From Structural Violence to Resource Wars:

The Climate-Conflict-Displacement Nexus

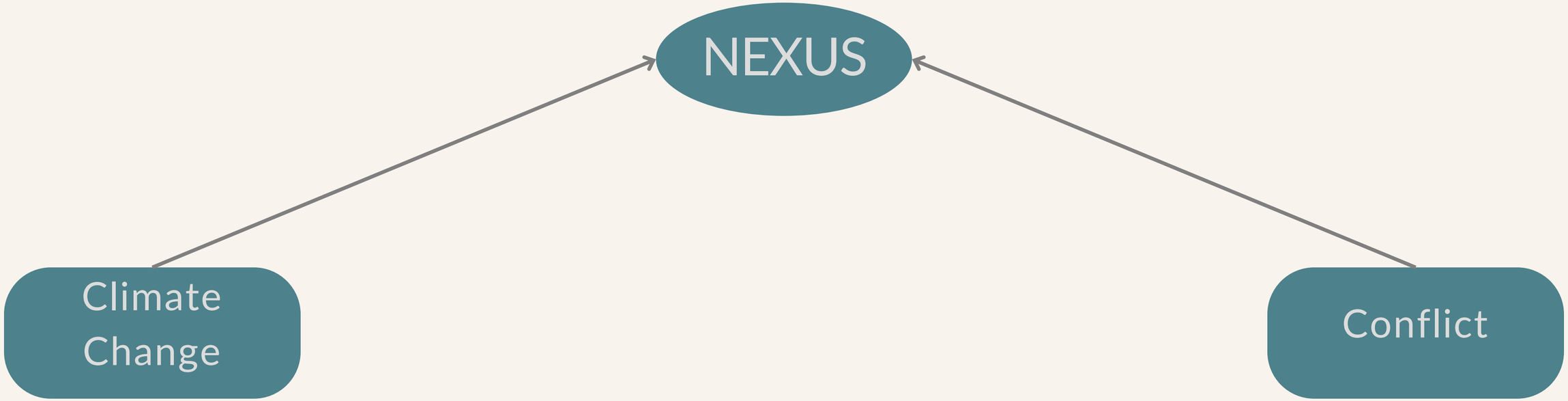


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Introduction

- Self-Introduction
- Objectives
- Core debates
- Housekeeping



Mechanisms ⇢ Responses

Goal is both climate resilience & sustainable peace

Climate and Conflict Mechanisms

- Climate, migration, conflict & stability
  - Under Review for OUP Book Prize
- Economic shocks, migration & urban unrest
  - Funded by the Rule of Law Institute; RIPE (2025)
- Ocean changes & fishery militarized disputes
  - Funded by the World Wildlife Fund
- Climate displacement measurement
  - HORIZON-MISS-2025-01
- Hydropower development & conflict
  - Funded by the Institute for European Global Studies



Responses to Climate and Conflict

- Financial dependencies & conflict resolution
- Economic reintegration & peace durability
  - Funded by the NSF; JPR (2025)
- Drought, Conflict, and Irrigation in the DRC
- Climate adaptation laws
  - NSF application as co-PI; EPG (2024)
- Geography of conflict mediation & success
- Climate shocks, rebel demands, peace agreements

Climate Event
(mechanism)



Climate Laws
(response)

- Do **climate shocks** drive **rebel demands** for climate-related resources?
- Do climate-related **rebel demands** result in the inclusion of climate-related **provisions in peace agreements**?
- Do spikes in climate-driven **rebel demands** lead to an increase in **conflict mediation** efforts?
- Do **climate-related provisions in peace agreements** contribute to transformative changes, leading to more robust **climate laws** governing resource distribution?
- What is the **longevity of peace** depending on whether climate provisions are **included in peace agreements**?

Core Debates

in Climate Change, Conflict & Displacement

Direct Causality vs. Threat Multiplier

- **Direct Causality:** Climate change *causes* conflict
- **Threat Multiplier:** Climate stress *exacerbates* existing vulnerabilities

Empirical Divergence

- **Quantitative studies vs. qualitative case studies:** conflicting findings, methodological tensions.
- **Levels of analysis**

Policy and Normative Implications

- Security framing vs. justice framing.
- Military intervention vs. addressing root causes (e.g., structural violence, inequality).

Objectives

Activity 1

Debating the 'Threat-Multiplier'

Critically engage with the concept of climate change as a 'threat-multiplier' and explore differing viewpoints on the correlation vs. causality of climate change and violent conflict.

Activity 2

Case Study & Policy Response

To apply theoretical and practical approaches to a specific case study, fostering solutions-focused discussions and considering historical experiences in understanding contemporary challenges.

Activity 3

Future Projections & Reflections

Contemplate future projections related to climate-induced conflicts and consider the implications for human mobility.

Housekeeping

Structure

- You'll work in small breakout groups for each of three activities, completing a shared Padlet board before rejoining the full group to discuss.
- Then, we will wrap up with some concluding remarks.
- Q&A

Interactive Format

- Be ready to participate in breakout discussions
- A representative from your group will share your insights
- Diverse perspectives are welcome



Activity 1

Debating the 'Threat-Multiplier'

Objective

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Critically engage with the concept of climate change as a 'threat-multiplier' and explore differing viewpoints on the correlation vs. causality of climate change and violent conflict.

Key Concepts

Correlation vs. Causality

- Correlation: Two things occur together (e.g., climate change & violence)
- Causality: One directly causes the other (e.g., drought → war)
  - Acknowledging confounding variables (poverty, governance, institutions)

"Threat Multiplier" Concept

- Climate change doesn't cause conflict directly
- It exacerbates existing social, political, & economic tensions
- Examples: resource scarcity, livelihood loss, migration pressures

Breakout Instructions

Guiding Question: To what extent is climate change a direct cause of violent conflict, versus a “threat-multiplier” that exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and conflict drivers?

Task (15–20 min):

1. **You’ll be assigned a stance:** Pro-Direct Causality (events) or Pro-Threat Multiplier (odds)
2. **Discuss arguments supporting your stance using:** Readings, lecture insights, your own disciplinary lens
3. **Consider at least one counter-argument**
4. **Post at least 2–3 key points + counterargument on the Padlet**

To what extent is climate change a direct cause of violent conflict, versus a “threat-multiplier” that exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and conflict drivers?

Pro-Direct Causality vs. Pro-Threat Multiplier



Activity 2

Case Study & Policy Response

Objective

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Case Study & Policy Response

To apply theoretical and practical approaches to a specific case study, fostering solutions-focused discussions and considering historical experiences in understanding contemporary challenges.

Case Study

Context: The Lake Chad Basin, encompassing parts of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, is a vital source of water and livelihood for over 40 million people. Historically one of Africa's largest freshwater bodies, Lake Chad has dramatically shrunk by approximately 90% since the 1960s, primarily due to climate change (reduced rainfall and increased evaporation) and unsustainable water management practices.

The Nexus in Action:

Resource Scarcity and Competition:

The drastic reduction in the lake's size has led to a severe decline in fish stocks and arable land, directly impacting the livelihoods of millions who depend on fishing, farming, and pastoralism. This scarcity intensifies competition over dwindling water and fertile land resources among different communities, frequently leading to inter-communal clashes between farmers and herders.

Structural Violence and Vulnerability:

Pre-existing vulnerabilities, poverty, and weak governance structures in the region are exacerbated by these environmental changes. Marginalized communities, often lacking alternative livelihoods, become more susceptible to the impacts of climate change, further deepening their hardship and increasing their motivation to migrate in search of survival means.

The Nexus in Action:

Conflict and Displacement:

The resource-based conflicts, coupled with the long-standing presence of armed extremist groups like Boko Haram, have created a complex humanitarian crisis. Boko Haram exploits the widespread poverty, food insecurity, and competition for resources, recruiting disenfranchised individuals by offering incentives and a sense of belonging. The violence has caused massive displacement, with millions of people forcibly uprooted from their homes, many seeking refuge along the shrinking lake's shores or in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. This displacement, in turn, often puts further pressure on host communities and their resources, potentially creating new tensions.

Breakout Instructions

Task (15–20 min) to discuss:

1. How do the issues of structural violence, resource competition, and displacement manifest in the Lake Chad Basin case study?
2. What historical lessons or patterns can be observed in this specific context regarding the relationship between climate change, conflict, and human mobility?
3. Given the complexities, what potential solutions or policy responses could be considered to address the climate change, conflict, and displacement nexus in the Lake Chad Basin, aiming for **both** *immediate* relief and *long-term* stability? Consider responses that go beyond military interventions and address the root causes and vulnerabilities.

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Activity 3

Future Projections & Reflections

Objectives

Activity 3

Future Projections & Reflections

Contemplate future projections related to climate-induced conflicts and consider the implications for human mobility.

Breakout Instructions

Guiding Question: Looking ahead, what are the most significant challenges and opportunities in addressing the 'climate wars' narrative and ensuring just and equitable responses to climate-induced human mobility?

Task (15–20 min):

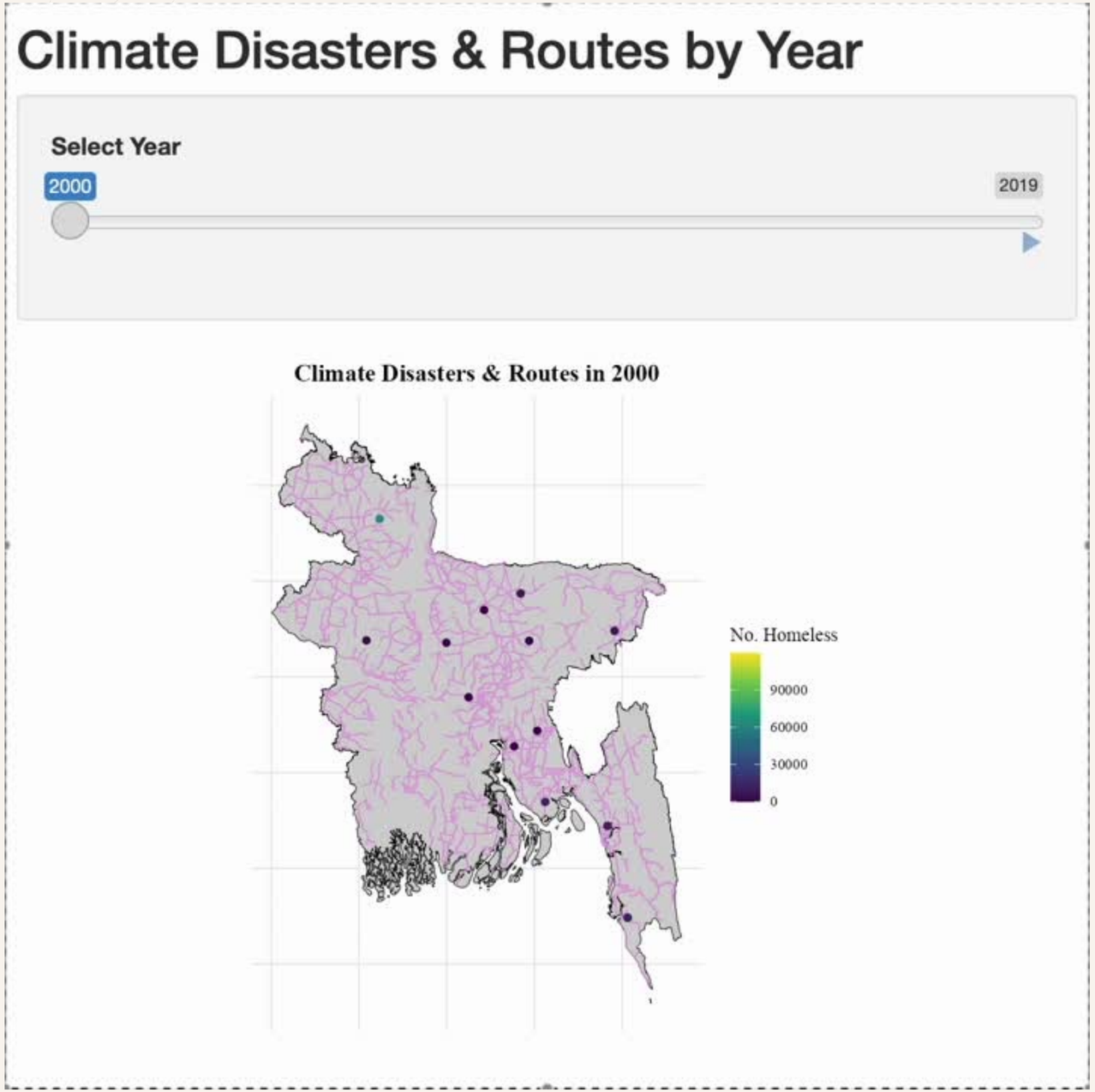
1. Brainstorming
2. Questions
3. Concerns

Looking ahead, what are the most significant challenges and opportunities in addressing the 'climate wars' narrative and ensuring just and equitable responses to climate-induced human mobility?



Concluding Remarks

My next steps...



Global Climate Displacement Measurement

Takeaways

Currently, climate change is rarely a direct cause of conflict, but often a threat multiplier.

Vulnerability and displacement are shaped by deep-rooted *structural* and *historical* factors.

Case studies like Lake Chad reveal the limits of deterministic thinking and the need for context-specific analyses.

Just responses to climate mobility must go *beyond* securitization to address underlying inequalities.

Looking Ahead

- How do we respond *ethically* and *effectively* to climate-linked conflict and displacement?

- What role should scholars and practitioners play in shaping just climate futures?

Q&A

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