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Climate-Migration: A Security Analysis within the Context of Green Theory

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to discuss climate migration as a relatively new global issue with various dimensions and to widen the current perspective within global politics to be more inclusive and ecocentric. This study argues that traditional international relations theories and practices are ineffective in discussing and analyzing climate migration as a new global security problem. After a discussion of the conceptual problems, the traditional paradigms of international relations, their policy implications, and the traditional actors will be identified as the primary sources of this problems. Finally, we will conclude that the application of an ecocentric perspective, with holistic characteristics, will provide a better understanding of the current problems.

Keywords: Climate Migration, Green Theory, Security, Climate Change, Green Security

İklim Göçü: Yeşil Teori Bağlamında Bir Güvenlik Analizi

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, yeni bir küresel sorun olan iklim göçünü farklı boyutlarıyla tartışmayı ve küresel siyaset perspektifini daha kapsayıcı ve ekomerkezci bir anlayışa genişletmeyi hedeflemektedir. Çalışma, yeni bir küresel güvenlik sorunu olan iklim göçünü tartışma ve analiz etme konusunda geleneksel uluslararası ilişkiler kuramlarının ve pratiklerinin etkisiz olduğu argümanına dayanmaktadır. İlk bölümde temel kavramsal sorunlar tartışıldıktan sonra, ikinci bölümde bu sorunları ortaya çıkaran en önemli sebebin, geleneksel/ana akım uluslararası ilişkiler kuramlarının sundukları küresel politikalar ve geleneksel aktörler olduğu iddia edilecektir. Çalışmanın son bölümünde, antroposentrik yaklaşımlara bir alternatif olarak, Yeşil Siyasi Teori'nin ekolojiji merkeze alan bütüncül bakış açısının mevcut sorunların daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlayacağı sonucuna varılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İklim Göçü, Yeşil Teori, Güvenlik, İklim Değişikliği, Yeşil Güvenlik

Introduction

As it was in the past, migration continues to be an essential phenomenon of humanity, and it is likely that its importance will increase in the future. In modern times, especially in the 21st century, human mobility is more simplified than any other era due to technological advancements in travel and transportation. As larger and larger numbers of people move away from their hometowns, migration has become a defining social reality. After the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, also known as the Refugee Convention or the Geneva Convention, signed in 1951, forced migration has become an issue of international relations, as it is now an issue of international law. Migration has a multi-dimensional nature that affects both sending and receiving countries in various ways; hence every state must develop policies for its migratory movements. However, these measures differ from what states have been doing that see the flow of migration as a threat to their borders. Today, of the nearly 80 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, 26 million have refugee status, 45.7 million are internally displaced, and 4.2 million are seeking asylum.¹ It is expected that these numbers, which are already high, will increase in the near future. There is also cause of a new wave of migration that has the potential to overshadow the current numbers and lead to one of the most devastating humanitarian crises ever seen; that is climate migration.

Climate migration is a subfield of migration that is used to refer migrants or refugees who have fled from their homeland due to the damaging effects of climate change, climate-change-related sea-level rise, drought, water scarcity, extreme weather events, deforestation, air pollution, and other climate-related disasters.² This type of migration will increase exponentially on a global scale in the near future unless the effects of human-induced climate change (or anthropocentric climate change) are prevented. There are some severe estimations about the potential total numbers of climate migrants. According to a variety of studies and statistics, anticipated numbers vary from 100 million to 1 billion according to different studies³ and statistics.⁴ However, even the lowest estimations for potential climate migrants are much higher than the total number of forcibly displaced people that currently exist in the world. If we consider the current management problems for the migration and refugee crises we are seeing today, it will be easier to fully comprehend the impending threat of climate migration.

Throughout the history of migration, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the flow of immigrants has been perceived as a security threat by many states⁵ (especially by developed states), and climate-related migration will likely be perceived within this same framework. Moreover, the possibility of an additional one billion people being displaced due to climate change's harmful effects will pose a potential challenge for states whose primary concern is to ensure their border security. In summary, it is not difficult to see that climate migration will be one of the greatest global security threats of the coming decades.⁶ However, as Ken Booth points out, security is a derivative concept upon which different inferences can be made.⁷ Security is not an objective concept nor does it have a

1 "Figures at a Glance", UNHCR, 18 June 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> (Accessed 25 June 2020).

2 Discussion Note: Migration and the Environment: Ninety-fourth session, MC/ INF/288, IOM, Geneva, 2007, p. 1-2.

3 Christian Aid, "Human Tide: The Real Migration Crisis", London, Christian Aid Report, 2007, p. 5.

4 Oli Brown, *Migration and Climate*, Geneva, International Organization for Migration, 2008, p. 11.

5 Steffen Angenendt, "International Migration—Just a Matter of State Security", *The Security Migration Nexus Challenges and Opportunities of African Migration to EU Countries*, Bonn, 22–23 February 2008, p. 19.

6 Brown, *Migration and Climate*, p. 33.

7 Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 109.

shared understanding for every actor in global politics as ‘security perception’, ‘insecurity’, and ‘feeling secure’, all mean different things to different agents. Hence, ‘security for whom?’ or ‘security for what?’ questions always follow. For instance, human security approach broadens concepts of national and international security and offers different perspectives on problems, such as climate migrants, where reactions of traditional security approaches seem insufficient. Starting from this point of view, the aim of this study is to show that as long as traditional understandings of security dominate international relations, they are bound to fail when confronted by new security problems such as climate migration. So, an alternative security approach should be adopted to maintain global security. Since the primary cause of climate migration is traditional practices of international politics, the same approach is and will continue to be an insufficient solution to our environmental woes.

With this in mind, climate migration generally will be examined in the first section through a focus on the dilemmas that has been generated from several lenses namely definitional, political, legal, and security spheres. The primary purpose of this detailed analysis is to reveal the main causes of the problems and indicate that a state-based understanding of global politics is the root cause. In the following section, it is aimed to show the challenges of interpreting this issue within the traditional view of international politics, and finally green security perspective, which is derived from Green Political Thought, will be introduced as an alternative for the holistic security of global environmental politics and ecology.

Climate Migration

Although climate-induced migration is a less known concept in the field of international relations, it is one of the defining phenomena of the 21st century and has increasing importance. During the last couple of decades, many scholars have mentioned anthropocentric climate change as one of the biggest threats for the future of humanity and have repeatedly cited a number of subversive effects of climate change (water shortages, sea level rises, desertification, deforestation, famine) as human security threats.⁸ However, climate migration, the expected result of these disastrous events, has not been discussed as much as it deserves in the academic field and the political sphere. The biggest consequence of the aforementioned disasters is the potential migration flows that can affect not only those who are migrating, but also those living in areas which are receiving migrants.

Before contextualizing this subject, it is important to first define “climate migration” and “climate migrants/refugees” comprehensively. Starting with a clear definition is crucial for two essential reasons: First, a proper definition would direct governments and international organizations to take the right actions. Second, depending on the definition, reliable datasets can be provided.⁹

One of the earliest definitions of climate migrants is from El-Hinnawi’s, who refers to them as “environmental refugees” in a report prepared for the United Nations Environment Programme

8 Jon Barnett, “Security and Climate Change”, *Global Environmental Change*, Vol. 13, No 1, 2003, p. 7-17; Oli Brown *et al*, “Climate Change as the New Security Threat: Implications for Africa”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No 6, 2007, p. 1141-1143; Emyr Jones Parry, *The Greatest Threat to Global Security: Climate Change is not Merely a Environmental Problem*, <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/greatest-threat-global-security-climate-change-not-merely-environmental-problem> (Accessed 25 June 2020).

9 Frank Laczko and Christine Aghazarm, *Migration, Environment and Climate Change : Assessing the Evidence*, Geneva, International Organization for Migration, 2009, p. 18.

(UNEP). In this report, El-Hinnawi describes environmental refugees as “people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardizes their existence and/or seriously affects the quality of their life”.¹⁰ This is clearly a broad description that incorporates almost every kind of climate-migration and form of environmental-based mobility. On the one hand, it is important to ask the question of whether it is better to have a definition that is so wide and inclusive, or if it is difficult to frame an issue with that kind of broad definition. Although the term environmental refugee became popular after El-Hinnawi’s use of it in the 1985 report, Lester Brown was the first one who first coined this term in 1970s.¹¹ After Hinnawi and Brown, another famous study involving the term environmental refugee was conducted by Norman Myers in 1993.¹²

Although the concept of climate refugees has been used plenty of times by a number of scholars throughout the years, describing climate-induced migrants as ‘refugees’ remains controversial among scholars, because the concept of a ‘refugee’ has a legally binding status which describes certain types of migrants. For example, Stephen Castle argues that using ‘climate displacement’ instead of ‘refugee’ is a more correct definition for environmental migrants. Because most migrants flee not across borders but within borders.¹³ Dina Ionesco introduces another dimension, claiming that using the term refugee is legally incorrect and that it may weaken current refugees’ legal status and acquired rights.¹⁴ Although all of these arguments have fair criticisms, Myers and Hinnawi use of the term was rhetorical, and their primary intent was to draw attention to the potential security threat.

One of the best definitions for climate migrants is from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The IOM describes climate migrants saying, “environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, for compelling 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.”¹⁵ Although this definition is made from a broad perspective, the use of “migrants” instead of refugees is more helpful in insuring state-centric political organizations recognize the problem. The use of the word ‘refugee’ allows states to ignore the problem because they have reached their threshold of endurance against further refugee crises: they no longer want to accept new refugees.

Along with the definition problem, one of the most crucial problems for climate migrants is their legal status. As stated in the previous paragraph, recognizing climate migrants as refugees causes many problems. However, when climate migrants are not granted legal status, states see themselves as not being obliged to make an effort to solve the problem. This legal gap is a major obstacle when formulating effective global policies.

10 Essam El-Hinnawi, *Environmental Refugees*, Nairobi, UNEP, 1985, p. 4.

11 Laczko and Aghazarm, *Migration, Environment and Climate Change*, p. 18.

12 Norman Myers, *Ultimate Security*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1993, p. 189-213.

13 Stephen Castles, *Environmental Change and Forced Migration: Making Sense of the Debate*, UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research No 70, October 2002, p. 8.

14 Dina Ionesco, “Let’s Talk About Climate Migrants, Not Climate Refugees”, 6 June 2019, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/06/lets-talk-about-climate-migrants-not-climate-refugees/> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

15 *Discussion Note: Migration and the Environment (MC/INF/288)*. Geneva, International Organization for Migration, 2007, p. 1.

In 2013, Kiribati citizen Ioane Teitiota, who resided in New Zealand with his wife and two children, became the first person to apply to the New Zealand Immigration and Protection Tribunal for refugee status based on climate-centric causes. Teitiota argued that the rising sea levels as well as other damaging effects of climate change had rendered Kiribati uninhabitable for all its residents, including his family.¹⁶ However, the Court declined to grant him and his family refugee status.¹⁷ As a result, in 2015, Teitiota and his family were deported back to Kiribati. Teitiota's application was declined because New Zealand's Immigration and Protection Tribunal ruled that Teitiota and his family's experience did not fall under any of the five asylum categories of international law: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. Even though Teitiota was considered the world's first climate refugee by environmental activists, this case shows the gap between the legal definitions of refugee and climate-based migration.

According to Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, signed in 1951, the definition of a refugee is "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion."¹⁸ As can be seen, there are at least three main inconsistencies between so-called climate-refugees and the 1951 definition of refugees.

The first problem is about leaving the country. One must cross borders and leave their country in order to be accepted as a refugee according to 1951 definition. Most of the climate migrants are expected not to cross the borders when they flee from their home, but to move to other places within their own country. So, from the legal perspective, even though climate-induced migration is accepted as a driver for having refugee status, most of the climate migrants cannot have refugee status in any circumstances because they do not leave the borders of their country. Thus, many scholars think that giving refugee status to climate migrants is not the best idea to overcome climate-induced migration.¹⁹

The second problem is that the definition of 1951 Convention is about discrimination. The definition states that one must be discriminated against because of her/his race, religion, nationality, membership of a social group, or political opinion. Climate refugees are not fleeing from these kinds of discrimination, but rather, they are fleeing from the damaging effects of climate change. Even if climate change is considered to be the fault of industrialized states, it does not just affect specific groups of people, but instead everyone who lives in a particular place.

Finally, the third problem with the definition comes from the fear of persecution. Although it is understood that humans are the leading cause of climate change today, it is not easy to frame persecution within the traditional meaning. Persecution requires an actor which can be referred to as a persecutor; in climate change, it is almost impossible to point to any single persecutor as being the reason for climate-based migration. However, it should be noted that most countries which contribute to the climate change, are highly industrialized countries, but people affected by the damaging effects of climate change live in under-developed countries. In this case, there is an obvious irony, thus states might not take the responsibility for what they create until they are legally bound to the problem.

16 "Historic UN Human Rights case opens door to climate change asylum claims", 21 January, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25482&LangID=E> (Accessed 10 June 2020).

17 Teena Brown Pulu, "New Zealand's Climate Refugee Debate Grows Louder", *Te Kaharoa*, Vol. 8, 2015, p. 10-13.

18 UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, United Nations General Assembly, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, Vol. 189, p. 137.

19 Jane McAdam, *Climate Change, Forced Migration and International Law*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 43.

Hence, the suggestion of a new definition of refugee should be comprehensive in order to include migrants across the borders and inside their country, while also being refined within a framework that can result in effective policies. In addition to these discussions, Jane McAdam claims that providing legal status for climate migrants should not be the primary goal, but more of an instrument to solve the problems within the phenomenon of climate migrants, because legal decisions can only be successful if they are supported by political authorities. Otherwise, extending the scope of the refugee convention will accomplish nothing. Additionally, it may cause states to evade their responsibilities if they see themselves as doing their full share of work already.²⁰ Without genuinely making an effort to solve the problem, definitional or legal endeavors will not be effective. As a result, the problem cannot be resolved with a legal regulation alone.

Besides the definitional and legal problems of climate migrants, other major issues within climate migration are political and security obstacles. It should be pointed out that the disconnection between security perceptions and political agendas might allow for a misreading of the dynamics. So, the political and security related issues will be covered together in this part to explain how actors of international relations form their policies based on their perceptions of security or insecurity.

The European Union is the primary example that comes to mind as a body which determines migration policies according to its security priorities. Especially in recent years, the European Union has developed more security-based migration policies due to the waves of migration into European countries. In 2007, a report entitled *Climate Change as a Security Risk*, prepared by European Union, drew attention to the increasing effects of climate change and warned European states that it may result in new waves of migration and cause instability in Europe.²¹ In this report, migration has been directly linked to security and calls for the requirement of security-based policy actions. The European Union's security-oriented policy is not the only example of course. The migration policy of the U.S. is also very similar. In the last couple of years, the US has continued to reduce the number of refugees that is allowed to enter the country. The Trump Administration has reduced the number of the refugees allowed into U.S. from 85,000 in 2016 to 1,800 in 2019,²² and it is anticipated to decrease even more. Trump has blamed foreigners for being dangerous criminals²³ and suggested that those migration restriction policies were implemented because of security concerns. Building a wall on the Mexican border was also another security-oriented policy of the Trump administration. It should be noted that those ultra-security-oriented policies of the U.S. cannot be explained just by the personality of Donald Trump. Building a wall on the Mexican borders was not conceived of first by Donald Trump. In 2006, the Secure Fence Act aimed to build physical barriers across parts of Mexico's border, and was enacted with the support of both Democrats and Republicans.²⁴

Therefore, these kinds of policies do not depend only on individual extremist opinions, but also state-based security policies. Other examples of states restricting migration are in New Zealand

20 Ibid., p. 210-211.

21 European Commission, "European Border and Coast Guard Agreed", 22 June 2016, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_16_2292 (Accessed 10 June 2020).

22 Steven Tetrick, *Climate Refugees: Establishing Legal Responses and U.S. Policy Possibilities*, Scholarly Horizons: University of Minnesota, Morris Undergraduate Journal, Vol. 5, No 2, 2018, p. 9.

23 Linda Qiu, "Explaining Trump's Tweet on Crimes by Immigrants", 12 January 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/12/us/politics/trump-illegal-immigration-statistics.html> (Accessed 29 January 2020).

24 *Secure Fence Act*, 26 October 2006. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/house-bill/6061> (Accessed 20 May, 2020).

and Australia. They are excluding the people of Kiribati and Tuvalu, the two island states that will likely completely sink in the ocean within a few decades because of the rising sea-levels caused by climate change. New Zealand and Australia's policies protecting themselves against the Kiribati and Tuvalu's humanitarian crisis indicate that state-based security policies are bound to fail. Considering that the total population of Kiribati and Tuvalu is less than 120,000, it is clear that state-based policies are even more insufficient at dealing with the problems of the near future when millions of people will become climate migrants.

The following section will summarize the basic dynamics of traditional security, which are considered key factors in the emergence and failure of the climate migration problem. Following, the relationship between security and climate migration will be analyzed through a critical Green Theory perspective.

From Traditional Security to Green Security

Security has been one of the most contending issues in international relations history. The definition of security within international relations has evolved over time. Especially after the end of the Cold War, global understandings of security have been disentangled from narrow military-based definitions and new perspectives on security have emerged.²⁵ The emergence of new security problems, together with the changing structure of international politics, have led to the expansion of security issues. One of these relatively new security problems is the security of the environment. Further degradation of the environment necessitates the need for a new perspective on environmental issues and global environmental security. To comprehend this need for a new security perspective, the traditional security view's main assumptions should be put forward first, with its reflections on environmental security issues.

Within the literature of international relations theory, neorealism and neoliberalism have been the most dominant schools of thought for decades. Therefore, the traditional security approach has been shaped around the suggestions of these approaches. According to these traditional international relations theories, the state is the main actor within international politics. Thereby they regard states as the main actors within security studies.

The neorealist school of International Relations, also known as Structural Realism, asserts a state-based security approach. According to Kenneth Waltz, the most influential neorealist scholar, international structure is anarchic and leads states to behave in certain ways.²⁶ In such an anarchic structure, states constantly compete with one another in order to maintain the balance of power. In an anarchic structure, the only possible way to ensure the security of states is through the balance of power. That is, while states try to maintain the balance of power in the system, they seek to get more power in order to feel safer against other actors. Neorealists also assume that states are rational and unitary actors within international politics. So, the domestic factors or opinions of decision-makers are not seen as efficient inputs to distort the assumption of neorealism which suggests that states are holistic unitary actors within the international arena.²⁷ According to neorealists, the environment is valuable as an area of conflict in which states are fighting to get a bigger slice of the pie. Thus, environmental

25 Barry Buzan, "Rethinking Security after the Cold War", *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 32, No 1, 1997, p. 8.

26 Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Boston, Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1979, p. 88.

27 Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *Principles of International Politics*, London, SAGE Publication, 2014, p. 41.

degradations become a security issue for neorealists depending on their relation to national security.²⁸ As it is mentioned, environment or people in general cannot be the subject of security analyses for neorealists unless it refers to the states' interests and security. Like environmental issues, migration is not considered a security problem unless it causes intra-state conflict or other national-security problems such as associations with terrorism.

The other traditional theoretical perspective that holds a crucial place within international relations is neoliberal institutionalism. It is worth noting that neoliberals, like neorealists, recognize international politics as having an anarchic structure, but that they consider the interests of states to be individual gains that can interact peacefully and simultaneously with each other through comparative advantages, that is, absolute net gains. Thus, states are motivated to cooperate with each other in order to reach absolute gain.

Neoliberals focus on the potential for longer-term gains that either side can exploit to their economic benefit.²⁹ In addition, although neoliberals see states as the primary actors within international relations, they argue that non-state actors such as international organizations are also a part of international politics.³⁰ They also point out the importance of security even though security is not the sole aim of states. However, unlike neorealism, they see the interdependence of states as a reasonable way of providing security and maintaining peace between actors. According to neoliberalism, international security can also be maintained through international organizations and economic and political cooperation. It is also possible to protect the environment by cooperating through multilateral agreements which lead states to create international regimes for environmental issues.

Although neoliberals view the maintenance of security as possible via cooperation, the economic burdens which environmental arrangements place on sovereign states prevent them from working together to solve environmental problems. Thus, it is not easy for states to cooperate on problems of environmental degradation.³¹ Due to the lack of supreme authority over common goods, such as clean air, water, forests, no state wants to limit its consumption of such goods. On the contrary, they compete to use the common goods more than other states, resulting in the Tragedy of the Common Goods³² and making the sustainable use of natural resources impossible through cooperation in an anarchic environment in which there is no supreme authority among the states.

Although these two conventional approaches may seem quite different, they actually have a lot in common. They have so many common concepts and insights that the great debate between neorealism and neoliberalism is referred to as neo-neo synthesis. First, both theories use the same methodology, epistemology, and ontology. Secondly, in the way that neorealists accept international actors as rational, neoliberals also believe that agents are rational actors.³³ In addition, even though

28 Matthew Paterson, *Understanding Global Environmental Politics*, London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2000, p. 20

29 Jennifer Sterling-Folker, "Neoliberalism", Tim Dunn, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith (ed.), *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 119.

30 Melania-Gabriela Ciot, *Negotiation and Foreign Policy Decision Making*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, p. 88.

31 Scott Burchill, "Liberalism", Scott Burchill et al (ed.), *Theories of International Relations*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005, p. 65.

32 Tragedy of the Commons is a term used by Garrett Hardin to describe the inevitable problems of prioritizing individual interests instead of acting together over the use of common goods.

33 Sterling-Folker, "Neoliberalism", p. 115.

one of them focuses on relative gain while the other focuses on absolute gain, they both focus on the gain and increase of power, and evaluate nature as a means of maximizing such power-centric interests.

As this article suggests in the introduction, most of the problems of climate-migrants stem from policy implementation that is oriented around the perspective of traditional international relations theories. State-led international organizations and neoliberal institutions that support the rise of capitalist economic growth and create this tragedy of the commons are two defining features of today's global political perspective. They create global crises and climate change and thus the climate change-caused migration. When we turn back to the second part and look at the problems of climate-migrants, it will be understood that the main problems are depicted in the traditional state-perspective on global politics. As it is mentioned in the second section, the conceptual and definitional roots of the problem also stem from the understanding that do not consider migrants or environment as a main object of security.

The legal problems mentioned above are also closely related to traditional views that are not connected to protecting or providing security to people, but rather focus on states' borders and economic stability. It is clear that the 1951 Refugee Convention does not protect the climate-change-caused migrants and it is also very obvious that states do not have the desire to revise it according to contemporary demands of refugee flows. Even in 1951, as Hathaway argues, the real motivation behind the Refugee Convention's preparation was the tension between the western states and socialist states.³⁴ The real aim was not maintaining the security of the refugees. Instead, western countries aimed to secure themselves against the communist threat that could spread across the continent.

The primary reason why climate migrants are not given refugee status, taking into account the persecution criteria, is this state-based perspective. McAdam claims that the meaning of persecution is a point of dispute in the conversation surrounding climate-migrants. Because climate refugees, who are meant to flee from their persecutors, which are the developed countries who contribute to climate change, would try to migrate to those same countries in order to survive.³⁵ McAdam's observation is consistent with the meaning of persecution, which is widely accepted as it was described in 1951. However, as security threats change, so does persecution. Climate-migrants are persecuted not directly by their land, but implicitly. Their environment has been damaged or persecuted by industrialized states, and climate-refugees are fleeing from the damage and pollution caused by industrialized states.

Robyn Eckersley approaches this from a critical perspective, and argues that climate-refugees are also subjected to persecution. Furthermore, unlike political persecution, climate refugees, who do not have a home to return to, will remain refugees for the rest of their lives.³⁶ In fact, Eckersley claims that all states have a responsibility to receive climate-refugees, because all states contribute to climate change in some capacity. In other words, although Westphalian sovereignty, which underlies the modern international system, liberates states of their domestic politics,³⁷ behaviors of those states are still the main contributor to climate change, and as a result, climate migration. This means that just as the principle of Responsibility to Protect expands the sovereign state notion of the Westphalian

34 Sarah Leonard and Christian Kaunert, *Refugees, Security and the European Union*, London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019, p. 48.

35 McAdam, *Climate Change, Forced Migration and International Law*, p. 44-45.

36 Robyn Eckersley, "The common but differentiated responsibilities of states to assist and receive 'climate refugees'", *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 14, No 4, 2015, p. 493.

37 Mehmet H.M. Bektaş, "Examining the Possibility of an Eastphalian International Order", *SİYASAL: Journal of Political Sciences*, Vol. 26, No 2, 2017, p. 115.

World Order, states must take responsibility and receive climate migrants as a result of the damage they inflict outside their borders.

Solutions to global security problems, including climate change and climate-induced migration, are not possible within the confines of traditional perspectives. Therefore, looking from a perspective of holistic security is necessary instead of a security perspective which aims to protect the interests of states and companies. The most obvious proof of this suggestion is the failure of international efforts aiming to reduce the effects of global warming and climate change. From this critical view, it is not difficult to claim that those efforts are failing because their aim is not to protect the environment, but keep protecting the interest of states. Additionally, Robert Cox classifies those traditional theories that explain traditional practices in global politics as problem solving theories.³⁸ Cox means that theories like neorealism and neoliberalism are designed to solve the problems within the system, not to criticize and to change the system itself. So, when the problem is the theory itself, like as is in this case, it is not possible to solve it without changing it. As social constructivists argue, this change can bring about a fundamental shift towards wider international security. The aim should not be to 'explain,' but rather, to offer an 'understanding' of the world which we live in.³⁹

Unlike traditional theories, Green Political Theory is a theory that aims to understand environmental politics from a critical point of view, rather than explain it without questioning. Another difference is that Green Theory, which places ecology at its center, offers an ecocentric perspective rather than an anthropocentric view.⁴⁰ In this context, according to the Green Theory, ensuring security is not done by providing security to a particular group, ruling class, or people, but rather, by ensuring the security of the ecology as a whole. When such ecological security is achieved, human beings will be free from any threat perception part of the ecological order.

In this respect, Green Theory differs from critical security approaches as well as traditional security approaches by broadening the security agenda from individuals to ecology. If the arguments of Green Theory is adapted to the phenomenon of climate-migration, policies created by states and other traditional organs would not be able to overcome obstacles. This is because it is not possible to overcome an environment-related problem without securing the whole ecological order. At its best, traditional security practices can integrate climate-migrants into the established political system without calling into question the root of the problem, which means sweeping the problem under the rug. However, the real aim should not just be maintaining the political system or just rescuing people, but saving the balance of nature, along with all living and non-living creatures. Ensuring national security, human security, and international security without ensuring the security of life on earth does not make sense.⁴¹ This can be achieved by challenging our political and ethical assumptions. Therefore, as this article has criticized the traditional approaches, the approach of Green Political Theory, which overlaps with this article's critiques of traditional theories, represents the best theoretical perspective for global environmental issues.

38 Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory", *Millennium*, Vol. 10, No 2, 1981, p. 128.

39 John Baylis, "The Concept of Security in International Relations", *Globalization and Environmental Challenges Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace*, Vol. 3, No 5, 2008, p. 499.

40 Andrew Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, New York, Routledge, 2007, p. 42.

41 Yasemin Kaya, *Ekolojik Güvenlik*, Bursa, Dora Yayıncılık, 2019, p. 80.

The Approach of Green Political Theory

Green Political Theory, which was established after the 1970s with the rising concern about the stability of the balance of nature, developed in the field of international politics. One of the most important features that distinguishes Green Political Theory from traditional IR theories is its philosophical stance of not centralizing human and state interests over the interests of the ecological system. Thus, Green Theory assumes that there is no persuasive criteria by which to make an ethical distinction between the human and non-human world.⁴²

In addition to the ecocentric world-view, the other important suggestion of Green Theory is regarding the limits of natural and economic growth on earth. As it has been argued in the *Limits to Growth* report prepared by the Club of Rome, everything in the world is finite.⁴³ So, the human population, physical and technological improvements, and other elements that depend on natural resources, cannot grow forever.⁴⁴ The report suggests that if the obsession with economic growth continues like this, natural resources will run out by the end of the 21st century. Green Political Theory tries to explain why infinite economic growth is impossible and why humans have to profoundly change their social and political behavior in order to sustain the ecosystem that makes life on earth possible.⁴⁵

A human-centric world view destroys nature in order to achieve greater economic growth which is the main reasons for climate change. Thus, climate migration shows us how Green Theory's two main arguments are accurate in explaining the current global crisis. Similar inferences have been made by Ken Conca about the relations between environmental peril and traditional understandings of states and their economies. Firstly, Conca argues that the traditional understanding of the state is not an environmentally friendly institution and the centralized, industrialized, capital-centric structure of the modern nation state is of the main reason for such environmental hazards. Secondly, the transnationalizing of the global economy deprives states' of the ability to protect the environment, both domestically and transnationally.⁴⁶ As it is seen, Conca also makes the same inferences using Green Political Theory about maintaining global security within traditional way of thinking about international politics. In conclusion, instead of realist and liberal views which only refer to the instrumental value of the environment, ecocentrism emphasizes the intrinsic value of the environment.

Another important aspect that makes the green perspective valuable for the governance of global security is the holistic value perspective of Green Political Theory. A holistic view does not differentiate between different species in the ecosystem. According to this approach, dealing with global issues should be done using a wider perspective. For instance, it is not possible to rescue the human being from the effects of global warming or climate migration without also rescuing the ecosystem. If there is a global problem, the solution should address the issue from a broader perspective. Otherwise, detaching the issue from the context and analyzing it from a narrow perspective is not useful, because

42 Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Towards an Ecocentric Approach*, London, UCL Press, 1992, p. 49-51.

43 Donella H. Meadows et al, *The Limits to Growth; a Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, New York, Universe Book, 1972.

44 Donella H. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, Dennis L. Meadows, *Beyond the Limits: Confronting Global Collapse, Envisioning a Sustainable Future*, Chelsea, Green Publishing Company, p. 7.

45 Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, p. 12.

46 Ken Conca, "Old States in New Bottles? The Hybridization of Authority in Global Environmental Governance", John Barry and Robin Eckersley (ed.), *The State and the Global Ecological Crisis*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2005, p. 181-182.

the ecosystem is interconnected. This view is practical in terms of preserving both human and non-human elements of the world, because of its wider identification of the world. In this context, the non-discriminative approach of green security would not segregate any component of the ecosystem and would thus provide policies which are beneficial for all species.

One of the most influential ecologists in history, Aldo Leopold, says in his famous book *A Sand County Almanac* that all ethics evolved under the premise that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts, but ecological ethics enlarge the boundaries of the community to include soil, water, plants, in short the land as a whole.⁴⁷ This quote of Leopold reveals the desire to maintain the stability of the ecosystem as a whole while preserving living and non-living elements of the ecosystem. That kind of understanding will contribute to developing better policies to assist climate-migrants; however, it will not be easy to understand the moral motivations behind preserving both living and non-living components of earth. Leopold also explains how he sees the intrinsic value of the ecosystem parallel to his own life story of becoming an ecologist. In the 1920s in the U.S., when Aldo Leopold believed that humans are undoubtedly superior to other species, he was appointed as director of a research group working to eradicate the U.S. wolf population. The intent of this research was to manipulate nature by decreasing the wolf population in order to have more deer in the mountains for American sport hunters. However, when they first shot down a wolf pack and Leopold saw a dying wolf up close, he said:

“There was something new to me in those eyes-something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters’ paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.”⁴⁸

That was a formative moment that completely shifted Leopold’s view of the ecosystem. It is very easy to understand what Leopold means when he says the wolf would not agree, but it is not as easy to understand what he means when he says the “mountain would not agree.” Stephan Harding explains this moment by saying that Leopold was using a metaphor when he says the “mountain.” Leopold realized that the ecosystem is a dignified great being with its own intrinsic value, and is a living system with many components that are living or non-living.⁴⁹ Therefore, global security that aims to save climate-migrants and the climate itself, should have this specific understanding of security, not simply focus on some institution or group’s security.

Conclusion

Climate change will impact human life in many ways, with climate migration being one of the most notable consequences. Many scholars estimate that a significant portion of the global population will be climate migrants in the near future and that this issue has not gotten enough attention. This study aims to show that climate-migration is one of the most important problems attached to climate change; it is also a security issue for global politics. As it has been discussed in this article, the only way

47 Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1949, p. 220-225.

48 Ibid., p. 130.

49 Stephan Harding, “Deep Ecology in the Holistic Science Programme”, <https://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/deep-ecology-in-the-holistic-science-programme> (Accessed 20 June 2020).

of overcoming this security problem is shifting the perception of security from a traditional view to a critical and inclusive security perspective. Since traditional understandings result in the phenomenon of climate migration being an almost insolvable problem, it cannot be dealt within the framework of mainstream theories.

Through the article, the obstacles associated with climate-migration have been linked to the agenda and traditional policies were criticized using the green perspective. In the first and the second sections, various estimations about climate-induced migration were introduced. In addition, legal, political, and security issues related to climate migration revealed the causes of these problems and were examined. In the last section of the article, traditional understandings of security, that are mainly evolved from neo-neo synthesis, have been summarized. Finally, the main assumptions of green theory as an alternative understanding of security are presented. In conclusion, it is suggested that security policies which only take into account sovereign states, elite groups, interest groups, and nongovernmental organizations as the main actors of international politics cannot overcome the global security problems of climate migration. Alternative security perceptions of Green Political Theory are needed to deal with the current global environmental problems. The nation-state, which is accustomed to solving security problems by using military power and spending money to buy weapons, rather than human development, must be fundamentally questioned. Therefore, radical changes to the perceptions of international politics are necessary to cope with the current problems within global politics.