

Climate Change Mission Creep: Will the UN Security Council Establish a ‘Green Helmets’ Peacekeeping Force?

by [Marlo Lewis](#) on July 21, 2011

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Yesterday’s [UK Guardian](#) reports that a “special meeting” of the United Nations (UN) [Security Council](#) is “due to consider whether to expand its mission to keep the peace in an era of climate change.”

This was inevitable. With the Cold War many years behind us, and only a few important regional wars (Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya) going on, the Security Council needs some kind of permanent, global crisis to justify its existence. Mission Creep thy name is Climate Change.

Germany called the special meeting via a “[concept note](#)” titled “Maintenance of international peace and security — the impact of climate change.” It outlines all the shopworn cliches about how global warming will intensify conflicts over food and water and, via accelerated sea-level rise, turn millions of people living in coastal communities and small island nations into climate refugees.

An obvious question for the German delegation is why now? Maybe they haven’t heard, but there’s been [no net global warming in nearly 15 years!](#)

They're also behind the times on climate refugees. As discussed in an [earlier post](#), the UN Environment Program (UNEP) predicted in 2005 that warming-induced flooding, famine, and water shortages could drive as many as 50 million people from their homes by 2010. Not only did waves of refugees fail to materialize, but several areas UNEP thought would be hardest hit by global warming experienced rapid population growth.

Okay, but what about the future? Supposedly, global warming will exacerbate conflict and instability in poverty-stricken regions where people already struggle to feed themselves and cope with extreme weather, disease, and drought. But as economist [Indur Goklany shows](#), even the UK Government's [Stern Review](#) report, the most pessimistic assessment of climate change impacts under the UN IPCC's high-end warming scenario ([A1FI](#)), implies that, despite climate change, developing countries in 2100 will be richer – and thus better able to adapt to climate change — than industrial countries are today.

Specifically, in the *Stern Review* worst case, developing country per capita GDP increases from \$900 in 1990 to \$61,500 in 2100. For perspective, [Goklany notes](#) (p. 17) that in 2006, GDP per capita was \$19,300 for industrialized countries, \$30,100 for the United States, and \$1,500 for developing countries. In addition to being wealthier, future generations are bound to develop superior technologies in such critical endeavors as agriculture, medicine, water resource management, and disaster preparedness. So climate change is unlikely to be an important “threat multiplier” in the decades ahead.

Besides, is it even true that environmental stresses are a significant cause of armed conflict? Science journalist [Wendy Barnaby found](#) that, in the water-stressed, conflict-prone Middle East, Israel and her Arab neighbors have cooperated rather than fought over water. One reason is that the region's nations import more “virtual water” in the form of grain than flows down the Nile River.

A new Cato Institute book, [Climate Coup](#), has a superb chapter on global warming as a security threat. The author, Ivan Eland, points out that even if global warming does decrease agricultural production in some countries, this would not necessarily lead to conflict:

But some nations' agricultural production will increase because of warming, and others will decline. This production differential will make it profitable to sell grain from those in surplus to those in deficit. Throughout history, markets and trade have survived wars, political upheaval, natural disasters, and pandemic diseases. Where there is a willing buyer and seller, there is usually an incentive to trade.

Eland also points out that, in the modern world, people with empty bellies are usually not the ones to launch wars of aggression: “widespread hunger reduces the capacity of nations or groups to make war effectively.”

According to the *Guardian*, “Small island states, which could disappear beneath rising seas, are pushing the Security Council to intervene to combat the threat to their existence.” So, the tail that’s wagging the dog is the same gang of mini-states who have [hyped the threat](#) of [sea-level rise](#) to demand multi-billion dollar [climate reparations](#) from Uncle Sucker and other industrial nations.

The Security Council is a relic from the Cold War. Clearly, these folks don’t have enough to do. The Security Council, of course, would not be the first UN body to turn fear of climate change into a lifetime meal ticket.

Tagged as: [Ivan Eland](#), [patrick michaels](#), [Security Council](#), [Tuvalu](#), [UN](#), [United Nations](#), [Wendy Barnaby](#)