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## Preface I



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In the winter semester of 2010/2011, in the framework of the *Cycle Franco-allemand* at Sciences Po and the Free University, Charlène Cabot attended my annual compact seminar at the Otto Suhr Institute for Political Science at the Free University of Berlin on “Climate Change Impacts for International, European, National and Human Security: Causal, Discourse, Scenario and Empirical Analyses of Hotspots”; she presented a talk on “Climate change impacts for sub-Saharan Africa and the political response” that impressed me both by its scientific focus and by her concern for the issues.

In September 2011, I proposed her MA thesis on *Climate Change and Security Risks in Africa: The Influence of Political Factors on the Reduction of Climate-induced or -aggravated Conflicts—A Study of Farmer–Herder Conflicts over Natural Resources in Western Africa* for the *prix d'excellence* of the *Deutsch-Französische Hochschule—Université franco-allemande*. Charlène Cabot's thesis addressed the research question “how institutional design and policies influence and might reduce conflicts, therefore avoiding the escalation of social conflicts into violence and upholding human and environmental security”. She combined French scientific expertise on Africa with German expertise in the societal effects of climate change on security and conflicts by focusing on “social, economic and political circumstances mediating environmental changes and determining whether the societal challenge posed by climate change will be a conflictive one”. She rejected any automatic link between climate change and conflict and stressed instead that political institutions and decisions could reduce violent climate-induced conflicts through integrated policies. Her results may be of practical relevance for development cooperation and for the global political debate on whether political factors will be decisive in determining whether climate change will become an additional stressor, increasing the probability of conflict.

Not surprisingly, on 18 November 2011 Ms. Charlène Cabot—at the age of 23—won one of the nine prizes and the only one for outstanding academic achievement for her French-German master's thesis in political science; she was the first student from the Free University of Berlin to be awarded this prize. In early 2012, her study underwent a second round of double-blind review by Africa specialists from different disciplines from both Africa and Europe. In December 2011, Charlène Cabot joined the *World Food Programme* (WFP) and worked in Germany, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Senegal and the organization's Policy and Programmes Division in Rome, before moving to work for WFP's office in Chad.

Charlène Cabot has been one of several highly gifted ambitious young women and men from the Cycle Franco-Allemand who have combined scientific excellence with sociopolitical and environmental concerns and who have later taken up key positions in French and German

government agencies and with international organizations, including positions in political and environmental hot spots in Africa or in Afghanistan.

Since the Élysée Treaty was signed on 22 January 1963, Franco-German friendship has gradually evolved, offering a new framework for cooperation in foreign and defence policy as well as in education and youth policy. A new generation of French-German bridge-builders and leaders has emerged who each speak and understand the language and culture of the other. Thirteen years earlier Jean Monnet, an experienced political visionary, had set bilateral economic and political relations on a different track, breaking with hundreds of years of conflict.

In 1984, on the initiative of Prof. Dr. Gerhard Kiersch, Sciences Po (*Institut d'études politiques de Paris*) and the Otto Suhr Institute for Political Science signed an agreement on exchanging students. In 1991 a joint and integrated study programme followed, and in 2008 a dual master's programme, with different specializations in political science, international relations and European affairs. During the past three decades some 500 students have participated in this programme, with 20 new students admitted each year.

Charlène Cabot developed her talents in this broader political and educational framework of closer French-German cooperation. Talented and engaged students are the highest gift to any university educator who is keen to translate knowledge into political and social action. I was delighted to work with Charlène Cabot to develop her thesis into this book. My friend since 1963, Michael Headon from Wales, helped with language editing. This trilateral cooperation has become an intergenerational French, British and German effort.

I am delighted that Mme Barbut (France), Executive Secretary, *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* (UNCCD), and Dr. Ibrahim Shaw have endorsed Charlène Cabot's book with a foreword and preface. Dr. Shaw, himself a member of the Fulbe people, grew up in Freetown (Sierra Leone), teaches at Northumbria University, UK, and is the first African Secretary General of the *International Peace Research Association* (IPRA).

Mosbach, Germany  
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## Preface II



The causal links between environmental disasters and conflicts have been recognized in both research and policy interventions. These links have often been associated with the notion of a ‘risk society’ based on Ulrich Beck’s idea of ‘manufactured uncertainties’ as they relate to invisible environmental issues that have ‘short and long term effects on plants, animals, and people’. Beck (2003) defines risks as a set of ‘radioactivity, which completely evades human perceptive abilities, but also toxins and pollutants in the air, the water and foodstuffs, which induce systematic and often *irreversible* harm’ on all living things.

However, what has been ignored, and which certainly deserves attention in research and policy interventions, is the broader conceptualization of risk beyond the parameters of ‘manufactured uncertainties’ that lead to environmental disasters and other challenges, to include those associated with indirect or invisible forms of violence such as absolute poverty, inequality, famine, forced migration, forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, racism, xenophobia, marginalization or exclusion of minorities, disease, business risk, patriarchy and gender discrimination, religious discrimination, corruption, hate speech, unfair trade and other insecurities. The broader conceptualization of risk and conflict is therefore associated with indirect or invisible forms of violence, resonating with Galtung’s (2004) conceptualization of conflict as invisible cultural (attitude) and structural forms of violence. According to Galtung’s ABC (attitude, behaviour and contradiction) conflict triangle, some conflicts are rooted in economic contradictions and political structures, while others are located within social attitudes or cultural outlooks (Galtung 2004). This shows that there are links between risk and conflict, broadly speaking, although this is rarely recognized in research and policy interventions. As I argue in my book *Human Rights Journalism: Advances in Reporting Humanitarian Interventions* (2012), invisible and indirect forms of violence (attitude and contradictions) by way of risk or conflict, such as absolute poverty, famine, racism, discrimination, economic injustice and inequality, if not prevented or managed, can lead to direct/visible forms of violence (behaviour) such as civil wars, armed robbery, inter-state wars, murder, rape, beating, shooting, torture, genocide, ethnic cleansing, domestic violence, extremism and terrorism.

Yet, as pointed out in this timely book by Charlene Cabot, while there is evidence of increasing research into the causal links between adverse climate change and conflict and policy interventions to prevent or address these visible and invisible forms of violence, there is relatively limited research looking at the links between non-environmental factors or risks and conflict. Cabot’s book, which looks at political factors in exacerbating or mitigating conflict by way of direct violence, is an important contribution to addressing this gap in peace and conflict research.

I clearly go along with Cabot’s emphatic argument that climate change in itself cannot lead to conflict in the sense of direct violence, and that other factors (such as political, social and economic) should be taken into consideration. Her book provides a convincing argument

grounded in a combination of theoretical and empirical research drawing on case studies from three geographically and culturally closely linked West African countries: Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. The findings of her research—the well-calculated and well-articulated government policies of integration, equitable land distribution, and participative decision-making processes that can mitigate against climate-change-induced or -exacerbated conflicts will, arguably, go a long way towards debunking neo-Malthusian theorists' simplistic explanation of climate change and population explosion for civil conflicts and wars in Africa.

Some critics may want to argue that the three West African countries on which Cabot bases her study are not enough to draw conclusions that may apply to the other 16 West African countries, let alone the rest of Africa. Yet while this book makes a passing reference to similar simplistic explanations for the Darfur crisis and the Rwandan genocide, where well-thought-out intervention policies would also have helped, there is evidence to suggest the situation is not very different from other West African countries, and perhaps the rest of Africa.

An American political commentator, Robert Kaplan, for instance, wrote a controversial article in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1994 in which he referred to the 'New Barbarism' thesis that was largely supportive of the neo-Malthusian idea of linking most African conflicts to climate change and population explosion: *The Coming Anarchy: How scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet*. Kaplan (1994) wrote that "West Africa is becoming the symbol of worldwide demographic, environmental, and societal stress, in which criminal anarchy emerges as the real 'strategic' danger". What made Kaplan's thesis even more problematic was the fact that he used the Sierra Leone civil war which started in 1991 as his special case study of West Africa, and perhaps the rest of the world, whose future he said now rested in the hands of "Thomas Malthus, the philosopher of demographic doomsday". Kaplan noted that the civil war in Sierra Leone, which had claimed over 160,000 lives and displaced more than two million people by the time it ended in 2002, was "a product of social breakdown caused by population pressure and environmental collapse". Yet looking at Sierra Leone's very small population of a little over five million and largely unexploited land during the war years, it is easy to see that Kaplan's thesis, at least as far as Sierra Leone was concerned, was out of tune with reality. The extent to which *The Atlantic Monthly* is considered a magazine of reference for most US diplomats in Africa shows just how Kaplan's article may have negatively influenced Western thinking, and by extension that of the international community, about African conflicts in general and that in Sierra Leone in particular.

Little wonder that the Rwandan genocide, which incidentally happened in 1994, the same year that Kaplan's article saw the light of day, was simply reduced to an ethnic conflict of Hutus killing Tutsis for fun and for control of the country's resources. In the more recent Darfur crisis, the narrative was almost the same, with the Arab Janjaweed militias treating the people of Darfur as second-class citizens. Each of these cases echoes the familiar story of cultural baggage, with one tribe fighting the other for scarce resources. The framing had a Malthusian tone at best as it was one of too many people scrambling for too few resources, giving the impression that there was hardly enough to go around. There are three of the most commonly used cultural frames in Western media news discourse of conflicts or crises in Africa: first, 'historical baggage' (seeing Africa in the prehistoric era of exploration as well as through the slave trade era lens of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries); second, 'ethnic hatred' (seeing Africa as only one country with many tribes fighting against each other); and finally, 'dark, primitive and hopeless' (seeing Africa as a basket case where poverty and misery are rife, and where nothing can be done to change things).

It is worth noting that it is largely this loaded negative stereotypical representation of Africa that informed Kaplan's 'new barbarism' thesis about the civil war in Sierra Leone. In a similar vein, the Kaplan thesis might have impacted not only on the way Western diplomats and politicians perceived African conflicts, not least the civil war in Sierra Leone, but also, and

perhaps more importantly, on most Western journalists and academics writing about Africa. In fact, some African technocrats who had lived in the West for a very long time before returning home to contribute to building their countries were apparently influenced by Kaplan's thesis. For instance, Tejan Kabbah, who worked for the UN in New York before returning to be Sierra Leone's first democratically elected president in 1996 following one-party rule, said that the RUF rebels were all 'bandits' and 'criminals', and that all youths, some as young as 10, recruited by the rebels were 'thieves' and 'vagabonds'. But the good news is that while followers of the neo-Malthusian theory of the climate change and population explosion–conflict link may have simply celebrated the Kaplan thesis, there are at least a few scholars who refused to buy into it. One of them is a British anthropologist, Paul Richards, who wrote the book *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (1996), which criticized the Kaplan thesis as deeply flawed. Richards's book is largely based on an ethnographic study of the Sierra Leone civil war, drawing mainly on observation and interviews with rebel combatants, especially child soldiers as young as 10 years old. In his book, Richards underlines and critiques the Kaplan thesis in the following way.

Throughout West Africa, drought and land hunger (Kaplan argues) had driven young people to the teeming and only superficially modernized shanty town suburbs of the coastal cities. Spun off from a failing traditional society, these criminally-inclined young migrants were "loose molecules in a very unstable social fluid" (Kaplan 1994: page). The perpetrators of the violence in eastern and southern Sierra Leone lacked any clear political purpose. They were better pictured as criminals and bandits. Reverting to odd, superstition-riddled forms of violence, these gangs of young stars, roaming the Sierra Leone country side, armed with AK-47s and killing for scraps, are likened by Kaplan to the hungry mercenary hordes ravaging seventeenth-century Germany prior to the ending of the Thirty Years War (Richards 1996: 15–16).

But Richards drew on the findings of the research in his book to dismiss Kaplan's claims as wanting. To start with, while not totally disputing the claim that the war in Sierra Leone was fought for the country's resources, Richards said that there is at least no evidence in his findings to suggest that the war was caused by an environmental crisis. On the contrary, he explained, the young victims of the war (the child soldiers) were attracted to join the ranks of the rebels because of the many failings of the political system in the country in providing them with education, jobs, health care and other basic requirements of life. Moreover, the British anthropologist noted that the findings of his research point to claims made by the child soldiers saying that they took up arms to fight against the corruption of the state, and above all to remove the one-party system and replace it with a multi-party democracy.

I can see a very strong resonance between the findings of Paul Richards's research and those of Cabot's research that inform the key arguments of this book. Richards's findings point to the failings of the political system in Sierra Leone as the root cause of the civil war in the country, and indicate that one way to reduce such conflict situations between the marginalized youths and people of Sierra Leone on the one hand and the state authorities on the other was to put in place proper policies of integration, equitable opportunities for all Sierra Leoneans, and a more decentralized and democratic society. In a similar way, Cabot's reviews of successful policies and institutional reforms (policies of integration, equitable land distribution and decentralization involving agro-pastoral communities) in addressing climate-change-induced or -aggravated conflicts in the three case studies of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso presented in this research demonstrate the extent to which "political and institutional framework[s] may help to mitigate the threats to human security from climate change" (Cabot *infra*: page).

And for all one knows, the application of Kaplan's 'new barbarism' thesis, and its obvious criticisms, cannot be said to be limited to Africa, or West Africa. There have been even more mediatized incidences of environmental disasters in other even more vulnerable 'risk societies', not least in Western countries such as the US during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and in developing countries such as after the earthquakes in Haiti in 2010 and Nepal in 2015. It is clear that one common thread that runs through all three of these environmental hazards is that

these disasters became more social in nature because of the very slow government response to mitigating human suffering, and by extension, the tensions and conflicts that were created.

In the case of Hurricane Katrina, the US government of George Bush was heavily criticized for its delayed and weak response to reducing the suffering of those trapped in makeshift shelters such as the Hippodrome in New Orleans. In fact, the Bush government was accused of racism for not doing enough for the people of New Orleans, the majority of whom were poor black people who lacked the means to quickly evacuate and survive the disaster. While the people of New Orleans were struggling to cope with the disaster, President George Bush was spotted playing country music while Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was spotted shopping in a Manhattan boutique. What is more, just as we saw in West Africa, Kaplan's 'new barbarism' thesis was evoked here as the attention of the media, and by extension the public and the politicians, quickly shifted from blaming the authorities in Washington for failing to respond quickly and appropriately in order to reduce human suffering to blaming what they called 'rampant looting and raping' perpetrated by 'black' criminals ravaging New Orleans. It turned out that the poor and delayed response by the Washington authorities had more to do with New Orleans's socio-economic position in the US as a notoriously poor part of the country heavily populated by African Americans with a cultural baggage of 'criminality and violence'. It should be noted that environmental disasters are far more multi-layered than they appear; when disasters strike they tend to expose far wider social, political, economic, and sometimes even racial or ethnic fault lines. When Katrina exposed the problems of poverty and social class, the response was paradoxically more akin to that of a developing country than a global superpower.

The *Federal Emergency Management Agency* (FEMA), which was charged with the responsibility of evacuating or supporting the helpless survivors of the disaster, proved to be a total shambles as it demonstrated poor judgement. Many people died, mainly from starvation and poor organization of the evacuations. Many were stranded for days lacking food and medicine. Yet the framing of survivors' coping mechanisms in the face of adversity by some Western media was at best racist. For instance, while *Agence France-Presse* (AFP) framed a white couple as wading through the waters of the flood after getting food from the shops, *Associated Press* (AP) described two blacks wading through the waters carrying food they 'looted' from the shops. FEMA's lack of timely and appropriate intervention was most likely caused by the media's negative depiction of the disaster zone as being largely populated by ravaging 'looters' and 'rapists'. Yet according to Lisa Finnegan in her book *No Questions Asked* (2006), the stories of looting and raping turned out to be grossly exaggerated, and they just provided a perfect alibi for the US authorities for their lack of timely and appropriate intervention in halting or reducing human suffering in the wake of the disaster. Critics say, and perhaps rightly so, that if Katrina had hit a state populated predominantly by white Americans, such as California, it would have received more timely and appropriate government intervention and media sympathy than what we saw in New Orleans. Besides, Katrina hit other nearby coastal cities of America such as Louisiana but the impact was less severe because they were not only white-dominated cities that were not only less vulnerable because they were better prepared but also received far more positive attention from the media and US authorities. Thus, for many African Americans, Hurricane Katrina provided a defining moment in which they rediscovered poverty and social injustice in the US, and interrogated their social contract with the government in Washington.

Hurricane Katrina might be a different climate change phenomenon in terms of the scale of devastation compared to that of the drought in West Africa, but the circumstances of the failure of governance and policy causing the failure to mitigate conflict and human suffering are to a large extent the same. As we see in the case studies of the three West African countries in Cabot's book, the existence or lack of appropriate policy interventions made a positive or negative contribution to mitigating conflict between herders and farmers, and their consequent suffering. In the case of Hurricane Katrina, the slow and inappropriate intervention by the US federal authorities translates to a similar political factor that made the natural hazard itself

more of a sociopolitical disaster. Where there are appropriate and timely policy interventions it is very unlikely that disasters will lead to conflict and human suffering. For instance, forty years earlier in 1965, another hurricane called Hurricane Betsy devastated New Orleans. However, in the case of Hurricane Betsy, soldiers from the US National Guard were quickly deployed to help evacuate victims and provide other much-needed support. Hurricane Betsy was very similar in severity to Katrina since it was also a category three hurricane but it left only 76 people dead compared to Katrina's over 1,500. This shows that the policy intervention during Betsy in 1965 was far timelier and appropriate compared to Katrina in 2005. And so, while there is evidence to support the link between lack of appropriate and timely government policy intervention and conflict and suffering involving the victims during Katrina, there is evidence of appropriate and timely government policy intervention and less or no conflict and suffering involving the victims during Betsy. We also see a similar scenario in Côte d'Ivoire in Cabot's book "where the implementation of integration policies and the equitable distribution of land rights between users are linked to lower levels of conflict". However, as Cabot argues in her conclusion, "this was noted most clearly at the beginning of the period studied in Côte d'Ivoire, before politics became discriminatory and heavily driven by ethnic considerations (with the concept of Ivoirité)" (2015; page). And so we can see that in both New Orleans and in Côte d'Ivoire initial policy interventions were largely fair and appropriate, thereby producing less conflict and suffering, whereas the latter policy interventions were largely discriminatory and inappropriate, thereby producing more conflict and suffering.

The central lesson that can be drawn from Cabot's book, which I have tried to expand upon above, is that an environmental hazard only actually becomes a disaster when other non-environmental factors such as political ones are at play in the negative sense by way of the absence of, or insufficient, policy interventions to prevent its developing into conflict and human suffering. This raises an important question: what is the difference between environmental risk and environmental hazard? Well, based on the above lesson, I am proposing the following distinction: environmental risk—as understood by Beck—is a 'manufactured uncertainty' that is at the latent stage and can manifest at any time. Environmental hazard is a 'manufactured uncertainty' that is already at the manifest stage. That is to say, an environmental risk is a man-made uncertainty such as a societal vulnerability such as poverty or discrimination (a form of invisible violence) that is initially at the latent stage but can move to the manifest stage (form of visible violence) when triggered by another man-made uncertainty (going by Ulrich Beck's thesis of global warming caused by man's activities in this world), this time a disaster. As Kaufman (2006) argues, natural hazards cannot be said to be natural in their social consequences.

I am quite sure that this is a debate that is bound to continue beyond the scope of my contribution here. I want to wrap up by thanking Cabot for her very important contribution to this important debate. I hope to see more research in the future that would keep this debate alive!

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