

Review: Exploring Climate Migration and Environmental Security

Reviewed Work(s): On Climate Migration: Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond by Muhittin Ataman and İbrahim Efe: The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration by Jake Bittle: Different Dimensions of Environmental Security in Türkiye and Beyond by Muhittin Ataman and Gloria Shkurti Özdemir

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# Exploring Climate Migration and Environmental Security: Türkiye to America and Beyond

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## On Climate Migration: Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond

*Edited by Muhittin Ataman and İbrahim Efe*  
SETA Publications, 2023, 288 pages, \$25.00, ISBN: 9786258322439

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## The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration

*By Jake Bittle*  
Simon & Schuster, 2023, 268 pages, \$17.91, ISBN: 9781982178253

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## Different Dimensions of Environmental Security in Türkiye and Beyond

*Edited by Muhittin Ataman and Gloria Shkurti Özdemir*  
SETA Publications, 2023, 224 pages, ₺56,70, ISBN: 9786258322385

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## Introduction

Climate is the long-term sum of the atmospheric elements that make up the weather over short periods. Since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, industrial development and associated massive emissions of greenhouse gases have led to a gradual increase in the average temperature and accompanying changes in the global climate. These changes, in turn, lead to the emergence of climate-related risks and adversely affect human life.

In the “Global Risks Report 2020,” more than 750 experts and decision-makers were asked to present their forecasts and concerns for 2020 in terms of probability and impact, and for the first time in the survey’s 10-year outlook, the top five long-term global risks were grouped under the heading “environment.”<sup>1</sup> According to this report, climate change and environmental disasters or events caused by climate change are expected to be among the global risks that will affect the world in the next 10 years.<sup>2</sup>

Many issues that the earth is facing right now are related to climate change and global warming. For example, biodiversity loss, forest fires, floods, extreme weather, desertification, land degradation, and rising sea levels are some of the consequences of global warming. Furthermore, the impact of the environment on human life is expected to be even more dramatic, as 200 million people would be harshly affected by the rise in sea level by 2100.<sup>3</sup>

The three books mentioned in this article are analyzed under two sub-headings: *Climate Change, Migration, and Displacement*, and *Climate Change and Environmental Security*. The three books analyzed in this article reveal the different impacts of climate change. For those who want to deepen their knowledge on the impacts of climate change, reading the three books together offers a complementary perspective. These books reveal, in detail, how dangerous the problems caused by climate change can be for humanity in the near future if measures are not taken globally.

The book *On Climate Migration: Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond*, edited by Muhittin Ataman and İbrahim Efe, explores the impact of climate on migration. The book consists of 13 chapters. The first part discusses the ethical and legal implications of the relationship between climate change and migration, as well as inadequate state policies (such as Haiti and Libya) at the national and international levels. The second part discusses the steps taken and policies implemented by Türkiye in the face of the mass influx of Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war in their country. In addition, Türkiye’s struggle for climate security and its impact on migration patterns are analyzed. The final section discusses climate-induced migration and appropriate state responses in other parts of the world, as well as migration from Africa and the EU’s policies in response.

*The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Mi-*

*gration* by Jake Bittle conveys the stories of people in the U.S. who have been forced to leave their towns and cities due to climate change-induced floods, natural disasters, and fires. It also reveals in detail how displacement following a climate-induced disaster begins at the local level and how it affects the lives of thousands of people over time. The book consists of 8 chapters. The first chapter focuses on the severity of weather disasters, state policies, and the private housing market as drivers of climate-induced displacement. Chapters 2 and 3 explore how these three elements combine to create the large-scale and long-term displacement that will characterize the next century. Chapter 4 examines climate-induced coastal erosion and cultural extinction, while chapter 5 focuses on flood control and urban inequality. Chapter 6 discusses drought and agriculture, using the example of people living in Arizona. In chapter 7, falling markets due to rising seas are described. Chapters 8 and 9 address the thorny question of where people displaced by climate change will settle and attempt to chart the trajectory of migration in the next century.

*Different Dimensions of Environmental Security in Türkiye and Beyond*, edited by Muhittin Ataman and Gloria Shkurti Özdemir, emphasizes that global warming and climate change are the most important and perhaps the most neglected threats to humanity. Climate change is discussed from an environmental security perspective, emphasizing how this issue transcends national borders and national

interests. Rising sea levels, resource depletion, freshwater scarcity, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, droughts, and forest fires are presented as examples of these new challenges.

The book consists of 11 chapters. In the first part of the book, the role of International Environmental Regimes (IERs) in global environmental governance is questioned from a general perspective. Chapter 2 approaches the issue from a supranational perspective, focusing on great power competition in the Arctic to explain the link between geopolitics and environmental security. Chapter 3 argues that there is a new (East-West) great power rivalry and consequent conflicts in international politics. Focusing on the Eastern Mediterranean, a more controversial case regarding environmental security, chapter 4 emphasizes that the Eastern Mediterranean region urgently needs a system for climate issues and cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean. Chapter 5 highlights the combination of climate change and technology, emphasizing climate change and its impact on global politics. Chapter 6 presents the climate change policy of the EU, one of the actors working the hardest for climate action, the steps taken in this context, and an assessment of where the EU currently stands on climate. Chapter 7 focuses on the three most important actors on climate change: the U.S., Russia, and China. In chapter 8, Türkiye's environmental problems and the initiatives it has taken in this regard are

discussed in depth. Chapter 9 argues that existing constraints and emerging global challenges will determine Türkiye's energy policy in the next decade. In chapter 10, institutional and cross-sectoral (energy and food) analyses are used to describe Türkiye's water security policies and practices, with a particular focus on Türkiye's transboundary water security strategies. Finally, the eleventh chapter pays special attention to the war in Ukraine, the resulting food crisis, and the grain deal brokered by Türkiye.

### Climate Change, Migration, and Displacement

Climate change causing forced migration is discussed in detail in the first two books *On Climate Migration: Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond* and *The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration*. However, the two books differ primarily in their conceptual approach to climate-induced migration or displacement. In *On Climate Migration Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond*, the term "climate migration" is used for climate-induced migration and defined as follows: "The movement of people inside their own country or across international borders in response to the effects of climate change, such as increasing sea levels, extreme weather events, and diminishing agricultural production" (p. 9). The book also uses the term "climate migrants" for those who migrate due to climate migration.

In the book *The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration*, it is stated that people are forced to migrate from their homes, or countries they live in, due to environmental risks caused by climate change or in search for economic resources. Therefore, it is more appropriate to use terms such as "displacement," i.e., displacement-removal, instead of migration. When the terms are carefully considered, it will be clear that it is more appropriate to use the terms "displacement" or "forced climate migration" instead of climate migration and to use terms such as "climate refugees" instead of "climate migrants" for those who migrate. Indeed, these people are "forced" to leave or migrate due to environmental risks or damage to their livelihoods.

The book, *The Great Displacement*, has a human-centered narrative on a national scale. The narrative claims that millions of Americans will be displaced over the next fifty years, which will constitute the largest migration in the country's history. The book's title refers to the Great Migration from 1910 until the 1970s, which resulted in the migration of six million black people. The author argues that the climate will cause a similar-scale migration in the U.S., if not greater. *The Great Displacement* tells the stories of those who are already experiencing displacement and describes how climate change will radically transform daily life, wipe out historic towns and villages, push people into new areas, and reshape the geography of the U.S. The author tells the stories of people

whose homes have been damaged by climate change-induced fires, floods, and hurricanes in various parts of the U.S., and who have been forced to move, while seeking answers to these questions: Why have we built so many homes in places that are vulnerable to destruction? Why are our housing markets so inequitable and unaffordable? Who decides where we should or should not live?

Another difference between these two books on climate-induced migration is how they are narrated and the language used. *On Climate Migration: Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond* contains 13 scientific and academic articles in total and includes case studies on climate-induced migration from many regions and countries around the world. While this contributes to the understanding of climate migration in terms of containing worldwide cases, it is a distraction in the flow of the book. While the articles in the first and last parts of Ataman and Efe's (2023) book deal with the link between climate change and migration, most of the second part discusses Türkiye's actions in the face of the mass influx of Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war, Türkiye's efforts to contribute to climate security and how these efforts affect migration patterns. These two topics mentioned in the second part disrupt the book's flow and do not coincide with the book's title, *Climate Migration*. Since the title of the book is *Climate Migration*, it is expected to discuss climate-induced forced migration in Türkiye, but the sudden shift of the topic to Syrian refugees and environmental

security and the mention of climate-induced migration again in the last part makes it difficult to follow and understand the book.

*The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration*, on the other hand, is a monograph that focuses on climate-induced displacement in the U.S. by focusing on people's stories. The first-person stories of people who have lost their homes and histories due to climate change are told narratively, drawing on hundreds of original interviews and thousands of pages of research. Therefore, while one book presents a scientific framework on the subject, the other book deals with the subject through human stories, thus complementing each other. Similar to these books, it would be useful to conduct studies focusing on both external and internal climate-induced migration in Türkiye, both scientific and narrative.

On the other hand, both books state that as the effects of climate change continue to worsen, climate migration will increase, and this problem will grow and cause significant social, economic, and political questions worldwide. As a matter of fact, the World Bank has announced that at least 216 million people will have to migrate in the next 30 years due to increased drought and rising sea levels because of climate change.<sup>4</sup> It is also noted that forced migration will increase due to climate change and natural disasters such as major earthquakes and devastating floods. These two books have an important place

in the literature due to their focus on this important issue.

In addition, both books underline the need to act not only nationally but also internationally and together on climate-induced forced migration and make concrete recommendations. It is emphasized that enjoying a safe, clean, and sustainable climate is a vital element of the right to a healthy environment and is essential for human life and well-being. It was stated that it is the responsibility of all states to take the necessary measures, such as preparing rights-based decarbonization plans, achieving zero carbon emissions, reducing fossil fuel use, protecting vulnerable populations, and increasing climate finance.

Besides, unlike Bittle (2023), Ataman and Efe (2023) take the issue one step further and emphasize that creating a safe climate environment by each country taking the necessary measures against climate change is actually related to the protection of fundamental human rights. According to this perspective, neglecting the measures to be taken against the risks arising from climate change means violating fundamental human rights. This makes it strikingly clear that this issue cannot be neglected in any way.

Finally, both books point to the need for more work on climate-induced forced migration, emphasizing that while more attention is paid to people displaced by war, much less attention is paid to the millions of people fleeing their homes and countries due to climate change or natural disas-

ters. Indeed, according to the International Displacement Monitoring Center, more than 21 million people have been displaced annually on average since 2008 due to a variety of natural disasters.<sup>5</sup>

## Climate Change and Environmental Security

*Different Dimensions of Environmental Security in Türkiye and Beyond* deals with the issue of environmental security in a conceptual dimension and in a broad perspective, which the other two books only briefly touched upon. It explains when environmental security started to be used as a concept and which important agreements and conferences have been organized in this context since then. From this perspective, it can be said to be a very important and up-to-date compilation on the subject. In addition, by including the conferences that Türkiye has participated in and the agreements that Türkiye has signed so far on climate change, this book is one of the most important reference books for those doing research on the subject in the context of Türkiye.

It is important to read this book together with the two books mentioned above. Because climate-induced forced migration both affects and is affected by national and international security. In fact, migrants may create security weaknesses in the places they go to, or if the country they go to is already not well protected in terms of security, they may be negatively affected from a security perspective.



In addition, as is claimed, the book addresses the most important environmental challenges Türkiye faces and is trying to address, including climate change, water, food, and energy security, as well as the initiatives Türkiye has taken to address them. In this respect, this book differs from *On Climate Migration Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond*, because the problems faced by Türkiye, its climate policies, and the initiatives it has taken are presented to the reader from a broader perspective. It is emphasized that Türkiye's demand for climate justice should be considered in the current international climate debates, but Türkiye should include its national climate policies in its development plans.

On the other hand, this book, which consists of 11 chapters, could have included a chapter on climate-induced forced migration, which has an intricate relationship with the issue of environmental security. Moreover, it could have mentioned in detail that forced migration both affects and is affected by environmental security. In particular, the issue of climate-induced forced migration in Türkiye could have been addressed from an environmental security perspective and added as a chapter, as this is one of the most important areas that needs to be studied in Türkiye.

Finally, like the other two books, this book underlines the need for the international community to work together on climate change, in a sense that refers to the motto "None of us is safe until we are all safe." As the book

is dated 2023, it will be one of the essential books for those who want to be informed about the latest developments on environmental security and the current steps taken by Türkiye on climate change.

The fact that environmental security is barely touched upon in *On Climate Migration: Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond* and *The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration* is an issue to be criticized. Moreover, climate-induced migration to other regions negatively affects environmental security. For these reasons, these two books could have devoted more space to the issue of environmental security, or at least only one section could have addressed migration from a security perspective. The word "environmental security" is mentioned only once or twice in places in the books and in some articles, but not explored in detail.

## Conclusion

Two of the three works analyzed here address climate change in the context of migration and the other in the context of environmental security, from a historical perspective and multi-dimensionally. Climate change-related security and migration problems and challenges will become more visible across the globe in the coming decade. In this context, these three books are necessary and important contributions to the literature. While climate change-induced migrations are described both through scientific



articles and human stories, the impact of climate change on environmental security is supported only by scientific articles.

The book *On Climate Migration: Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond*, which consists of 13 chapters, analyzes the effect of climate-related issues on migration. *The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration*, which consists of 8 chapters presents the stories of people in the U.S. who have been forced to leave their homes, cities, and towns because of climate change-induced floods, natural disasters, and fires. *Different Dimensions of Environmental Security in Türkiye and Beyond*, which consists of 11 chapters, climate change is observed from an environmental security perspective, emphasizing how climate change-related security issues affect national borders and national interests.

In the book titled *On Climate Migration Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond*, the focus on Türkiye's policies towards Syrian refugees and not on climate change-induced internal or external migration in Türkiye draws attention as an important deficiency. As the book is about "climate migration," readers would want to read more about how migration in Türkiye is affected by climate change. Furthermore, it is important and necessary that climate change-induced migrations in Türkiye should be told not only through scientific articles and studies but also through human stories, as in the book *The Great Dis-*

*placement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration*, which describes climate-induced migrations in the U.S.

Finally, in *Different Dimensions of Environmental Security in Türkiye and Beyond*, the inclusion of Türkiye's historical steps taken so far in relation to climate change is appreciated. However, a criticism of the book is that the issue of forced migration, which is a phenomenon that both affects and is affected by environmental security, is not addressed from the perspective of environmental security, especially in Türkiye.

Since all three books were published in 2023, they are foremost among the works that will be useful for those interested in this topic, as they are up-to-date and address current issues on the relationship between climate change, forced migration, and environmental security. Many studies conducted around the world reveal that the effects of climate change will become much more visible both in the world and in Türkiye, especially in the next decade, and that the lives of millions of people will be directly negatively affected. For this reason, it is important to conduct qualitative and quantitative studies on what awaits Türkiye in terms of climate-related risks, especially in terms of migration. ■

## Endnotes

1. "Burning Planet: Climate Fires and Political Flame Wars Rage," *World Economic Forum*, (January 15, 2020), retrieved February 14, 2024,

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3. Scott A. Kulp and Benjamin H. Strauss, "New Elevation Data Triple Estimates of Global Vulnerability to Sea-level Rise and Coastal Flooding," *Nature Communications*, (October 29, 2019), p. 9.

4. "Climate Change Could Force 216 Million People to Migrate within Their Own Countries by 2050," *The World Bank*, (September 13, 2021), retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/13/climate-change-could-force-216-million-people-to-migrate-within-their-own-countries-by-2050>.

5. Muhittin Ataman and İbrahim Efe (eds.), *On Climate Migration Exploring Cases from Türkiye and Beyond*, (SETA Publications, 2023), p. 11.

# رؤية

تركيية



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