

# Hydro-climatic change, conflict and security

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# Increasing political interest on climate change, water and security

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- ▶ *No nation, however large or small, wealthy or poor, can escape the impact of climate change. Rising sea levels threaten every coastline. More powerful storms and floods threaten every continent. More frequent drought and crop failures breed hunger and conflict in places where hunger and conflict already thrive. **The security and stability of each nation and all peoples -- our prosperity, our health, our safety -- are in jeopardy.***
- ▶ *Climate change threatens to overburden states and regions which are already fragile and conflict prone. It is important to recognise that the risks are not just of a humanitarian nature; **they also include political and security risks that directly affect European interests.***

**U.S. President Barack Obama,  
2009**

**Javier Solana,  
EU High representative for the  
Common Foreign and  
Security Policy, 2008**



# EU call for research

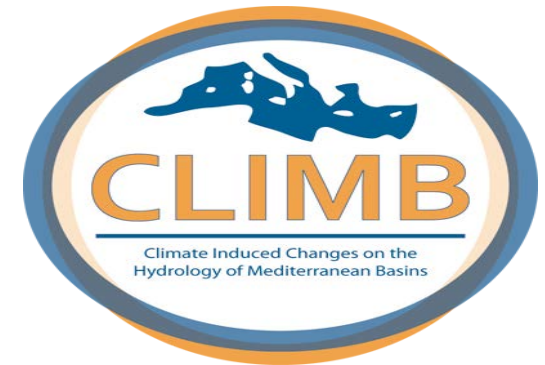
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FP7 Cooperation Work Programme: Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities

## **SSH-2009 - 4.2.1. Climate induced changes in water resources in Southern Europe and neighbouring countries as a threat to security**

Climate change and its impacts on societies, economies and ecosystems is increasingly perceived as a threat to human security. Research should provide an interdisciplinary analysis – across the usually separated areas of climate change research and conflicts and peace research – on the contribution of climate change in the escalation or exacerbation of societal tensions and border conflicts due to the impacts of extreme weather events (including displacement of people due to floods, droughts and other events). Mitigation and adaptation strategies at various levels (local, regional, European and global) should be examined in a comparative manner to allow the identification of factors that can enhance social, institutional and economic resilience, protection of fundamental rights, the prevention of violent conflicts, and peace-building through cooperation over access to natural resources. Water resources need to be focused on given their specific vulnerability to climate and their key importance in the escalation or prevention of conflicts. The research should make use of the latest hydrological and climatic models and have a regional focus on South Europe, North Africa, and/or Sahel zone, and/or Middle East –leading to genuine interdisciplinarity and comparison between these distinct but related regions.

**Funding scheme: Collaborative project (small or medium-scale focused research project) for specific cooperation actions dedicated to international cooperation - Targeted to North Africa, Mediterranean Countries, Middle East** (*Topic coordinated with the Environment work programme topic ENV.2009.1.1.5.2*).



# CLICO, a unique project in scale and scope



- ▶ 14 partners.
- ▶ 11 in-depth case-studies.
- ▶ Statistical analysis of more than 10,000 domestic water conflict or cooperative events.
- ▶ Truly interdisciplinary.

# This presentation

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1. Three key findings
2. Three areas for more research
3. Policy implications



# This presentation

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1. **Three key findings**
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# Finding 1: Water is not for violent fighting

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- ▶ Water wars are extremely rare, and shared waters are more often a reason for cooperation than conflict.
- ▶ Climatic variability does not correlate with domestic water conflict; population growth, urbanization and agricultural development do.
- ▶ Violent domestic water conflicts are extremely rare.
- ▶ Conflict may play out over water, but it is not water that causes the conflict: e.g. Sudan, Israel-Palestine.



## Finding 2: Climate change does affect human security: it impacts on vulnerable people

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- ▶ Floods and sea-level rise likely to cause large scale population and economic dislocations, which cause social tensions.
- ▶ It is the socially-excluded and the impoverished that stand to suffer the most from hydro-climatic changes, but bureaucracies do not cater to their needs.





# States are often a source of mal-adaptation

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- ▶ Mal-adaptation = adaptations with more energy emissions and high social and economic costs.
- ▶ States prone to make gigantic interventions, in the name of adaptation or as a response to a disaster, even when there are softer, cheaper solutions.
- ▶ Not a call to go “beyond the state”; a call to reinvent the state.



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# Question 1: Which institutions reduce vulnerabilities and increase security?

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- ▶ At the transboundary level, international treaties are crucial but need to address climate variability and change better.
- ▶ At the domestic level: social security institutions and civil protection (disaster relief) agencies.
- ▶ How do social and civil security institutions improve human security and why are they dismantled if they do so?



## Question 2: Why, when and how can conflict be good?

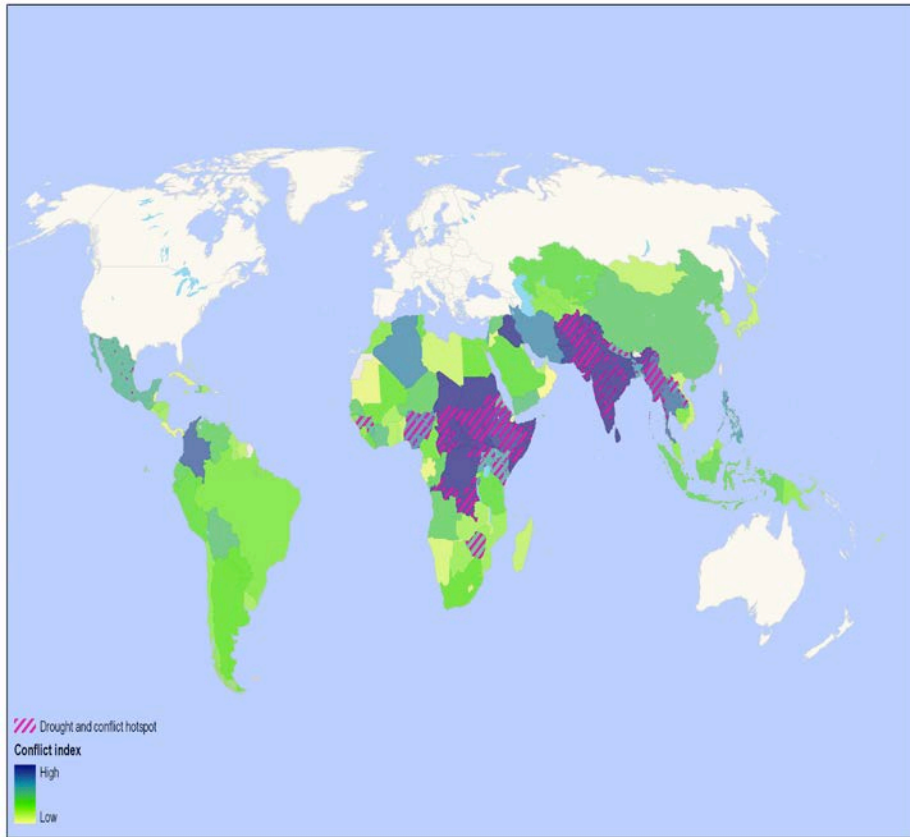
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- ▶ Conflict is not always bad.
- ▶ “Adaptive conflict”.
- ▶ Conflict as a source of institutional change.
- ▶ How, when and which type of (water) conflict can be socially progressive?



# (Non) Question 3: No need for hotspot maps

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- ▶ We lack useful climate change predictions at relevant scales.
- ▶ Causality is too complex and contingent to be simplified into “conflict indexes”.
- ▶ Yes to good GIS information; no to oversimplifying and misleading maps that can turn into self-fulfilled prophecies.
- ▶ Also: how do effects travel through space to impact far-distant territories?



# This presentation

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# Policy implications

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- ▶ Stop reproducing in policy documents and declarations the “climate wars” and “water wars” fallacies.
- ▶ Invest to protect those most vulnerable. We know who they are and what they need.
- ▶ Improve and strengthen social security and civil protection and disaster relief institutions.





Thank you!



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