

Article

Gender in the Climate-Conflict Nexus: “Forgotten” Variables, Alternative Securities, and Hidden Power Dimensions

Tobias Ide ^{1,2,*}, Marisa O. Ensor ³, Virginie Le Masson ⁴ and Susanne Kozak ⁵¹ Institute of International Relations, Technische Universität Braunschweig, Germany; E-Mail: t.ide@tu-bs.de² Department of Global Studies, Murdoch University, Australia; E-Mail: tobias.ide@murdoch.edu.au³ Justice and Peace Studies Program, Georgetown University, USA; E-Mail: moe2@georgetown.edu⁴ Centre for Gender and Disaster, Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, University College London, UK; E-Mail: v.lemasson@ucl.ac.uk⁵ Centre for Gender, Peace and Security, School of Social Sciences, Monash University, Australia; E-Mail: susanne.kozak@monash.edu

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 19 March 2021 | Accepted: 14 July 2021 | Published: 22 October 2021

Abstract

The literature on the security implications of climate change, and in particular on potential climate-conflict linkages, is burgeoning. Up until now, gender considerations have only played a marginal role in this research area. This is despite growing awareness of intersections between protecting women’s rights, building peace and security, and addressing environmental changes. This article advances the claim that adopting a gender perspective is integral for understanding the conflict implications of climate change. We substantiate this claim via three main points. First, gender is an essential, yet insufficiently considered intervening variable between climate change and conflict. Gender roles and identities as well as gendered power structures are important in facilitating or preventing climate-related conflicts. Second, climate change does affect armed conflicts and social unrest, but a gender perspective alters and expands the notion of what conflict can look like, and whose security is at stake. Such a perspective supports research inquiries that are grounded in everyday risks and that document alternative experiences of insecurity. Third, gender-differentiated vulnerabilities to both climate change and conflict stem from inequities within local power structures and socio-cultural norms and practices, including those related to social reproductive labor. Recognition of these power dynamics is key to understanding and promoting resilience to conflict and climate change. The overall lessons drawn for these three arguments is that gender concerns need to move center stage in future research and policy on climate change and conflicts.

Keywords

Anthropocene; civil war; division of labor; environment; masculinity; protest; resources; social reproduction; violence; vulnerability

Issue

This article is part of the issue “Climate Change and Security” edited by Yasuko Kameyama (National Institute for Environmental Studies, Japan) and Yukari Takamura (University of Tokyo, Japan).

© 2021 by the authors; licensee Cogitatio (Lisbon, Portugal). This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).

1. Introduction

The intersections between climate change and conflict are of increasing political concern. In 2019, for instance, the UN Security Council recognized climate change as a threat multiplier negatively affecting peace, with Under-

Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo stating: “The risks associated with climate-related disasters do not represent a scenario of some distant future. They are already a reality for millions of people around the globe—and they are not going away” (UN News, 2019).

This policy interest has been matched by a rapidly growing academic literature in the past decade. Recent cross-case analyses find that climate change-related impacts, including disasters, water scarcity and food insecurity, influence violent and non-violent conflicts within states (e.g., Ide et al., 2020, 2021; Koren et al., 2021). These findings are also supported by qualitative evidence suggesting, for instance, that droughts and higher food prices increase conflict risks (Gleick, 2014; Heslin, 2020). Low intensity conflicts like civil unrest are more sensitive to climate change than high intensity violence, such as civil wars, while no conclusive evidence has been found directly linking climate change and armed international disputes. While a few scholars remain skeptical about a climate-conflict nexus, there is increasing consensus that climate change is one among many (although rarely the major) drivers of intrastate conflict risks (Mach et al., 2019).

With very few exceptions, however, the literature on climate change and conflict has so far not meaningfully considered gender. Fröhlich and Gioli (2015) were among the first scholars to call for a systemic integration of work on global environmental change, gender, and peace and conflict. Their call has been picked up, among others, by Cools et al. (2020), investigating the impact of rainfall shocks on partner violence, as well as by Yoshida and Céspedes-Báez (2021), who highlight the gender dimensions of environmental peacebuilding. Likewise, a number of recent reports by universities or international institutions disentangle how climate change intersects with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (Tanyag & True, 2019; UN Environment Programme et al., 2020), how environmental stress affects women's and girls' right to peace (Yoshida et al., 2021), and how women confront the combined challenges of climate change and violent conflict (Smith et al., 2021). Overall, gender is nevertheless still at the margin of climate-conflict research. Yet, a gender perspective is essential for understanding the complex interlinkages between climate change and conflict.

We define gender as the socially constructed norms, roles, attitudes, and attributes associated with people of different sex characteristics and the relations between and among these different groups. Gender relations influence power dynamics and are closely tied to hegemonic norms of femininities and masculinities. These norms shape how crises, including armed conflicts and disasters, emerge, evolve, and are experienced by different individuals. This understanding acknowledges that gender analyses focus on multiple, socially constructed notions of female and male, rather than on women (and their vulnerability, invisibility, or agency) alone. This also implies that gender intersects with other markers of social difference, such as class or ethnicity, to produce complex structures of power and exclusion. When discussing conflict, we refer to perceived conflicts of interest between at least two social groups resulting in manifest actions by at least one group, such as protesting or

fighting. Such forms of conflict are often deeply tied to notions of state or societal insecurity, which consequentially also dominate climate-conflict research (Daoudy, 2020). In Section 3, we illustrate how broader notions of security could further this research field.

The (for the most part) separate scholarships on (1) environmental change and gender as well as (2) gender, peace and conflict have demonstrated how gendered power dynamics result in different vulnerabilities to environmental crises and violent conflict. Likewise, the social construction of gender and its associated power structures can be drivers of both environmental degradation and violent conflict. Connecting insights from both scholarships hence holds a vast potential for furthering knowledge on the climate-conflict nexus while building critical awareness of underlying power structures.

In this article, we therefore argue that gender is an integral dimension of the conflict implications of climate change. In the subsequent sections, we substantiate this argument along three broad lines: First, gender is an important, yet understudied intervening variable in the climate-conflict nexus. Second, by including gender concerns, research on climate change and conflict can unpack the concept of security and re-frame its dependent variable, including the often "invisible" violence occurring in the domestic sphere. Third, a gender perspective allows for a broader interrogation of the concept of resilience, and hence opens new perspectives on adaptation and empowerment, including in the context of armed conflicts. The conclusion summarizes how gendered power dynamics are important within the climate-conflict nexus and discusses pathways for future research.

2. Gender and the Climate-Conflict Nexus

Existing empirical studies are strongly variable-oriented, seeking to identify the impact of climate change (independent variable) on conflict (dependent variable) in various contexts (intervening variables). Previous research has demonstrated that factors like the physical security of women (Hudson et al., 2009), the promotion of gender equality (Wood & Ramirez, 2018), and the fulfillment of women's rights (Harris & Milton, 2016) reduce violent conflict risks. However, most empirical studies on climate change and conflict have so far ignored gender-related variables. There are good reasons to address this omission.

To start with, gender roles and identities can play an important role in either instigating or mitigating climate-related conflict. Consider pastoralist conflicts in northern Kenya, Uganda, and South Sudan—some of the literature's most common cases—as illustrative examples. Different pastoral groups (e.g., the Karamojong, Pokot, and Turkana from Kenya and Uganda; or the Dinka and Nuer from South Sudan) have engaged in violent confrontations over the past decades that involve cattle raids, tensions surrounding territorial control, and

revenge killings. Climate change is predicted to increase drought frequency and intensity in East Africa. Droughts, in turn, tend to accelerate tensions among pastoralists, and between pastoralists and farmers (although examples of cooperative responses exist as well; see Adano et al., 2012). Scarcity of fodder and water force pastoralists to move their cattle into border regions or even territories traditionally used by other groups, hence increasing the likelihood for violent confrontations. In extreme cases, the adverse impact of climate change can result in direct violent competition over water or grazing areas. Moreover, raiding neighboring groups is a frequently used measure to re-stock cattle when a significant portion of the herd perishes during a drought (Ensor, 2013; Schilling et al., 2012).

Cattle raiding in Kenya, Uganda, and South Sudan is strongly tied to gender roles and identities. It has traditionally been considered one of the markers signaling a male youth's transition from adolescence to social adulthood (Ensor, 2013). In order to marry, a man has to pay a considerable bridewealth to the woman's family, usually in the form of cattle. This custom encourages particularly poor men to engage in cattle raids as a means to acquire the required wealth. Further, in some communities, successful raiders are considered heroic and dependable breadwinners, and hence more desirable husbands (and sons). Likewise, "[w]omen would tell the men who did not go raiding: You are not a man" (Mkutu, 2008, p. 242), and fellow men would likewise mock them as cowardly and non-manly. Such violent masculinities and conflict-sustaining gender roles constitute a major intervening variable between climate change's negative impacts on livestock and violent conflict. Nevertheless, the strength of such gender norms varies across communities and, in some areas, the association between cattle wealth and marriage is loosening (Omolo, 2010).

This illustrates how gender norms can act as a conduit to conflict in situations of environmental degradation due to climate change and threatened livelihoods. These cases also demonstrate how gender should not be equated to women and girls (Enloe, 1993). Gender norms can also have negative implications for men, which are manifested in these conflict situations. While associated with patriarchal power structures, norms connecting cattle raids with masculinity and social status can also cause strong psychological stress. Likewise, men frequently incur severe or fatal injuries during such raids. Moreover, while an intersectional gender perspective can allow for a better understanding of the different impacts on different women and men, it is important for scholars and practitioners alike to not equate work or research on gender equality with women's vulnerability. For example, women act as strong advocates for peaceful conflict resolution (Funder et al., 2012) or as indispensable providers for the household in times of crisis (Johnston & Lingham, 2020). Women also demonstrate considerable agency in conflict transformation, peacebuilding, climate change action, and resilience.

Furthermore, gender acts as an intervening variable between climate change and conflict when patriarchal social structures that lead to unequal gender relations and normalize violence against women combine with personal and political factors to motivate women to join armed groups (or at least facilitate recruitment efforts of the latter). During the Nepalese civil war (1996–2006), for example, around 30% of the fighters and activists of the Maoist rebels were women. Many of them were motivated to participate in the armed struggle by the Maoists' explicit objective to challenge existing forms of gender discrimination, including male-centered inheritance rights, the absence of legal protection against sexual harassment, inferior access to health and education for women and girls, and the virtual absence of women in decision-making roles. These gender inequalities did not affect all women equally but intersected with caste and class issues to create particular forms of marginalization and exclusion. For instance, the rebels recruited most women (as well as men) among the poor and lower castes (Acharya & Muldoon, 2017; K. C. & Van Der Haar, 2019).

Similar patterns of strong female rebel mobilization in the face of high gender inequality and repressive structures can be observed for other armed movements, such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey (Tezcür, 2015) and the People's War Group in India (Scanlon, 2018). This is in line with evidence suggesting that countries with weak (de facto and de jure) protection of women face higher conflict risks, although the specific causal paths leading to this outcome are still being investigated (Wood & Ramirez, 2018). Climate change can accelerate such gender-related risk factors for armed conflict, for instance by increasing gender inequality or generalized livelihood insecurity (see Smith et al., 2021; and Sections 3 and 4 of the present article).

These examples show that gender can be a motivating factor for taking up arms, both through gendered identities and norms surrounding violent masculinities, and as a reaction to existing gender inequalities. Gender can therefore serve as an important intervening factor in the climate-conflict nexus, particularly when climate change affects associated risk factors like droughts, cattle availability, and livelihood insecurity. This reinforces Cockburn's (2010, p. 140) argument that gender relations are "an intrinsic, interwoven, inescapable part" of conflict analysis. Considering (intersectional) gendered inequalities and norms can thus yield important insights when studying the contextual conditions for, causal pathways underpinning, and resilience factors related to climate-conflict links.

3. A Gender Perspective Interrogates the Notions of Security: Of Whom? And From What?

As the still limited but steadily growing evidence base shows, gender is not just an often-unexamined intervening variable in climate-conflict research. Gender

considerations should also shape the definition of dependent variables. In other words, gender should inform the sort of conflict and security that is considered when examining the security implications of climate change. Climate-conflict research has diversified its focus in recent years (Koubi, 2019), which is no longer limited to civil war, but also includes social unrest (Koren et al., 2021), peaceful protests (Ide et al., 2021), and support for the use of violence (von Uexkull et al., 2020). This is considering that protests and radical positions can pave the way for more intense forms of (violent) conflict. Likewise, this broader perspective also speaks to critiques of climate-conflict research as overly focused on threats to state security like civil wars to the detriment of human security (Selby & Hoffmann, 2014).

In line with this expanded understanding, the vast and long-established field of security studies is similarly experiencing an expansion of the conceptualization of “security.” In particular, gender-sensitive and feminist approaches emphasize that there is a gender bias in core security studies concepts including the state, violence, war, peace, and security itself. Drawing on these approaches, scholars have gained empirical insights from analyzing new or neglected subjects pertaining to the experiences of women (Sjoberg, 2009). The use of violence against women and girls as a tactic of war has been widely documented in conflict-related studies. Recent examples include the sexual enslavement of Yazidi women and girls in Northern Iraq and the sexual and physical abuse of Rohingya women and girls in Myanmar (Prügl, 2019). Evidence indicates that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) during conflict predominantly affects women and girls but has also been perpetrated against men and boys as a weapon of war. However, far less examined is violence perpetrated against women and girls by their own family members in conflict and post-conflict settings, even though it affects a much larger number of women and girls than sexual violence perpetrated by militias, rebel groups and government forces (Human Security Research Group, 2012).

The impacts of climate change on vulnerable settings can deepen gender inequalities, increase the vulnerability of women and sexual minorities, and indirectly exacerbate sexual and gender-based violence (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020). For example, women and girls who adapt to climate change by walking longer distances to collect water or wood (as a result of changed precipitation patterns) or who seek shelter in refugee camps after climate-induced disasters are more exposed to various forms of violence, including rape and robbery (Horton, 2012). Sexual and gender minorities including people with transgender identities also frequently face increased insecurity after climate-related disasters, for instance in emergency shelters (Gaillard et al., 2017).

Both in India and Nepal, women’s relative and absolute poverty increased in the face of climate-related disasters in the recent past, among others due to their limited access to land titles, irrigation schemes,

credit, and markets. If their husbands die during such a disaster, women not only suffer personal loss, but also experience reduced social status and limited protection from sexual violence (Ahmed & Fajber, 2009; Sugden et al., 2014). It is worth noting that men can also face additional risks. Delaney and Shrader (2000) argue that, although disaster-affected Central American women endured greater vulnerability in the aftermath of the Hurricane Mitch due to their lower social and economic status (see also Ensor, 2009), more men than women died during the event itself as they took greater risks. This, in turn, was driven by prevailing gender norms about men as protectors and breadwinners. This is an example of how men’s security also can be compromised by gendered norms regarding masculinity during disasters.

In other countries, such as Mexico, where climate-sensitive livelihood strategies (e.g., agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting) are predominantly considered male activities, poor harvests and livestock loss result in lower earnings and food insecurity, putting pressure on men’s traditional role as providers and compromising their breadwinner identity (Pearse, 2017). This raises men’s poverty and psychological stress, but also increases the likelihood of intimate partner violence, usually against women (Cools et al., 2020). Such consequences have also been documented in Australia with the impacts of drought on rural communities: Women, already overloaded by work, became increasingly financially responsible for family sustenance as farm incomes declined. Associated income-related stress led to an increase in alcohol and drug consumption by men as a coping mechanism, again resulting in reduced men well-being as well as increased physical and emotional abuse against women (Whittenbury, 2013).

Child marriage is another manifestation of gender inequalities and violation of children’s rights that may increase in times of crisis and that has been observed in disaster-affected areas such as in Zimbabwe (Otzelberger, 2014). In South Sudan, resource-constrained families will marry off their daughters at an increasingly young age: “This has been explained as a survival strategy to obtain cattle—vital among pastoralist groups—money, and other assets via the traditional practice of transferring wealth through the payment of dowries, in the absence of other viable alternatives” (Ensor, 2014, p. 20). Such coping strategies—and the associated impacts on young women’s and girl’s security—are likely to become more prevalent with climate change resulting in increased drought frequency and livelihood pressures. This example, like those discussed in previous paragraphs, emphasizes the importance of an intersectional perspective: Educated women from powerful, wealthy, and/or high caste households are less likely to face the risks associated with collecting water or firewood, and are able to draw on alternative resources, including those of other household members, to enhance their resilience to the impacts of climate-related disasters.

The cases presented here demonstrate how a gender perspective alters and expands the notion of what conflict might look like, and whose security is at stake. As shown in this discussion, climate change not only acts as a threat-multiplier that intensifies the risk of armed conflict and social unrest; it also has serious implications for intra-household conflicts and the security of women (and also of men and sexual minorities) in everyday contexts, including in the form of SGBV (Thurston et al., 2021). More systematic gathering of gender-disaggregated data would support comparative analyses on this issue. Gender analyses are also critical to better understand how underlying inequalities aggravate people's vulnerability in crises and undermine their capacities to adapt to changes. In addition, by acknowledging SGBV as a security issue, we are prompted to recognize it not only as a consequence of crises, but as a crisis in its own right. This point is increasingly being addressed by a body of research on the linkages between climate change, disasters, and violence against women and girls (e.g., Cools et al., 2020; Le Masson et al., 2019; Thurston et al., 2021).

4. A Gender Perspective Interrogates the Concept of Resilience

While SGBV is perhaps the most acute manifestation of gender inequality, the examples provided above also highlight other forms of gender injustices embedded within the climate change-conflict nexus to which a gender perspective can draw needed attention. These injustices are often not experienced as separate events, but are rather part of the composite realities that people face in their everyday lives where intersecting inequalities are manifested and reinforced through social norms and practices.

Notably, gendered norms about the intra-household division of labor are critical for understanding how climate change and conflict can cause gendered impacts. An important aspect of this is the unequal burden of the social reproductive labor which is central for the proliferation and the survival of household members. While social reproduction has not yet been fully considered in the climate-conflict nexus (for an exception, see Tanyag, 2018), there is recent research in the separate fields of climate change and conflict which can be built upon when considering gender in the climate-conflict nexus.

Research indicates that the labor that is traditionally assigned to women and girls (e.g., unpaid care and domestic work) increases in times of crises (Dankelman, 2010; Enarson & Morrow, 1998). For instance, following the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, women who were evacuated to displaced centers were tasked with preparing meals which they did without being paid. This was not the case for male evacuees who were not expected to contribute to this task, and had the option of collecting and removing rubbish, for which they received compensation (Saito, 2012).

In the aftermath of disasters or armed conflicts, the risks associated with securing one's livelihoods such as longer walking distances to fetch water and finding alternative food sources not only raise the risk of SGBV; they also mean a significant increase in unpaid care and domestic labor which falls disproportionately on women and girls due to the gender division of labor prevalent in their societies (Alston et al., 2019; Pearse, 2017; UN Women, 2016). In addition, household livelihood opportunities and resources are often insufficient in crisis situations, as income-generating activities might cease during intergroup fighting, or assets such as livestock die during a climate-related disaster. At the same time, social infrastructure such as health services might be weakened and overburdened. In such conditions, the labor that women and girls are required to devote to household chores and caretaking responsibilities can increase even further (Buckingham & Le Masson, 2017; Johnston & Lingham, 2020).

These consequences might affect different groups of women to different degrees depending on intersecting vulnerabilities and power structures. But for many young women and girls, these increases in social reproductive responsibilities due to disasters and conflicts may well have long-lasting negative consequences, as the time and effort invested in their expanded responsibilities may interfere with their education (Bradshaw & Fordham, 2015). Similarly, older women might take on more responsibilities by caring for young children and helping out with household tasks. Men have also been documented to take on new and non-traditional responsibilities within the household in times of drought (although women usually continue to do the majority of this work; Oxfam International, 2016).

Furthermore, the norms and power structures that produce the gender division of labor can also regulate and constrain women's opportunities and agency to amplify their and their families' resilience. In post-conflict Eastern Chad, rural communities have to cope with chronic food insecurity, economic fragility, and regular droughts. While men resort largely to temporary and sometimes permanent migration to find new livelihoods, women have to deal with rigid gender norms that forbid them to run a business, earn an income, own land, and decide how to use it or access stock in the family granary even if their husband is absent. This "denial of resources and opportunity," a form of economic violence stressed by the majority of the participants of a recent study, restricts women from diversifying their livelihoods and accessing basic services (food, education, health, etc.). This makes them, and their household members, more vulnerable to environmental shocks and stresses by limiting the resources available to them in the event of a crisis. This is especially true when men do not earn a regular and/or sufficient income, particularly if they have multiple wives since polygamy is widely practiced in the region (Le Masson et al., 2019). In other cases, instead of limiting opportunities, stresses generated by the impacts of

climate change and disasters create additional productive responsibilities for women along with greater social reproductive work (see above).

Gendered experiences of climate stress and violent conflict often manifest in women and girls enduring more limited access to resources such as food and water, and basic services like education and healthcare. Yet, it is imperative to transcend limited approaches that focus on short-term coping mechanisms—as a short-hand for resilience—and identify power-sensitive frameworks that address the long-term root causes of vulnerability. The mainstream adoption of the resilience concept, especially in policy implementation, as something intrinsically “good” conceals power structures, inequalities, and gendered vulnerabilities within societies. It does so by mainly focusing on the ability to cope and recover at individual, local, or national levels, instead of aiming to fundamentally change societies for long-term transformation (Brown, 2015). This understanding of resilience is thus inadequate for elucidating the intersecting vulnerabilities that women and girls experience in the conflict-climate nexus. These gender-differentiated vulnerabilities often stem from, or are exacerbated by, inequities within local power structures and embedded in socio-cultural norms and practices (Jordan, 2019).

It follows that women’s and girls’ experiences in crisis situation are not just an impact of exogenous shocks and stressors but need to be understood in terms of structural power relations which are reproduced in policy responses and in social norms. Those render different women’s experiences and the labor they perform “undervalued, uncounted, and unpaid” (Tanyag, 2018, p. 566). When a significant part of the survival strategies of households and communities essentially relies on the invisible social reproductive labor performed predominantly by women it can lead to a “feminization of survival” (Sassen, 2000). If resilience and recovery policies fail to acknowledge this labor, they inadvertently also accept the depletion and gender injustice encompassed within this unequal gender division of labor. A gender perspective can unveil these unintended effects. Studying social reproductive labor allows us to reassess where the resilience of communities and households resides (Kozak, 2021). By recognizing social reproductive labor as equally relevant, and crucial for survival, it helps us broaden the understanding of what kind of support is required in order to truly strengthen resilience (Rai et al., 2019).

Similar to how instances of SGBV change our interpretation of the concepts of security and conflict, experiences of unequal labor burdens can alter our understanding of how resilience is achieved. Further, a gender perspective underscores that the concepts of security and resilience cannot be understood as separate, as they are both part of the human (gendered) experience. Kronsell (2019) notes that human security as a concept challenges conventional understandings of security which only refer to acute threats and exclude structural

violence. Dankelman (2010) offers a conceptual framework on gender, human security, and climate change, where human security is defined as: (1) security of survival, which entails mortality risks, and levels of health; (2) security of livelihoods, including food, water, energy, shelter, income generating opportunities and environmental security; and (3) dignity, which encompasses respect of basic human rights, capacities, and participation in decision-making processes. In line with this framing, a more gender-responsive research approach to study the manifestations of climate change and conflicts helps to better document and respond to underlying gender inequalities that aggravate people’s vulnerabilities and undermine security in its multiple forms, from risks to women’s dignity to conflict insecurity.

5. Conclusion

The intersections between climate change and conflict have attracted increasing attention in recent years, as evidenced by a broad range of scholarly publications and various UN Security Council debates (for an overview, see von Uexkull & Buhaug, 2021). Research on the intersections of gender, conflict, and climate change has, nonetheless, remained limited owing in part to the tendency to investigate this multifaceted interface only in terms of pairs of components (Fröhlich & Gioli, 2015). Consequently, gender concerns still play only a marginal role in debates about the interconnection between climate change and conflict despite a variety of rich insights that could be derived from such an approach.

In this article, we emphasize the importance of a gender perspective to understand the dynamics and impacts of the climate-conflict nexus. Gender roles (e.g., cattle raiders as heroes, breadwinners, and good husbands) and unequal gender structures (e.g., the marginalization and impoverishment of women in conflict-prone societies) are important contextual factors that shape climate-conflict risks in various world regions. Furthermore, gender inequality, intersecting with other inequality structures like class or caste, can aggravate or change the impact of both climate change and conflict, and shape how they are experienced by different people. The cases on SGBV and the gender division of social reproductive labor show us that a gender perspective can interrogate and redefine our understanding and fundamental concepts in the research on the climate-conflict nexus, such as conflict, (in)security, and resilience.

The commonality between these interrogations and redefinitions lies in an understanding of gender inequalities as both manifested and reinforced through social norms and power relations. Norms framing notions of violent masculinities, male breadwinners, or female reproductive labor are often taken for granted and deeply embedded in society. Likewise, SGBV often remains “invisible.” Social stigma means that violence survivors are expected to bear the burden of insecurity

without possibilities of redress (Davies et al., 2016). Moreover, women's labor is often not only ignored or considered insignificant, but it is expected, demanded, and taken for granted. Women contribute to building peace, resilience, and security (Omolo, 2010; Pearse, 2017), and their agency needs to be recognized and supported. Men can also suffer from adverse impacts of climate change and conflict, often related to their identities as breadwinners, protectors, and warriors. The gendered impacts of both climate change and conflict need to be better understood and given higher priority in order to be mitigated. A gender perspective can help to understand such impacts, while providing a more nuanced, and often more grounded analysis of the inequalities and injustices that both underpin and are exacerbated by conflicts and climate change.

With the exception of the examples of Japan and Australia, we derive the evidence used in this article from countries located in the Global South. This does not imply that we consider these countries to be naturally violent, unable to deal with environmental problems, or a threat to the Global North (Ide, 2016). Rather, it reflects that most large-scale armed conflicts in the past 70 years took place in the Global South (among others as a result of colonial legacies and Cold War geopolitics), and that many countries in the Global South are more vulnerable to (albeit less responsible for) climate change. A large part of the literature on gender and climate change thus tends to follow and reproduce an impact-focused narrative where victims of climate change are predominantly black women in poor settings of the Global South (Arora-Jonsson, 2011; MacGregor, 2017).

Understandings of conflict, security, and resilience as discussed in Sections 3 and 4, especially the broader interpretations, are relevant to the Global North as well. Unequal divisions of labor, intra-household violence, livelihood loss due to disasters, and norms of men as protectors, among others, are phenomena well known in North America, Europe, and Australia. A gender perspective to climate change and notions of (in)security also interrogates the causes of environmental degradation and conflict, not just their consequences. Environmental and feminist scholars have generated and called for more research inquiries in the Global North and in industrialized societies to examine the linkages between gender norms and unsustainable ways to exploit the environment or extract natural resources (Buckingham & Le Masson, 2017).

Nevertheless, gender-responsive analyses remain the exception rather than the norm in climate-conflict research. Because all manifestations of both violent conflict and climate change affect people differently, a gender perspective is essential when considering environmental policy and security-related decision-making, as well as in the development and implementation of strategies concerning mitigation and adaptation. This includes recognizing women as a heterogeneous group whose gender identities intersect with other axes of social differ-

ence like class, caste, and ethnicity. Likewise, we caution against conceiving women as passive victims and ignoring that both women and men have particular capacities and resilience as well as vulnerabilities.

We encourage further work to address four specific challenges. First, investigate the role of gender norms and identities in increasing (or decreasing) both conflict risks and environmental degradation (including climate change). Second, critically interrogate how climate change does not only affect violent conflict and social unrest, but also broader notions of security and conflict, including SGBV and other threats to human security. Third, inform responses to both climate change and conflict by highlighting the roles that women (can) play in building peace and resilience, and address power structures that constraint women's agency to play such roles. This should include deepening our understanding of social infrastructure as an integral part of the policy responses to climate and conflict challenges. Fourth, as a cross-cutting concern, document gender-based inequalities and insecurities in the context of climate change and conflict as part of larger efforts to generate disaggregated data for analysis and policy programming.

Addressing these challenges is certainly no easy task. But doing so would not only facilitate the integration of climate, gender, and conflict research, but also allow for more inclusive and effective policy and programming that promotes the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 5 (gender equality), 13 (climate action) and 15 (peace, justice, and strong institutions).

Acknowledgments

We thank two anonymous reviewers as well as the editors for helpful comments on earlier versions of this article. Tobias Ide's research was funded by the Australian Research Council (DE190101268). We acknowledge support by the Open Access Publication Funds of Technische Universität Braunschweig.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

- Acharya, K., & Muldoon, O. T. (2017). Why "I" became a combatant: A study of memoirs written by Nepali Maoist combatants. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 29(6), 1006–1025.
- Adano, W., Dietz, T., Witsenburg, K. M., & Zaal, F. (2012). Climate change, violent conflict and local institutions in Kenya's drylands. *Journal of Peace Research*, 49(1), 65–80.
- Ahmed, S., & Fajber, E. (2009). Engendering adaptation to climate variability in Gujarat, India. *Gender & Development*, 17(1), 33–50.
- Alston, M., Hazeleger, T., & Hargreaves, D. (2019).

- Social work and disasters: A handbook for practice.* Routledge.
- Arora-Jonsson, S. (2011). Virtue and vulnerability: Discourses on women, gender and climate change. *Global Environmental Change*, 21(2), 744–751.
- Bradshaw, S., & Fordham, M. (2015). Double disaster: Disaster risk through a gender lens. In A. E. Collins, S. Jones, B. Manyena, & J. Jayawickrama (Eds.), *Hazards, risks and disasters in society* (pp. 233–251). Elsevier.
- Brown, K. (2015). *Resilience, development and global change.* Routledge.
- Buckingham, S., & Le Masson, V. (Eds.). (2017). *Understanding climate change through gender relations.* Routledge.
- Castañeda Camey, I., Sabater, L., Owren, C., Boyer, A. E., & Wen, J. (2020). *Gender-based violence and environment linkages: The violence of inequality.* International Union for Conservation of Nature.
- Cockburn, C. (2010). Gender relations as causal in militarization and war. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 12(2), 139–157.
- Cools, S., Flatø, M., & Kotsadam, A. (2020). Rainfall shocks and intimate partner violence in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, 57(3), 377–390.
- Dankelman, I. (2010). *Gender and climate change: An introduction.* Earthscan.
- Daoudy, M. (2020). *The origins of the Syrian conflict: Climate change and human security.* Cambridge University Press.
- Davies, S. E., True, J., & Tanyag, M. (2016). How women’s silence secures the peace: Analysing sexual and gender-based violence in a low-intensity conflict. *Gender & Development*, 24(3), 459–473.
- Delaney, P. L., & Shrader, E. (2000). *Gender and post-disaster reconstruction: The case of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Nicaragua.* World Bank.
- Enarson, E., & Morrow, B. H. (1998). *The gendered terrain of disaster.* Praeger Press.
- Enloe, C. (1993). *The morning after: Sexual politics at the end of the Cold War.* University of California Press.
- Ensor, M. O. (2009). Gender matters in post-disaster reconstruction. In M. O. Ensor (Ed.), *The legacy of Hurricane Mitch* (pp. 129–156). University of Arizona Press.
- Ensor, M. O. (2013). Youth, climate change, and peace in South Sudan. *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 25(4), 526–533.
- Ensor, M. O. (2014). Displaced girlhood: Gendered dimensions of coping and social change among conflict-affected South Sudanese youth. *Refugee: Canada’s Journal on Refugees*, 30(1), 15–24.
- Fröhlich, C., & Gioli, G. (2015). Gender, conflict, and global environmental change. *Peace Review*, 27(2), 137–146.
- Funder, M., Cold-Ravnkilde, S. M., & Ginsborg, I. P. (2012). *Addressing climate change and conflict in development regions: Experiences from natural resource management.* Danish Institute for International Studies.
- Gaillard, J. C., Sanz, K., Balgos, B. C., Dalisay, S. N. M., Gorman-Murray, A., Smith, F., & Toelupe, V. a. (2017). Beyond men and women: A critical perspective on gender and disaster. *Disasters*, 41(3), 429–447.
- Gleick, P. (2014). Water, drought, climate change, and conflict in Syria. *Weather, Climate, and Society*, 6(3), 331–340.
- Harris, C., & Milton, D. J. (2016). Is standing for women a stand against terrorism? Exploring the connection between women’s rights and terrorism. *Journal of Human Rights*, 15(1), 60–78.
- Heslin, A. (2020). Riots and resources: How food access affects collective violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 58(2), 199–214.
- Horton, L. (2012). After the earthquake: Gender inequality and transformation in post-disaster Haiti. *Gender & Development*, 20(2), 295–308.
- Hudson, V. M., Caprioli, M., Ballif-Spanvill, B., McDermott, R., & Emmett, C. F. (2009). The heart of the matter: The security of women and the security of states. *International Security*, 33(3), 7–45.
- Human Security Research Group. (2012). *Human security report 2012: Sexual violence, education, and war: Beyond the mainstream narrative.* Simon Fraser University.
- Ide, T. (2016). Critical geopolitics and school textbooks: The case of environment-conflict links in Germany. *Political Geography*, 55(1), 61–70.
- Ide, T., Brzoska, M., Donges, J. F., & Schleussner, C.-F. (2020). Multi-method evidence for when and how climate-related disasters contribute to armed conflict risk. *Global Environmental Change*, 62(1), 1–8.
- Ide, T., Lopez, J. M. R., Fröhlich, C., & Scheffran, J. (2021). Pathways to water conflict during drought in the MENA region. *Journal of Peace Research*, 58(3), 568–582.
- Johnston, M., & Lingham, J. (2020). *Inclusive economies, enduring peace in Myanmar and Sri Lanka: Field report.* Monash GPS Centre.
- Jordan, J. C. (2019). Deconstructing resilience: Why gender and power matter in responding to climate stress in Bangladesh. *Climate and Development*, 11(2), 167–179.
- K. C., L., & Van Der Haar, G. (2019). Living Maoist gender ideology: Experiences of women ex-combatants in Nepal. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 21(3), 434–453.
- Koren, O., Bagozzi, B. E., & Benson, T. (2021). Food and water insecurity as causes of social unrest: Evidence from geolocated Twitter data. *Journal of Peace Research*, 58(1), 67–82.
- Koubi, V. (2019). Climate change and conflict. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22(1), 343–360.
- Kozak, S. (2021). *The political economy of social reproduction in disasters—The case of drought in Zimbabwe* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Monash University.

- Kronsell, A. (2019). WPS and climate change. In S. E. Davies & J. True (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of women, peace, and security* (pp. 726–736). Oxford University Press.
- Le Masson, V., Benoudji, C., Reyes, S. S., & Bernard, G. (2019). How violence against women and girls undermines resilience to climate risks in Chad. *Disasters*, 43(S3), S245–S270.
- MacGregor, S. (2017). Moving beyond impacts: More answers to the ‘gender and climate change’ question. In S. Buckingham & V. Le Masson (Eds.), *Understanding climate change through gender relations* (pp. 15–30). Routledge.
- Mach, K. J., Kraan, C. M., Adger, W. N., Buhaug, H., Burke, M., Fearon, J. D., Field, C. B., Hendrix, C. S., Maystadt, J.-F., O’Loughlin, J., Roessler, P., Scheffran, J., Schultz, K. A., & von Uexkull, N. (2019). Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict. *Nature*, 571(7764), 193–197.
- Mkutu, K. A. (2008). Uganda: Pastoralist conflict and gender relations. *Review of African Political Economy*, 35(116), 237–254.
- Omolo, N. A. (2010). Gender and climate change-induced conflict in pastoral communities: Case study of Turkana in northwestern Kenya. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 10(2), 81–102.
- Otzelberger, A. (2014). *Tackling the double injustice of climate change and gender inequality*. CARE International.
- Oxfam International. (2016). *Consolidated gender analysis for the Ethiopian drought response*.
- Pearse, R. (2017). Gender and climate change. *WIREs Climate Change*, 8(2), Article e451.
- Prügl, E. (2019, June 3). Sexual violence: A new weapon of war. *Graduate Institute Geneva*. <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/communications/news/sexual-violence-new-weapon-war>
- Rai, S. M., True, J., & Tanyag, M. (2019). From depletion to regeneration: Addressing structural and physical violence in post-conflict economies. *Social Politics*, 26(4), 561–585.
- Saito, F. (2012). Women and the 2011 East Japan disaster. *Gender & Development*, 20(2), 265–279.
- Sassen, S. (2000). Women’s burden: Counter-geographies of globalization and the feminization of survival. *Journal of International Affairs*, 53(2), 503–524.
- Scanlon, E. (2018). Fifty-one years of Naxalite-Maoist insurgency in India: Examining the factors that have influenced the longevity of the conflict. *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 6(2), 335–351.
- Schilling, J., Opiyo, F., & Scheffran, J. (2012). Raiding pastoral livelihoods: Motives and effects of violent conflict in north-eastern Kenya. *Pastoralism*, 2(25), 1–16.
- Selby, J., & Hoffmann, C. (2014). Beyond scarcity: Rethinking water, climate change and conflict in the Sudans. *Global Environmental Change*, 29(1), 360–370.
- Sjoberg, L. (2009). Introduction to security studies: Feminist contributions. *Security Studies*, 18(2), 183–213.
- Smith, J. M., Olosky, L., & Fernández, J. G. (2021). *The climate-gender-conflict nexus: Amplifying women’s contributions at the grassroots*. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security.
- Sugden, F., Maskey, N., Clement, F., Ramesh, V., Philip, A., & Rai, A. (2014). Agrarian stress and climate change in the Eastern Gangetic Plains: Gendered vulnerability in a stratified social formation. *Global Environmental Change*, 29, 258–269.
- Tanyag, M. (2018). Resilience, female altruism, and bodily autonomy: Disaster-induced displacement in post-Haiyan Philippines. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 43(3), 563–585.
- Tanyag, M., & True, J. (2019). *Gender responsive alternatives to climate change: A global research report*. Monash GPS Centre.
- Tezcür, G. M. (2015). Violence and nationalist mobilization: The onset of the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey. *Nationalities Papers*, 43(2), 248–266.
- Thurston, A. M., Stöckl, H., & Ranganathan, M. (2021). Natural hazards, disasters and violence against women and girls: A global mixed-methods systematic review. *BMJ Global Health*, 6(4), Article e004377.
- UN Environment Programme, UN Woman, UN Department of Political Affairs, & UN Development Programme. (2020). *Gender, climate, and security: Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change*.
- UN News. (2019, January 25). Climate change recognized as ‘threat multiplier,’ UN Security Council debates its impact on peace. *UN News*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/01/1031322>
- UN Women. (2016). *Time to act on gender, climate change and disaster risk reduction: An overview of progress in the Pacific region with evidence from Marshall Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa*.
- von Uexkull, N., & Buhaug, H. (2021). Security implications of climate change. *Journal of Peace Research*, 58(1), 3–17.
- von Uexkull, N., d’Errico, M., & Jackson, J. (2020). Drought, resilience, and support for violence: Household survey evidence from DR Congo. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 64(10), 1994–2021.
- Whittenbury, K. (2013). Climate change, women’s health, wellbeing and experiences of gender based violence in Australia. In M. Alston & K. Whittenbury (Eds.), *Research, action and policy: Addressing the gendered impacts of climate change* (pp. 207–221). Springer.
- Wood, R., & Ramirez, M. D. (2018). Exploring the micro-foundations of the gender equality peace Hypothesis. *International Studies Review*, 20(3), 345–367.
- Yoshida, K., & Céspedes-Báez, L. (2021). The nature of women, peace and security: A Colombian perspective. *International Affairs*, 97(1), 17–34.
- Yoshida, K., Bondand, H., & Kezie-Nwoha, H. (2021). *Defending the future: Gender, conflict and environmental peace*. London School of Economics and Political Science.

About the Authors



Tobias Ide (PhD) is adjunct associate professor in international relations at TU Braunschweig. He is also lecturer in politics and policy at Murdoch University Perth. His research deals with the intersections of climate change, disasters, environmental politics, peace, conflict, and security. Tobias has published in numerous high-ranking journals, including *International Affairs*, *Journal of Peace Research* and *Nature Climate Change*, and consulted for a range of decision makers and media. He holds PhDs in Political Science and Geography.



Marisa O. Ensor (PhD) is a gender and youth specialist with a background in the human dimensions of conflict, disasters, environmental change, displacement and security. Trained in applied (legal, political, environmental) anthropology and human rights law, Ensor has worked in over 20 conflict-affected and fragile countries of Africa, Europe, the MENA region and Latin America. Her research has resulted in numerous publications including five books, over 50 book chapters and journal articles and numerous technical and policy briefs.



Virginie Le Masson (PhD) is a geographer by training and co-director of the Centre for Gender and Disaster at University College London. Her research looks at gender inequalities and violence-related risks in places affected by environmental changes and disasters and aims to inform more gender-responsive humanitarian and development programs. In 2017, she co-edited a book with prof. Susan Buckingham (Routledge) on climate change and gender relations. Virginie is also a research associate with ODI, a development think tank based in London.



Susanne Kozak is a gender equality specialist researching changes in social reproductive labor as a result of climate change and disasters. She has worked as a practitioner and gender advisor with the United Nations in Rwanda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and the MENA region since 2005, focusing on women, peace and security research, and programmes on gender-based violence, women's economic empowerment and political participation, as well as national accountability on gender equality. She is currently completing her PhD at the Gender Peace and Security Centre at Monash University.