**Symposium to Commemorate the Publication of
"Does climate change destabilize society? —The dynamics of international
politics on water resources"**

On December 14, 2022, the SDGs Collaborative Research Unit of the Institute for Future Initiatives at the University of Tokyo hosted the launch of the edited book titled, "気候変動は社会を不安定化させるか ―水資源をめぐる国際政治の力学".

Prof. Kiichi Fujiwara, the lead editor of the book, began the proceedings. He explained that the book, published in November 2022 by the Nippon Hyoron Sha Press, was the outcome of the research project "The Nexus of International Politics on Climate Change and Water Resources: Security and SDGs Perspectives" (conducted from 2019 to 2021). This project investigated the nexus of international politics in terms of climate change and water resources with case studies of the Global South. In bringing perspectives from contributing authors, the purpose of this symposium was to share the contents of the book and stimulate further research on the topic.

Next, Prof. Fujiwara welcomed the two discussants, Prof. Yasuko Kameyama and Prof. Naosuke Mukoyama.

In her comments, Prof. Kameyama noted that this was the first book ever written in the Japanese language on the relationship between water and social instability. She noted that this theme was less published even in English language. With its focus on case studies of Singapore, Israel-Palestine, Manila, India, Afghanistan, and the African Sahel, the book showed that the same climate change impacts could lead to various forms of social instability due to different contexts, pathways, and consequences. Asian case studies were especially valuable. This work was important, keeping in view the extraordinary impact of human activity on climate change, the effects of climate-related impacts on worldwide displacement of people, and increasing depletion of water resources. Since establishing causal links between climate change and loss and damage is important for scientific analysis and policy interventions (such as loss and damage funding), the next step is to consider future assessments. Such analysis could identify ways to prevent or mitigate further social instability, inspire collaboration, and explore the role of Japan in these conversations.

Prof. Mukoyama in his comments noted that the contribution of this book is in its cross-regional discussion of the impact of climate change, an event seemingly unrelated to international politics, on international conflicts, civil wars, or domestic governance, and in its focus on causal mechanisms. On the other hand, the book missed cases from understudied regions such as the Pacific Islands, Oceania, and Central Asia. Also, there was some room for improvement in the linkage between the two parts of the book. Part one focused on theory, ecological modernization, and risk assessment for instance, but part two focused on water-related case studies. He raised two questions. First, what is the impact of climate change on democracy? In chapter 1, it was noted that liberals respond to the dangers of climate change, but that conservatives and populists are less responsive. Is this trend difficult to change and is it possible to mobilize politics in different ways? Second, is there any possibility of achieving peace through global warming in the areas of extreme cold? He concluded his discussion by pointing out that the book was the first of its kind in Japan to focus on the impact of climate change on society and represented promising initial steps.

Following the two discussants, the authors commented.

Prof. Chiharu Takenaka focused on the nexus between *climate change politics* and *pandemic politics*. She noted that it was essential to conduct scientific analysis for future predictions and policy development in order to pursue a sustainable world in international society. Japan could take leadership, since the country is based in growing Asia, while it is also part of the Global North. Japan has also a long history of building cooperation with neighboring countries in Asia, especially in the field of development. With such background, area studies of Asian countries have been well advanced here, which could be precious the intellectual resource for policy studies on climate change and global warming. A global approach is essential to create new knowledge, and scholars of international politics and international relations should play an important role to facilitate joint research.

Prof. Hideaki Shiroyama in his comments pointed out that climate change is not a standalone challenge but interconnected with others—from food security to resource scarcity to health. In that sense, multiple approaches are needed to address multifaceted risks. The approach of the book was to look at complex risks and responses to risks by society through perspectives based on water issues.
At IFI, an institution that includes the word "future" in its name, with a certain degree of imagination, the goal is to involve all stakeholders. To that end, it may be useful to consider if alternative visions could be considered in comparison to conventional framings. This is a huge challenge as it entails accumulating research results. However, it is by combining approaches and inducing cooperation that we may achieve resilience. This may entail not only national players but also sub-national players that could contribute to cooperation. Going forward, it would help to pay attention to how societies respond to uncertainty and how these responses may contribute to changes (positive and negative) in governance.

Prof. Yee Kuang Heng noted that the concept of futures literacy is important. More importantly is the need to act preventively, as climate change and conflict is a complex interconnective issue that requires coordination across multiple government departments. How can this level of coordination be brought about, what policy processes are emerging, and what sort of new policy structures are being developed? The chapter focused on efforts towards building and embedding future's literacy through government and ministries in the UK and Singapore. The UK Governments Office of Science has a dedicated specialist future's team, which has been a key player to facilitate and embed future's thinking across different government agencies. In Singapore, a similar function has been fulfilled by the Center for Strategic Future. These cases illustrate attempts to develop a stronger a sense of inter-agency coordination across multiple ministries to think about climate futures materializing in the next 10, 20 years. The voice of the Global South and Japan has been negligible in these debates. There is potential for partnership with the UK, not only with government ministries but also through academia in these debates. Lastly, in terms of relationship between climate change and peace, we already see security dilemmas emerging because of changing climate and potential scramble for resources.

Prof. Masahiro Sugiyama noted in his comments that the element of future was important in terms of policy outcomes. Qualitative aspects, such as changes in lifestyles and levels of industrialization, ought to be included. In the comments on the book, the issue of re-framing of climate change and politics was raised. In terms of artificially cooling the Earth, for instance, the issue has attracted the interest of Republicans in the United States. However, the debate is far from decided. There is great likelihood that temperature rise may exceed 1.5 degree Celsius as agreed under the Paris agreement. Lastly, relationships between climate change, precipitation, water, and conflicts need to be explored further.

Prof. Takeshi Wada in his comments explained that covering Latin American case studies in Global South was not possible due to constraints posed by COVID-19. As a result, instead of case studies, the chapter analyzed four databases of political events to identify hotspots of water-related conflicts worldwide. This work has contributed towards a journal article in addition to the book chapter. The article compared 26 cases of urban and rural water conflicts in Latin America and uncovered that chances towards SDGs-

friendly conflict resolutions increased in instances where NGOs, IGOs, academics, and professionals were involved.

Prof. Aiko Nishikida noted that her case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict indicated that the climate and conflict were not necessarily related with direct causality. Nevertheless, the effect of climate change, and especially decreasing rainfalls has affected water availability in their daily lives. While its political inclination is not liberal as is the case of most of the Green parties in European countries, governments of Israel have promoted technological development to cope with the climate change in the past decade. The advanced technologies including the use of recycled water and desalination has considerably improved the availability of water resources. However, the increased water capacity did not induce Israel to share more water with Palestine because of the ongoing conflict. Maldistribution of water remains and people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories still suffer from severe water shortage. The findings in the study suggest that technological development may solve the problem of water necessity, whereas it does not necessarily result in resolution of conflict.

Prof. Kazuyo Hanai focused on the African Sahel in her chapter. She noted the differential impact of climate change. In some instances, there was too little water, and in some there was too much. Political players used climate change as a tool for political gains. For instance, autocratic governments are implementing climate change policies to gain support from the international community. However, they exploit the goodwill gained from such support and entrench their power through anti-democratic policies. It is important then to learn from past lessons to shape future policies.

Prof. Nazia Hussain in her comments noted that the book attempted to unpack not only the complexity of climate change but also the deep methodological struggles around making sense of climate change. From that perspective, water provided an accessible lens that could combine responses from the macro to the micro level. In terms of climate change and democracy or conflict, it may help to frame the relationship via political processes and outcomes. In the Manila case study, for instance, the political outcome showed deepening of inequality, which is also a political outcome. In other cases, keeping in view varying contexts, we may see potential violence or riots. Paying attention to emergence, and how people, governments, and in that sense, governance at various levels, as well as responses by ordinary people are important in locating answers.

Prof. Kazushige Nagano focused on Kashmir. He pointed out that although it has been addressed in terms of territorial disputes and human rights issues, but the impact of climate change on human security in a conflict area has not been talked about. The chapter focused on climate-induced disasters and instability of society. Furthermore, it placed them within the medium- and long-term process of weakening local autonomy and democratic processes in Jammu and Kashmir, India. In the context of not only the international rivalry relations over the Kashmir region, but also the conflict composition of India's domestic central-local relations, the various impacts of climate change on society are a new risk in political meaning for the local population. The climate change impact cannot be ignored in understanding the complex problems of Kashmir. The huge task is whether human security can be achieved in a policy context in both natural and political-social settings.

Prof. Vindu Mai Chotani focused on the Yarlung Tsangpo - Brahmaputra river and its two key riparian's - India and China. While climate-induced impacts are not the main driver of conflict, when combined with a number of geopolitical tensions, territorial disputes and the lack of a water-sharing treaty, the likelihood of conflict significantly increases. In preventing future conflict, the chapter suggests de-securitizing water resources by focusing on sharing agricultural practices as well as a need for multilateral frameworks. Both China and India have shown an immense proclivity to solving disputes bilaterally, however moving towards a multilateral framework would be beneficial. There is only one mechanism, which is the BCIM, the Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar project that focuses on the multilateral aspect in terms of

connectivity. Being able to do more research on how it could talk about water sharing alongside connectivity could be an area to explore for future cooperation. Lastly, the lower riparian states of Bhutan and Bangladesh need to be included in the conversation. Japan's role could be interesting as Japan is very active through its ODA in the region, but there is a perception gap, that is, India and Japan view China in varying ways. From this vantage point, it is tough to see how much Japan can do on this issue.

Prof. Hiromu Shimizu, explained how a drought broke out on the ground in Afghanistan when the U.S. was working to defeat al-Qaeda after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and how people joined warlords and the Taliban in order to eat. He then described the importance of civilian support at the grassroots level. He stated that although the most important role of Japan in Asia was to support livelihood and agriculture, it was regrettable that Japan provided assistance that was biased toward building modern institutions and failed to capture the hearts and minds of the people.

Prof. Kazuya Nakamizo referred to the relationship between climate change and political regimes based on the case study of India. There are two possibilities. One is the possibility that climate change could lead to authoritarianism. In India, for example, Narendra Modi became the chief minister of Gujarat in 2001 due to strong dissatisfaction with the then BJP state government's handling its disaster response to the 2001 Kutch earthquake. This led to him becoming the Prime Minister of India and promoting strong-arm politics. The other is the possibility of deepening democracy. During his tenure, Prime Minister Modi promoted a massive dam construction project, which was achieved over the protests of the dam-building opposition. There is also growing resistance from civil society to his authoritarian approach to governance, including but not limited to this. The important thing that can be said from the Indian case is to pay attention to the realities on the ground in the facing climate change. Connecting global efforts to address climate change with local efforts to co-exist with climate change has the potential to solve the problem.

After the comments from the book authors, Prof. Fujiwara thanked Ms. Michinaka of the Nippon Hyoron Sha Press for her extensive efforts in publishing the book. In his concluding comments, Prof. Fujiwara noted that in addition to the big questions addressed by the book, some themes were important to mention again. They included the following. Resilience—what is the power of resilience in preventing instability, and how can such a foundation be established? Multilateralism—not only in terms of trade but also how non-state actors could contribute to it. Regime impact and meaning of democracy—what do the concepts entail? Instability—not only in terms of conflict but also social instability including criminal activities. Lastly, the war in Syria was a reminder—the drought there may have undermined stability, but what was the effect towards civil war? How could such cases be prevented? Future research entails not only looking at causality but at efforts to prevent possibilities of conflict.

These comments were followed by an exchange between contributors and audience members during the questions and answers session.