
Negotiating the security implications of Climate Change

Simulation of the Council of the European Union

Introduction to the simulation

On June 21, 2023, a joint press statement released following a meeting between EU, NATO, and US representatives highlighted the impact that climate change and environmental degradation will have on security and defence issues. The joint statement stated that the European Union and NATO would strengthen their cooperation to address the security concerns amplified by climate change and overall environmental degradation.

The links between climate change and security and defence have been emphasised in many academic publications and reports. The latest Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) report, for example, explicitly suggests that *“Even with current, moderate climate change, vulnerable people will experience a further erosion of livelihood security that can interact with humanitarian crises, such as displacement and involuntary migration (high confidence) and violence and armed conflict, and lead to social tipping points (medium confidence).”* (TS.C.8.1)

The European Union has been preparing for such scenarios since 2008 with the release of the “Climate Change and International Security” report. This report, prepared by the EU’s High Representative for the Common Security and Foreign Policy and the European Commission, identified the security threats stemming from climate change (e.g., conflict over resources), and highlighted the important role of the European Union, as an international actor, in responding to these threats and challenges.

Over a decade later, in 2020, the European External Action Service (EEAS) released the “Climate Change and Defence Roadmap”, which identified short-, medium- and long-term actions must be taken at the Member State level and the pan-EU level, to address the security risks amplified by climate change.

One year later, in 2021, the EEAS published another document titled “Concept for an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security”. The Concept recommended that the climate dimension is addressed in *all* EU security operations and activities in the field. The application of new policies should be multidimensional, multi-phased, multi-level, and multilateral in order to respond to the complicated situations that climate and environmental related security risks create.

Whilst there are abundant policy ideas and action items in the documents noted above, there is little progress in the sense of implementing new policies. Indeed, one of the most recent documents on the topic, a 2023 joint communication by the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, identified the need for more tangible

actions, not only to mitigate climate change, but also to address the security risks the latter creates.

This simulation scenario emulates a Council of the European Union negotiation on a proposal put forward by the European Commission to enhance security in view of new challenges created by climate change and environmental degradation.

The proposal tabled for discussion is not based on any existing draft legislation, however, it is realistic insofar similar ideas have been raised in many reports published by European Institutions.

Target Groups for the simulation and topics covered

This simulation is appropriate for high-school students, undergraduates and graduate students studying topics relating to:

- Sustainable Development
- International Security
- Climate Change
- International Relations
- Global Governance

Scenario for the simulation

Climate change is considered one of the main challenges humankind faces in the 21st century. Apart from its immediate effects on ecosystems and human livelihoods the world over, reports from international organizations forecast climate change will have dire impacts on security. The shortage of resources, extreme weather conditions, destruction of habitats (amongst other concerns) are expected not only to increase migratory flows from high-risk countries to safer destinations, but also to increase the prevalence of violent conflict and compound the number of individuals affected by war and violence.

The European Union is a leading international organization working on this issue, having begun to do so in 2008. Through a series of reports and communications, EU institutions have highlighted the interrelatedness of climate change and security and has dedicated much debate to deciding the EU's next steps, particularly at the policy level.

To this end, the European Commission has proposed the following legislation, which addresses a small, yet important, piece of the problem. The proposal addresses:

- **the sustainability of Member States' armed forces**, promoting smart and efficient measures to strengthen climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. It builds on the third point of a 2023 joint communication by the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy titled "*A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence*".

Commission Proposal

Article 1:

The EU will establish a “Climate and Defence Support Mechanism” with the task of promoting and strengthening climate adaptation among Member States’ armed forces.

Article 2:

The support mechanism will identify opportunities in armed forces procurement for equipment and services to reduce the climate impact of armed forces; to improve procurement procedures and assess changes on the items needed by armed forces due to climate change.

Article 3:

The support mechanism will report yearly on the changing needs of the armed forces of each Member State and provide an assessment of how these have been altered or otherwise impacted by climate change and weather hazards.

Although the proposal is quite straightforward, significant disagreements are expected to arise among the Ministers during the discussion in the Council.

Some ministers have pointed out that the proposal is an(other) effort by the European Commission to create a backdoor for the European Union to interfere in an area that falls under the Member States’ sovereign competency; Member States should have the exclusive responsibility for policy decisions in issues related to defence and their military.

Others are more positively inclined to the proposal however they perceive this issue as a low-priority one and would prefer to prioritize other security initiatives impacted by climate change addressing parts 1 and 2 of the aforementioned joint communication document, which tackle the “Evidence-based analysis and foresight as an enabler for action” and “Operationalising the climate and security nexus in EU external action” topics, respectively.

Finally, there are several Ministers who agree with the content and intent of the proposal, and are ready to support it, perhaps with some minor changes.

Overall, the Council must decide on:

- a) The final wording of the proposal
- b) The inclusion, or not, of other articles that would improve the draft legislation

Tips for the simulation

- For students to familiarize themselves with the topic and prepare for the simulation, facilitators might assign them to read “A new outlook on the climate and security nexus:

Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence” (link provided below).

- The final wording of the document must be approved by the Council by a qualified majority (55% of Member States must agree which represent 65% of the EU population). You may use the voting calculator provided in the links below.

Selected sources

[Press Statement on Climate and Security from Frans Timmermans, Josep Borrell, Jens Stoltenberg, and John Kerry](#)

[IPCC 2022 – Full Report](#)

[Climate Change and International Security \(2008\)](#)

[Climate Change and Defence Roadmap \(2020\)](#)

[Concept for an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security \(2021\)](#)

[A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence \(Joint Communication, 28.6.2023\)](#)

[Voting Calculator](#)