

**Climate Change, Policy and Security: State and Human Impacts,
Edited by Donald Wallace and Daniel Silander. New York, N.Y.:
Routledge, 2018.**

Katharine Petrich
Northeastern University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss>
pp. 156-159

Recommended Citation

Petrich, Katharine. "Climate Change, Policy and Security: State and Human Impacts, Edited by Donald Wallace and Daniel Silander. New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2018.." *Journal of Strategic Security* 13, no. 4 (2020) : 156-159. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.13.4.1897>
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol13/iss4/11>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Strategic Security by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

Climate Change, Policy and Security: State and Human Impacts, Edited by Donald Wallace and Daniel Silander. New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2018.

***Climate Change, Policy and Security: State and Human Impacts*, Edited by Donald Wallace and Daniel Silander. New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2018. ISBN 978-1-351-06047-9. 270 pages. \$47.95 (ebook), \$155.00 (hardback)**

Climate Change, Policy and Security examines the ultimate collective action problem: The global impact of climate change. This edited volume includes chapters exploring how global climate change will alter security challenges, the geographic regions most impacted by climate change, and context on the international efforts via the mechanism of the United Nations. Helpfully, the authors and editors have distinguished between state and human security concerns, allowing for a more holistic discussion of threats from a changing environment. The volume is organized around two related frameworks. The first distinguishes between ‘human’ and ‘state’ security, and the second considers how states then respond to these security threats, arguing they have pursued three strategies: Mitigation, adaptation, and capacity building.

Climate change has both direct and indirect security implications. In the first chapter, Wallace traces its trajectory as a security threat. He includes immediate effects like desertification, rising sea levels, and worsening natural disasters and second order effects, notably political instability created by climate refugees or interstate competition over dwindling resources. While unintentional, Wallace’s literature review in the first chapter highlights how recently global climate change has been viewed as a political threat.

Wallace also outlines the international efforts and frameworks created by the United Nations, situating climate change historically and institutionally. He identifies two drivers of UN climate change action: the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Security Council. Both could be powerful tools but require genuine investment from industrialized powers. Wallace argues that allowing the UNSC to include environmental issues within its portfolio would allow for better enforcement and monitoring.

Nunn and Betzold argue that the Asia-Pacific region, encompassing a quarter of the world, is critically important to climate change because it is uniquely vulnerable. It has experienced a population and GDP boom in recent decades, leading to rapid urbanization of coastal megacities and low-lying coastal populations. The region has also experienced increasingly severe environmental disasters. These climate-driven impacts displace significant populations in states with limited institutional ability to manage them, exacerbating security threats. The authors note that even in the absence of direct climate impacts, leaders could leverage the threat to justify poor governance or authoritarian behavior. They argue countries in the region, particularly weaker states, must focus on adaptation measures first, followed by capacity-building.

While Africa contributes the lowest level of greenhouse gases in the world, it is one of the most vulnerable to climate change. Silander is particularly concerned about how climate change will worsen existing political violence and interstate tensions among African states as they compete for diminishing resources and struggle to manage climate refugee flows. The author suggests the civil war in Darfur is the first climate change conflict in history and illustrates how climate-related pressures interact with weak governance, ethnic tensions, and established competitive rivalries. Unfortunately, this chapter is limited by its conflated presentation of all African countries as largely insecure and fragile.

The first single state case study is Michelsen's chapter on the United States, which links the American response to climate change to the five Presidential administrations between 1992-2017 and discusses how policies have swung between mitigation, adaptation, and capacity-building. Michelsen notes that while the U.S. has overall contributed to climate change response, domestic partisanship on the issue makes the country's future role in international efforts uncertain. Generally, the author expects the U.S. to focus on adaptation, an inward-looking choice which will further erode American global leadership and commitment to multilateralism.

Nilsson explores how the European Union navigates the tension between its own stated climate objectives and its capability. As of 2017, the EU seems to have successfully achieved its emission reduction and renewable energy investment goals. However, Nilsson assesses the EU as unprepared

or unwilling to anticipate the security implications of climate change. This may cause significant problems to the collective security agreement if member states experience disproportionate threats from climate change and the organization is unwilling to respond effectively.

One state eager to fill the power vacuum created as the U.S. steps back from the global sphere is China. When discussing climate-security issues, China is key because it is both largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions and a potential rising hegemon. Recently, however, China has made a surprising and abrupt about-face, pledging large reductions in emissions by 2030 and a shift to renewable energy. Silander and Nilsson argue that this commitment will fail when it negatively impacts economic growth, because China does not associate climate change with state security. Further, the authoritarian nature of the Chinese government makes internal monitoring assessments questionable and independent audits unlikely. Any supranational climate-security solution necessarily must involve China, but reluctance to cooperate on anything that could challenge its sovereignty will make meaningful inclusion challenging.

Geographically close but ideologically distant, India also struggles with the relationship between sustainability and development. Janzekovic argues India faces two related challenges: maintaining its level of economic growth and mitigating the resultant serious environmental challenges. Poor infrastructure, high levels of poverty, and rapid urbanization make climate change particularly urgent for India, but it lacks the capacity to enact reforms—particularly in the area of energy consumption. Janzekovic contends that India's environmental efforts are directly correlated with its ability to modernize and its future socioeconomic capabilities. Thus, more developed states should seek to financially and logistically support India's mitigation efforts to allow for continued development.

Budd argues that Japan holds a split orientation towards climate challenges, pursuing a mitigation strategy internally but providing significant adaptation investment and capacity building assistance through bilateral relationships in the developing world. This reflects Japan's conceptualization of climate change as a human security issue. Budd warns Japan's participation and leadership on climate change in multilateral institutions has been historically linked to the U.S. position.

Increasing American isolationism may cause Japanese policymakers to take a more independent position.

Russia's response to the climate crisis has been mixed. While acknowledging that climate change is a function of human activity, Russia has chosen to focus on adaptation strategies. Karaman argues that this is driven by deep economic reliance on fossil fuels and strategic interests. Warming temperatures will benefit Russian power in the Arctic, from accessing mineral deposits to increasing sea lanes for trade and naval power projection. Karaman argues that economic interests will displace any international efforts toward climate mitigation policies, unless signing an environmental agreement would be advantageous against the U.S. or of significant leverage in a negotiation on a separate issue.

In closing, it is unfortunate that the editors have only focused on 'major countries' rather than states more directly impacted by climate change, or which are pursuing innovative responses. Innovation in megacities, for example, have been some of the most ground-breaking climate response actors and are often the most vulnerable to the consequences of climate crisis, as the editors' note. A deeper discussion about states other than the "usual suspects" would have significantly distinguished this volume from other similar works. For instance, an exploration of how Uruguay has managed to deeply invest in clean energy and increase forest coverage with the goal of become carbon neutral by 2030 might have provided valuable insights on mitigation for states with limited capacity and resources. Alternatively, Nigeria's partnership with Brazilian companies to convert garbage into electricity would have made a fascinating Global South-led adaptation case study. By consigning whole regions into buckets of "Asia-Pacific" and "Africa," the volume replicates established perspectives and existing conversations. Taken as a whole, however, *Climate Change, Security and Policy* offers a good primer on the climate-security nexus and offers two useful frameworks for thinking through climate-related security challenges.

Katharine Petrich, Northeastern University