Louise van Schaik, Stefano Sarris, Tobias von Lossow & Anca-Elena Ursu

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Climate-related security risks in Iraq and Mali: What the EU can do

For over a decade the EU has shown an interest in mitigating climate-related security risks, but this has rarely translated into effective policies. Iraq and Mali provide examples of how EU missions, policies and related financial instruments could be adjusted to take due account of the climate-security nexus. There is ample opportunity to include this nexus into ongoing programmes, which would also strengthen other EU foreign policy objectives in the fields of security, migration, development and climate adaptation. As several countries close to the EU are highly vulnerable to climate-related insecurity, a more explicit approach to address this issue and more dedicated funding programmes are crucial.

Introduction

On 26 February 2018 EU foreign ministers adopted the 'Council Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy', which emphasise the security implications of climate change and the need for swift action.[1] With the Conclusions, the EU takes decisive steps on climate change and security – a topic which has been on the agenda for over a decade. On 22 June 2018, High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini will host the high-level event 'Climate, peace and security: the time for action'. The event will address the risks and destabilising effects of climate change, and demonstrates the commitment of the EU and its partners to turning awareness of the issue into ambitious action. This policy brief gives a succinct overview of how the climate-security nexus arrived on the EU's political agenda, its relevance in two cases of political priority – Iraq and Mali – and how EU external action policies and instruments could help reduce climate-related security risks.

The road to 2018: EU leadership on climate security

Following the US and the UN, the EU formally recognised climate change as a security risk for the first time in 2008, after internal instigation of the UK and Germany. But for about a decade this was more a generic acknowledgement of climate change as a security risk than a call for action. Consequently, it had very little impact on EU policies and instruments that might reduce such risks.

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1   European Commission [EC]. (2018). Council Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32953/st06125-en18.pdf (accessed April 2018).

In 2008 a joint report by EU High Representative Solana and the European Commission acknowledged climate change as a '**threat multiplier** which exacerbates existing trends, tensions, and instability'.[2] Climate security was also mentioned in the *Review on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy*.[3] One year later a progress report underlined the EU's intent to harness a climate-security **multilateral leadership role** and to **strengthen the EU's capacity** to work on the issue.[4] Since 2011, climate security has become part of EU climate diplomacy, which bolstered foreign policy aspects of climate change after the failed Copenhagen Climate Summit of 2009. The 2016 EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy repeatedly refers to the security implications of climate change and calls for addressing them via the EU's external action policies.[5]

In the meantime some EU member states became more active in supporting and advancing climate security developments in other fora such as the UN Security Council (UNSC).[6] With the 2017 UNSC Lake Chad Resolution, the 2018 Presidential Statement on West Africa and the Sahel, and the resolution on Somalia in which climate was recognised as contributing to insecurity,

notable outcomes were achieved.[7] Sweden and the Netherlands are also pressing for an institutional home for the climate-security nexus at the UN – in the form of an institutionalised cooperation, with incoming members in the UNSC, Belgium and Germany expecting to take over the lead on this agenda in addition to France, the UK, Canada, the Maldives, Ethiopia and others.

The high-level event in June 2018 could be the starting point for the EU taking leadership on climate security, a policy field long dominated by the US. To fill this vacant position, the challenge now is how the EU can adjust its policies to actually reduce security risks emanating from climate change. The cases of Iraq and Mali can move this agenda forward, as both countries are in vulnerable phases of conflict and early post-conflict recovery. They are situated in regions that are highly exposed to climate change impacts. Integrating the security dimension of climate change into EU external action should be prioritised, as that could make a difference and contribute to regional stabilisation processes.

Climate security in Iraq: the EU's (potential) contribution

Climate change has had various consequences for Iraq, including prolonged heat waves, higher average temperatures and less precipitation. Among the most serious are the country's various water challenges, for example dilapidated infrastructures, potential tensions with the Kurdistan region and the massive environmental degradation of the marshes in the south.[8] Water has always been related to security and stability in Iraq. In the past, water has repeatedly been instrumentalised for political purposes,

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2   S113/08, p. 2.

3   EC. (11 December 2008). Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy. S407/08. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/104630.pdf (accessed April 2018).

4   Council of the EU. (25 November 2009). Joint progress report and follow-up recommendations on climate change and international security. http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2016645%202009%20INIT (accessed April 2018).

5   EEAS. (2016). Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe A Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy (EU Global Strategy). http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf (accessed April 2018).

6   United Nations [UN]. (9 May 2017). *EU an 'indispensable' UN partner, working for rules-based international order, Security Council told.* https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/05/556932-eu-indispensable-un-partner-working-rules-based-international-order-security (accessed May 2018).

7   Van Schaik, L., Sarris, S., Von Lossow, T. (2018). Fighting an existential threat: small island states bringing climate change to the UNSC. https://www.planetarysecurityinitiative.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/Schaik_Sarris_Lossow_PB_Fighting_an_existential_threat_fin.pdf (accessed May 2018).

8   Von Lossow, T. (2018): More than infrastructures: Water challenges in Iraq.

it played a role in jihadist recruitment[9] for Islamic State (IS), and has been weaponised during the recent violent conflicts.[10] The water crisis decreases food production,[11] threatens the country's electricity supplies and contributes to migration trends,[12] all of which are significant threats in the current fragile post-conflict setting in Iraq.

The EU's policies on Iraq pay only sporadic attention to the impact of climate change and water on security and development. The EU Advisory Mission in support of Security Sector Reform (**EUAM Iraq**), with a budget of €14 million until October 2018,[13] assists in implementing the Iraqi National Security Strategy and in addressing the outlined most urgent security threats.[14,15] This document explicitly lists water scarcity and natural disasters, challenges that are interrelated with climate change.[16] With its implementation support, the EU has a direct opportunity to engage in action on climate security in Iraq, but it is not clear if this potential is yet harnessed. The EUAM Iraq mission works in close coordination

with the Global Coalition against Daesh and with NATO, which has been active in Iraq since 2015 through providing training and assistance.[17]

The EU's **Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)** funds, with a budget of €7.5 million, smaller projects on security sector reform and human rights in Iraq but does not cover climate change issues. Projects related to climate security can seek funding through the long-term IcSP component managed by EuropeAid (DG Devco), but only one such project, which developed a climate-security risk analysis, has been funded to date and it did not look at Iraq.

The EU's **development assistance** for Iraq amounted to around €185 million between 2014 and 2017 and primarily targeted good governance, stabilisation, primary and secondary education, and sustainable energy. The latter contributes to mitigation of climate change impacts but does not reduce immediate risks stemming from those impacts, as these are caused by global emissions, of which Iraqi emissions are only a fraction. Following the announced defeat of Daesh in December 2017[18] the EU formulated and communicated an EU Strategy on Iraq.[19] The strategy set out six key areas, one of which focuses on the initiation of a formal migration dialogue. Herein, the EU has an opportunity to formally integrate and underline the impact of climate change on migration.

Iraq has received €107.5 million from the **EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis**.[20] Established in 2014,

9   Schwartzstein, P. (2017). Climate Change and Water Woes Drove ISIS Recruiting in Iraq. https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/11/climate-change-drought-drove-isis-terrorist-recruiting-iraq/ (accessed April 2018).

10 Von Lossow, T. (2016). The Rebirth of Water as a Weapon: IS in Syria and Iraq. https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2016.1213063.

11 IAUIRAQ. (2012). Climate Change in Iraq. Accessed May 2018 at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Climate%20change%20In%20Iraq%20Fact%20sheet%20-%20English.pdf.

12 Missirian, A., Schlenker, W. (2017). Asylum Applications Respond to Temperature Fluctuations. http://science.sciencemag.org/content/358/6370/1610.full (accessed May 2018).

13 EEAS. (2017). Common Security and Defence Policy EUAM Iraq. https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/factsheet_euam_iraq.pdf.

14 https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/factsheet_euam_iraq.pdf.

15 EEAS. (2017). EU launches new security mission in Iraq. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/33992/eu-launches-new-security-mission-iraq_en (accessed May 2018)

16 Shareef, H. (21 March 2016). Briefing on the Republic of Iraq's National Security Strategy, p. 7. http://stabilizationandtransition.org/pdfs/IST-1459338696.pdf (accessed June 2018)

17 NATO. (2018). Relations with Iraq. https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/topics_88247.htm (accessed May 2018).

18 England, A. (2017). Iraq announces defeat of Isis. https://www.ft.com/content/d6636416-dcf3-11e7-a8a4-0a1e63a52f9c (accessed May 2018).

19 FAC. (22 January 2018). Council conclusions on Iraq. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32406/st05285en18.pdf (accessed May 2018).

20 EC DG-NEAR. (n.d.) EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/syria/madad_en (accessed May 2018).

the fund supports Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and the Western Balkans in addressing the long-term economic, social and educational needs of refugees and internally displaced persons. These funds have also been used for irrigation infrastructure rehabilitation – a sensible climate adaptation response in the region.[21] On the assumption that these projects contributed to reducing tensions and were sufficient in scale and scope to address the huge water challenges and reduced food production, they can be considered as climate change adaption interventions that also contribute to European migration and security objectives.

Moreover, Iraq received nearly €370 million of **humanitarian aid** from the EU between 2014 and 2017.[22] The EU-Iraq country factsheet does not specifically mention climate change, but lists basic humanitarian assistance for climate-related factors, such as water and food availability.[23] EU humanitarian assistance focuses on supporting those most affected by conflict – by supplying basic needs for livelihood, including water and food.[24] Through its disaster risk reduction (DRR) programme, the EU has an opportunity to improve preparedness for water scarcity and natural disasters affecting Iraq.

The policies and instruments for Iraq indicate that climate change impacts on water and food security, and by extension the stability of the country in general, do not yet feature prominently. But in some cases, there is room for directly strengthening climate security, particularly in the form of adaptation measures; others areas may provide climate-security actions indirectly through the policy fields of water, food, development or migration among others.

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21 EEAS. (2018). EU-Iraq Relations: EU Response to Iraq Crisis.
22 EEAS. (2018). EU-Iraq Relations: EU Response to Iraq Crisis.
23 EC DG-ECHO. (2018). Humanitarian Aid in Iraq. https://ec.europa.eu/echo/printpdf/where/middle-east/iraq_en (accessed May 2018).
24 EC DG-ECHO. (2018). Humanitarian Aid in Iraq. https://ec.europa.eu/echo/printpdf/where/middle-east/iraq_en (accessed May 2018).

Climate security in Mali: the EU's (potential) contribution

In Mali, climate change affects the security situation through its impact on natural resources,[25] accelerating stress on water and land and hampering agricultural productivity.[26] Access to water, competition over land, and migration also play a role.[27] Furthermore, a link has been established with recruitment by radical armed groups,[28] migration and conflict risk. Of particular concern are disputes between nomadic herders and settled famers who are competing for grazing lands in the north and the centre, for instance in the Ségou and Mopti regions.[29] Against this background, the UNSC acknowledged that climate change can lead to adverse effects on stability in the Sahel and West Africa region.[30]

The 2016 **EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel** (Sahel Strategy) reports that security and development are inextricably linked in the Sahel, with climate change as one of the primary challenges affecting the region.[31] In this sense, the

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25 Mitra, S. (2017). Mali's Fertile Grounds for Conflict: Climate Change and Resource Stress. *PSI Policy Brief.*
26 Kalkavan, B. (2017). Climate Change, Inequality and Conflict. *PSI Policy Brief.*
27 Ursu, A. (2018). Finding justice amidst insecurity: Policy initiatives to strengthen customary justice systems and mitigate conflicts in Central Mali. *PSI Policy Brief.*
28 Walch, C. (2017). Fertile Ground? Climate Change and Jihadism in Mali. http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Blogs/Sahel-Watch-a-living-analysis-of-the-conflict-in-Mali/Fertile-Ground-Climate-Change-and-Jihadism-in-Mali (accessed April 2018).
29 Ursu, A.E. (2018). *Under the gun: embattled traditional authorities in Central Mali.* Conflict Research Unit. Clingendael Institute.
30 UN. (30 January 2018). UNSC Presidential Statement Expresses Serious Concern over Security Situation in West Africa, Sahel. https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13189.doc.htm (accessed April 2018).
31 EEAS. (2016). Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/strategy_for_security_and_development_in_the_sahel_en_0.pdf (accessed May 2018).

strategy sets multi-annual objectives for the EU in the region, although these focus on crunch issues such as conflict resolution, rule of law and combating radicalisation without relating them to resource scarcity, such as water or land, aggravated by climate change.

The Sahel Strategy is harmonised with the main talking points between the **EU and the G5 Sahel**. At the first high-level meeting in 2015, convened by High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini, climate change was on the agenda alongside security, crime, migration and humanitarian concerns.[32] This meeting resulted in the **EU Regional Action Plan for the Sahel (RAP)**, the implementation framework of the Sahel Strategy. The RAP falls under the responsibility of the **EU Special Representative for the Sahel** (EUSR), Angel Losada. One of Losada's key tasks is to continue raising awareness of the challenges around the Lake Chad Basin in relation to the consequences of climate change in the region, which are increasingly visible.[33] Through its context analysis, the RAP underscores the need to address underlying climate-related vulnerability and to build resilience to future climatic and conflict-related shocks through interventions covering, in particular, social protection, food security, nutrition and livelihoods.[34] The RAP highlights an understanding that climate shocks can undermine stabilisation and the provision of security. Nevertheless, in the implementation of the RAP, the climate-security nexus has not been prominent.

Most of the projects focus on migration, rural (agriculture) employment opportunities, and countering radicalisation; there is little recognition of areas particularly vulnerable to climate impacts or of the need to take account of the increasing scarcity of natural resources, notably food and water, due to climate change.

The EU has two Common Security and Defence Policy missions in Mali, the civilian and military **EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM)**, in operation since 2013, and the **EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali (EUCAP)**, set up in 2015. Currently, these missions do not take account of the climate-security nexus in their operations. They cooperate closely with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), but this mission remains limited to the realm of traditional security and does not incorporate analysis of climate change impacts into its activities. The established G5 Sahel seems to be the most proactive security actor in this sense. Geared towards stabilisation of the region it explicitly mentions the urgency of addressing and mitigating 'food and nutrition security, water resources management, pastoralism and climate change'.[35]

According to the EU's **National Indicative Programme (NIP)** for Mali,[36] €615 million is allocated for the period 2014-2020 out of the **European Development Fund (EDF)**.[37] The NIP funds are allocated under five categories: state reform and consolidation of rule of law; rural development and food security; education; transportation and infrastructure;

32 EEAS. (2017). The EU and the Sahel, factsheet. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/ headquarters-homepage_en/4099/The%20 European%20Union%20and%20the%20Sahel,%20 fact%20sheet (accessed May 2018).

33 Secretary-General of the European Commission. (3 January 2017). Annual Report on the Sahel Regional Action Plan, p. 10. http://data.consilium. europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5009-2017-INIT/en/ pdf (accessed May 2018).

34 General Secretariat of the Council. (20 April 2015). Council conclusions on the Sahel Regional Action Plan 2015-2020), p. 7. http://www.consilium.europa. eu/media/21522/st07823-en15.pdf (accessed May 2018).

35 General Secretariat of the Council. (20 Apr, 2015). Council conclusions on the Sahel Regional Action Plan 2015-2020), p. 7. http://www.consilium.europa. eu/media/21522/st07823-en15.pdf (accessed May, 2018).

36 European Commission. (2015). National Indicative Programme (NIP) for Mali. https://ec.europa.eu/ europeaid/sites/devco/files/pin-mali-fed11-2014_ fr.pdf.

37 EC DG-DEVCO. (2018). European Development Fund (EDF). https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/ funding/funding-instruments-programming/ funding-instruments/european-development-fund_ en (accessed May 2018).

and support for international organisations and civil society. Under rural development and food security, the NIP warns that the adverse effects of climate change, rising food prices and the security challenges create an alarming situation in Mali.

The EU also supports inclusive national dialogues to define **National Resilience Priorities for the Global Alliance for Resilience (NRP–AGIR)**.[38] The Alliance, consisting of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger, with Mauritania and Senegal in the process of validation, aims to build resilience to nutrition and food crises in West Africa and the Sahel.[39] The aim of the NRP-AGIR Mali is to address the root causes of this food and nutrition insecurity driven by 'demographic pressure, climate change and exacerbated by the 2011-2012 political crisis'.[40] The acknowledgement of climate change as an underlying factor in Mali's NRP-AGIR is a strong signal that EU external action is addressing climate security.

In the area of **migration** policy, the EU established the **EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF)** in November 2015 during the Valetta Summit. The EUTF addresses the root causes of instability, irregular migration and forced displacement, and contributes to better migration management. It complements existing EU foreign policy instruments, such as PARSEC Mopti-Gao in Mali, which aims to tackle the root causes of irregular migration and the phenomenon of displaced people and to prevent irregular migration, smuggling and human trafficking.[41] The EUTF currently has ten projects in Mali with a budget of €186.57 million, of which

about a third is allocated to strengthening resilience, including food and environmental security.[42] Other priorities are improved governance and conflict prevention, greater economic and employment opportunities, and improved migration management.

The EU has allocated nearly €200 million of **humanitarian aid** to Mali since 2012 to address immediate needs related to high infant mortality, severe malnutrition and the situation of Malian refugees in neighbouring countries.[43] Moreover the **Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)** funds a €5 million short-term crisis management project.[44] As peace building is still in the early stages, Mali continues to need ad hoc and short-term funding.

In summary, the Mali case illustrates that there is ample opportunity to integrate the climate-security nexus ito policy interventions, and they are recognised as important, particularly with regard to the food security situation in the country. Whereas development and migration policies have made a head start, peace building and humanitarian efforts still require a more explicit acknowledgement of the link between climate security and regional stability.

Towards 'the time for action' on EU climate security policy

In this policy brief, we discussed the EU's external action policies on Iraq and Mali and how they are already considering the climate-security nexus – or could do so. So far, the relationship between climate and security has been recognised, but more could be done to adjust relevant policy

38   Annual Report on the Sahel RAP, p. 12. http://data. consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5009-2017-INIT/en/pdf (accessed May 2018).

39   EC DG-ECHO (n.d.) AGIR (the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative). https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/resilience/sahel-agir_en (accessed May 2018).

40   https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/mali_case_study.pdf.

41   EC. (2018). EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa [EUTF]. https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/eu_emergency_trust_fund_for_africa_07-05-2018.pdf (accessed May 2018).

42   EC. (n.d.). EUTF Mali. https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/sahel-lake-chad/mali (accessed May 2018).

43   EC DG-ECHO.(2018). Humanitarian aid in Mali. https://ec.europa.eu/echo/printpdf/where/africa/mali_en (accessed May 2018).

44   EC. IcSP Map. https://icspmap.eu/ (accessed May 2018).

processes and policies.[45] More specifically, the following actions could be considered:

– Fund climate-security risk analyses and projects through the IcSP in order to increase awareness of climate-related security risks. Such risk analyses and risk management strategies could also become part of a Mediterranean-MENA taskforce on climate security.
– Raise awareness of climate-security as part of the RAP and include it permanently on the agenda of meetings between the EU and G5 Sahel. For this region it is clear that climate change is intertwined with other phenomena such as migration, radicalisation and conflict.
– Invest in policy actions that contribute to food security, improved water management and better use of land resources – to be carried out in a conflict-sensitive manner and taking into account the climate-security dimension. For example, such actions should not favour one group over another, should pay attention to existing grievances and should consider of future climate change.
– Expand the EU Strategy on Iraq with a focus on water scarcity and building resilience to prevent or reduce the possibility climate impacts hitting hard. This would be in line with the Iraq National Security Strategy. Related impacts aggravated by climate change, such as reduced food and electricity production, also need to be addressed up front.

– Stress more explicitly the climate-security nexus in the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa – thereby building on the 2016 EU Global Strategy. These instruments both acknowledge the challenges of migration and climate change in the Middle East and Africa and present a window of opportunity for addressing climate change in a practical manner.
– Integrate actionable climate security plans further into EU humanitarian policies and operations. More specifically, the EU could target climate-security objectives via its disaster risk reduction (DRR) programme. Currently 9 percent of EU humanitarian aid funds go towards the DRR programme, but with climate change impacts hitting increasingly hard, this is unlikely to be sufficient.[46]
– Pay more attention to climate impacts in military risk analyses and efforts geared towards peace building, especially in fragile contexts such as Iraq and Mali. To date, EU missions do not seem to be fully aware of how the climate-security nexus is relevant for the country in which they are based.

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45 See also Shiloh Fetzek and Louise van Schaik, 2018, Europe's Responsibility to Prepare: Managing Climate Security Risks in a Changing World, the Center for Climate and Security, in partnership with the Planetary Security Initiative and the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'.

46 https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/risk-reduction_en.

About the Planetary Security Initiative

The Planetary Security Initiative aims to help increase awareness, to deepen knowledge, and to develop and promote policies and good practice guidance to help governments, the private sector and international institutions better secure peace and cooperation in times of climate change and global environmental challenges. The Initiative was launched by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 and is currently operated by a consortium of leading think tanks headed by the Clingendael Institute.

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Website: www.planetarysecurityinitiative.org

About the authors

Dr Louise van Schaik is Head of Sustainability and Climate Change and Senior Research Fellow at the Clingendael Institute. She is also acting Head of the EU in the World Unit and visiting professor at the College of Europe in Bruges.

Stefano Sarris is former Intern at the Planetary Security Initiative, based at the Clingendael Institute.

Tobias von Lossow is Research Fellow at the Clingendael Institute.

Anca-Elena Ursu is Research Assistant with Clingendael's Conflict Research Unit. A legal professional by training, she works at the intersection of customary justice, local governance and irregular migration from the Sahel.