Environmental change as a source of conflict

M.J.D.Peiris

Assistant Lecturer, Department of Philosophy

jananimc@yahoo.com/jananimc4@gmail.com

Abstract

A number of scholars have recently studied large-scale human-induced environmental pressures may seriously affect national and international security. But here this environmental change is discussed as a source of conflict and these huge environmental changes may lead to conflicts in the future.

How might environmental change lead to conflict? Some experts propose that environmental change may shift the balance of power between states either regionally or globally, producing instabilities that could lead to war or as global environmental damage increases the disparity between people. Poor nations may militarily confront or struggle the rich for a greater share of the world's wealth. Warmer temperatures could lead to contention over new ice-free sea-lanes in the Arctic or more accessible resources in the Antarctic. Population growth and land stress may produce such environmental refugees. This may cause recipient's domestic and international stability. Countries may fight over dwindling supplies of water and the effects of upstream pollution. In developing countries, a sharp drop in food crop production could lead to internal strife and finally into conflicts among urban and rural areas. If environmental degradation makes food supplies increasingly tight, exporters may be tempted to use food as a weapon. Environmental change could ultimately cause the gradual impoverishment of societies in the world.

Moreover, many scholars indicate that environmental degradation will "ratchet up" the level of stress within national and international society, thus increasing the likelihood of many different kinds of conflict and impeding the development of cooperative solutions. But the time has come to escape from it and "rescue" our environment. It's all our responsibility to know about these environmental changers and challenges and take possible and serious actions regarding it.

Keywords: conflict, climate change, environment

Introduction

First and foremost environment can be simply defined as "circumstances, objects, or conditions by which one is surrounded". It consists of physical and the natural environment. The natural environment is the combination of water, land, and atmosphere. But in today's world we can see and hear lot of environmental changes such as climate changers, environmental damage, pollution, and much more. Meanwhile most of the countries are in face of issues due to environmental changes and challenges. These changes affect the human life in overall and it will lead to the future conflicts as well. People always tend have the power, the victory of their nations handle the ethnical or the religious power in fighting with each other and creating such kinds of conflicts.

What is Environmental change?

Environmental change can be defined as change in precipitation or change temperatures. Environmental change may be the result of natural occurrences or impacted by human activity. Therefore these activities may convert in to conflicts in near future. Conflicts can be friction or opposition resulting from actual or perceived differences or incompatibilities. Thus, these incompatibilities can be resulted through beliefs, needs, disagreements and perceived views. In fact the environmental changes are almost visible in the world, nevertheless the environment protection is a certain point else this may result in conflicts among human beings in future.

Over the past 30 years ago, 30% of the worlds natural environment has been harmed and been severely damaged. The populations of freshwater animal and plant species even have been decreased and the natural environments have declined by 10 percent as well. This problem may also cause due to creating climate change and ozone depletion, as using up resources and producing toxic waste products by rich countries. On the other hand, the arguments have arisen that due the globalization leads to the economic development and create the societies more sustainable for a stable living and deal with waste products in an environmentally friendly way. On the contrast side of the arguments indicate that the economic growth leads to a great environmental damage and the as sustainable development fails to take place. In addition, it is argued that health risks caused by environmental damage are seldom borne by those who cause them. Poor countries contribute relatively little to pollution that causes environmental and climate change, yet they are increasingly suffering its economic and health consequences.

So the first challenge is simply the facing of environment change. One of the very vast problems of this environment change is the climate change in the world.

Climate change could be accelerated by dangerous feedbacks such as melting ice, snow on tundra's reflect less light and absorb more heat, releasing more methane, which in turn increases global warming and melts more tundra, warming the atmosphere and melting more ice, which further warms the water to release more methane and many more.

We can state some example of other states facing and have faced global and environmental changes. The regional focus will be on adaptation to climate change rather than mitigation, as Africa does not contribute much CO2. And they have lost more than 30% of their maize crop in 2003 because of the climate change. And the world's biggest states such as India and China lose as much as 12% and 10% respectively of their GDP due to environmental damage. However in Unites States of America also suffering due to air pollution and exposure to toxic chemicals cost their children $76.6 billion in health expenses. Permafrost temperature in northern Alaska increased about 4–7°C during the last century, almost half of it during the last 20 years.

Climate change is the world's first truly global man-made environmental problem and a firm warning that human activities can influence our physical environment on a global scale. The range of possible consequences of climate change is so wide. The study of the relationship between climate change and conflict has advanced noticeably in the past five years. With regard to how changes in precipitation may influence internal conflict, the one area where we now have a fair number of studies. Studies of how climate change may promote interstate conflict over water resources also seem to point in the direction of a weak or a null relationship. In other areas, the number of studies is still very low, so it is premature to offer a summary. On the whole, however, it seems fair to say that so far there is not yet much evidence for climate change as an important driver of conflict. And it will be pathetic problem in near future. Due to the environment change, changes in the climate and environment pollution will completely affect our lives as well.

Mean while these environmental changes directly affects the human beings, and for their social, economic, cultural factors as we. And this might lead to the environmental stress in future.

Environmental stress may contribute to five probable outcomes such as;

a) Natural and manmade hazards and disasters

b) To distress migration, internally displaced persons and environmental refugees

c) To severe societal, economic and political crises

d) Violent conflicts that may be avoided by efforts

e) Conflict resolution and prevention by the initiation of a process of de-escalation.

Due to the environment and climate change, especially human welfare, would be affected, by changes in supplies of and demands for water, food energy, and other tangible goods that are derived from these systems changes in opportunities for non-consumptive uses of the environment for recreation and tourism, changes in non-use values of the environment such as cultural and preservation values, changes in income, changes in loss of property and lives from extreme climate phenomena and changes in human health. Further its impacts will affect the prospects for sustainable development in different parts of the world and may also enlarge existing inequalities.

There we can understand that there are such global environmental problems like global warming, ozone depletion, and threats to biodiversity. In fact the scarcity of renewable resources can be a source of civil violence in the future as well. It may include the ethnic clashes, and it will it predicted that due to scarcities of cropland, fresh water and forests will increase such violence also may cause in parts of developing countries. Some scientists predict that continued population growth and rising resource demand and persistent inequalities will affect environmentally sensitive regions, as in the Mediterranean. However it's important to say that the environmental transformation or the change does not directly result the conflicts, but it impacts on conflict potentials that violently increase.

Environmental Stress and Environmental Hazards and Disasters

In future we would face hazards. Hazard can be the result of a naturally arising event or a human influence process. It can be increased as well as decreased due to human activities. Thus, Climate change may become a direct cause for increased hazards i.e- floods, drought.

However" Hazards" can be elaborate it further as, hazards for people in fact it will be the deaths, injuries, and diseases. On the other hand, for good in sake of hazard can be

identified as property damage and economic losses. And hazards of environment can be stated as loss of flora and Fauna, pollution and loss of amenity. Environmental hazards may be natural or man-made with different effects. Natural environmental hazards or events can be caused by external forces. Human sensitivity to these hazards is a combination of physical exposure and Human vulnerability. Basically, Technological disasters are created by the spread and failure of high-risk technologies.

There are some other examples of hazards as well. It can be notified as follows;

- Geologic (landslides, earthquake, volcanic eruption, rapid erosion)
- Biologic (epidemic, Forest fires)
- Technologic (air crash, industrial explosion, nuclear power Plant failure, collapse of buildings, germ, nuclear warfare)

Environmental Conflict Prevention through Cooperation

In fact we should pay our attention thoroughly to these environment changes, threats and issues while addressing the global climate change as soon as possible. The time has come to protect our nature and the environment to avoid such issues occurring in the future. Therefore here we discussing about the conflict prevention while protecting the environment. Thus if we are able to protect our natural sources and environment most of conflicts too can be avoided.

There should be more strategies and policies created in order to prevent and address those causes that contribute to the environment stress well. On the longer-term structural level, strategies for sustainable development must deal with both root causes: anthropogenic climate change with policies and measures and population growth with effective policies of reproductive health in line with the religious and cultural value systems of respective countries. However for the development of a strategy of environmental conflict avoidance a better understanding of the linkages among the factors of the survival hexagon that contributes to environmental degradation and scarcity is needed both at the regional but also at the national level.

It's no big secret that that climate change is a very significant challenge that the global community is going to have to learn to deal with. There needs to be a greater focus on the development, and implementation of various green technologies. Even though we are

aware of the risks we are taking by accelerating climate change we still continue to move in the wrong direction, despite current efforts.

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

-Chief Seattl

The following could be some possible ways to protect our environment.

ACT

1. All people must consciously try limiting their use of oil and gas. Better scientific and energy efficient practices can go a long way in curbing their misuse. Public transport systems, cars.

2. Alternatives like hydro, solar and wind power and bio-fuels must be used more frequently. They are both and renewable and non-exhaustive sources of energy. This would bring down the demand for the natural gas and oil.

ABIDE

1. The Government has set many standards in the consumption of oil and gas. Better vehicles with good engine condition are certified. A good citizen should abide by these policies to minimize the misuse of oil and gas.

2. All government policies and initiatives need to meet the complete support and encouragement of the people.

3. International bodies must monitor the consumption of oil and gas by various nations and must set international standards for all nations to practice.

 ADVOCATE

1. It is of vital importance that the message of conservation of oil and gas must be spread to as many people as possible. It should be passed on as a social responsibility. Through various schemes and campaigns school children and the youth must be involved in the procedure. Awareness Campaigns should be conducted at regular intervals.

2. Research in new alternatives and better techniques to conserve oil and gas should be adequately funded and encouraged by the government as well as non government organizations.

3. Preaching without practice will never help and so we need to see that the policies have to be realized by the people and not remain as academic exercises only.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Climate change is the world's first truly global man-made environmental problem and a firm warning that human activities can influence our physical environment on a global scale. The range of possible consequences of climate change is so wide, even for the limited temperature changes foreseen in the IPCC scenarios, that it is difficult to sort out the main priorities. Obviously, if a reversal of the trend towards a more peaceful world was one of these consequences, it should have a prominent place on the policy agenda. Framing climate change as a security issue may influence the perceptions of the actors in local and regional conflict and lead to militarized responses and thus perhaps contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The study of the relationship between climate change and conflict has advanced noticeably in the past five years. With regard to how changes in precipitation may influence internal conflict, the one area where we now have a fair number of studies, the dominant view seems to be that rainfall abundance is associated with greater risks than drought and that in any case other conflict-generating factors are more important.

Studies of how climate change may promote interstate conflict over water resources also seem to point in the direction of a weak or a null relationship. In other areas, the number of studies is still very low, so it is premature to offer a summary. On the whole, however, it seems fair to say that so far there is not yet much evidence for climate change as an important driver of conflict. However change may under certain circumstances increase the risk of violent conflict, the existing evidence indicates that this is not generally the case.

There we have to protect the environment to face such challenging climate changers upcoming in the future. We should lead it by examples, if we are serious about saving the environment; it is fairly difficult to be taken seriously if we are not practicing what we preach. Moreover we can use energy audit done in our home, replace with green technology stop buying plastics when possible, use our recycling program, purchase cloth shopping bags, use public transportation or buy a more energy efficient vehicle.

Despite of that we can spread the message to save our environment. What many people fail to realize is that going green is a great way to save money considering the state of the

global economy. Over time saving the environment can pay dividends in the form of tax credits, and in saving on energy bills. We can also use social networks to spread the importance of green such as facebook and twitter and challenge them to go for "green".

 Another way is to get involved politically. In this situation politicians have the power and ability to make change on a mass scale. Especially our vote will be good use if they know of the saving the environment and having the knowledge of environmental issues and react for them. Thus, we can encourage people to buy green products and environmentally friendly products. . The larger the market for green products and services, the more companies will adopt these types of practices. Likewise it is a "must" to protect our environment and to prevent our environment with minimum conflicts in the near future.

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