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Climate security in Dutch international climate policy – From ambition to implementation

Climate security risks are becoming increasingly noticeable. Extreme heat and drought aggravate water and food insecurity in the world's already most fragile countries. Extreme weather events lead to more calls for military assistance at home and abroad, unbearable living conditions force people to migrate, and melting ice in the Arctic heightens existing tensions between world powers. Climate interventions can contribute to peace and stability, but can also exacerbate inequalities or lead to concerns over a new form of (climate) imperialism. Up until now, climate security was referred to in Dutch foreign, defence and climate policies, but only in a minimal way. The international climate strategy of the Netherlands, its resources strategy, the government-wide security strategy and the recent Africa strategy recognise the relationship between climate change and (inter)national security. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, in this case in policy implementation. Implementation would mean including security and conflict risk assessments in climate and resource interventions (including in the food and water sector), considering climate interventions that enhance living conditions in areas of potential mass migration, expanding military capacity for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HADR), reducing the carbon and resources footprint of humanitarian and military activities and missions, preparing better to undertake such missions in harsher climatic conditions.

Introduction

The destabilising effects of climate change in already-fragile contexts, and climate policies and investments potentially leading to new conflicts and protests, necessitate a closer consideration of the climate-security nexus. On top of this comes the new geopolitics of (renewable) energy transition and competition over critical raw materials that are necessary for achieving Europe's green and digital transitions. Military personnel, diplomats and development actors realise the importance of implementing the concept of climate security

in foreign, defence and development policies, but still struggle with how to do it. As a country with an open economy that is highly dependent on international trade and, hence, stability, it is in the interest of the Netherlands to play a leadership role in furthering the climate security agenda.

Up until now climate security was referred to in Dutch foreign, defence and climate policies, but only in a minimal way and not connected to implementation. The Netherlands raised

awareness by initiating the Planetary Security Initiative in 2015, but this ambition was not linked to its own international climate policies. Even in the climate-adaptation field of water, where an additional Water, Peace and Security Programme is funded, the connection with security and conflict in actual policies is still lagging. This is illustrated by the limited capacity and financial resources assigned to climate security risks.¹ The Dutch international climate strategy (in Dutch: Internationale Klimaatstrategie; hereafter referred to as the IKS), published in the autumn of 2022 as part of a broader set of foreign policy strategies, could potentially change this as it paves the way for an integration of relevant policy domains.² In the IKS, ‘climate and safety’ (in Dutch: ‘klimaat en veiligheid’) is featured as part of a whole-of-government approach to climate policy, and implementing the strategy is the responsibility of several Dutch ministries.³ Other relevant policies for climate-security are the natural resources strategy⁴, the government-wide security strategy⁵ and the Africa strategy.

The IKS aligns with the policy consensus that climate adaptation, better management of natural resources and provision of new renewable energy can help in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. An overview of climate-security policies and practices around the world can be found on the website of the

Planetary Security Initiative.⁶ There is a need, however, for continuous analysis of how such interventions compare and connect to other conflict-prevention and peacebuilding efforts and which metrics can be used to assess their impact. Literature is available on the need to avoid climate interventions do not lead to benefits for one group over others, thereby aggravating tensions (so-called maladaptation). However, for many climate activities, for instance the Just Energy Transition Partnerships, no analysis is made of their conflict sensitivity – and the instruments to do so are lacking. For Dutch activities specifically, it is advised to consider conflict sensitivity, as most Netherlands bilateral programmes are in the water and food sector and are implemented in East Africa and the Sahel, which are highly conflict-sensitive regions.

To put climate security into practice in an integrated manner, the Dutch strategies would benefit from a common, cross-ministry agenda for implementation. This policy brief identifies the various elements that could be part of such an agenda.⁷

Climate security in a tense geopolitical context

Climate change has a significant impact on stability in the world. Climate-related disasters, such as extreme droughts, water shortages and floods, increasingly lead to temporary displacements and permanent migration.⁸ Moreover, extreme climate conditions reinforce existing and dormant conflicts in already fragile regions, notably the MENA (Middle East North Africa) region, the Levant, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and Southeast Asia. In Iraq, for example, extreme heat and drought have led to water shortages and dust storms, both

1 Simone Bunse, Elise Remling, Anniek Barnhoorn, Manon Du Bus de Warnaffe, Karen Meijer, and Dominik Rehbaum, “[Mapping European Union Member States’ Responses to Climate-related Security Risks](#),” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, September 2022.

2 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate, “[Internationale Klimaatstrategie](#),” Rijksoverheid, 7 October 2022; debated in Parliament on 15 February 2023.

3 Notably Foreign Affairs, Economic Affairs & Climate, Agriculture and Finance, thereby working closely with, among others, the Ministry of Defence.

4 Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, and Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, “[Grondstoffen Voor de Grote Transitie](#),” Rijksoverheid, 9 December 2022.

5 Rijksoverheid “[Veiligheidsstrategie voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden](#),” April 2023.

6 “[Welcome to the Planetary Security Initiative](#) | Planetary Security Initiative,” n.d.

7 The analysis and recommendations in this brief are based on previous research conducted by Clingendael, notably in the framework of the Planetary Security Initiative.

8 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “[Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#),” 2022.

causing significant disruptions to the economy and people's livelihoods. This combination of economic and environmental degradation has spurred violent protests and overall insecurity in the country, notably in Basra.⁹

In many parts of Africa the situation is equally or perhaps even more severe. Climate change aggravates already existing conflicts between herders and farmers over land across the Sahel. This is recognised in the recent Africa Strategy of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁰ The contribution of climate to conflict also features in several resolutions of the UN Security Council, the first one being on the Lake Chad region in 2017, as well as in mission mandates, such as MINUSMA. During its shared membership of the UNSC in 2017 and 2018, the Netherlands actively promoted this agenda. This was reinforced in 2018 when Hurricane Irma hit the Caribbean part of the Netherlands and the navy had to provide assistance and secure law and order on the island of Sint Maarten. It clearly showed the relevance of this agenda beyond Africa.

However, other parts of the world are also affected. A prominent example is the Arctic, where the melting of ice is leading to intensified competition over resources and water ways.¹¹ In addition, climate impacts directly hit military infrastructure and diminish their capabilities because they are more often called upon to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) or for peacekeeping missions.¹² Also humanitarian organisations are called upon more often, and must also consider how to diminish their own carbon and resources footprint.

Conflict and war also hamper progress on achieving the climate goals. The war in Ukraine, for example, has already led to greenhouse gas emissions exceeding 100 million tCO₂e – comparable to the total emissions of a country like the Netherlands over the same period. In addition, according to the Ukrainian Ministry of the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, already 30% of the country's protected areas have been bombed, burned, polluted or hit by military strikes – with severe consequences for the country's ecosystems and biodiversity. In a context of increased geopolitical tensions around the EU's external borders but also in other parts of the world, it is becoming increasingly important to assess and anticipate the relationship between conflict and its environmental impact.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has, moreover, exposed our fossil energy dependency and the associated risks. For a large proportion of its oil and gas, the EU is dependent on petrostates, of which many are governed by autocratic regimes.¹³ With fossil energy exports generating the most important source of revenue, these countries are vulnerable to global price volatility and, consequently, domestic economic and political instability.¹⁴ Moreover, instability in these countries can have direct consequences for international (energy) security. For the EU in particular, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has proven to be a wake-up call as to the risks associated with its energy dependency and it has urged its member states to accelerate the green energy transition. Consequently, the EU and its member states are increasingly diversifying their energy supplies and seeking to establish new renewable energy partnerships with third countries, for example Egypt, Morocco and Namibia.

9 Maha Yassin and Hassan Khalil, "[Sandstorms and Desertification: Instability in the South of Iraq](#)," Planetary Security Initiative, August 30, 2022.

10 Beslisnota Afrika Strategie, [Beslisnota Afrika Strategie \(overheid.nl\)](#), 2023.

11 Tony van der Togt, "[New Op-Ed: Arctic, EU, Russia, and European Security](#)," Planetary Security Initiative, 27 September 2019.

12 Adaja Stoetman, Dick Zandee, Ties Dams, Niels Drost, and Louise van Schaik, "[Military capabilities Affected by Climate Change: An Analysis of China, Russia, and the United States](#)," The Clingendael Institute, January 2023

13 In 2021 the EU's import of Russian oil and gas accounted for respectively 24.8% (oil) and 39.2% (gas).

14 Giulia Cretti, Akash Ramnath and Louise van Schaik, "[Transitioning Towards Energy Security Beyond EU Borders](#)," The Clingendael Institute, 26 October 2022.

The geopolitics of the energy transition

In the global race to become a leader in renewable technology and trade, some countries are gaining relevance and power relative to, or at the expense of, others. This has led to a current redrawing of the geopolitical map. A country's position on this map depends on its ability to generate and export large amounts of renewable energy – for example in the form of hydrogen – as well as its dependency on fossil energy.

In 2019, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) distinguished three groups of renewable energy leaders: i) countries that are, or have the potential to become, net exporters of electricity generated by renewables, such as Brazil and Saudi Arabia; ii) mineral-rich countries that have an opportunity to become part of the global production and value chains necessary for renewable technologies, such as Bolivia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); and iii) leaders in digital innovation and renewable energy technology necessary for the green energy transition, most notably China.¹⁵ Moreover, IRENA predicts that, in contrast to the fossil fuel economy where power is concentrated in the hands of a few governments and corporations, the green energy transition will reshuffle (geo)political and economic power, with a more diverse set of countries holding key positions on the renewable energy map, and with new actors and business models emerging.¹⁶

However, the green energy transition could, almost paradoxically, also create new climate security risks. In fact, the list of future renewable energy leaders includes countries that have a poor track record when it comes to democratic governance and the protection of human rights. Importantly, green energy technologies, such as solar panels, wind turbines, energy storage and

electric vehicles, rely on critical raw materials (CRMs), such as lithium and cobalt, of which large amounts are found in fragile and conflict-affected countries such as the DRC and Afghanistan. Moreover, the processing is dominated by one specific player, namely China.¹⁷ Hence, the green energy transition runs the risk of creating new undesired dependencies on undemocratic regimes or even systemic rivals.

Rising global demand for resources fuels local grievances

Moreover, rising demand for CRMs could fuel domestic rivalries and conflicts in politically and economically fragile countries. In many of the countries where CRMs are extracted, governments and mining companies perform poorly in terms of due diligence and ensuring sensitivity to conflict and the needs of local communities. According to research conducted by International Alert, in the DRC large multinational cobalt companies frequently break the Mining Code, and the mismanagement and unequal distribution of mining revenues have led to grievances and conflict.¹⁸

In a similar vein, the construction of infrastructural projects for the generation of renewable energy, such as wind and solar parks, is linked to human rights violations. In the same study, International Alert stresses that in the Western Sahara, Morocco's plans to instal solar and wind parks violate the international humanitarian laws protecting civilian populations under occupation and are harming peace efforts in the region.¹⁹ With demand for green energy technologies on the rise, the likelihood of violations and conflict can also be expected to increase. It moreover leads to questions by developing countries as to which agenda is served by the new green technology, which is considered to benefit, above all, Western countries.

15 International Renewable Energy Agency, "[A New World: The Geopolitics of the Energy Transition](#)," 2019.

16 International Renewable Energy Agency, "[A New World](#)," 42-44.

17 Cretti, Ramnath and van Schaik, "[Transitioning](#)."

18 Priscilla Ateyo, "[Fuelling Conflict? The impact of the green energy transition on peace and security](#)," *International Alert*, September 2022.

19 Idem.

Scarcities of water, food and land are likely to increase too. As assessed in Clingendael's Early Warning Early Action programme, this is already spurring conflict risk and migration in many areas of the world, but the situation might become more acute in the future.²⁰ In light of population growth forecasts in, for instance, the Sahel and temperature rises that make it increasingly difficult to survive, the magnitude of the problem is increasing. High temperatures in combination with dust storms, water scarcity and electricity blackouts may make parts of the world uninhabitable.

Climate security in the context of Europe's strategic autonomy

Disproportional dependencies and resource-related conflicts pose a threat to global stability and place open economies like the EU, and the Netherlands in particular, in a vulnerable position. Indeed, in the longer-run, diversification of energy supplies prevents dependency on a single or few countries and is an effective strategy to fight shocks in energy supplies and prices. Yet, in the short-term, this diversification is not easily achieved. With its European Green Deal and green industrial policy, the EU is well positioned in the (green) energy technology race, but competition from China is harsh and the US is getting back in the game with its Inflation Reduction Act that will allow subsidises for its green energy transition at home.

With a war raging on its continent and with exposed resource dependency, the EU is perhaps more than ever faced with climate security risks that are affecting not only people's livelihoods abroad but also its own economies and populations. The increased droughts affecting food production in southern Europe and other extreme weather events such as forest fires and the floods in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands in 2021 are examples. Climate events such as these are affecting Europe's room for manoeuvre and its ability to live by its own norms, rules and practices. Addressing climate

security risks has, thus, become an issue of enhancing Europe's strategic autonomy.

Climate security in the Dutch International Climate Strategy

For the Dutch government this means that implementation of the IKS cannot be postponed. Yet, while the strategy includes an action and instrument package for climate change mitigation, adaptation and finance, the strategy is much less exhaustive and concrete when it comes to instruments to pursue climate security. The IKS – as well as the recently published Dutch security strategy 2023-2029 and Africa strategy – reiterates the recognition that the effects of climate change may contribute to insecurity. For that reason, the IKS stresses that 'the climate transitions and the impact of climate change will be incorporated into Dutch safety and security policy, while climate risks and climate resilience will be addressed in strategic context analyses, conflict analyses and programming.' Actions are directed towards incorporating a climate lens in development and stability programming abroad, for example by accelerating the green energy transition in developing countries, pursuing inclusive green job creation and sharing Dutch knowledge and expertise on water security, land use and climate-smart agriculture. In terms of implementation, solutions are mainly sought in greening funding and trade instruments. Moreover, the IKS pledges additional Dutch support for organisations and systems that use big data to gain insights into potential water-related conflicts and solutions to them, so-called *early warning early action* systems.

Yet, not only does the IKS fall short on concretising the 'how', the proposed instruments also largely portray only one side of the coin. The instruments incorporate a climate lens in Dutch foreign, security and development policies abroad, but largely neglect the other side of the coin, namely adopting a conflict lens in Dutch climate policy here and abroad. The IKS does recognise the importance of the latter, for example by emphasising the importance of guarding against 'Dutch climate

²⁰ [Clingendael, Early Warning Early Action.](#)

action having negative spillover effects on the climate transition in other countries and [...] the environment and human rights elsewhere' and urging other countries and multilateral institutions to do so as well. However, when it comes to implementation, the IKS falls back on typical Dutch approaches, such as gender and youth mainstreaming and the Dutch Diamond approach that strives to include the private sector and Dutch expertise in international efforts. What is lacking is a climate security action agenda that would tackle both sides of the coin in an integrated manner and which would be embedded in a broader national and European security strategy.

Next steps: recommendations for an integrated climate security agenda

Such an integrated action agenda would consist of instruments to ensure mainstreaming of climate security risks in foreign and development policy, stronger involvement of the military in such efforts, as well as ensuring a climate-security lens in Europe's industrial policy and trade with third countries, especially in the context of the green and digital transitions. The current geopolitical context requires Dutch efforts to be closely aligned with the EU that will soon publish a new Communication on climate-security. Yet, given the Dutch track record on climate diplomacy, and its strong knowledge base on water and food-related conflict, the Netherlands could do more when it comes to its own bilateral programming in the Horn of Africa and Sahel. The measures below are part of a package initially aimed at the Dutch ministries of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Defence and Economic Affairs and Climate, but could be actively promoted within an EU-wide approach.

Effective climate security mainstreaming in development programming

With climate and safety featuring in the IKS as part of a whole-of-government approach to climate policy – next to climate and humanitarian

aid and climate and health – the Dutch government paves the way for mainstreaming climate security risks into development programming. The Netherlands could consider continuing its efforts, both bilaterally and in the EU context, in pursuing political dialogue on climate security risks, most notably in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, but also the Levant. The Basra Forum for Climate, Environment and Security – established by the Planetary Security Initiative – has proven to be an effective form of dialogue, and could be used as a model for replication in other regions.²¹ Moreover, particular actions and instruments could improve climate security mainstreaming, such as:

✓ *Climate security advisers*

To ensure that climate security risks are mainstreamed throughout various policy domains, from development and defence policies to finance, the Dutch government could appoint climate security advisers in its Ministry of Foreign Affairs or specific embassies. Such advisers would be tasked with integrating climate change, environmental degradation, and conflict and security affairs throughout Dutch development programmes and policies, notably the food and water programmes. Example could be taken from its own Taskforce Women's Rights and Gender Equality, which is tasked with ensuring that gender equality plays a role in all policy areas and supporting colleagues to achieve this.

✓ *Programme auditing*

The Netherlands could audit its development programmes to identify opportunities for more systematic integration of the links between climate and security. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has, for example, conducted such an audit and found that its programmes scored less on the protection of civilians from environmental damage due to war and on disaster risk reduction.²² Moreover, the audit pointed to a gap between policies 'on paper' and actual

21 Planetary Security Initiative, "[Basra Forum for Climate, Environment and Security](#)," n.d.

22 Bunse, Remling, Barnhoorn, Du Bus de Warnaffe, Meijer, and Rehbaum, "[Mapping](#)," September 2022.

implementation. The Netherlands could take this example and conduct such an audit, possibly extended by auditing various Dutch investment funds as well. The ‘greening’ of Dutch investment funds and instruments, such as pledged in the IKS, could initially be navigated by an in-depth ‘climate security audit’, perhaps conducted by its Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB).

The Dutch military and climate change adaptation

Although implementation of the IKS is undertaken in close cooperation with the Ministry of Defence (MoD), it does not set out actions or instruments directed specifically towards the Dutch military. That being said, the MoD increasingly takes action to pursue climate security, especially on the mitigation side, as shown by its focus on becoming more energy-efficient in its military operations and thereby reducing its emissions.²³ But also in terms of adaptation, the Dutch military could play a crucial role. In its policy note, the MoD states that in the field of climate security, it will put more emphasis on international cooperation within NATO and the European Defence Agency (EDA).²⁴ In addition, the MoD is further professionalising its tasks in disaster relief and is incorporating the consequences of climate change into its strategic regional analyses.²⁵ To put these ambitions into practice, the following additional measures are advisable, and could be considered:

✓ *Involvement of the Dutch military in early warning early action systems*

As recognised in its own policy note, the MoD has an important role to play when it comes to humanitarian assistance and disaster management in case of extreme weather conditions, both in the Netherlands and abroad. Yet, the military also has an important role to play when it comes to the prevention of humanitarian disasters after extreme weather

events. Early warning early action systems are a major component of this.²⁶ Particularly when it comes to local responses, such systems could benefit from the involvement of the military. Military missions could be deployed in part as the ‘eyes and ears’ of both international parties and national (and regional and local) authorities in climate-sensitive regions, in order to provide these parties with timely information about potential disasters and conflict risks.

✓ *Climate envoys in peace-building missions*

Environmental protection can contribute to peace building. Climate-sensitive peacebuilding can be ensured by appointing climate-security advisers in UN peacebuilding missions. This is already the case in some UN missions, such as the one in Somalia.²⁷ This was for example proposed by Germany during a UN Security Council held on the topic of climate security in February 2021.²⁸ In a similar vein the EU added environmental security advisers to some of its missions, although it is a struggle to find resources to fund these positions and to fill them with experts with sufficient knowledge of both conflict and climate policies. The Netherlands could support such efforts financially or by providing experts.

Conflict-sensibility in the green energy transition

New resource extraction necessary to achieve the climate and digital transitions could create new dependencies and fuel grievances and conflict. Hence, it is important that the transitions are pursued in a conflict-sensible manner, both when it comes to specific Dutch activities and programmes, but also those in the EU context. This implies, above all, the following:

23 Ministry of Defence, “[Defensienota 2022 | Beleidsnota | Defensie.nl](#)” June 2022.

24 Idem.

25 Idem.

26 Tobias von Lossow, Anouk Schrijver, Maxime van der Kroon, Louise van Schaik and Jos Meester, “[Towards a Better Understanding of Climate Security Practice](#)”, Planetary Security Initiative and The Clingendael Institute, April 2021.

27 Planetary Security Initiative, “[Climate Security Practice Spotlight – Resilience in Somalia](#),” June 2021.

28 Planetary Security Initiative, “[Our last chance to get this right: UNSC debate on climate-security](#),” February 2021.

✓ *Research on strategic dependencies and vulnerabilities*

In her State of the Union speech, Von der Leyen echoed an increasingly heard concern raised about Europe's risk of replacing fossil dependency with a new one on critical raw materials. The EU is already acting on this agenda, as shown in the Commission's recent proposals that are part of the Green Deal Industrial Plan to reshore the mining of CRMs to European territory. Yet, it takes considerable time for new mines to become operational, or for new technologies to be developed and upscaled.

Therefore, it is critically important, especially for a small country like the Netherlands, to continuously monitor which strategic dependencies are at play in the green and digital transitions, and to explore diversification strategies – for example by exploring alternatives and recycling critical metals and minerals.

This is being done, for example, in the geo-economic monitor that Clingendael has published in cooperation with SEO Economic Research and TNO and commissioned by the Netherlands Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁹ The analysis shows that Dutch dependency is highest on China and the US: on China mainly in the areas of energy transition (i.e. alkali metals like lithium), food security (i.e. agricultural or horticultural sprayers) and health (i.e. antibiotics), and on the US in the areas of national security.³⁰ The monitor is a first step in a necessary ongoing process of analysing strategic dependencies to gain a better insight into current and future dependencies.

29 Michiel Bijlsma, Joost Witteman, Adam Kuczynski, and Astrid Lensink (SEO); Rem Korteweg and Xiaoxue Martin (Clingendael); Elmer Rietveld and Gabriela Bodea (TNO), "[Geo-economische Monitor](#)," The Clingendael Institute, TNO, SEO, December 2022.

30 Bijlsma, Witteman, Kuczynski and Lensink (SEO); Korteweg and Martin (Clingendael); Rietveld and Bodea (TNO), "[Geo-economische Monitor](#)."

✓ *Climate security lens in the EU's Green Industrial Policy*

In aiming to reduce strategic dependencies, the EU and its member states are currently developing industrial strategies to diversify supply chains and restore critical production chains (back) to the European continent. Notably, the EU aims to enter the race for lithium and is betting on several deposits for mining in Portugal, Germany, France, the Czech Republic, Austria and Finland.³¹ Yet, such activities are not uncontroversial. Concerns have already been expressed that, under pressure from the EU REPowerEU plan, environmental standards are lowered.³² Moreover, mining projects are also planned in tense regions near the EU's external border, notably in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Serbia, a controversial foreseen lithium mining project ('Jadar') was stalled due to persistent local protests in the southwest of the country.³³

Hence, it is crucially important that Europe's diversification and reshoring activities are carefully designed and implemented with a climate security lens. This implies that such activities, for example in the context of the EU's Critical Raw Materials Act, are assessed on the basis of their climate security impacts by addressing economic, social and environmental inequalities and any potential for conflicts. A climate security lens would also include analyses of environmental costs and effects, mapping of local stakeholders and their conflicting interests, and analyses of potential sources of grievances that might stem from these. An example could be taken from conflict-sensitivity tools that are already used in development programming.³⁴

31 Estimated at 7% of the world total and assumed to provide for 80% of Europe's battery needs – Camille Rustici, "[Lithium: What Are the Main Mining Projects in Europe?](#)" DirectIndustry News, 4 November 2022.

32 Igor Todorović, "[Is EU Sacrificing Balkans for Lithium for Its Energy Transition?](#)" Balkan Green Energy News, 18 August 2022.

33 Guardian Staff Reporter, "[Rio Tinto Puts Serbia Lithium Mine on Hold](#)," The Guardian, 31 December 2021.

34 See for example: Stabilisation Unit, "[Conflict Sensitivity Tools and Guidance](#)," June 2016.

✓ *Climate security lens in green energy partnerships with third countries*

In the IKS, the Netherlands announces its aim to cultivate green energy partnerships in order to develop the renewable energy potential and to, simultaneously, capitalise on economic opportunities in so-called ‘combination’ countries – countries where the Dutch government implements a combined trade and development cooperation approach.³⁵ In doing so, the Netherlands sees added value in cooperation with EU countries within Team Europe and with international partners within the framework of the ‘Just Energy Transition Partnerships’ (JETPs), currently in place with South Africa, Indonesia and Vietnam.³⁶ These programmes target climate objectives, but take little notice of other green and security goals, which has contributed to complaints about the West engaging in climate colonialism. A better understanding of the conflict or political sensitivity of these partnerships could help adapt them so as to be a more mutually appreciated effort.

In the current geopolitical context this is a difficult balancing act. Notably, while international debates on climate action at COPs and G7/20 reiterate the importance of phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and reducing the use of coal, the EU decided after the Russian invasion in Ukraine to halt the phasing out of coal at home and explore new gas suppliers. A little earlier it surprised international experts by giving gas (and nuclear energy) investments a green label under certain conditions. The latter has opened the door for potential investments in gas extraction in, for example, Senegal, Algeria and Angola, as well as in Qatar and

Azerbaijan. This will not only affect global green ambitions, but could also go against security interests, as it could enrich corrupt, or in some cases even autocratic, regimes. Moreover, such agreements affect the credibility of the EU which, simultaneously, is encouraging developing countries to accelerate their green energy transition.³⁷

To apply more coherence and consistency, it is important that the Netherlands, in the EU arena, promotes the development of a common balanced approach that includes economic, environmental, social, and security considerations in green energy partnerships with third countries. The EU already has several instruments at its disposal that could be used, such as the conditionalities used in the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), the European Fund for Sustainable Development, and the OECD Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits. Yet, these frameworks in general reflect a pre-2022 reality and are mainly aimed at long-term development goals rather than climate security ones.³⁸

✓ *Climate diplomacy*

The Dutch government has announced that in implementing the International Climate Strategy, it will work closely with like-minded countries to encourage other countries to enhance their climate ambitions and translate these into national policies. Climate diplomacy will be crucial for the Netherlands if it is to actively promote the reduction of military emissions at both EU and NATO levels – for example by including decarbonisation in public procurement and by investing in new R&D programmes on decarbonising defence technologies and weapon systems.

35 The combination countries are: Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Ukraine, Senegal, Vietnam and South Africa.

36 The first JETP was announced during the COP26 in Glasgow and is a partnership between South Africa on the one hand and France, Germany, the UK, the US and the EU on the other hand; Katherine Kramer, “[Just Energy Transition Partnerships: An Opportunity to Leapfrog from Coal to Clean Energy](#),” International Institute for Sustainable Development, December 2022.

37 Cretti, Ramnath and van Schaik, “[Transitioning](#).”

38 For a detailed overview of EU instruments see: Cretti, Ramnath, and van Schaik, “[Transitioning](#).”

Effective climate diplomacy is particularly important when it comes to climate security, as certain priority countries with which *Team Europe* aims to close green energy deals, are countries that are prone to climate-related conflicts. Yet, geopolitical tensions increasingly put pressure on climate diplomacy. Many of these countries uphold a different value system than the EU and are non-aligned – meaning that they advocate neutrality in international affairs by not joining either the Western bloc or China or Russia. Europe's strategic dependency on these countries when it comes to the green and digital transitions has increased their relative power, something that became clear in the various UN-votes on the Russian invasion in Ukraine.

To pursue effective climate diplomacy, it is crucially important that EU member states, including the Netherlands, enhance their embassy network, especially in priority countries. These embassies would benefit from the appointment of specific climate security advisers, capable of mainstreaming the issue throughout other policy domains. Moreover, to prevent EU member states from being played out against each other, it is crucial that bilateral diplomacy efforts are pursued in close alignment with the EU and that member states speak with one voice.

Conclusion: Climate-proofing foreign and security policy and conflict-sensitive climate action

The Netherlands and other countries struggle with how to address climate-related security risks. Governments seem to fear a further politicisation of international climate change policy. Whereas it can be difficult to consider conflict risks related to climate programming and the search for critical raw materials, not doing this may lead to aggravated security risks down the line of implementation. Continuous analysis of climate security risks worldwide, and best practices to address these, is therefore recommended. Climate interventions could, moreover, be used more often to support peace and security objectives, and engaging more with security and defence actors could help to accelerate the green energy transition and foster climate resilience.

In addition to stepping up its own contribution in implementing a climate-security agenda, the Netherlands could actively show its commitment when the new EU Communication on climate-security will be published. Another opportunity will be the Environmental Peacebuilding Conference that will be organised in the Hague in June 2024. Since 2015, the Netherlands has helped to set the climate -security agenda internationally, but now it needs to follow through.

About the Planetary Security Initiative

The Planetary Security Initiative sets out best practice, strategic entry points and new approaches to reducing climate-related risks to conflict and stability, thus promoting sustainable peace in a changing climate. The PSI is operated by the Clingendael Institute in partnership with Free Press Unlimited and The Hague Center for Strategic Studies.

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