The Discipline of Climate Security

Towards an Evidence-Based Policy Framework in the Asia-Pacific

Moving Beyond Ambiguity: Insights from the APCS Project

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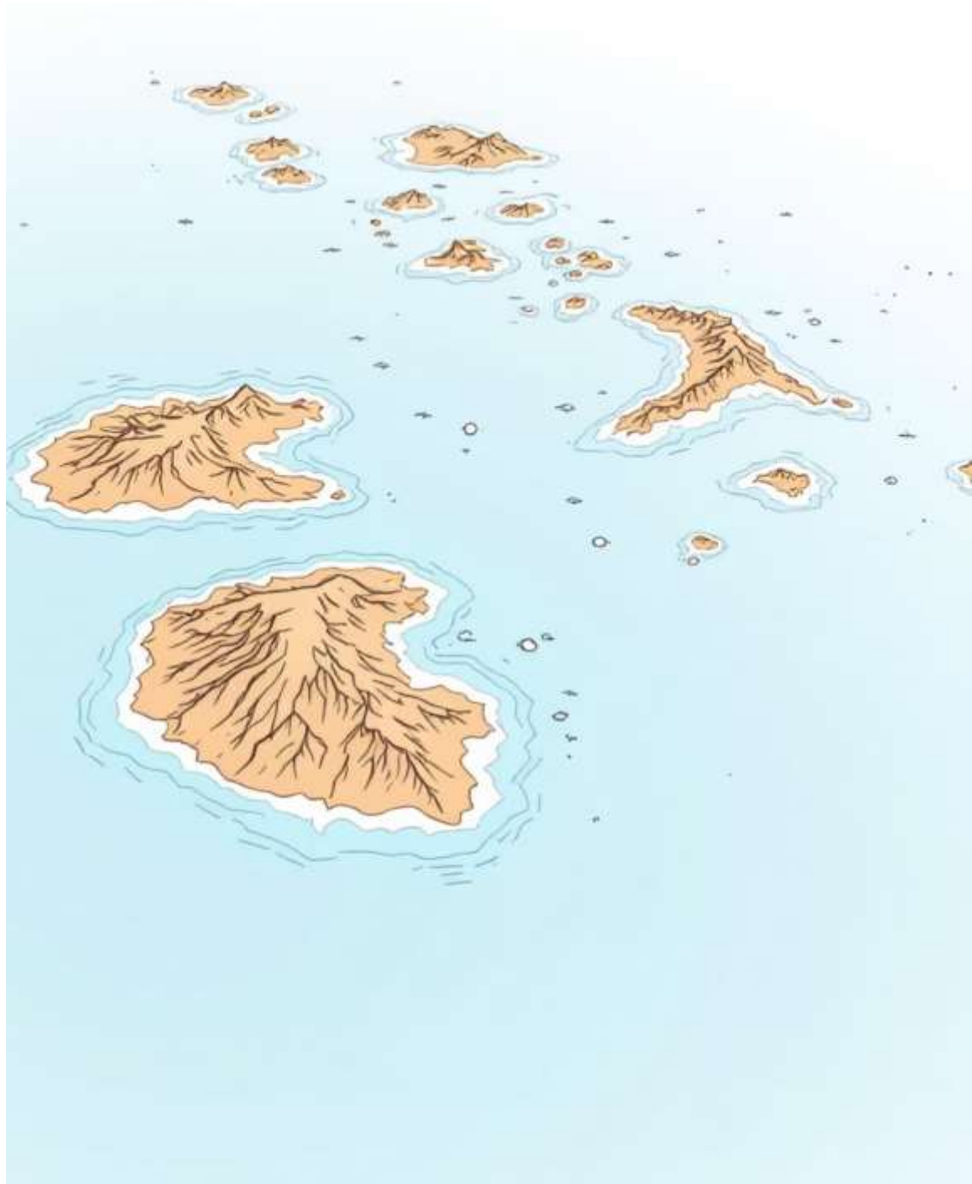

BACKGROUND

Today's talk

- ***Based on the IGES Policy Report on Climate Security (in Japanese) published last July.***
- ***For further details, please refer to this document https://www.iges.or.jp/jp/pub/kiko-anzen-hosho-gainen-no-sai-kento-nippon-no-seisaku-teki-taio-e-no-ichi-teigen/ja***

- ***Still work in progress.***
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CONTEXT

From Individual Risks to a Common Language

The APCS Journey

Over three years, the APCS project identified diverse risks related climate security across the Asia-Pacific region:

- ***Food security***
- ***Energy transition***
- ***Adaptation***
- ***Migration and displacement***
- ***Maritime security***

The Missing Link

While we have catalogued specific risks, we still lack a unified logical framework connecting these diverse issues.

Objective: Provide a potential option for theoretical backbone and material for the next phase of regional cooperation.

THE PROBLEM

The "Tower of Babel" in Climate Security

The term "Climate Security" carries varying understandings across sectors and countries, undermining coordination.

Environment Ministry

Officially adopts the term "Climate Security."
Frames it primarily within the "Climate Change Impact" context.

Defense Ministry

Focuses on "Security Implications" (e.g., disaster relief, geopolitics) but addresses them through defense strategies.

Diplomatic Strategy

Prioritizes "Human Security" and international cooperation.

The Reality: Even within Japan, the usage and weight of the term vary significantly.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

The Global Context

Four major institutional actors interpret climate security through fundamentally different lenses—revealing a fragmented landscape without shared understandings.

UN Security Council

Conflict Prevention

Peacebuilding and stability

NATO / Defense Sector

Operational Risks

Geopolitical threats

Vulnerable Nations (V20)

Existential Threats

Loss & Damage focus

Development Agencies

Human Security

Livelihood protection

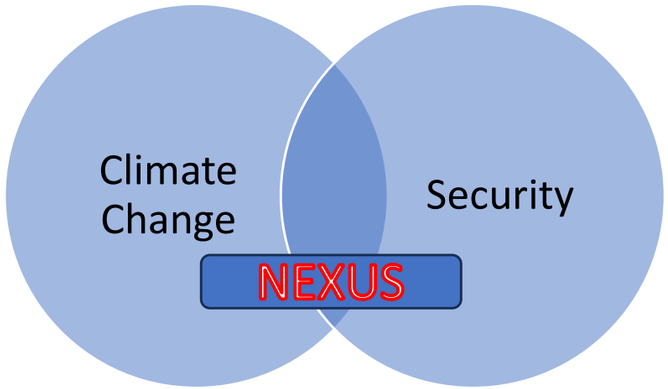
COMPARISON

Two Distinct Frameworks

The "Nexus" Approach

Relationship-Focused

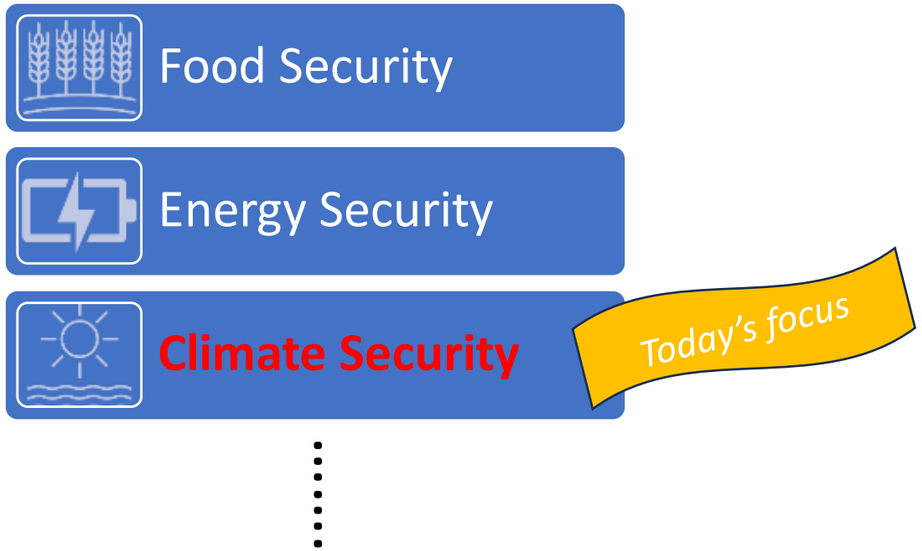
Examines the intersection and overlap between climate change and traditional security concerns.



The "Concept" Approach

Domain-Focused

Positions climate security as a distinct policy field parallel to established security domains.



Focus on defining the specific operational domain of "Climate Security

BEYOND THE TOWER OF BABEL

Hollow Rhetoric: The Instrumental Use of "Climate Security"

The deeper problem is not merely definitional divergence—it is deliberate vagueness. The term "Climate Security" is frequently deployed without any operational definition, leveraged primarily for its rhetorical weight rather than analytical utility.

Loud Slogans

"It is no longer just an environmental issue"

"Security" invoked to signal urgency

The "vibe" replaces rigorous analysis

Missing Definitions

No clear threat model specified

No causal mechanisms articulated

Political impact over analytical clarity

The Result: An under-defined concept — oversimplified slogans masquerading as strategic discourse.

Why Ambiguity Matters: Two Critical Risks

Without a shared understanding, we risk undermining both cooperation and credibility.

Risk 1: Hindrance to Cooperation

Diverse definitions lead to "talking past each other." Effective international partnership becomes impossible without a shared baseline.

When nations interpret climate security differently, negotiations stall and collective action fragments.

Risk 2: Erosion of Scientific Credibility

The Greater Danger: Reliance on "alarmism" without clear definition is dangerous. Merely labeling issues as "security" to incite fear can backfire.

It risks fueling skepticism (e.g., "Climate Change is a Hoax") by lacking an evidence-based foundation.

We must protect the integrity of climate science from political instrumentalization.

THE CORE QUESTION

The Missing Question: Relationship with UNFCCC

The Responsibility to Define the "Differential"

The Premise:

- ***The UNFCCC was established as a comprehensive framework to address climate change (via Mitigation and Adaptation).***

The Accountability:

- ***If we claim "Climate Security" is necessary, we have a responsibility to explain why the existing UNFCCC framework is insufficient.***

The Critique:

- ***This core question has been neglected.***
- ***Without answering this, "Climate Security" lacks institutional legitimacy.***

The Goal: Institutional Clarity, Not Just a New Term

To move beyond hollow rhetoric, we must strive for a precise, shared understanding of "Climate Security," fostering a disciplined and actionable policy domain.

The Missing Question

Why is the existing Adaptation framework insufficient? Avoiding this question undermines the field's legitimacy and analytical rigor.

A Working Hypothesis

What follows is one possible answer derived from our analysis—an illustrative attempt to bridge this definitional gap.

Disciplined Policy Domain

This is not the only solution, but an example of the structural thinking required to establish Climate Security as a robust, disciplined policy domain.

The Unsorted Mixture: Current Discourse

A Lack of Self-Awareness in Risk Labeling

HADR OPERATIONS | *ARCTIC GEOPOLITICS* | *CRITICAL MINERAL SUPPLY CHAINS* | *MIGRATION & DISPLACEMENT* | *BASE RESILIENCE*

FOOD & WATER INSECURITY | *LOSS OF TERRITORY*

Various risks routinely labeled as "Climate Security" issues — thrown into the same box merely to emphasize urgency

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The Diagnosis: Some topics represent simple adaptation of defense assets (e.g., base resilience); others reflect structural geopolitical shifts (e.g., critical minerals). Conflating them undermines rigorous analysis.

HEURISTIC DISCOVERY

Sorting the Mixture: Finding the Residuals

By applying a simple filter to "Climate Security" risks, we can isolate a distinct category that existing frameworks don't address.

Input: The Mixture

HADR Operations, Migration & Displacement, Base Resilience, Arctic Geopolitics, Critical Mineral Supply Chains, Food Price Volatility ...

Filter: Local Exposure?

Does the risk require Adaptation? Heatstroke, Floods, Disaster Response → Yes

Output: The Residuals

Arctic Geopolitics, Critical Mineral Supply Chains, Food Price Volatility...

The Discovery: These residuals propagate through global systems, not local geography. They are "Adaptation-External" — a distinct risk category requiring new frameworks.

Defining the "Residuals": Climate Socio-Economic Hazards (CSEH)

Toward a Complementary Relationship with Adaptation

ADAPTATION (UNFCCC)

Local Exposure

- ***Focus: Direct local natural hazards.***
- ***Scope: Physical climate impacts requiring site-specific resilience.***
- ***Key: Requires specific local exposure to manifest.***

CLIMATE SECURITY (CSEH)

Global/Regional Systems

- ***Focus: Systemic socio-economic hazards.***
- ***Scope: Indirect, transnational disruptions that propagate beyond exposure zones.***
- ***Key: Risks with no specific local exposure, impacting global systems.***

By defining Climate Security as CSEH, it becomes a complementary partner to Adaptation, effectively covering the structural blind spots of existing UNFCCC mechanisms and creating a holistic framework for climate risk management.

Distinguishing the Research Agendas

Both frameworks serve essential but distinct functions in climate policy development. Understanding their complementary roles enables more effective institutional design and resource allocation.

Nexus Research: The Relationship

Role: Vital for understanding complex interconnections—how climate stresses amplify fragility across sectors and borders.

Relevance: Essential for APCS Phase 2 research, where the focus centers on mechanisms, feedback loops, and systemic relationships.

Contribution: Reveals how risks evolve and cascade through interconnected systems.

'Climate Security' Concept: The Policy Domain

Role: Establishes a new operational domain that extends beyond traditional Adaptation frameworks.

Requirement: Unlike Nexus research, proposing a new policy concept must answer the "Missing Question"—demonstrating structural differences from Adaptation to justify dedicated resources and mandates.

Function: Defines where new policy tools, institutions, and governance structures are needed.

Bottom Line: We need both approaches. Nexus research informs us how risks evolve and interconnect; Climate Security (CSEH) defines where new policy tools and institutional frameworks are required to address these challenges effectively.

CONCLUSION

Towards an Evidence-Based Policy Framework

Effective climate-security policy requires strategic clarity, conceptual rigor, and risk mitigation.

Strategic Distinction

Nexus Approach: *Understand complex causal mechanisms linking climate and security outcomes*

Concept Approach: *Establish a new policy domain with institutional authority*

Action: *Deliberately choose the right analytical tool for each specific policy challenge*

Disciplining the Concept

From Slogans to Structure: *Transform political rhetoric into operational frameworks*

Answer the "Missing Question": *Clearly identify value-add beyond traditional adaptation strategies*

CSEH Framework: *Define the precise domain of "Global Systems" with clear boundaries and scope*

Overcoming the Risks

Prevent hindrance to international cooperation *through poorly defined concepts*

Prevent erosion of scientific credibility *with unsupported claims*

Outcome: ***A disciplined, evidence-based policy framework*** *that strengthens global climate action*

Thank You

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to our discussion.

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