

Briefing Note No. 1

“Climate Change and EU Security Policy: An Unmet Challenge”
Paper by Richard Youngs, May 2014
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Summary

This 19-page report published by Carnegie Europe assesses the role that climate change plays in EU security policy. Summarizing developments at the level of the Union and its member states, it argues that agenda-setting regarding ‘climate security’ is well advanced, but the translation of concept papers into tangible policy outputs is trailing behind. The report analyses the state of European policy on four challenges – climate-induced fragility, changing migration patterns, military engagement, and the geo-economics of climate change – and concludes that policy instruments need to be further developed to match the scale of the likely challenges ahead. Youngs argues that the EU needs to pursue deeper international cooperation to tackle the fundamental challenges ahead, and makes six broad recommendations (see below).

In detail

The report starts off with a quick overview of key themes and recommendations for EU policymakers. The introduction subsequently contrasts the ‘plethora of policy documents’ with the lack of strategy and coherent policy as well as the risk that short-term crises may crowd out climate security challenges. What follows is a detailed overview on the mainstreaming of climate security issues into European foreign policy documents. It demonstrates that the need to address climate security has been recognized at both the EU and member state level.

A subsequent section details how the implementation of EU climate security policy has focused on producing statements, commissioning studies and offering training for policy officials – in short on raising awareness rather than tangible policy outputs. It notes the lack of leadership on, and effective integration of climate security into foreign policy making. Youngs specifically criticizes that energy security is still conceived of in terms of securing fossil fuel supplies, and that the European Commission focuses on replicating internal market rules (light bulbs etc.) abroad rather than developing a true climate security policy.

Specific challenges

After this general assessment, the report looks at four challenges – climate-induced fragility, changing migration patterns, military engagement, and the geo-economics of climate change. With respect to **fragility**, it argues that climate change has insufficiently informed conflict prevention policies (with the 2011 Gothenburg program update failing to even mention climate factors). The report mentions EU efforts in the EU neighbourhood and the Sahel as positive examples but concludes that overall, policy adaptation is embryonic. Youngs criticizes the EU’s focus on disaster response rather than disaster preparedness and details its mixed record in mainstreaming climate adaptation into development and security policies and vice-versa. The section on **migration** criticizes the lack of a forward-looking strategy to address climate-induced migration. Whereas the EU emphasizes that climate change will likely trigger intraregional migration rather than mass migration to Europe, it has hardly started to prepare for the former, whether in terms of impact assessment or aid programming.

The subsequent section on **military engagement** concludes that EU armed forces have so far primarily focused on the relatively narrow issues of disaster response and greening military operations. In that respect, EU militaries lag behind the U.S. military's engagement, and there is hence insufficient evidence for the sometimes dreaded militarization of EU climate security policies. In the final section on the **geo-economics of climate change**, Youngs sees the EU as seeking to strike a balance between interdependence based on free markets and autarky. Evidence for the latter is derived from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (and its impact on food insecurity abroad), mercantilism in the realm of renewables policies, and commercial diplomacy focused on securing access to scarce resources.

Recommendations

A final section considers the fundamental tenets of EU strategy, whether climate change will propel the world towards deeper, positive-sum cooperation or towards isolationist self-protection. It urges European governments to come off the fence in support of the former, and to pursue a comprehensive climate foreign policy that recognizes the Union's own role in contributing to some of the global threats it seeks to defend against. Thus, EU climate security policy should not be only about spending modestly higher amounts on various aspects of climate change, but needs to connect to an overall strategy for the global order the EU seeks to shape.

This appeal is loosely related to six recommendations for EU policymakers and member states formulated at the outset of the report:

- 1) to address climate changes through cooperation, not isolationism;
- 2) to integrate climate security into conflict prevention strategies;
- 3) to adopt a forward-looking response to climate induced migration;
- 4) to broaden militaries' engagement with climate security;
- 5) to develop a systematic approach to the geo-economics of climate change;
- 6) to incorporate climate concerns into all aspects of the Union's foreign policies.