

CAMDEN CONFERENCE DISCUSSION SERIES

Climate Change and War – Inevitable?

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Reading List

Essential Articles and Videos

1. [Climate Change and Conflict](#) (2013). Living on Earth audio interview. 6:55 minutes. *An interview by Steven Curwood with Ted Miguel of UC-Berkeley on climate change. This is a recent seven-minute segment of NPR's Life on Earth series. NPR's Steve Curwood interviews Edward Miguel of UC Berkeley. Miguel was one of the researchers who published the results of a new study, published in the renowned journal Science, that shows a direct link between higher temperatures in the world's climate and increased conflict ranging from individual violence to civil war going all the back to the Mayan period.*

Facilitator's note: The link will take you to a transcript/menu page for the entire program aired on August 2, 2013. To hear the interview, click on the play button for the first segment, Climate Change and Conflict, found near the top of the screen. To view the transcript for the interview, click on the title itself.

Note: Because there are numerous segments on this Web page, to print out just this transcript, copy the transcript itself and paste it into a word processor and print from there.

2. [Climate Change War Game: Major Findings and Background](#) (2009). A working paper from the Center for New American Security. Sharon Burke and Christine Parthemore. 10 pages.

This is a summary of the proceedings, put together by the Center for New American Security (CNAS), of a gathering of 45 prominent scientists, government policy makers, and business leaders from around the world. The group was divided into four teams representing the US, the European Union, China, and India -- the four largest contributors of carbon to Earth's atmosphere. In simulation mode, the four teams were instructed to come up with "framework agreement" on managing the effects of long-term climate change. They were given three days to accomplish their (simulated) task. This reading is a summary of their findings.

Note: To print out this article, simply print the page using your computer's print command.

3. ['Uncertain' Science: Judith Curry's Take On Climate Change](#) (2013). An interview on National Public Radio. Richard Harris of NPR. 7:50 minutes. *Judith Curry, chair of the Department of the School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the Georgia Institute of Technology, believes that if climate scientists more readily would acknowledge the inherent uncertainties of the issue, skeptics would more likely accept the established central tenets of global warming.*

Note: To print out the transcript of this interview, click on the "Transcript" link at the top of the page and then print the transcript using your computer's print command.

Additional Readings for Climate Change and War – Inevitable?

[Will Climate Change Trigger Endless War?](#) (2013) A blog in The Guardian by Nafiz Ahmed, 4 pages.

Ahmed, who has a regular column on The Guardian's website, summarizes the findings from a recent study in the renowned journal Science that claim to show strong links between climate change and human violence (including war) around the world. Ahmed suggests that despite the apparently strong correlation between climate change -- especially warming temperatures -- and violence generally, war does not have to inevitably follow in the future.

Note: To print out this blog, simply print the page using your computer's print command.

[Climate Change and Conflict](#). (2007) Journal article in Political Geography by Ragnhild Nordas & Nils Gleditsch., 14 pages.

Political Geography is a highly respected academic journal. Authors Nordas and Gleditsch pick up on the national security threats mentioned in the article by Femia & Werrell. Nordas and Gleditsch survey some of the recent literature on climate change and conflict and point out that climate-induced changes in the availability of basic resources like food and water do not need to result in war. Such changes can also result in cooperation as did international efforts at nuclear disarmament did in the Cold War. Furthermore, they point out that the number of wars under way at any given time has been declining for several years.

Note: To print out this article, simply print the page using your computer's print command.

Note that it is 14 pages in length.

[Global climate change, war, and population decline in recent human history](#). (2007) Article in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences by Shang, Brecke, Lee, He, and Zhang, 10 pages.

This is an in-depth, dense summary of research done by a team of scientists using high-resolution paleo-climatic data combined with traditional written history. The scientists found that temperature change (both hotter and cooler) correlated with reduced food production followed by war and population reduction followed by recovery. This cycle repeated itself multiple times over the centuries, but so did certain forms of social adaptations. In summary, the study seems to say that climate change may have played a more significant role in ancient conflicts than has previously assumed, while at the same time social institutions that can reduce the likelihood of war or mitigate its damage have continuously evolved and improved.

Note: To print out this article, simply print the page using your computer's print command.

Note that it is 10 pages in length.

[Can changes to climate increase conflict?](#) (2013) Article from the Thomson Reuters Foundation by Francesco Femia & Caitlin Werrell, 4 pages.

In this website posting authors Femia & Werrell review several recent studies on climate change and conflict. They urge caution in accepting too easily the conclusions of the studies they review, most of which claim strong evidence that climate change -- especially increasing temperatures -- increases the likelihood of conflict and war. On the other hand, Femia & Werrell say that as a practical matter policy makers and national security planners cannot afford to wait until the scientific evidence overwhelmingly supports the claim that such a link exists. They have to make contingency plans now, acting as if the

link did exist. They can't wait for the scientific community to be certain.

To print out this article, click on the “Print” icon that appears in the column of links just below the opening photograph.

[La Niña-like Conditions Behind Gentler Global Warming](#). 2013 Article in the *Washington Post* article by Jason Samenow, 3 pages.

This newspaper article explains why the reported recent decline in the surface temperatures of the eastern Pacific Ocean do not mean that global warming has stopped or even slowed significantly. The author explains the dynamics of the complex interaction between the El Niño and La Niña ocean currents and how they affect air temperatures in the US, especially in the southwest.

To print out this article, click on the printer icon that appears above the title.

[On War and Climate Change – The Fierce Urgency of Now](#) (2013). Paul Olson. A review of the book, *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence* by Christian Parenti published in *Nebraskans for Peace*. 4 pages.

Parenti is an editor for Nation magazine. As a journalist -- not a scientist -- he argues in his book that in populated regions of the world climate change has been most acute in the tropics and has already destabilized many governments in the region. This destabilization usually leads, he says, to violent skirmishes and outright war. He predicts that further climate change will produce even more destabilization, which, in turn, will lead to more small wars. The solution, he says, is for international standards for carbon emissions to be developed and enforced. In a note of optimism he cites reforestation efforts in Burkina Faso and American resistance to the TransCanada pipeline.

Note: To print out this article, click on the printer icon found at the end of the review.

[A Controversial Claim: Climate Change = War & Violence](#) (2013). A blog in *Discover Magazine* by Keith Kloor.

This is a segment of a blog by Keith Kloor, a freelance journalist who has written for The Economist, Discover magazine, and other popular media. Kloor cites respected scientists who are skeptical of the received wisdom that climate change CAUSES war. War, these skeptics argue, is a complex phenomenon has many causes that interact with each other in complex ways that cannot, and should not, be over-simplified into politically correct, trendy claims that cannot stand up to rigorous scientific scrutiny.

Note: To print out this blog, print the first 4 pages using your computer’s print command. The remaining pages are reader comments.

[Climate and Security 101: Why the US National Security Establishment Takes Climate Change Seriously](#) (2012). A report from The Center for Climate and Security. Francesco Femia and Caitlin Werrell, 4 pages.

The Center for Climate and Security is a think tank in Washington, DC that focuses on policy development for issues relating to national security. Authors Femia and Werrell explain that the US military establishment sees climate change as an issue that merits the

allocation of significant military planning resources. The military cannot wait until the link between climate change and war is scientifically "proven" before they take the possible threat seriously. If they do that, it will be too late.

Note: To print out this report, simply print the page using your computer's print command.

[Drought helped cause Syria's war. Will climate change bring more like it?](#) (2013) An interview of Francesco Femia and Caitlin Werrell in the Washington Post by Brad Plumer, 5 pages.

Francesco Femia and Caitlin Werrell are co-founders of the D.C.-based [Center for Climate and Security](#), a think tank focused on the interactions between climate change and security issues. In recent years, they've published [a number](#) of [reports](#) looking at the environmental roots of both the Arab Spring and the ongoing civil war in Syria.

To print out this article, click on the printer icon that appears above the title.