

## **Climate-Related Migration: Formulating a Contemporary Framework**

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*This article elaborates on the theoretical foundations as well as the empirical outputs of climate-related migration and formulates a contemporary framework in analyzing this subject. There has been a paradigm shift from securitizing climate-related migration towards an emphasis on adaptation, resilience and justice. While it is still possible to talk about security-oriented discourses based on the realist approach, climate change has increasingly been recognized as a 'threat multiplier' rather than a sole primary threat. In the meantime, the liberal approach has embraced adaptation, resilience and climate justice discourses about climate refugees. On the empirical front, climate-related migration is observed mainly in South Asia, the Pacific and Africa.*

**Keywords:** *Climate change, climate-related migration, climate refugees, adaptation, resilience, climate justice*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the latest data released by the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) (2021), 2020 was the warmest year ever recorded along with the previous warmest year of 2016 in the global scale. The data reminded the international community that there is only limited time to avoid the worst consequences of climate change, and that 2021 could be a critical year in coping with global warming (Rowlatt, 2021). Even in the context of massive international lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a slight reduction of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions in 2020. The next United Nations (UN) climate change conference will take place in Glasgow by November 2021, succeeding the landmark Paris meeting of 2015. Glasgow meeting is considered critical to see whether the world leaders would raise their carbon-cutting ambitions.

One of the serious consequences of climate change has been the growing number of displaced people as a result of natural disasters which have been considerably accelerated by climate change. In 2015, the UN accepted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which included the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of the 17 SDGs was taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Based on this goal, three targets were stated: strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters; integrating climate change measures into national policies; and improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). Furthermore, on September 19, 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, underscoring the importance of the international refugee regime (United Nations Refugee Agency, 2016). These contemporary policies have attracted attention on climate change and international responsibility for refugees and migrants.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) are the two leading intergovernmental migration agencies engaged with the question

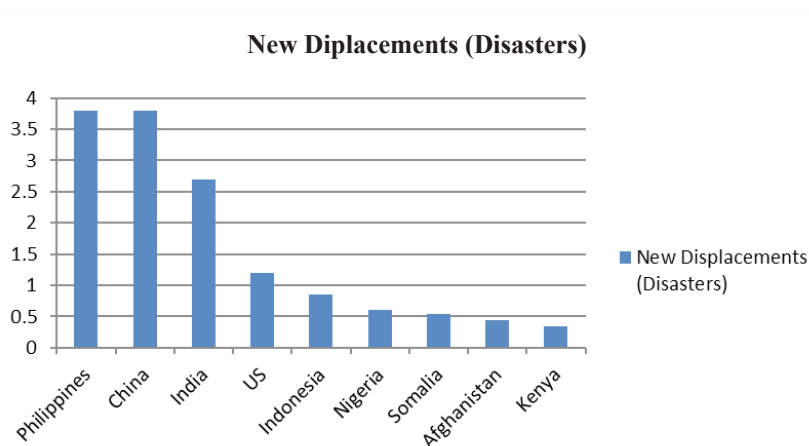
of climate-related migration (hereafter referred as CM) and have been at the forefront of research and policy efforts. The UN Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) first recognized the growing importance of CM with the adaptation of the 2010 Cancun Adaptation Framework. Climate migrants have become more visible in the international policies with the 2015 Paris Agreement (United Nations Environmental Migration Portal, 2015).

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to conflict, violence and disasters reached to 41.3 million in 2019 from 28 million IDPs in 2018. (IOM World Migration Report 2020: 21) While conflict and violence caused 10.8 million, weather-related hazards triggered 16.1 million displacements in 2018, with storms and tropical cyclones accounting for 9.3 million displacements and floods accounting for 5.4 million displacements (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2019). Examining the number of countries and territories in which new displacements occurred in 2018, there were 144 displacements due to natural disasters, compared with 55 displacements due to conflict and violence (IOM World Migration Report 2020: 45). In 2019, new displacements due to natural disasters were the highest in Philippines and China, followed by India, the US, Indonesia, Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Kenya and Myanmar as shown in the figure below.

Today, people who leave their homes because of climate change are not considered as refugees in the sense of Geneva Convention. Experts do not agree about the term to be used to indicate them and use terms such as environmental refugees or migrants, ecological refugees or migrants, climate-change migrants, climate-induced migrants, environmentally displaced people, forced migrants, environmentally-induced forced migrants and so on. Migration and global environmental change are strongly interrelated. Migration has also connection with social, economic and political issues, which makes CM a complicated issue. In this context, one debate in the literature is the extent to which environmental disasters and climate change are a factor in migration decisions (Barnett, 2003: 11).

The debates concerning CM are marked by continued dynamism and thus there are some questions about the construction of analytical frames (Ransan-Cooper, 2015). Reviewing the existing literature on climate change and migration both in theoretical and empirical

**Figure 1.** Disaster Figures 2019



Sources: IDMC (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>)

terms, this article suggests a contemporary framework in analyzing the relationship between climate change and migration. So far, to the best of the author's knowledge, a comprehensive contemporary framework has not been developed. This article aspires to contribute for a systemized analysis through handling the multidimensionality of the subject. Suggested contemporary framework both provides theoretical insights and a rich understanding of policy developments. The findings suggest that there is a paradigm shift from securitizing CM towards an emphasis on adaptation, resilience and justice. While earlier studies grouped 'climate refugees' into three; as victims, security threats (Myers, 2002; Hartmann, 2010) and adaptive agents (Black et al., 2011), recently, environmental and climate migrants have been viewed as agents of adaptation. Discourses on resilience and climate justice in relation to adaptation are highly emphasized which underlines both opportunities and challenges (Gemenne and Blocher, 2017). Besides the main arguments on adaptation, resilience and justice, there is still a security-oriented discourse, but it is quite different than earlier security discussions on CM. Climate change is increasingly recognized as a 'threat multiplier' rather than a sole primary threat. Furthermore, empirical studies indicate that CM is mainly observed in South Asia, the Pacific and Africa.

## 2. AN OVERVIEW OF EARLY STUDIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION

Under international law, based on 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is a person who is in need of international protection because of a serious threat to his/her life, physical integrity or freedom in his/her country of origin as a result of persecution, armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder (UNHCR, 2018). However, 'climate refugees' are lacking recognition and protection under international law, because the term is not approved by the UNHCR. Furthermore, according to the UNHCR it is more accurate to refer them as "persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change". People displaced across borders do not fulfill the principal element of being persecuted. They are considered to move due to environmental disasters such as droughts, floods, storms, hurricanes, typhoons, sea level rise, coastal erosion and desertification (Nishimura, 2015). The IOM (2011) stated, "Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment that adversely affects their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad". Furthermore, the IOM and UNHCR have used the term "forced climate migrant" to denote non-voluntary population displacement in the 2000s (Brown, 2015: 15; Castles, 2002: 7).

Two schools of thought guided earlier discussions on CM: maximalist and minimalist (Suhrke, 1994). Maximalist school saw the link between migration and climate disaster as causative and direct. Minimalist school focused on the complex interaction questioning any supposedly direct causal links between environmental disasters and migration. Minimalist school rejected the term 'climate refugee' (Bettini, 2014). Baldwin et al. suggest that "at least in academia the minimalist argument has largely won the day (Baldwin et al., 2014: 122). Within international climate change assessments and agreements, there has been minimalist perception of environmental migration. This is especially true in the rhetoric of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Likewise, 2011 Nansen Initiative

did not use the term ‘climate refugee’.<sup>1</sup>

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were officially adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1998 and in the 2000s, the IDPs have been perceived as a humanitarian problem. The UNHCR was given an official mandate to assist and protect IDPs, yet there was no clear-cut information about who would be in charge (Gemenne and Brücker, 2015). Meanwhile, some climate change studies linked CM to national security (Barnett 2003; MacGregor, 2009). For example, “the IPCC by Norwegian Nobel Committee (2007), the Stern Review (2007)” were considered to securitize CM (Bettini, 2014: 184). Bettini (2013: 65) analyzed the narratives in the 2000s and argued that narratives are damaging emancipatory approach to climate change. CM was included in the arena of high politics and migration played a crucial role in the securitization of climate change (Baldwin et al., 2014: 122). While securitization of CM increased in 2007, there have been two interrelated dimensions: one focusing on human security and the other on traditional security. (Baysal and Karakaş, 2017).

### 3. THE CONTEMPORARY FRAMEWORK

The contemporary framework can be analyzed under two discourses: a realist approach, which involves a security-oriented discourse; a liberal approach, which involves discourses of adaptation, resilience and climate justice.

#### 3.1. Realist Approach: Security-oriented Discourse

In the last decade, although critics on securitization of climate change have increased, there has also been an argument that existing patterns of conflict could be reinforced under climate change. Thus, climate change is increasingly recognized as a ‘threat multiplier’ rather than a sole primary threat. For example, there is an argument that risk of armed-conflict outbreak is enhanced by climate-related disaster occurrence in ethnically fractionalized countries, while there is no indication that environmental disasters directly trigger armed conflicts (Schleussner et al. 2016; Buhaug, 2016). According to Buhaug (2016: 333), climate change does not cause conflict directly. However, climate change influences the dynamics of interaction between societal actors, increasing the potential for conflict.

Similarly, the UN has been discussing the impact of climate change on security. The first meeting of the UN Security Council examining the linkages between climate change and security took place in April 2007. In the following years, they have continued to see two issues as linked. In July 2011, an open debate was held; in March 2017, resolution 2349 was adopted highlighting the need to address climate-related risks in order to tackle the conflict in the Lake Chad basin; and in July 2018, a debate was held on “understanding and addressing climate-related security risks”; in January 2019, the UN Security Council held an open debate to discuss concrete impact of climate change on peace and security (UN News, 2019a).

In the last decade, both in the US and Europe, discourses and policies of the governments have indicated that climate change and migration are linked to security threats rather than to

<sup>1</sup> Nansen Initiative was a state-led initiative started in 2012 for the protection of cross-border displaced persons in the context of disasters and climate change. For more details, see <https://www.nanseninitiative.org/secretariat/>.

humanitarian crises.<sup>2</sup> As Ranson Cooper et al. indicate expression of security risks related with CM has generally been deployed in the reports prepared by well-resourced Northern think-tanks and defense-aligned bodies (Ranson-Cooper et al., 2015: 110). Environmental migrants are pointed out to come from the Global South which are presenting threats to security of hosting states in the Global North (Ranson-Cooper et al., 2015: 110-111).

### **3.2. Liberal Approach: Discourses of Adaptation, Resilience and Climate Justice**

In the recent years, adaptation strategies are highly significant on CM. (Doyle and Chaturvedi, 2012). By the early 2000s, the framing of climate adaptation often occurred in relation to and sometimes in tension with climate change mitigation. From the point of view of mitigation, climate change is regarded as human-induced through greenhouse gas emissions (Dewulf, 2013: 324). Byravan and Rajan (2006) emphasized on a mechanism for relating CM regime to policy of mitigation. Although wealthy countries are responsible for most of the accumulated greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, they have faced far lower human damage from the associated climate effects than poor countries. Furthermore, many developing countries do not have the resources to mitigate the impacts by protective measures such as sea walls and embankments or extensive insurance arrangements. Therefore, there has been a growing debate on adaptation measures (Byravan and Rajan, 2006: 248).

What does adaptation to climate change mean? The IPCC defined adaptation as “the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects” (IPCC, 2014: 5). In 2018, the IPCC noted that migration was increasingly seen as an adaptation strategy to threats. Adaptation and resilience include adjustments, which are, in general, seen as a positive response to climate change. The 2015 Paris Agreement accepted a goal on adaptation as well as recognized ‘loss and damage’ (European Commission). Although, today, adaptation is pursued by a range of actors and institutions at multiple levels, the UNFCCC regime is still central for shaping governance and politics of adaptation, by defining rules and norms on the division of responsibilities, by creating a demand for adaptation knowledge, and by hosting an arena for showcasing and exchanging adaptation practices (Persson, 2015). In addition, the Cancun Adaptation Framework and the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change Impacts recognize migration as an adaptation strategy to climate change and call for approaches to disaster displacement. The Protection Agenda developed by the Nansen Initiative and its successor; the Platform on Disaster Displacement can be regarded as more recent projects. To sum up, the argument on the movement of people as a positive adaptation strategy to cope with the impacts of climate change has accelerated, bringing softer tones to de-securitize CM.

Relocation caused by climate change can be an effective strategy to adapt to localized changes, yet it can also be causing ‘loss and damage’. In other words, while some researchers consider migration or movement of people as a solution, others are considering it as a problem even naming it as ‘adaptation failure’ or ‘failure to adapt’ (McNamara et al., 2018: 112). According to McNamara et al., ‘loss and damage’ occurs for everyone who are forced to leave their home; and negative effects “can range from a break in ties to a sense of place and identity, self-efficacy, rights to land and culture, and bridging and bonding capital that is often

<sup>2</sup> For instance, see Deutsche Welle. April 11, 2019. “Building walls to keep climate refugees out.” Accessed October 12, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/building-walls-to-keep-climate-refugees-out/a-48273469>

derived from physical places and losing access to common property resources” (McNamara et al., 2018: 111-117). Migration is seen both as a form of adaptation and as a form of failure to adopt. For instance, Upadhyay et al. suggest that if CM is voluntary then it’s more likely to reflect a form of adaptation, whereas if CM occurs involuntarily than it’s more likely to reflect failure to adapt to climate change (Upadhyay et al., 2015: 401). Atteridge and Remling (2018) argue that if the arrival of migrants leads to reduced vulnerability and positive contribution such as the introduction of new skills in the labor market, it can be regarded as a form of adaptation. On the other hand, if the arrival of the migrants does not reduce their vulnerability and in return, causes vulnerability of the hosting countries’ citizens such as enforcing greater strain on the public health system, then this cannot be regarded as a form of adaptation (Atteridge and Remling, 2018).

Nevertheless, recently there are milder tones stating that migration can represent an adaptation strategy (Bettini, 2014; Nishimurai, 2015). For a successful adaptation policy, Bettini (2014: 186) underlines the management of CM. Adaptive CM supposes responsible migration to safely decrease household or community vulnerabilities (Wiegel et al., 2019: 3). A guidebook for adaptation is developed by a diverse team of authors based in Germany, Thailand, and Australia to address a gap in the awareness and understanding of migration potentials and risks in the TransRe Project.<sup>3</sup> The guide accepted statements of the IOM as well as of the UN at the international level and tried to provide a practical guide for implementation of global commitments developed by these organizations.

Furthermore, the concept of resilience is mobilized (Bettini, 2014: 188; Methmann and Oels, 2015). What does climate resilience mean? The IPCC (2014: 5) defines resilience as “the capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation”. According to Bettini (2014: 191), the triad human security-adaptation-resilience, seeks to create effective solutions. Black et al. (2011) argue that policies can link adaptive advantages to demographic deficits and labor shortages in potential host nations; therefore, allowing those in environmentally vulnerable areas to work seasonally or on a temporary basis in countries, where their skills are in demand. Similarly, Bettini et al. (2017: 350) define resilience as “the ability of an individual or community to withstand, adapt to, and recover from external disturbances – of which climate change is a prominent example”.

According to Methmann and Oels (2015: 55), while the concept of resilience is spreading, its meaning remains divergent. Different notions of resilience – as maintenance, adaptive and transformational – are all present in the debate about climate change. Resilience as maintenance is most clearly embodied in the well-known 2°C target, but no longer an option. Methmann and Oels (2015: 55) argue that “the recent discourse about climate-induced migration expects adaptive resilience to fail and therefore seeks to replace it with transformational resilience”, therefore more than adaptation they consider CM as a solution which is improving the livelihoods and diversifying income sources (Methmann and Oels, 2015: 59). Similar to McNamara, Methmann and Oels (2015: 62-63) underline ‘loss and

<sup>3</sup> For more details, view *Migration for Adaptation: A Guidebook to Integrate Migration and Translocality into Community-Based Adaptation*. 2018. Co-produced by TransRe Project / University of Bonn, RMIT University, Melbourne, University of Vienna, Raks Thai Foundation. Accessed August 22, 2020. [http://www.transre.org/application/files/5715/3296/4247/Migration\\_for\\_Adaptation\\_Guidebook\\_online\\_english.pdf](http://www.transre.org/application/files/5715/3296/4247/Migration_for_Adaptation_Guidebook_online_english.pdf)



damage'. Firstly, since the recipient regions of CM are usually ill-prepared for the arrival of people who need to be integrated into social, economic and political systems, migrants lack a legal status and therefore are highly vulnerable to exploitation and violence. Secondly, CM is mostly associated with internal displacement, and therefore the discourse of resilience facilitates a shift of responsibility from the North to the South. Third, climate change is naturalized and depoliticized within this discourse (Methmann and Oels, 2015). With the concept of resilience, it is considered that responsibility of states to secure their population is shifting to individuals as they become responsible agents (Bettini et al., 2017: 350).

According to the World Bank report 2019, CM needs to be addressed within countries' development and climate change adaptation frameworks, because it is mostly internal and since the most vulnerable groups tend to have the fewest opportunities to adapt locally, they tend to migrate (World Bank Report, 2019: 6); yet there is a divergent view about adaptation potential of CM focusing on internal displacements.

Bettini et al. (2017) argue that there has been a shift of focus from 'climate refugees' to CM and this could signal a marginalization of the very problem of 'climate justice' in the debate on the climate change and migration nexus, through which individuals can utilize migration to become resilient in the 'migration as adaptation' policy. By using the concept migration rather than refugee, the international community frames mobility as a voluntary or at least as an individual decision (Bettini and Gioli, 2016: 180). Bettini et al. (2017: 349) conclude "that the climate change and migration nexus is moving away from an approach based on inherent rights and justice to a self-help approach to climate change adaptation based on resilience and preparedness". They believe that previously there was much attention on justice, human rights and ethical points in policies, also there was an argument that responsibility belong to states and international community and could be avoided by mitigation measures. Now, people are expected to secure themselves being the resilient subjects. Furthermore, they said that "resilience does not rest on the premise of (or search for) equality: whilst the negative effects of climate change may have catastrophic consequences for some people (those who are not resilient), others will be able to withstand, adapt to and recover from these external stressors" (Bettini et al., 2017: 351).

Therefore, in the contemporary policies, the vulnerable climate migrants are no longer depicted as passive victims in need of international protection, but as 'agents of adaptation' (Bettini et al., 2017: 352). The adaptation policy has four aspects: underlining labor migration; involving circular mobility and highlighting remittances as risk mitigation; arguing that it is rather practiced in the South as a South-South movement; serving as human capital migrants are healthy, young and predominantly men (Bettini et al., 2017: 353). The new narrative emphasizes on the opportunities to move which is offered by labor mobility. The migration as adaptation narrative demonstrates a neoliberal character. Populations that are affected from environmental disasters are to be converted into adaptive subjects, which are assumed to bring socio-economic development based on the idea of resilience goals (Bettini et al., 2017: 354).

Bettini and Gioli argue that this discourse on adaptation and resilience has been developed on the old arguments about migration and development (Bettini and Gioli, 2016). Thus, migration is considered as an agent of development. Theoretically, migration as adaptation thesis is the merging of New Economic of Labor Migration (NELM) and Sustainable Livelihood Approaches (SLA). According to NELM, decision to migrate is given by household, because the ones migrating would be sending remittances, so that poor families would be deprived of risks (Bettini and Gioli, 2016: 180). SLA contends that

households possess a variety of natural, physical, financial, human and social assets, all contributing to the household's livelihood. If one of the assets experiences a loss, in this case due to environmental disasters, it can be reimbursed by the other available assets. Migration is hence re-conceptualized as a positive form of adaptation (Bettini and Gioli, 2016: 181).

Gemenne and Blocher (2017) argue that environmental changes have potential to damage resilience and adaptive capacities. Nevertheless, positive adjustments can be taken through migration to increase adaptive capacities. CM is a powerful adaptation strategy, when populations are faced with environmental and climate changes, and often it is a voluntary decision. Yet, "adaptive actions are non-linear, may change over time, and are not always necessarily positive" (Gemenne and Blocher, 2017: 3). Asking the question, 'adaptation by migration for whom?', Gemenne and Blocher (2017: 6-8) considered three groups: the migrants, the community of origin, and the community of destination. First, when their living place is no longer tolerable and when looking for higher socio-economic status, people decide to migrate, though it has risks. Second, communities of origin are also influenced as migration can lessen strain on limited resources at home and remittances send by migrants can greatly improve their resilience. Third, from the aspect of the community of destination, there is negative public discourse since migrants are considered as a driver of overpopulation and conflict as well as positive views such as migrants may fill labor and demographic gaps and be vehicles for transfer of knowledge and technologies. Gemenne and Blocher (2017: 9) state the need for more both quantitative and case studies. We still cannot say when there is a successful adaptation because what constitutes adaptation for some may represent mal-adaptation in other parts of the system.

Meanwhile, climate justice advocates have viewed the outcomes of climate change as an illustration of inequality in the contemporary world. In this context, while industrialized countries are considered as largely responsible for environmental degradation, developing countries face its negative consequences. For instance, according to 2018 report by the World Bank, whereas the US and Europe contributed 26 percent and 22 percent of global cumulative greenhouse gases respectively, the African continent just contributed 3.8 percent (World Bank, 2018). Furthermore, the destructive impacts of climate change on low-income countries are multitudinous and include preventing quality education, intensifying existing gender inequalities, provoking conflict, destabilizing governments, and forcing people to leave their homelands (Walsh, 2019: 40).

The concept of climate justice began to be pronounced by the early 2000s. It became organized in the mid-2000s through simultaneous campaigns and demonstrations in different parts of the world. Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)<sup>4</sup> helped hundreds of thousands of people to mobilize around the world, calling for climate justice on the eve of the UN COP 21 climate change summit in 2015 (FoEI, 2015: 11). Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice<sup>5</sup> has promoted various campaigns on climate justice to raise awareness about the vulnerable people, subjected to negative outcomes of climate change. The International Institute of Climate Action and Theory (IICAT)<sup>6</sup> has also encouraged the international struggle for climate justice through its emphasis on the disproportional negative impact of global warming. Climate justice movement proved its transnational strength in 2019

<sup>4</sup> For more details, see FoEI. Accessed September 24, 2020. <https://www.foei.org/>

<sup>5</sup> For more details, see Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice. Accessed September 20, 2020. <https://www.mrfcj.org/>

<sup>6</sup> For more details, view IICAT. Accessed September 21, 2020. <https://www.iicat.org/>.



with its reinforced mobilization capacity through Extinction Rebellion (XR)<sup>7</sup> and Fridays for the Future<sup>8</sup> and their actions across the globe (Almeida, 2019: 975). Equality, fairness, participation, access to resources and information, and protection are the leading themes to be employed in the definitions of climate justice (Shaw, 2016: 508).

Advocates of climate justice view CM within the framework of global redistributive justice. They believe that those industrialized countries, which have contributed climate change to a greater extent through their historic emission should now take greater responsibility for the compensation of the relevant losses and damages. Sinivaran (2010: 309) argues that rich, developed states have to play leading roles in coping with the negative repercussions of global warming through supplying developing countries financial and technological support for mitigation and adaptation. According to Draper and McKinnon (2018: 2), parties responsible for the displacing effects of climate change such as countries or fossil fuel corporations “could offer just resettlement as compensation for the displacement”. Draper and McKinnon (2018: 4) think that there is need to specify minimum requirements for justice for the affected in terms of resources and well-being, however they also point out that just setting out standards may risk turning the affected people into passive recipients. Thus, they (2018: 4) suggest that in order to have a just resettlement program, specified standards need to be accompanied by “participation and the self-understanding of those affected”.

Ahmed (2018: 8) proposes a model for major climate-polluting industrialized countries to take responsibility of ‘climate refugees’ within the framework of climate justice. Focusing on the question of “who will take what proportion of the climate refugees,” Ahmed (2018: 17) identifies four parameters to construct the ‘climate refugee’ settlement model: per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, per capita GNI, human development index (HDI) and per capita planet’s resource consumption. According to Ahmed (2018: 19), this model offers critical step to be considered by various UN and other international platforms. Another proposal in terms of meeting climate justice belongs to Lister. According to Lister (2014: 618-634), international community owes a moral obligation to those people negatively affected from climate change and extending protection to help those at risk could be a meaningful international response.

It is noted that, there have been critics on securitization of CM and maximalists have been blamed for increasing securitization (Bettini, 2013; Bettini and Gioli, 2016: 171-189; Bettini et al., 2017: 348-358). For example, in *Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security*, Miller (2017) discusses securitization of climate change and argues that homeland security and border militarization are designed to respond to the increasing number of ‘climate refugees’ (Palmieri, 2020: 1-3). He suggests that through replacing the logic of climate security with the logic of climate justice, the forces driving climate change would be better understood. Similarly, Chaturvedi and Doyle (2010a: 95-115) criticized securitization and militarization of state responses to CM.

#### 4. EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Among the contemporary empirical studies on CM, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) occupy a central place. SIDS are the most vulnerable states to the impacts of climate change,

<sup>7</sup> For more details, see XR. Accessed September 21, 2020. <https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/>

<sup>8</sup> For more details, view Fridays for the Future. Accessed September 20, 2020. <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>

while simultaneously they are the least responsible ones for its causes (UN, 2019: 18). Among them, particularly the Pacific Island states such as Kiribati, Tuvalu and Vanuatu have been extremely vulnerable to climate change-related natural hazards, causing many Pacific Islanders to migrate (IOM, 2020: 253-269).

Migration is seen as a crucial adaptation strategy to be employed by the low-elevation SIDS which are highly challenged by climate change (Thomas and Benjamin, 2018: 86). Accordingly, there is need for SIDS to develop national policies and mechanisms addressing CM to help organizing movement of their residents (Thomas and Benjamin, 2018: 100). Vaha (2018: 229) critically examines the proposal for the free right of 'climate refugees' to choose host states with a special attention to SIDS. According to her (2018: 238), since it is clear that SIDS have not considerably contributed to climate change, the international community has to recognize SIDS' legitimate rights-claims regarding their continuous existence. She (2018: 239) also states that if there is a need for relocation for the citizens of SIDS then "mutually beneficial political arrangements between the endangered communities and potential host states" shall be sought.

McNamara et al. (2018: 111-117) interpret Kiribati's concrete migration strategy as a visionary adaptation strategy. In line with this argument, Kiribati's President, Anote Tong, has seen CM as a form of adaptation calling it as "migration with dignity" (Ransan-Cooper et al., 2015: 111). Decision to migrate is considered very complicated and cannot be explained simply through climate change. Focusing on the discourses of migrants in Tuvalu, other problems such as violence, poverty and overpopulation are indicated (Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012: 382-390). Yet, migrants are not fond of vulnerability discourse as temporary migration has become a normal life style for them and that they do not feel living a highly traumatic life (Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012: 382-390). Accordingly, adaption policies should pay attention to the local voices (Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012: 382-390).

Examining the impact of migration-affected change on local vulnerability in Lamien Bay, Vanuatu, Craven (2015: 223-236) concludes that migration is likely to contribute to the vulnerability in already vulnerable communities. He maintains (2015: 223-236) that if migration is to create a dependency on remittances, populations will become also depended on migration. Kothari (2014: 130-140) points out that the government in Maldives has proposed the consolidation of a population dispersed over 200 islands to 10-15 islands. Rather than thinking about the environmental disasters, the government has promoted population consolidation due to economic reasons, but there has been little trust on governmental policies among the public and thus they resisted moving (Kothari, 2014: 130-140). Recently, in order to persuade people of the need to move, the government tried to increase awareness about climate change, but again people do not trust the government (Kothari, 2014: 130-140).

Bangladesh is the most vulnerable South Asian country to suffer from the effects of climate change including "flooding, cyclones or riverbank erosion as well as being subject to slow-onset processes such as soil salinity and coastal erosion" (Foresight 2011: 183). These climatic events cause internal and external displacement of a considerable number of Bangladeshi each year. Nasser et al. (2019: 175) view CM as a significant adaptation strategy to cope with the environmental shocks in Bangladesh. They (2019: 182) argue that rural Bangladeshi families including a member "who migrated to either cities or abroad, have a better capacity to adapt to climate change due to remittances." Likewise, the World Bank Report (2019) points out that the Bangladeshi government is developing a Perspective Plan for 2041, which recognizes migration as a potential adaptation option. Vaid and Maini (2013)

attract attention to increase of Bangladeshi migration to India stating that India is increasingly becoming a natural choice for many Bangladeshi.

Chaturvedi and Doyle (2010b: 206-222) criticize growing trends to securitize CM, arguing that the geopolitics of fear appears to be dictating and driving the dominant climate change discourse about Bangladesh. This fear is related with the fact that coasts are experiencing adverse consequences of the hazards related to climate; there is risk of coastal erosion, and therefore Bangladesh is widely reported as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change-induced sea level rise (Chaturvedi and Doyle, 2010b: 206-222). Ahmed (2018, p. 20) claims that Bangladesh is a victim in the face of global climate change and the countries responsible for climate pollution should pay for Bangladesh’s recovery through supporting social, ecological, economical and infrastructure sectors and taking responsibility for the displaced population. Unlike other studies, Calla et al. (2017: 157-165) challenge the common assumption that flooding, precipitation extremes and high temperatures will consistently increase temporary migration in Bangladesh.

According to the IOM (2020: 63) report, there has been an increase in environmental

**Table 1.** Frames and Actors

TYPE OF ACTOR	FRAMES			
	THEORETICAL FRAME			EMPIRICAL FRAME
	Realist - security-oriented approach	Liberal approach		
		Adaptation & resilience	Climate justice	
Academic Research	Schleussner et al. (2016); Buhaug (2016)	Bettini (2014); Methmann and Oels (2015); Nishumura (2015); Bettini and Gioli (2015); Bettini et al. (2017); Gemenne and Blocher (2017)	Almeida (2019); Shaw (2016); Draper and McKinnon (2018); Ahmed (2018); Lister (2014); Miller (2017)	Calla et al. (2019); Kothari (2014); Farbotko and Lazrus (2012); Craven (2015); Chaturvedi and Doyle (2010); Thomas and Benjamin (2018); Vaha (2018); Naser et al. (2019); Renou and Diallo (2015); Musah-Surugu et al. (2018)
Think-tanks	Northern think-tanks	Raks Thai Foundation; Environmental Justice Foundation	Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice; International Institute of Climate Action and Theory	
International governmental organization	IPCC	World Bank; Asian Development Bank; UNDP		IOM; UNHCR; Nansen Initiative
International nongovernmental organization			Friends of the Earth International; XR; Fridays for the Future	

change and disasters such as higher occurrence of drought particularly in Eastern and Southern Africa (Somalia) which increasingly cause human movement. Renou and Diallo (2015) suggest that rather than “representing a failure to adapt”, migration can be an effective adaptation strategy in response to the gradual environmental degradation such as in the case of desertification in the Sahel. Likewise, it is pointed out that migrants’ remittances in Ghana have played a critical role in climate change adaptation through their contribution to rural household economy (Musah-Surugu et al., 2018: 180). Environmental migrants support the adaptive capacities of those, who decide not to migrate in the face of climate change (Musah-Surugu et al., 2018: 192-193). Lastly, McNamara et al. (2018: 111-117) mention about the need for relocation in Alaska, Newtok (Eskimo village) due to coastal erosion and flooding. Yet, climate-threatened communities in Alaska have been reluctant to relocate because of the anticipated loss and damage (McNamara et al., 2018: 111-117).

The table given below provides an overview of the types of actors and the two frames concerning CM, indicating active actors in relation to the frame. In this way, a clear picture is presented about the level of engagement of different actors in two approaches. Their arguments are analyzed in the body of the paper.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Solutions cannot be single dimensional. Furthermore, CM needs a comprehensive approach which requires involvement of civil society, states and the international community. On the one hand, it is believed that people, particularly potential climate migrants, would become responsible for overcoming these challenges themselves. On the other hand, responsibilities of the states are: ensuring that climate refugees are not created in the first place and bringing climate change mitigation and adaptation under consideration; and introducing mechanisms to protect those people who are nevertheless displaced. (UN News, 2019b)

When affected by climate change, solution to migrate involves a lot of challenges for the communities under risk. For instance, it causes loss of connection to place, heritage, culture, and community resources. (McNamara et al, 2018: 115) Evidence suggests that climate change impacts will be felt the most strongly in the developing countries due to their lower adaptation capacity. Furthermore, the majority of environmental migration will be internal. Within them, economically and socially marginalized groups face acute consequences due to their poor ability of adaptation. It is important to recall that those who will migrate might not be the poorest. Poorest ones do not have the financial resources to move and can actually be under greater vulnerability. Thus, policies designed to prevent all migration can make people more vulnerable.

At the international basis, UNHCR provides legal advice, guidance and support to the international community to develop enhanced protection for climate migrants, and within the UN climate change regime, today parties carry out adaptation-related activities. An action on adaptation seeks to reduce vulnerability and build resilience in developing country parties. In the meantime, IOM seeks to minimize forced and unmanaged migration as much as possible; where forced migration does occur, to ensure assistance and protection for those affected and to seek durable solution; to facilitate the role of migration as an adaptation strategy to climate change. (The IOM, 2014) In other words, IOM prefers firstly, risk reduction to prevent displacement, secondly, to reduce risks during displacement, and thirdly, to build resilience.

The organization supports migration as an adaptation strategy.

As another international institution, the Asian Development Bank, recognizing the risk of climate change and natural disasters in the Asia and Pacific region, searches to help its member countries become more resilient such as by financing flood control and water resource management projects and investing in energy infrastructure. It also provides assistance to support post-disaster recovery needs. (Asian Development Bank, 2021)

The most concrete policy initiative taken on a global level is a state-led consultative process, named as Platform on Disaster Displacement. Based on the outcome of 2011 Nansen Conference on Climate Change and Displacement, at the UNHCR Ministerial Conference in December 2011, Norway and Switzerland initiated an approach for the protection of climate migrants. This idea provided the basis of 2011 Nansen Initiative which searched for a consensus among states to protect people displaced across borders in the context of disasters caused by natural hazards, including climate change. 2016 Platform on Disaster Displacement is the successor of the Nansen Initiative consultative process. The Steering Group contains between 15 and 20 states and the European Union. It is committed to support the implementation of the protection agenda.

Today, improved understanding of migration due to climate change gives a better chance for offering solutions. Particularly, the 2015 Paris Agreement established a global goal on adaptation. Nevertheless, the narrative ‘migration as adaptation’ is not expected to cause disappearance of structural injustice for climate migrants (Bettini, Nash & Gioli 2017; Bettini & Gioli 2016) In short, there is still no structural capacity in the international system to provide comprehensive solutions for these migrants. Furthermore, there is lack of political willingness to create new binding international norms to provide legal protection.

The scientific variables warn us that negative consequences of climate change will continue to increase and that above-mentioned current attempts to address CM will not be sufficient. So, what shall be done further? Since it is widely accepted that mitigation efforts are not adequate alone, greater attention needs to be paid to improve migration management. Recommendations can be classified into two categories as at the national level and international level.

The national level response includes responsibilities by (migrant) sending states and (migrant) receiving states. Those governments of the sending states have to develop better migration policies to help organizing safe movement of their vulnerable residents. On the other hand, those governments of the receiving states, particularly the developed states, have to develop their national migration regulations and policies to provide comprehensive legal options for climate migrants. (Wilson Center 2020, 166) For instance, they may provide “special migration measures (including visas and residency permits) to those affected by the impacts of climate change”. (Wilson Center 2020, 167)

On the international level, first of all, the international community has to think about amending the existing refugee convention or to develop a new international legal framework to address the governance gap with respect to CM. Current instruments and regimes fail to respond to increasing movement of people due to climate change. In order to overcome this gap, secondly, funding mechanisms can be developed to facilitate high-income industrialized countries to make regular donations to contribute adaptation efforts regarding CM. Thirdly, quotas can be introduced to facilitate the accommodation of climate migrants by developed states in accordance with their physical and financial capacities. Lastly, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) can intensify their campaigns to increase political awareness and to put pressure particularly on developed states to act and to present dignified

options to climate migrants.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The close linkage between climate-related disasters and migration cannot be denied. As the world experiences the dual impacts of the climate crisis and COVID-19, it is time for the nation-states and the international community to commit themselves seriously to climate migration management. This study developed a contemporary framework about discourses on CM examining academic and policy studies in order to present a systemized analysis through handling the multidimensionality of the subject. The suggested framework contributes to a timely and better understanding of the rhetoric shift in the literature and policy papers with respect to CM.

Theoretical foundations as well as empirical studies are analyzed in this study. Looking at the theoretical foundations, there are two approaches related with discourses including realist and liberal approaches. Realist approach is based on a security-oriented discourse, yet it is noticeably distinct from the early security perspective, because climate change is increasingly recognized as a ‘threat multiplier’ rather than a primary threat. Second, noticeable majority of the contemporary academic literature and policy documents do not tend to use the term ‘climate refugee’, because these people are not considered as refugees under the international law.

It is found that in the contemporary academic literature, the liberal approach highlights some solutions to solve CM problems particularly through the adaptation and resilience strategies. Adaptation and resilience discourses support the idea that migration can be treated as an appropriate adaptation strategy to global environmental change. Migration is not solely viewed as a challenge, but rather it is regarded as part of the solution. Accordingly, organized migration is seen as a means to reduce vulnerability of people through encouraging social and economic development, and helping resilience. Particularly, remittances have been playing a critical role in their adaptation. Yet, not all migrants are fond of the vulnerability discourse. There are studies which view migration both as a form of adaptation and as a form of failure to adopt, emphasizing also loss and damage due to migration.

In addition, within the liberal approach, there has been an increasing interest on the discourse of climate justice with respect to CM. CM particularly occurs in poorer and developing parts of the world, where people depend on ecosystem services to earn their living. Thus, they have been more vulnerable to natural resource scarcities related with the climate change. According to the climate justice, since the industrialized countries have contributed to environmental degradation and climate change to greater extent through their historical carbon dioxide emissions, they are expected to undertake greater responsibility in tackling with CM.

Empirical studies on CM mainly focus on SIDS such as Kribati, Tuvalu and Vanuatu in the Pacific Ocean and Maldives in the Indian Ocean, Bangladesh, parts of the African continent and Alaska. Migration has increasingly been perceived as a crucial adaptation strategy to be employed by vulnerable countries to the negative consequences of climate change such as SIDS and Bangladesh. There is need for such countries to develop national policies to help organizing the movement of their residents in addressing CM. There are also references to climate justice discourse while analyzing the case studies. It is argued that those countries having cumulative responsibility for climate change have to undertake critical roles



for the recovery the displaced populations of vulnerable countries.

To conclude, CM has become a more important issue and so far, there have been relatively more efforts to improve human capacities by adaptation and resilience strategies. In the contemporary era, it can be suggested that the policies' main emphasis is keeping the people at home when there is climate change, providing the vulnerable people means to adapt to changing conditions and increasing their resilience. Based on the severity of conditions, there has also been a commitment to enhance safe migration through adaptation and resilience strategies and human rights measures.

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