Security implications of climate change

Sub Project A
How scarcities of renewable subsistence resources and their social distribution affect the risk of armed conflict

Sub Project B
How hydrometeorological natural disasters affect political stability, economic growth, and the risk of armed conflict

Sub Project C
How rapid urbanization and population growth affect social stability and the risk of organized violence

A simplified causal model of climate change and armed conflict

Three physical developments associated with climate change stand out as potentially harmful to security and peace: declining availability of subsistence resources, increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters, and rising sea levels. The causal mechanism proposed to connect these changes to violence and conflict is struggle over dwindling resources, often accentuated by large-scale human displacement.

This project explores to what extent and under which conditions environmental variability and migration are likely to lead to organized political violence. It employs multiple methods to allow wide flexibility in theory development and empirical assessment, including several field trips to relevant regions in Asia and Africa. Unlike earlier, general research on the subject, the project pays particular attention to low-intensity conflicts, including non-state (pastoral clashes and violent inter-ethnic competition) and radical violence (attacks on unorganized civilians), which are among the forms of violence most likely to emerge as a result of environmental marginalization. A crucial step in this endeavor is the development and application of disaggregated quantitative research designs that capture local dynamics of environment-conflict linkages.

Although the overall project is global in scope, it pays special attention to Sub-Saharan Africa, where impacts of climate change are expected to occur first and with the most destructive force.

Contemporary armed conflicts are located in some of the most environmentally vulnerable parts of the world


Visit the project’s web page at http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Research-and-Publications/Project/?oid=48586763

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