

Climate Security Challenges for NATO

12th meeting of the Brussels Dialogue on Climate Diplomacy
Thursday, 17 September 2020

RECOMMENDED READING

What should be discussed during the Munich Security Conference 2021 when it comes to the climate-security nexus?

Presentation by Tom Middendorp, former Netherlands Chief of Defence and Clingendael's Senior Research Associate, during the Webinar 'Climate Interventions & Peace in the Age of Covid-19', 19 Jun 2020



“For the first time in their history, climate-security featured at the main stage at the Munich Security Conference. Climate Change was discussed as one of the most important threats of our time. And that turned this conference into a wake-up call for the security community, realising that they have a responsibility to act.

Now, what does that mean for the next Munich Security Conference? How can this conference move beyond recognizing the existential danger of climate change and beyond adding another call for action?

To take the climate-security discussions to a next level, we need to shift our efforts from calling for action to designing and initiating action.”

[>> Watch the presentation / Read the transcript](#)

Op-Ed: Toward a “Greener” NATO: The Atlantic alliance is perhaps not the first port of call when it comes to fighting climate change. But NATO could make a contribution nonetheless

Dominik Jankowski and Julian Wieczorkiewicz, Berlin Policy Journal, 15 June 2020



When Greta Thunberg made her speech at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit last September she concentrated on governments and corporations. Interestingly enough, she did not point her finger at the military. The armed forces are not an environmentally-friendly organization and frankly they are not designed to be one. They focus on the most effective means to dominate and defeat the enemy. But a culture of environmental oblivion cannot be sustained, especially when climate change impacts the military’s operational capabilities. NATO - whilst not the first responder to climate changes - can help to collectively address this challenge.

[>> Read the full article](#)

The BDCD is an informal network for the exchange of information and promotion of cooperation among European institutions, international organisations and Brussels based NGOs and think-tanks active in the nexus between climate change and international, national, human and environmental security.

Scoping NATO's Environmental Security Agenda

Michael Rühle*, Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome, March 2020 / NDC Policy Brief No. 6, 4 pp



Environmental change [1] is increasingly recognised as one of the major factors that will shape the global security environment. According to most experts, rising global temperatures will lead to rising sea levels and cause more extreme weather events, such as storms, flooding, droughts and wildfires. [2] The firestorms that engulfed parts of Australia in late 2019 and early 2020, burning an area the size of Belgium and Denmark combined, and severely decimating that continent's wildlife, were a stark reminder of the force of these changes.

While the causal relationship between environmental change and conflict is difficult to establish, there have been arguably several conflicts where environmental change has acted as a trigger, notably Darfur and Somalia. Even the beginning of the Arab Spring has been related to environmental

change: unrest erupted because of increasing food prices, which in turn were the result of several bad harvests attributed to climate change.[3] In general, there is a widely held assumption that environmental change could lead to food and water shortages, pandemic diseases, mass migration, and humanitarian disasters.

* Michael Rühle is Head, Hybrid Challenges and Energy Security Section, Emerging Security Challenges Division, NATO HQ

[1] Although the term "climate change" is more commonly used, it is politically charged, as it is closely connected with the question of whether it is a man-made phenomenon. Hence, this paper mostly uses the term "environmental change", as it is also more comprehensive.

[2] See International Military Council on Climate and Security, The World Climate and Security Report 2020, February 2020.

[3] See S. Johnstone and J. Mazo, "Global Warming and the Arab Spring", Survival, April/May 2011, pp.11-17.

N.B. All opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position or views of the institution they represent.

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NATO in a climate of change

Rickard Söder, WritePeace blog / Commentary, SIPRI, 14 February 2020

NATO in a climate of change



"View of the room" at the NATO Leaders' Meeting in London, United Kingdom, 3-4 December 2019. Photo: NATO.

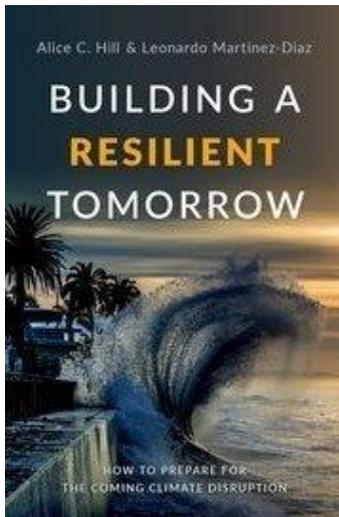
During last year's Munich Security Conference, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg spoke about facing an increasingly more uncertain and unpredictable security environment. Speaking from the perspective of NATO, he argued that although allies disagree on certain issues, such as climate change, it is crucial to stand together. Regardless of whether Stoltenberg considers climate change to be part of this changing environment or not, NATO is paying the issue increasing attention. To coincide with this year's Munich Security Conference, this blog explores NATO's current

position in the growing debate on climate change and related risks.

[>> Read the full article](#)

Building a Resilient Tomorrow: How to Prepare for the Coming Climate Disruption

Alice C. Hill and Leonardo Martinez-Diaz, Oxford University Press, Oxford / New York, 2020, 256 pp



Climate change impacts—more heat, drought, extreme rainfall, and stronger storms—have already harmed communities around the globe. Even if the world could cut its carbon emissions to zero tomorrow, further significant global climate change is now inevitable. Although we cannot tell with certainty how much average global temperatures will rise, we do know that the warming we have experienced to date has caused significant losses, and that the failure to prepare for the consequences of further warming may prove to be staggering.

Building a Resilient Tomorrow does not dwell on overhyped descriptions of apocalyptic climate scenarios, nor does it travel down well-trodden paths surrounding the politics of reducing carbon emissions. Instead, it starts with two central facts: climate impacts will continue to occur, and we can make changes now to mitigate their effects. While squarely confronting the scale of the risks we face, this pragmatic guide focuses on solutions—some gradual and some more revolutionary—currently being

deployed around the globe. Each chapter presents a thematic lesson for decision-makers and engaged citizens to consider, outlining replicable successes and identifying provocative recommendations to strengthen climate resilience. Between animated discussions of ideas as wide-ranging as managed retreat from coastal hot-zones to biological approaches for resurgent climate-related disease threats, Alice Hill and Leonardo Martinez-Diaz draw on their personal experiences as senior officials in the Obama Administration to tell behind-the-scenes stories of what it really takes to advance progress on these issues. The narrative is dotted with tales of on-the-ground citizenry, from small-town mayors and bankers to generals and engineers, who are chipping away at financial disincentives and bureaucratic hurdles to prepare for life on a warmer planet. For readers exhausted by today's paralyzing debates on yearly "fluke" storms or the existence of climate change, Building a Resilient Tomorrow offers better ways to manage the risks in a warming planet, even as we work to limit global temperature rise.

"As we race to awaken conscience and countries to meet an existential challenge, building resilience is an urgent and underappreciated part of the fight against global climate change. This timely and important book, by deeply knowledgeable veterans of that fight, offers practical ideas and lessons on how to do it and each story underscores a reality with which the world must reckon now." - Former Secretary of State John Kerry"

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Planetary Security: The Security Implications of Climate Change

Alexander Verbeek, NATO Review, Brussels, 10 December 2019



An article in NATO Review - published ahead of the UN climate conference in December 2019 - explains the urgent need both for effective climate change action and for steps to be taken to prepare for life in a drastically different world, where global warming and related environmental degradation will impact on security.

Alexander Verbeek writes that "The impact of climate change that we already see now is only the beginning of more significant changes to come. A growing, but still relatively small part of the public, is beginning to realise this and is calling on governments to act much more decisively."

In his view, the author says that "two key developments will influence our capacity to anticipate potential instability or conflict. On the one hand, climate

change and environmental degradation will make it even more complicated to predict conflicts. On the other hand, the rapid increase of big data and artificial intelligence (AI) could increase our capacity to forecast future security threats. These new tools could help us to prepare for a different world with new challenges”.

He concludes that “Technically and economically, the world should be able to deal with and adapt to this challenge. And while the public is increasingly raising its voice to demand urgent action, the ball remains very much in the court of governance. Accepting the reality of climate change, cooperating between all relevant stakeholders, and showing visionary leadership are some essential steps for the way forward. We have successfully dealt with huge threats in the past. Today, we simply cannot afford to ignore the biggest challenge of all.”

[>> Read the full article](#)

EU Foreign and Security Policy on Climate-Related Security Risks
Niklas Bremberg, SIPRI, November, 2019



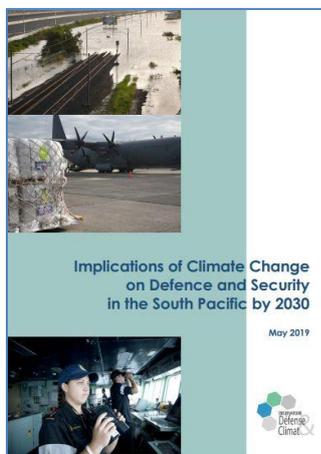
Policymakers and researchers have increasingly acknowledged the adverse effects of climate change on human security, and an increasing amount of international organizations are addressing climate-related security risks. The European Union (EU) is one of the most vocal proponents in this regard.

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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Implications of Climate Change on Defence and Security in the South Pacific by 2030

François Gemenne, Bastien Alex and Alice Baillat, Observatory on Defence and Climate, Paris, May 2019



This report has been prepared by the scientific team of the Observatory on Defence and Climate¹, led by the French Institute of International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS) and financed by the Directorate General for International Relations and Strategy (DGRIS) of the French Ministry of Armed Forces. It has benefited from substantial contributions of representatives of the different SPDMM members.

The South Pacific region covers the whole zone of the Pacific Ocean that is located south of the Equator, and comprises hundreds of islands. The South Pacific region will continue to be one of the world’s areas that will be most affected by the impacts of climate change. As affirmed by leaders at the 2018 Pacific Islands Forum, in the Boe Declaration, “climate change presents the single greatest threat to the livelihood, security and wellbeing of Pacific people” (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2018). Common climate challenges but also important disparities and strong historical and cultural links between countries of the region have fostered regional cooperation to build resilience to disasters and climate change for decades.

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Reinforcing Environmental Dimensions of European Foreign and Security Policy

Marianne Kettunen (IEEP), Dominique Noome (Global Military Advisory Council on Climate Change – GMACCC) and Johanna Nyman (IEEP), Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union, IEEP, Brussels Dialogue on Climate Democracy, Global Military Advisory Council on Climate Change, Brussels, January 2019



This paper outlines the environmental dimension of the European security policy and security-related foreign policy and discusses how the integration of environmental concerns into this policy framework could – and should – be improved to support the delivery of the 2030 Sustainability Agenda, both in the EU and globally.

In the chapter on EU foreign and security policy the authors state that “In terms of international cooperation, working closer with key partners, particularly the UN and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is considered important by the EU with a view to developing a comprehensive security policy”. The paper also includes several specific references to NATO environmental protection policies and practices.

In the chapter on the role of military forces in environmental security reference is made to the notion of 3S, Sustainability – Stability – Security [1] which “offers a new insight on the environment in which the military operates. Being able to assess climate fragility and drivers of conflict in an integrated way during a mission is considered crucial to prevent future conflict and take part in what has been named Comprehensive Climate Adaptation [2]. Although there is no common agreement on the definition of the ‘Comprehensive Approach’, it is generally agreed to aim to address the many dimensions of conflict in an integrated way. This includes, but is not restricted to, humanitarian, financial, political (and/or diplomatic), rule of law, military (defence, and/or security), human rights and development dimensions [3]. Climate change and environment are crosscutting themes that impact most if not all of these dimensions. They can be incorporated into the approach by using climate mitigation, adaptation and decision-making strategies that have been tried and tested in other sectors.

[1] Antoine Meunier, [Sustainability, Stability, Security: Why it is vital for global security and stability to tackle climate change and invest in sustainability](#), WWF France, Le Pré Saint-Gervais, 2017

[2] Dr. M.F.J. Houben, [Klimaatveiligheid in Militaire Spectator, 22 February 2017](#); The idea builds on the Comprehensive Approach in use by NATO and the EU, the EU and UN Integrated Approach, the 3D Approach (Defence, Diplomacy and Development), and what is alternatively referred to as the ‘whole-of-government approach’.

[3] [EU enhances its comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crises](#), European Commission Press release, Brussels, 11 December 2013

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Europe’s Responsibility to Prepare: Managing Climate Security Risks in a changing World

Shiloh Fetzek and Louise van Schaik, The Center for Climate and Security / Clingendael / Planetary Security Initiative, Washington, D.C. / The Hague, June 2018



The European Union (EU) has recognised the high-probability, high-impact threat climate change poses to international security, but is still formulating a response commensurate to the threat. This report outlines how the EU can meet a Responsibility to Prepare for unprecedented yet foreseeable threats to international peace and security. This involves routinising, institutionalising, elevating and integrating climate security considerations into policymaking processes and the policies and financial instruments of EU institutions, while honing rapid response capabilities and developing contingencies for unintended consequences. [>> Publication Page](#)

European Regional Organizations and Climate-Related Security Risks: EU, OSCE and NATO

Niklas Bremberg, SIPRI, February, 2018



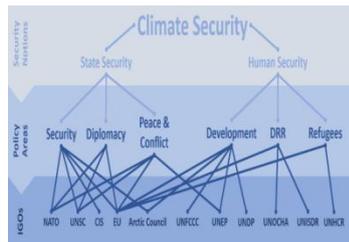
Research suggests that states and societies around the world are increasingly confronted by climate-related security risks. These risks are unavoidably transnational in character, and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are instrumental in developing policy solutions and enhancing international cooperation. However, previous research highlights that knowledge about the conditions under which IGOs address climate security risks, and when they do so effectively, is incomplete. There is a need for further in-depth analysis of relevant IGOs in the field of climate security.

This SIPRI Insights presents a concise analysis of how three regional organizations in Europe with a security mandate have responded to climate-related security risks. The main findings stress that all three IGOs acknowledge climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ (i.e. a factor that might exacerbate existing drivers of instability and conflict) and are addressing climate security to varying degrees within their mandates. The EU and the OSCE are actively seeking to incorporate climate security in efforts to promote peace and security, whereas NATO’s role currently remains more limited to disaster response.

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Intergovernmental Organizations and Climate Security: Presentation at the international conference “Enhancing Climate Diplomacy in a Changing Political Environment” 20 November 2017, ACP, Brussels

Niklas Bremberg, Ph.D. Research Fellow Swedish Institute of International Affairs



The presentation refers to two main categories of IGO response to climate security, problems and pitfalls and implications for policy-making.

[>> Download the presentation](#)

Intergovernmental Organizations and Climate Security: Advancing the Research Agenda

LISA M. DELLMUTH, MARIA-THERESE GUSTAFSSON, NIKLAS BREMBERG, MALIN MOBJÖRK, Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate change, 13 October 2017



Climate-related security challenges are transnational in character, leading states to increasingly rely on intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)—such as the European Union and the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization—for policy solutions. While climate security issues do not typically fit comfortably within the mandates of existing IGOs, recent decades have seen increasing efforts by IGOs to link climate change and security.

This article reviews existing studies on IGOs' responses to climate security challenges. It draws together research from several bodies of literature spanning political science, international relations, and environmental social science, identifying an emerging field of research revolving around IGOs and climate security.

We observe significant advancement in this young field, with scholars extending and enriching our understanding of how and why IGOs address climate security challenges. Yet we still know little about the conditions under which IGOs respond to climate security challenges and when they do so effectively. This article discusses the main gaps in current work and makes some suggestions about how these gaps may be usefully addressed in future research. A better understanding of the conditions under which IGOs respond (effectively) to climate security challenges would contribute to broader debates on climate security, institutional change, and effectiveness in international relations and environmental social science, and may facilitate crafting effective global solutions to society's most intractable climate security challenges.

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Facing an Unpredictable Threat: Is NATO Ideally Placed to Manage Climate Change as a Non-Traditional Threat Multiplier?

Amar Causevic, *Connections QJ*, 16, no.2, 2017: 59-80



This paper examines NATO's perception of climate change as a non-traditional threat multiplier and analyzes how different schools of international relations theory define climate change and address this security concern. In addition, the article provides insights into how climate change-induced threats affect the socio-economic and political security of nation states and what that means for NATO adding that the Alliance will have to do more to integrate these concerns because current efforts are not sufficient to meet future security challenges stimulated by increase in the average global temperature.

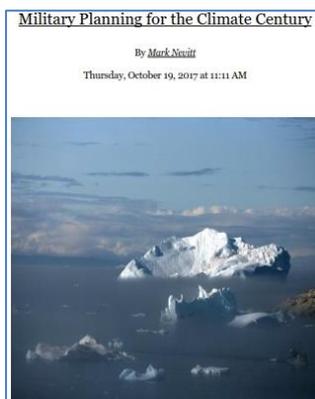
The paper concludes that NATO has recognised the importance of climate change as a security threat, but that NATO's organizational mechanisms and divisions that are responsible for coping with climate change impacts are still evolving. This process faces new challenges, especially after the election of

the U.S. President Donald Trump, who is highly skeptical regarding the issue of climate change. One must note, however, that in March 2017 U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis stated that climate change is already impacting operations of the U.S. armed forces and that combatant commands should incorporate these risks into their planning.

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Military Planning for the Climate Century

Mark Nevitt, *Just Security*, 19 October 2017



"Climate change has been described as the world's greatest environmental threat. But it is also increasingly understood as a [national security threat](#), that serves as both a "[threat multiplier](#)," and "[catalyst for conflict](#)." Plus, its national security effects are multidimensional, without geographic or spatial limitations. ... In light of climate change's sheer complexity, how should the world's militaries begin to prepare for its national security threats?" "... climate change will impact the security environment and the militaries of the world in three fundamental ways ... Climate adaptation, Climate mitigation and Climate response ..."

[>> Read the full article](#)

NATO and Climate Change: The Need for a More Coherent Approach

Amar Causevic for The EastWest Institute, Stratfor Worldview, 13 October 2017



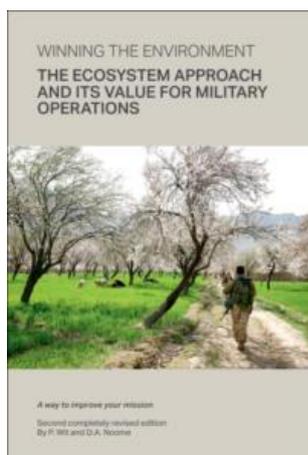
The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has not been immune to the threats posed by climate change. This issue is extremely important for the Alliance because it is directly linked to NATO's operational capacity and response to security challenges emanating from the environment (e.g., preparing for and responding to natural disasters, adapting military assets to a hostile physical environment, addressing negative impacts of climate change such as climate migrants, etc.). Responsibly, the Alliance has already developed policies, frameworks and designated units re-sponsible for addressing climate change as a non-traditional security threat. More precisely, NATO is currently trying to incorporate geostrategic implications of climate-related threats into its deliberate planning, contingency planning and crisis action planning processes. Nevertheless, the pressing question remains: To what extent is NATO capable of managing climate change as a

non-traditional threat multi-plier?

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Winning the Environment: The Ecosystem Approach and its Value for Military Operations - A way to improve your mission

P. Wit and D.A. Noome, IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management, Gland, Switzerland, Revised Second Edition, August 2016



In this second completely revised edition (August 2016), GMACCC members Piet Wit and Dominique Noome summarise the twelve principles of the Ecosystem Approach into four steps of a Rapid Ecological Assessment.

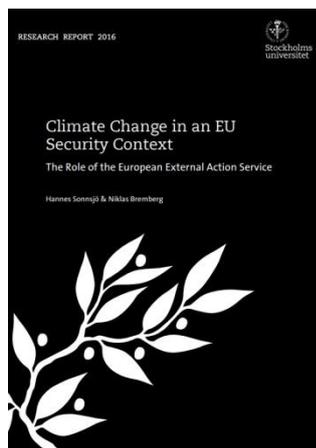
Military (and civilian) personnel using this book will be guided to a more complete situational understanding, allowing them to create relevant partnerships and make decisions for long-term conflict resolution.

This publication guides you through the understanding .. of how military operations may affect the people that depend on the products and services of nature, and what can be done to consolidate positive impacts and to avoid or reduce negative ones.

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Climate Change in an EU Security Context: The Role of the European External Action Service

Hannes Sonnsjö & Niklas Bremberg, Stockholm University, June 2016



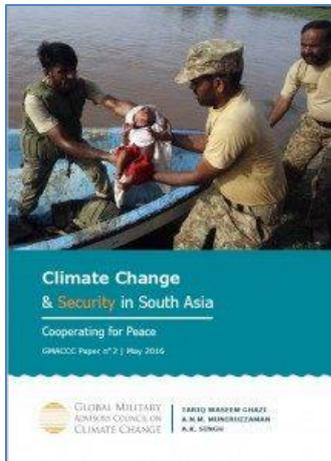
The security implications of climate change have attracted increasing attention in policy and research during the past decade. Since climate change has far-reaching implications for human livelihoods and activities, the potential security implications are broad and complex.

The main goal of the project was to assist and inform policy making on security risks posed by climate change, with the focus on two specific areas: How policy organisations such as development and defence actors frame and integrate climate security risks in their work; and how and under what circumstances climate change increases the risk of violent conflict.

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Climate Change and Security in South Asia: Cooperating for Peace

Lt. General Tariq Waseem Ghazi (Ret.), Pakistan, Maj. General A.N.M. Muniruzzaman (Ret.), Bangladesh and Air Marshall A.K. Singh (Ret.), India, GMACCC, May 2016



This report, published in May 2016, warns that a recent drought in India which has affected over 330 million people – causing displacement and threatening farms –is just the first hint of how climate change could destabilise the South Asian region unless steps are taken to address the threat posed by a warming, resource-scarce world.

The report by GMACCC authors Lt. General Tariq Waseem Ghazi (Ret.) of Pakistan, Maj. General A.N.M. Muniruzzaman (Ret.) of Bangladesh and Air Marshall A.K. Singh (Ret.) of India recommends that the region’s leaders strengthen cooperation to reduce the potential for widespread human suffering and further instability.

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