Draft policy brief for Planetary Security working group on governance and policy (WG10).
Please do not cite or quote; this policy brief is meant to inform participants of the WG and will be revised and published after the conference.

November 2016

Policy Brief
Translating Climate Security Policy into Practice

Malin Mobjörk & Dan Smith

Summary:
The security implications of climate change have attracted increased attention in policymaking and research circles since the early 2000s. Since climate change has far-reaching implications for human livelihoods and activities, the potential security implications are broad and complex. Responses from different policy communities–foreign affairs, defence, development and environment–are therefore required. These communities are currently at different stages of developing strategies to integrate climate security risks into their work.

Because climate-related security challenges cross boundaries–not just national and geographical boundaries but also temporal and sectoral ones–successful responses demand integrated approaches and mainstreaming strategies. An essential element in such efforts is to incorporate different approaches and knowledge that have previously been separate, such as how climate changes challenges traditional peacebuilding efforts, or how climate change programming can increase conflict risks. This policy brief provides an overview of the challenges policy organisations face in order to adequately respond to climate-related security risks and set out some practical recommendations on how policy organisations can strengthen their efforts to respond to these risks.

Background

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.[1] Because the effects of climate change are diverse and wide ranging, so too are the security risks related to them. Six often mentioned thematic areas of joint climate and security challenges are: water security; food security; rising sea-level and coastal degradation; extreme weather events and weather-related disasters; climate-induced migration; and violent conflict.[2] In the light of this, a range of security approaches—encompassing human, community, state and international aspects of security—must be used to address these challenges. Because of these risks' multi-faceted characteristics, policy responses are needed from different policy communities, such as development, crisis management, environment, defence, and foreign affairs. These communities are currently at different stages of developing strategies to integrate climate security risks into their work.

Challenges

In order to analyse climate-related security risks, researchers and policymakers face a number of challenges. We will here outline three major sources of challenges.

One source of challenge is the context-dependency of climate-related security risks. Research on, for instance trans-boundary water management, food security and extreme weather events, has clearly demonstrated that the same pressures can affect societies differently. Some societies have the capacity to adapt to significant levels of stress, while others will suffer severe negative impacts from lesser pressures. The impacts of climate change on human societies depend not only on the magnitude and speed of climate change, but also on the unequally distributed vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity within and between societies.[3] Therefore, adaptive capacity and governance structures are important to take into account in the risk analysis of climate change. The salience of governance structure and adaptive capacity also explains why studies focused on a direct link between a specific climate variable, such as precipitation, and a specific negative security outcome could result in contrasting findings.

Another source of challenge is the compound character of climate-related security risks. For example, increased water stress exacerbates food insecurity, and extreme weather events put additional pressure on areas facing sea level rise. While these interactions have always existed, they are likely to be intensified as a consequence of a changing climate. Policymakers and scholars alike need to pay careful attention to how these interactions affect a given thematic issue or geographical area. It is also crucial that policy responses take into account this compound character, not least so as to avoid spill-over effects from measures taken in one area negatively affecting another.[4] Furthermore, it is essential to guard against the possibility that the security approach adopted within one thematic issue-area or policy community could come at the cost of generating other forms of insecurity.

A third source of challenge in attempting address climate-related security risks effectively is that these risks are transmitted across time and space.[5] In terms of the time dimension, this means that some climate risks, for instance extreme weather events, occur rapidly while others, such as sea level rise, develop over long periods of time. In terms of space, the transmission means that societies could be heavily affected by impacts

[1] Oppenheimer, M. et al., 'Emergent risks and key vulnerabilities', eds. C. B, Field et al., Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 1039–99.
[2] Mobjörk et al., *Climate-related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach* (Stockholm: SIPRI and SU, 2016).
[3] IPCC, 'Summary for policymakers', eds C.B. Field et al., *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability, Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects, Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, 2014), pp. 1-32.
[4] Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks* (adelphi, International Alert, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2015).
[5] Mobjörk et al., *Climate-related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach* (Stockholm: SIPRI and SU, 2016).

that occur at distant locations. For instance, a drought in one location could result in rapidly increased food prices that generate political instability halfway across the world. To respond to these challenges policy making must base itself on a risk analysis that itself pays careful attention to how risks are transmitted over time and space.

In addition, all these three challenges are enveloped in the inherent uncertainties climate change involves. Climate change is a process of transformation. It involves some challenges that have not been before such as sea level rise, and others that are well known but changing, such as droughts, heavy precipitations, cyclones and heat-waves to name a few. Although many of the risks posed by climate change lack statistical data concerning probability and precise consequences, there is enough information to understand the magnitude of the expected long-term impacts of climate change. Nevertheless, the lack of statistical data affect how risk analysis can be conducted. It adds a dimension of uncertainty on how climate-related security risks may evolve. This uncertainty together with the context-dependency calls for a risk-based approach.

Responses

Because climate-related security risks cross boundaries–not just national and geographical boundaries but also temporal and sectoral ones–successful responses require integrated approaches and mainstreaming strategies.[6] An essential element in such efforts is to incorporate different approaches and knowledge that have previously been separate.

One way of grasping the complex linkages between climate change and security is to break the implications down into different policy areas, such as defence, foreign affairs, environment, crisis management and development.[7] At the same time, however, due to the interplay between different security challenges, the responses between various policy fields need to be integrated; if not, responses in one area may cause unintended negative effects in another. What is needed has been expressed as an integration between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, the involvement of local vulnerabilities and adaptation capacity in security analysis, and the incorporation of climate change impacts into peacebuilding processes.[8] A pivotal reason for the call for integration is the insight that the different issue-areas are interlinked. In both policy making and research, this is well-known, but the practical challenges to implement these policies are huge.

A recent study on how policy organizations are working with integrating climate-related security risks showed that while the organization's policies are often ambitious, they tend to be formulated at a relatively abstract level and are seldom implemented in a systematic fashion. This study, which analysed two different kinds of policy organizations in-depth, identified four suggestions for how to improve strategies for integrating climate-related security risks:[9]

a) Mainstreaming strategies can raise awareness in an organization as it has done with for instance gender and human rights. However, in order to translate climate-security policies into practice, strategies are also needed to ensure that climate risks are taken into account in analysis and programming. This involves, for instance, better processes for supporting and evaluating climate-sensitive projects for conflict prevention, strengthening the competence about climate-related security risks, and providing incentives for prioritising climate issues.
b) Analytical tools need to take better account of the compound character of climate-related security risks. Many analytical tools today in different issue areas within the fields of climate change and policies on peace and security do not address inter-connectivity sufficiently. It

[6] Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks* (adelphi, International Alert, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2015).
[7] Vivekananda, J., Schilling, J. and Smith, D., 'Climate resilience in fragile and conflict-affected societies: concepts and approaches', *Development in Practice*, vol. 24, no. 4 (2014), pp. 487–501.
[8] Birkmann, J. and von Teichman, K. "Integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation: key challenges, scales, knowledge, and norms, *Sustainability Science,* vol. 5, no. 2 (2010), pp. 171-184; Matthew, R., 'Integrating climate change into peacebuilding', *Climatic Change*, vol. 123, no. 1 (2014), pp. 83–93; Steinbruner, J.D., Stern, P.C. and Husbands J.L., *Climate and Social Stress: Implications for Security Analysis* (National Academies Press: Washington, DC, 2013).
[9] Mobjörk et al., Climate-related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach (Stockholm: SIPRI and SU, 2016).

is therefore important to develop the analytical tools so they bridge different thematic issue-areas and crack organisational silos.

c) The call for 'policy coherence' is often used as a way to respond to complex and compound challenges in society. To achieve policy coherence on climate security issues requires not only overcoming institutional barriers and having sufficient resources; it also requires that different guiding principles and conceptualisations of security are transcended. To respond to climate-related security risks demands sensitivity to different policy areas, while taking into account the effects that measures taken in one area may have on other areas. One way of doing this is both to add a security dimension to efforts on climate action, and to 'climate proof' other policy areas. Across the board, policy measures need to be stress tested to see how they stand up to pressures generated by climate change and its impacts on societies, in order to be identify and prepare to respond to potential new situations of insecurity.

d) Coordination across policy areas needs to be improved. Achieving an integrated approach on climate-related security risk does not mean that all actors involved with climate change should start analysing its national or international security implications. It does imply, however, that the actors involved in human as well as state security should be given a mandate to work with the strategic relevance these implications could have, and to articulate proper responses to them. The analysis showed that if policy areas are managed by the same department, or by a specially created steering group, coordination becomes significantly easier. The analysis also showed the need for firm leadership and the provision of incentives to overcome policy silos, without these integrated approaches can not be developed.

An overall finding made by Mobjörk et al (2016) is the need for strategic guidance and sustained leadership. Staff members not only need to have the necessary resources and capabilities to work across different forms of boundaries, but also adequate incentives to work across silos. For this, strategic guidance based on long-term thinking is required. Accordingly, sustained and coherent leadership is essential in order to develop organizational structures, and to strengthen collaboration and knowledge exchange between different policy communities, and between policymaking, policy analysis and research.

Conclusions

Currently, many policy organizations at different levels–national, regional and global–have developed climate security policies in their area of responsibility and are now in a process of translating these into practice. The implementation of these policies occur simultaneously with focus on different aspects within the organisations: to cross boundaries between policy communities; to overcome silos within organisations; and to develop programmes focusing on different issue-areas. To strengthen the development of these practical efforts to address climate-related security risks effectively, experience sharing across different communities and issue-areas is vital. Some key questions for this work are:

- Policy organizations of all kinds are addressing climate-related security issues. What is needed so that more of them can take a grounded view of complex, climate-related security risks? And how can they then incorporate it in their work so that, for example, peacebuilding becomes climate-resilient peacebuilding and adaptation and mitigation measures become conflict-sensitive?
- If different organizations improve their integrated approaches, how can they make the next step to cooperate with other agencies that have different mandates? What are the strategies to strengthen inter-agency communication and collaboration?
- Are there any examples of organizations successfully bridging silos between different areas of expertise?
- What new or recently developed analytical tools seem most fruitful for strengthening knowledge about climate-related security risks taking into account their complex and compounding character?
- What role does leadership play in encouraging groups to relax their organizational boundaries?