

Climate Change, Social Stress and Violent Conflict
State of the Art and Research Needs
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Abstract

Policing borders in a time of rapid climate change

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Most of the current paradigms of potential climate change are being rapidly revised in the light of new data about the likely speed of onset and the synergistic factors which will make the time scales of future negative impacts shorter. The most public response so far has been the fostering of erudite conferences like the one which I went to, in Copenhagen last week, some international policy exchanges marking the urgent necessity for making progress on the Kyoto agreements, and a host of NGOs arguing for cap and converge as the only just way forward.

What has been less noticed is the slow creep of the security factor in some recent conferences and policy positions. Whilst wishing to remain upbeat and optimistic rather than remain in denial, many governments have realized that with an estimated billion people on the move, border security is going to become a key future issue. Given that climate change is coinciding with a perception that we are living in a time of terror, it should not be surprising if this approach rapidly militarizes.

The presentation will examine how the military are responding to challenges of future area denial technologies at borders, where the flow of humanity may contain a mixture of civilians and anti-state combatants and where the sheer numbers involved may overwhelm normal border policing systems. It will address the emergence of a new generation of lethal, and sub-lethal systems for arms control both at the borders themselves, as well as at some distance either through robotic technologies, unmanned aerials or directed energy weapons, which can operate at a distance of between one and several kilometres. The presentation ends with a stark ethical challenge - whose side of the border should we be on, the refugees or the refugee deniers? Information will be provided from recent field visits to the testing grounds of some of these weapons and from arms fairs where their proliferation is being actively promoted