

The United Nations Security Council, the Boe Declaration, and Upolu Luma Vaai's Umbilical Cord – and Why They Matter for Peacebuilding in the Era of Man-Made Climate Change

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Introduction

This is a Policy Brief about climate change and peace. It is trying to do the seemingly impossible: to lay open the relations between spheres of experiences and activities that at first sight are worlds apart, such as debates in the UN Security Council and stories told in a village on a small Pacific island, decisions taken (or not taken) by so-called world leaders in New York and by local village elders; and it tries to explain why revealing these relations matters for peacebuilding and policy advice in our current era of climate change. In other words: looking and acting across scales is crucial for addressing the climate change – peace (building) nexus. The deliberations build on experiences and examples from the Pacific region which so far have not attracted much attention in the mainstream academic and policy discourse on climate change, conflict and peace. It will be demonstrated that Pacific experiences and views can contribute new insights and recommendations to the discourse.

The paper commences with a comparison between the two existential threats mankind is confronted with today: nuclear threat and the threat of climate change. In doing so, the case is built for peace research to engage with climate change, and the specifics of this engagement are outlined. This sets the scene for a closer look at how the field of climate change, security, conflict and peace is discussed today in the academic and policy sphere, focusing on the dilemmas of securitisation and the connections between climate change adaptation and peacebuilding. Flowing from the identification of gaps and shortcomings in the debate,

an innovative Pacific eco-relational approach is presented, which can address these gaps and shortcomings, and how research might proceed based on this approach is sketched. Finally, some conclusions are drawn, stressing the multi-scalar nature of the challenge, the need to work across the state/non-state divide, the strengths of eco-relationality in dealing with climate change, conflict and peace, the vulnerability/resilience interface, and the linkages between climate justice and peace and, accordingly, climate movements and peace movements.

The Threat of Nuclear War and the Threat of Climate Compared

Today we are faced with two fundamental threats to the survival of humankind, of the world as we know it (or of Creation if you like). The first threat is nuclear war and nuclear annihilation; the second is man-made climate change. Although at the time of writing this text, the Covid-19 pandemic is overshadowing these threats in the public perception, the threat posed by Covid-19 is of another quality than these other two. Without doubt the pandemic is a global crisis of enormous proportions, but in the long-term climate change will have more devastating effects by far, not to speak of the effects of nuclear war if it should happen. While the Covid-19 pandemic is recognised as an emergency, and emergency measures are taken to deal with it—with broad public and political consent—, this sense of emergency has not been applied yet to the climate crisis which brings with it much greater dangers in the long run. These impacts, however, are more gradual than those of Covid-19, and hence it is much harder to convey the sense of an emergency and the need for emergency measures. So as it is of great importance to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic and its likely far-reaching economic, political and social consequences (from mass unemployment in the Global North to mass hunger and starvation in the Global South) as a global emergency, it must not be forgotten that this emergency will be temporary. It will be overcome in the foreseeable future; the threats of nuclear war and climate change will stay with us after the pandemic is over. There is no vaccine against climate change or nuclear war. This is not to say that there will not be more pandemics in the future, and it will be worthwhile to explore the links between the increasing frequency of pandemics and climate change and to grasp the opportunity provided by the pandemic “to debate the nature of 21st century threats and to reorder political and economic priorities to meet the real rather than the imagined threats to human existence” (Clements 2020, 2). The most dangerous of these real threats to human existence are nuclear war and climate change (with the latter linked to the threats of future pandemics).¹

The first of these existential threats has been a core topic of peace research from its very beginnings, the second has only rather recently drawn the attention of peace and conflict studies scholars. There are obvious differences between these two threats and how to deal

¹ Kevin Clements rightly makes the point that dealing “with global pandemics is one thing but looming behind it are the medium to long term consequences of climate change which arguably will generate as much chaos as Covid-19 over the next 50 years” (Clements 2020, 3). In a similar vein, the Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum emphasises the “interconnectivity between the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change” and argues that “notwithstanding the current threats and impacts of COVID-19, climate change remains the biggest threat facing humanity today. We must not lose sight of this reality. The COVID-19 public health emergency and its ensuing humanitarian and economic fallout offers us a glimpse of what the global climate change emergency can become – if it is left unchecked and if we do not act now” (Taylor 2020).

with them. Let me just point to three: Firstly, the threat of nuclear war and nuclear annihilation is global in its character – a nuclear war would be a world war, or if it were regionally confined, it nevertheless would have devastating effects at the global scale (just to mention nuclear winter). Nuclear war would, secondly, be a rapid onset event – it would change the world from one day to the next, its catastrophic consequences would be felt immediately. Thirdly, the sources of causation are highly centralised and can be easily isolated and identified: the nuclear weapon states and their strategies and policies. One has to deal with a clearly limited number of specific sources of causation.

From these three characteristics flow consequences for how to politically address the threat of nuclear war and nuclear annihilation. The only option is prevention. Nuclear war has to be prevented, no matter what. If prevention fails, the game is over. Politics of prevention have to be situated at the global or international level, due to the global character of the threat, and politics of prevention can focus on clearly demarcated and confined sources: the nuclear weapons states and their political and military elites. This is what has been done almost since the beginning of the nuclear age: trying to prevent nuclear war and annihilation through politics of arms control, nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, nuclear weapons free zones, strategic stabilisation, confidence building etc. This was—and is—an undertaking at the international level, carried out by the political elites of the nuclear weapons states and their allies as well as international organisations, at times supported by—or put under pressure by—more or less strong, more or less enduring, anti-nuclear movements at the grassroots and a broad and highly diversified epistemic community committed to the prevention of nuclear war, several generations of peace researchers included.

Let us now compare this to climate change. Without doubt, climate change is also a global phenomenon, and it is increasingly perceived as a global security risk, but it has markedly different effects in different locations; so whereas its effects are ubiquitous and can be observed all over the world, they are far from uniform – some parts of the world experience more frequent and more intense droughts, others higher precipitation; low lying islands and coastal regions are directly affected by sea level rise, whereas mountainous regions far from any coast are not (but they are affected by melting glaciers). So, while every corner of the world is affected by climate change (and the effects are clearly interrelated), the effects are different (some more privileged regions/populations might even profit from certain effects of climate change in the short term).

Secondly, climate change is a slow onset event; it occurs gradually; its effects are not felt immediately, from one day to the next, although more and more often the gradual process of climate change is interspersed with rapid onset events caused by climate change – disasters like bushfires, cyclones, floods. Finally, there are multiple, diffuse sources of causation. Although one can—and should—point to some main culprits, e.g. multinational fossil fuel companies, and one can—and should—identify countries and societies which contribute to a much larger extent to climate change than others, climate change is caused globally in today's globalised world, with ubiquitous sources of causation (from coal mines through cattle ranches to cars and mopeds/tuk-tuks in the mega-cities of the world). These characteristics of climate change which differentiate it from the threat of nuclear war and annihilation lead to different political consequences.

First of all, while there is only one option with regard to the threat of nuclear war, namely prevention, (optimally through the abolition of all nuclear weapons) when it comes to climate change there is not only one option; not only prevention, which in this case means mitigation (to prevent further global warming by reducing or eliminating its causes, e.g. terminating the use of fossil fuels and transitioning to renewables), but also various forms of adaptation. Given that climate change is a slow-onset event, there is time for, and there are means for, adaptation. And there is need for adaptation here and now. While nuclear war is 'only' a threat, climate change is a reality; it is happening now, right before our eyes, and with increasing ferocity. The climate emergency is on. Hence while it is of crucial importance to continue and intensify mitigation/prevention, it is also getting more and more important to focus on adaptation, because many people and societies are suffering from the effects of climate change already or will unavoidably suffer in the near future; for them mitigation comes too late, the effects of climate change cannot be prevented anymore, but have to be dealt with. This focus on adaptation, however, should not be used as an excuse for giving up on mitigation, following a line of argument which says that it is too late for prevention/mitigation anyway, so let's just adapt. Such a stance would let the main culprits off the hook and it would lead to a highly fractured, unjust and violent world society in the future, with the few who have the means and options to adapt, and the many who would be left to perish due to the multiple negative effects of climate change.

Finally, mitigation and adaptation have to be pursued at all levels of world society, across all scales. They are not just processes at the international level of negotiations as is the case with the threat of nuclear war. In relation to nuclear war it is 'only' necessary that a small number of nuclear weapon states come to agreements, and the international community of states is in accordance. Such a confined and centralised approach will not work with regard to the threat of climate change. Of course, the international level is of importance. What happens at the UNFCCC conferences matters – to a certain extent. But action is required—and action is possible—at various scales, from the international to the local, and the individual. Climate change can be addressed and has to be addressed by actors and institutions across scales, at the micro, meso and macro levels, from policies which decide to terminate the use of fossil fuels through to changes in individual lifestyles.

This has consequences for actors and activities aimed at overcoming the threat of climate change. While anti-nuclear peace movements and the epistemic community focused on the prevention of nuclear war had no other option but to try to influence or put pressure on the nuclear powers (which could include activities at other scales, e.g. declaring one's own town (or backyard) a 'nuclear weapons free zone' – but these were just symbolic activities), the climate change movement of today and the affiliated epistemic community have a much broader range of options for action and at the same time a much more comprehensive and diversified challenge to deal with. The spectrum of both opportunities and tasks is much wider for the forces who want to overcome the threat of climate change today than it was—and is—for the forces targeting the threat of nuclear war and annihilation.

These differences between the two existential threats to the survival of mankind and the world as we know it also have profound consequences for peace researchers and peace practitioners who are trying to make sense of the conflict-creating threat of climate change.

Peace research and peace movements have a long history of dealing with the threat of nuclear war. And without any doubt it is of utmost significance to maintain—and even intensify—research and activities in this field. The almost total collapse of the nuclear weapons control regime and the dangers of new weapons technologies make it more important than ever to confront the threat of nuclear war with new energy and new ideas.² It even gives reason for concern that the threat of climate change these days in a way overshadows the threat of nuclear war to such an extent that not enough attention is paid to the nuclear threat anymore and not enough thought is spent on its prevention.

The threat of climate change, by comparison, is a relatively new field for peace research. There are multiple reasons, however, for peace research to engage in this field. Climate change has to be an issue for peace research because of its economic, political, social, cultural and other effects; these effects are conflict prone, they pose risks to peace and security, albeit in markedly different ways than nuclear weapons and strategies.³ Because of the multi-scalar, diffused, but ubiquitous nature of conflict-prone climate change effects, peace research has to address the nexus of climate change, conflict, peace and security at different scales, in a variety of contexts, from the global through the regional and national to the local, tracing the relations and linkages between scales and contexts.

The United Nations and Climate Change and Security

Let us first take a closer look at the global level. It is interesting to note that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which at its core has the nuclear powers as permanent members (the so-called P5 – the USA, Russia, the United Kingdom (UK), France, and China), has in recent times had to deal with climate change and security as a global threat to mankind. This move towards a so-called ‘unconventional’ security issue like climate change in the context of the UNSC, however, came not out of the group of the P5, but from non-permanent members. The P5—with the exception of the UK—so far have shown no interest in expanding the UNSC’s agenda to also encompass climate-security issues, and Russia and China in particular even argued that this would distract the UNSC from its core business. Against this reluctance and opposition, non-permanent members made climate change and security a recurring theme for the UNSC, starting in April 2007, when the UNSC, upon the initiative of the UK, held its first-ever debate on the impact of climate change on peace and security.⁴ Most recently climate change and security was the topic of an open debate in the UNSC in January 2019.⁵

Moreover, in October 2018 a modest Climate Security Mechanism was established in the UN system, hosted by the UN’s Department for Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA), with

² See the Toda Policy Briefs Holloway 2019 and Miall 2019.

³ Not to forget, however, that the effects of climate change can directly enhance the dangers of nuclear weapons: in the summer of 2018 bushfires in California threatened nuclear and missile facilities of the US military. Floods, storm surges and landslides can also threaten nuclear facilities. On the other hand, the nuclear arms race absorbs resources at an enormous scale which are needed for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

⁴ See <https://www.un.org/press/en/2007/sc9000.doc.htm>

⁵ See the UNSC documents relating to the UNSC debate in January 2019 (concept note Dominican Republic and summary of the debate) at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13677.doc.htm> <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/s20191.php>

input from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Its task is to work on climate-related security risk assessments, using a climate security risk assessment framework which is to capture security risks in different world regions.

Finally, there is the 'Group of Friends' on climate security at the UN, led by Germany and the small Pacific island country Nauru, which was established in August 2018. Initially the Group had 27 members, but it is constantly growing, with currently more than 50 members. It can be expected that this Group of Friends will keep the debate about climate change and security alive in the UN context. And there are even more ambitious plans to strengthen the topic at this level, for example the request of Pacific Island Countries (PICs) for the UN Secretary General to appoint a Special Adviser on climate change and security, and for the UNSC to appoint a Special Rapporteur to produce a regular review of security threats posed by climate change (see for example Pacific Islands Forum 2019, 15; also Day and Caus 2020, 5). Germany has announced that during its presidency of the UNSC in 2020 it will have a special focus on climate change and security.

All this demonstrates that climate change as an issue with implications for security and peace has 'arrived' at the global political level.⁶ Hence peace research will have to observe and will have to engage with what is going on at that level. The question, however, is what to make of these moves to link climate change and security from a peace research perspective. Exploring this question leads us into the debate about the securitisation of climate change (Busby 2019).

Securitisation of Climate Change: Pitfalls and Possibilities

As the so-called Copenhagen School of security studies explains, certain issues of societal and political interest can be constructed as security issues, with far-reaching political effects: elevating the issue into the sphere of 'high politics', dramatising it, making it an urgent and existential topic, a threat which calls for extraordinary measures and even emergency action (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998). Over the last years, this has also happened to climate change (policies). Climate change was constructed as a threat to security. From a peace research perspective, such securitisation is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can be seen as a source of more political attention for the problems of climate change and for mobilising more resources and more funding for addressing those problems. It also alerts politicians and the wider public to the need for extraordinary action (as has been the case with the Covid-19 pandemic once it had been declared an emergency at national and global levels). On the other hand, it also can lead to the militarisation of the issue. Militarisation of security as a consequence of securitisation legitimises military means and actions as appropriate and necessary to address the issue which was constructed as a security threat (Bonacker 2019). In this context, securitisation frames climate change as an issue that has to be dealt with by the defence and military establishments, thus allowing them to demand additional resources, expanding their area of responsibility and strengthening

⁶ Mention can also be made of the G7 or G20. These groups which have the power to influence world politics and world affairs also have addressed climate change and security over the last years, and it can be expected that the topic will gain more prominence in their deliberations in the future.

their legitimacy. It can even lead to authoritarian responses under the pretext that climate change poses an existential threat and requires emergency measures (McDonald 2018b). For example, securitisation of climate change in its militarised form can legitimise military interventions in “fragile situations” in regions of the Global South ravaged by climate change and its conflictual social and political effects, or it can lead to the framing of climate-change induced migration as a “security threat”, with the response of the fortification of one’s own borders in protection against the “waves” of climate refugees. Such narratives present victims of climate change as threats to national security and legitimise responses to climate change based on force; in this context, the military is presented or can present itself once more as major provider of—national—security, now with regard to climate change as a security threat. A recent example of such an approach is the ‘Worldwide Threat Assessment’ of the CIA, FBI and other US agencies of January 2019 which states that “climate change is an urgent and growing threat to our national security” (quoted from Nuccitelli 2019). This is in line with the Pentagon’s perspective on climate change as a security issue (Klare 2019).⁷ This framing of climate change as a national security concern of course easily lends itself to militarised responses; on the other hand, however, it can also be argued that if the military demonstrates concern about climate change this can strengthen a sense of urgency and credibility among the public, e.g. in the context of current US politics, and might pave the way to use military resources and assets for climate change adaptation (Schewe 2018).

Militarisation of climate change is closely linked to a specific understanding of security as national security of states (Bonacker 2019) (or international security of the state system). Although this narrow conceptualisation of security as tied to the nation state (or the international system of states) is still the dominant discourse globally today, it has not been left unchallenged. Concepts like ‘human security’ or, more recently, ‘ecological security’, provide alternatives for dealing with climate change as a security issue – beyond a narrow focus on national security and militarisation and the accompanying justification of military means and measures (Mayhew et al. 2018). The concept of human security, for example, has as its referent object not the nation state, but people, their lives and livelihoods, their values and everyday practices. This understanding of security brings new actors, beyond defence establishments and the military, into the security discourse and practice, e.g. NGOs, development agencies, or communities at the grassroots. One can go even further and define the referent object of security as ecosystems, as is the case with ecological security. This can lead to transcending the anthropocentric understanding of peace and security which is still implicit in ‘human security’ and transcending the divide between (human) society and (non-human) nature. Concepts like ‘ecological security’ (McDonald 2018a) or ‘community security’ point in this direction – with ‘community’ in the most far-reaching concepts understood as not only comprising living human beings, but also unborn generations, spirits (of the ancestors), other living beings and elements of the material and immaterial world, all of which do not exist as distinct entities, but only relationally (I’ll come back to that later). Embedded

⁷ That different approaches can be taken by defence and military establishments is demonstrated by the New Zealand Ministry of Defence, which in its take on the issue is much more open to linkages to concepts like human security and environmental security than its US counterparts. See New Zealand Ministry of Defence 2018 and 2019.

in such alternative approaches, there might still be a place and role for military organisations and measures, but they will definitely have lost their dominant position.

It should have become clear that the debate about climate change and security is wide open, with a vast variety of positions and approaches between the two poles of militarisation and national security on the one hand and ecological or community security on the other, or climate change as a threat that demands securitised responses versus climate change as an opportunity that opens avenues for cooperation. It is worthwhile to engage in this contestation from a peace research perspective. What exactly, for example, does it mean when the PIF countries in their regional security declaration of September 2018 posit that climate change is “the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific” (Boe Declaration 2018)? Does this pave the way for a militarisation of the topic, for military responses? Or does talk about “human security” and an “expanded concept of security” (ibid) pave the way for a genuine linkage of peace and climate change policies, acknowledging the transboundary nature of the climate change risks and the need for cooperative security? And if linking peacebuilding and addressing climate change is seen as a promising way forward, how can this be done?

Climate Change and Peacebuilding

Over the last few years, a new stream of work in peace and conflict studies has emerged which argues that climate change policies and peacebuilding⁸ should be linked (which is a normative argument), because there is empirical evidence that climate change can negatively affect peace or, put the other way round, can cause or enhance violent conflict, and violent conflict can negatively affect climate change policies, or, put the other way round, peace is a prerequisite for effective climate change policies. Climate change policies that ignore problems related to violence and peacebuilding even can in themselves cause or enhance conflict and violence, and peacebuilding that ignores climate change can fail exactly because of this ignorance and can even exacerbate the negative effects of climate change. This is why it has been argued that climate change policies have to be conflict-sensitive,⁹ and peacebuilding has to be climate change-sensitive (see e.g. Mosello and Rüttinger 2019, 6). The challenge is to link climate change policies and peacebuilding policies (Nett and Rüttinger 2016, 49, 56; Taenzler, Rüttinger and Scherer 2018, 4). If conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation and climate-sensitive peacebuilding are woven together, the possibility arises to even use climate change induced disasters and crises “as opportunities to build peace and increase the resilience of affected populations” (Nett and Rüttinger 2016, 53), fostering “climate resilient peace” (Barnett 2019, 933).

⁸ Here a comprehensive understanding of peacebuilding is applied, comprising various forms of conflict prevention and conflict transformation, dispute resolution and non-violent civil forms of conduct of conflict, as well as peacebuilding in acute post-conflict situations. Peacebuilding is necessary and can be conducted prior to violent conflict escalation (in order to prevent such escalation), during violent conflict (to terminate violence and transform the conduct of conflict from violent to non-violent forms), and after violent conflict (to overcome the legacies of violent conflict, to prevent relapse into violence, and to build a peaceful future).

⁹ “Conflict-sensitivity is an approach to policy-making that seeks, at a minimum, to avoid causing harm and, at maximum, contribute to peace” (Taenzler and Scherer 2019, 8).

The linkages play out in various shapes and forms. To give just a few examples: Climate-change induced displacement and relocation of communities can lead to conflicts between those people who are forced to resettle and those who have to welcome them in their midst. This can happen—and it has happened—if inter-community relations are not addressed in a conflict-sensitive manner. Hence conflict prevention and peacebuilding in such a case are closely linked to the effects of climate change. If a state or society is plagued by violent conflict, it cannot develop and implement climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies because of lack of respective resources, capacities and political will, and parties to the violent conflict might even contribute to enhancing climate change, e.g. by burning large areas of forests. It can even be argued that the effects of violent conflict on vulnerability to climate change are more prominent and serious than the impact of climate change on the risk of violent conflict.

On the other hand, climate change policies which are not conflict-sensitive can contribute to the emergence or aggravation of violent conflicts; adaptation measures, for example, which lead to the eviction of local communities from their land can lead to violent responses or to violence elsewhere. Large wind farms on the lands of indigenous communities are a case in point, as are adaptation projects which privilege one community over the other (funding mangrove planting in one coastal village, but not the other). Finally, peacebuilding projects which are not climate change-sensitive can have negative climate change effects, for example, funding the creation of jobs (for ex-combatants, for potentially violent male youths) in non-sustainable industries, e.g. establishing palm oil plantations at the expense of forests; or peacebuilding can fail because it does not address the negative effects of climate change, e.g. relocation of people who were internally displaced by previous violent conflict to coastal areas prone to sea level rise – these people might be forced to relocate again, and this in itself can become a trigger of new violence.

Because of these linkages, the plea to bring peacebuilding and climate change policies together, has become more intense, and lately it also has become more nuanced. This can be seen in particular with regard to two thematic areas: the climate change – violent conflict nexus, and the adaptation – conflict nexus.

Whereas initially research and academic debate very much focused on the question of whether there is a causal link between (the effects of) climate change and violent conflict, with inconclusive results (some research confirming, and other not), over time more nuanced assessments evolved, embedding climate change into the complex web of factors causing violent conflict and the pathways leading to violent conduct of conflict, with a focus on the 'climate-fragility' nexus, arguing that fragile states and situations are particularly conducive to the emergence and the dynamics of violent conflicts linked to the effects of climate change (see for example Rüttinger et al. 2015; Vivekananda et al. 2017; Mayhew et al. 2018; Moran et al. 2018; Schaar 2018). These deliberations converge in the catch-phrase of climate change as a 'threat multiplier' (Rüttinger et al. 2015). This catch-phrase has become prominent both in the academic and the policy discourse. More recently, it also has been challenged because it is not very helpful for identifying the specifics of (the effects of) climate change in relation to the emergence and intensification of violent conflict and hence

with regard to respective policy advice.¹⁰ It is argued that the exploration of the linkages between climate change and violent conflict demands even greater complexity and nuance in order to become policy-relevant.

Turning to the second point, it was initially argued that climate change adaptation, in particular in fragile or conflict-prone societal contexts, contributes to peacebuilding as it supports and enhances the resilience of climate change-affected societies and communities. Over time, however, it became clear that well-intentioned adaptation programmes and projects can have unintended negative effects with regard to peace and conflict. “Adaptation and mitigation policies can be perceived as top-down projects that involve little consultation with surrounding communities, and have therefore resulted in continued local opposition” (Mayhew et al. 2018, 44). They share this conflict-proneness with development policies and development projects more generally.

The ‘do no harm’ principle which guides peacebuilding and development has also to be applied to climate change policies and adaptation projects, given that externally designed and financed climate change interventions in fact can increase vulnerability by creating dependency, disrupt social relations, weaken existing governance structures and even trigger conflict. This not least means taking more time for interventions, working with local people and existing social structures. Taking local context into account is key, and it must not be forgotten that international actors and national governments which engage in climate change adaptation and peacebuilding in the local context themselves become part of this context and can entice conflict.

‘Do no harm’ is only the minimum standard. Going further, policies can—and should—aim at designing and implementing adaptation measures in ways which support peacebuilding, e.g. by establishing and fostering linkages between parties or communities which previously had been in conflict with each other. “Adaptation strategies, programmes and projects should be designed in a way that they (a) do not create or exacerbate conflicts and (b), ideally, contribute to peace” (Taenzler and Scherer 2019, 8). Joint climate change adaptation projects, for example, can strengthen inter- and intra-community relationships as they require dialogue and cooperation (Mosello and Rüttinger 2019, 9). Water projects bringing pastoralist herders and sedentary farmers together in drought-stricken regions are a case in point. A prerequisite for success is intimate familiarity with the local social-political-cultural context, its history and actual social relations.

A Pacific Paradigm: A Relational Understanding of Climate Change and Peace

The discourse on climate change, security, conflict and peace has come a long way over the last few years, and it looks very much like it is going to become dominant in peace and conflict studies in the foreseeable future (at the expense of other pressing issues, in particular the nuclear threat, see above). Given the existential risks inherent in climate change, this is a welcome development. There are, however, shortcomings and lacunae in the discourse

¹⁰ See, for example, Busby: “Merely saying climate forces are threat multipliers is not especially helpful, giving limited guidance about the circumstances under which climate forces are most likely to generate negative consequences” (Busby 2018, 342; see also Busby 2019).

which urgently need to be addressed in order to avoid dead ends and dangerous slippery paths (e.g. towards the militarisation of the issue, see above) and to come up with policies which can adequately deal with those existential risks. First and foremost, Euro-centric or 'Western' (one might even say neo-colonial) approaches should be overcome. Such 'Western' frameworks and epistemologies dominate the discourse today, but they are in danger of not measuring up to the challenges ahead.

In the following an alternative approach will be presented which attempts to introduce a fresh perspective. It emerged in the context of debates among academics, policymakers and practitioners from PICs and some 'external' researchers about how to approach the problematique of climate change, violent conflict, security and peace from a Pacific perspective, in ways which are adequate to Pacific traditions, ontologies and epistemologies, and which can lead to insights and outcomes of relevance for Pacific circumstances.

The result of these debates was the 'Toda Pacific Declaration on Climate Change, Conflict and Peace'.¹¹ This text is not only interesting with regard to the issues that were identified as conflict-prone or already contributing to violent conflict in the Pacific region—e.g. resource scarcity, food insecurity, and in particular climate change-induced migration—but also with regard to how conflict-sensitive and peace-supporting climate change policies should look. It builds a case for the inclusion of

dimensions of the climate change – conflict nexus which so far have been widely ignored or underestimated, such as cultural and spiritual aspects, gender, traditional customary law and knowledge, together with contemporary indigenous knowledge and indigenous ways of climate change adaptation, of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. (Toda Pacific Declaration 2019).

It stresses the importance of "weaving together traditional ecological knowledge with climate science" (ibid.), and of "overcoming human-centred approaches, which separate people from nature, nurturing the concept of relationality which will deepen connections between people and other living beings and the material and immaterial worlds" (ibid.). If this is taken seriously, conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation and climate change-sensitive conflict prevention and peacebuilding have to go well beyond current mainstream research and policy endeavours.

In this regard, the concept of relationality and the dialogical approach of the Declaration warrant particular attention.

Eco-relationality

The "concept of relationality" which figures prominently in the Declaration alludes to a fundamental epistemological and methodological shift in research and practice in the field of climate change and peacebuilding. It is grounded in indigenous Pacific ways of knowing and being in the world. It gives priority to relations, interactions and flows over entities,

¹¹ See <https://toda.org/pacific-declaration.html>

units and structures. In particular, it takes human beings not as isolated ‘individuals’, but as members of communities, defined through their—not only rational, but also affective and spiritual—relationships with other human beings as well as with actors beyond the human sphere, in nature and the spirit world. Being relational “is about wrestling to understand the ‘individual’ as part of the ‘community’ and the ‘community’ as imaged in the ‘individual’ (...) it is about being able to have a fluid and holistic grasp of both” (Vaai 2017, 26).

Personhood in Pacific communities is (understood as being) genuinely “relational and contextual” (Nabobo-Baba 2017, 163; see also Nanau 2017), which is in contrast to the Western concept of the individual as a discrete entity. And community is not understood in an anthropocentric way, but in a holistic cosmic way, including people, land, ocean, ancestors, spirits, trees, villages, animals, language, mountains, God – who all exist relationally.¹² Consequently, the ‘environment’ or the ‘climate’ cannot be understood in an anthropocentric, dualistic and substantialist manner (as separate from people, society and the sacred), but have to be understood cosmologically. Accordingly, “we can never confine the climate change discussions to the physical material dimensions; rather, we have to take into serious consideration the spiritual dimension that shapes the being and structure of the multiple relationships in the household” (Vaai 2019, 13) – with household understood in the encompassing way inherent in the Greek ‘oikos’ as an inclusive, holistic, relational concept embracing the whole inhabited earth (Bhagwan 2019; Vaai 2019).

Such a relational Pacific approach has far-reaching consequences for (the study of) climate change adaptation and governance, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The consequences become clear, for example, when thinking about the climate change – migration – conflict nexus. There is far-reaching consensus in the research community today that various forms of climate change-induced human mobility—relocation, displacement and migration—and their conflict potential have to be the focus of future research as well as of peacebuilding policy and practice. In the Pacific region in particular, it is highly likely that climate change will increase human mobility; communities on low-lying small islands, in deltas and floodplains and along coasts are particularly at risk, and relocation (further inland, to other islands or to urban centres) is a likely response. Such migration can be conflict-prone. The Pacific relational approach, however, posits that this has to be understood in a much more comprehensive way than is usually the case in climate change – migration – conflict studies. Research that merely looks at this issue as a technical, economic, legal and—maybe—political one, and practice that merely addresses it as such, fall short of the challenge and hence risks to miss its conflict potential and to fail in conflict prevention. By contrast, the concept of relationality allows us to comprehend the significance of the land/identity connection in Pacific Island societies and cultures. Land cannot be understood merely as the physical location where people live, or as an economic asset, but has to be understood also in terms of its social, relational, cosmological and spiritual dimensions (Vaai 2019). Following from such an understanding, it becomes clear that identity for Pacific Islanders is inextricably linked to land, to the place of origin. Upolu Luma Vaai, who is at the forefront of elaborating the concept of Pacific eco-relationality, explains that in his Samoan

¹² “Indigenous peoples’ cosmologies do not draw strict separations between people and the natural environment, physical and metaphysical, and rational and nonrational, unlike Western intellectual traditions informed by Cartesian philosophy” (Nalau et al. 2018, 852).

communities the umbilical cords of the newborn babies are buried in a ritual in the soil of their place of birth as an expression of the connection of people, land and ancestors (Vaai 2019, 10). In fact, this practice of burying the umbilical cord is widespread in Pacific societies; and of the same importance is to bury the dead in home soil so that their spirits can reside there, providing the linkage between the living and the dead. Another expression of the inextricable land/people connection can be found in Pacific languages, in which the term for land and people is the same, (Campbell 2019, 2-3).¹³ The Fiji term *vanua*, for example, incorporates “not only the land on which people live and its physical and natural resources but also the social and cultural elements of the people who are part of it” (Campbell 2019, 2). In Samoan, the “word for placenta (*fanua*) that holds the unborn baby in the womb of a mother is the same as the word for land and community” (Vaai 2019, 10).

This connection to land is under threat due to the effects of climate change (sea level rise, coastal erosion, food insecurity etc.), and hence, so too is the land-based identity of people.¹⁴ Climate change and climate change-induced migration does not only have serious implications for the material security of affected communities, but also affects their emotional and spiritual wellbeing, their ontological security (Campbell 2019). Climate change-induced displacement, migration and relocation pose a major challenge to people’s identity which is rooted in their place of birth and connected to the ancestors of that place. ‘Placelessness’ is a far more immediate and pressing threat for people than the threat of statelessness due to climate change. John Campbell even goes so far as to say that loss of customary land for community groups equals the loss of an important rationale for their existence, with severe emotional, psychological and spiritual implications (Campbell 2019; see also Barnett and McMichael 2018, 340). Conflicts arising from this challenge are to a large extent identity conflicts, within communities (e.g. gender-based or domestic violence), but also between relocating and recipient communities. An eco-relational approach to climate change, conflict and peacebuilding allows us to grasp these dimensions of the climate change – conflict/peace nexus (which easily get lost in mainstream Western approaches), as affects, emotions, feelings are integral to a relational understanding of self, community and, consequently, peace. Most importantly, peace(building) as well as climate change adaptation in a relational Pacific understanding cannot be had without the inclusion of the spiritual dimension.¹⁵

¹³ Hermann explains this relationship for people in Kiribati as follows: “... land is not so much matter as the material manifestation of divine power. As such, land is seen in relation to other non-human entities like ocean and waves, winds and clouds, rain and water, sun, lightning and thunder, but also the sky, moon, and stars. The existential importance of land derives from its also including those who live there, the people on the land. In fact, land and people are inseparably linked in the cultural logic of the I-Kiribati, a logic reflected in the Kiribati vernacular by there being a single term for both: *te aba* (land/people)” (Hermann 2017, 55).

¹⁴ The Toda Pacific Declaration therefore urges us to acknowledge “the inseparable connection of Pacific people(s) to the land (*vanua, fenua, fanua, ‘aina, whenua, enua, fonua, te aba, ...*) which is fundamentally, culturally and spiritually, linked to identity. Therefore the loss of land means a loss of cultural identity” (Toda Pacific Declaration 2019).

¹⁵ This is why even approaches which try to go beyond the dominant understanding of adaptation as a technical challenge and which criticise adaptation measures that focus “too much on technical than socio-political aspects” and which stress the importance of “socio-economic consequences” and “political questions” still do not reach far and deep enough (Taenzler and Scherer 2019, 7).

In other words: research which understands the climate change – conflict nexus and conflict-sensitive climate change governance and adaptation in merely secular terms, and climate change adaptation programmes and projects which are designed and implemented as secular endeavours, miss a crucial dimension of the problematique. John Campbell therefore cautions against climate change response strategies and projects dominated by international agencies informed by ‘western’ scientific, engineering and economic practices as they miss the spiritual and emotional dimensions of the problems at hand (Campbell 2019, 6; on the importance of emotions Hermann 2017). Secular approaches which solely ‘explain science’ to communities and impose foreign secular language and approaches upon them are bound to fail, as Patrick Nunn warns:

(...) one reason for the failure of external interventions for climate-change adaptation in Pacific Island communities is the wholly secular nature of their messages. Among spiritually engaged communities, these secular messages can be met with indifference or even hostility if they clash with the community’s spiritual agenda. (Nunn 2017)

Accordingly, Nunn warns against “sidelining God” in climate projects. And Upolu Luma Vaai cautions that “climate solutions from a secular perspective (...) may not touch deeply the unseen wounds of societies”; he emphasises that “the search for climate change solutions must go beyond the secular” (Vaai 2019, 4). In other words: climate science and peace research are not—or cannot remain— ‘secular’ disciplines

Weaving the Mat: Dialogue

All this means that the dominant narrow Western approach to climate change, conflict, security and peace has to be overcome, and this also means to shift from (mono-)causal mechanistic thinking to relational thinking which allows the capturing of the complex and multifaceted relations and interactions between climate change, conflict, security and peace. Western ways of knowing have to be aligned and combined with alternative ways—from the Pacific and elsewhere—so as to avoid a neocolonial framing of the issues at hand. Climate change science has to be interwoven with the histories of places and people and their local knowledge about the environment. Cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural dialogue are indispensable for dealing with climate change, conflict, peace and security in research, policy and practice. This is why the Toda Pacific Declaration has a strong focus on “weaving together”, “building linkages”, “supporting bridging institutions”, “including different worldviews”, “nurturing cross-cultural dialogue”, “integrating ‘Western’ and Pacific ways of thinking” (Toda Pacific Declaration 2019). In this context, the ‘bridging’ institutions mentioned in the Declaration are of particular importance: they are familiar with both worlds and both views of the world, ‘Western’ and Pacific (or other ‘non-Western’) cosmologies and epistemologies. They are well positioned to bring together local/indigenous/traditional knowledge (about climate change and peacebuilding) and international scientific knowledge (see also Nalau 2018, 860-862).

More recently, there is growing acceptance in international academic and policy circles of the need to take seriously local/traditional/indigenous knowledge¹⁶ and ways of operating when dealing with conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation and climate change-sensitive peacebuilding. There is, however, the danger that this traditional, indigenous, local knowledge is—once again—expropriated and exploited by ‘Western’ outsiders. Morgan Brigg reminds us: “The inclusion of Indigenous voices and perspectives frequently leads them to be processed in ways that meets the conventions of Western scholarship” (Brigg 2016, 156). He points to the tendency to just selectively incorporate indigenous knowledge into Western knowledge and formats according to the latter’s terms and thus again subordinate indigenous knowledge. He therefore recommends proceeding “with extreme caution (...) because the phenomenon of the white man claiming access to Indigenous forces is a longstanding trope in the effacement and replacement of Indigenous people by colonisers” (ibid.). Indeed, Pacific Islanders have hurtful experiences of their wisdom and stories stolen by outsiders, or being forced to express their experiences and knowledge in alien Western formats. Accordingly, they have the suspicion that acknowledgement of ‘traditional knowledge’ by outsiders will only lead to another wave of quasi-colonial exploitation of that knowledge and to more epistemological violence (Nalau et al. 2018, 860, 862).

Many existing models of integrating ITK [Indigenous Traditional Knowledge – VB] and scientific knowledge fail to challenge the status quo of Western thought, development, and climate adaptation options and do not navigate power asymmetries between groups effectively. (Nalau et al. 2018, 861)

Genuine coproduction of knowledge and cross-cultural dialogue has to be different; it needs deep self-reflection and immense effort to challenge one’s own deeply ingrained convictions about the ‘right’ way to see the world and how to change it for the better. This goes well beyond the conventional, well-established notion of multi-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary research. Beyond the inputs by the ‘usual suspects’ —political science, psychology, economics, sociology, geography, climate science, meteorology—the field of climate change, conflict and peace definitely also needs the input and efforts of other disciplines, such as philosophy, anthropology, theology. But even this will not be enough: what is desperately needed is the expertise and wisdom of knowledge-holders from outside the ‘Western’ canon of academy, from ‘non-Western’ traditions of knowing the world.¹⁷

Furthermore, what is needed is dialogue across cultural difference – difference between ‘the West’ and ‘the rest’, difference between academia and politics, difference between research and practice, between different worldviews and epistemologies. We need bridge-building and bridge-builders, e.g. with regard to the international discourse on the climate change – conflict – security nexus and local situations in the Pacific.

¹⁶ A discussion of the terminology can be found in Nalau et al. 2018.

¹⁷ Of course, indigenous/traditional/local knowledge does not provide ‘the’ solution to problems of climate change and peace. There is no doubt need for further critical assessment as to what this “actually includes, how it has developed (...) and the extent this knowledge can accommodate the changes in climate (...)”. Such evaluation is most relevant and appropriately done by indigenous peoples themselves (...)” (Nalau et al. 2018, 860).

Openness to genuine cross-cultural dialogue not least means to engage with alternative cosmologies, ontologies and epistemologies and to aim at co-production of knowledge together with the 'subjects' of research, what recently was termed ethnographic peace research (Millar 2018): to conduct research in close collaboration with local researchers and affected communities whose voices still are largely absent from the climate change and conflict discourse today. 'Weaving the mat' is an excellent Pacific metaphor for such an approach.

A Policy-Relevant Peace Research Approach

It is in the context of the local and the everyday that the conflict-prone effects of climate change actually play out and where actual conflicts or violence occur—well below the threshold of inter-state or internal war—and where they have devastating effects on the lives of people. Accordingly, what is needed is in-depth case study research, fine-grained ethnographic research which pays attention to the complexity of local context, the micro, the everyday. "(L)earning more about the micro-dynamics of climate-related violent conflict is imperative if we are to take the agency of people seriously" (van Baalen and Mobjoerk 2018, 70).

Such fine-grained ethnographic peace research not only can fill current knowledge gaps, but it can also provide urgently sought-after recommendations for policy and practice. It advances "understanding of inter-linkages between governance and the cultural and social context, which is important for a thorough assessment of local adaptive capacity and resilience" (Petzold and Ratter 2015, 42), not least with regard to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and on this basis can give concrete policy and strategic guidance to policymakers and practitioners. It allows coming up with highly localised and specific policy recommendations, tailored to particular cultural – social – political contexts, taking account of contingent and endogenous conflict escalation, importance of pathways and contextual factors.

Such research thus can take on "the urgent challenge to move from analysis to action on addressing climate-fragility risks" (Vivekananda et al. 2017, 2), addressing practitioners' and policymakers' need for more input from the academic realm so that they can develop well-informed and targeted policies, strategies, governance and adaptation measures. This is urgently needed, given that currently there is still

...little in the way of an actionable programme to advise on how best to tackle current and emerging risks, or how to adapt climate change adaptation and mitigation interventions to different types of conflict contexts. There also isn't much in the way of grounded evidence on the lived experiences of those at the intersection of such threats. (Mayhew et al. 2018, 55)

Policy-relevant research along these lines will not only have to explore the conflict-prone effects of climate change, but also the conflict potential of climate change adaptation and mitigation policies and technologies. And it can even go a decisive step further by exploring the "climate-cooperation nexus" (Ide et al. 2016, 297); that is, exploring the potential of climate change policies for building and sustaining peace, keeping in mind that, for example, "climatic disasters can be the catalyst to build peace in conflict-affected areas" (Barnett

2019, 932). Climate change in the Pacific can also be an opportunity for cooperation instead of competition, from the village level to the level of great power rivalry.

The focus on the local, on in-depth fine-grained ethnographic case study research, does not mean that this research cannot be of relevance beyond specific sites and contexts. It can be part of comparative case study research (e.g. pairing cases with different outcomes) (Busby 2018, 342-343), and of comparative learning, both vertically (e.g. communities – governments – regional/international organisations) and horizontally (across different sites in the Pacific, and between sites in different world regions).¹⁸ And it can feed into discussions and policy formulation at other scales, e.g. the UN Climate Security Mechanism and the security risk assessment framework (one has to be aware of the danger, however, that the further knowledge is generalised, the less it is pertinent to the local context). It has been posited, for example, that the UN's climate security framework “needs to be field-tested at different levels by drawing on the multi-faceted nature of challenges facing Pacific peoples” (Pasisi 2019, 18). A research focus on the local has to be—and can be—aligned with the multi-scalar character of the challenges at hand.

Conclusions

In conclusion, five points seem to be of particular importance when reflecting on climate change and peacebuilding against the background of Pacific experiences. First is the significance of a scalar approach, with regard to understanding climate change and peace as well as doing climate change policies and peacebuilding. Climate change and peace play out across scales, and peacebuilding and climate change interventions (have to) happen across scales. The linkages across scales, implications of challenges and activities at one scale for another scale, feedback loops across all scales determine the climate change – peace(building) nexus. What happens in the UN system matters – but only so much. What happens in a village in Fiji or Samoa also matters. There is a link between the UNSC and the umbilical cord of a new-born child in a community on a ‘remote’ Pacific Island (‘remote’ only seen from the perspective on UN Headquarters in New York, or a university in the Global North). One therefore has to consider impacts and decision-making across scales, and one has to focus on building and strengthening governance frameworks for climate change adaptation and peacebuilding across scales, working with both formal and informal institutions.

Using the example of the relocation of a climate change-affected village in Fiji (Narikoso), Barnett and McMichael demonstrate the multi-scalar character of such a local event (village relocation over a short distance on community-owned land):

The relocation process entails engagement with institutions across multiple scales from the level of the Village Development Committee to international funding agencies (...) Multi-scalar relationships between individuals, households, mobile community members, Provincial Councils, Government Ministries, and international donors and agencies also contribute momentum to relocation planning and

¹⁸ Kloeck and Fink rightly point to the “need for context- and place-specific solutions; one-size-fits-all solutions do not exist”, at the same time positing “that the diverse experiences of islands hold valuable lessons: small islands can learn from one another – and we can all learn from small islands” (Kloeck and Fink 2019, 2).

activities (...) So, multi-scalar institutions provide persuasive power as to the adaptive value of relocation and influence relocation planning in Narikoso. (Barnett and McMichael 2018, 345)

This multi-scalar character is even more obvious when one looks beyond relocations over short distances: to resettlement to other people's land within one country, or to migration to other islands or urban centres, or to distant foreign countries.

This multi-scalar character of the climate change – peace(building) nexus has far reaching consequences for peace research and peace practice. I tried to explain this when comparing the climate change threat to the nuclear threat.

In addition to looking and working across scales, it is necessary to look and work across the state/non-state divide. That is my second point. Non-state actors can and do play important roles in climate change adaptation and peacebuilding and in linking the two. This not only includes civil society organisations in the Western understanding of the term, but also traditional authorities and institutions from the local customary sphere of societal life. Traditional authorities—chiefs and elders, tribal leaders, religious authorities, healers, big men and wise women—are of major importance for the organisation of everyday life in Pacific societies. They enjoy legitimacy with their people and are in charge of the governance of communities, natural resources and the environment; they regulate resource use and solve disputes (not least disputes over land and other natural resources) according to local custom. They have to be taken into account and included when it comes to the management of the effects of climate change and adaptation policies. Resilience of communities and adaptive capacity very much rest with customary landownership, with densely knit customary societal networks of support and reciprocity, with customary authorities and institutions as effective and legitimate governance actors and mechanisms, and the indigenous traditional knowledge of which they are custodians (Bryant-Tokalau 2018). They are important for planning, decision-making, legitimisation and implementation of climate change adaptation programmes. Communities' adaptive capacity—seen not as a technical issue, but in its political, cultural and social dimensions—to a large extent rests with legitimate customary actors and institutions. Hence climate change and its effects are not issues that can be dealt with in the framework of the state and its institutions alone, but local customary non-state, as well as civil society, institutions have to be included. Improving relationships between communities and these institutions and actors on the one hand and state institutions and governments on the other is crucial for effective and legitimate conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation and climate-sensitive peacebuilding. In the best case the result of such cooperation would be peacebuilding that supports climate change adaptation, and climate change adaptation that supports peacebuilding.

This links in with the third concluding point. People and communities in the Pacific (and in other regions of the Global South) are not just 'victims' of climate change, but they have agency of their own; they can build on the strengths of their social relations, customs, histories and knowledge. Hence presenting them merely as 'victims' and 'vulnerable' is not adequate (and increasingly rejected by Pacific islanders themselves). On the other hand, however, they are in fact the victims of the actions of others (the big greenhouse gases emit-

ters elsewhere) and are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Their resilience therefore must not be used to shift the burden of responsibility to the climate change affected communities and to co-opt local voices in order to legitimise the lack or insufficiency of action on the side of those forces most responsible for climate change. Local resilience and agency, grounded in social networks and relational forms of governance, definitely can contribute to climate change and peace, but this alone is not enough. The interface of local agency and international responsibility is, for example, visible in the attitude of the people in Kiribati, as Hermann explains:

[They] do not simply subject themselves to discourses that would deny these atolls, and those living on them, any future prospects. Instead, they have developed their own emotional discourses, repudiating those powerful rival discourses that insist that the loss of their land is certain. In thus articulating their worries, therefore, they convey their determination not to sit idly as the ocean gradually devours their beloved land. Many islanders are aware of the fact that their state has very limited economic resources at its disposal, and cannot alone rise to the challenges posed by the inroads of climate change. But in this connection they do not see themselves as isolated from the world; rather they appeal to other nations and states, hoping to be helped by them. (Hermann 2017, 67)

Governments and civil society of PIC in fact have every right to stress their own vulnerability and the responsibility of others in the political negotiations with external actors.

Indeed, the concept of vulnerability itself is a weapon of the weak, at least in so far as at-risk groups can deploy it strategically for a variety of purposes, ranging from highlighting the need to reduce emissions to more and better adaptation practices, alternative forms of assistance, identity-making, or political legitimacy. (Barnett 2020, 3)

On the other hand, however, the vulnerability discourse can also be used for neocolonial purposes: presenting the vulnerable people as without agency, in need of solutions that come from external powerful actors and institutions that know best what is good for the vulnerable, imposing their agendas—of adaptation—upon these passive people who cannot act for themselves (Barnett 2020, 4). “Indeed, ‘adaptation’ and ‘resilience’ often appear to be fixes to sustain the liberal-capitalist institutional complex that causes climate change and the unequal distribution of its attendant risks” (Barnett 2020, 4). The climate change agenda thus to a certain extent has been colonised by international actors.

The fourth point is that research on and from the Pacific, conducted along the lines of a Pacific concept of eco-relationality, can make an important contribution to the wider international debate about climate change, conflict, peace and security. Pacific themes and Pacific views widen the perspective beyond conventional mainstream approaches, taking into account so far underestimated or marginalised aspects. Pacific voices introduce relational-affective non-anthropocentric perspectives that provide insights and entry points for policy and practice which so far have been missed by the Western-dominated international discourse. In particular, the “climate-fragility risks” which figure prominently in the dominant mainstream discourse (see above) cannot be confined to the fragility of states. Of

course, it is significant both from an academic and a political perspective to explore and address the link between fragile states and climate change (in both directions: climate change enhancing state fragility, and state fragility hampering adequate responses to climate change), but it is not enough; the challenge, from a peace research and peacebuilding perspective, is much more complex, it reaches wider and deeper. In addition to political fragility, climate change-induced societal, emotional and spiritual fragility matters too. In this context, even far-reaching concepts like 'human security', which for example underlies the PIF's approach to the climate change – security complex (see above), still fall short of coping with the actual challenges. In the light of the unprecedented dangers of climate change (and pandemics like Covid-19 for that matter), a focus on human security as the security of human beings and human societies in isolation, as separated from the non-human 'rest' of the world (or of creation, if you like) will not suffice; rather, this anthropocentric way of seeing the world and thinking about it, this reification of a divide between human society on the one hand and 'nature' on the other is a cause of the climate change-induced emergency that mankind finds itself in (after having created that emergency). Pacific eco-relationality might provide more adequate avenues to deal with this emergency (as well as emergencies caused by pandemics like the current one).

This leads to the fifth concluding point: climate justice, understood not least as inter-generational justice and inter-species justice, taking into account also the rights of unborn generations and of non-human beings. The negative effects of climate change constitute a new form of structural violence, and this can also be seen as violation of climate justice. Climate-related livelihood loss, diseases, insufficient food and water etc. (that is: the effects of structural violence) are in fact more immediate, more direct and more pressing threats to many people's everyday security than (the danger of) armed conflict (at the same time those suffering from armed conflict are more at risk from the effects of climate change). "Broadly, there is a growing consensus that climate change is disproportionately impacting low-income, fragile countries, and typically the poorest and most vulnerable communities within them" (Day and Caus 2020, 13). Peace research which encompasses research into the causes and forms of structural violence links in with the concerns of climate justice. Moreover, the quest for climate justice provides a crucial link between the climate movement and the peace movement.

This, finally, leads me back to the beginning: The age of climate change is at the same time still the nuclear age. What is urgently needed is a double zero: zero nuclear weapons, and zero carbon emissions - denuclearisation and decarbonisation. To achieve this is the big task ahead for the joint peace and climate movement, supported by peace research that engages with both the nuclear and the climate threat.

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