

Researching Topic #8 -- SOCIETAL IMPACTS – POLITICAL IMPACTS
[last revised 3/11/2021]

This prompt offers two kinds of help:

- A brief overview of the kinds of questions you might wish to explore as you study how climate change is likely to affect the food supply;
- A suggested strategy for how to search the literature as you prepare to write your paper.

OVERVIEW – CLIMATE AND POLITICAL IMPACTS at level of the NATION

What might be the downstream political consequences of significant climate change?

Consider, first, current political conditions around the world. One sees a variety of such conditions, ranging from stable democratic polities with functioning, competent government bureaucracies, to nations whose governments are increasingly tending toward authoritarian forms, to nations where government is corrupt, incompetent and on the verge of failure.

Climate change is likely to have very different political consequences for societies over such a large range of types of political systems.

Consider the societal impacts other research teams are studying – extreme weather, hunger, illness, economic trouble. What does the literature say are likely to be the political consequences? Successful coping in some places? Social disorganization, unrest, civil conflict elsewhere?

So, you should consider both

- what climate change impacts are likely to do to various nations' internal politics (increasing discontent, protest, conflict, strains on governments' ability to cope, etc.)
- the political impacts of migration on the places migrants are moving to.

In addition to looking at predictions in the literature, it might help to

- (a) look at the political consequences of climate change already happening today, and
- (b) to consider evidence from reasonably good observable analogies (for example, take the political impact in Europe of recent migration from the Middle East and consider what might happen if tens of millions of climate refugees seek to enter Europe or the U.S.).

This is, obviously, a huge topic. If you get overwhelmed, focus on a couple of facets, such as:

- What climate change will do to the political situation in societies that are already suffering from inadequate food supplies, economic underdevelopment, civil conflicts, incompetent or corrupt governments, an environment already overexploited and/or mismanaged.
- The likely political consequences for “destination” nations – where millions of climate refugees are going to try to get to (examples: Western Europe, Scandinavia, the U.S.)

SUGGESTED STRATEGY FOR SEARCHING THE LITERATURE

I recommend the following sequence for searching the literature:

- 1 Start with a search of the most recent **reports from top scientific bodies and government agencies**;
- 2 Search **academic articles** using Google Scholar (scholar.google.com);
- 3 Do a **more general search** using Google or another search engine;
- 4 Search the **best newspapers** and **reputable climate websites**.
(NOTE that I do not suggest using Wikipedia.)

- 1 Search the most recent **reports from top scientific bodies and government agencies**

(NOTE: There are many excellent reports one can consult. You will find a lot of repetition, so you do not need to consult every source. Here I start with a handful of the most recent reports, followed by a more complete list.)

These publications should, in most cases, supply you with all you need:

IPCC's most recent full set of reports:

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/>

EPA: https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/climate-impacts/climate-impacts-society_.html

U.S. Global Change Research Program:

<https://science2017.globalchange.gov/> (the science)

<https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/> (the impacts)

American Meteorological Society:

www.ametsoc.net/sotc2017/StateoftheClimate2017_lowres.pdf

A more complete list of best scientific and governmental sources:

International

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)
World Meteorological Organization

Agencies of the U.S. federal government

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
U.S. Global Change Research Program

Scientific bodies – U.S.

National Academic of Sciences
Climate Change at the National Academies (climatechange@nas.edu)
National Science Foundation

Other professional bodies – American Meteorological Society

2 Search **academic articles** using Google Scholar (scholar.google.com)

(NOTE: Narrow and focus your search by using several phrases in quotes – such as “climate change”. For example, if you are searching for how climate change will increase the frequency of extreme weather events, don’t just enter “climate change,” search, instead for” “climate change” AND “extreme weather events”)

Search terms to use (you may certainly choose others):

“climate change” AND x, where x can be:

- Political polarization
- Political tribalism
- migration
- climate migration
- hunger AND migration
- Xenophobia
- Civil conflict
- Civil war
- Ethnic conflict
- Failed states
- Political crisis
- National security
- Culture war

(NOTE: For some citations you find on Google Scholar, you can directly download the PDF. For other citations, you may be able to find and download PDFs if your University library offers on line access to academic journals.)

3 Do a **more general search** using Google or another search engine

Use the same search terms to do a general search on Google or another search engine. This will bring up information more recent than you find on scholar.google.com (it takes several years for research to be published in academic journals).

4 Search the **best newspapers** and **reputable climate websites**

New York Times, Washington Post, The Guardian

On line sources

- Climate Central
- GRIST
- Society of Environmental Journalists
- The Daily Climate
- Climate Nexus
- InsideClimate News
- DeSmogBlog

Skepticalscience.com
Yale 350

(NOTE about on line sources: You will run into a lot of denialist disinformation on the internet, on websites, on blogs, on youtube. FYI, skepticalscience.com has a comprehensive list of denialist talking points (and refutations of those talking points). See, for example: <https://www.skepticalscience.com/argument.php>)

Finally, here are some further suggestions to help you get started:

For political impacts on underdeveloped nations, look at reports concerning U.S. national security in publications from the U.S. Department of Defense and from the U.S. national security apparatus (CIA, National Intelligence Council). See references in Szasz, “Novel framings create new, unexpected allies for climate activism,” Chapter 10 in Shannon O’Lear and Simon Dalby, eds., Reframing Climate Change: Constructing an Ecological Geopolitics, Routledge, 2015. Write szasz@ucsc.edu for a PDF.)

For climate migration and climate refugees, search both Google Scholar and Google. For example, the Guardian has run a series of articles on climate migration. Here are the titles (you can search the article titles in Google and it will take you to the original article):

”Climate change will stir ‘unimaginable’ refugee crisis, says military”

“Climate change ‘will create world's biggest refugee crisis’”

“Climate change soon to cause movement of 140m people, World Bank warns”

Late 2018 articles on climate and migration:

<https://www.texasobserver.org/climate-change-migration-central-america-united-states/>

<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2018/03/climate-migrants-report-world-bank-spd/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/30/migrant-caravan-causes-climate-change-central-america>

new from 2019 and 2020:

<https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2019/07/a-brief-introduction-to-climate-change-and-national-security/>

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/30012019/worldwide-threat-assessment-climate-change-intelligence-agencies-national-security>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/07/11/how-does-climate-change-impact-conflict-world/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.f20a6129f68b

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/13062019/climate-change-global-security-violent-conflict-risk-study-military-threat-multiplier>

https://insideclimatenews.org/news/19012019/migration-climate-change-trump-state-department-guidance-diplomats-gao-report?utm_source=InsideClimate+News&utm_campaign=c826126a39-&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_29c928ffb5-c826126a39-327847793

<https://features.propublica.org/climate-migration/model-how-climate-refugees-move-across-continents/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html?action=click&module=Editors%20Picks&pgtype=Homepage>

<https://earth.gizmodo.com/the-un-is-sounding-the-alarm-on-climate-refugees-1844132777>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/09/climate-crisis-could-displace-12bn-people-by-2050-report-warns>

<https://www.dw.com/en/climate-change-a-threat-to-world-order-munich-security-conference-hears/a-47553876>

Guy J. Abela, *et al*, “Climate, conflict and forced migration,” *Global Environmental Change*, Vol 54, pp. 239–249, 2019

“A Security Threat Assessment of Global Climate Change,” <https://climateandsecurity.org/a-security-threat-assessment-of-global-climate-change/>