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## **Natural Disasters and Security Governance: Shifting from a Strategic Culture of Risk-Elimination to a Strategic Culture of Risk Adaption**

Contemporary modes of security governance are premised on a cognitive model aimed at the elimination of risks rather than adaptation to their occurrence. Security-seeking in this context reveals the need to attain safety and avoid harm at any cost. Underpinning this conceptualization of security governance is a pervasive strategic culture resting on the belief that human/socio-political systems are both detached from natural/biophysical ones and in control of natural space. Such an understanding of security governance has obfuscated the fact that human societies inhabit complex spaces, which present different kinds of challenges and opportunities. Moreover, such strategic culture of risk-elimination—perhaps, paradoxically—presents human/socio-political systems simultaneously as the causes of and the solution to insecurity.

In this respect, natural disasters are perhaps the most conspicuous indication that human/socio-political systems are neither detached from, nor in control of, natural/biophysical processes. My contention is that natural disasters confront us with the vacuity of the current modes of security governance—that is, natural disasters reveal that human societies lack the capacity for flexible adaptation due to (i) the prevailing desire for stability and (ii) risk-assessments preoccupied with threats emanating from human/socio-political rather than natural/biophysical systems. In an attempt to rectify the cognitive underpinnings of current security governance, this projected investigation proposes to infuse the thinking about security and its governance in international relations (IR) theory with insights from the natural sciences (especially biology). The proposition is that our current state of insecurity is both a function of evolution's continued presence in our lives and our freedom from evolutionary constraint.

The point of departure for such an investigation is the suggestion that humans are not the only species to whom security is crucial. Instead, all organisms inhabit environments in which they need to manage diverse sets of risk in order to survive. Yet, the engagement of the experience of natural/biophysical systems has been conspicuously absent from the security analyses of IR. The argument here is that by looking at the ways in which, for instance, immune systems develop resilience to diseases or organisms adapt to the introduction of a new predator or competitor, IR can develop not only more nuanced, but also more relevant understandings of the notions and practices of security governance in the context of an increased vulnerability to complex risks, such as natural disasters, prompted by the catalytic effects of small events, whose consequences are felt later, elsewhere, and by others.

The following sections outline the aims of this project, its intellectual background, and its research design. The specific aims of this project are to:

1. Demonstrate the paradigmatic insecurity that natural disasters cause to the strategic culture of security governance;
2. Critique the assumptions of predictability and controllability underpinning mainstream understandings of security governance;

3. Contribute to the development of an interdisciplinary approach to security governance bringing together the insights of natural science and international relations theory;
4. Develop a more refined and critical understanding of security and its governance by exploring the usually overlooked experience of risk-management among natural/biophysical systems;
5. Undertake a detailed analysis of the security governance mechanisms of ecological communities (both immunological and species adaptation);
6. Reveal the importance of security governance premised on the adaptation to risk rather than its elimination.