



INTEGRATED POLICY RESPONSES FOR ADDRESSING CLIMATE-RELATED SECURITY RISKS

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change is widely recognized as one of the major forces shaping the future. It is also an example of how human actions fundamentally affect the basic physical processes of the world, with far-reaching and, in the worst case, potentially disastrous consequences for human societies. Given the profound impact that climate change has already had and will continue to have across the globe, it is increasingly being viewed as a source of security risks. Because the effects of climate change are diverse and wide ranging, so too are the security risks related to them. The risks are multifaceted in nature and cover many different areas—such as water and food security, coastal degradation and migration. As such, a range security approaches—encompassing human, community, state and international aspects of security—must be used to address them. Effective policy responses in different policy areas—such as crisis management, defence, development and foreign affairs—will be essential to address these risks in order to avoid spillover effects from measures taken in one area negatively affecting another area.

This Policy Brief summarizes the 2016 report *Climate-Related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach*, which draws together the key findings of a project funded by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.¹ The project had two interrelated missions: (a) to provide an overview of climate-related security risks and to identify important features that should be taken into account when analysing climate-related security risks; and (b) to examine how policy organizations integrate climate-related security risks into their policies and practical work, which can provide practical insights into how policy responses can be strengthened to address those risks. This knowledge is a prerequisite for policymakers seeking to accurately assess the value of current strategies and thus identify how policies, strategic guidance, internal organization and procedures can be improved in order to better respond to climate-related security risks.

¹ Mobjörk, M. et al., *Climate-Related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach* (SIPRI and Stockholm University: Stockholm, 2016). The project ran from Sep. 2015 to Sep. 2016. The team comprised Dr Malin Mobjörk, Dr Maria-Therese Gustafsson, Hannes Sonnsjö, Sebastian van Baalen, Dr Lisa Maria Dellmuth and Dr Niklas Bremberg.

SUMMARY

● Climate change has far-reaching implications for human livelihoods and activities, including potential security implications. These security risks are multifaceted in nature and involve human, community, state and international security. Effective policy responses in different policy communities will be required to address these risks. As a way of strengthening their responses, many policy organizations are attempting to develop integrated policy approaches.

This Policy Brief summarizes the report *Climate-Related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach*, which details three key ways to strengthen integrated policy responses: (a) identify common concepts that can facilitate collaboration and mutual understanding across policy communities; (b) develop organizational structures to reinforce coordination; and (c) cultivate a deeper understanding of climate-related security risks. A truly integrated approach cannot be achieved without strategic guidance based on long-term thinking. Sustained and coherent leadership is therefore a vital overarching component of any such approach.



INVESTIGATING CLIMATE-RELATED SECURITY RISKS

In reviewing the literature on climate-related security risks, the project analysed a number of reports that address the nexus between climate change and security. It identified six thematic areas as joint climate–security challenges: (a) water security; (b) food security; (c) sea-level rise and coastal degradation; (d) extreme weather events and weather-related disasters; (e) climate-related migration; and (f) violent conflict.² Additionally, in order to assess when and under what circumstances climate-related security risks evolve, the project conducted a study on the pathways from climate-related change to violent conflict in East Africa. This study examines quantitative and qualitative research on this topic.³

Key conclusions

The analysis of studies on climate-related security risks leads to four major conclusions. First, the way in which climate-related change increases security risks, including violent conflict, is dependent on the ability of societies to respond to stress. *Governance structures and adaptive capacity* are therefore critical mediating factors that affect the security implications of climate change. This context-dependency explains why the same climate-related impact can have different outcomes in different settings. In addition, it highlights the importance of acknowledging that

societies are dynamic, meaning that governance structures and adaptive capacity change over time. This dynamic needs to be captured in the analysis, and static conceptions of society or climate should be avoided.

Second, the security risks posed by climate change interact with one another—water scarcity affects food security, and food insecurity could increase social unrest and violence. Greater attention must be paid to how these interactions affect a given thematic issue or geographical area. To respond effectively to climate-related security risks, *integrated approaches are required* in both knowledge acquisition and policymaking.

Third, climate-related security risks are *transmitted over time and space*. Some risks are delayed, while others manifest themselves as rapid-onset disasters. Moreover, consequences in one locality can have major implications in other (possibly distant) locations. Researchers and policymakers must take this into consideration to ensure that trans-boundary and long-term implications are included in their analytical approaches and measures.

Fourth, although climate change is a global phenomenon, *the impacts are characterized by far-reaching inequalities*. Vulnerable people and societies are often the most severely affected by the impacts of climate change. This raises fundamental moral issues about equity, justice, vulnerability and power relations. Greater efforts need to be made in security-oriented analysis to address how different groups and communities are affected by climate change and how these risks can be reduced.

² See Mobjörk et al. (note 1), pp. 3–23.

³ For details see van Baalen, S. and Mobjörk, M., *A Coming Anarchy? Pathways from Climate Change to Violent Conflict in East Africa* (Stockholm University and SIPRI: Stockholm, 2016).



EXAMINING INTEGRATED POLICY RESPONSES

The project's second mission was to examine how different policy organizations have responded to climate-related security risks. The report provides an overview of different global and regional policy organizations' responses and identifies that these organizations are increasingly integrating climate-related security risks into their work. A key aspect of the analysis was to determine how these organizations can break down and work across silos in their organizational structures. In order to investigate this, the authors of the report conducted two case studies. One case study focused on the European Union's (EU) European External Action Service's (EEAS) efforts to integrate climate-related security risks into its work, while the other focused on the efforts of national development organizations in three European states (Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom).⁴ None of these organizations has climate change as part of its core mandate so each faces a challenge to integrate climate change into its different issue areas. The case studies show that while the organizations' policies are often ambitious, they tend to be formulated at a relatively abstract level and are generally

not implemented in a systematic fashion.

Key conclusions

Based on these case studies of different policy organizations, the report outlines four suggestions on how to improve strategies for integrating climate-related security risks. First, *mainstreaming* climate change might help to raise awareness of its possible security implications, but this also needs to be complemented with integration strategies. To ensure that climate risks are taken into account in analysis and programming, it is important that staff members working in policy organizations have the necessary resources and capabilities, as well as effective follow-up procedures.

Second, there is a need to *develop analytical tools* that can improve the organizations' work in this area. This involves, for example, the use of methods to analyse climate risks and the development of climate-sensitive tools for conflict prevention.

Third, rather than adding a security dimension to existing efforts on climate action, *a 'climatization' of other policy areas is needed*, which means addressing how climate-related change affects existing policies and could create new situations of insecurity.

Fourth, it is essential to *improve coordination across policy areas*, preferably around specific projects based on a common strategy. In order for such projects to be effective, the objectives must be clear, the relevant actors must be provided with incentives to fully engage, and sufficient resources must be allocated to facilitate the cross-fertilization of expertise.

⁴ Sonnsjö, H. and Bremberg, N., *Climate Change in an EU Security Context: The Case of the European External Action Service* (Stockholm University and Swedish Institute of Foreign Affairs: Stockholm, 2016); and Gustafsson, M., *How do Development Organisations Integrate Climate and Conflict Risks? Experiences and Lessons Learnt from UK, Germany and the Netherlands*, (Stockholm University: Stockholm, 2016). The report *Climate-Related Security Risks* focuses on Germany and the UK. See Mobjörk (note 1).

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IMPROVING POLICY RESPONSES

In recent years it has become increasingly clear that earth's changing climate poses considerable security risks. While policy organizations have started to address these challenges, there is a need to develop these efforts further and to work in a more integrated and context-sensitive manner. The report *Climate-Related Security Risks* identifies and details three overarching, practical options for policymakers and practitioners:

(a) Currently, different policy communities use different concepts to frame the security risks posed by climate change. *Identifying common concepts* can facilitate collaboration and mutual understanding, and reinforce coordinated responses across policy communities.

(b) To ensure effective implementation, it is important to *develop organizational structures* to strengthen coordination. The report identifies two complementary strategies for overcoming silos: the creation of interdepartmental working groups, and the greater use of support from external expert units. Incentives and resources are also critical to enable policymakers and administrators to work across silos existing both within and across governmental bodies and public authorities. Sustained and coherent

leadership will be essential to achieve this.

(c) Closer cooperation between policymakers, practitioners and researchers will be needed in order to *provide systematic and detailed knowledge* on climate-related security risks. Policymaking, practical work and research need to be conducted in parallel, and they should inform each other. Increased collaboration and movement between these different domains can strengthen both policy and research. The report's case studies also show that external expert units can undertake the function of translating research into policy.

In sum, climate change poses multiple security risks for societies around the globe. These risks are transmitted over time and space and are manifested differently depending on the context. Since these security risks span different research and policy areas, policy organizations responding to these risks face the additional challenges of overcoming disciplinary and organizational barriers to collaboration. To overcome these challenges, *strategic guidance based on long-term thinking* is required. Clear leadership is therefore vital in order to develop the required preventive measures that will contribute to human security, sustainable development and peace.

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For details on this research project, visit www.sipri.org/research/peace-and-development/climate-change-and-risk/climate-change-and-security. For information on research team members and all reports conducted in this project, visit www.statsvet.su.se/english/climatechangeandsecurity.