vulnerable to fluctuations in global energy prices, and has also led to environmental degradation and pollution. In addition, the competition for resources like oil and gas has fueled conflicts in the region, such as the ongoing war in Syria and the ongoing tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Finally, the Middle East is also facing rapid population growth and urbanization, which is putting even more pressure on its already strained resources. The region's cities are growing at an unprecedented rate, putting pressure on infrastructure, housing, and public services. This is leading to rising inequality, social unrest, and a growing sense of frustration among many young people.

Overall, the challenges facing the Middle East are complex and interlinked, and will require a coordinated and sustained effort from governments, civil society, and the international community to address. While the challenges are significant, there is also great potential for the region to transform itself into a more sustainable, resilient, and secure place for all its citizens.

#### **TRADITIONAL AND NONTRADITIONAL SECURITY DYNAMICS OF MIDDLE EAST**

The Middle East is an area of great geopolitical importance, and one of the most challenging security environments in the world. In recent years, the region has faced a growing number of security challenges, many of which are directly linked to climate and resource politics and changes. These challenges are driven by a complex web of environmental, economic, and political factors, including the region's increasing population, rapid urbanization, and growing demand for water, food, and energy.

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community to address. While the challenges are significant, there is also great potential for the region to transform itself into a more sustainable, resilient, and secure place for all its citizens.

The Middle East is facing a range of security challenges that are both traditional and nontraditional in nature, and that are being amplified by the impacts of climate change. Traditional security challenges in the region include interstate conflicts, terrorism, and insurgency, while nontraditional security challenges include environmental degradation, natural disasters, and food and water insecurity.

Climate change is exacerbating both traditional and nontraditional security challenges in the Middle East. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and more frequent and severe droughts are putting immense pressure on the region's already limited water resources. This is leading to water scarcity, which is in turn fueling conflicts over water rights between different communities and countries in the region. The United Nations has noted that water scarcity could become a major driver of conflict in the Middle East, as it is increasingly being used as a weapon by some countries against others.

Climate change is also leading to more frequent and severe natural disasters in the region, such as floods and droughts, which are causing significant economic and social disruptions. The United Nations has warned that these disasters could increase the risk of conflict, as they are exacerbating social and economic inequalities, and could also lead to the displacement of large numbers of people.

In addition to traditional and nontraditional security challenges, the Middle East is also facing a range of political and economic pressures that are being amplified by the impacts of climate change. Economic and political instability, social unrest, and a growing sense of frustration among many young people are all contributing to a volatile security environment in the region.

The United Nations has called for a coordinated and sustained effort to address the security challenges facing the Middle East. This effort should involve a range of actors, including governments, civil society, and the international community. The UN has noted that addressing the impacts of climate change is critical to achieving sustainable security in the region, and has called on countries in the region to take urgent action to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

In conclusion, the Middle East is facing a complex set of security challenges that are being amplified by the impacts of climate change. These challenges are both traditional and nontraditional in nature, and are requiring a coordinated and sustained effort from all actors to address. The United Nations has an important role to play in supporting efforts to achieve sustainable security in the region, and in helping countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The impacts of climate change in the Middle East are exacerbating both traditional and nontraditional security challenges, and the United Nations estimates that up to 70% of the region's population is at risk of water scarcity.

Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and more frequent and severe droughts are putting immense pressure on the region's already limited water resources. This has already led to water scarcity, which is fueling conflicts over water rights between different communities and countries in the region. The United Nations also reports that natural disasters, such as floods and droughts, are becoming more frequent and severe, and could increase the risk of conflict and displacement. Furthermore, the Middle East is experiencing economic and political instability, social unrest, and a growing sense of frustration among many young people, all of which are being amplified by the impacts of climate change. Addressing the impacts of climate change is critical to achieving sustainable security in the region, and the United Nations is calling for urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

## **BUZAN THEORY OF NONTRADITIONAL THREATS AND REGIONAL SECURITY**

It has been debated that the traditional military threats conventionally camouflaged by underlying issues of economic, societal and environmental threats.

Barry Buzan's theory of regional security complexes posits that regions are defined by the existence of common threats and shared security concerns. In the Middle East, a number of regional threats have emerged, creating a complex and often volatile security environment. Here are some of the key regional threats in the Middle East, analyzed through the lens of Buzan's theory:

### **THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is one of the most enduring and divisive issues in the Middle East. The ongoing violence and political tension between the two sides have created a shared sense of insecurity among neighboring countries, particularly those with significant Muslim populations. The conflict has also contributed to the emergence of militant groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah, which pose a threat to the security of the entire region.

#### **Terrorism:**

Terrorism is a persistent threat in the Middle East, with a number of militant groups operating throughout the region. These groups are often motivated by religious or ideological beliefs, and their activities can have a destabilizing effect on regional security. The rise of ISIS in recent years is a stark reminder of the ongoing threat of terrorism in the Middle East.

#### **Iran's Nuclear Program:**

Iran's nuclear program has been a source of concern for many countries in the Middle East, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia. These countries fear that Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons could destabilize the region and lead to a dangerous arms race. The international community has imposed sanctions on Iran in an effort to curb its nuclear ambitions, but tensions remain high.

### **SECTARIANISM**

Sectarianism is a significant threat to regional security in the Middle East. The divide between Sunni and Shia Muslims has fueled conflict in a number of countries, including Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. The involvement of regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia in these

conflicts has exacerbated sectarian tensions and contributed to a sense of insecurity throughout the region.

### **WATER SCARCITY**

Water scarcity is a growing threat in the Middle East, where many countries rely on shared water resources. Climate change and population growth have exacerbated the problem, leading to increased competition and potential conflict over water resources. The issue of water scarcity is particularly acute in the arid regions of the Middle East, such as the Gulf states and parts of North Africa.

Overall, Buzan's theory of regional security complexes provides a useful framework for understanding the complex and interrelated security challenges facing the Middle East. The existence of common threats and shared security concerns highlights the need for regional cooperation and diplomacy in order to build a more stable and secure future for the region

Understanding this security model of Buzan nontraditional security problems equally threatened the survival and security of people and they fundamentally are arising of non-military sources for example illegal migration, climate change, resource scarcity, food shortages to name few.

These threats are transnational in nature and their 'spill over' effects need larger and collaborative responses to the problems. The core referent of these issues is just not state sovereignty but wellbeing of the people.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY OF MIDDLE EAST POLITICS**

The egotistical relation of human with nature is leading the world to catastrophic effects of climate change. Environmental risks are causing long term threats to all kind of living beings around the globe but various instant security and survival related threats are posed to human and non-human communities. These are majorly human-caused damages to the ecology such as, over exploitation of natural resources for self-interested material and profit-driven economic developments.

Although the impact of environmental crisis is 'seen and experienced' yet it has not been prioritized as part of security puzzle. Even though, the concept of security has been evolving and has exposed the significance of other aspects such as ecology. Environmental security is still considered as a controversial idea and mostly overshadowed by conventional political and military debates of International Relations The complex interconnectedness of climate change, economy, social development, political stability and security, are new-fangled ideas for the policy makers, researchers, analysts and other stakeholders.

### **CLIMATE CRISIS; IMPACT AND VULNERABILITY**

Climate crisis, risks and vulnerability are basic assessment to recognize the magnitude and the nature of climate impact human society and natural systems. These assessments depend on the aim and geographic area and the system. The climate impacts are varying among regions, thus understanding the vulnerabilities and risks are important key objectives for resource prioritization, policy making, planning and implementation.

Middle East has been experiencing violent conflicts for many decades. The years of violent conflicts in one or other form has affected the regional development. The preexisting crisis and wars are further worsening the progress and crucial underlying issues like climate change, although the region is experiencing the affects of global warming faster than ever.<sup>1</sup>

The aridity of the region and complicated geographical features, for example

Hyper-arid areas of the Sahara and Arabian Peninsula, wet and cool mountains of Levant, North Africa and Yemen and Iraq, lies next to semi-arid coastal plains. Rainfall is rare and seasonal. Such aspects make precipitation highly unpredictable for future. However average temperatures are going to rise anyway. And Middle East is expected to experience intense heat by 2030. Many areas in the region will become drought-prone; a crisis already affects many areas in the region. As it was described by Vice-president Hafez Ghanem “Climate change will make a difficult situation much worse, and will affect millions of people in the Middle East and North Africa” The trends of rising temperature are going to be intensified as it’s likely to be increased by 3C across the region by 2065. Even winter temperatures are expected to rise to 1.5C in some parts of the region. The rising heat is disastrous for a region, already low in precipitation and the water resources are running short rapidly and pushing the region for a water crisis.

## **THE REGIONAL IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND WATER CRISIS IN MIDDLE EAST**

Water is becoming a scarce resource all over the globe hence it has become a source of conflicts within and among the states. The Middle East also is facing increasing water insecurity and it is predicted to be the first region hit by the ‘Wars for Waters’. The pressure for control over on the available water resources is higher than ever due to hyper population growth, unavailability of rational water policies, unsustainable agricultural practices and constant civil wars.<sup>2</sup>

Water management is the most challenging part in the Middle East as 90% of the sources are from outside of Arab World and they are shared with already hostile neighborhood, located in dry tropical area. A major chunk of the population lives under the line water poverty where an individual has lesser annual access of 1000 cubic meters. The conflict has begun to show signs in states like Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Jordon, Israel and the Palestinian territories. Israel has been rapidly building dams on River Jordan and it has fueled a water crisis in its neighborhood particularly depriving Palestinian territories from access to water.

Turkey’s design for water control has been taken as a hostile attempt by her neighbors. Turkey has built massive dams on the Euphrates, due to which water flow towards Syria and Iraq has declined dangerously. Although it has been predicted by experts that due to global warming the Euphrates and Tigris will “disappear this century” therefore there is stressful

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<sup>1</sup> Jamal Saghir, Climate Change and Conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, Beirut : the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI), at the American University of Beirut (AUB), 2019, P4

<sup>2</sup> Ghazi Ismail Rababa’s, Water conflict in the Middle East, Jordan: Department of Political Science International Islamic University of Science, 2012, P13.

political contest to maximize control over these rivers. Simultaneously river Nile has been stirring conflict among Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan. To make the matters even more complicated the source of sweet water are majorly located in progressive states. Therefore these states practice their hegemony over the control of water due to their better infrastructure and resources, add to the vulnerabilities of small and weaker states around them.

In this regional anarchy, climate change can exacerbate existing volatile socio-political conditions and absence of good neighborhood relations, bilateral or multilateral bodies, legal framework and organizational structure, could be the reason of fueling in the situation.

## **THE REGIONAL IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON FOOD SECURITY**

Middle East has experienced several violent conflicts and fragile stability over the decade. The regional unrest hampered the development however, hyper population growth led to increasing demand for water and food. The issue has been further aggravated by climate change.

The debate of climate change is a chain reaction of water, food, agriculture and security. Therefore, ensuring food security in times of peace or war is a real challenge for the state in Middle East. Food security is determined by food production, access and affordability therefore local conditions of the region play a vital role, such as floods, droughts, drying tendency, rising temperature and precipitation trends, without contextualization the depth of issues within the region the severity cannot be analyzed.

Unsustainable agriculture practices are another leading cause of desertification which is a serious environmental problem, with enormous effects in states like Jordan, Iran, Syria and Iraq. Over grazing and misuse of land by heavy irrigation is a common practice in Middle East and it is affecting undersized water resources of various states. Such examples have been a contributing factor to frequent droughts and have changed landscape.

The regional food supply is becoming import-dependent of weak agricultural production, water scarcity, in few cases political stability, civil wars have decreased the food production yet the demand was higher than ever. The global food markets are also experiencing unstable trends therefore food prices are uncertain and mostly going up. For example Egypt experienced high prices of wheat in 2008 with combination of reasons, such as floods and drought and fluctuations in global food market went higher, and resulted in widespread protests against food crisis in Egypt. Furthermore, Syria was hit by worst drought in between 2006 to 2010. This had dramatically affected agriculture in Syria. Crops yields miserably failed by one-half to two-thirds. Syria had no choice left other than importing large quantities of cereals therefore food prices got doubled. It resulted in mass migration and millions people abandoned their lands and moved to urban centers. This ultimately led to political unrest in Syria.

On the other hand constant wars and conflicts have left behind poverty-stricken masses with limited economic means and it also has a drastic impact on the local food production. Thus it has affected the purchasing power of a large population. As a result, abrupt food shortages are

expected and it could be a cause of violence and riots and it may have the potential to inflame more aggression at regional level.

## **THE REGIONAL IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON MIGRATION**

The concept of migration has been explained as “an extreme varied and complex manifestation and component of equally complex economic, demographic, social and cultural processes functioning at the local, regional, national, and international levels” the environment is an important part of the same puzzle. It is equally important to understand the intrinsic relationship of security, climate change, environmental degradation and migration. All the variables have a deterministic relationship with each other.

Climate Change has a great impact on population mobilization and migration. People have been displaced by land and shoreline erosion, flooding, forest fires, intense storms, droughts and agricultural crisis. Such climate migrants are called climate refugees. Therefore the scale and scope of national and international governance and cooperation will be tested by mass migration due to climate change.

Migration may trigger violent conflicts by amplifying the stress on resources and enhancing insecurity among population in receiving areas therefore it can lead to social instability. On the other side of coin, migration may prevent the conflict, as people move to different places to work and send remittances back to increase prosperity and development in the originating areas. Climate crisis coincides with social and economic pressures and the potential forces migration from rural to urban areas. Researchers have revealed the correlation between migration and climate change in Middle East region and it mainly due to water scarcity. The nexus is real. The World Bank has estimated in 2018 that three regions Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia would generate 143 million climate refugees by 2050. Thus such facts paint a picture that climate crisis could present security challenge and it would lead to tensions and conflicts among various communities.

Understanding geopolitical situations, such mass migration may have a global impact. Syrian rural to urban migration due to droughts in 2008, brought 1.5 million to urban areas in search of work, many of these cities were already over populated. These migrants formed small fragmented communities around Hamah, Daraa, and Homs. And these were the areas where first violence erupted in 2011.

Immigrants are seen as aliens in any host community and considered as threats to national identity and social cohesion. These unwelcomed climate migrants could be a source of civil disorder, ethnic tension and political turmoil.

### **CONCLUSION: CLIMATE RESILIENCE**

Climate change may not be the only contributing factor to conflict but it's a significant contributing factor, if it's examined in relation with other elements. Nonetheless, states should build up their resilience to eliminate the risks of climate change. The correlation between conflict and climate can be mediated by a range of societal, political and institutional factors. Nevertheless, if preventative strategies and adaptation measures are designed and implemented

correctly, these measures can be helpful to reduce tensions and promote stability. Therefore the design of these adaptation measures must be negotiated and implemented in such a way that it could build climate change resilience in the region.

Middle East needs climate-resilient infrastructure, designed and implemented to deal with climate risk and it should be a regional priority. The COP 21, Paris Agreement has presented possibilities for climate-smart investment in the region's infrastructure. It includes transport, water and agriculture, clean energy and it signals out the message that transition to a booming green economy is unavoidable and irresistible. This agreement encourages the private sector along with respective governments to come forward and invest into climate solutions. It is necessary to invest into climate-resilient infrastructure; it includes transport infrastructure and water management (hydropower, irrigation, water supply, and flood control).

The adaptation and climate-resilience are primary challenges for the Middle East. It requires awareness about climate impacts and effective technology and its application, integration of climate policies into development plans. It also requires local capacity building and improved preparedness.

Furthermore, in the Middle East, investment in sustainable agriculture methods and rural development is an essential part to the solution to stop rapid migration as well as it will eliminate poverty and sustain peace. Climate-smart agricultural practices are certain to bring high agricultural output.

In addition, Middle East needs desperate and affective water management policies to deal with water crisis. However, contemporary political situations and bitter relations among Middle Eastern states, make it extremely difficult to achieve any mutually agreed plans. But states must need to rise above their political differences to save their future's generations from water shortages and regional instability.

In conclusion, Middle East needs transformative policies and willingness to implement to ensure regional environmental security. There is a need for the realization at different levels by different stakeholders that we are now living into environmentally threatened world. A comprehensive regional security is impossible to achieve until food and water security would not be ensured because such scarcities don't have regional impact only, but global affects. Therefore this is the high time for global community just not must try to slow down the damage by adopting affective preventive measures, even if we can not completely stop it.

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