



EU FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY ON CLIMATE-RELATED SECURITY RISKS

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Around the world, policymakers and researchers are increasingly acknowledging the adverse effects of climate change on human security. In recent years, experts have repeatedly identified the failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, coupled with extreme weather events, as being among the most severe risks the world faces.¹ Research shows that, as well as having human security and socioeconomic impacts, climate change may exacerbate local conflicts in vulnerable countries.² Meanwhile, climate change and climate security are gaining increased attention within international organizations.³

¹ World Economic Forum, *Global Risks Report 2019*, 14th edn (World Economic Forum: Berlin, 2019), p. 5.

² Koubi, V., 'Climate change and conflict', *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 22 (May 2019), pp. 343–60; Busby, J. and von Uexkull, N., 'Climate shocks and humanitarian crisis: Which countries are at risk?', *Foreign Affairs*, 29 Nov. 2018. See also, Van Baalen, S. and Mobjörk, M., 'Climate change and violent conflict in East Africa: integrating qualitative and quantitative research to probe the mechanisms', *International Studies Review*, vol. 20, no. 4 (Nov. 2017), pp. 547–75.

³ Born, C. et al., 'Advancing United Nations responses to climate-related security risks', SIPRI Policy Brief, Sep. 2019; Dellmuth, L.M. et al., 'Intergovernmental organizations and climate security: advancing the research agenda', *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, vol. 9 no. 1 (Jan./Feb. 2018); Krampe, F. and Mobjörk M., 'Responding

One such organization is the European Union (EU), which is of particular importance due to its broad policy scope and significant resources.⁴

The EU is among the most vocal proponents of the need to address security risks related to climate change and the issue has been on the EU's foreign and security policy agenda for more than a decade.⁵ The 2016 EU Global Strategy describes climate change as a 'threat multiplier' and Federica Mogherini, the EU's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, has repeatedly emphasized the need to further develop EU capacities with regards to climate change and security.⁶

to climate-related security risks: reviewing regional organizations in Asia and Africa', *Current Climate Change Report*, vol. 4, no. 4 (Oct. 2018), pp. 330–37; Hardt, J.N., *Environmental security in the Anthropocene: assessing theory and practice* (Routledge: London, 2017); Mobjörk, M. et al., *Climate-related security risks: Towards an integrated approach* (SIPRI: Stockholm, Oct. 2016).

⁴ Bremberg, N. et al., 'The EU and climate-related security risks: a community of practice in the making?', *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 41, no. 5 (2019), pp. 623–39.

⁵ Youngs, R. *Climate Change and European Security* (Routledge: London, 2015).

⁶ European Union, 'Global Strategy for the European Union's foreign and security policy', Jun. 2016; European Union, 'Remarks

SUMMARY

● Policymakers and researchers have increasingly acknowledged the adverse effects of climate change on human security, and an increasing amount of international organizations are addressing climate-related security risks. The European Union (EU) is one of the most vocal proponents in this regard.

This SIPRI Policy Brief analyses EU responses within its foreign and security policy to climate-related security risks, focusing on developments since the release of the 2016 EU Global Strategy. It concludes that the EU already has several instruments at its disposal but the EU and its member states need to raise their ambitions.

This SIPRI Policy Brief recommends that: (a) EU climate diplomacy should integrate climate security; (b) knowledge provision and risk assessment should be enhanced; (c) mandates for missions within the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy should be broadened; and (d) EU–United Nations cooperation should be strengthened.

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Climate security needs to be understood broadly to include risks and threats to humans, societies and states that emanate from the adverse effects of climate change

This SIPRI Policy Brief analyses EU responses within its foreign and security policy to climate-related security risks, focusing on developments since the release of the 2016 EU Global Strategy. Building on previous research it assesses the possibilities and constraints that the EU and its member states face when it comes to managing and mitigating security risks posed by climate change. This SIPRI Policy Brief: (a) defines ‘climate security’ based on recent conceptual advancement in relevant fields of study; (b) summarizes recent and current EU actions on climate-related security risks in the fields of foreign and security policy; and (c) presents a set of recommendations for future EU actions.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SECURITY

Regions around the world are likely to experience various effects of climate change, such as extreme temperatures and increases in the frequency and intensity of precipitation and droughts.⁷ United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, recently described climate change as ‘a direct existential threat’, which if it remains unmitigated will lead to

by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the Informal Meeting of EU Defence Ministers’, 29 Aug. 2019.

⁷ Masson-Delmotte, V. et al. (eds), *Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*, (IPCC: Geneva, 2018).

‘disastrous consequences for people and all the natural systems that sustain us’.⁸ ‘Climate security’ as a concept covers a range of distinct yet interrelated phenomena. Among policymakers and researchers, the relationship between climate change and security is sometimes described in terms of climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’—that is, it exacerbates already existing security risks. This may in many cases be an adequate description but sometimes changes in biophysical conditions might be *the* existential threat facing human societies. For example, developing countries with high levels of substance farming threatened by extensive drought periods or small island nations threatened by sea-level rise.⁹ However, in most instances the adverse effects of climate change on the security of states and societies are felt indirectly and in interaction with other social and physical processes.

Importantly, climate security needs to be understood broadly to include risks and threats to humans, societies and states that emanate from the adverse effects of climate change.¹⁰ Combining state and human security, climate security can be defined as the social practices through which humans, societies and states build capacity to manage, and ultimately prevent, climate-related risks. This definition does not only combine different notions of security, it also facilitates a research agenda that seeks to explain and understand why, how and under which conditions climate change poses security risks. This in turn introduces the question of

⁸ United Nations, ‘UN Secretary-General’s remarks on Climate Change’, 9 Sep. 2018.

⁹ Mobjörk et al. (note 3) pp. 14–16.

¹⁰ Dellmuth et al. (note 3).



how international organizations (broadly defined) might contribute to strengthening states' and societies' ability to mitigate and manage those risks.

CLIMATE SECURITY AND EU FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

The complex relationship between environmental degradation, climate change and international security is increasingly recognized in EU foreign and security policy. The EU first acknowledged in the early 2000s that climate change has security implications. Since then, the EU has also developed its capacities within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) with, for example, the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the launch of several military and civilian crisis management operations under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The EU Global Strategy from 2016 consistently refers to climate change as 'exacerbat[ing] potential conflict' due to, for example, water and food security.¹¹ Further impetus was given to this agenda in 2018 at an EU-led high-level meeting on 'Climate, Peace and Security' in Brussels, which brought together a broad range of policymakers to discuss ongoing and new risks to peace and security posed by climate change.

In early 2019, the EU Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) reiterated that climate change acts as a threat multiplier but emphasized that climate change is also a 'threat in its own right, with serious implications for peace and security

across the globe'.¹² The FAC underlined that fragile countries are the most exposed and the least able to respond to climate change, and that a 'security perspective' needs to be integrated into climate change risk management (i.e. mitigation and adaptation as well as disaster risk reduction and conflict prevention). In August 2019, EU defence ministers met informally in Helsinki, where they discussed climate change among other issues. Mogherini reported that the ministers deliberated on how to reduce the carbon footprint of military forces and the need to adapt those forces to make them operational in regions that are adversely affected by climate change.¹³

However, climate security is not a distinct policy field within EU foreign and security policy. Rather, it should be understood as a cluster of different policy fields linked by the EU's declared ambition to better respond to and ultimately prevent climate-related security risks. For example, EU climate diplomacy in general refers to actions undertaken by the EU to shape international cooperation on mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Following on from the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris in 2015 (COP21), the EU advanced the scope for its climate security actions by emphasizing the direct and indirect

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¹² Council of the European Union, 'Council conclusions on climate diplomacy', 6153/19, 18 Feb. 2019.

¹³ European Union, 'Remarks by Mogherini' (note 6).

¹¹ European Union, *Global Strategy* (note 6).



international security impacts of climate change (e.g. migration, food security, access to resources).¹⁴

The EU aims to make the Paris Agreement ‘work in practice’ by assisting partner countries to fulfil their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the agreement.¹⁵

In the field of development cooperation, the EU’s global partnership for poverty eradication and sustainable development acknowledges the adverse effects of climate change, and

EU officials stress that the EU has a strategic interest in enhancing mitigation and adaptation actions

in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁶ In 2018, the EU signed a memorandum of understanding with the African Union (AU) on Peace, Security and Governance, which underlined the joint ambition to cooperate on climate-related security risks.¹⁷

Furthermore, climate change is increasingly acknowledged within the EU’s comprehensive approach

¹⁴ Council of the European Union, ‘Council conclusions on European climate diplomacy after COP21’, 6061/16, 15 Feb. 2016, p. 5.

¹⁵ Bardram, E., Presentation on the EU’s position at COP23, Brussels Dialogue on Climate Diplomacy, Brussels, 2017; European External Action Service (EEAS) official (Global Issues), Interview with author, Brussels, 22 Nov. 2017.

¹⁶ European Commission, ‘Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A global partnership for poverty eradication and sustainable development after 2015’, COM(2015) 44 final, 5 February 2015; European Commission official (DG Environment), Interview with the author, Brussels, 21 Nov. 2017.

¹⁷ EU, ‘Memorandum of understanding between AU and EU on peace, security and governance’, 23 May 2018, p. 5.

to security. For instance, the May 2019 Council of the EU conclusions on the Sahel underscore that ‘challenges relating to security’ in the region include terrorism, extremism, organized crime as well as ‘climate change adversely affecting natural resources and fuelling local conflicts’.¹⁸ Within the women, peace and security agenda, the EU recognizes that climate change often disproportionately affects women in conflict areas.¹⁹ EU officials suggest that the role of the CSDP could be enhanced in the future since the demand for military and civilian assets for disaster response and conflict prevention are likely to increase.²⁰

There are also indications that EU officials in EU delegations around the world are increasingly aware of the need to further integrate climate-related security risks into EU foreign and security policy. For example, an official from the EU delegation in Mali describes how the delegation staff are more aware than before of the links between climate change and security in the country and that their work now takes into account climate-related security risks to a larger extent, focusing for instance on reforestation and agricultural reforms.²¹ The EU’s early warning system for conflict prevention incorporates climate variables alongside other economic, social and political variables, and both EU intelligence officers and the

¹⁸ European Commission, ‘Council conclusions on the Sahel’, 9103/19, 13 May 2019.

¹⁹ European Commission, ‘Council conclusions on women, peace and security’, 15086/18, 10 Dec. 2018, p. 32.

²⁰ EEAS official (EU Military Staff), Interview with the author, Brussels, 21 Nov. 2017.

²¹ EU Delegation official (Mali), Telephone interview with the author, Bamako, 12 Nov. 2018.

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geographical desks at the EEAS are involved in risk assessments.²²

In the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC), which is responsible for CSFP/CSDP and recommends strategic approaches and policy options to the Council, there seems to be support for the idea that the EU needs to be better at factoring climate change into foreign and security policy, although there is not necessarily consensus more concretely on what measures to take.²³ For instance, the EU Special Representatives for the Sahel and the Horn of Africa are not specifically tasked to address climate-related security risks, despite working in conflict-affected regions in which the adverse effects of climate change are likely to contribute further to instability.²⁴

NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EU actions on climate-related security risks within its foreign and security policy must first and foremost be directed towards the aim of delivering security in the sense of strengthening local resilience in the face of changing climate factors. This entails naturally both long-term and short-term measures, and the need to adequately address climate-related security risks is urgent.

Previous research shows that the EU is gradually developing capacity within its foreign and security policy to respond to climate-related

security risks.²⁵ However, it also shows that while the EU already has several instruments and tools at its disposal, the EU and its member states need to raise their ambitions. Since the new European Commission enters into office in December 2019, there will be a new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy at the helm of the EEAS who should continue to develop the EU's climate security agenda. The proposal from the Commission that the EU budget for 2021–27 should mainstream climate across all EU programmes, with a target of at least 25 per cent of EU expenditure contributing to climate objectives, might seem ambitious at first sight but may in fact not be enough.²⁶

The EU's comprehensive approach to security and its diverse policy toolbox put it in a favourable position compared to many other international and regional organizations. However, effective coordination of EU external actions is often a challenge. EU actions might be more effective if EU member states could agree a set of priorities for climate security. For example, conflict prevention and humanitarian aid could aim to further strengthen resilience vis-à-vis climate-related security risks in vulnerable countries. Crisis management capacities within the CSDP could be geared towards helping societies in conflict-affected

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²² EEAS (MD Africa), Telephone interview with the author, Brussels, 28 Nov. 2018.

²³ PSC ambassador, Telephone interview with the author, Brussels, 15 Nov. 2018.

²⁴ EUSR Sahel, Personal conversation with the author, Madrid, 30 Nov. 2018; Official working with the EUSR Horn of Africa, Telephone interview with the author, Nairobi, 19 Oct. 2018.

²⁵ Bremberg et al. (note 4).

²⁶ European Commission, 'A modern budget for a Union that protects, empowers and defends: The Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027', COM(2018) 321 final, 2 May 2018.



regions to manage the adverse effects of climate change. Efforts to identify such priorities, and to devise strategies to allow them to guide external EU actions on climate-related security risks, need to be supported by policy-relevant knowledge from both research and practice.

This SIPRI Policy Brief suggests a set of priorities for advancing the EU's ambition to better respond to and ultimately prevent climate-related security risks.

1. EU climate diplomacy efforts need to integrate climate security.

EU external actions in climate diplomacy (including both the EEAS and the European Commission) should focus more on climate-related security risks. This involves enhancing international processes including the UNFCCC COP21;

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and the Sendai

Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Strengthening cooperation with the AU and other regional organizations in the area of climate security should be a priority. An important step towards 'putting Paris in practice' in terms of climate security would be to help partner countries develop efforts to manage climate-related security risks in their NDCs. The Political Dialogue on Human Rights under Article 8 Cotonou Partnership Agreement with the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries is highly relevant here, and it is important to note that several developing countries are already depicting climate change as

an 'urgent security threat' in their NDCs.²⁷

2. Enhance knowledge provision and the capacities for risk assessment.

To understand climate-related security risks it is of fundamental importance to properly understand contextual factors. By tasking EU delegations and EU Special Representatives to report regularly on the relationship between climate change, security and development in their respective countries and regions would strengthen the EU's capacity to respond to climate-related security risks. However, the capacity to analyse this information on climate-related security risks and translate it into policy and practice requires enhanced institutional capacity in the EU. The EEAS unit currently working on climate security does not seem to be adequately equipped. It should be expanded and tasked to manage and coordinate information-sharing, knowledge production and risk assessments within the EU. Climate security training of EU officials and diplomats should also be enhanced.

3. Broaden the mandate for CSDP missions.

Military means per se are not necessarily the most effective to combat climate change, but military and civilian assets can be used effectively to respond to climate-related security risks. In the EU, the PSC should assess the possibility of incorporating into the mandates of CSDP missions the need to address climate-related security risks. For example, the PSC could explore

²⁷ Jernäs, M. and Linnér, B.-O., 'A discursive cartography of nationally determined contributions to the Paris climate agreement', *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 55 (Mar. 2019), pp. 73–83.

EU climate diplomacy should focus more on climate-related security risks



the extent to which climate-related security risks could be included into the Civilian CSDP Compact, not least given that it explicitly seeks to address a broad range of security challenges and build resilience in partner countries. Moreover, by tasking the EEAS Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability and the Military Planning and Conduct Capability to specifically incorporate climate-related security risks the relationship between climate change, security and development would be addressed on the ground to a greater extent than today in those places where the EU conducts CSDP missions.

4. Strengthen EU–UN cooperation.

International cooperation is key to manage climate-related security risks and EU–UN cooperation in this area should be further enhanced. The EEAS should explore the possibilities for the EU to support and collaborate with the UN Climate Security Mechanism, which comprises staff from the UN Development Programme, the UN Environment Programme and the UN Department of Political Affairs and is mandated to increase knowledge and management of climate-related security risks. EU–UN cooperation could include co-financing context-specific risk assessment projects and strengthening knowledge exchange between practitioners and researchers to support policymaking. The EU already has a range of relevant instruments and capacities in place, but climate security lacks an ‘institutional home’ to coordinate this work within the EU. Lessons from the UN point to the importance of such institutional capacity, and if the unit in the EEAS were expanded, as

suggested in this policy brief, that would be an ideal place to create such a home for climate security within the EU.²⁸

²⁸ Born et al. (note 3).

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