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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**CLIMATE CHANGE, MIGRATION, & REVISIONIST POWER COMPETITION**

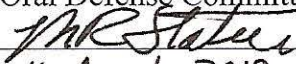
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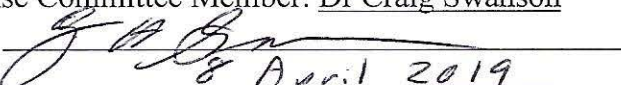
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## Executive Summary

**Title:** Climate Change, Migration, & Revisionist Power Competition

**Author:** CIV John R. Miller, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

**Thesis:** Increased global migration exacerbated by climate change will likely affect the national security of the United States to a greater degree than other “revisionist powers;” Therefore, recognition of climate migration and increased resiliency efforts should be key pillars of future US strategies to address revisionist power competition.

**Abstract:** In 2017, the Trump Administration changed the focus from terrorism to revisionist power competition as the primary US national security threat in his “America First” National Security Strategy, which also removed climate change as a national security threat. This comes at a time when climate change, and the overwhelmingly negative effects it has on humans is increasingly being recognized not just as an environmental issue, but as a national security issue. This thesis aims to examine the ways in which concerns over climate change and revisionist power competition intersect. The thesis primarily focuses on global migration exacerbated by climate change and argues why this is likely to be the most serious climate change-related threat. Several areas are examined in which the US and its allies are more vulnerable to climate migration than revisionist powers of Russia and China. Also explained are ways in which Russia and China exacerbate conditions leading to climate migration and exploit its negative effects. It is recommended that future strategies should recognize the threats from climate migration within the broader context of revisionist power competition, and tailor priority actions to increase resilience and posture the military appropriately.

## DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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## SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

Climate change is a topic that tends to instantly invoke polarization, strong emotions, and political undertones, especially in the United States. Many of the arguments made for or against the concept of manmade climate change quickly devolve from an informed scientific discussion to one based on unsupported talking points, provocative language, and partisan tension. Despite the historical achievement of the Paris Climate Accord, questions remain on whether mankind will be able to prevent or adapt to the worst outcomes of climate change, with pessimistic predictions still dominating these discussions. Climate change is also increasingly being discussed as not just an environmental issue, but a national security issue. From the effects of sea-level rise on US military bases, to the role climate-induced drought and food scarcity have on instability and conflict, to natural disasters driving mass migration, climate change is becoming an issue with which the US military will have to contend. But amid this doom and gloom, there is one bright spot within the United States. The US Department of Defense (DoD), and a growing number of lawmakers from both parties who oversee it, are separating issues of causality to instead focus on the importance of addressing the national security implications of a changing climate.

With the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, US presidents have been periodically required by Congress to submit a National Security Strategy (NSS) outlining significant concerns of national security and how their administration plans to address them. Since 1991, terrorism has generally been the threat of most concern, but climate change has also been cited in the NSS by US presidents from both political parties as a matter requiring attention. Climate change has generally been cited as either a stand-alone concern or linked to the effects that it has on vulnerable populations more prone to terrorist recruitment. In 2017, the “America

First” NSS published by the Trump Administration recognized long-term strategic competition from “revisionist powers,” not terrorism, as the primary threat to national security. But a different change was the source of greater consternation and criticism: the omission of climate change as a national security concern. A diverse range of lawmakers, policy experts, and journalists have all contributed arguments on why this omission was a serious mistake, urging the President and his administration to reconsider climate change as a major threat that requires serious attention. Despite some very compelling arguments, none have approached the issue by framing climate change within the broader context of the primary national security threat.

How is climate change related to revisionist power competition? Could a failure to prepare for the national security implications of climate change leave the US at a strategic disadvantage compared to Russia and China? Will climate change affect the security of Russia and China in the same ways it will affect the US and its allies? This thesis examines the answers to these questions, as their answers make a convincing case for why climate change is directly related to strategic competition with Russia and China. This thesis finds that global migration will be increasingly driven by climate change, and the negative effects from this migration potentially represents the greatest national security threat from climate change. Consequently, this thesis argues that increased global migration exacerbated by climate change will likely affect the national security of the United States to a greater degree than other revisionist powers; Therefore, recognition of climate migration and increased resiliency efforts should be key pillars of future US strategies to address revisionist power competition. Since revisionist power competition will likely remain the primary security threat identified by the next NSS, regardless of who the US president is that writes it, the arguments in this thesis could serve among the most

compelling reasons for why climate change should be re-emphasized as a national security threat.

## SECTION 2 – THE NATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE & MIGRATION

### **Climate Change & National Security**

Climate change has been referred to by many as the greatest collective challenge humanity will face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As awareness of the far-reaching consequences of climate change continue to permeate, a greater percentage of the world's population is now beginning to experience the first-hand effects of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers that once existed for centuries are melting away. Coastal areas that once only flooded during major storms are now becoming inundated at high tide. Wildfires and droughts are becoming more frequent. Although the overall temperature of the globe is expected to continue rising, thus the term “global warming,” some regions are predicted to experience a net cooling of temperatures due to the slowing of oceanic currents.<sup>1</sup> The effects of sea-level rise, desertification, drought, and changing weather patterns are being felt around the globe, and the resulting burdens being placed on societies by these changes are causing a greater desire for collective awareness, research, and action.

As with any scientific field, climatology continues to advance and improve our shared understanding of the effects of climate change, past, present and future. Climate models are constantly being refined and improved, so that more accurate predictions can be made about the future of earth's climate, and new and innovative methods of gathering climate data continue to be developed. Because so many of earth's physical systems are interconnected, and the interaction of different climate forcings – or external factors that influence the climate – are difficult to forecast, exact climate predictions remain challenging. There is still much to be

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<sup>1</sup> Peter T. Spooner. “The ocean currents that keep the US and Europe warm are at their weakest in 1600 years.” *The World Economic Forum*. April 13, 2018. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/climate-change-is-slowng-atlantic-currents-that-help-keep-europe-warm>.

learned about the earth's climate. However, one aspect of climatologic study has reached an overwhelming consensus, and that area is on what is causing the current changes to earth's climate. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - the largest internationally accepted authority on climate change – reported with 95% confidence in their 2014 assessment that human activity is the main cause of the current global warming.<sup>2</sup> Several exhaustive surveys of peer-reviewed studies on climate change published since 2004 have found that between 90-100% of scientists concur with the consensus view that human activity is causing global warming, with most surveys reporting a 97% concurrence rate.<sup>3</sup> In addition, nearly 200 worldwide scientific organizations support similar conclusions about anthropogenic global warming.<sup>4</sup>

But scientific consensus does not necessarily translate to political consensus. Worldwide opinion on the threats and causes of climate change shows a wide range of regional variability, but a majority of populations in all countries, including the United States, agree that climate change is a serious problem and that nations should work together to address it.<sup>5</sup> According to annual Gallup polling, a majority of Americans also agree that global warming is caused by human activities (64%) and the effects of global warming have already begun (60%).<sup>6</sup> However, public opinion in the United States regarding climate change remains sharply divided along partisan lines, especially concerning actions to address it.

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<sup>2</sup> IPCC. "Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report." Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer). Geneva, Switzerland. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/>.

<sup>3</sup> John Cook et al. "Quantifying the consensus on anthropogenic global warming in the scientific literature." *Environmental Research Letters* 8, 031003. (2013). <http://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/8/2/024024>.

<sup>4</sup> California Governor's Office of Planning and Research. "List of Worldwide Scientific Organizations." Accessed February 12, 2019. <http://www.opr.ca.gov/facts/list-of-scientific-organizations.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. "Chapter 5a: World Opinion on the Environment." In *Public Opinion on Global Issues*. November 2019. <https://www.cfr.org/background/world-opinion-environment>.

<sup>6</sup> Megan Brenan And Lydia Saad. "Global Warming Concern Steady Despite Some Partisan Shifts." *Gallup*. March 28, 2018. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/231530/global-warming-concern-steady-despite-partisan-shifts.aspx>.

This divergence between scientific and political viewpoints might seem to put the DoD in a difficult position. However, the DoD has been discussing climate change as an issue since the 1990s; Climate change was first mentioned in the National Security Strategy of 1991, produced by the administration of President George H. W. Bush.<sup>7</sup> And although climate change as a political issue has ebbed and flowed in importance with each subsequent presidential administration, the DoD has generally avoided the politics of climate change by taking a pragmatic approach, avoiding debates about causality and instead treating it as “a reality affecting the present and future operating environment...that American military forces must deal with.”<sup>8</sup> This risk management approach to climate change reached its zenith during the Obama Administration when the NSS and other policy documents clearly identified climate change as a national security issue that must be deliberately planned for. Documents such as the *2010 Quadrennial Defense Review* highlighted specific threats to the strategic environment that climate change could cause or exacerbate, such as “environmental degradation...weakening of fragile governments...food and water scarcity and increasing the spread of disease, [and] mass migration.”<sup>9</sup> Other documents, such as *The National Security Implications of a Changing Climate*, identified threats to military bases due to sea-level rise and increasing demand for DoD assets to respond to natural disasters.<sup>10</sup>

On the surface, the Trump Administration appears to have taken a dramatically different course on climate change policy from not just the Obama Administration, but the past several

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<sup>7</sup> United States. 1991. “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.” (Washington): President of the U.S.

<sup>8</sup> Edward J. Erickson. “Climate Change and the Department of Defense: An Introduction.” *Marine Corps University Journal*. 2016. 8.

<sup>9</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on Armed Services. “The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review: Committee On Armed Services, House of Representatives, One Hundred Thirteenth Congress, Second Session, Hearing Held April 3, 2014.” Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2014. 84-88

<sup>10</sup> United States. “The National Security Implications of a Changing Climate.” 2015. (Washington): President of the U.S.

presidential administrations since George H. W. Bush. Much ado was made about the removal of climate change from President Trump's "America First" NSS published in 2017, and other statements and actions by the administration have caused concern that the DoD might backslide on the modest steps made under President Obama to recognize climate change as a national security threat.<sup>11</sup> Certainly, some broader actions taken by President Trump related to climate change represent a dramatic shift in policy, such as removing the US from the Paris Climate Accord, reducing funding for the Environmental Protection Agency, and cutting funding for climate change research.<sup>12</sup> However, upon close examination of climate change-related activities within the DoD, it appears that momentum from the previous administration is being somewhat maintained. Although climate change was also omitted from the 2018 Summary of the National Defense Strategy (NDS), statements from DoD leaders have iterated their recognition of climate change as a national security concern, including former Secretary of Defense James Mattis, who stated at his confirmation hearing that "the effects of a changing climate...will impact our security situation."<sup>13</sup> Climate change resilience regarding military installations continues to be prioritized, as evidenced by the 2018 DoD report *Climate-Related Risk to DoD Infrastructure*, identifying risks to DoD installations from climate change.<sup>14</sup> Other mitigation efforts have also

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<sup>11</sup> Umair Irfan. "106 lawmakers — including 11 Republicans — tell Trump climate change is a national security threat." Vox. January 12, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2017/12/18/16791106/white-house-climate-change-national-security-strategy-threat-military>.

<sup>12</sup> Natalie Meade. "Trump's Cuts in Climate-Change Research Spark a Global Scramble for Funds." *The New Yorker*. July 7, 2018. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/trumps-cuts-in-climate-change-research-spark-a-global-scramble-for-funds>.

<sup>13</sup> Caitlin Werrell And Francesco Femia. "Chronology of U.S. Military Leadership on Climate Change and Security: 2017-2018." *The Center for Climate and Security*. February 21, 2018. <https://climateandsecurity.org/2018/02/21/chronology-of-u-s-military-leadership-on-climate-change-and-security-2017-2018/>. For the purposes of this thesis, the comments of former Secretary of Defense James Mattis were highlighted due to his leadership in the formulation of the 2017 NSS and 2018 NSS. Acting Secretary Patrick Shanahan has not yet been confirmed as of April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 and has made few statements on the topic of climate change.

<sup>14</sup> United States Department of Defense. "Climate-Related Risk to DoD Infrastructure Initial Vulnerability Assessment Survey (SLVAS) Report." *Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics*. January 2018.

continued at the service level. Outside of the DoD, other statements and policy documents have been mixed; *The Joint Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022* produced by The US Department of State and US Agency for International Development gave just one brief mention to the importance of climate resilience, however the 2018 *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community* explicitly details a range of threats from climate change and their implications for US national security.<sup>15</sup>

One of the primary drivers of this DoD momentum on climate change has surprisingly originated from politicians of both parties in Congress, which has “gone from being a headwind on the climate issue to a tailwind, propelling the military forward rather than marooning it in place.”<sup>16</sup> Language in both the 2018 and 2019 military spending bills passed by Congress and signed by President Trump have included language identifying climate change as a “direct threat” to national security, and directing continued planning for climate change resilience.<sup>17</sup> Congress has even weighed in on the removal of climate change from the NSS, when a bipartisan group of House members sent a letter to President Trump expressing concern and urging him to “reconsider this omission.”<sup>18</sup>

Outside the DoD, the idea of climate change as a national security issue is certainly gaining momentum and mainstream acceptance. National security think-tanks such as CNA, the Center for Climate and Security, and the American Security Project have published comprehensive reports to inform and influence US policy makers on climate change-related

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<sup>15</sup> United States. “Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community.” *Office of the Director of National Intelligence*. February 12, 2018.; United States. “FY 2018-2022 Department of State and USAID Joint Strategic Plan.” *US Department of State*. February 12, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Sean Mowbray. “A tale of two policies: climate change, Trump, and the U.S. military.” *Mongabay*. January 17, 2018. <https://news.mongabay.com/2018/01/a-tale-of-two-policies-climate-change-trump-and-the-u-s-military/>.

<sup>17</sup> John Conger. “U.S. Congress Addresses Climate Change and Security in the Latest Defense Bill.” *The Center for Climate and Security*. August 13, 2018. <https://climateandsecurity.org/2018/08/13/u-s-congress-addresses-climate-change-and-security-in-the-latest-defense-bill/>.

<sup>18</sup> Congress of the United States to President of the United States. January 11, 2018.

security issues. Outside of the US, *The Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change* published in 2014 also determined that “70% of nations in the world explicitly stated that climate change was a national security concern.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Climate Migration: The Greatest National Security Concern**

Of all the various types of national security threats either caused or exacerbated by climate change, increased migration has the potential to be the most challenging. Irrespective of cause, migration already presents an enormous problem that governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are presently struggling to address. According to the United Nations (UN), in 2017 the total number of immigrants worldwide reached 258 million, more than 3% of the world’s population.<sup>20</sup> This number includes all types of migrants both voluntary and forced, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), external migrants, refugees, and economic migrants. In addition, 2017 saw an unprecedented 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, the most of which are being hosted in developing countries.<sup>21</sup> Recently, the European Migrant Crisis has raised serious concerns about the future of migration and policy regarding migrants from the Middle East and Africa, and Central American migration continues to be a deeply polarizing issue in the United States.

The UN Population Division estimates that “economic and demographic asymmetries between countries are likely to remain key drivers of international migration for the foreseeable future,” and predicts that the US and mostly Western countries will remain the primary

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<sup>19</sup> American Security Project. “The Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change.” September 22, 2014. <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/the-global-security-defense-index-on-climate-change-2/>.

<sup>20</sup> United Nations. “International Migration Report.” *Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. New York: 2017.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “Figures at a Glance.” Accessed February 12, 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

destination for most of the world's migrants.<sup>22</sup> Economic migrants, those people that are migrating by choice to seek out better job opportunities and economic prospects, remain the largest group of migrants by type.<sup>23</sup> Although climate change is increasingly becoming recognized as a driver of migration, it can be difficult to separate climate change from other political, social, environmental, and economic factors that prompt migration, complicating analysis of purely climate change-driven migration.<sup>24</sup> Probably because of this, "climate refugees" are not yet recognized or protected under international law.<sup>25</sup> However, analysis by the IPCC identifies natural disasters as the most common driver of short-term climate migration, and drought, flooding, and sea-level rise as the most likely drivers of long-term climate migration, and these events are all predicted to become more frequent as the effects of climate change worsen.<sup>26</sup> Whether or not individual climate-related events cause migration is highly dependent on a number of other factors, and often migration can be a successful and peaceful means of climate adaption.<sup>27</sup>

Two contrasting historic examples highlight these differences. After Hurricane Katrina, a large percentage of people who became displaced in the immediate aftermath of the storm have not returned to New Orleans, particularly poor people.<sup>28</sup> However, after major flooding in

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<sup>22</sup> United Nations. "World Population Prospects." 2017 Revision. [https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017\\_KeyFindings.pdf](https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017_KeyFindings.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> United Nations. "International Migration Report." *Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. New York: 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Schuyler Null and Lauren Herzer Risi. "Navigating Complexity: Climate, Migration, and Conflict in a Changing World." *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*. November 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Tim McDonnell. "The Refugees the World Barely Pays Attention To." *NPR*. June 20, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/06/20/621782275/the-refugees-that-the-world-barely-pays-attention-to>.

<sup>26</sup> W. N. Adger et al. "2014: Human security." In *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, pp. 755-791.

<sup>27</sup> Schuyler Null and Lauren Herzer Risi, 16.

<sup>28</sup> C. A. Myers et al. "Social vulnerability and migration in the wake of disaster: the case of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita." *Population and Environment*, 29(6), 271-291.

Bangladesh in 2005, the areas affected actually saw an increase in migrants to the affected areas, mainly associated with reconstruction.<sup>29</sup>

Predictions of migration trends, although not precise, indicate climate change is likely to become one of the primary drivers of future migration. These predictions describe climate change as a “migration multiplier” in the same way that the DoD treats climate change as a threat multiplier. For instance, a report from *The World Bank* estimates that more than 143 million people could become displaced from Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America by 2050 due primarily to climate change.<sup>30</sup> Some studies are also attempting to correlate changes to climate with statistics on migration; one such study found that deviations of temperatures optimum for agriculture correlated with rises in EU asylum applications, which are predicted to increase by at least 28% by 2100.<sup>31</sup> Other reports estimate there could be more than 200 million people displaced by climate change over the next three decades.<sup>32</sup> It is important to note that global migration would likely increase absent any significant climate change, simply based on continued trends in population growth and wealth disparity between developing and developed countries. The compounding effects of climate change on migration will add to these difficulties and could at times be a key factor in whether states are able to manage increased mass migration.

Although the direct effects that climate change and environmental factors have on migration are somewhat simpler to assess, climate change can also have indirect effects on migration in other ways, mainly as a contributing factor to conflict. The relationship between

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<sup>29</sup> IPCC, 767.

<sup>30</sup> Kanta Kumari Rigaud et al. “Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration.” *World Bank*. 2018. Washington, DC. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461>.

<sup>31</sup> Anouch Missirian and Wolfram Schlenker. “Asylum applications respond to temperature fluctuations.” *Science*. December 22, 2017. Vol. 358, Issue 6370, pp. 1610-1614. <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/358/6370/1610>.

<sup>32</sup> PBS Digital Studios. “Climate change will push millions from their homes. Where will they go?,” YouTube video, August 9, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xuZT7VkjVg>.

climate change and conflict is an emerging area of research, and there is substantial disagreement about the impact climate change has on conflict. On one end of the spectrum, there are arguments being made that in certain circumstances, climate change can be the primary cause of conflict.<sup>33</sup> On the other end, there are those that argue that there is no evidence that climate change contributes to the likelihood of conflict.<sup>34</sup> Because the climate-conflict nexus is a relatively new area of research, a well-occupied middle ground has emerged. For instance, an exhaustive analysis of studies on the subject by the IPCC concludes “there is justifiable common concern that climate change or changes in climate variability increase the risk of armed conflict in certain circumstances.” The DoD has also taken the stance that climate change is a “threat multiplier,” rather than a direct cause of conflict on its own without other contributing factors. Many studies agree that in areas that are already challenged by weak governance, resource competition, or ethnic tensions, the compounding negative environmental effects brought on by climate change can increase the likelihood of armed conflict in these already vulnerable areas.<sup>35</sup> It is from these areas of conflict that increase migration, forced and unforced, can occur.

One recent and often cited example of this is the ongoing Syrian Civil War. While most still argue that the primary cause of the war was the repressive authoritarian regime of Bashar Al Assad, the unprecedented three-year drought leading up to the conflict – made more likely by climate change – is being considered as a contributing factor.<sup>36</sup> This drought forced hundreds of thousands of Syrians to abandon agricultural jobs in the countryside to seek work in already

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<sup>33</sup> Thomas F. Homer-Dixon. “On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict.” *International Security*. Volume 16, Number 2, Fall 1991. 76-116.

<sup>34</sup> Erin Llwyd Owain and Mark Andrew Maslin. “Assessing the relative contribution of economic, political and environmental factors on past conflict and the displacement of people in East Africa.” *Palgrave Communications* volume 4, Article number: 47 (2018); Idean Salehyan. “From Climate Change to Conflict? No Consensus Yet” *Journal of Peace Research*. May 1, 2008. Volume: 45 issue: 3, p315-326.

<sup>35</sup> Schuyler Null and Lauren Herzer Risi, 12.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Kolbert. “Unsafe Climates.” *The New Yorker*. December 7, 2015. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/12/07/unsafe-climates>.

overcrowded cities. The coinciding rise in food prices, unemployment, and weak government response set conditions for the corresponding civil war and spread of ISIS.<sup>37</sup> Although most of the fighting in this conflict has remained within Syria (with the exception of ISIS in neighboring Iraq), the resulting refugee crisis has contributed to the highest number of displaced persons globally since the end of World War II, straining the governments of nearby Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan with the massive influx of migrants.<sup>38</sup>

Another indirect effect climate change can have on migration is by increasing the number of economic migrants. Economic migrants are an umbrella term for those migrants that voluntarily migrate in search of better economic prospects and living standards. Economic migrants currently make up an estimated 75% of all migrants, and therefore any changes to the global economy caused by climate change will have a direct impact on the rate of these migrant flows. Regarding the US economy, the recent 2018 Fourth National Climate Assessment states:

The impacts of climate change, variability, and extreme events outside the United States are affecting and are virtually certain to increasingly affect U.S. trade and economy, including import and export prices and businesses with overseas operations and supply chains.<sup>39</sup>

In the worst-case scenario, it is predicted that the US economy may lose 10% of its GDP by the end of the century because of climate change.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report indicates a direct correlation between global GDP and the amount of future warming that occurs due to climate change.<sup>41</sup> These negative economic effects will certainly be more pronounced in the economies of countries that are less resilient, more vulnerable, or both. The resulting

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<sup>37</sup> Schuyler Null and Lauren Herzer Risi, 25.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015." June 20, 2016. <https://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7>.

<sup>39</sup> IPCC.

<sup>40</sup> D.R. Reidmiller et al. "2018: Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II." U.S. Global Change Research Program. 2018: Washington, DC.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

increases in economic migrants could become a challenge for other countries that are otherwise more resilient to the direct effects of climate change.

Before noting the potential negative effects of migration and their implications for national security, it is important to highlight some potential benefits of migration. A report for United States Agency for International Development (USAID) produced by *The Wilson Center* on climate, migration, and conflict notes that “movement in response to environmental change has a long history, and migration can be a successful and peaceful means of climate adaptation if enabled by smart policy.” Many studies have shown that economic migrants are a net benefit to the sending country, receiving country, and the migrants themselves.<sup>42</sup> Migrants from developing countries often provide labor and low-skill workers in developed countries that lack demand. Remittances that these workers send back to their home countries can help fund rebuilding after natural disasters and potentially assist with the economic stability and resilience that prevents further migration.<sup>43</sup> And in developed countries where the birth and fertility rates are shrinking, migrants help boost the working-age population, which ensures social welfare programs remain solvent.<sup>44</sup> Migrants displaced by natural disasters are also more likely to desire assimilation in host areas after migrating, and their societal integration can serve as an inoculant against virulent groups such as gangs or terrorist organizations.<sup>45</sup> As Fiona B. Adamson puts it, “if states have the capacity to design and implement effective policies that ‘harness the power of migration,’ international migration flows can enhance, rather than detract from or compromise, state

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<sup>42</sup> Robert McLeman. “Beyond Environmental Refuge: Robert McLeman at TEDxUOttawa.” YouTube Video. October 18, 2012. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdeyz\\_1gNSA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdeyz_1gNSA).

<sup>43</sup> Climate and Migration Coalition. “Migration as Climate Adaption.” Accessed 25 February 2019. <http://climatemigration.org.uk/migration-as-adaptation-new-briefing-paper-2/>.

<sup>44</sup> Syed Munir Khasru. “Migration Benefits All of Us. These Stories Show How.” *World Economic Forum*. February 28, 2018. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/02/here-s-how-migration-can-benefit-us-all/>.

<sup>45</sup> Schuyler Null and Lauren Herzer Risi, Fiona B. Adamson. “Crossing Borders: Internal Migration and National Security.” *International Security*. Vol. 31, No. 1 (Summer 2006), pp. 165–199.

power.”<sup>46</sup>

But migration can also have severely detrimental consequences in certain circumstances, especially forced migration within or to countries that have a reduced capacity for managing migrant flows. When large groups of people are forcibly displaced, be it from conflict, violence, or natural disasters, the vast majority of these people remain within the borders of their own country as IDPs. The care of IDPs, frequently within poor countries already challenged by conflict or natural disasters, often puts even greater strain on the host government resources and infrastructure, and IDPs may suffer from a lack of basic necessities unless effective international aid is rendered. Complicating this is the fact that there is no specific international legal framework for the protection of IDPs, and international efforts at assistance can be ad hoc and complicated by sovereignty issues.<sup>47</sup> The general goal for IDPs is to eventually enable them to return to their places of origin, but in cases of natural disasters – potentially fueled by climate change – this is not always possible, further complicating their reintegration. Displaced people cannot always return to villages wiped out by severe storms or overtaken by rising sea levels. If IDPs are not appropriately cared for in their home nations, IDPs may eventually cross into neighboring countries as refugees or economic migrants, potentially causing further destabilization.<sup>48</sup>

The migrants or refugees that cross international boundaries currently tend to arrive in poor countries with a lower capacity for supporting large influxes of foreigners. High numbers of migrants seeking job opportunities can depress the wages of native workers, increase unemployment, and strain public services and infrastructure, which often leads to tensions

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Roberta Cohen. “New Challenges for Refugee Policy: Internally Displaced Persons.” *Brookings*. April 1, 1999. <https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/new-challenges-for-refugee-policy-internally-displaced-persons/>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

between native and immigrant populations. In areas where there may already be underlying ethnic tensions, “a demographic shock which affects existing political, ethnic, religious, and social equilibria, creates new winners and losers in the system and can exacerbate existing fragilities.”<sup>49</sup> These negative effects are highly dependent on the capacity for the receiving nation to host and integrate refugees, and poorer countries and more rapid migration usually leads to worse outcomes. Developing countries tend to have a reduced ability to support the sudden influx of migrants, manage social tensions resulting from them, or control borders to regulate their arrival. The economic shocks from managing a sudden influx of migrants can also result in worsening of national debt and reduced investment. These detriments can undermine public confidence in governance, leading to political turmoil and instability, especially when international aid is lacking.

Increasingly, migration is receiving consideration not just as a human security issue, but as a national security issue. This is especially true as the US and other nations consider the long-term national security implications of climate change, with large-scale migration as one of the primary symptoms. Climate change-induced migration can destabilize countries and create conditions for economic turmoil and violent conflict, and the spillover of migrants and refugees can lead to regional unrest. The resulting political turmoil can threaten the fidelity of alliances and economic partnerships. Although migration to developed countries typically has negligible and sometimes positive economic and security effects, perceived threats and political mishandling of migrants and refugees can still lead to social and political tension, strain allied relationships, and be used by malign actors to further an “us versus them” narrative.

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<sup>49</sup> Uri Dadush, Mona Niebuhr. “The Economic Impact of Forced Migration.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. April 22, 2016. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/04/22/economic-impact-of-forced-migration-pub-63421>.

The national security concerns surrounding migration are nothing new, however the framing of these concerns and strategies for dealing with them have changed substantially with each US presidential administration. In the next section, the ways in which the 2017 NSS identifies migration concerns will be covered. But first, it must be explained what is meant by long-term strategic competition by revisionist powers, and how migration concerns are tied to this newly-identified primary threat.

## SECTION 3 – The 2017 NSS: Revisionist Power Competition & Migration

### **Revisionist Power Competition**

The summary of the 2018 NDS very clearly states that “inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern for U.S. national security.”<sup>50</sup> This competition from revisionist powers, mainly China and Russia, seeks to change the rules-based liberal world order that favors the United States and its allies, to one that is more consistent with their authoritarian models of government. This world order, established after the Cold War, features “a globalised economic system, functioning multilateral institutions and – most important of all – an unchallenged role for the US as the most powerful player.”<sup>51</sup> Recent events indicate that revisionist powers are no longer satisfied with American global hegemony and are increasingly seeking to assert dominance and expand their spheres of influence.

China is aggressively asserting its territorial claims in the South China Sea, and in other territorial disputes with Japan, India, and Bhutan. China’s increasing competition in space, cyberspace, and its growing military are foreshadowing challenges to US dominance. Economically, China’s “Belt and Road Initiative” aims to improve global infrastructure and investment links, creating a collective trade network that covers 30 percent of global GDP and 62 percent of the world’s population.<sup>52</sup> China’s establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to rival the World Bank has prompted fears that China may “use the bank to set the global economic agenda on its own terms, forgoing the environmental protections, human rights, anticorruption measures and other governance standards long promoted by its Western

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<sup>50</sup> US Department of Defense. Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America. (Arlington, VA: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2018).

<sup>51</sup> Gideon Rachman. “Revisionist powers are driving the world’s crises.” *Financial Times*. June 30, 2014. <https://www.ft.com/content/fb9a5ba6-fd4d-11e3-96a9-00144feab7de>.

<sup>52</sup> Caroline Freund. “Belt and Road Initiative” (blog), *Worldbank.org*, March 29, 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/brief/belt-and-road-initiative>.

counterparts.”<sup>53</sup>

Russia is also taking aggressive actions to reassert its dominance over former Soviet countries in the Russian near-abroad. The recent conflicts in Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine demonstrate the actions Russia is willing to take to achieve regional hegemony. Its Eurasian Economic Union serves as a counter to the EU, and aggressive trade practices are one of many in Russia’s arsenal of influence. Recently, Russia has also come to appreciate the advantages afforded by the aggressive use of propaganda and information warfare, malign activities in cyberspace, and even meddling in the elections of other countries. Russia continues to challenge US leadership in areas such as Syria, and its support for the Assad regime and other authoritarian governments and leaders continues to advance Russia’s role as an opportunist and spoiler.

The 2017 NSS is made up of four pillars of vital national interest, many aspects of which are directly tailored to addressing revisionist power competition. Similarly, the 2018 NDS identifies three lines of effort to “expand the competitive space” against revisionist powers, and other DoD policy documents such as the *Joint Operating Environment 2035* specify objectives that will advance US interests in a future security environment defined by strategic competition.<sup>54</sup>

## **Migration in the 2017 NSS**

Unlike with climate change, President Trump’s 2017 NSS did not remove migration as a substantial concern carried forward from previous national security strategy documents of past

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<sup>53</sup> Jane Perlez. “China Creates a World Bank of Its Own, and the U.S. Balks,” *New York Times*. December 4, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/05/business/international/china-creates-an-asian-bank-as-the-us-stands-aloof.html>; Haseeb Bin Aziz. “Is China a Revisionist Power: An Analysis.” *Strategic Studies*. 2011.

<sup>54</sup> US Department of Defense; United States. “Joint Operating Environment 2015.” The Joint Chiefs of Staff. July 14, 2016.

US Presidential Administrations. “Strengthen Border Control and Immigration Policy” is listed as a key subsection of Pillar I, where most of the threats from migration are contextualized around the concerns over illegal immigration to the US. However, instability and tensions caused by mass migration to Europe are also mentioned. Furthermore, democratic values and strong economic ties are cited as an antidote to “violence, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration that threaten our common security.” However, the way in which migration is framed as a national security concern is substantially different from the way it was framed under previous national security strategies in two main ways.

First, migration is no longer linked to climate change, as climate change has been essentially removed from the 2017 NSS. The potential for climate change to increase migration and refugees was unmistakably identified as a national security threat in the 2010 NSS produced by the Obama Administration, which stated “the danger from climate change is real, urgent, and severe. The change wrought by a warming planet will lead to new conflicts over refugees and resources.”<sup>55</sup> Besides identifying the threats from migration, the 2017 NSS makes no mention of climate change or any other factors that could potentially increase future mass migration events.

Second, migration is not linked to the primary national security threat identified by the 2017 NSS: revisionist power competition. Although terrorism was previously identified as the primary national security threat since 9/11, concerns surrounding climate change – to include increased migration – were linked to their effects on this primary threat. The DoD-produced *2014 Climate Change Adaption Roadmap* highlighted that the threat of climate change “has the potential to exacerbate many of the challenges we are dealing with today – from infectious disease to terrorism,” and states instability caused by climate migration “can create an avenue for

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<sup>55</sup> United States. “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.” 2010. (Washington): President of the U.S.

extremist ideologies and conditions that foster terrorism.”<sup>56</sup> This linking of climate change and migration to the primary national security threat ultimately strengthened the importance of preparing for both, underscoring their significance to the overall strategy to combat terrorism. Migration in the 2017 NSS is instead listed as a stand-alone concern, which is neither linked to terrorism (the old primary threat) nor revisionist power competition (the new primary threat). The next section will detail some of these links, which taken together make a compelling case for why migration – exacerbated by climate change – should be a key aspect of future strategies dealing with revisionist power competition.

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<sup>56</sup> United States Department of Defense. “2014 Climate Adaption Roadmap.” 2014. Washington, D.C.

## SECTION 4 –THE INTERSECTION OF CLIMATE MIGRATION & REVISIONIST POWER COMPETITION

The areas of intersection for concerns surrounding both climate migration and revisionist power competition are centered around three areas. First, the US and its allies are generally more vulnerable to the negative effects of mass migration than revisionist powers. Second, revisionist powers are exploiting this increased vulnerability to migration, discrediting the West while increasing their global standing. Third, the actions of revisionist powers may be degrading climate resilience in developing countries, potentially contributing to an increase in future climate migration. The following three subsections will examine these areas of concern.

### **Increased Vulnerability to Climate Migration for US & Allies**

The United States and its allies and partners are more exposed to the possible detrimental effects from all types of international migrants than Russia and China. One simple reason this is true is due to the exponentially greater number of allies and partners the US has compared to Russia and China, and therefore the US has more to lose. Put another way, the spheres of influence of Russia and China are smaller than that of the US. The United States has military alliances with at least 50 countries and has close economic partnerships with many others. Conversely, Russia counts just the five other members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and China can arguably only count Pakistan and North Korea. But another simple reason for this greater exposure is due to the numbers of migrants heading for the US and its allies versus the numbers heading for Russia and China. When given the choice, many more migrants prefer to migrate to Western countries than Russia and China for a variety of reasons, most of them likely related to increased prospects for economic opportunity. Geographic proximity also probably plays a role; Africa is the most likely source of the greatest number of

future climate migrants, and it is geographically easier for African migrants to reach US allies in Europe than Russia or China.

Migration statistics demonstrate this disparity: In 2017 the US hosted the largest number of international migrants by far (49.8 million), most of which were from Mexico, China, India, and the Philippines. Saudi Arabia and Germany – both US allies – hosted the second and third largest migrant populations (12.2 million each). Russia hosted the fourth largest population of migrants (11.7 million) but was also the country of origin for the third largest number of emigrants (10.6 million). China remains primarily a country of origin for international migrants due to its restrictive immigration policies and was not listed in the top 20 destination countries for immigrants in 2017.<sup>57</sup> Older estimates from a 2010 census indicated China was host to just over half a million foreign-born immigrants (594,000), a miniscule number compared to its population of 1.33 billion at the time.<sup>58</sup> Climate change is not the dominant driver of these numbers currently, but the predominant destination countries may remain similar for future climate migrants.

But beyond the numbers of migrants, Russian and Chinese authoritarian models of government allow greater control over migration policy. For Russia, this has allowed greater flows of migrants from mostly regional countries, facilitating the use of migrant labor that Russia desperately relies on to support its economy.<sup>59</sup> Since the fall of the Soviet Union and continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Russia's fertility rate has decreased below the rate of replacement, and Russia now relies on foreign workers to keep its economy afloat and its social programs

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<sup>57</sup>United Nations. "International Migration Report." *Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. New York: 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Heidi Østbø Haugen, "Destination China: The Country Adjusts to its New Migration Reality," *Migration Policy Institute*, March 4, 2015, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/destination-china-country-adjusts-its-new-migration-reality>

<sup>59</sup> Leonid Ragozin, "Russia Wants Immigrants the World Doesn't," *Bloomberg.com*, March 14, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-03-14/russia-s-alternative-universe-immigrants-welcome>

solvent.<sup>60</sup> Conversely, Russia has accepted a small fraction of the refugees from Syria, despite being one of the main belligerents to the ongoing Syrian Civil War. Russia has even deported Syrian refugees in the country illegally, and some have been forced to bribe local officials in order to remain in-country.<sup>61</sup> Russia's migration policies remain grounded in self-interest, accepting the migrants it needs and rejecting those it deems undesirable.

The Chinese also tailor immigration policy to fit broader political and economic policy goals, and this immigration policy has undergone recent reform. While the Chinese have no shortage of low-cost laborers within its domestic population, China has adjusted its immigration policies to attract skilled workers in key industries, mostly to facilitate international trade and export and international students for its growing universities and academic institutions. Chinese migration policy has also made it very easy for Chinese nationals living abroad to return to China. In contrast, China has very strict regulations regarding low-skill migrants, and new legislation aims to crack down on the "three illegals": illegal entry, residence, and work.<sup>62</sup> China has even utilized the tools of its authoritarian system to combat illegal migration, including sweeps to round up illegal migrants and rewarding informants who report on suspected illegal migrants.<sup>63</sup> China has also demonstrated an aversion to welcoming refugees, temporarily hosting just under 800 in 2015, including less than 30 from Syria.<sup>64</sup> Because the migration policies of Russia and China are tightly controlled by the state with little public influence, these countries will likely be able to quickly and strongly react to potential mass migration events in the future,

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<sup>60</sup> Rand Corporation. "Russia's Demographic "Crisis": How Real Is It?" Accessed December 21, 2018, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/issue\\_papers/IP162/index2.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/issue_papers/IP162/index2.html).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Haugen.

<sup>63</sup> Elisabeth Rosenthal. "Beijing Increases Detentions of Illegal North Korean Immigrants," *Newyorktimes.com*, March 21, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/21/world/beijing-increases-detentions-of-illegal-north-korean-immigrants.html>

<sup>64</sup> Liang Pan. "Why China Isn't Hosting Syrian Refugees," *Foreignpolicy.com*, February 26, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/26/china-host-syrian-islam-refugee-crisis-migrant/>.

altering policy as needed.

The US and its allies are, in general, more accepting of immigrants and especially refugees than Russia and China. For the United States, this is rooted in the history of the country as a nation of immigrants, codified into laws and policies, and even embodied in cultural icons such as the Statue of Liberty. Specific policies towards immigrants and refugees have varied in restriction through time in response to politics and events, but the US has generally remained an accepting destination for the world's "tired, poor, huddled masses yearning to breathe free." A comprehensive breakdown of the immigration policies of all US allies is beyond the scope of this paper, but it can be generally stated that most US allies have more accepting immigration policies than Russia and China, usually based on a more liberal interpretation of the 1951 UN Protocol and 1967 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees. This greater acceptance of the world's vulnerable people seeking a better life comes with great advantages, both moral and practical. However, this greater acceptance also comes with larger burdens associated with the care, integration, and employment of these immigrants, burdens from which Russia and China are more protected.

Due to these burdens and the nature of open political debate in the US and Western countries, quick policy changes in response to changing migration situations are generally not possible because migration policies generally take longer to enact. In the US, this often leads to political gridlock and incoherence or uncertainty regarding immigration policy, and causes considerable tension between EU nations when formulating unified policies between the bloc. This is not surprising to see within a democracy, and many would argue that these debates are a healthy characteristic of a free society. But in authoritarian states such as Russia and China, speech is suppressed, the press is under considerable state control, and these public debates are

not as frequent. This is used as an advantage when it comes to scrutiny or debate surrounding immigration policy, isolating each government from criticism, both domestic and international. But in the US and Western countries, issues and tensions regarding immigration is on full display for open criticism, which can restrict policy options for more strict control of migration.

But another area where the US is particularly vulnerable to climate migration is the global instability it creates, and the increased burden on the US to respond to this instability. By nature of having the largest military in the world by several orders of magnitude, as well as the forward-deployed nature of its military assets, the United States is frequently depended on during regional crises and instability. With capability often comes responsibility, and other nations such as Russia and China are not generally expected to respond militarily to crises partly due to their reduced capability to do so. The bulk of these responses have thus far been related to humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR)-type missions in permissive environments, but it is possible that climate change may contribute to future non-permissive relief operations, known as complex humanitarian emergencies. HA/DR missions already account for two thirds of US military operations for contingency response in the US Pacific Command area of operations, and demand for these missions in other combatant commands is expected to grow.<sup>65</sup> It is possible that the continued demand these types of missions put on military resources and the budget could strain other military priorities related to strategic competition, such as weapons modernization.

Finally, regional instability caused or exacerbated by climate change has the potential to create populations that are more vulnerable to recruitment by terrorists and other extremists

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<sup>65</sup> Ralph Espach et al. "Impact of Climate Change on U.S. Military Operations in the Western Pacific." *Marine Corps University Journal*. 2016.

groups.<sup>66</sup> This has been the case with ISIS in Syria, Al Shabab in Somalia, and other areas of weak governance. Climate migration may contribute to future areas of weak governance, state failure, and vulnerable populations primed for this type of recruitment. As with ISIS, these terrorist groups may continue to pose a greater threat to the US and its allies than Russia and China. This is not to say that terrorism or Islamic extremism has not been a concern of Russia, although China seems largely immune from these concerns. However, terrorist attacks and violence emanating from these regions have more often targeted the West, leading to greater security challenges and requiring a greater response from the US and its allies.

### **Exploitation of Migration Vulnerabilities by Revisionist Powers**

As previously mentioned, political tensions surrounding migration policy are much more frequent in open, democratic societies of Western countries. These migration debates can and do often lead to diplomatic tensions, as has been the case with EU countries during the Syrian Refugee Crisis. This discord over immigration has even had the practical effect of weakening the EU, as the UK Brexit vote to leave the EU was driven partially by concerns about unchecked EU immigration.<sup>67</sup> Recently, Russia has seen an increasing opportunity to exploit the internal divisions surrounding migration debate through its campaign of disinformation and malign influence. Russian goals in this respect are threefold. First, Russia seeks to increase internal divisions and sees the hot-button issue of migration as a conduit to do so. One of the key issues Russian-government “trolls” at the Internet Research Agency used to sow discord ahead of the

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<sup>66</sup> Ben Doherty. “Climate change will fuel terrorism recruitment, report for German foreign office says,” *The Guardian*. April 19, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/apr/20/climate-change-will-fuel-terrorism-recruitment-adelphi-report-says>.

<sup>67</sup> Kim Hjelmgaard, et. al. “Exploding UK immigration helped drive 'Brexit' vote,” *USAToday.com*, June 28, 2016, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/06/28/exploding-uk-immigration-helped-drive-brexit-vote/86424670/>

2016 US Presidential Election was debate around US immigration policy, in an attempt to widen political polarization.<sup>68</sup> There has been continued evidence that covert and even overt propaganda efforts by Russia in Europe, Australia, and other Western countries continues to exploit the tensions caused by immigration and refugee acceptance policies in order to promote political divergence and gridlock.

Russia's second goal is to discredit the West, and uses immigration tensions as a showpiece of its narrative that Western democracies are dysfunctional. Russian propaganda and state-controlled media within the Russian Federation itself and in nearby Russian-speaking regions points to the problems of unchecked migration to the US and EU. This is then contrasted with the tightly controlled migration policies of Russia, demonstrating Russia's strength in this regard, and used to maintain support for the Russian government. Among foreign audiences, this narrative of discredit is mainly used to disrepute Russia's main economic competitor: the EU.

This leads to Russia's third goal for exploiting migration divisions: assisting the rise of far-right, populist parties that are both anti-immigrant and pro-Russian. This has been the case throughout the EU during the Syrian Refugee Crisis, where uneven sharing of the refugee burden has caused anti-immigrant and anti-EU backlash in certain member countries.<sup>69</sup> From Italy's Giuseppe Conte to Austria's Sebastian Kurz, far-right politicians are gaining political power that favor increased restrictions to immigration policy, sometimes justified by unfounded security concerns and even xenophobia and racism.<sup>70</sup> Russia provides both overt and covert support for

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<sup>68</sup> Ben Nimmo. "#TrollTracker: Russian Traces in Facebook Takedown," Medium.com, August 16, 2018, <https://medium.com/dfrlab/trolltracker-russian-traces-in-facebook-takedown-767aac0a3483>; Ben Collins et al. "Leaked: Secret Documents From Russia's Election Trolls." *The Daily Beast*. March 2, 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Radka Havlova And Kristyna Tamchynova. "The Uncertain Role of the EU Countries in the Syrian Refugee Crisis." *Insight Turkey*. Vol. 18, No. 2, 2016. pp. 85-106.

<sup>70</sup> Jon Henley. "Rise of far-right in Italy and Austria gives Putin some friends in the west," *The Guardian*, June 7, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/07/rise-of-far-right-in-italy-and-austria-gives-putin-some-friends-in-the-west>

these political parties, favors which are often returned in the form of political positions and policies favorable to Russia.<sup>71</sup> For instance, Bulgaria's far-right President Rumen Radev has been highly critical of continued sanctions on Russia over Crimea, and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and other far-right leaders have called for improved relations between the EU and Russia.<sup>72</sup> If climate change-induced migration increases as projected, it can be expected that Russia will continue to use this already controversial issue to increase polarization, especially during times of economic decline, when higher unemployment can lead to increased anti-immigrant backlash.<sup>73</sup> Russia will not only continue to benefit from these fractures within its rivals but will continue to benefit from favorable partnerships with far-right leaders in return for its support.

Another potential way that revisionist powers may exploit Western vulnerabilities to climate migration is by the use of migration as a weapon. The use or threats to use migration as a weapon has historical precedent and could be a factor to consider in a future when mass migration due to climate change becomes more common. The most well-known example of migration used as a weapon was during the 1980 Mariel Boatlift, when Fidel Castro allowed the large migration of Cuban refugees to the United States, including released prisoners and mental patients, in order to put pressure on the US for negotiations.<sup>74</sup> More recently, in a 2014 event related to revisionist power competition, Russia threatened the expulsion of Central Asian guest

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<sup>71</sup> Joe Parkinson and Georgi Kantchev. "Russia Uses Rigged Polls, Fake News to Sway Foreign Elections." *Wall Street Journal*. March 23, 2017.; [https://www.jstor.org/stable/43555253?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/43555253?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

<sup>72</sup> Georgi Gotev. "Bulgaria's Radev: 'I fear EU will remain hostage of sanctions war against Russia'," *EAURACTIV.com*, January 30, 2017, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/interview/bulgarias-radev-i-fear-eu-will-remain-hostage-of-sanction-war-against-russia/>

<sup>73</sup> Christopher Cochrane and Neil Nevitte. "Scapegoating: Unemployment, far-right parties and anti-immigrant sentiment." *Comparative European Politics*. Vol. 12, 1, 1–32.

<sup>74</sup> Kelly M. Greenhill. "Migration as a Weapon in Theory and in Practice." *Military Review*. November-December 2016. 23-36.

workers if those countries supported UN efforts condemning Russia's annexation of Crimea.<sup>75</sup>

Possibly due to the unprecedented scale of the Syrian Migration Crisis, there have been several different accusations of Syrian migrants being used as a weapon by both competitors and allies. In 2016, NATO commander General Phillip Breedlove accused Russia and Syria of purposely using indiscriminate weapons such as barrel bombs, in order to terrorize certain populations of Syrians and forcing them to emigrate. He suggested this was intentionally done in the hopes that mass migration would both destabilize Europe and act as a cover for European-recruited terrorists and proxies to return to Europe and carry out terrorist attacks.<sup>76</sup> Turkey has also used the threat of allowing tens of thousands of Syrian refugees free passage to the EU, in order to extract concessions from EU countries for aid and continued talks on Turkish EU accession.<sup>77</sup>

If international aid to support migrants and refugees stagnates with greater demand or a receding economy, poor countries may use the threat of migration to extract assistance, or even to punish rich countries. Although these events will be difficult to forecast, the threat of migration being used as a weapon has historic precedent, and must be considered as a future possibility, especially as migration increases due to climate change.

### **Degradation of Climate Resilience by Revisionist Powers**

There are two types of actions revisionist powers are taking that are potentially reducing the resilience of other countries to climate change, possibly increasing the likelihood of future climate migration. The first is the support revisionist powers give to other authoritarian

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ben Thompson. "NATO commander: Russia and Syria are using migration as a weapon," Christian Science Monitor, March 2, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/nato-russia-syria-use-migration-as-weapon-2016-3>.

<sup>77</sup> Xinhua News Agency. "Spotlight: Turkey's refugee card playing with EU risks failure." March 20, 2017.

governments, which are more likely to ally and partner more readily with each other than other democratic countries are to partner with them.<sup>78</sup> Authoritarian governments are also less likely to promote and respect Western values of freedom, human rights, and fair trade, and are less likely to advocate for these values in international forums such as the UN, decreasing the accountability of revisionist powers for upholding these values. No less concerning are areas where problems with authoritarianism intersect with problems of climate change and migration.

First, there is historical precedent indicating that democratic countries facing economic crisis are at times prone to authoritarian shifts in governance.<sup>79</sup> In times of resource scarcity, including future scarcity exacerbated by climate change or increased migration, it is suggested that fragile democracies facing these threats may become more authoritarian in an attempt to deal with them. A recent example of this was in the Maldives, where the democratically elected president pushing austerity measures to cope with climate change was overthrown by a military coup and replaced with an authoritarian strongman.<sup>80</sup> It has been suggested that “major shifts in the global climate could give rise to a new generation of authoritarian rulers,” and that historically these authoritarian leaders are less constrained than liberal democracies in resorting to violence, both internal and external, to deal with resource scarcity.<sup>81</sup>

Some sociologists and scientists frustrated with the failure of democracies to cope with such a complex problem as climate change have even suggested authoritarian solutions may be a viable option to address it, similar to putting a country on a “war footing” and temporarily

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<sup>78</sup> Shale Horowitz and Michael Tyburski. "When are Similar Regimes More Likely to Form Alliances? Institutions and Ideologies in the Post-Communist World." *Post - Soviet Affairs*. 2016. 32 (2): 176.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, “Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases,” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer, 1994), pp. 5-40.

<sup>80</sup> Samuel Miller Macdonald. “Climate Kings: How a new generation of authoritarian leaders are using climate change to seize power,” *The New Republic*, July 30, 2018, <https://newrepublic.com/article/148861/climate-change-authoritarian-leaders>.

<sup>81</sup> Homer-Dixon, 6; Samuel Miller McDonald.

suspending certain freedoms for the greater good. Others sharply disagree, asserting that only “democratic governance is flexible and capable of learning from policy mistakes, which are inevitable when trying to deal with something as complex as climate change.”<sup>82</sup> A report by the Center for Climate Security summarizes the evidence, stating:

“evidence suggests that authoritarian regimes are far less resilient (and thus, less climate resilient) than more open or democratic societies, partly because they are generally unaccountable to the needs of their citizens, have high levels of corruption, and are less capable of, or willing to, adapt to rapidly-changing external and internal circumstances that effect their publics.”<sup>83</sup>

In the case of corrupt, authoritarian governments, the trade and diplomatic practices of Russia and China may actually be contributing to the strength of these regimes, providing further resistance to democratic change and climate resilience. As stated by the NSS, “strategic competitors often exploit rather than discourage corruption and state weakness to extract resources and exploit their populations.”<sup>84</sup> This in turn may exacerbate the negative effects of climate change, including mass migration, that as previously mentioned are generally more detrimental to the US and its allies.

In the case of authoritarian responses of governments to climate change, this would represent a case where Russia and China could actually benefit. As previously noted, authoritarian governments are more likely to ally and partner with Russia and China, and it may be possible that these revisionist powers may even take active measures to encourage shifts towards authoritarianism as a response to the effects of climate change. This highlights the

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<sup>82</sup> Stehr, Nico. “Exceptional Circumstances: Does Climate Change Trump Democracy?” *Issues in Science and Technology* 32, no. 2 (Winter 2016.), <https://issues.org/exceptional-circumstances-does-climate-change-trump-democracy/>

<sup>83</sup> Caitlin Werrell, et. al. “Can Authoritarian Regimes Be Climate Resilient? Not Likely,” *The Center for Climate and Security*, March 19, 2013, <https://climateandsecurity.org/2013/03/19/can-authoritarian-regimes-be-climate-resilient-not-likely/>

<sup>84</sup> United States. 1991. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. (Washington): President of the U.S.

incumbency for the US and the West to aid in the resiliency and stability of developing democracies, as the failure to do so can both harm the West and help revisionist powers.

The second area of concern regarding actions taken by revisionist powers that may increase future climate migration surrounds China's aggressive quest for food and water resources. With a population of 1.4 billion people and growing, China's government is taking aggressive steps to ensure it can continue to provide food and water to its people. Climate change is projected to exacerbate problems related to drought and desertification within China, and manmade problems of polluted water and farmland continue to be a challenge. To solve these challenges, China has been taking steps to shore up food and water resources, steps which have implications for the food and water resources of other countries. If these implications are sufficiently negative and go unchecked, China's efforts to provide food and water for its population could threaten food and water security abroad, contributing to the vulnerability of populations of people that may turn to migration as their only recourse.

In terms of water security, China is in a strategically strong position, as it controls the "water towers of Asia" – the Himalayan Mountains where seven of Asia's major rivers begin. Due to China's dam building spree, it now has the largest number of dams of any country in the world, which it uses to provide freshwater for agriculture and industry, as well as for hydropower. China uses its upstream leverage to influence its downstream neighbors; In 2017 China refused to provide hydrological data to India on the Brahmaputra River, possibly in response to an Indian boycott of a summit on the "Belt and Road Initiative" and longstanding

border tensions.<sup>85</sup> It is feared that China could use this leverage over other downstream countries with other transnational rivers, such as the Mekong or Salween. Concerns over upstream water pollution have also been raised, and it is feared that without any leverage or enforcement of water sharing agreements, downstream populations may have no recourse if future climate change leads to drought or reduced water flow, potentially leading to migration.<sup>86</sup>

Having some of the smallest amount of arable land per capita, and due to its increasing population, China is increasingly looking abroad to secure food resources. China's growing middle class is also changing the way Chinese people consume food, as more people switch to a more Western diet and the demand for seafood continues to rise. China boasts the world's largest fleet of deep-sea fishing vessels that fish around the globe's international waters and increasingly exploit national waters of countries that have little means of stopping them.<sup>87</sup> As local waters around China have become over-exploited, the Chinese government has subsidized these long-distance fishing fleets, which are "having an outsize impact on the globe's oceans."<sup>88</sup> With overfishing a problem around the globe, there is fear that China is prioritizing feeding its population while showing no concern for the sustainability of global fisheries.<sup>89</sup> This problem is most pronounced in western Africa, where local fisheries often provide the only reliable source of protein for certain populations. These countries often have little means to enforce fishing laws,

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<sup>85</sup> Brahama Chellaney. "Resource-hungry China is in overdrive as it wages water wars by stealth," *South China Morning Post*, January 16, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacydefence/article/2128119/resource-hungry-china-overdrive-it-wages-water-wars>.

<sup>86</sup> Eugene K. Chow. "China Is Weaponizing Water" *The Buzz* (blog), August 26, 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/china-weaponizing-water-22053>

<sup>87</sup> Christopher Woody. "The US military is warning that China's fishing boats are bullies and could start a war in the high seas" *businessinsider.com*, January 4, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/us-warns-chinas-aggressive-fishing-boats-could-start-a-war-2019-1>

<sup>88</sup> Andrew Jacobs. "China's Appetite Pushes Fisheries to the Brink," *NYtimes.com*, April 30, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/30/world/asia/chinas-appetite-pushes-fisheries-to-the-brink.html>.

<sup>89</sup> Salem Solomon. "Chinese Overfishing Threatens West African Economies." *Voice of America*. Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <https://www.voanews.com/a/chinese-overfishing-threatens-west-african-economies/3947764.html>.

and overexploitation by Chinese trawlers has led to massive declines in fish stocks, putting many fishermen out of work. In Asia, this has led to people turning to unsustainable agriculture practices to make up the difference, which further degrades the environment. In Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, and other west African countries, this unemployment has often led to migration to Europe.<sup>90</sup>

Recently, there has been increased attention on China's large acquisition and investments in farmland abroad, which has grown more than tenfold since 2009.<sup>91</sup> Agricultural investment has been endorsed as a "core component of China's One Belt, One Road initiative," as China looks abroad for arable farmland and to ensure more control over food supply chains and food prices.<sup>92</sup> Much of these investments have been made in developing countries throughout Asia and Africa, but Chinese companies have also made investments in Western countries such as France, Canada, Australia, and even the United States. Concerns over these investments in the US have been made as early as the 1970s, prompting the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) in 1978, and recent laws in response to these investments have also been passed in France and Australia.<sup>93</sup> But in areas such as Africa with weak governance or authoritarian rule, concerns have been raised about secrecy and lack of transparency regarding these investments, as well as corruption and a lack of environmental or sustainability oversight.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Meaghan Beatley, et. al. "Overfished: In Senegal, empty nets lead to hunger and violence," *gpinvestigations.pri.org*, May 30, 2018, <https://gpinvestigations.pri.org/overfished-in-senegal-empty-nets-lead-to-hunger-and-violence-e3b5d0c9a686>.

<sup>91</sup> Fred Gale, et al., "Is China Buying Up Worldwide Agriculture? USDA Says Yes..." *Southeastproduceweekly.com*, April 26, 2018, <https://southeastproduceweekly.com/2018/04/26/china-buying-worldwide-agriculture-interests-usda-says-yes/>.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Rory Mulholland. "Emmanuel Macron promises to stop foreign investors buying up French farms after China land grab," *Telegraph.co.uk*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/02/22/emmanuel-macron-promises-stop-foreign-investors-buying-french/>; Johnathan Hettinger, et. al, "Foreign investment in U.S. land on the rise," *Investigatemitwest.org*, June 22, 2017, <https://investigatemitwest.org/2017/06/22/foreign-investment-into-u-s-farmland-on-the-rise/>.

<sup>94</sup> Carin Smaller, et. Al. "Farmland and Water: China invests abroad," *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, August 2012, [https://www.iisd.org/pdf/2012/farmland\\_water\\_china\\_invests.pdf](https://www.iisd.org/pdf/2012/farmland_water_china_invests.pdf).

It is also feared that China's willingness to deal with nefarious leaders over long-term food security concerns could lead to a rollback of progress made in areas of human rights and democracy, for which China has shown a lack of apprehension.<sup>95</sup> But reporting on the actual implications of these investments has been mixed, with other reports shedding light on potential benefits China is bringing to developing countries through agricultural investments, such as sharing of best-practices, increased agricultural jobs, and infrastructure improvements. It remains to be seen whether there will be a net benefit for developing countries that are host to these Chinese agriculture investments, or if some of the more pessimistic predictions may occur.

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<sup>95</sup> Robert O'Brien. "China's Africa Play." *CBSnews.com*. January 18, 2010. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/chinas-africa-play/>.

## SECTION 5 – RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous sections have aimed to establish two main points. The first: that the threats from climate change have national security implications, migration likely being the most severe of these threats. The second: that climate migration is directly related to revisionist power competition because climate migration will affect the US and its allies to a greater degree, and revisionist powers may exploit this, while at the same time contributing to conditions that increase future climate migration. The following recommendations are scoped to suggested changes to US national security strategy documents, the most important of which is the NSS. It is from this document that all other strategy documents are derived, and therefore changes to this document would have a trickle-down effect.

These recommendations are also centered around two specific areas. First, the nature of the threat must be clearly identified, linking climate change as a driver of migration, and linking migration concerns with broader concerns about revisionist power competition. Second, specific strategies and guidance must be given to combat the national security threats from climate migration, identifying where these efforts overlap with broader efforts to compete strategically with revisionist powers. If these recommendations are followed, the US and its allies will be more resilient to the negative effects of climate migration, and better able to out-compete revisionist powers in a future security environment challenged by climate change.

### **Identifying Climate Migration in the National Security Strategy**

The first step of any effective national security strategy should be a well-defined outline of potential national security threats. Any strategy that fails to properly characterize threats will certainly fail to adequately address them. Both the NSS and NDS undoubtably achieve this in

identifying revisionist power competition as the primary threat to US national security. Both documents make a strong case for why this competition is the most dangerous threat, and although the NSS has often been characterized as a political document, the characterization of this threat largely transcends politics. Revisionist power competition will likely remain the primary threat to the US in future strategy documents written under President Trump or another president from either political party.

The NSS also clearly identifies immigration as a national security concern. Most of these concerns are contextualized around the problem of illegal immigration to the US, but instability and tensions caused by mass migration to Europe is also mentioned. Furthermore, democratic values and strong economic ties are cited as an antidote to “violence, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration that threaten our common security.” However, this characterization of the threat from migration falls short in two key areas. First, the NSS fails to identify climate change as a key driver of future global migration and refugee flows. As mentioned in Section Two, natural disasters, food and water insecurity, sea-level rise, and even conflict are all drivers of migration that are being exacerbated by climate change. Climate change is predicted to become one of the primary drivers of future migration, including illegal immigration to the US and mass migration to Europe. The NSS fails to reference this key driver of migration, potentially allowing efforts to address it to fall short.

Second, migration and refugee concerns are not clearly linked to revisionist power competition. The NSS fails to mention how the US and its allies are more exposed to the national security concerns surrounding migration, or how actions by revisionist powers like Russia and China may even contribute to mass migration and the lack of climate resilience that can exacerbate it. Because migration is related to revisionist power competition, strategies to address

migration-related security concerns will simultaneously advance the US in the competitive sphere, contributing to the resilience of US hegemony and the stability of the current international order.

Because revisionist power competition and migration are both key aspects of the 2017 NSS, a complete revamp of this strategy is not needed. However, a stronger identification of the causal relationship between climate change and migration, as well as its connection to revisionist power competition would greatly strengthen the strategy's characterization of these threats. This would in turn allow tailoring of strategic guidance designed to combat these threats, and would also provide improved direction to the DoD, which included neither climate change nor migration in the 2018 NDS.

### **Improving Priority Actions to Address Climate Migration**

The NSS typically only makes broad recommendations, which are referred to as “Priority Actions,” and leaves more specific objectives and lines of effort to department-level strategy documents such as the NDS. Adjustments or additions to these priority actions that incorporate concerns over climate migration would greatly improve the overall guidance of the NSS. The following suggested changes are limited to priority actions that would directly improve resiliency to climate migration. There are clearly other priority actions within this strategy that could be improved to more directly address manmade causes of climate change, particularly within the “Embrace Energy Dominance” section. However, environmentalists, scientists, national security analysts, and a broad range of other experts have extensively covered these types of

recommendations, which are beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>96</sup>

### **Recommendation One:** Using Trade to Improve Governance and Climate Resilience

As explained in Section Four, stabile, transparent, democratic governments that respond to the will of the people they govern tend to be more resilient to the effects of climate change, including climate migration. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the US to use diplomatic, and especially economic means to promote these values, as doing so will not only strengthen economic and trade relationships, but it will also improve the climate resilience of other countries and potentially reduce climate migration. The 2017 NSS does an excellent job of highlighting the importance of these efforts in the “Incentivizing Reforms” section, when it states, “the United States will use diplomacy and assistance to encourage states to make choices that improve governance, rule of law, and sustainable development.” The strategy also notes the importance of countering corruption. However, these efforts are not explicitly tied to climate resilience, and other suggestions fall short when discussing priority actions within fragile states. The priority actions go on to state “political problems are at the root of most state fragility,” which while arguably true, fails to mention food and water security, natural disasters, sea-level rise, migration, or any other effects of climate change as important and sometimes dominant contributing factors.

The strategy also recommends the US “commit selectively...[giving] priority to strengthening states where state weaknesses or failure would magnify threats to the American homeland.” This recommendation seems short-sighted when considering the detrimental effects that mass migration can have on the stabilization of US regional allies and partners. The stability

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<sup>96</sup> Caitlin Werrell And Francesco Femia. “Reaction: The New National Security Strategy and Climate Change.” *The Center for Climate and Security*. December 18, 2018. <https://climateandsecurity.org/2017/12/18/reaction-the-new-national-security-strategy-and-climate-change/>.

of US allies is critically important to national security, especially in the context of strategic competition. An overly selective partnership strategy risks inattention to highly climate-vulnerable states, where targeted investment and aid may be the difference between resilience and stability, or state collapse and mass migration.

The next NSS should maintain a commitment to promoting democratic values, human rights, and fighting corruption, while highlighting the role these values play in increasing climate resilience. Assisting developing countries and fragile states that are highly vulnerable to climate change and climate migration should also be prioritized. Combating the destabilizing effects of mass migration should not just be considered with respect to protecting the US homeland, but with protecting key US allies and partners as well.

**Recommendation Two:** Investing in and Sharing Technologies to Improve Climate Resilience

Technology assistance and support with best practices has been cited as a key method that the US could use to assist developing countries and fragile states become more resilient to climate change.<sup>97</sup> This assistance could greatly enhance climate resilience and the reduction of future migration, especially if the assistance is focused in areas such as agricultural best-practices, water conservation, and urban planning. The 2017 NSS comes close to these recommendations when it lists priority actions to “support food security and health programs that save lives and address the root cause of hunger and disease.” The strategy also states that the US should capitalize on new technologies in developing countries by incorporating “innovative technologies in our diplomatic and development programs.” The next NSS should expand on

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<sup>97</sup> Josephat Okuku Oloo and Paul Omondi. “Strengthening Local Institutions as Avenues for Climate Change Resilience.” *International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment*. Vol. 8, Issue 5, 2017: 573-588; James Bond et al. “How Foreign Climate Aid Benefits the United States.” Video. *Environmental and Energy Study Institute*. April 11, 2017.

these recommendations to include the sharing of technologies and assistance to promote climate resilience, which could increase investment opportunities for US companies and industries, while at the same time reducing the risks from climate change and migration.

**Recommendation Three: Military and Intelligence Capacity for Climate Change Response**

Under the section titled “Champion American Values,” the 2017 NSS indicates “[The] United States will continue to lead the world in humanitarian assistance...[and] continue to catalyze international responses to man-made and natural disasters and provide our expertise and capabilities to those in need.” This is an important acknowledgement of the significance that HA/DR missions serve within US foreign policy and military strategy. However, when outlining priority actions for military modernization, acquisition, capacity, readiness, and retention of a full-spectrum force, no mention is made of the increasing demand for HA/DR missions. As noted in Section Four, climate change has the potential to increase the demand on US military assets for HA/DR missions. A failure of US response or assistance has potentially severe implications for US national security, especially regarding climate migration and revisionist power competition. These priority actions for the future strength and posture of US military forces must include an acknowledgement of the increased demand for HA/DR missions, so that the joint force can be trained, manned, and equipped appropriately.

The strategy also includes two general priority actions regarding intelligence, including guidance to “harness all information at our disposal” and “fuse information and analysis.” These priority actions are overly broad and would serve as an appropriate area to include recommendations for harnessing US intelligence to conduct more predictive analysis regarding climate change. Predictive analysis using artificial intelligence, modeling, and multi-int fusion can provide advanced warning of emerging areas of instability, and can also predict areas where

climate change could contribute to conflict.<sup>98</sup> Driven by this intelligence, the US would better understand areas of increased vulnerability, enabling the allocation of resources and aid appropriately, and preparing the military for potential response. The US Intelligence Community continues to warn of the potential threats from climate change, as indicated by an entire section devoted to “Environment and Climate Change” in the 2018 *Worldwide Threat Assessment*.<sup>99</sup> This additional direction to emphasize predictive analysis would give US policy makers and DoD leaders an added advantage in responding to threats from climate change hotspots.

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<sup>98</sup> Kaushik Pal. “How Big Data and Predictive Analytics Can Help Manage Climate Change.” *KD Nuggets*. Accessed March 5, 2019. <https://www.kdnuggets.com/2015/12/big-data-predictive-analytics-climate-change.html>; Elizabeth Sablich. “How artificial intelligence will affect the future of energy and climate.” *Brookings*. January 10, 2019. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-artificial-intelligence-will-affect-the-future-of-energy-and-climate/>.

<sup>99</sup> United States. “Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community.” *Office of the Director of National Intelligence*. February 12, 2018.

## SECTION 5 – CONCLUSION

Migrants have been and will continue to be an asset to any country that chooses to accept them, as long as their acceptance is facilitated by organized immigration policies. But future migration trends are certain to be influenced by the increasing changes to the earth's climate, and with these changes comes the possibility of disruptive mass migration. The consequences of destabilizing migration, exacerbated by climate change, must be considered as a national security issue for both the United States and its allies and partners. The potential negative consequences for this migration are enormous, especially for US allies and partners with a reduced capacity to deal with it.

In an era of great power competition between the US and the revisionist powers of Russia and China, it is incumbent for US government and DoD leaders to examine the full spectrum of security threats that could potentially influence this competition. As revisionist power competition is now the chief concern as identified by President Trump's "America First" NSS, the next update to this strategy should take an exhaustive look at all emerging threats, prioritizing those that are directly related to this concern. This thesis finds that climate migration will affect the national security of the United States to a greater degree than other revisionist powers, and is therefore directly linked to concerns surrounding revisionist power competition. Not only are the US and its allies more vulnerable to climate migration, but revisionist powers are actively exploiting these vulnerabilities and taking actions that may make future climate migration worse. As the principle document guiding formulation of US national security policy, the next NSS must directly address the threat posed by climate migration and give specific guidance on how to mitigate it. That way, the overall benefits of migration can remain as advantageous as they have been for the United States since its founding in 1776.

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