

To: Jing Ling Tan and George Yean

From: David Struhs

CC: Gary King and Noah Dasanaiké

Date: November 4, 2024

RE: GOV 2020 Replication Project

This memo provides feedback on Jing Ling and George's GOV 2020 replication paper entitled "Climate Disasters Drive Security Concerns: A Text Analysis of UN Climate Speeches." The paper is well written and well organized. My feedback is primarily focused on clarifying and standardizing language related to climate change and security threats and considering alternative explanations for their findings. Additionally, I failed to replicate their outputs but that is likely due to my own technical shortcomings. Finally, I provide corrections to a few minor grammatical errors (far from comprehensive).

Title, Abstract & Introduction:

Overall, the abstract reads well, particularly when you begin discussing methodology (sentence beginning, "We exploit..."). I think the language in the opening sentences could be sharpened. One way to clarify the writing would be to standardize your terminology. I wonder if rather than using "security issue" and "security concern," it would be more effective to standardize the language throughout the paper as a "security threat". This could also be applied to the title by making clear your finding: "Climate Disasters are a Security Threat: A Text Analysis of UN Climate Speeches," or "The Increasing Salience of Climate Disasters as Security Threats: A Text Analysis of UN Climate Speeches."

While I am unsure if "security threat" has some specific meaning within the literature, it seems to more accurately capture the sentiment that you are measuring. "Issue" seems vague, while "threat" is direct and conveys a sense of urgency and severity. Section 2 of your paper "What is climate Security?" seems to support the idea of climate as a "security threat."

Additionally, in the second sentence of the abstract, you describe Fukushima and Hurricane Milton as "climate issues" but then go on to discuss climate change and climate disasters as a measure of increased climate securitization. Defining a term, perhaps something like "climate related disasters", and then referring to that throughout the paper would remove some ambiguity. Your current definition of "climate issue" in the first paragraph of the introduction attempts to do this, but I am not convinced by your definition and the corresponding examples, specifically as it relates to Russian and gas exports. Europe's demand for energy predates climate change. This seems more like an issue of trade than climate change.

Analysis

Is there a difference between a natural disaster that is not a climate-related event and one that is? In other words, are all natural disasters a result of climate change? It seems that you are sorting out certain disasters that are not related to climate such as fires and epidemics (Section 3.2, Paragraph 2). Does framing all naturally occurring disasters as climate disasters conflate severe weather with climate change? Is there a reason that in 2006 there is a sharp and dramatic increase in the number of disasters that occurred?

I wonder if “climate change” has become a catch-all term within the political lexicon used to both label weather events (not officially within the dataset but colloquially) and therefore politicians are more likely to use the term when responding to those events, regardless of if the events are the result of climate change. My primary concern with Figure 1 and the paper’s framing around climate change is that climate change is a gradual process that began with the industrial revolution. It is not a shock that occurred at a specific point in time.

Additionally, I wonder how you think about environmental disasters that occur such as the Exxon Valdez or the BP oil spill. Do those fall under climate related disasters? If so, I wonder to what extent climate change is being included in speeches that are primarily about energy security and not necessarily about climate security. It seems to me that it is possible that the increase in speeches related to climate change has more to do with the increased politization of the term and its corresponding interaction with other securitized topics such as economic growth. In other words, is it merely a buzz word that has been added to more speeches. I think the robustness checks you plan on conducting by further restricting the types of disasters included in the data may help answer this question.

Replication

I was unable to completely replicate your figures and findings in the code (I successfully recreated Figure 1). The code fails at line 165 because “metadata_relevant_columns” is not found. I tried to diagnose the problem, and reran the code chunk again, as described in the comments within the code, but I was unsuccessful. There is a high likelihood that it is user error on my side as I am not a particularly good coder.

Potential Extension Analysis:

- Explore the disaster data to see why there is a sharp change in 2006. Also, explore why there is a sharp increase in climate related speeches (or, if they are driven by the climate events, what are the content of the speeches and do they align with that hypothesis).

Odds and Ends

- Section 1, Sentence 2: “The impact of Hurricanes Milton and Helen that successively hit *the* Southern U.S. underlined how climate change” (missing the).
- Section 3.1, Paragraph 3, Sentence 3: “The authors (i.e., us)...” Just use “we” as you do in the preceding and following sentence.
- Section 3, example speech by German ambassador – there is a mojibake in the third line.