



Flows of sediment, flows of insecurity: Climate change adaptation and the social contract in the Ebro Delta, Catalonia



Christos Zografos*

Ramón y Cajal Research Fellow, John Hopkins University – Pompeu Fabra University Public Policy Centre, Barcelona, Spain

Ramón y Cajal Research Fellow, Visiting Professor, Department of Environmental Studies, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Jostova 10, Brno 61500, Czech Republic

Ramón y Cajal Research Fellow, Department of Political and Social Sciences, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain

Ramón y Cajal Research Fellow, Associated Researcher, Institute of Environmental Science & Technology (ICTA), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14 February 2016

Received in revised form 24 October 2016

Accepted 15 January 2017

Keywords:

Climate-security nexus

Social contract

Farmland expropriation

Human security

Climate change adaptation

Ebro Delta

ABSTRACT

To avoid dominant positivist explanations of links between climate change and security, I use alternative, human security approaches to study how climate security is managed in one of Spain's most endangered coastal ecosystems, the Ebro Delta. I find that increasing the downstream flow of sediments retained in upstream dams is a crucial measure for dealing with climate change threats (sea-level rise) in the Delta. Yet, state policies do not increase sediment flow, but instead implement incremental adaptation at the site of climate impact (coast), which, at times, requires executing small-scale land expropriations. Refraining from improving human security via increasing sediment flow benefits corporate interests upstream. At the same time, expropriation silences mild farmer protest downstream and adds insult to injury by conveying to farmers a sense of blame for their vulnerability to climate change. Meanwhile, using expropriation at the service of incremental adaptation goes against the very rationale of expropriation established by Spanish legislation and creates a fundamental contradiction between what the practice is meant to deliver, namely security and the social contract from the part of the state, and what it actually does, i.e. permit the state to evade providing human security. I conclude that, under climate change, achieving human security, the delivery of the social contract, and corporate rent-seeking at the same time may not be possible. Moreover, rather than the social contract being threatened by state incapacity to respond to the effects of climate change and breached social contract expectations of vulnerable communities, it is the actual mobilisation of the contract in order to respond to climate change that diminishes human security.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In a talk to defence experts in 2011, Chris Huhne, the then UK Secretary of the State for Energy & Climate Change explained that

“Climate change will increase the threat of war”

[Harvey, 2011]

and that

“...conflict caused by climate change risks reversing the progress of civilisation”.

[Harvey, 2011]

Stories of the catastrophic consequences of climate change such as those highlighted by the ex-UK Secretary are nowadays relatively commonplace in the public domain. A more or less standard storyline develops when policy and popular media present the security implications of climate change. In this narrative, climate change is expected to produce natural resource scarcities (e.g. less water, less fertile land), which would reduce livelihood opportunities, especially in the developing world, and increase both conflict in developing countries and migration to more secure places, essentially the global North. Such migration would stretch to the limit scarce natural and institutional (e.g. health services) resources in recipient states as a result of which conflict in those countries could increase too. Under this scenario of dystopia, both climate change-struck and migration recipient states would see their ability to function properly and resolve conflict reduce dramatically. This possibility gravely concerns European institutions,

* Address: JHU-UPF Public Policy Centre, Mercè Rodoreda building (Ciutadella campus), Ramon Trias Fargas, 25-27, 08005 Barcelona, Spain.

E-mail address: christos.zografos@upf.edu

such as the European Commission who has recently announced a call for proposals in its Horizon 2020 research programme considering that

“Climate change in Third Countries is a real threat to security of the European Union.”

and that climate change

“can have disastrous consequences on European security, as climate-driven crises occurring outside the EU can have ... direct or indirect security implications on the Union (e.g. climate-driven migration forcing large number of people to move from their homelands to another country – EU Member State;...”

[EC, 2015]

Critics of this climate-security nexus narrative hold that it is largely based on a-political positivist research and policy discourse. They argue that its focus on the global South reflects a set of neo-liberal ideas that most conflict is internal to and emanates from the global South and not from the liberal ‘zone of peace’; that the internal anarchy of ‘failed states’ is the major contemporary global security challenge; and, that economic growth is a panacea, thus fomenting a “widespread inattention to the ways in which climate change will challenge Northern forms of economy, politics and society” (Selby, 2014).

When it comes to the study of the politics of the climate-security nexus and the global North, critical studies mostly examine the global North as a generator of either insecurities for the global South (e.g. Dalby, 2009), or discourses of insecurity focusing on the global South (e.g. Hartmann, 2010). Still, the global North can itself be a place of climate insecurity for its own inhabitants in the absence of ‘external threats’ such as the massive migration of climate refugees purported by the positivist discourse. This is the case with sea-level rise (SLR) due to thermal expansion of water volumes resulting from climate change (IPCC, 2007b), which poses a security concern for river delta livelihoods currently harming them with occasional sea-storms while threatening to inundate large part of deltas in the future. A recent environmental social science literature considers that such climate-induced security threats can have a major political impact by eroding the so-called ‘social contract’, i.e. the citizenship relationship between states and their citizens, which requires citizens to display obedience to state authority in exchange for security provided by the state (Hayward and O’Brien, 2010). This literature considers the social contract mainly by focusing on the capacity of the state to deliver security and on how climate change alters this capacity and the expectations of citizens that the state acts as the sole provider of security. However, the relation of authority between state and citizens that the contract justifies is an equally prominent aspect of the social contract, and the way in which exercising authority is mobilised within the context of state provision of climate security has not been explored by that literature. I empirically consider this feature of the social contract with my study and conclude that rather than the social contract been threatened by state incapacity to respond to the effects of climate change and breached social contract expectations of vulnerable communities, it is the actual mobilisation of the social contract in order to respond to climate change that helps diminish human security.

The paper examines how acute climate insecurities are dealt with by state policies in the global North through a case study of climate change security and adaptation response in the Ebro Delta in Catalonia, Spain, one of the Iberian peninsula’s ecosystems most endangered by expected temperature rises due to climatic changes and in particular SLR (MMA, 2006). I use a political ecology approach to study winners and losers from state management of

climate security and key mechanisms of power mobilised for implementing state responses. In the next section, I present the literature on human security and climate change, and the literature on climate change and the social contract. After that, I present study methods and then move into findings where I explore human security in the Delta, look at how vulnerability to climate change and state response to deal with it (adaptation policy) develop, as well as the political-economic drivers behind this response. I continue with a discussion of the links between one key mechanism of power I have identified operating in my case study, namely farmland expropriation, and social contract ideas on state authority. Finally, I conclude with some remarks about the relevance and contribution of the case study for both the study of the climate-security nexus and political ecology scholarship on farmland expropriation. This paper sits at the intersection of the climate change and human security literatures. It contributes a critical view of the role of the social contract in adaptation, and a closer attention at the operation of green governance mechanisms, in particular farmland expropriation.

2. Climate threats: security, human security and the social contract

A major concern with climate change involves the risks it poses to security through the expected increase in the frequency and occurrence of extreme hydrological events (e.g. droughts), which are feared to increase conflicts over scarce water resources. Assertions such as the one made by the UN Secretary General that climate change is a threat to security (Ki-Moon, 2007) have helped consolidate a security-oriented conceptualisation of climate change. As dystopian scenarios place possible collapse of state institutions at the heart of the climate security challenge faced by societies, traditional means to deal with national security are invoked as a response and these mainly involve the use of military solutions. Since at least the mid-90s, the US Department of Defence has pondered the possibility that should climate change have drastic impacts, militaries may become involved in conflicts and peace-keeping (Barnett, 2003). Nevertheless, military institutions may not be the most appropriate ones to deal with climate change. Not only their past environmental record makes them one of the most polluting human institutions in history but the also tend to shift the burden of climate change to its victims, e.g. through attempts to forcefully contain immigration (Dalby, 2009).

As a reaction to that, an alternative conceptualisation of climate security has developed, one that tries to highlight climate change implications for individuals and communities instead of states. The alternative concept of *human security* understands that climate change may reduce access to and the quality of natural resources that are important for sustaining livelihoods and in this way affect the security of individuals and groups. Parting ways with national security, human security scholars conceptualise climate security as “a state whereby individuals and localities¹ have the necessary options to respond to threats to their human, environmental and social well-being imposed by climate change and have the capacity and freedom to exercise these options” (Adger, 2010, p. 281). Three key and interrelated issues must be analysed when exploring climate security: vulnerability, adaptation, and equity.

Studies of vulnerability to ‘natural disasters’ within the tradition of political ecology have long pointed out that these are caused not only by natural effects but are also the product of social, political, and economic environments (Blaikie et al., 1994) “because of the way these structure the lives of different groups of people” (Wisner et al., 2003, p. 4). As “humans are not equally

¹ Adger refers to vulnerable, or at risk localities and individuals.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات