FACULTY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

REFRAMING SECURITY IN THE AGE OF CLIMATE REFUGEES

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SYRIA AND BANGLADESH THROUGH SECURITY PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This thesis examines how climate change reshapes security and mobility by comparing two distinct pathways of climate-related displacement: rapid-onset drought and agricultural collapse in Syria, and slow-onset sea-level rise and salinization in Bangladesh. Building on Environmental Security, Human Security, and Securitization Theory, the study argues that these frameworks illuminate important mechanisms—such as climate change as a “threat multiplier” and the political construction of (in)security—but remain limited by state- and anthropocentric assumptions. To address these limits, the thesis advances a Green Theory–informed perspective that centers ecological integrity and climate justice as core security referents.

Methodologically, the research employs a comparative case design with process-tracing and pattern-matching across secondary data (peer-reviewed studies, attribution science, displacement statistics, and policy reports). The Syria case links multi-year drought, rural–urban migration, and governance failures to heightened social unrest and onward displacement. The Bangladesh case shows how chronic inundation, salinity intrusion, and livelihood erosion generate primarily internal, incremental mobility with long-term human security risks. Cross-case synthesis demonstrates convergent vulnerabilities (exposure, adaptive capacity, and institutional response) alongside divergent temporal dynamics and policy needs.

The thesis contributes in two ways: empirically, by integrating visual and quantitative evidence on climate impacts and mobility patterns across contrasting contexts; and normatively, by proposing elements of a sui generis protection regime for climate-displaced persons (eligibility criteria for planned relocation, responsibility-sharing formula, and dedicated financing and monitoring). Overall, it reframes security in the Anthropocene toward ecocentric and justice-oriented protection that better aligns with the lived realities of climate-affected populations.

Keywords: climate-induced migration; climate refugees; environmental security; human security; securitization; Green Theory; Syria; Bangladesh; climate justice; international law.

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List of Abbreviations:

AR6 — Sixth Assessment Report (IPCC)
ASIS — FAO Agricultural Stress Index System
BBC — British Broadcasting Corporation
BBS — Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BCCSAP — Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
BWDB — Bangladesh Water Development Board
CNA — The Center for Naval Analyses
COP21 — A critical milestone in global climate policy was the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference
EU — European Union
FAO — Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GRID — UNHCR, IDMC
IDMC — Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IOM — In his report prepared for the International Organization for Migration
IPCC — According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MENA — In more recent years, the Middle East and North Africa
MMC — Mixed Migration Centre
NASA — National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NGO — Non-Governmental Organization
NOAA — National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OCHA — United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
S1 — Global Environmental Change, 21
SLCT — Sea Level Change Team
TPS — Both the Convention and its Protocol lack a comprehensive foundation to address the displacement of individuals due to climate change A notable legal development in the 1990s was the introduction of the Temporary Protected Status
UK — United Kingdom
UN — United Nations
UNDP — This shift was institutionalized most clearly through the 1994 United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC — The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR — The first concrete institutional step addressing refugee issues on a global scale was the establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US — United States
WGII — Working Group II (IPCC)
WWA — World Weather Attribution

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Introduction

"We have to recognise that every breath of air we take, every mouthful of food we take, comes from the natural world. And if we damage the natural world, we damage ourselves. We are one coherent ecosystem. It's not just a question of beauty, or interest, or wonder – the essential ingredient of human life is a healthy planet."
— Sir David Attenborough, *A Perfect Planet* (BBC, 2021)

Migration has long been a core human strategy for adapting to environmental and socio-economic change. Patterns and drivers have shifted—from seasonal and pastoral mobilities to industrial-era urbanization and contemporary cross-border movements—but mobility remains a constitutive feature of social resilience (McLeman, 2017). With the consolidation of nation-states and modern border regimes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, migration became more regulated and politically salient (Torpey, 2000). The 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol institutionalized protection for persons fleeing persecution, transforming migration into a central object of international law and policy (United Nations, 1951, 1967).

In parallel, climate change and broader ecological degradation have moved to the center of the global agenda. At their intersection lies climate-related displacement**:** movements driven, in whole or in part, by slow-onset processes (e.g., sea-level rise, salinization, desertification) and rapid-onset hazards (e.g., storms, floods, heatwaves) (IPCC, 2022). Estimates of future climate mobility vary across methods and scenarios, yet converge on the expectation that climatic impacts will increasingly shape where and how people live (IPCC, 2022). This raises a fundamental question: security for whom, and for what? Security is not a fixed condition but a socially constructed and contested concept, contingent on whose interests and which referent objects are prioritized (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998).

This thesis argues that while Environmental Security**,** Human Securit**y**, and Securitization Theory offer valuable—yet partial—lenses on climate-related displacement, each remains constrained by state-centric and anthropocentric assumptions (Buzan et al., 1998). I advance a Green Theory–informed perspective that centers ecological integrity and climate justice as primary referents of security (Eckersley, 2005). For legal accuracy, I adopt the term **"**climate-displaced persons and climate refugee**"**[1] while acknowledging

[1] In this thesis I use both **"climate refugee"** and **"climate-displaced persons (CDPs)"** deliberately. Legally, *refugee* status under the **1951 Refugee Convention** and **1967 Protocol** requires persecution on protected grounds; climate-related harm **alone** does not qualify, so there is currently **no treaty-based category** of "climate refugee" (United Nations, 1951, 1967; UNHCR, 2020; McAdam, 2012). Moreover, climate-related mobility is typically **multi-causal**, interacting with governance, livelihoods and inequality; descriptive terms such as **climate-displaced persons** better reflect this complexity and align with usage in UN guidance (IPCC, 2022; Betts, 2010). I therefore adopt **CDPs** as the **default analytic term** throughout. I retain **"climate refugee"**

the rhetorical power—and current legal absence—of “climate refugee” under the 1951 regime (McAdam, 2012;). Climate refugee refers to people forced to cross international borders due to climate-related events, while climate displaced persons may remain within their country of origin. Both terms will be used interchangeably in this thesis due to their overlapping realities and the absence of legal recognition.

Empirically, the study compares two archetypal pathways**:** Syria (rapid-onset drought interacting with governance fragility) and Bangladesh (slow-onset sea-level rise and salinization) (Kelley et al., 2015; World Bank, 2021). Methodologically, it employs a comparative case design with process tracing and pattern matching across peer-reviewed research, attribution science, displacement statistics, and policy documents (Yin, 2018). The contribution is twofold: (1) an integrated account of how distinct climatic stressors reconfigure mobility and (in)security across contrasting contexts; and (2) a policy framework—grounded in Green Theory—for a sui generis protection approach to climate-displaced persons, including eligibility, responsibility-sharing, financing, and monitoring principles.

Literature Review: “Climate Refugee” Concept: Security

In the broadest sense, security means being safe from danger, risk, or threat. The idea of threat is often at the center of different definitions of security. Ole Waever, a key member of the Copenhagen School, says that you can't really talk about security unless you think there is a threat (Wæver, 1995). However, it's hard to come up with a definition of security that everyone agrees on because it involves many different fields. For example, Barry Buzan says that security is a very personal idea, like love, freedom, or power, and that it is hard to define exactly what it means (Buzan, 1991). Ullman also says that people often don't fully understand what security means until it is threatened or has been broken into (Ullman, 1983). People and governments may have different ideas about what security means, but they all agree that it is important. In this case, Baldwin says that the search for security may justify the use of other resources that could be used to reach other goals (Baldwin, 1997).
It is clear that it is very hard to give a clear and complete definition of security because different fields have different ways of looking at it. Still, there are some basic parts that can help us understand what security means. Some of these important parts could be:

• The Referent Object: Who or what is being protected? (for example, a person, a community, a state, or the environment)
• The Source of Threat: Who or what is the threat or risk?

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normatively—to foreground the protection gap and when quoting or engaging advocacy and public discourse—while making clear that it is **not** a recognized legal status at present. Related jurisprudence (e.g., **HRC *Teitiota v. New Zealand***, 2020) signals that non-refoulement duties may arise where climate impacts threaten the right to life, but it does **not** create a new refugee category.

• The Legitimate Provider of Security: Who is in charge of providing security?
• The Means and Methods of Security Provision: What tools, strategies, or mechanisms are used to make sure people are safe?
• The Costs of Security: What rights, resources, or priorities might you have to give up to get or keep security?
Identifying threats—what or who is a threat—is one of the most important parts of security. Politicians usually have the power to decide what these threats are. This political power over threat construction means that the security discourse can be used as a way to control and pressure society. As a criticism of this approach, other points of view say that security shouldn't just be about military issues.

The idea of security came about in the early days of settled life. As people moved from being nomads to farmers, they grew more food than they needed, which led to food surpluses. These surpluses, in turn, needed protection because other groups started to raid them. So, the need to protect these resources led to the first security concerns. This need led to the creation of state structures, standing armies, and eventually the institutionalization of war.

The way states and their militaries worked changed over time, and so did the way wars were fought. These changes also had a big impact on how people saw threats and how they thought about security in general. Especially after the Cold War, changes in technology and world politics happened quickly, changing the nature of war. Major powers mostly avoided direct military conflict, which led to proxy wars. Weapons of mass destruction, on the other hand, were a deterrent to large-scale conflict because they were becoming more common and could do a lot of damage.

These changes in the way wars are fought brought with them new and more confusing kinds of threats. Terrorist groups and separatist movements, which are not part of the government, became major sources of insecurity. At the same time, the role of traditional state-based security providers started to change as well. Before, people thought the military was the only thing that could keep the country safe. Now, private military companies have changed the security landscape by adding new players.

As a result, the idea of security has grown from being only a national or regional issue to being a global one. Figure 1 shows that security today can be thought of as having three overlapping layers: national security, regional (proximate) security, and global security. (Kaya, 2019)

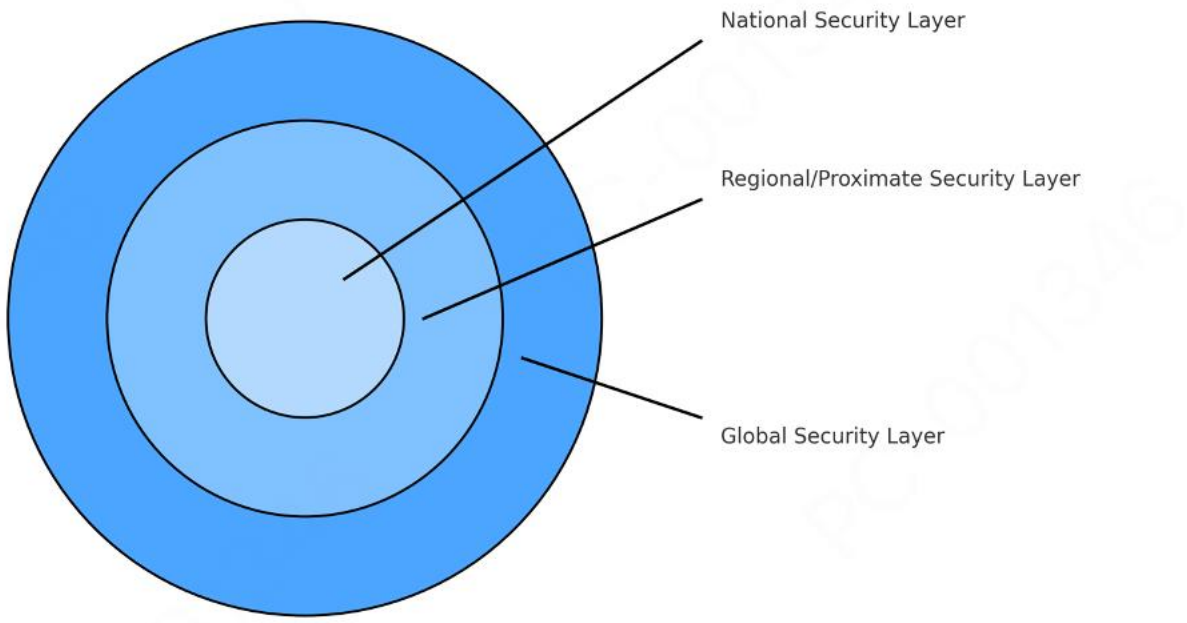

Figure 1 Three- Tiered Security Space Source: Kaya (2019)

National security is making sure that a country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, political stability, and the safety of its people are all safe from threats from inside and outside the country. Regional (or "proximate") security is about keeping the peace and stability between states or areas that are close to each other. It focuses on dealing with cross-border threats, crises, and migration flows that could affect more than one country in the same region. Global security means protecting the whole international system from threats that cross borders, like climate change, pandemics, and nuclear proliferation. To deal with problems that go beyond national and regional borders, countries need to work together and use collective security mechanisms Kaya (2019).

Over time, different important ways of looking at security studies have come up. The Copenhagen School, which is led by Ole Waever and Barry Buzan, is one of the most important of these. The school sees security as a concept with negative aspects, which goes against the idea that it is always a good thing. The development of securitization theory is one of its most important contributions.

This theory says that securitization is the process of framing an issue that wouldn't normally be seen as a security threat as an existential threat, which justifies taking extreme measures. For securitization to happen, there has to be a strong argument made by a securitizing actor and an audience that is willing to see the issue as a security threat.

The securitizing actor uses language that makes things seem urgent and special to call for extraordinary actions (Baysal & Lüleci, 2015).

Because of this, the idea of security, which used to be seen as mostly good, has come to be linked with manipulation and control more and more. This change is mostly because of the political systems that decide what counts as a threat. These systems can be used for strategic reasons. State actors, in particular, often try to securitize issues by making them seem like threats to security. The main goal is often to gain more power over society. However, making security a political issue can make it much harder for non-state actors who are trying to solve real security problems.
Security has long been seen as a basic human need, and in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it is the second tier, right after physiological needs. Security is looked at on many levels, including individual, national, regional, international, and global, because it is so important to society. In the same way, the field of security has grown to include five main areas: military, political, economic, social, and environmental security. In today's interconnected world, each of these areas shows a different side of what security means.

The growth of security studies into environmental areas has made it easier to think of climate-induced[2] displacement as both a security and a humanitarian issue. But this change doesn't always go smoothly. Barnett (2003) says that making environmental issues a security issue can get politicians' and resources' attention, but it can also lead to militarized responses that hurt human security goals. So, a balanced framing that acknowledges the urgency of climate risks without resorting to exceptionalist and exclusionary measures is essential for including climate migration in the larger conversation about security.

Baldwin (1997) said that the referent object of security changes depending on the situation. Climate-induced migration can be looked at from both an environmental security point of view, which looks at ecological thresholds and resource stability, and a human security point of view, which looks at the well-being of individuals and communities. Barnett and Adger (2007) say that climate change is a "threat multiplier" that makes existing weaknesses worse at the national, regional, and global levels. This theoretical connection is what the next section builds on. It goes into more detail about Environmental Security, Human Security, and Securitization Theory.

The Relationship Between Climate Change and Security

To fully understand the link between climate change and security, we need to first look at how environmental issues came to be seen as security issues. Since the Industrial

[2] This thesis I use climate-induced migration to describe mobility in which climatic stressors are a contributing driver alongside economic, political, and social factors. Following the IPCC and World Bank usage, the term is analytically broad but legally neutral: it covers internal and cross-border movement; temporary, seasonal, circular, or permanent mobility; and both rapid-onset hazards (storms, floods, heatwaves) and slow-onset processes (sea-level rise, salinization, drought) (IPCC, 2022; World Bank, 2021). Although such conceptual transitions are visible, such concepts will continue to be used as the main definition progresses through "Climate Refugee".

Revolution, people have done more and more damage to the environment. In the modern era, this damage has gotten so bad that it is very concerning. Because of this, the damage to the environment has gotten so bad that it now poses serious threats to everyone on Earth.

The link between environmental issues and security can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s. Richard Falk's 1971 book This Endangered Planet was one of the first and most important contributions. It looked at how environmental damage, resource scarcity, and violent conflict are all connected. Falk's work was important for the growth of environmental security as a field of study. The Club of Rome paid for the important 1972 report The Limits to Growth, which was written by a team led by Donella Meadows. It looked at how continued economic growth could use up natural resources. The report stressed the long-term dangers of environmental collapse caused by policies that aren't sustainable (Atvur & Vural, 2022).

By 1977, people were starting to talk about national security in a way that included environmental issues. Lester Brown suggested a new definition of national security that included environmental risks that year. The idea of "common security" was first brought up in the 1982 report Common Security: A Blueprint for Disarmament by the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues. This report showed how security is changing in a world that is becoming more connected.

The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 report Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report, may have had the biggest impact on the environmental security conversation. This report clearly linked environmental damage to poverty, making sustainable development a need for both development and security (Kaypak, 2012).

APPROACHES TO ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY	TRADITIONAL SECURITY (State-Centric)	HUMAN SECURITY (Human-Centric)	ECOLOGICAL SECURITY (Ecosystem-Centric)	COLLECTIVE SECURITY (State-Centric)
DEFINITION OF THREAT	Impact of ecological problems on national security	Impact of ecological problems on human life and security	Impact of ecological problems on ecosystems and the integrity and sustainability of the planet	Impact of ecological problems on international security
ACTORS	State	Individuals, communities, states, international organizations, NGOs	Individuals, communities, states, international organizations, NGOs	States, international organizations, NGOs
REFERENT OBJECT (SECURITY OBJECT)	State	Individual	Biosphere	State-centric international system

Table 1 Approaches to Environmental Security (Atvur & Vural, 2022)

The table above, Table 1, is a clear and complete summary of the different definitions and ways of thinking about environmental security. It talks about the main ways people think about environmental security and how each one defines threats, finds the right actors, and decides what the main objects of security are.

As was said in the previous parts of this study, the idea of security has changed a lot over the years. One of the most important results of this change is that people now realize that security is no longer just a problem at the regional or national level; it is now a global issue. This change has been most obvious since the end of the Cold War, when environmental problems started to be seen as major security threats.
Environmental threats are one of the most important factors that have led to the globalization of security. Climate change is becoming more and more seen as one of the

most urgent and serious security issues of our time in this group. Climate change is seen as more important than other environmental issues because it has a direct and deep effect on people's lives and standards of living (Sağsen, 2017).

In its broadest sense, climate change means long-term changes in temperature and weather patterns. The Earth's natural cycles used to include these kinds of changes, but the balance started to shift when the Industrial Revolution began. Burning fossil fuels like coal and oil has caused a big rise in the amount of greenhouse gases in the air. These gases trap heat by stopping solar radiation from bouncing back into space. This makes the planet get warmer over time (Demir, 2009).

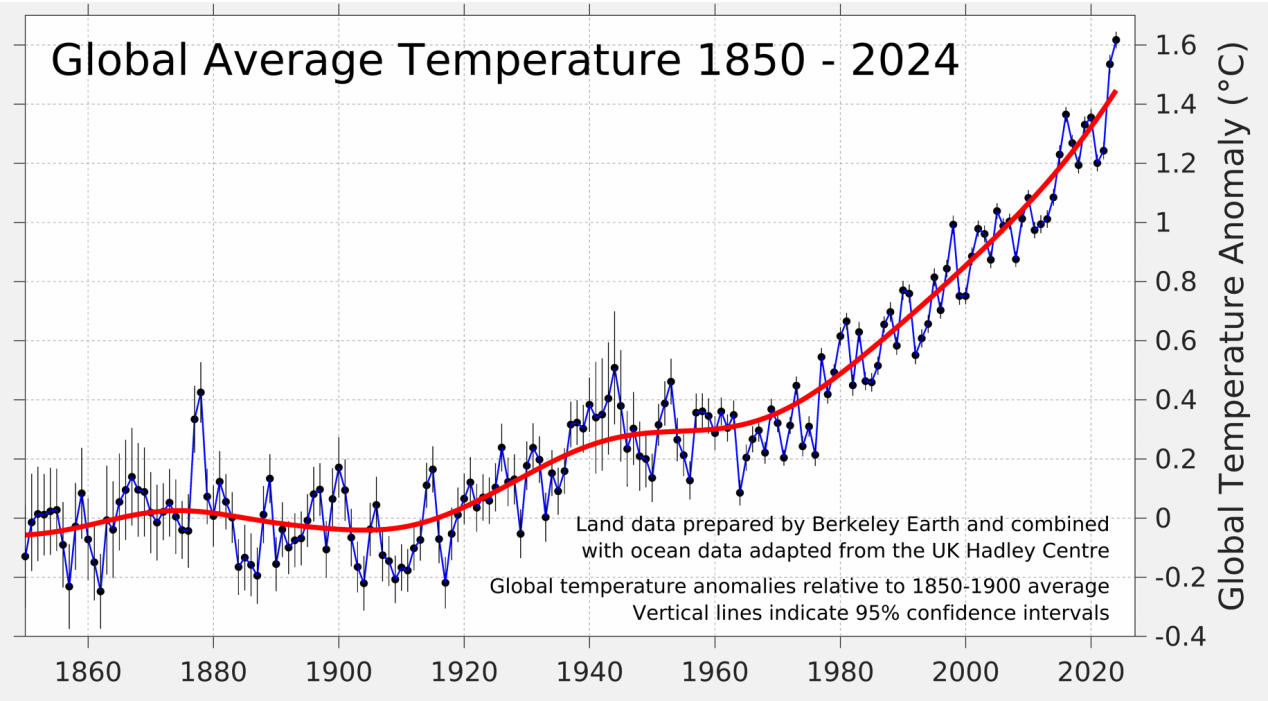

Figure 2 Global average temperature anomaly from 1850 to 2024. Land data prepared by Berkeley Earth and combined with ocean data adapted from the UK Hadley Centre. Global temperature anomalies are relative to the 1850–1900 average. Vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Source: Berkeley Earth. (2024). Global average temperature 1850–2024

Figure 2 shows how the average surface temperature around the world has changed since 1850, compared to the baseline of 1850–1900, which was before the Industrial Revolution. The dataset, which was put together by Berkeley Earth and combined with ocean records from the UK Hadley Centre, shows that there have been short-term changes in the climate because of natural variability. However, the long-term trend has been steady and speeding up warming, especially since the 1970s. The year 2024 saw the biggest difference in the series, with temperatures about 1.6 °C higher than the pre-industrial average. This is higher than the 1.5 °C limit set by the IPCC as a critical limit for avoiding the worst effects of climate change. This trend shows how important it is to include climate change in discussions about security, since rising global temperatures are

closely linked to more frequent and severe migration and conflict caused by climate change.

As the world's population has grown, so has industrial production. This has led to more factories, which use fossil fuels and make the greenhouse effect worse. Also, things that people do, like cutting down trees, driving cars, and spraying deodorants and other products that release aerosol chemicals, have also made the atmosphere worse. These factors have all made the bad effects of climate change happen faster.
The effects of climate change on the environment are now directly and seriously threatening human life, making the issue a matter of global security. It has a lot of different effects, such as droughts, desertification, floods, hurricanes, the spread of infectious diseases, rising sea levels, food insecurity, loss of biodiversity, and pollution of freshwater sources (Özerdem & Barlas, 2021). These things are not only making life worse, but they are also causing problems in society as a whole, such as political and economic instability, irregular migration, terrorism, water shortages, and competition for natural resources. All of these things make both regional and international security weaker.

Also, recognizing climate change as a security threat has brought up the idea of climate justice. This term means that some countries are unfairly affected by climate change even though they don't contribute much to it. It shows the moral problem that resource-poor and vulnerable countries are hit harder than others, even though they had little to do with the crisis (Balcılar, 2022). Some people say that countries that have been more responsible for greenhouse gas emissions in the past should help less responsible but more vulnerable countries with money and technology. These kinds of efforts are necessary to fix the structural problems that are at the heart of the global climate crisis.

Climate Refugee: Series of Uncertainties

People moving from one place to another for political, economic, or social reasons is common in today's world. Changes and damage to the natural environment are becoming more and more of a reason for these movements. These changes make it harder for people to live in certain areas. Since the Industrial Revolution, these changes to the environment have sped up and become more complicated and global. Pollution and resource depletion happen on a small scale, but bigger problems like ocean acidification, desertification, deforestation, loss of arable land, biodiversity decline, and global climate change have become major global issues (Yılmaz & Navruz, 2019: 257).

Climate change is linked to a lot of different things, like rising global temperatures, melting glaciers, fewer natural resources, more frequent and severe extreme weather events, changing seasonal patterns, and the spread of diseases. These effects have caused serious problems like resource insecurity, social unrest, poverty, security threats, and more people moving to other countries. Climate change has started to have more

and more obvious effects on people, in addition to its effects on the environment. One of the most important of these is mass displacement, which is now a major human aspect of climate change. In short, climate change has already started to cause people to move in large numbers in different parts of the world, and it will continue to do so with more and more intensity in the years to come (Gönenç & Kibaroğlu, 2017: 2).

The 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees say that a refugee is someone who is outside the country of their nationality and cannot or will not take advantage of the protection of that country because they have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for their race, religion, nationality, membership in a certain social group, or political opinion (UNHCR, 1998). This definition, which focuses on persecution based on social or political identity, doesn't do a good job of recognizing people who have to leave their homes because of environmental or climate threats. That is to say, people who are in danger or scared because of climate change do not currently fit into this legal framework.

Environmental refugees, a closely related idea, got a lot of attention in international discussions after Essam El-Hinnawi wrote an article about it for the 1985 United Nations Environment Programme. He said that environmental refugees are "those people who have to leave their traditional habitat, either temporarily or permanently, because of a significant environmental disruption (natural or human-made) that threatens their life and/or severely affects the quality of their life." (El-Hinnawi, 1985).
People have criticized the term "climate refugee," Bettini (2013) says that in Western political talk, it is often framed as a potential threat to receiving states instead of a humanitarian issue. Boas and Rothe (2016) also warn that portraying climate migrants as passive victims can take away their political power and support paternalistic and exclusionary policies.

There is a lot of research that looks at the works of Boas and Rothe (2016) and McAdam (2012), but there are also other scholars who have looked at the socio-political framing of climate-induced migration. For example, Farbotko (2010) shows how stories about "sinking islands" can unintentionally reinforce stereotypes and take away the power of Pacific communities. Baldwin (2017) also criticizes technocratic approaches to climate mobility, saying that they often make displacement less political by only focusing on adaptation and resilience measures. Adding these points of view broadens the analysis by showing that the "climate refugee" debate is influenced by more than just legal and security issues; it is also shaped by postcolonial and critical geography ideas.

Some researchers want climate refugees to be recognized, but others don't like the term at all. Black (2001) says that environmental factors don't usually work alone and are usually part of bigger social, economic, and political situations. Because of this, saying that climate change is the main cause of migration may make it too simple to understand how people move around. Gemenne (2011) also warns that the term "climate refugee" may overstate the cause of the problem, which could take attention away from the immediate development and governance needs in vulnerable areas. These

counterarguments are a good reminder that the debate isn't just about legal gaps; it's also about the accuracy of ideas and the effects of policies.

There have been many guesses about how many people will have to leave their homes because of climate change in the next few decades. Mostafa K. Tolba warned at a meeting of the American Institute of Biological Sciences in 1989 that as many as 50 million people could become environmental refugees. In his book Ultimate Security, Norman Myers said that as many as 200 million people might soon be at risk of becoming climate refugees (Myers, 1993: 613). Christian Aid, a humanitarian group, also predicted that climate-related causes could displace about one billion people by 2050 (Christian Aid, 2007: 5).

These scary numbers have made people around the world worried and led to more discussion in international policy circles about what kinds of actions and changes to the law are needed to deal with the growing problem of people moving because of climate change. Questions about what protections, definitions, and frameworks can be put in place to help "climate refugees" are now a major focus of global political and humanitarian efforts.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was set up in 1950 as the first real step by an organization to deal with refugee problems around the world. The agency was first set up to help Europeans who had lost their homes or been forced to leave them after World War II. Over time, its mission grew to include protecting and helping refugees all over the world.
Article 1 of the 1951 Geneva Convention says that someone is a refugee if they are outside of their country of nationality and cannot or will not take advantage of that country's protection because they are afraid of being persecuted for their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, and this fear is based on events that happened before January 1, 1951 (UNHCR, 1951: 14).
After this, the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees was passed. This removed the time limit set by the 1951 Convention, which meant that refugee protection could apply to events that happened after that. But neither the Convention nor the Protocol has any specific rules for people who have to move because of climate or environmental factors. The law only looks at threats caused by human persecution, so people who have to leave because of natural disasters are not covered (Hiraide, 2022: 6).

Even though there isn't a law that covers this, more and more people around the world are being forced to leave their homes because of extreme weather events. They're not leaving because they're being persecuted, but because of the threats that environmental degradation poses. The Convention and its Protocol don't have a solid basis for dealing with people who have to leave their homes because of climate change. The introduction of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in the United States in the 1990s was an important legal change. TPS, which was created in 1990, lets people from other countries stay in the U.S. for a short time because of unusual circumstances in their home countries, such as natural disasters. For instance, after Hurricane Mitch hit in 1998,

people who were affected by the storm were given this status and allowed to stay in the U.S. for a short time (Jaswal Jolly, 2013: 57–58).

The asylum application of Ioane Teitiota, a Kiribati citizen who sought refuge in New Zealand, was one of the most talked-about legal cases about climate refugees in the 2000s. Teitiota said that the rising sea levels and worsening environmental conditions in his country were putting his life in danger. The court, on the other hand, turned down his claim, saying that he was not being directly persecuted and did not meet the requirements to be considered a refugee under the 1951 Convention (UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies, 2016: 2–4).

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has become a hotspot for climate-induced displacement in the last few years. The region's dependence on agricultural water sources and its growing vulnerability to water shortages, made worse by less rain, make it especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Many studies have predicted that large numbers of people will have to leave the MENA region because of worsening environmental conditions (Hugo, 2011: 21; Wodon et al., 2014: 2; Borghesi & Ticci, 2019: 291; Balsari et al., 2020: 406–407).

The United Nations said again in 2020 that it is against the law to force refugees to go back to countries where their lives or health would be in danger. This statement could be seen as a possible step toward giving people whose lives are in danger because of climate-related problems more international protection. (2016) United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC)

There is no legal definition of climate refugees in international law, but there have been big steps taken around the world to deal with climate change and people who have to leave their homes because of it. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is one of the most important international agreements that about 193 countries have signed. Its goal is to encourage cooperation among countries on climate change and to set up a framework for the future. The Kyoto Protocol, which went along with this convention, made it legally binding for countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions (Ekşi, 2016: 39).

The 2015 UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) was a very important step in global climate policy because it led to the signing of the Paris Agreement. The agreement doesn't say what a "climate refugee" is, but Article 50 says that the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism should set up a task force to stop, reduce, and deal with people being forced to leave their homes because of the bad effects of climate change.
The European Union has also taken a lot of steps to lessen the effects of climate change, especially in countries that could send a lot of climate refugees. The European Commission set up a working group that wrote a report between 2011 and 2013 that listed ways to work together with third countries on climate change and asylum issues. The report talked about how climate change could lead to a lot of people moving from developing countries to Europe and suggested a number of things that could be done to

get ready for this. The EU has promised to make Europe carbon-neutral by 2050 in response to the larger crisis. It is focusing on investment plans and incentives, especially in the countries that are most affected by climate change.
The EU is still worried about the possibility of large-scale migration to Europe, but it's important to remember that climate change also poses serious threats within Europe, which could lead to security concerns there as well.

The most recent important event in this area happened in 2020, when the UN Human Rights Committee made a historic ruling that people who are affected by climate change may be able to seek asylum. The case was about a person living on Tarawa, one of the Kiribati Islands, who applied for asylum in New Zealand in 2013. They said that the rising sea levels and skyrocketing land prices were making the drinking water unsafe. In 2015, New Zealand turned down the claim, saying there was no immediate threat to life. However, the UN Human Rights Committee later said that "people who are forced to leave their land because of climate change cannot be returned to their countries if their basic rights are at risk."

The Committee did not find that New Zealand broke any international laws, but it did say that climate change could be a threat to the right to life. This decision was a big step, even though it wasn't legally binding. It showed how urgent and serious climate change is as a global threat. People have seen it as a last chance to rethink the laws and policies that govern climate change and climate-related displacement on both a national and international level.

As was said before, many researchers have made predictions about climate refugees, but some estimates and suggestions have become the most well-known and trusted in studies of climate refugees. It's interesting to note that there are big differences between these projections, even though they all come from reliable sources. Oli Brown also pointed out this inconsistency in his report for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and asked why the estimates were so different. Piguet et al. (2011) say that the link between climate change and migration is often indirect, because it is affected by social, economic, political, and cultural factors. This makes it hard to measure in real life. Oli Brown (IOM, 2008) goes on to say that the big differences in estimates of displacement are mostly due to the fact that there is no one definition that everyone agrees on and that studies don't all use the same methods. This methodological gap shows how important it is to do more consistent, interdisciplinary research to help shape laws and policies.
One of the main reasons for these differences is that there is no clear, widely accepted definition of the term "climate refugee." Also, the fact that there isn't a clear and well-defined connection between climate change and migration makes things even more complicated.

Betts (2010) says that climate-induced migrants are in a "protection gap" because the 1951 Refugee Convention doesn't cover them, even though they are in danger of losing their lives. McAdam (2012) also says that the term "climate refugee" is legally wrong and politically charged, and he suggests using other terms like "climate-induced

displacement" to avoid confusion. The IPCC AR6 WGII (2022) says that both rapid-onset hazards (like cyclones and floods) and slow-onset processes (like sea-level rise and salinization) are likely to cause more and more people to move. South Asia and MENA are two of the regions that will be hit the hardest.
The main goal of this study is to critically look at how current frameworks don't do a good job of defining the environmental factors that cause people to move and to show that the world hasn't been able to agree on a single definition. The study also wants to look into how this lack of clarity and legal recognition leads to security problems by using theoretical frameworks to look at these problems. Finally, case studies will be used to see how this gap in definitions and laws affects the real world. The growth of security studies into environmental areas has made it possible to think of climate-related displacement as both a security and a humanitarian issue. But this change doesn't always go smoothly. Barnett (2003) says that making environmental issues a security issue can get politicians and resources involved, but it can also lead to militarized responses that hurt human security goals. So, a balanced framing that acknowledges the urgency of climate risks without resorting to exceptionalist and exclusionary measures is essential for including climate migration in the larger conversation about security.

Theoretical Framework

In the last few decades, the effects of climate change have gotten worse and worse. They have not only created serious problems for the environment and people, but they have also changed what security means and where it is. People have started to question traditional ideas of security, which have long been based on military threats, interstate conflict, and state-centered protection mechanisms. This is because of new, non-traditional threats like pandemics, cyber warfare, and environmental degradation. In this situation, climate-induced displacement has become a problem that affects many areas of security, including environmental, human, societal, and political security. The study's theoretical framework looks at how different security paradigms think about and deal with the problems that climate change and forced migration bring up. More specifically, it draws on three different but related ways of thinking: Environmental Security, which sees climate change as a threat to political and ecological stability; Human Security, which focuses on individuals and vulnerable groups; and Securitization Theory, which breaks down how threats are politically constructed and what it means to recognize—or not recognize—climate-induced migration as a legitimate security concern. The study's goal is to give a multidimensional view of the security effects of climate-related displacement by looking at these three points of view and questioning the normative assumptions that each one makes.

Environmental Security – Framing Climate Change as a Threat

As a way to connect changes in the environment to issues of peace, conflict, and human well-being, environmental security has become more important. It became clear in the late 20th century that environmental degradation, especially when it led to resource shortages, unstable climates, and ecosystem collapse, could threaten national, regional, and even global security (Matthew, Barnett, McDonald & O'Brien, 2010). Environmental security is different from traditional security approaches that only look at military threats and national borders. It looks at how natural systems and human systems are connected.

The idea that climate change is a "threat multiplier" is one of the most talked-about ideas in the field of environmental security. The United Nations and the U.S. Department of Defense made this term popular. It means that climate change makes existing weaknesses worse and raises the risk of conflict, instability, and forced migration (CNA Military Advisory Board, 2007; UN Security Council, 2011). Climate shocks can make competition for scarce resources worse, cause people to move within their own countries, and even lead to state failure in fragile areas like drought-prone regions or low-lying coastal areas (Barnett & Adger, 2007).

The environmental security paradigm knows that threats to the stability of ecosystems are rarely one-time events. A long drought, for example, is not just a weather event; it also lowers agricultural productivity, causes economic stress, drives people to move to cities, and in some cases, sparks political unrest. In this way, environmental degradation affects many levels and interacts with political and social factors in complicated ways. The case of Syria, which will be discussed later in this study, is a clear example of how drought and lack of resources, along with bad political management and a weak economy, can lead to widespread displacement and civil war (Kelley et al., 2015).

Homer-Dixon (1994) and other scholars have also said that environmental stress can lead to "acute scarcity conflicts," which happen when groups fight violently over resources that are becoming harder to find, like fresh water, arable land, or forest resources. Recent evidence is more complicated than early claims about "climate wars." Meta-analyses and large-N studies show that climate stress can make violence more likely in certain social and political situations, like when institutions are weak or people depend on their livelihoods. It doesn't always cause violence. Hsiang, Burke, and Miguel (2013) say that there is a statistical link between unusual weather and the risk of conflict. On the other hand, Buhaug (2015) and Selby et al. (2017) warn against climate determinism and stress the importance of governance and development in the middle. Mach et al.'s (2019) more recent synthesis comes to the same conclusion: climate is best understood as a threat multiplier that works with existing vulnerabilities.

The environmental security approach doesn't just see climate change as a future threat; it sees it as a process that's already happening and has measurable effects. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says that extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and changing patterns of precipitation have already started to displace millions of people around the world, with developing countries being hit the hardest (IPCC, 2022). These trends show that environmental security should not be seen as a minor issue, but as a major part of global governance in the 21st century.

But there have also been complaints about environmental security. Some researchers say that putting environmental issues in the context of security could lead to the militarization of climate responses or strengthen state-centered stories that ignore the needs of vulnerable groups (Dalby, 2009). Others warn against determinism, which is when people say that climate change directly causes conflict. Instead, they say we should have a more nuanced understanding that takes into account political, historical, and socioeconomic factors.
Even though people have said bad things about it, environmental security is still a useful way to look at the structural and systemic nature of climate-related threats. When it comes to climate-induced displacement, it helps us understand how environmental degradation doesn't happen in a vacuum, but rather with existing social tensions. This study will argue that it is important to see climate change as a security issue, especially through the lens of environmental security, in order to create anticipatory governance strategies, fair policy responses, and legal frameworks that can deal with the realities of climate migration.
The IPCC AR6 WGII (2022) agrees with this and says that both rapid-onset events (like floods and tropical cyclones) and slow-onset processes (like sea-level rise and salinization) are already affecting internal and cross-border mobility. South Asia and MENA are two areas where these risks are highest.

Human Security – Shifting Focus from State to Individual

The idea of human security came about in the early 1990s as a way to fix the problems with traditional state-centered security models. Human security changed the focus of security analysis from the safety, dignity, and well-being of individuals to the integrity of the territory, military defense, and the survival of the state. The 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report made this change official by defining human security as "freedom from fear and freedom from want" and focusing on seven main areas: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP, 1994).

This new way of thinking about security came about because people realized that most of the threats they face today—like famine, disease, poverty, environmental degradation, and forced displacement—don't come from outside military aggression, but from weaknesses built into their own societies. In this way, the human security framework goes against the Westphalian idea that the state is both the main object of security and the only one that can provide it. Instead, it focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis and says that the state is only legitimate if it can protect the basic rights and needs of its people (Acharya, 2001).

The human security approach gives us a strong theoretical basis for understanding both the causes and effects of climate-induced migration. Environmental stressors like droughts, rising sea levels, and natural disasters can break down important systems that people rely on for their livelihoods, often pushing already vulnerable groups past their

limits of resilience. When people can't get food, water, shelter, or health care, their basic human rights are violated, and they often have to move to stay alive (Adger et al., 2014). Also, the human security framework lets us look closely at how climate change affects different social groups in different ways. Women, children, the elderly, indigenous communities, and the poor often don't have the money or political power to move or adapt safely. This makes them more likely to be displaced by environmental changes. From this point of view, climate migration is not just an environmental issue; it is also an issue of fairness and justice that is based on power imbalances, structural inequalities, and historical patterns of marginalization (Gasper, 2005).

Recent evaluations support these worries about how things are spread out. The IPCC AR6 WGII says that poverty, gender, and marginalization affect how people are exposed to and sensitive to climate change. This makes it harder for low-income households and residents of informal settlements to adapt and increases their risk of being displaced (IPCC, 2022). Additional studies connect climate stress to current inequalities and development gaps, indicating that protection must include measures that promote fairness (Islam & Winkel, 2017; Rigaud et al., 2018).

One of the case studies in this research, Bangladesh, shows this dynamic very well. The country is very vulnerable to rising sea levels because it has a lot of people living close together, a lot of poor people, and jobs that depend on the weather. In these kinds of places, where people can't adapt and the government doesn't have strong infrastructure, environmental degradation happens slowly over time, which makes people less safe. This often doesn't lead to formal refugee mechanisms or international intervention.
The human security paradigm also shows that the current legal and institutional systems are not good enough to protect people who have to move because of environmental reasons. As we talked about earlier, the 1951 Geneva Convention does not consider climate change to be a valid reason for refugee status. This legal gap leaves people who have had to leave their homes because of climate change in a state of legal limbo, where they are not fully protected by refugee law and development or humanitarian frameworks do not fully address their needs. Because of this, the human security approach says that we need to rethink protection systems and push for policies that are more inclusive and focused on people that reflect how displacement is changing in the 21st century (Betts, 2009).
The human security framework is different from the more abstract and often political language of national security because it gives us a moral and ethical way to look at policy gaps and push for changes in the way things are done. By focusing on human dignity, vulnerability, and empowerment, it not only criticizes current systems but also shows how to make governance more fair and strong.

But there are people who don't agree with human security. Some people say that its wide range, which includes things like poverty and mental health, could make the idea too vague to be useful (Paris, 2001). Others say that by focusing on individual needs, it might unintentionally hide the importance of collective action or structural change. For this study, however, the human security framework is an important addition to environmental

security because it helps us better understand the real lives of climate migrants beyond just numbers and geostrategic issues.

By adding human security to the theoretical base of this study, the analysis goes beyond state-centered threat assessments to look at who is really at risk, why, and what kinds of protection are (or aren't) available to them. This point of view is necessary to connect the climate displacement debate to issues of justice, agency, and human rights.

Securitization Theory – How Climate Refugee is Constructed (or Excluded) as a Threat

The Copenhagen School came up with the securitization theory, which is best known for being explained by Ole Waever and Barry Buzan. This theory gives us a way to look at how some issues are framed as "security threats" in political talk. This theory says that security isn't a real thing, but a way of talking about things. It's what happens when a political actor successfully frames an issue as a threat to life that needs special measures (Wæver, 1995). Securitization is the process of moving an issue from normal politics to emergency status, which makes it okay for the government to take unusual actions.

1. A securitizing actor (like a politician, state, or institution); 2. A referent object (like the state, the environment, or human life); and 3. An audience that needs to agree with the securitization for it to work.

When it comes to climate-induced migration, securitization theory is a very useful way to look at how climate change is being framed as a security issue and how climate migrants are talked about in public and political discourse. Climate-induced displacement is often talked about in less clear and more political terms than traditional refugee flows, which are usually linked to war or persecution. For example, it is sometimes called a humanitarian crisis and other times a security threat to the states that take in refugees (McDonald, 2013).

In Western political discourse, this securitizing narrative is most obvious. Climate migrants, especially those from the Global South, are often seen as possible sources of instability, economic burden, or even demographic threat. These kinds of arguments have been used to support stricter border policies, more surveillance, and the outsourcing of migration controls (Bettini, 2013). In practice, this often means moving migration controls outside of the country and increasing border surveillance—steps that put state security ahead of migrant protection (Bigo, 2002). These kinds of responses show how securitization can shift resources to control structures while keeping gaps in normative protection the same. In these cases, the term "climate migrant" is not used to protect them, but rather to protect against them because they are seen as a threat to national or regional order.

It's interesting that securitization theory can also help us understand why climate migration hasn't been properly securitized in the law. Even though more and more scientists agree that climate change is linked to displacement, international laws like the

1951 Geneva Convention do not recognize climate-related factors as valid reasons for refugee status. This shows that securitization didn't work or wasn't finished. The issue is talked about a lot around the world, but it doesn't have the institutional follow-through that usually comes with securitized issues (Boas & Rothe, 2016).

Also, the selective securitization of climate-related issues shows that there are bigger problems with global power structures. Policy papers, like the UN Security Council debates on climate security, talk about climate change as a threat to our very existence. However, the voices of people who have been displaced are often left out. Securitization theory brings to light some very political questions, such as who gets securitized, by whom, and for whose benefit (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998).

This theory also shows, in a very important way, how not securitizing can be a way for politicians to control people. States may be able to avoid legal or political responsibility for climate displacement by keeping it in the realm of development or humanitarian aid instead of security. They can still talk about how bad the problem is, though. This plan lets powerful people keep control of their own countries and borders while still looking like they're involved in global climate governance.

Even so, making climate migration a security issue isn't always a bad thing. In some cases, framing climate-induced displacement as a security issue may help get the political will, money, and institutional capacity needed to protect vulnerable groups. But critics have warned that securitization should be done with care so that it doesn't support exclusionary or militarized responses that violate human rights (Floyd, 2007).

Securitization theory is especially helpful for this study because it shows how the way people talk and the way institutions work affect how the world responds to climate migration. It shows how some threats are made bigger while others are ignored, and how this process shows deeper power dynamics in international relations. By looking at how climate-induced displacement is or isn't securitized, we can learn more about why legal frameworks are still not very good, why policy responses are often reactive, and why climate migrants still don't get the protection they need. When you look at them all together, they show a conflict: environmental security makes people feel urgent, human security focuses on dignity, and securitization explains why politics are so interested in these issues, but none of them fully incorporate planetary boundaries and ecological justice.

Synthesis: Limits of Existing Frameworks and the Need for a Green Turn

This study looks at three theoretical approaches: environmental security, human security, and securitization theory. Each of these approaches sheds light on how climate change and forced migration are changing over time. Environmental security shows how climate change is a structural and systemic risk factor, especially in weak states where there aren't enough resources and institutions aren't strong enough. Human security shifts the focus of the analysis to the real-life experiences of vulnerable people and communities,

putting more emphasis on ethical responsibility and rights-based protection. Securitization theory, on the other hand, focuses on how climate migration is talked about and politically constructed—how some stories make state responses seem reasonable while others are left out or pushed to the side.

These frameworks each have their own strengths and weaknesses, but they also show major flaws when faced with the full complexity of climate-induced displacement. Environmental security is often focused on the state, which can lead to militarizing responses to environmental problems. Human security is a strong idea, but it can't be enforced by institutions and is still mostly an idea in many policy areas. Securitization theory helps us understand the politics of threat construction, but it doesn't give us any real solutions for people who are still legally invisible, like climate migrants who aren't covered by the 1951 Refugee Convention.
This synthesis shows that there is a theoretical and normative gap. This is a place where current frameworks don't do a good job of incorporating ecological realities, planetary boundaries, and the long-term interdependence between people and their environment. Also, existing theories tend to repeat anthropocentric ideas, seeing the environment either as a threat to human security or as a resource to be managed for political stability, instead of as a part of social systems and justice claims.

The next chapter will look at the real-world problems with these theories through the lens of the case studies of Syria and Bangladesh. It will then put forward a new theoretical idea called Green Theory. This theory tries to place climate-induced migration within a larger ecocentric, justice-oriented, and ethically based framework that values ecosystems for their own sake, acknowledges global differences in responsibility, and stresses the need for collective action.

The above discussion shows that traditional security models don't do a good job of capturing the many sides of climate-induced migration. As threats shift from military aggression to ecological collapse, it is important to create a security framework that puts ecological integrity at its center. Green Theory is a way of looking at climate-related migration and other global problems that is based on norms and a critique of anthropocentric worldviews. The next part goes into detail about Green Theory, looking at its philosophical roots, its moral claims, and how it can help us rethink what security means in the 21st century.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative **most-different systems** case study design to analyze the nexus between climate change, forced migration, and security. The objective is twofold: (i) to trace how environmental stress interacts with political and socio-economic vulnerabilities under different temporal hazard profiles; and (ii) to evaluate what existing security frameworks explain—and miss—while introducing **Green Theory** as a normative complement.

Research Question

Core RQ. How do **rapid-onset** (Syria) and **slow-onset** (Bangladesh) climate-induced displacements challenge existing international security and legal frameworks, and how can **Green Theory** provide a normative foundation to address the resulting protection gap?

Sub-questions

1. In what ways do **Environmental Security**, **Human Security**, and **Securitization Theory** explain (or fail to explain) climate-induced displacement?
2. How can **Green Theory** reframe recognition and protection for climate-induced migrants?

Analytical use (operationalization). This study operationalizes the three paradigms as follows: **Environmental Security** focuses on hazard exposure and resource stress (e.g., drought intensity, salinization) and their interaction with governance capacity; **Human Security** assesses vulnerability and adaptive capacity at household/community level (livelihood dependence, poverty, access to services, inequality); **Securitization Theory** traces speech acts and policy outputs (legislation, budget lines, border practices, externalization) that frame climate mobility. The analysis proceeds via **within-case process-tracing** and **cross-case pattern-matching**.

Case Selection

Two contrasting cases are selected to reflect different **temporal dynamics** of climate hazards:

- **Syria (rapid-onset, drought-related stress):** illustrates how climatic shocks can act as risk multipliers in politically fragile settings, catalyzing acute humanitarian crises and cross-border displacement.
- **Bangladesh (slow-onset, sea-level rise & salinization):** demonstrates structural, long-horizon displacement dynamics in a climate-vulnerable yet comparatively stable setting.

This design enables comparison between **acute** and **chronic** pathways of climate-related displacement.

Analytic time windows.
Syria: Mostly **2000–2015** (drought onset to early displacement escalation), with selective updates to 2024 for policy outcomes.
Bangladesh: Mostly **2000–2024** (evolution of slow-onset stressors and policy responses).

To keep the methodology section focused on design and analytic procedures, detailed narratives and interpretation of each case are presented in the subsequent **Case Analysis** section.

Data Sources

The study relies on **secondary data**:
Peer-reviewed literature in environmental politics, migration studies, and security studies.
Institutional/policy reports: **IPCC** (AR5/AR6 WGII), **IOM** (World Migration Report), **UNHCR**, **IDMC** (GRID), **World Bank** (Groundswell).
Country documents: **FAO** Syria drought assessments; **Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP)**; related national plans.
Search & selection protocol. Sources were identified through **Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, Google Scholar**, and institutional repositories (IPCC, IOM, UNHCR, IDMC, World Bank). Time window: **2000–2024**; language: English (with selected Turkish policy texts where relevant).
Search strings combined terms such as:
Syria AND (drought OR SPEI OR PDSI) AND (migration OR displacement); Bangladesh AND (sea-level rise OR salinization) AND displacement; securitization AND (migration OR border) AND climate.
Inclusion criteria: peer-reviewed or institutional reports with transparent methods; country-specific policy documents. **Exclusion:** opinion pieces, non-traceable datasets, duplicates.
Quality appraisal: each source screened for (i) methodological transparency, (ii) triangulation/replicability, and (iii) temporal relevance.

Analytical Framework

The research employs **thematic content analysis**. Data from academic and institutional sources are coded under four primary themes:

1. **Environmental Triggers** (drought; sea-level rise; salinization; flood frequency)
2. **Migration Dynamics** (internal vs. cross-border; seasonal vs. permanent; rural-urban flows)
3. **Security Implications** (conflict risk; human security; state capacity/stability)
4. **Policy & Legal Gaps** (protection frameworks; recognition; finance; planned relocation)

Coding protocol & reliability. A hybrid approach is used: **deductive** codes from the four themes and **inductive** sub-codes emerging during analysis (e.g., *flash drought*, *externalization*, *informal-settlement exposure*, *planned relocation*). Coding is iteratively memoed; **10%** of items are re-coded after a two-week interval (test–retest) and discrepancies resolved via **codebook refinement** (intra-coder consistency).

Securitization	Speech acts with security lexicon; policy outputs (border budgets, readmission deals, TPS-like measures); surveillance/externalization practices.	Gov/EU/UN docs; media records	Security framing → control infrastructures ↑; protection gaps persist
Green Theory (normative check)	Alignment of **emissions responsibility** & **capacity to assist** with **protection pathways** (adaptation finance per capita, planned relocation, mobility rights).	UNFCCC/Paris mechanisms; WB finance	Better alignment → reduced normative gap

Comparative strategy. Within each case, **process-tracing** links environmental triggers to migration dynamics via mediating political-economic conditions; across cases, **pattern-matching** contrasts rapid vs. slow-onset pathways and maps how each framework (Environmental/Human/Securitization) illuminates or obscures causal chains and protection needs.

Limitations, Scope Conditions, and Ethics

Limitations. The absence of primary interviews/surveys constrains direct representation of lived experience. This is mitigated through **triangulation** across peer-reviewed and institutional sources and by explicit consideration of **alternative explanations** (e.g., repression, commodity shocks, patronage politics).

Scope conditions & causality. Findings generalize to contexts with comparable hazard profiles and governance capacities; they do **not** claim universal climate–conflict causation. Climate is treated as a **risk multiplier** whose effects are **conditional** on social, economic, and institutional mediators.

Ethical note. Although using secondary materials, the study adheres to a **do-no-harm** and **decolonial** stance, avoids sensationalist framings of “climate refugees,” and cites local/Global South where available.

Findings

Syrian Case

Climate change is a threat multiplier, which is one of its most important traits. It directly threatens people, but it also makes a lot of other problems worse, making them harder to deal with and more serious. Many problems that would be easy to deal with in normal times become much worse when climate change is added to the mix. Underdeveloped countries with low levels of adaptability and high levels of social and political instability are usually the most vulnerable to this amplifying effect.

In these situations, climate-induced migration becomes both a cause and an effect of larger social problems, such as civil wars and political strife. For example, people who have to move from rural to urban areas because of drought and crop failure often put more stress on regions that are already economically unstable, which can lead to more unrest within those regions. Also, when state institutions don't do a good job of dealing with these kinds of social and environmental problems, tensions between governments and their people rise, causing more people to move.

Susan Martin says that "conflict over scarce natural resources leading to displacement" is one of the four main reasons why people move because of climate change. The Syrian refugee crisis is a strong example of this framework (Martin, 2013). Syria's civil war has been going on for almost ten years with no end in sight. It is one of the most devastating conflicts that came out of the Arab Spring, a wave of uprisings that spread across North Africa and the Middle East. Scholars were not surprised by the start of civil war in Syria or similar unrest in other parts of the Middle East. These events were the result of complicated social and environmental factors.

Climate change can be seen as a major factor that makes things worse in Syria. Before the Arab Spring began in 2011, Syria had been in a long drought that lasted almost three years. Many people think this was because of changes in rainfall patterns caused by climate change. This drought had terrible effects on a country whose economy relied heavily on agriculture. It forced thousands of rural Syrians to move to cities even before the first protests started. These people who were forced to leave their homes became climate migrants.

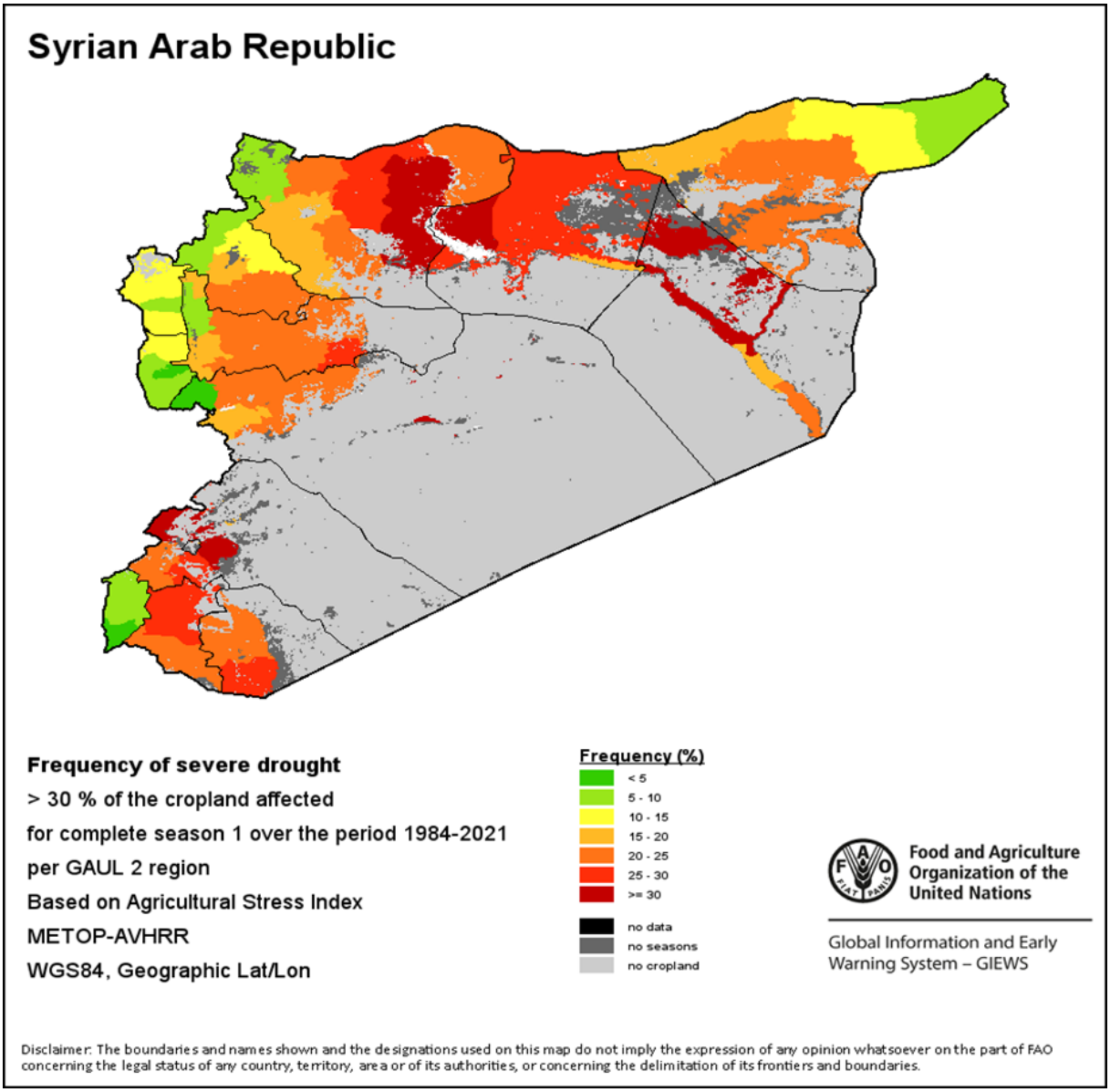

Figure 3 Frequency of severe drought in the Syrian Arab Republic (1984–2021), based on the Agricultural Stress Index derived from METOP-AVHRR data. Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (n.d.). Historic drought frequency – Syria [Map]. FAO Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Portal. Retrieved March 15, 2025, from https://www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation/asis/index_1.jsp?lang=en

This map from the FAO illustrates regions in Syria where over 30 % of cropland has been affected by severe drought between 1984 and 2021. It visually reinforces the **environmental trigger** context of Syria's rapid-onset climate-induced migration.
The Syrian government, already facing structural economic weaknesses and limited institutional capacity, struggled to manage the mounting pressures in cities. In addition, mismanagement of water resources and poor agricultural policies under Bashar al-Assad's regime further worsened the situation. These conditions made segments of the

population more susceptible to revolutionary sentiment and more inclined to rise against the government during the Arab Spring.

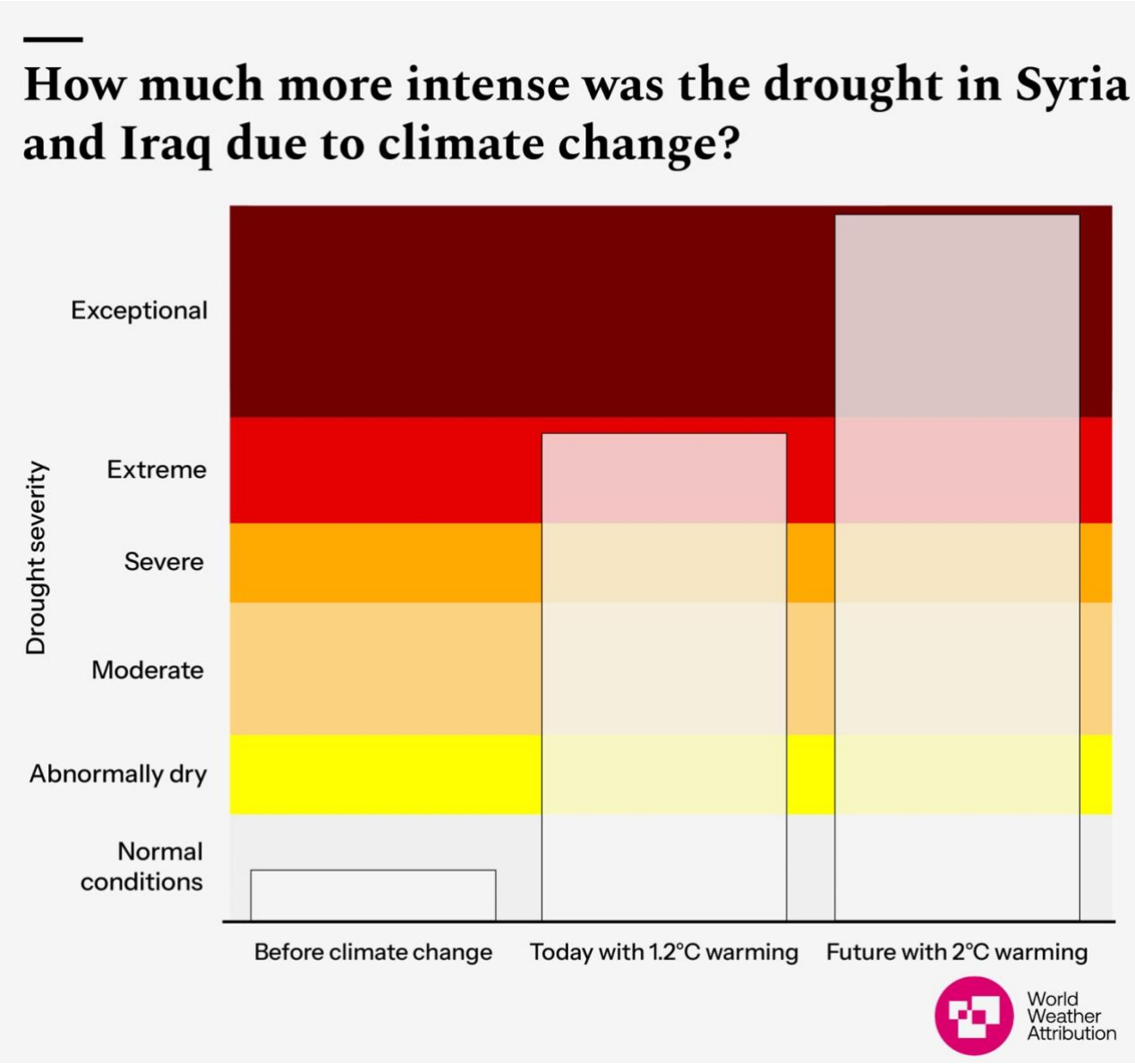

Figure 4 Shift in drought-severity distribution for Syria and Iraq before anthropogenic warming, today (~1.2 °C), and under 2 °C warming. Source: World Weather Attribution (WWA, 2023).

This FAO map shows parts of Syria where more than 30% of cropland has been hit by severe drought between 1984 and 2021. It shows how the environmental factors in Syria's rapid-onset climate-induced migration are related to each other.
The Syrian government was already having trouble managing the growing problems in cities because of weak economic structures and limited institutional capacity. Also, Bashar al-Assad's government made things worse by mismanaging water resources and having bad agricultural policies. During the Arab Spring, these conditions made some

groups of people more likely to support a revolution and more likely to fight the government.

The World Weather Attribution initiative's recent attribution studies show a clear causal link between human-caused climate change and worsening drought conditions in Syria and Iraq. Before global warming became a big problem, droughts in the area were usually only moderate or severe, and really bad droughts were rare. But now that the Earth is about 1.2°C warmer than it was before the Industrial Revolution, the chances and severity of droughts have changed a lot. The distribution now shows a big rise in the number of extreme and exceptional droughts, while the number of moderate droughts has gone down in relative frequency.

The projection for a 2°C warming scenario shows an even more worrying pattern: extreme and exceptional droughts are expected to take over the hydro-climatic regime, making it very unlikely that conditions will return to what they used to be. This escalation is not just bad for the environment; it also has serious social and political consequences for Syria. Longer and more severe droughts hurt farming, speed up the movement of people from rural areas to cities, and make existing social and economic problems worse. These kinds of changes are similar to what happened before 2011, when long-term droughts hurt rural economies and led to civil unrest and people moving within the country.

From a security point of view, these results support the idea that climate change is a "threat multiplier," meaning that environmental stress makes problems with governance and resource conflicts worse. The WWA analysis shows how important it is for Syria to include climate risk in both national policy planning and regional cooperation frameworks. This is because the chances of having more high-intensity droughts are likely to rise as the world warms.

The Syrian drought from 2006 to 2010 is known as a rapid-onset climate event because of how quickly and severely it affected the area. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022) says that rapid-onset events happen suddenly and cause major problems for people and the environment right away. In 2007, the amount of rain that fell in the northeastern provinces of Syria was up to 66% less than the historical average (NOAA, 2009). Data from the FAO Agricultural Stress Index System (ASIS) show that soil moisture levels have dropped below 50% of what they normally are, which has caused a lot of crops to fail (FAO, 2009).

From 2007 to 2010, cereal production fell by about 50%, livestock herds shrank by up to 80%, and 1.3 million people moved from rural to urban areas (UN OCHA, 2010). These effects happened in just a few years, showing how serious and short-lived the crisis was and how it made things worse before Syria's wider social and political unrest (Gleick, 2014).

We need to make it clear that the Syrian conflict is not just a climate crisis. There is also no scientific agreement that climate change was the main cause of the war. But many

studies show that the droughts that happened after 2006 had a big effect on rural livelihoods, made the economy worse, and led to civil unrest. Even John Kerry, the U.S. Secretary of State, talked about how Syria's worst drought in recorded history was linked to the start of the civil war (Kerry, 2015). President Barack Obama also connected climate change to the conflict in Syria, saying it was one of the main causes of the unrest (Obama, 2015).

Year	Avg. Rainfall Decrease (%)	Cereal Production Change (%)	Livestock Loss (%)	Internal Displacement (millions)
2007	-66	-38	-50	0.4
2008	-60	-50	-65	0.6
2009	-55	-49	-80	1.3

Table 2 Key Indicators of Syrian Drought (2007–2009) Source: FAO (2009), NOAA (2009), UN OCHA (2010)

Bangladesh Case

With a population of ~170 million and still growing, Bangladesh concentrates a very large population in a relatively small territory of ~147,570 km², roughly comparable to Florida (~170,312 km²). Its population density (≈1,280–1,300 people/km²) is well over double that of the Netherlands (≈520 people/km²). Many Bangladeshis live in low-elevation coastal and deltaic areas—a large share within ≤10 m of mean sea level—which heightens exposure to coastal flooding and salinity intrusion (UN DESA, 2022; World Bank, 2023; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023; IPCC, 2022).

As sea level rises, substantial parts of coastal Bangladesh face inundation risk. While much larger displacement figures are sometimes cited in public debate, the World Bank's Groundswell modeling projects up to ~13.3 million ***internal*** climate migrants by 2050 under high-emissions scenarios, with hotspots in the southwest and southeast; UN medium-variant projections put Bangladesh's 2050 population at ~200–205 million (World Bank, 2021; UN DESA, 2022).

Historical experience illustrates the stakes. The 1991 cyclone caused approximately 138,000 deaths**,** one of the deadliest tropical cyclones on record. Looking ahead, the IPCC assesses increasing proportions of intense tropical cyclones with warming and highlights above-global-mean sea-level rise along many Asian coasts, compounding storm-surge risks for Bangladesh (EM-DAT, 2023; IPCC, 2022).

Bangladesh's political history also shows how disasters can interact with governance and social pressures. The **1974 famine**—with mortality commonly estimated in the **hundreds of thousands (≈300,000)**—contributed to severe public discontent and instability preceding the **1975 military coup** that killed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman; historians emphasize multiple structural drivers rather than simple causation (Alamgir, 1980; Sen, 1981; van Schendel, 2009).

Bangladesh is very vulnerable to climate change. Millions of people living in the low-lying delta regions are at risk of losing their homes due to rising sea levels, saltwater intrusion, and coastal flooding (IPCC, 2022). The World Bank's Groundswell projections say that by 2050, up to 13.3 million people could be forced to leave their homes because of climate change. This could happen in Khulna, Barishal, and Chattogram divisions (World Bank, 2021). Salinity intrusion into coastal aquifers has made it harder to get fresh water, hurt farming, and raised health risks, especially for women and children (Mixed Migration Centre, 2020). These environmental stressors are already causing people to move from rural coastal areas to cities like Dhaka and Khulna on a seasonal and permanent basis (IDMC, 2023). The Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP, 2009) lists ways to adapt, such as building cyclone shelters, coastal embankments, and diversifying livelihoods. However, there are still big gaps in policy and funding. From a human security point of view, these slow-onset processes put not only physical survival at risk but also the integrity of societies and cultures. This makes it clear how important it is for policies to be ecocentric and include everyone.

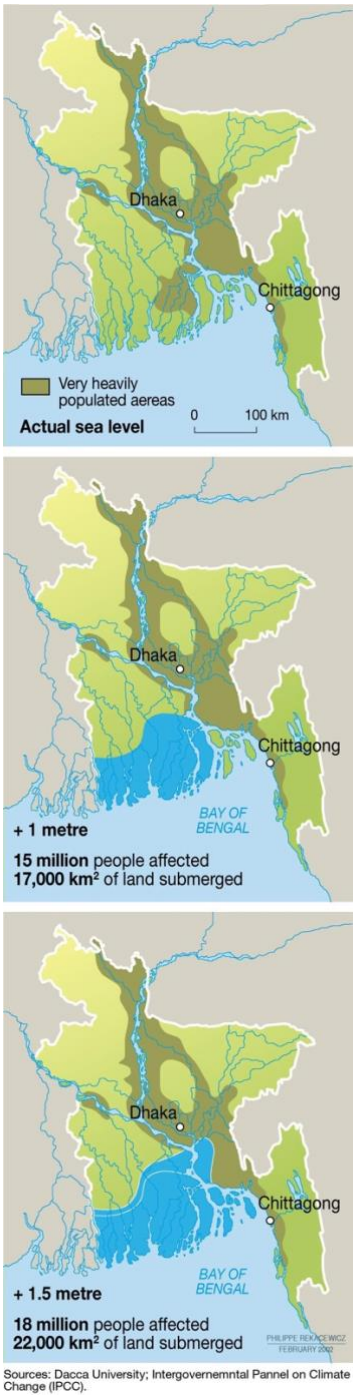

Figure 5 Bangladesh Coastal Flood Risk Map Source: Rekacewicz, P. (2009). Impact of sea level rise in Bangladesh [Map]. In GRID-Arendal, Vital Water Graphics 2. Retrieved from https://www.grida.no/resources/5648

The GRID-Arendal map shows parts of coastal Bangladesh, especially around Chattogram and Dhaka, that are very likely to flood and get salty because the sea level is rising. It backs up the slow-onset environmental trigger analysis in the case study from Bangladesh.

On the other hand, Bangladesh shows how slow-onset climate change affects people, especially in its coastal and deltaic areas. Over long periods of time, processes like rising sea levels, saltwater entering freshwater systems, and slow erosion of riverbanks gradually lower agricultural yields, access to clean water, and housing stability (IPCC, 2014; 2022). Because these risks happen slowly over time, people can prepare for them in advance by diversifying their crops, getting ready for disasters in their communities, and moving slowly to new places. But these adaptive measures often don't work well enough when there are a lot of people living in a small area, a lot of socio-economic problems, and not enough land. Bangladesh does experience sudden disasters like cyclones from time to time, but the main environmental stressors in this case study are those that build up over decades and slowly change how people live and move without the immediate effects of sudden disasters.

According to Susan Martin, rising sea levels are one of the most important causes of climate-induced displacement, not only in Bangladesh but also in small island nations that are at risk of being completely submerged (Martin, 2013). Kiribati (116,000 people) and Tuvalu (11,000 people) are two of the most at risk Pacific island nations. Even a small rise in sea level could make these countries unlivable, forcing their people to leave and become climate refugees. Once their homes are underwater, these islanders will have no choice but to move to other countries against their will.
Like the Maldives and the Marshall Islands, other island nations are also at risk of becoming uninhabitable because of rising sea levels caused by climate change. The situation in these states shows how deeply unfair and urgent climate displacement is, and it needs to be taken very seriously by the world community.

We chose Syria and Bangladesh as case studies because they show both sudden and slow-onset migration caused by climate change. The situation in Syria shows how drought, the collapse of agriculture, and conflict are all connected. The situation in Bangladesh shows how rising sea levels and salinization can force people to move for a long time. This duality lets the thesis look at different time-related aspects of climate-related displacement.

Since the study used secondary data and literature analysis, it did not do any primary interviews. This makes it harder to directly represent the communities that are affected. But triangulating information from several academic and policy sources has been used to make sure that the understanding is complete and fair.
Bangladesh is at risk from slow-onset climate changes, especially sea-level rise and salinity intrusion, which take decades to have their full effects. According to the IPCC (2022), slow-onset processes are changes that happen over time and slowly damage ecosystems, livelihoods, and the ability to live in an area. According to NASA N-SLCT (2024), satellite altimetry data show that the sea level along Bangladesh's coast has been rising by an average of 3.3 mm per year since 1993.

Since the 1970s, salinity levels in coastal aquifers and soils have gone up by an average of 26%. This is because sea levels have risen, river flows have slowed down during the

dry season, and storm surges caused by cyclones (BWDB, 2020; Ashrafuzzaman et al., 2022). These changes in the environment have caused rice yields in some areas to drop by as much as 15% (BBS, 2022) and sped up the shift to salt-tolerant aquaculture for people who rely on it for their livelihoods.

If adaptation measures don't get better, World Bank Groundswell scenarios say that a lot of people will have to move within Bangladesh by 2050. The most migration will happen in coastal districts (World Bank, 2021).

Table 3. Key Indicators of Slow-Onset Impacts in Bangladesh *Source:* NASA N-SLCT (2024), BWDB (2020), BBS (2022), Ashrafuzzaman et al. (2022)

Period	Sea-Level Rise (mm/year)	Salinity Increase (%)	Coastal Rice Yield Change (%)
1993–2000	2.9	+8	-3
2001–2010	3.2	+12	-8
2011–2023	3.4	+26	-15

Table 3 Key Indicators of Slow-Onset Impacts in Bangladesh Source: NASA N-SLCT (2024), BWDB (2020), BBS (2022), Ashrafuzzaman et al. (2022)

This study uses a qualitative comparative case study design and looks at Syria and Bangladesh as examples of people being forced to leave their homes because of climate change. The cases are chosen using a logic of "most different systems": Syria is a politically unstable state that is prone to conflict, and climate stress (especially drought) has led to civil unrest there. On the other hand, Bangladesh is a politically stable state that is vulnerable to climate change but is facing slow-onset environmental risks like rising sea levels. This thesis looks at two different ways that climate change can make things worse: acute crisis and chronic vulnerability. It does this by looking at how these two pathways work. The choice is also based on how relevant the data is to policy and how important each case is in the climate migration literature. This part compares and contrasts the effects of climate change on people who have to leave their homes in Syria and Bangladesh. In line with the methodology, the cases are looked at in four main areas: environmental triggers, migration dynamics, security implications, and policy/legal gaps. This method not only shows the differences between climate events that happen quickly and those that happen slowly, but it also connects them directly to the theoretical framework. This shows how important Environmental Security, Human Security, Securitization Theory, and the need for Green Theory are.

a. Environmental Triggers
Between 2006 and 2010, Syria had a number of very bad droughts that caused most of the country's farms to fail and forced about 1.5 million people to leave their homes in the

countryside. This is a classic example of a rapid-onset climate event, where environmental stress happens suddenly and makes existing socio-economic weaknesses worse.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, has slow-onset processes like rising sea levels, salinization, and flooding that happens again and again in its low-lying delta regions. These changes slowly make it harder for people to make a living, especially in coastal and riverine areas, which leads to long-term internal displacement.

b. The dynamics of migration

In Syria, people moved from rural areas to cities because of the drought. This made cities on the outskirts of the country more crowded, which led to social unrest that started the civil war in 2011. This internal displacement grew into one of the biggest refugee crises in the world in the 21st century.

Most of the time, people in Bangladesh move within the country. Families move from coastal villages to cities like Dhaka and Chattogram, which makes cities overcrowded and puts a strain on the economy. Cross-border migration into India is becoming a bigger problem, but it hasn't gotten as bad as it has in Syria.

c. Effects on security

Syria is an example of the "threat multiplier" idea that is at the heart of Environmental Security theory. Climate stress alone didn't cause the conflict, but it made already weak political and economic situations worse, which led to civil unrest and armed conflict. Securitization Theory is also clear because both domestic and international actors saw the migration crisis as a threat to security.

On the other hand, Bangladesh is an example of human security slowly falling apart. Climate change doesn't cause armed conflict, but it does cause people to move, which leads to long-term social and economic stress, health risks, and possible future instability. This fits with the Human Security framework and strengthens the need for Green Theory as a standard.

d. Gaps in Policy and Law
In Syria, people who were forced to leave their homes eventually became refugees in other countries, but international law never officially recognized their environmental displacement. The crisis shows that the 1951 Geneva Convention has a structural flaw because it doesn't cover migration caused by climate change.

Bangladesh is in a similar legal situation: while it has plans like the BCCSAP to deal with people who are forced to move within the country, there is no formal protection for people who want to move across borders because of climate change.

Comparative Overview

Table 4. Comparative summary of the distinct environmental triggers, migration patterns, security implications, and policy or legal gaps observed in the Syrian (rapid-onset) and Bangladeshi (slow-onset) climate-induced migration contexts. The table highlights the differing nature of environmental pressures and their associated socio-political consequences.

Theme	Syria (Rapid-Onset)	Bangladesh (Slow-Onset)
Environmental Trigger	Severe drought, agricultural collapse	Sea-level rise, salinization, floods
Migration Dynamics	Internal → urban → cross-border	Primarily internal displacement
Security Implications	Social unrest → civil war	Long-term human security risk
Policy / Legal Gaps	No environmental recognition for refugees	No legal recognition for climate migrants

Table 4 Comparative summary of the distinct environmental triggers, migration patterns, security implications, and policy or legal gaps observed in the Syrian (rapid-onset) and Bangladeshi (slow-onset) climate-induced migration contexts. The table highlights the differing nature of environmental pressures and their associated socio-political consequences.

According to the IPCC, Syria is an example of a rapid-onset event because it had climate effects that happened quickly and caused immediate shocks to people's lives and large-scale displacement. On the other hand, Bangladesh's problems come from slow-onset processes that slowly damage the environment and the economy over the course of decades. This difference affects the policies and changes that need to be made in each situation (IPCC, 2022; World Bank, 2021).

The analysis is also framed through the lens of critical security studies, especially Green Theory, to question traditional, state-centered ideas of security and to make ecological well-being a central referent object. The differences and similarities between Syria and Bangladesh show how climate change can cause people to move. Syria is an example of a rapid-onset crisis, where a sudden drought made an already weak political and economic situation worse, leading to civil unrest and refugees crossing borders.

On the other hand, Bangladesh is an example of a slow-onset scenario of sea-level rise and salinization. This causes long-term internal displacement and a loss of human security, but it doesn't lead to armed conflict. Even though these two cases are different, they both show the same legal and moral gap in international migration governance: climate-induced migrants are still not recognized by the 1951 Geneva Convention and other related frameworks. These results support the idea that Green Theory is a necessary way to look at things that connects environmental and human security to help shape future policy responses.

The cases of Syria and Bangladesh show that climate change can cause people to move

because of both fast- and slow-moving environmental changes. In Syria, drought was a major stressor that, when combined with political instability, sped up mass internal migration and made social unrest more likely (Kelley et al., 2015; Gleick, 2014). In Bangladesh, slow changes like rising sea levels and saltwater intrusion are slowly destroying people's livelihoods, forcing them to move as a way to adapt (World Bank, 2021; MMC, 2020). Even though the time frames are different, both cases show that current legal and security systems do not meet the needs of people who have been forced to move because of climate change (UNFCCC, 2015; Human Rights Committee, 2020). The ecocentric approach of Green Theory could help us think about security in a new way that focuses on ecological balance and community resilience instead of the state.

Analysis: Theoretical Gaps in Explaining Climate-Induced Displacement

The case studies of Bangladesh and Syria demonstrate how climate-induced migration is a complex phenomenon that involves legal, political, economic, and environmental factors. Although the theoretical frameworks of securitization theory, environmental security, and human security provide valuable analytical tools, this section contends that each framework has significant limitations that hinder a comprehensive understanding and successful response to displacement caused by climate change when applied to real-world situations.

As discussed in the earlier sections, migration brought on by climate change is becoming a more urgent worldwide problem that puts conventional security frameworks to the test. Though they have made an effort to take ecological threats into account, ideas like environmental security and human security mostly stay within the bounds of anthropocentric reasoning. In other words, the state or the individual remains the referent object of security, excluding the larger ecological systems that enable life. Although environmental security acknowledges the impact of ecological change and human security broadens the concept of vulnerability across national boundaries, both frameworks ignore the fundamental assumptions that led to the ecological crisis in the first place: techno-rationalism, anthropocentrism, and unrelenting growth.

This gap makes it possible to introduce Green Theory[3], which is not only an alternative but also a necessary shift in how we think about and handle security in the Anthropocene. Green Theory rethinks the logic of security itself by providing an ecocentric, holistic viewpoint that sees the environment as a subject with inherent value rather than just something that needs to be preserved for human benefit. It argues that

[3] **Green Theory**, drawing on ecologism and ecological citizenship (Dobson, 1998; 2003) and eco-republican arguments about ecological democracy and responsibility (Eckersley, 2005; 2016), advances an **ecocentric** account of security. It treats ecosystems as co-constitutive of social orders rather than mere backdrops, links protection to intergenerational and interspecies justice, and reframes security around **planetary stewardship**. For climate mobility, this implies moving beyond anthropocentric, state-centric lenses towards governance that aligns **emissions responsibility, capacity to assist, and rights-based mobility pathways**. In the further processes of the study, green theory will be discussed in more detail, conceptually and historically.

ecological survival is just as important as national sovereignty or military threats, rejecting the division between "soft" and "hard" politics.

Furthermore, Green Theory demands a fundamental change in our understanding of our relationship with the Earth, going beyond simply changing laws. According to a green viewpoint, security requires reestablishing ecological systems' equilibrium rather than just defending borders or commercial interests. This entails opposing dominance structures that sustain inequality and environmental degradation, whether they be derived from patriarchal governance, extractive capitalism, or militarism.

Examining the current international regimes' incapacity to offer legally binding solutions to climate-induced displacement makes the need for a Green Theory approach clear. These regimes, which are state-centric and fragmented, are structurally unable to provide displaced people or the ecosystems they leave behind with long-term resilience strategies.

Environmental Security: A Systemic View Without Justice

An important factor in connecting ecological deterioration with instability and conflict has been the environmental security paradigm. The idea that climate change is a "threat multiplier" is especially relevant in the Syrian context. According to scholars like Kelley et al. (2015), the drought that lasted from 2006 to 2010 exacerbated unrest during the Arab Spring by causing agricultural collapse, rural migration, and socioeconomic pressure in urban areas. Similar to this, the IPCC (2022) projects that up to 35 million people in Bangladesh will be displaced by rising sea levels by 2050, endangering both regional migration patterns and national stability.

However, environmental security is frequently state-centric, emphasizing how environmental shocks undermine governance rather than how they impact justice or individual rights. This strategy runs the risk of instrumentalizing the environment as a source of geopolitical risk rather than acknowledging the ecological ethics or human suffering involved, as noted by Barnett (2003) and Dalby (2009). For example, the discourse on environmental security in Bangladesh tends to focus more on the demands of migration on India than on the needs and rights of the displaced themselves (Islam & Winkel, 2017).

Moreover, detractors caution that, without addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability, framing climate change in terms of security can justify militarized or exclusionary responses, such as tighter border controls or "climate-proofing" national interests (Trombetta, 2008).

Human Security: Ethical Sensitivity, Operational Weakness

The human security framework offers a normative shift from national interest to individual well-being, acknowledging that threats such as food insecurity, environmental collapse, and displacement directly undermine human dignity. It is particularly useful for contextualizing the vulnerabilities of rural communities in Syria who lost their livelihoods

due to drought, and of Bangladeshi families living in flood-prone deltas with minimal adaptive capacity.

However, human security remains theoretically broad and institutionally weak. As Paris (2001) argues, its conceptual inclusiveness—covering everything from poverty to psychological harm—makes it difficult to translate into precise, enforceable policies. Despite wide use in UN discourse (UNDP, 1994), the framework has not translated into legal protection for those displaced by climate change. Climate migrants do not qualify as refugees under the 1951 Convention, and the human security lens has not produced legal innovations to close this gap.

Moreover, in cases like Bangladesh, the lack of international burden-sharing and adaptation support exposes the structural weakness of human security: without mechanisms for global equity or accountability, it becomes more of a moral appeal than a policy instrument (Baldwin et al., 2014).

Securitization Theory: Powerful Diagnosis, No Prescription

By recognizing that risks like food insecurity, environmental degradation, and displacement directly compromise human dignity, the human security framework provides a normative shift from national interest to individual well-being. It is especially helpful in putting the vulnerabilities of Bangladeshi families living in flood-prone deltas with limited capacity for adaptation and Syrian rural communities that lost their livelihoods due to drought into perspective.

Human security is still weak institutionally and theoretically, though. Its conceptual inclusivity, which encompasses everything from poverty to psychological harm, makes it challenging to translate into specific, legally binding policies, as Paris (2001) contends. The framework has not resulted in legal protection for individuals displaced by climate change, despite its widespread use in UN discourse (UNDP, 1994). According to the 1951 Convention, climate migrants are not considered refugees, and there have been no legal innovations to bridge this gap that are based on the human security lens.

Furthermore, the structural weakness of human security is revealed in situations such as Bangladesh, where the absence of international burden-sharing and adaptation support makes it more of a moral argument than a tool for policy (Baldwin et al., 2014).

A brand new perspective: Green Theory

Table 5. Comparative overview of three security theories—Environmental Security, Human Security, and Securitization Theory—highlighting their key strengths, limitations, and the potential contributions offered by Green Theory in addressing climate-induced security challenges.

Security Theory	Strength	Limitation	Green Theory Contribution
Environmental Security	Highlights environmental risks	State-centric; weak ecological focus	Introduces ecocentric perspective and ecosystem as a security subject
Human Security	Focuses on individual vulnerability	Limited policy and legal impact	Provides normative foundation and climate justice perspective
Securitization Theory	Explains political construction of threats	Does not offer normative solutions	Adds normative and solution-oriented dimension

Table 5 Comparative overview of three security theories—Environmental Security, Human Security, and Securitization Theory—highlighting their key strengths, limitations, and the potential contributions offered by Green Theory in addressing climate-induced security challenges.

This table shows how Green Theory builds on and improves existing security frameworks when it comes to climate-induced migration. Environmental Security, Human Security, and Securitization Theory all offer useful ideas, but they also have flaws. Green Theory fixes these flaws by focusing on ecological integrity and moral solutions for climate-induced migrants.

Green Theory became an important political idea in the late 20th century, but its roots can be found in 19th-century Romantic critiques of industrialization and in older philosophical traditions that oppose human control over nature. However, the most organized and coherent expression of green thought today can be found in the years after the 1970s, especially in response to the ecological problems brought to light by the Club of Rome's Limits to Growth report in 1972 (Meadows et al., 1972). This report was a turning point in the global conversation about the environment because it questioned the idea that the economy can keep growing in a world with limited resources.

At its heart, Green Theory is against anthropocentrism, which is the idea that humans are the most important and superior beings in the world. Instead, it embraces ecocentrism, which is the idea that all living and non-living things in nature have value on their own, regardless of how useful they are to people (Dobson, 2000; Goodin, 1992). Green Theory is different from both liberal and Marxist traditions in that it sees nature as more than just a backdrop for human progress.

Green Theory vs. Environmentalism

People often mix up Green Theory with environmentalism, but they are actually two different things in terms of knowledge and politics. Environmentalism, which Arne Naess

calls "shallow ecology," tries to fix ecological problems by using better management and technology, usually without questioning the economic and political systems that cause these problems in the first place. Green Theory, on the other hand, is part of the "deep ecology" tradition and says that real sustainability needs big changes in the way capitalism, the state, and even science work (Naess, 1973; Bookchin, 1982).

Environmentalists think that ecological problems are caused by bad government, while green theorists say that these problems are signs of problems with the growth-oriented, industrial-capitalist system as a whole. So, while environmentalism works within the status quo, Green Theory questions the system itself, which is more in line with critical and post-structuralist ideas.

Critical Nature of Green Theory

As Robyn Eckersley (2005) and Robert Goodin (1992) have said, Green Theory is a type of critical theory in the Horkheimerian sense because it doesn't just explain the world; it also tries to change it by exposing normative assumptions and calling for systemic change. Green theorists, on the other hand, go beyond traditional critical theorists by including non-human entities and ecosystems as rights holders and subjects of justice. Green Theory is similar to the Frankfurt School in some ways, but it is very different in that it rejects Habermas's idea of instrumental rationality and his view of nature as something that can be manipulated by people. Green theorists say that looking at nature only as a tool or a means to an end harms it and ignores the fact that ecological systems are connected and embedded in each other.

In a time of climate-related crises, Green Theory's involvement in international relations is especially important. Realism, Liberalism, and even Marxism are examples of traditional IR theories that tend to focus on state interests, economic productivity, or class struggle. They often ignore the environmental factors that are important for global security and stability. Green theorists disagree with this by questioning the state's central role in being, capitalism's need to grow, and the technocratic elitism of global environmental governance (Paterson, 2000; Barry, 2014).

Eckersley (2005) says that "greening the nation-state" means changing how we think about sovereignty, not just as exclusive control over land, but also as shared responsibility for the environment. In this view, ecological justice is just as important as geopolitical balance, and fairness between generations is a key principle of global cooperation.

Green Theory doesn't just call for changes to policies; it also calls for a break with Enlightenment-based ways of thinking that see nature as passive and outside of us. It calls for a new way of thinking about political ethics, security, and legitimacy that takes into account the interconnectedness of ecosystems, the limits of the planet, and the idea that there are many different kinds of ethics.

This thesis will suggest a Green Theory of Climate-Induced Migration in the next section.

This theory is based on these moral commitments and is meant to fix the problems with the current frameworks.

Environmental or global environmental security is a way of thinking that sees environmental damage as a security issue and calls for working together to find solutions to these kinds of threats. In this context, we can see two different ways of doing things. The first looks at environmental problems in terms of traditional international relations actors, mostly states, by looking at how changes to the environment can put a state's national security at risk. Because states' physical territory is part of the natural environment, any change in environmental conditions could directly threaten state stability, upset the balance of power between states, or create new weaknesses.
The second, more normative view sees the environment as a thing with its own value that needs to be protected from harm caused by people and the government. This point of view, which comes from Green Theory, wants to set up global governance systems that will protect the balance of nature, no matter how useful they are to people or governments. This way of thinking about security is very similar to the ideas behind green security, which protects not only people and the state, but also ecosystems and non-human beings.

In the field of International Relations, security has traditionally been state-centered, with a lot of emphasis on protecting sovereignty and territorial integrity. But as the world changes, so do ideas about what is threatening and what is weak. Military strength and foreign aggression are no longer the only things that define security. Political repression, ecological collapse, and socioeconomic instability are also factors. Because of these changes, we need to take a hard look at traditional ideas about security.
Green security sees environmental threats as major security issues, saying that neither people nor the state can survive without keeping the environment in balance. Manipulating and harming nature by government officials in order to gain economic or military power is seen as a major threat to the stability of the environment. Green security theory says that protecting the environment is just as important and urgent as stopping wars or making defense policy, which is very different from traditional theories that see environmental issues as "low politics."

Peter Newell says, "just as wars need a landscape to be fought on, the preservation of that landscape is just as important to life itself" (Newell, 2019, p. 49). A livable environment is not just something that goes along with human life; it is what makes life possible. Because of this, Green theorists say that countries should cut their military spending by a lot, especially on making nuclear weapons, because they have terrible effects on the environment. Using large amounts of natural resources to build up the military not only harms ecosystems, but it also strengthens patriarchal, hierarchical social structures that make domination seem normal—over people and the planet.

Green Theory also takes a strong moral stance: it says that violence is not a good way to settle disagreements and criticizes a world political system based on war. Green security is similar to other critical security theories in some ways, such as its opposition to

militarism. However, it is unique in that it extends moral consideration and protection to all living things, even the nonliving parts of the ecosystem.

Aldo Leopold's A Sand County Almanac (1949) is a great example of this way of thinking. In it, he talks about a moment of deep moral realization he had while hunting wolves. When Leopold saw the dying look of a wolf he had shot, he began to question the anthropocentric logic that allowed him to do such things. He decided that getting rid of predators to boost deer populations went against the ecological consent of "the mountain," "the waterfall," and the natural order as a whole. His reflection shows a change toward seeing ecosystems as whole systems that deserve respect and protection for their independence and integrity.
Green Theory's approach to security is based on this holistic view. It goes against views of nature that see it as separate and useful, and instead says that the environment should be kept as a whole. Green security has two main goals: it is both moral, calling for people to be responsible for the planet, and practical, recognizing that the health of the environment is directly linked to the survival of humanity.

People depend on nature in a world where everything is so interconnected. This makes ecological security necessary not only to protect the environment but also to keep people alive. When ecosystems are damaged, it affects human societies in ways that go beyond borders. So, it is both a moral duty and a strategic need to push for a planetary security framework that puts ecological sustainability at its center (Newell, 2019; Harding, 2020).
Green Theory is not without its critics, even though it offers a new way of looking at security through an ecocentric lens. Researchers like MacDonald (2013) and Dalby (2009) have said that Green Theory's normative approach can be hard to understand when it comes to real-world policy problems, even though it is morally sound. Critics also say that its strong focus on ecological integrity may unintentionally downplay the immediate social and political issues that come up when people are forced to move, especially in areas where there is a lot of conflict. Some analysts also wonder if its call for post-capitalist ecological restructuring is even possible given the limitations of global governance systems that are mostly focused on state interests and neoliberal goals.
This thesis, on the other hand, does not see Green Theory as a replacement for existing approaches. Instead, it sees it as a necessary addition that shows the ecological blind spots of dominant paradigms and stresses the moral urgency of environmental justice in the age of climate crisis.

Policy Recommendations

This part gives policymakers, international organizations, and civil society groups who want to help people who have to move because of climate change some specific things they can do. Using the normative ideas of Green Theory, the following suggestions aim to change the way we currently respond from reactive, state-centered models to more comprehensive, preventative, and justice-based ones:

Green Theory started as a critique of the most common security models, but its effects on policy making are becoming more and more clear. Moving from anthropocentric to

ecocentric thinking requires more than just words; it needs new ways of doing things in institutions. Green Theory says that we should put planetary stewardship ahead of state sovereignty, climate resilience ahead of militarized borders, and global justice mechanisms ahead of environmental responsibility.

These principles are in line with the policy suggestions made in this thesis, especially the focus on giving legal status to climate migrants, working together across borders, and funding climate justice. Green Theory gives us a moral compass for future-oriented, ethically sound, and environmentally friendly policy frameworks by framing environmental degradation as both a risk and a result of systemic injustice.

1. Give climate migrants legal status around the world
Not recognizing climate-related displacement in the law makes it harder to protect people who are already vulnerable. Climate-related displacement should be clearly listed as a reason for protection in an amendment to the 1951 Refugee Convention or in a new, binding international protocol. This would mean writing down the rights and responsibilities of communities that have been affected.

2. Set up an Ecological Security Framework in the UN System
The United Nations Security Council and the UNHCR are two examples of international organizations that need to include ecological security in their strategic plans. A special task force on climate and displacement should be set up by all agencies. This group should bring together environmental science, migration policy, and peacebuilding efforts under one umbrella agenda.

3. Give decentralized and community-led adaptation strategies top priority.
Adaptation measures that come from the top down often don't take into account the needs and knowledge of the communities that are affected. States and donors should help local efforts, especially those that help Indigenous and other marginalized groups, to restore land, manage water, and create jobs that last. Cultural and territorial autonomy must be the basis for ecological resilience.
4. Take the military out of environmental policy
Militarized border responses to climate migration make people suffer more and keep structural violence going. Resources should be moved from enforcing the border to building infrastructure for climate resilience and helping people in need. We should see environmental degradation as a problem we all need to work on, not a security threat that needs to be dealt with with force.

5. Set up ways to finance climate justice
Countries that emit a lot of pollution are responsible for the breakdown of ecosystems in the past. To help the countries that are most affected by displacement, a global climate reparations fund should be set up. This fund could be paid for by taxing carbon or restructuring debt. These funds should focus on development paths that don't extract resources and have low carbon footprints.

6. Include Ecocentric Education and Advocacy
Schools and public discussions need to move toward an ecocentric way of looking at things. Planetary boundaries, Indigenous ecological knowledge, and post-growth economics should all be part of the curriculum. Public campaigns can change the way people think about migration, turning it from a threat into a call for people around the world to work together.

7. Reimagine Sovereignty Through Green Governance
Old ideas about sovereignty make it harder for countries to work together on environmental issues that cross borders. Green governance says that we should all have equal control over the atmosphere, oceans, and forests, which are all parts of the planet that we all share. To help countries deal with climate change, we should encourage regional agreements and bioregional governance models.

Additional Analysis: Framing Climate Refugees within Security Discourses

The way that international relations sees climate refugees as a security issue is mostly based on the most popular theories. In the past, migration was mostly seen through the lens of humanitarian or human security. But these days, it is more often seen through the lens of national and geopolitical security. Realists used to think that climate change was a secondary issue. But now it is being recognized as a major issue because it could make instability and conflict worse.

Liberal theories deal with climate change and displacement in two main ways. The first one focuses on legal recognition and ways to help climate refugees. The second is about mitigation policies, which are meant to stop the root causes of displacement from getting worse and turning into a security crisis (Doyle & Chaturvedi, 2011).

There is a complicated connection between climate change, displacement, and security. Refugees are not threats by nature, but they can make things worse, especially in fragile states that are already dealing with weak institutions, lack of resources, or unresolved conflicts. The Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa are the most vulnerable to the combined effects of climate change and mass migration. This is especially true in areas with weak governments and limited resources (Reuveny, 2007; McLeman, 2017).

The Lake Chad Basin is one example that shows how these things work. Environmental damage, terrorism, and displacement all come together here to create a crisis with many sides. Lake Chad has shrunk by 90% in the last 50 years, forcing 2.5 million people to leave their homes and making over 200,000 people refugees in Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger. This environmental disaster has also given armed groups like Boko Haram more power. They take advantage of migration and fight over limited resources (Tower, 2007).

Based on five basic ideas, Biermann and Boas (2010) say that a sui generis regime should be set up to deal with climate-related migration.

1. Planned Relocation: By predicting environmental risks, we can set up resettlement programs ahead of time instead of waiting for a crisis to happen.

2. Resettlement over Temporary Asylum: Policies need to deal with long-term displacement situations, especially for people from island nations that are disappearing.

3. Rights of Affected Communities: Laws should protect the rights of whole communities, not just individuals.

4. Help from other countries for people who have to move within their own country: other countries must help and pay for people to move within their own country.

5. Fairly Sharing the Burden: Countries that emit a lot of greenhouse gases must help manage climate migration with money and politics.

States, international organizations, civil society, and transnational actors would all need to work together to create such a regime. Legal clarity, real-world case studies, and predicting risks are all important tools for planning future actions (McLeman, 2017).
In the end, it is important for national and international security agendas to include climate migration. Because more and more people are being forced to leave their homes, and this has a negative effect on governance, stability, and human well-being, we need to create a legal and institutional system that is specific to the problems of Anthropocene.

This thesis looked at the growing problem of climate-induced displacement from the points of view of environmental security, human security, and securitization theory. It also proposed Green Theory as a better alternative that addresses the problems with these theories.

This research showed that climate change is not only an environmental threat, but also a structural force that makes existing social, political, and economic weaknesses worse, which leads to forced migration. The case studies of Syria and Bangladesh were used to show this. In Syria, a long drought hurt the economy in rural areas and helped start civil unrest. Millions of people in Bangladesh are in danger of dying because the sea level is slowly rising. These cases show different times and ways of being displaced, but they all show the same thing: climate change is a threat multiplier, not just in theory but in real, measurable ways.

While the frameworks of environmental and human security help explain these dynamics, they don't provide binding protections or complete solutions. Environmental security is still too focused on the state, which could lead to militarized responses. Human security focuses on the person, but it can't be enforced by law. Securitization theory shows how

politicians use threat narratives to manipulate people, but it doesn't give us clear ways to protect ourselves or get justice.

In this situation, Green Theory is not just a criticism; it is also a way to change things. It challenges anthropocentric ways of thinking, changes the definition of security to include ecological balance, and expands the referent object to include ecosystems and future generations as well as states and individuals. It shows that climate displacement has deep roots in capitalism, militarism, and institutional inertia, and it calls for big changes in how we think about sovereignty, justice, and resilience.

But accepting Green Theory isn't just an academic exercise; it's also a moral and political need. Not recognizing climate migrants legally, not having ways to share the burden, and framing displacement as a security issue are all signs of a lack of imagination and will. As the climate crisis gets worse, responses that are reactive, fragmented, and focused on the state will become less and less useful.

This thesis argues for the creation of a unique legal and policy system for climate-induced displacement that is based on planetary ethics, collective rights, and anticipatory governance. In the Anthropocene, the future of human mobility doesn't depend on making borders stronger. Instead, it depends on rethinking what it means to belong, be safe, and be responsible for the environment.

In the end, migration caused by climate change is not just a humanitarian issue; it is a threat to the very foundations of international order. It makes us think about hard questions like, "Who is safe?" Who makes the choice? What do we owe each other and the Earth? To answer these questions, we need to change the way we think about global security, based on justice, humility, and working together.

Recommendations for Further Study

Future research should look more closely at the causes of events in Syria by systematically connecting high-resolution climate attribution data to changes in agricultural output, prices, governance performance, conflict events, and displacement at the sub-national level. A research design that uses both event-study models and synthetic control at the governorate level would help separate the effects of multi-year drought from shocks that happened at the same time, like food price spikes and security crackdowns. This would make it clearer when and how environmental stress led to different types of mobility and conflict.

To understand how people's decisions about moving slowly change over time in Bangladesh, we need more longitudinal, household-level data. Setting up a coastal panel in districts where salinity is a problem would let researchers figure out the points at which households go from adapting to their current situation to moving seasonally and then permanently. Quasi-experimental leverage, which comes from differences in storm-surge exposure, the placement of embankments, or the timing of adaptation investments, could

help us figure out which interventions are best at delaying or reducing displacement without creating new risks.

Adding more countries to the comparison, like Syria and Bangladesh, would test the external validity in other areas that are sensitive to climate change. It might be possible to see if hotspot patterns, adaptation trade-offs, and governance bottlenecks are the same in the Mekong and Nile deltas or in the Sahelian regions that are prone to drought. These kinds of studies should also look at how people who are displaced within a country interact with people who move across borders to see what effects this has on regional cooperation and sharing of responsibility.

One important area of study is the health effects of climate stress on men and women and people of different ages, and how these affect mobility. Future studies should measure the effects of drinking-water salinity on the health of mothers and children in coastal Bangladesh. They should also look at how health shocks change when people move, where they go, and how they divide up household work. Combining epidemiological analysis with qualitative research on care burdens and safety would give public health and social protection policy makers more useful information.

Planned relocation and urban absorption should be carefully looked at by policymakers. When comparing the cost-effectiveness of different models for relocating people in the Dhaka and Khulna peripheries, researchers should look at how people's lives improve, how well they get along with each other, how long they can stay on their land, and how easy it is for them to get services twelve to thirty-six months after they move. Adding monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ongoing government and NGO programs would give local governments and donors the evidence they need that they don't have right now.

Lastly, there is a chance to put Green Theory's normative commitments into action in a practical assessment toolkit. Future research should come up with measurable indicators for ecological integrity and climate justice. These could include per-capita adaptation finance, historical-emissions-weighted responsibility, ecosystem condition indices, and participatory measures of procedural fairness. These indicators should then be added to the security diagnostics that planners use. Transparent data practices will speed up progress here. For example, combining open satellite products (like CHIRPS/ERA5, GRACE, and Landsat) with displacement statistics (IDMC/UNHCR), administrative microdata, and, if it is ethical, indicators from mobile phones or night lights. Any future studies that involve vulnerable groups or look at planned relocation should have preregistration, community co-design, and strong protections (FPIC, privacy, and benefit-sharing) as their minimum standards.

Conclusion: Reframing Security for a Climate-Disrupted World

This thesis looked at the connection between climate change, migration, and security by critically examining existing theoretical frameworks and real-world case studies. Using the ideas of environmental security, human security, and securitization theory, the study

has shown that these frameworks are useful for understanding climate-related displacement, but they are not enough to deal with the complicated problems of the Anthropocene. When applied to the situations in Syria and Bangladesh, each framework shows important strengths but also major flaws, mostly because they are based on assumptions that people and the state are the most important things.

The environmental security framework shows how ecological degradation acts as a "threat multiplier" that makes existing vulnerabilities and social and political instability worse. The drought in Syria and the people who moved there caused civil unrest. In Bangladesh, rising sea levels threaten the lives of millions of people. But this point of view often sees nature as just a tool for national or regional interests, not as something valuable in its own right, and it makes it hard to see the moral issues surrounding climate justice.

The 1994 UNDP Human Development Report introduced the human security paradigm, which focuses on people and their weaknesses. Human security is a strong moral argument, especially in places like Bangladesh where displaced people suffer in silence, but it doesn't have any legal tools or ways to enforce it. Human security is still more of a goal than a plan of action, as shown by the flaws in the 1951 Refugee Convention and the fact that climate migrants are not protected.

The Copenhagen School came up with the idea of securitization theory, which is a way to talk about how climate migration is framed in a way that makes it seem like a threat to the host societies instead of the migrants themselves. To show how global climate governance is unfair, the theory must be able to break down political stories. But it doesn't give any ideas for how to change things, and it doesn't focus on environmental causes or moral obligations.

Because of these problems, this thesis proposed Green Theory as a normative and analytical alternative that could deal with the many aspects of migration caused by climate change. Green Theory is based on ecocentrism and goes against the ideas of growth, techno-rationalism, and human exceptionalism that are most popular right now. It doesn't see security as keeping sovereign territories safe or keeping the economy stable. Instead, it sees it as keeping the planet's integrity and ecological balance.

There are three ways that Green Theory helps. First, it makes the referent object of security bigger by including all living things and ecosystems. Second, it calls for a change in the way the world economy works, saying that extractive capitalism and militarism are the main reasons why the environment is getting worse. Third, it supports a vision of global justice that puts the voices of the people who are most affected—those who are least responsible for climate change but most at risk of its effects—at the center.
The real-world results of this study show how important it is to make this change right away. In Syria, climate-related agricultural collapse led to people moving to cities and fighting. In Bangladesh, slow-onset disasters like rising sea levels could force tens of millions of people to leave their homes. These examples show that reactive, state-

centered responses don't work and that we need a comprehensive, forward-looking framework based on ecological justice.

In conclusion, climate-induced migration is not just a humanitarian issue or a geopolitical problem; it is also a sign of deeper problems in how we think about security, development, and our relationship with the Earth. To solve this crisis, we need more than just technical changes or changes to the law; we need a new way of thinking about politics. Green Theory gives us a framework that is based on ethics, knowledge of the environment, and a global perspective. By taking this view, people in academia, government, and everyday life can all start to work toward a more fair, strong, and long-lasting future.

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