

*The Use of Scenarios
in Assessing Climate Change, Human Security, and Potential Outcomes*

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Abstract:

This work addresses how scenarios help distinguish between threats, vulnerabilities, and risk, and what are the best possible mechanisms to address the complex relationship climate change and human security impact. Well known scenario cases that have considered climate change and its security impact (such as the Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall case written for the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Net Assessment) have most often focused on how to mitigate risk, particularly in the context of "national security." Few scenarios, to date, have considered the usefulness of assessing human security impact and attempts to mitigate vulnerability and avoid conflictual outcomes that are considered in a framework other than a nation-state response to a potential/emerging/real "threat." Given that scenarios might prove most useful to how a person/group/decision-maker might benefit from climate change scenarios, we propose to assess how best to consider and evaluate appropriate scales of action for a scenario for a given purpose. While catastrophic climate change will affect the globe in a disastrous way, scenarios that consider the complex relationship— and uncertain outcomes— from direct impact on human security vulnerabilities might compel the serious development of a research agenda that moves beyond the nation-states as the best response mechanism to human security impact outcomes as a result of climate change and related vulnerability events. Specifically, if "human security" is the appropriate social (decision making?) unit of analysis, who or what co-operative regime is best suited to provide response? Moreover, what influence or range of responses might be available for such mechanisms to be effective? Finally, given the complex dynamics of this workshop's focus, we consider it likely suggests that one scenario will not work for all bases of action, and raise the issue of "nested" scenarios with multiple options for decision as an effective policy mechanism for decision makers.



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