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BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE

COOPERATION, COLLABORATION AND FORESIGHT

REPORT



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This event is part of Friends of Europe's Peace, Security and Defence Programme supported by the United States European Command (EUCOM). Our work is firmly anchored in our expertise in a range of fields, including energy and climate change, geopolitics, international development, migration and health. We seek a holistic approach to European, transatlantic and global security policies. Security considerations are, in turn, mainstreamed into these areas of expertise, enriching the debate by encouraging experts to think outside their comfort zones.



INTRODUCTION

States and communities around the world are increasingly being confronted with a variety of climate change and security-related challenges. Building resilience in the emerging and evident nexus between climate and security was a key discussion point throughout the Friends of Europe Policy Insight “Building climate resilience: cooperation, collaboration and foresight” on 24 April. Environmental pressures are a special challenge in that their consequences can be disastrous for communities and states, leading to disruptions in food, water and energy supplies and damages to critical infrastructure. These in turn pose risks to the social and democratic order more broadly, which can amplify instability and insecurity in cities and countries.

While climate action has been a priority for years, the international community has struggled to create a concrete, large-scale blueprint for preparing for and mitigating such threats and challenges. Absorbing and adapting to these threats, while in parallel mitigating them, will require better and improved governance and a system-wide shift in our attention to provide more funds, resources and expertise to strengthen disaster risk management, risk reduction and preparedness.

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Oli Brown

Senior Programme Coordinator
for Disasters and Conflicts at the UN
Environment Programme (UNEP)

“How can we make use of the available science to be smarter in how we respond?”

Tessa Kelly

Climate Change Coordinator at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

CLIMATE CHANGE AS THE NEW SECURITY THREAT

Climate change has become increasingly embedded within the international security discourse. The adverse effects of climate change on natural, societal and governance systems certainly amount to a threat that is transnational in scope. “Climate change is fundamentally redrawing the maps of the world and that is going to have a massive impact on society, on politics, on people and on communities. It is redrawing where rain falls, where food can be grown, where people can live and where maritime borders go,” said [Oli Brown](#), Senior Programme Coordinator for Disasters and Conflicts at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

The nexus between climate and security is increasingly evident said moderator [Dharmendra Kanani](#), Director of Strategy at Friends of Europe: “Climate change is the new security threat – or at least it feels like that.” Climate change intersects with poor environment management and broader institutional or socioeconomic fragility such as racial discrimination, and therefore multiplies existing threats to create significant political issues. However, this makes the security impact of climate change often hard to grasp; primarily because it is not a security threat in the sense of having a clear enemy, which means that there is no conflictual relationship that you can deal with.

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH EARLY-WARNING AND FORESIGHT CAPABILITIES

Climate change is different from many other problems because it is evolving fast. However, a lack of foresight and prevention by policymakers exacerbates the efficient implementation of solutions. Typically, once a problem is located, a solution is designed and then implemented. However, that takes too long for problems related to climate change, and the solutions rapidly become out of date. “Now we need to think about how the world is going to be,” said [Brown](#). “The world is going to be a different place to how it is now, not only because of climate change, but because of a whole range of other things. 60% of the buildings that are going to exist in 2050 haven’t yet been built.”

A changing climate is intensifying work for humanitarian organisations around the world. In the face of mounting environmental pressures, science-based information about emerging climate threats can be used to reduce risk and improve resource allocation. “We have to become more anticipatory, more forward-thinking and smarter in our approach,” said [Tessa Kelly](#), Climate Change Coordinator at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). One tool that the organisation is working on is forecast-based financing, which uses climate science forecasts and implements early action ahead of disasters and extreme weather events. This favours a preventative approach which would be more efficient than requesting financing after the impact of a disaster. The organisation

is also working with communities to better understand the risks they face. Taking a community view would improve the capacity and capability of agencies to build resilience.

Supported and encouraged by the German government, the IFRC is currently working on financial mechanisms to enable this. The aim is to use forecasts that will enable triggers to be identified so that funding can be released, and food, water and hygiene kits can be distributed ahead of the impact. In 2017, for example, Cyclone Mora caused widespread devastation and severe flooding in Bangladesh and other countries in the region. The organisation was able to distribute cash ahead of the cyclone because they knew that it was coming. These kinds of approaches of using early warnings to implement early actions will become more and more important in a changing climate. “How can we make use of the available science to be smarter in how we respond?” asked Kelly.

A LOCAL LEVEL RESPONSE BASED ON MULTI-AGENCY PARTICIPATION AND INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS

Cities, more so than national governments, are at the forefront of the consequences of climate change and security threats. If resilience at a local level is to work, we need to break silos in budgeting and mandates. Multi-agency working and practice should be the new order of the day focused on ensuring that communities can bounce back from crises, whether related to climate or security. A “holistic approach and a systemic vision of local development” is needed said [Sébastien Maire](#), Chief Resilience Officer of Paris. “If we look at climate change without taking air quality into account, we will make the same mistakes as before.” According to Maire, the two main challenges in cities now are climate change and social inequality. “The resilience approach is proposing to define solutions that address both at the same time.”

Yet in France, barriers to an efficient holistic approach to local resilience exist in the city administration, which is “more political than administrative” explained Maire. “In all the 25 resilience challenges we identified in Paris, we discovered that the key is governance. It is not technical solutions. It’s how we are going to onboard everyone to reach the solution we’ve been working on.” Within his position, Maire significantly improved territorial governance by helping seven city departments to work together, including those responsible for water, energy, greening and social affairs.

His position is one encouraged by the 100 Resilient Cities, a network that helps cities build resilience to economic, social and environmental challenges. City governance involves an array of distinct actors ranging from government agencies to local businesses, who often don’t communicate well with one another. Moreover, individual cities regularly solve problems already addressed in other cities, which could help them learn from each other.

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Head of Energy Security at the NATO's Emerging Security Challenges Division

ROLE OF THE MILITARY

The impact of climate change and security related issues amplify resource competition and increase the risk of instability and violent conflict. Military forces are increasingly preparing for and involved in the consequences. NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept highlighted that “environmental and resource constraints, including health risks, climate change, water scarcity and increasing energy needs will further shape the future security environment in areas of concern to NATO”. These constraints also have the potential to significantly affect NATO's planning and operations.

“Climate change is a threat multiplier,” said [Michael Ruehle](#), Head of Energy Security at the NATO's Emerging Security Challenges Division. “It makes other problems worse. It transforms the environment in which the military has to operate.” One reason the military is directly concerned with climate change is that it is often the first actor deployed in situations where people are in need. “The military is often the first responder in humanitarian relief situations, whether these are climate change-induced or for other reasons,” Ruehle said. “They are there, and the military has to deal with it.” However, the role of the military will be different from those of cities and NGOs. “The military is not in the prevention business,” he said. “It is basically in the adaptation business.”

NATO is doing more analysis on the future security environment, and climate change will play a greater role in this. “We are in the business of looking at energy efficiency standards,” said Ruehle. “The military can at least look at technologies that, while maintaining the priority of being militarily effective, are less of a burden on the environment. Military activities are a burden on the environment and there are ways to minimise that ecological footprint.”

Climate change, while a global phenomenon, affects different countries at different times and with different intensities. “This means that a nation that doesn't see climate change as an immediate problem will probably focus less on it and its army will focus less on it. There is a general reluctance by countries to engage in discussions that inevitably lead them back to their own national climate policies. You don't want to discuss the linkage between coal and the climate goals, for example. There is a natural reluctance in many institutions – not just NATO – to go too far in a direction that reflects badly on individual countries.”

CONCLUSION – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

BUILD RESILIENCE THROUGH EARLY-WARNING AND FORESIGHT CAPABILITIES

To meet the needs of a changing environmental security landscape, greater foresight capabilities are needed to predict and prepare for the diverse impacts that climate change will have on security. Although governments cannot prevent natural hazards such as hurricanes or earthquakes from happening, they can help bridge humanitarian relief and long-term development efforts to protect vulnerable populations. This can include building better and improved water and sanitation systems or using science-based information about emerging climate threats can be used to reduce risk and improve resource allocation at the time of impact.

RECOGNISE CLIMATE CHANGE AS A NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREAT IN POLICY

Understanding and recognising climate change as a security threat means understanding security in the 21st century. By recognising climate change as a non-traditional threat or at least as a threat multiplier, enables governments and the NATO Alliance to build emergency responses to extreme weather events, and to adapt military planning, training and budgeting accordingly. Although institutions such as NATO have already engaged in developing policy and conducting operations responding to the impact of climate change, a more concrete approach is needed. This can include a faster process of sharing climate change-related information between member states and NATO or build from national capacities for dealing with climate risks to the NATO level. NATO members should develop a common strategy on how to integrate the mitigation of climate risks into their national defense strategies.

IMPROVE URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE FOCUSED ON COLLECTIVE TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE

Urban infrastructure and urban networks need to be adapted to respond to the risks threatening them, including heat waves, major floods, intense rainfall events and frequent pollution peaks. At the forefront of climate change risks, cities must manage and evaluate the infrastructure in place in an integrated way and ensure their resilience. Mobilising and training of a wide range of stakeholders, and producing additional spatial data on the territory, its vulnerabilities and the risks that threaten it, are some of the drivers that will enable a better allocation of resources and ensure the implementation of shared and sustainable solutions.

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MOBILISE THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO DEVELOP RISK MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

More companies should develop climate resilience solutions that would help protect customers from a range of climate risks. These include resilient building materials and services; new weather and climate analytics; climate-resistant seeds, crops, and methods, financial and insurance products that incentivise resilience building; water-efficient technologies, flood control and defence mechanisms; efficient air conditioning services; back-up power generation system; insulation against heat, and many other related products and services. Businesses should seek partnerships with government and civil society to expand their participation in urban resilience building.



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