

Beyond International Climate Negotiations: Climate Diplomacy from a Foreign Policy Perspective*

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Abstract

Flooding, droughts, a shift of climate zones, and increasingly frequent and intense extreme weather hazards will have serious economic and social consequences for entire regions. Countries with low adaptation capacities are likely to be hit the hardest by these climate changes, among them many of the so-called fragile states. To address this challenge, a new profile of climate diplomacy is evolving using the full range of available policies, including development cooperation, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance, as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation. The aim is to move from risk analysis of climate-related threats to preventive action. This also asks for ways to integrate climate change concerns into development, foreign, and security policies. Based on the discussions of major developments within the European Union, the United Nations and Germany, we outline some of the potentially key tasks for climate diplomacy in the future that are needed to complement the negotiations for a comprehensive, global climate agreement.

A. The Climate Security Challenge

The slow progress in further developing the international climate regime shows that urgent action is needed that complements and stretches beyond international climate negotiations. In recent years, climate change has gained increasing prominence among foreign policymakers.¹ This can partly be ex-

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1 For an overview, see Tänzler & Carius (2012).

plained by the fact that climate change represents a vital challenge for international politics. Flooding, droughts, a shift of climate zones, and increasingly frequent and intense extreme weather hazards will have serious economic and social consequences for entire regions. In addition, there is a broad consensus that countries with low adaptation capacities will be hit the hardest, among them many of the so-called fragile states.² Starting in 2007, a number of analyses reveal a growing potential for conflict and an increase in social tension as a result of the impending changes in the climate.³ Conflicts may arise as a result of water and food shortages, in turn caused by an increase in extreme weather events and climate-change-induced mass migration. Weak and fragile states are considered particularly vulnerable because of their already limited political capacities. The main assumption is that a further weakening of the key services provided by the public sector is likely to lead to national and regional destabilisation, with societal and political tensions potentially developing into violent conflict. Seen in this light, it is not surprising that the foreign policy community is concerned about the slow progress of the international climate negotiations and the decision to agree on an outcome with legal force by 2015 which is to enter into force only by 2020.

However, the role of foreign policies in a changing climate is complex. When assessing whether or not there will be an increase of violent conflicts related to the distribution of natural resources such as water and land, one should avoid one-dimensional causal explanations.⁴ Possible conflicts will not be caused by climate change alone; rather, climate change is seen as a factor that multiplies the deficits in other areas such as poverty, a lack of the rule of law, and social and economic injustice.⁵ In addition, a worsening of conflict situations as a result of climate change is only one possible pathway. Another is the peaceful avoidance of new conflict situations through early action and cooperation. The latter interpretation is based on research findings about how environmental cooperation toward common challenges could support confidence-building as well as peace-building efforts between former antagonists.⁶

2 Corendea et al. (2012).

3 Campbell et al. (2007); CNA (2007); WBGU (2007).

4 See e.g. Harris (2012).

5 Carius et al. (2008).

6 See e.g. Conca & Dabelko (2002); UNEP (2009).

This opens a different point of entry for foreign policy engagement. In other words, there is a need not only to reflect appropriately the potential security-related impacts of climate change, but also to design appropriate policy measures which are timely enough to avoid a further destabilisation of already weak or fragile states. It seems more than obvious that such approaches have to go beyond traditional climate policy as we have known it for some time. By encompassing the full range of available policies, including development cooperation, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance, as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation, a new profile of climate diplomacy is evolving. This new profile most likely requires new strategic alliances beyond the conference halls of Copenhagen, Doha or Durban. In the following section, we discuss selected political processes initiated in recent years on climate change, international security and foreign policies. These processes illustrate how to move from risk analysis to preventive action and how to integrate climate change concerns into development, foreign, and security policies. To this end, in order to address the challenges of climate security, we first highlight major developments within the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN) and Germany. Based on this discussion, we then outline some of the potentially key tasks for climate diplomacy in the future that are needed to complement the negotiations for a comprehensive, global climate agreement.

B. Foreign Policy Perspectives on Climate Change

I. The EU on the Search for International Partners for Climate Security

An early approach to address the potential security implications of climate changes was initiated by the EU. Under the 2007 German EU presidency, the European Council and the European Commission were asked to prepare a joint paper on climate change and international security. This report, published in March 2008, summarised potential security risks associated with climate change.⁷ Broadly, the report outlines that climate change has the potential of becoming a “threat multiplier”, exacerbating existing tensions and potentially creating new ones over time.⁸ Among the main security-relevant threats of climate change that the EU identified were conflicts over

7 EU (2008).

8 (ibid.).

depleting resources such as water and food, and the economic damage and risks caused by an increase in sea levels and in the strength and frequency of extreme weather events. According to the report, fragile and radicalised situations may be exacerbated owing to the amount of environmental stress and a lack of coping capacity.

Against the backdrop of these risks, the Council stated in its Conclusions of December 2009 that climate change and its international security implications were part of the wider EU agenda for climate, energy, and its Common Foreign and Security Policy.⁹ The Council stressed the need to strengthen the EU's comprehensive efforts to reduce emissions as one aspect of conflict prevention.

In the aftermath of the Council's Conclusions, the main focus of the EU's activities has been directed towards enhancing EU capacities for early warning, on the one hand, and towards fostering international cooperation with the aim to creating dialogue and a common awareness in relevant international forums, including the UN, on the other. However, owing to the establishment process of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the initiatives to address climate change and security have only progressed very slowly. In July 2011, however, the EEAS and the services of the Commission presented a conceptual outline of what should be considered as a climate diplomacy blueprint: the Joint Reflection Paper.¹⁰ Most importantly, the Joint Reflection Paper outlined three "strands for action" action on EU climate diplomacy:¹¹

- The promotion of ambitious climate action
- The support of implementation of climate policies and measures, and
- Activities in the area of climate change and international security.

Among the 13 recommendations outlined in the Joint Reflection Paper, there are some with immediate implications if they are implemented. For example, the capacities of the EEAS to engage in climate diplomacy should be strengthened "by establishing a focal point in the Service for Climate change issues"¹² as well as local climate change working groups in strategic partner countries to improve the relevant reporting on climate-change-related developments. In addition, by suggesting the mainstreaming of climate action

9 Council of the European Union (2009).

10 EEAS & EC (2011).

11 (ibid.:1).

12 (ibid.:5).

in the multiannual country and regional strategy papers, long-term processes can be initiated that may help to make climate change a cross-cutting issue on EU foreign affairs agendas.

In principle, the EEAS approach can be interpreted as building a bridge between further improvement of early warning capacities on climate-change-related security threats and the diplomatic efforts needed to contribute to a global negotiation deal. The practical relevance of this approach, however, remains to be seen.

II. The United Nations Arena

The UN took the climate change issue seriously right after its appearance on the international agenda. The 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as well as the 1997 Kyoto Protocol were highly influential in establishing a portfolio of policy innovations worldwide in respect of mitigating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to adapt to unavoidable climate changes.¹³ However, an increasingly complex and slow process of international negotiations has caused some concerns that the UNFCCC cannot achieve its main objective stated in its Article 2, namely to avoid “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”. This is especially understandable from the perspective of small island developing states (SIDSs) as well as other least-developed countries with low-lying coastlines, like Bangladesh, which are already today witnessing the severe impacts of climate change.¹⁴ As a result, the issue of climate security also has gained increasing attention in recent years at UN level. In 2007, the UN Security Council held its first debate on the impact of climate change on global peace and security. The discussions among UN member states revealed broad uncertainty regarding the question of an appropriate international framework for action on responding to the security risks related to climate change. The UN General Assembly, on 3 June 2009, adopted a res-

13 See for an early discussion of the accomplishments, Oberthür & Ott (1999); Yamin & Depledge (2004).

14 See the contributions of the Minister for Environment and Forests of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Hasran Mahmud (2012:25–29), and the then Minister of State for Housing and Environment of the Maldives, Mohammed Shareef (2012:31–32).

olution on climate change and its possible security implications,¹⁵ which had been proposed by Pacific SIDSs. The resolution was adopted by consensus, and 101 states supported it. For the first time in the history of the UN, the United States (US) co-sponsored a climate protection resolution. The resolution urged UN bodies to strengthen their efforts to combat climate change and to avoid intensifying potential security risks. This was also the first time that a UN resolution had established a direct link between climate change on the one hand, and international peace and security on the other.

On the basis of 35 contributions from member states and relevant regional and international organisations, the UN Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (ECSA) published a comprehensive report in September 2009.¹⁶ The report defined *security* in a broader sense, where vulnerable individuals and communities were the primary concern, and *security* was understood in terms of protection from a range of threats, i.e. disease, unemployment, political repression, disasters, and violence. The report further acknowledged that the security of individuals and communities was important in shaping the security of nation states, which is typically framed in terms of threats of external aggression. The most important aspect of the report was its strong focus on potential threat minimisers, such as –

- climate mitigation and adaptation
- economic development
- democratic governance and strong institutions
- international cooperation, and
- preventive diplomacy and mediation.

In addition, the report highlighted the importance of timely availability of information and increased support for research and analysis in order to improve the understanding of links between climate change and security, and to build up early warning capacities.¹⁷

Despite the report's clear mandate, however, it only received minor attention as a reference for further activities. It took until July 2011, when the German government, under its Security Council presidency, brought up the topic of climate change and security on the agenda of high-level discussions, namely at the UN Security Council. The open debate in the Security Council

15 Resolution A/63/281.

16 Climate Change and its Possible Security Implications, A/64/350, 11 September 2009, New York.

17 (ibid.).

resulted in a presidential statement not only confirming the concern of climate change affecting security, but also asking for a systematic and regular review of and reporting by the UN Secretary-General to the UN Security Council on the likely security implications of climate change.¹⁸ This result is remarkable, since China, Russia and several countries among the Group of 77 (G77) expressed their concern about linking climate change to security.¹⁹ The unanimous adoption of the Presidential Statement on climate change and security at the Security Council meeting of 20 July 2011, however, revived the spirit of climate diplomacy at international level in particular, because the UNFCCC was also endorsed as the major UN forum for discussing comprehensive climate policy actions by all participating representatives. In the aftermath of the Security Council meeting, the German government took steps to design preventive climate diplomacy – as did the United Kingdom and other governments, who are now involved in entrenching climate change as a key issue in foreign policy.²⁰

III. German Foreign Policy as regards Climate Change

German foreign policy has, in recent years, constantly pushed the EU as well as the UN to address the security risks of climate change and to make it a priority in the foreign policy community. This engagement started with asking the EU, under the German EU presidency in 2007, to prepare a report on the security dimensions of climate change. After the report was published, Germany was not only part of the informal steering group on this topic, but also started to develop its own initiatives to actively enter into discussions with partner countries and regions on climate change challenges. For example, in 2008, the German Federal Foreign Office designed and launched the initiative entitled “Water Unites” with the governments of Central Asia to jointly address the challenges of increased water scarcity in Central Asia through –

- promoting transboundary water management
- strengthening research on joint utilisation approaches

18 Statement by the President of the Security Council, S /PRST/2011/15. 20 July 2011, New York.

19 The authors' own observation during the open debate of the Security Council, 20 July 2011, New York.

20 See Thölken & Börner (2012:7–8).

- forming a network among experts from Central Asia, the EU and Germany, and
- knowledge transfer and investments in the water sector.

The initiative is also meant to contribute to the implementation of the EU Central Asia strategy, entitled The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership, issued in 2007, and other international initiatives in the region of Central Asia.

In addition, and as a follow-up to the Security Council meeting, the Federal Foreign Office has been implementing a number of climate diplomacy activities since 2011. These include a large international conference in Berlin.²¹ More than 100 participants from the foreign policy community discussed how the conclusions from the Security Council could be further operationalised. More concretely, the challenges of water scarcity, food insecurity and coastal instability were discussed, and the prospects of geopolitical change management examined.

According to the statements made during the Berlin conference, and during further regional dialogue initiatives in southern and East Africa, southern Asia and Latin America, climate diplomacy activities are specifically aimed at supporting communication with partner institutions in partner countries; promoting capacity- and network-building in affected regions in particular; and analysing the scientific fundamentals in a bid to identify climate policy options that will prevent conflicts. One of the key aspects within this multilevel effort of climate diplomacy is the integration of regional perspectives – especially from developing countries and emerging economies – into current international policy processes. To this end, it is imperative to raise awareness among key actors in the relevant regions regarding the need to cooperate regionally and globally in respect to climate issues, and this has been addressed by the German Federal Foreign Office and German embassies around the world by a number of public diplomacy means, including exhibitions, information platforms, round tables and conferences. In the following section, we will turn our attention to the question of how these initiatives and activities may be translated into a coherent climate diplomacy agenda that can be addressed with concrete policies and measures.

21 See adelphi (2012) as well as the documentation of the regional consultations, available at <http://www.climate-diplomacy.org>, last accessed 9 January 2013.

C. Towards a Strategy on Climate Diplomacy

The EU and the UN have made considerable progress in describing how a climate diplomacy framework would look, conceptually, in order to support international climate negotiations and strengthen conflict and crisis prevention capacities. German foreign policy has been a key driver behind these discussions. The identification of available threat minimisers, as outlined by the UN Secretary General in 2009, opens the door in principle to move from the stage of risk analysis to one of policy formulation and implementation, for which the parallel processes on this issue at the UN and EU levels can be used. Both levels offer other governments the opportunity to engage in strategy formulation in respect of dealing with the climate security challenge. Again, this matter will hardly be restricted to international climate negotiations: it requires the involvement of a broad spectrum of partners. Three potential areas of engagement for these partnerships are outlined in the following subsections.

1. Building Transformative Pathways

The concept of a low-carbon economy is relevant for the climate and security debate because it aims to address different political key priorities: climate protection, energy security, and economic and social development. The expansion of renewable energies is also an important element of debate today within the security and defence community: a 2010 report by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) outlined the potential opportunities for US national security that could result from the transition to an economy based on clean-energy technology.²² According to the CNA, innovation and commercialisation of clean, low-carbon energy would contribute directly to the US's future economic competitiveness and would bolster national security.²³ Comprehensive actions to mitigate GHG emissions in industrialised and developing countries are also needed to limit the risk of climate-induced conflicts and allow the global economy to shift towards lower emissions. Such transformative pathways should not only ensure compliance with ambitious

22 CNA (2010).

23 (ibid.).

climate change targets, but also support sustainable growth and the creation of new employment opportunities.²⁴

Thus, well-designed mitigation policies have the potential to link climate protection, development and conflict prevention, allowing them to serve together as threat minimisers. To this end, however, some of the key mitigation questions need to be answered, e.g. –

- How will mitigation efforts be distributed among the various countries, above all with respect to the key emitters?, and
- How can poorer countries be supported to link technological progress in strategic key areas such as energy supply, infrastructure development, or transportation with a low-carbon development pathway?

The development of sustainable energy options is especially important to avoid locking in high-carbon technologies while the demand for energy rises and, in turn, often leads to costly energy import dependency. In addition, decentralised grids are likely to offer co-benefits between sustainable energy production and improved access to energy. The impact of mitigation policies will vary significantly by country owing to varying sectoral composition, such as energy supply or transportation infrastructures. Accordingly, there is no silver bullet: ongoing consultations are needed – not least on how to involve the private sector.

II. Designing Conflict-sensitive Climate Policies

The discussion about appropriate policy frameworks is of strategic value. Accordingly, the development of low-carbon growth strategies needs further guidance and international cooperation. One possible option in supporting countries who are entering such a strategy discourse is to use the revenue generated from auctioning emission permits in carbon-trading programmes. At the same time, a conflict-sensitive approach requires that international donors and recipient countries ensure funding is spent transparently and effectively in order to avoid an increase in governance pitfalls such as corruption.²⁵

Apart from the energy sector, land use and forest protection have received increasing attention and can serve as an example of how climate mitigation

24 Ellis et al. (2009).

25 See for a general reflection, Hammill et al. (2009).

may be linked to development and stability. Efforts to systemically address the cost-effective emission reduction potential in the forest sector have led to various approaches to conceptualise the UN's Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD), a UN initiative to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. UN-REDD can, in principle, contribute to economic recovery by generating new sources of income in the forest sector for often-marginalised social groups.

Depending on the concrete design of benefit-sharing agreements, central governments as well as local communities can receive income and use it, for example, to build infrastructure and services. Additional employment opportunities may also be created for forest monitoring and law enforcement.

However, whether sustainable forest management and extractive logging are compatible with UN-REDD regulations will only be seen after an associated international agreement has been adopted. In addition, implementation of UN-REDD requires excellent governance capacities. Governments, communities, and project implementers need to develop sound concepts and implementation capacities to address the drivers of deforestation. When it comes to compliance with any future international agreement, countries need to enforce forest protection (e.g. curb illegal logging) and build up sufficient capacity to measure, report on and verify their commitments. Last but not least, sophisticated benefit-sharing mechanisms are needed in order to avoid conflicts on the national and local levels concerning the distribution of revenues generated through any kind of UN-REDD mechanism.²⁶

III. Learning to Adapt

The UNFCCC defines *adaptation* as "... adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities."

Seen through a more political lens, adaptation requires people to be empowered, their livelihoods to be secured, and their resilience to be strengthened by building appropriate institutions. Adaptation will require both effective local activities and national and regional coordination for the design

26 For a more comprehensive debate on potential risks, see the Rights and Resources Initiative, available at http://www.rightsandresources.org/documents/files/doc_140_0.pdf, last accessed 27 December 2012. See also Tänzler & Ries (2012:695–706).

and implementation of appropriate action. To this end, international cooperation is needed, especially in the case of the most vulnerable developing countries, to provide for adequate resources.²⁷

The idea of adaptation has taken centre stage in the debate on the security-related implications of climate change – in part because GHG emissions to date have already triggered irreversible global warming. Adapting to a changing environment should help avoid negative effects such as water or food scarcity and, consequently, social and political tensions. Ongoing activities have already made some progress in creating strategic support for future adaptation processes – including in some conflict-prone countries. As at the end of 2010, for example, 45 National Action Plans for Adaptation (NAPAs) for least-developed countries had been submitted to the UNFCCC. Of these, 21 were developed in countries considered to be states at high risk of destabilisation, and 19 in countries at increased risk of destabilisation.²⁸ Hence, so-called fragile states are also influenced by international support to initiate processes of adaptation.

However, there is only a slow initiation of concrete projects. This not only illustrates the as yet insufficient funding, but also contributes to an increasing loss of credibility for international climate protection measures in those countries most severely affected by climate change.

A coherent implementation of adaptation measures is likely to be facilitated by an institutionalisation of responsibilities. If an appropriate national authority does not exist, this jeopardises the integration of adaptation measures into other development processes, and makes it extremely difficult to incorporate conflict-sensitive considerations into national planning processes. As we learn from the research on environment and security, cooperation over scarce resources such as shared waters harnesses great potential to facilitate sustainable development and political stability between riparian nations as well as within such countries. One key factor for success is the establishment of strong institutions such as river commissions and other transboundary institutional arrangements.²⁹ Cooperation between countries with bordering watersheds has long been a focus of the international donor community. As a result, it is often possible to make use of existing structures – also to address future adaptation needs. However, the stabilising and trust-

27 For a comprehensive discussion, see Tänzler et al. (2010:741–750); Corendea et al. (2012).

28 See Fund for Peace (2011).

29 See e.g. Houdret et al. (2010).

building potential often demonstrated by transboundary cooperation in the water sector is not yet reflected prominently in existing national adaptation activities. This suggests the need exists to link and coordinate national and regional processes more systematically in order to provide for climate security, which may also be facilitated by appropriate institutions.

D. Doha and Beyond: Prospects for Climate Security and Climate Diplomacy

The impacts of global climate change will be felt differently across the world, but no region will be able to avoid all of them. Moreover, feedback loops between different threats across regions, converging trends, and global interconnectedness requires concerted and global action. The options available to foreign policymakers in respect of addressing climate-related security concerns are not limited to the UN climate negotiations. However, the ongoing debate on ‘targets and timetables’ cannot delay the establishment of a comprehensive framework for adaptation governance, and support for initiating the development of low-carbon growth strategies. These elements are likely to benefit from a re-energised global process in order to facilitate the mainstreaming of these issues in relevant national and regional processes and to provide a basis for further activities to ensure climate-related security. Beyond the international climate change process, there are further entry points to ensure that the responses to climate change are designed in a conflict-sensitive way. Here representatives from the fields of development, foreign and security policy should engage in a strategic partnership to address the following issues:

- Governments and non-governmental stakeholders should use ongoing risk analysis processes to identify sectors critically affected by climate change, especially in conflict-prone areas. This will also help to ensure coherency and coordination with other planning processes. One possible means would be to expand the use of peace and conflict assessments to consider the impacts of climate mitigation and adaptation activities.
- Aid agencies active in the transatlantic context should initiate conflict-sensitive mitigation and adaptation processes using a multi-dimensional system that incorporates administrative and societal perspectives. Involving representatives from partner countries in risk analysis and strategy formulation will probably increase acceptance for the transformation

processes necessary to secure the supply of food, water, and sustainable energy, and to improve disaster preparedness.

- The establishment of national and regional steering committees in conflict-prone regions can support the monitoring of mitigation and adaptation programmes, coordinating public authorities and external stakeholders such as donor organisations, and establishing mediation bodies. To this end, a substantial increase of capacities on a national and regional level is needed that can be supported not only by the EU but also by relevant UN agencies, and
- The support for adaptation and mitigation processes, especially in already fragile countries, should be integrated into the larger regional context. The further development of the EEAS offers a chance to expand international cooperation with third countries to commence dialogue, create awareness, share analysis, and cooperatively address the challenges of climate change.

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