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Militarised Adaptation?

How the Global South is Adopting Climate-Security Approaches

Dafne Yeltekin

ideas into movement

KEY POINTS

- Climate change is increasingly treated as a security issue in national and international agendas. This approach has been driven by the largest military powers, but low- and middle-income countries (L&MICs) are also starting to integrate the language of 'climate security' into their national strategies.

- L&MICs use the language of 'climate security' for different purposes and with different meanings: to seek to accelerate climate action, to legitimise their own national military expansion, to justify foreign influence and intervention, and more positively to advance peace-building efforts. The power and resources of the military and security forces means, however, that more militarised approaches often prevail.

- The power of the richest countries also influences climate-security agendas in L&MICs through funded partnerships and agreements, development aid, and climate finance, which results in foreign military initiatives, border militarisation, and the 'securitisation of development aid'.

- The language of climate security risks increasing militarised responses, further deepening injustice for those most affected by the climate crisis. We need to reimagine 'security', by rejecting the prevailing approach that seeks to maintain and manage a system that created climate change and that perceives the victims as potential 'threats'. We urgently need an approach built on justice that tackles the root causes of climate change.

Introduction

Climate change is increasingly treated as a security issue in national and international agendas, most often referred to as 'climate security'. Starting with its adoption by US and European military forces, it has also been adopted by international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and its specialised agencies, and also widely used by civil society, academia, and the media. So far, however, the drive to emphasise climate change as a security concern has largely been driven by high-income countries with disproportionately high levels of military spending. It has appeared in security strategies which focus predominantly on how to maintain military superiority at a time of global climate crisis and how to defend the national security of the richest countries against the instability caused by climate change that is likely first to occur largely in low- and middle-income countries (L&MICs).

There is, however, an emerging trend of L&MICs integrating the language of climate security into their national strategies. This is happening in the context of rapid climate change, with the greatest impact on countries where democracy is often in retreat, displaced by military or authoritarian leaders, often with the support of some of the richest countries. The result has been a growing militarisation of nations and societies, which will define how all countries respond to climate change.

Indeed, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) shows that there is a significant increase in military spending among L&MICs. Military expenditure in countries across Africa was an estimated $43.2 billion in 2020, up by 5.1% over 2019 and 11% higher than in 2011. India's military spending of $76.6 billion ranked third in the world. Nigeria increased military spending by 56% in 2021, to reach $4.5 billion. While this militarisation is not ostensibly in response to climate change, it sets the context as the climate crisis unfolds.

The dramatic rise in killings of frontline defenders and environmental activists in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, India and the Philippines point to an increasingly clear link between militarisation, land rights, and the climate crisis – where political leaders refer to climate change as a threat but at the same time oppress those who seek to defend the environment.

The language of climate security risks further increasing militarised responses. This discussion paper explores how the narrative of security could become universalised and extended towards militarised responses, further deepening injustices for those most affected by the climate crisis.

BOX 1: War on Terror – how a US military concept went global and affected human rights everywhere

The term 'climate security', which was conceived in the US and has since been applied globally, has a history. When Bush launched the 'War on Terror', the same rhetoric and framework was adopted by governments of every political complexion around the world and used for their own political purposes. It has led to torture, 'rendition' (i.e. kidnapping), false imprisonment, repression of civil society, freezing of civil society organisations' (CSOs) finances worldwide, often with global backing. TNI's work on counter-terrorism and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has exposed its costs for civil society everywhere, with even China adopting the term to justify its crackdown on Uyghur people. Similarly, it appears that the narrative of climate security is being adopted by authoritarian governments as a self-serving rhetoric to justify their oppressive policies. TNI's work on counter-terrorism and FATF shows the dangers of exporting and reinforcing language as well as policies that repressive governments can use to systemise state violence and oppression.

The Climate–Security Agenda driven by the US and European governments

Climate security as a framework first entered the policy agenda in 2003 in a Pentagon paper that examined climate change in terms of its direct and indirect threats to national security. Climate security is now part of the defence planning, intelligence assessments, and military operational plans of most wealthy nations including Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, the UK and the US. As TNI has shown in its Primer on Climate Security, the language and tone vary depending on the country and institution, but they all rely on a neo-Malthusian paradigm, which assumes that climate change causes *scarcity* which leads to *conflict,* making *security* solutions necessary.

Its assumptions are largely false. Recent studies have shown that the correlation between climate change and conflict is unproved and obscure socio-political complexities that exist alongside environmental issues.[1] The 2022 report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) affirms this, arguing that governance and socioeconomic factors are the key drivers of conflict and migration rather than climate change. Its flawed logic does not mean, however, that a climate security narrative serves no purpose. Assumptions about conflict and insecurity requiring militarised solutions help legitimise approaches that rely on the military and the security industry, and shift attention away from addressing the systemic causes of climate change and vulnerability.

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1   See also Selby, J., Daoust, G. and Hoffmann, C. (2022) Divided Environments: An international political ecology of climate change, water and security. Cambridge University Press

BOX 2: What are the main problems with describing climate change as a security issue?

1. Obscures or diverts attention from the causes of climate change, blocking necessary change to the unjust status quo. In focusing on responses to the impacts of climate change and the security interventions that might be required, climate security strategies divert attention from the causes of the climate crisis – the power of corporations and nations that have contributed most to causing climate change, the role of the military that is one of the biggest institutional GHG emitters, and the economic policies such as free trade agreements that have made so many people even more vulnerable to climate-related changes.

2. Strengthens a booming military and security apparatus and industry that has already gained unprecedented wealth and power in the wake of 9/11. Predicted climate insecurity has become a new open-ended excuse for military and security spending and for emergency measures that bypass democratic norms.

3. Shifts responsibility for the climate crisis to the victims of climate change, casting them as 'risks' or 'threats'. In considering the instability caused by climate change, climate security advocates warn of the dangers of states imploding, places becoming inhabitable, and people becoming violent or migrating. Those who are the least responsible for climate change are not only the most affected by it, but are also viewed as 'threats'.

4. Reinforces corporate interests. National security is typically interpreted as defending corporate interests even if they are companies such as oil giants that are the chief contributors to geopolitical and climate insecurity.

5. Creates insecurity. The deployment of security forces usually creates insecurity for others. This is evident, for example, in the 20-year US-led and NATO-supported military invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, launched with the promise of security from terrorism, and yet ended up fuelling endless war, conflict, the return of the Taliban and potentially the rise of new terrorist forces.

6. Undermines other ways of dealing with climate impacts. Once security is the framing, the question is always what is insecure, to what extent, and what security interventions might work – never whether security should even be the approach. It thus rules out other approaches – such as those that seek to look at more systemic causes, or centred on different values (e.g. justice, popular sovereignty, ecological alignment, restorative justice), or based on different agencies and approaches (e.g. public health leadership, commons-based or community-based solutions).

Based on TNI's 2021 Primer on Climate Security – The dangers of militarising the climate crisis.

One of the challenges of examining climate-security narratives is the amorphous way in which they are used and defined. Security means different things for different groups of people and thus can be interpreted and practised in different ways. It can help provide a sense of urgency to deal with tangible threats to ecological and human resilience. It is also being applied to non-military approaches to climate instability, such as investments in peace-building and reconciliation efforts in a given context, or to research to identify the systemic causes of certain conflicts. However, given the political and economic power of national military and security bodies, the national security framing about the 'threat' posed to nations remains the most prominent narrative among policymakers and political leaders and is the approach that underlies most policy responses. As Buxton and others have argued, the word 'security' should cause us to question *whose* security is being protected.

The Climate–security agenda in the Global South

While there is no agreed definition of the so-called Global South, this discussion paper uses the term to refer to L&MICs that are economically disadvantaged as a result of colonialism, global capitalism, and neoliberal policies of wealthy countries, the so-called Global North. Clearly, the term Global South is not determined solely by geography, although it includes regions within Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. While we recognize this term holds intersecting dimensions of race and also class not bound to geographical North/South framings, in our analysis we are focused mostly on countries or states. For our purposes, we also include the countries that have become economically powerful in recent decades such as India and China. We also look at the political position of coalitions such as the Group of 77 (G77) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). This oversimplifies a complex picture of different political positions and interests, but gives a sense of a broad consensus of views among nations that make up the Global South. While the climate-security framework has been driven and deployed by countries in the Global North, recent trends suggest that some countries within the Global South – particularly those with a large military apparatus and/or authoritarian regime – have increasingly integrated climate-security narratives, and more broadly a militarised response to climate impacts, into their national security and international strategies. We provide some examples below. This is in no way a comprehensive and exhaustive summary. Each country is affected by climate change differently and therefore each response to the crisis is likely to differ, but nevertheless there are some common patterns.

G77 and UN positions on climate security

The 1994 UN Human Development Report was the first to systematise the major threats to human security, which were categorised into seven thematic groups, one of which included the environment and the threats posed by climate change. The report introduced the concept of human security, which equated 'security with people rather than territories, with development rather than arms'. However, the richest and most militarised countries soon distorted and weaponised the concept of human security. When the topic of climate and security first emerged in the UN, Global South actors had, to some degree, a unified voice as they mostly opposed the securitisation of climate change. In 2006 the G77 argued that 'the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating

the global response to climate change' and that the richest countries should not only address the 'consequences [of climate change] but mainly the roots of the problem'. The G77 also stated that it is inappropriate to consider the issue of energy in the UNSC, 'reaffirming the key role of energy in achieving the goals of sustainable development, poverty eradication and achieving the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals]'. In 2013, the G77 and China reiterated this position arguing that the UNSC was 'not the appropriate forum for this discussion' and that such issues should be assigned to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly. The G77 has not issued public positions since then.

There has been an effort by the UN to have a more holistic approach to climate security that includes a greater focus on peace-building operations. The Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) was created in 2018 as a joint initiative by the Department for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) 'to strengthen the capacity of the UN system to analyse and address the adverse impacts of climate change on peace and security'. To do so, the CSM developed the Climate Security Toolbox to 'provide a broad framework for a holistic and systematic approach to climate security.' The CSM has also established a UN Community of Practice on Climate Security as an informal forum for information exchange and knowledge co-creation

BOX 3: Extractivism and militarisation

The rising global demand for primary resources has made the link between militarisation and extractivism increasingly clear. Metal and mineral production has soared, from 11.3 billion tons produced globally in 2000 to 17.7 billion tons in 2018. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, is constantly mined for its minerals such as cobalt, coltan, chromium, tantalum, and uranium. This mineral extraction has often been enforced with violence, taken from communities that have not consented and are even dispossessed of their land. Governments and private militias have repressed protest and resistance. Land and environmental defenders worldwide have consequently become among the most targeted groups, with over 1700 being killed since 2012, and many more injured. The shift to renewable energy has not changed this picture, as it is heavily dependent on minerals. A 2020 World Bank Group report found that the production of minerals, such as cobalt, graphite, and lithium, could increase by nearly 500% by 2050, to meet the growing demand for clean energy technologies. The extraction of lithium, in the Altiplano [Andean highlands] in Bolivia and Chile has not only led to exploitation of indigenous territories by mining companies SQM and Rockwood Lithium in the Salar de Atacama, but also to increased violence and policing. A recent survey by Benjamin Sovacool on the implications for energy justice in climate change mitigation over a 20-year period demonstrates that different communities around the world are still being negatively affected by low-carbon transitions as a result of environmental degradation, dispossession, and destruction. (Neo)extractivism, even more so than climate change, is one of the principal drivers of conflicts and injustice.

Even promoters of 'sustainability' can end up reinforcing military and corporate logics. Conservation areas are often patrolled by military or armed groups, killing any poachers or trespassers. In Niger – one of the most militarised and climate-vulnerable countries in Africa – military involvement, environmental protection, and humanitarian assistance are all tied together. Its National Border Police is involved in national reforestation and provides health services and infrastructure for internally displaced people (IDPs) and climate-related 'migrants'. It is also supported by the European Union (EU), through training, funding and provision of materials, to develop repressive security migration policies and techniques, including surveillance, detention and deportation in the 'fight against irregular migration'. This blurring of roles is deeply problematic, but is set to increase as state agencies are viewed as providing stability and security in climate-fuelled emergencies. The involvement and increased funding of security forces – which, in the case of Niger, are also supported by foreign powers – will increase insecurity for marginalised communities who already experience police repression.

See also: Orellana, A. (2021) Neoextractivism and State Violence: Defending the Defenders in Latin America, State of Power 2021. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.

Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights (2021) Extractive Industries, Violence, and Corporate Criminality: Is There a Pathway to Global Justice?

L&MICs' different uses of climate security

Opposition to climate security among countries of the Global South has not been universal, and in the last 15 years an increasing number of L&MICs have adopted the approach. In various national and international documents and debates, 'climate security' refers to a range of approaches and activities. These can be categorised as follows:

- **Urgency** – to seek to accelerate climate action
- **National military advancement** – to legitimise state military and security responses
- **Justify external influence and intervention** – to justify aid, policies, and even military deployment, from countries in the Global North
- **Peace-building efforts** are also described as climate security, although they are not based on the same assumptions and strategies as military-based approaches

It is important to examine these categories given that the term 'climate security' can refer to very different approaches, while noting which of these dominates due to the influence of powerful actors and financial flows.

Urgency

Some L&MICs use the language of climate security to suggest urgency as a way to accelerate climate action. Security narratives are therefore used as a strategy when the demands of countries most hit by climate change are met with inaction from governments and international organisations. For this reason, some countries in the Global South increasingly support the UNSC, rather than other UN bodies, as a forum to discuss climate change as it gives weight and urgency to the issue.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS), especially in the Pacific, have been among the most active proponents of a climate-security agenda in the UNSC. In 2009 they requested the UN Secretary-General draft a report on the security implications of climate change. In the debates they argued that climate change is an imminent and direct existential threat hindering their territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence and therefore requiring different security solutions. In 2008, the Maldives emphasised the need for wealthy countries to take responsibility for the effects of climate change, demanding an international mechanism to address loss and damage. Following this, in 2009 the Maldives established The Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), an international partnership of L&MICs that are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. During COP26, Pacific SIDS released a statement underlining that: 'climate change is the single greatest threat to our livelihood, security and wellbeing. The challenge is not about securing more scientific evidence, setting new targets without plans to reach them, or more talk shops. It is about action and survival'. They called for urgent support measures for climate adaptation and mitigation, noting that 'past actions and responses have been fragmented and plagued by a lack of urgency'. The SIDS' understanding of security includes solutions including military aid, financial assistance, and technology transfers from other countries. However, as scholar Eliana Cusato has argued, SIDS have also articulated alternative and progressive understandings of security, with an emphasis on historic responsibility, sustainability, ecosystem resilience, and indigenous knowledge.

Other L&MICs have also supported climate-security programmes coordinated by the UNSC in partnership with European countries. In 2016, Senegal hosted a meeting on water, peace and security, stressing the security implications of climate change in its region as 'a threat to social, economic and political gains'. This was the first time the UNSC discussed water as a security issue, which according to the UNSC document, led to 'mixed feelings' among Council members. In the same year, Egypt and Spain co-hosted a briefing on the impact of climate change and desertification on peace and security in the Sahel region, in order to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes 'focused on building Sahel countries' long-term 'resilience'.[2] In this briefing the Sahel's severe drought was said to exacerbate 'problems of land degradation and desertification, often translating into food insecurity that frequently triggers displacement and increases the risk of conflict'. Climate change and desertification were simplistically defined as 'underlying reasons for the large numbers of migrants going from West Africa through Libya to Europe' – a conclusion that has been challenged by some scholars. In 2020 a UN Informal Expert Group (IEG) was formed to address climate-security risks and in 2021 Niger and Ireland shared the presidency of the IEG which met to discuss climate-security challenges in the Sahel. Kenya's successful effort to win the non-permanent seat at UNSC in 2021–22 included a pledge to 'seek lasting solutions to security challenges caused by erratic climatic conditions'.

National military advancement

Similarly to the US and Europe, some countries of the Global South use the rhetoric of climate security as a way to strengthen the capacity of their national military and security forces and to sustain self-serving interventionism.

Some L&MICs have joined global military alliances. For instance, institutions in Angola, the Sahel, Senegal, South Africa, and the Asia–Pacific Network have become partners of the International Military Council for Climate and Security (IMCCS), a leading global voice for climate security.

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2   For UNSC member states' positions on the climate-security framework, see Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (University of Hamburg) (2020) A Climate for Change in the UN Security Council? Member States' Approaches to the Climate-Security Nexus.

In 2020, the IMCCS released a report urging Brazilian leaders to make climate change and counter-deforestation a 'security priority', and to 'climate-proof' the nation's security. This was worrying, given that Brazil's armed forces, which have in the past received US support, are the second largest in the Americas and the largest in Latin America and the Southern Hemisphere, and that President Bolsonaro has heavily relied on the army for humanitarian crises and for many civilian tasks. Indeed, Bolsonaro placed former military general and vice-president Mourão in charge of 'Operation Green Brazil', which means that the environment ministry and experts take orders from the military. Bolsonaro's anti-environmental, anti-human rights and anti-indigenous agenda is clear, as he continues to undermine Brazil's biodiversity and health. This might change as the left-wing former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva narrowly won the 2022 presidential elections promising new environmental policies and Brazil's Green New Deal. Although Lula gives hope for a different direction, the congress remains in the hands of the right, and a highly militarised country like Brazil is always at risk of electing a right-wing leader.

Egypt is another case in point. Although it is very vulnerable to climate change, it is also adopting a climate-security approach, echoing the regime's military character. In May 2022 Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly launched Egypt's National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS) 2050, describing climate change as a threat to national security. In November 2022, Egypt hosts COP27 despite the country's history of gross human rights violations, including the jailing of activists and criminalisation of peaceful demonstrations. Egypt's repressive regime is supported by the US and the EU and its member states, which provide the country with border guard trainings and the sale of surveillance systems. COP27 will take place in the remote resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh, which will prevent activists from organising, especially as the government decided to shut down event spaces dedicated to civil society groups on the first day of the summit. The government controls protests by having recourse to the security forces, using the 2013 anti-protest law, which bans any public assembly without the specific authorisation of the Interior Ministry. Egypt's regime makes it clear that 'climate security' means the repression of civil society.

Of course, many L&MICs lack any emergency and disaster relief capabilities, so they often have to rely on the military to respond to extreme weather events, which may unfortunately result in increased militarisation. This is also true in countries in the Global North whose armed forces are often called to assist in catastrophic events and provide Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.

In Pakistan, for example, the army has historically been a first responder to catastrophic events and health emergencies, providing humanitarian relief, including in the recent devastating floods. The formation of civil–military cooperation (CIMIC) was central to Pakistan's response to COVID-19 and many have praised its success, wanting to use it as a model for future crises. During a roundtable discussion on the security implications of the Pakistan floods hosted by the US Center for Climate and Security, expert panellists highlighted the role of the Pakistani army in successfully dealing with humanitarian crises. While the speakers highlighted the need for an integrated, holistic, interdisciplinary, and interconnected response to climate change, they also encouraged a climate-security approach and a new conceptualisation of national security. This approach could strengthen an already disproportionately powerful military sector in Pakistan, whose budget increased by 6.2% over 2021–22 with an 11% increase to the Defence Production Division that supports the country's arms industry. According to SIPRI, Pakistan was among the

major arms importers in Asia from 2016 to 2020 and ranked tenth of all among arms importers worldwide.

The case of India also illustrates how the 'threat' of climate change is used to justify the growing power of national military forces under the false narrative of 'greening' the military.

BOX 4: India and its position on climate security

India, with its increasingly militaristic authoritarian government, is an interesting case given its military power, its vulnerability to climate change, and its shifting position on the securitisation of climate change. According to SIPRI, India is the fourth largest military power after China, the US, and Russia, and is also the world's third biggest military spender. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, India was one of the first countries to oppose the securitisation of the climate crisis at the UNSC in 2007, criticising western alarmism and self-interest in regarding climate change as a security issue. Yet, while internationally India rejects the securitisation of climate change, calling it a development and human security issue, at the domestic level it adopts the language of climate security. The International Relations scholar Dhanasree Jayaram argues that the Indian military has engaged with security implications of climate change, partially borrowing concepts from the western discourse on climate security. The security framework is particularly strong in relation to narratives about the India–Bangladesh border, climate-induced migration, and the fear of undocumented migrants, especially the depiction of Muslim migrants as a threat to the nation in a context of increasing Islamophobia.

Indeed, according to the Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces, published in 2017, climate change is viewed as a 'non-traditional security threat' and that the environment 'has emerged as a critical area of the security paradigm'. The Joint Doctrine also sees climate change as a threat that could lead to war and conflict as it could increase 'migrations across national and international borders', 'heighten security risks', 'lead to responses from States in the military dimension', and 'result in the extinction of certain States'.

Similar to NATO-led initiatives, there are also efforts to 'green' the Indian military as part of the plan to achieve the National Mission for Enhanced Energy (launched in 2010). The Indian Navy released an Indian Navy Environment Conservation Roadmap (INECR) in 2019 to develop 'climate-smart' management methods for naval bases. In 2021, the Indian military launched a solar energy plan in North Sikkim. In March 2022 the Indian Army's Military Engineering Services (MES) completed its first 3D printed houses in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, which are known to be sustainable, to accommodate Indian forces. As in countries in the Global North, these efforts are unlikely to significantly reduce military emissions and are more focused on increasing military capabilities by adopting renewables to reduce the risk of dependence on fossil fuels and maintain India's 'institutional capacity'.

The Indian armed forces are also positioning themselves to remain a first responder to catastrophes, similar to Pakistan, through the globally acclaimed HADR, which has historically provided crucial emergency relief to neighbouring countries, such as the 2015 Nepal earthquake. Just in 2021, the Indian city and Indian Army's headquarters Pune hosted joint military exercises for the member countries of the Bay of Bengal Initiative of Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) focused on humanitarian aid and emergency relief.

India's emerging approach to climate change merits attention as the government is known for repressing peaceful protests by environmental activists and farmers, as the mass protests of the past year have shown. The Indian farmers' movement has much to teach the movement for climate justice on fighting ecologically and socially destructive economic policies.

Boas, I. (2014) 'Where is the South in security discourse on climate change? An analysis of India'. Critical Studies on Security, 2(2): 148–161. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21624887.2014.905295

Cons, J. (2018) 'Staging climate security: Resilience and heterodystopia in the Bangladesh borderlands'. Cultural Anthropology, 33(2): 266–294. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca33.2.08

Jayaram, D. (2021) '"Climatizing" military strategy? A case study of the Indian armed forces'. International Politics, 58: 619–639. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-020-00247-3

Justify foreign influence and intervention

The narrative of climate security is also used to facilitate and justify foreign influence and intervention, from wholesale adoption of security narratives designed by the major military powers to facilitating external funding (as we will explore in the next section) or even foreign military involvement.

Mainstream think tanks, policymakers and academics in the Global North have tended to dominate knowledge production related to the climate and security agenda. UN instruments such as the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM), initially established by Sweden, are always led by powerful countries. Even when L&MIC actors are involved in knowledge production, this often arises from commissioned research and development (R&D) projects from the richest countries, leaving little room for the Global South to have an influential voice.

The Bay of Bengal, one of the world's most climate-vulnerable regions and includes Bangladesh, Myanmar, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka has recently been the subject of debates on climate security, formulated in the Global North. According to western analyses on the Bay of Bengal, the region's use of the language of human security does not appear to suggest a particularly militarised approach to climate change, though we know that India has clearly engaged with militarised responses to social and environmental issues as discussed above. There has, however, been some external pressure on these countries to engage with security narratives in both domestic and international climate policies. In 2022, the Planetary Security Initiative (PSI) on the Bay of Bengal, led by the Clingendael Institute with other partners, examined the impacts of climate change on 'transnational and intra-country conflict faultlines' and 'strategic and military dynamics'. The report adopts the language of climate change as a threat-multiplier, focusing on the climate impacts

on military assets and operations, and viewing climate-induced migration as a major driver of conflict in the region. The report concludes by recommending the countries prioritise climate as a security issue in their national policy frameworks, create a 'climate security working group within BIMSTEC's (Bay of Bengal Initiative of Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Climate Change 'vertical', develop migration policies, and 'incorporate climate security-centric norms and practices into military doctrines, structures and operational modules'.

PSI's recommendations seem to have some influence given the political weight of its members. While there is certainly the need for more tangible climate policies and regional cooperation, the individual countries are already developing national climate policies that combine mitigation and adaptation goals. Bangladesh is often called the 'adaptation capital of the world' given its role as a 'guinea pig' for the latest climate adaptation practices. Furthermore, as the Rohingya continue to be forcibly displaced from Myanmar to Bangladesh, they become further marginalised as climate change affects their livelihood. Indeed, internally displaced and stateless persons are often the first affected by climate change. Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, hosting the world's largest refugee settlement, is the most climate-vulnerable area in South Asia, which could cause further displacement of Rohingya families. For this reason, a 'hard' security approach that views climate-induced migration as a driver of conflict further deepens injustices for already vulnerable communities.

PSI also hosted a webinar on climate-related security risks and opportunities in India, Iraq, and Kenya, as well as Dutch ambassadors to these three countries and national experts. While the guest speakers highlighted the importance of local knowledge in seeking climate solutions and recognised that climate change is not necessarily the cause of regional conflicts, they still advocated an integrated approach that involves the military, especially the deployment of foreign troops. The language of climate security is used in this context to justify the need for foreign intervention under the guise of development projects. They argued that this is necessary given that water and food insecurity are pushing communities to engage in 'adverse coping strategies' to survive. Local militia and non-state armed actors are using climate change and the lack of natural resources to recruit new members. According to PSI's guest speaker representing sub-Saharan Africa, this is apparently happening in Somalia where militant group al-Shaabab is leveraging the climate crisis and the perception of foreign military as a disruptor of local communities to gain popularity.

The case study on the Sahel region in Box 4 provides another example of how the language of climate security is used to justify the increased foreign military presence in the region.

BOX 5: The Sahel region, climate change and militarism

US and European security analysts refer to the Sahel as a a 'hotspot' and it is often the subject of international debates because of its severe climate-related vulnerabilities, communal violence, jihadist insurgencies, political instability, and internal and regional displacement. Its designation by military, security, and also humanitarian agencies in the US and Europe as a 'fragile region' has brought military deployment, development projects, and humanitarian assistance that have sometimes done more harm than good. The EU has had a strategy in the Sahel since 2011, focused on Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, and their regional grouping, G5 Sahel. This strategy has relied on heavy military interventions, including missions by different EU member states (Germany and Italy having the main military presence) to train local security forces. The stated goal was to reinforce 'national capacities' in the fight against jihadism, organised crime, and 'illegal immigration', which are framed as a threat to the EU's internal security. In 2021 the European Council approved a new EU 'comprehensive and integrated' strategy in the Sahel to increase the focus on state governance and human rights, recognising its previous military approach had failed to provide 'long-term regional stability'. Yet, this new strategy still assumes a direct causal link between climate change and conflict. The project titled 'Frexus: Improving security and climate resilience in a fragile context through the Water-Energy-Food Security Nexus', funded by the consulting office of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Commission, seeks in Chad, Mali and Niger to turn the 'vicious cycle of scarcity, competition, conflict and instability [...] into a virtuous cycle of resilience, sustainable resources management, cooperation and security'. This sounds like a positive approach but it relies on some of the same flawed analysis and over-reliance on military approaches that characterise much thinking about climate security.

The Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel region have been used to exemplify the linkage between water and security where climate change is seen as fuelling conflict, a threat to national security, and a cause of migration and displacement. In 2017, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2349 connecting conflict and water scarcity in the region. In 2020, Niger co-organised a UNSC meeting on climate security, following a 2018 UNSC statement on the Lake Chad Basin which identified climate change and the shrinking of Lake Chad as one of the root causes of the Boko Haram uprisings.

The result has been greater militarisation of the region. Between 2018 and 2019 Issoufou called on the international community to increase its military presence. The EU has provided €663 million to create a military task force, the G5 Sahel Joint Force, to 'fight human trafficking, crime and terrorism' in the border areas of the Sahelian countries. In 2022, Niger agreed to deploy more European troops as France is withdrawing its military presence from Mali. The EU is preparing to pay Niger €25 million in the 2022–2025 period to create an Armed Forces Technician Training Centre. Niger also receives finance and technical support and training through the European Capacity Building Sahel Niger programme in border management and innovative border technologies in the fight against 'irregular migration' and trafficking. Niger has become one of Africa's most militarised states, hosting foreign military bases for Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the US.

While the impacts of climate change are of extreme concern in the Sahel region, simplistic frameworks that directly connect political violence to environmental issues are not borne out by the evidence. Scholars also disagree on whether the desertification of Lake Chad has indeed led to conflicts, some noting the far more significant factors of complex pre-existing socioeconomic and political conditions, the influx of arms into the region, unfair terms of trade, religious issues, and the marginalisation of pastoralist communities. Even if there were links between conflict and climate change, military involvement is not necessarily the solution and may even exacerbate conflicts. CASCADES' 2021 report on climate change, security and development in Central Sahel, which included semi-structured interviews and a survey of more than 200 regional experts, found that many local experts advocate reducing the EU military presence in order to increase climate resilience in the region. Focusing on small-scale initiatives that are owned by rural communities and respect indigenous practices are crucial for climate mitigation and adaptation.

See European Union Institute for Security Studies (2020) Sahel Climate Conflicts? When (fighting) climate change fuels terrorism. https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/sahel-climate-conflicts-when-fighting-climate-change-fuels-terrorism

Peace-building efforts

Lastly, the language of climate security is applied – in a much more positive sense – to support peace-building efforts and policies that foster resilience in L&MICs.

In 2017, Bolivia led a high-level briefing on 'Preventive Diplomacy and Transboundary Waters', following similar statements made by Niger and Senegal. During this briefing, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres talked about water security in the context of the climate crisis as a 'catalyst' for cooperation and mutual interdependence rather than conflict, urging countries to cooperate to ensure 'water is shared equitably and used sustainably' and minimise water-related conflict. Since this briefing, The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, an international legal framework to create a global framework for preventive diplomacy for transboundary water, has been accessible to all UN member states.

Intergovernmental organisations such as the African Union (AU) have also adopted a climate-security approach to support peace-building efforts. According to SIPRI, the AU recognises the security risks of climate change as a potential cause of conflict, and is gradually developing more integrated responses using a climate-security framework based on four policy areas: food security, peace and security, human security, and energy security, and natural resource use crises. The African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032) offers a comprehensive list of goals and policies on climate that is based on a human security approach. Notably, there is no mention of military involvement in the Action Plan. While the Action Plan recognises climate change as a potential threat multiplier and conflict driver, it does not find a direct link between climate change and conflict, emphasising the need to consider political and social complexities as a whole. It also challenges the narrative of climate migrants as a threat to national security. Among the five AU Action Plan's key policy goals is a focus on 'pre-emptive action to improve resilience and adaptive capacity, particularly of the most vulnerable states and communities' through a context-based and regional approach. The document emphasises

the need for conflict prevention, peace-making and peace-building efforts by strengthening the capacity of the AU Peace and Security council, and empowering vulnerable communities by involving them in national decision-making processes. It calls for the development of 'national mechanisms that allow vulnerable communities to engage with parliament on national climate adaptation and green industrialization initiatives'.

The AU's more progressive approaches that focus on peace-building do not need to be framed in the language of climate security. They fit better with a language such as 'environmental peace-building', an approach that deserves more attention given that the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region has increasingly been at the centre of European and US-led debates on climate security and as Kenya won the non-permanent seat of UNSC.

The four dimensions of climate security presented above are just some of the ways in which the climate-security nexus emerges in some countries in the Global South. National strategies in L&MICs often present a combination of all of these approaches, but well-funded and military-backed 'hard security' agendas still dominate the global policy arena, undermining human rights, distorting more 'holistic' and progressive responses, and detracting from effective attempts to tackle the underlying systemic causes of vulnerability and conflict.

Funding and finance: How climate security is spread worldwide

The various approaches of climate security in L&MICs explored above cannot be fully examined without considering the power of the richest militarised countries in influencing climate-security agendas through funding and knowledge production. This bigger picture needs to look at funded partnerships and agreements as well as development aid and climate finance involving multilateral organisations and bilateral aid agencies.

Military initiatives

Some of these partnerships are directly related to the military. In February 2022, US Africa Command (AFRICOM), whose presence in Africa alongside NATO has a violent history, held a two-day symposium on the security implications of climate change in Africa where AFRICOM's Deputy Commander stated that 'We clearly know that environmental change is a driver of instability, and we recognize that other entities – whether we call them competitors or adversaries – are going to take advantage of that [instability]'. The U.S Institute of Peace, which co-hosted the AFRICOM event, is working closely with AFRICOM to build 'around applied research focused on helping define AFRICOM's strategic terrain'. In June 2022 the US Department of Defense released its budget for 2023 amounting to $857.46 billion, an increase of nearly $80 billion from 2022. The 2023 budget authorises $219.4 million for AFRICOM's intelligence, surveillance, and dissemination support and an increase of $93.6 million for AFRICOM for training, and physical security systems, with an additional $20 million for 'partner capacity building'. This is a disturbingly sharp increase over AFRICOM's 2022 budget, which totalled $126.6 million for 'intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance' and 'security cooperation programs and activities'. This is of particular concern, given AFRICOM's harmful presence in the region. Research data, for example, shows that since the establishment of AFRICOM there has been an increase in non-state armed groups operating in Africa. The evidence doesn't prove AFRICOM caused this increase, but it has failed to reduce them.[3]

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3   To read more about AFRICOM's and NATO's violent legacy in Africa, see Abayomi Azikiwe's 'Africa Remains at the Center of a 21st Century Cold War', Djibo Subukwe's article 'NATO and Africa: A relationship of colonial violence and structural white supremacy', and watch Margaret Kimberley's interview 'Blacks must oppose US AFRICOM'.

Moreover, some EU member states have deployed their national armies to African countries under the provisions of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which is now funded by the new €5 billion off-budget European Peace Facility (EPF) fund, providing military training to the Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, Mozambique Niger, and Somalia. Although these missions are not necessarily climate-related, the EU follows the US in recognising climate change as a threat multiplier and a threat to its member states' military capabilities. Its Climate Change and Defence Roadmap, released in March 2022, includes preparing 'climate-resilient CSDP training'. The establishment of the EPF in 2021 created new financial structures that allow the EU to directly fund military operations, including the supply of lethal weapons. Before this, funding was channelled through the Athena Mechanism and the African Peace Facility, a fund that was intended to ensure African-led peace support operations, capacity building for AU institutions, and AU-led conflict-prevention initiatives. According to AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC), its standing body for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts, the EPF's provisions were never discussed with the AU and 'a number of AU member states have expressed concern about the EPF as representing Europe's foreign and security policy shift from political engagement to a militarised and interventionist approach in defending Europe's interests'.

Border militarisation

Another dimension of climate security has been the emphasis on border security, with climate-induced migration from Africa, Asia, and Latin America portrayed as a major 'threat' to the Global North. Much of the finance for this is increasingly being provided through 'border externalisation' agreements. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex, whose budget increased from €6 million in 2005 to €754 million in 2022, for example, has negotiated a migration partnership with Morocco to support 'the fight against irregular migration', which would allow Frontex to work in Morocco on issues such as 'risk analysis, training, and operational cooperation'. Frontex and other EU member state security forces have also set up liaison officers in Niger in partnership with EUCAP Sahel. The EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum, signed by the European Commission in September 2020, made a clear commitment to renew partnerships and agreements with neighbouring countries. Individual member states such as France and Italy also continue to deploy troops to Libya and Niger. TNI's report, Expanding the Fortress, identifies 35 countries in North Africa and the Middle East (MENA) that receive funding to increase border and migration controls. Similarly, the US since 9/11 has exported its border enforcement around the world from the Americas to East Africa, the Middle East and the Philippines.

This funding for externalising borders is increasing, even while the richest countries have failed to deliver the $100 billion climate finance due in 2020 that was promised at the Paris Climate Accord to help countries mitigate and adapt to climate change. TNI's report Global Climate Wall showed that the world's biggest emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs) are spending, on average, 2.3 times as much on arming their borders as they are on climate finance. This figure is 11–15 times as much for the worst offenders such as Australia, Canada and the US.

Securitisation of development aid

The way climate change is framed affects aid policies because it influences priorities and therefore the type of action that is taken. Mayhew and Peters argue that when climate change is framed more as a security than a development or environmental issue, climate-related aid is prioritised

and accelerated. The intersection between aid and securitisation can be seen in the UK, where the former Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) (now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, FCDO) was the first to push the UN to hold a meeting in the UNSC on climate change and urged the UNFCCC to take action in 2007. In 2011, the then UK Department for International Development (DFID) committed to spending 30% of its aid in fragile and conflict-affected states by 2014–15, an increase from 22% from 2010. Narratives of climate security became central to the government's strategies, departments and funds. Between 2013 and 2015, the FCO held discussions on the climate, security and conflict in 'fragile' states at G8 and G7 meetings. In 2015 a report by the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy (NSS) stated that climate change presents a risk to national security and that spending on security would need to adapt. The former UK Special Representative for Climate Change, Rear Admiral Neil Morisetti, claimed that 'Climate change will require more deployment of British military in conflict prevention, conflict resolution or responding to increased humanitarian requirements due to extreme weather impacts'. The UK-established International Climate Fund (ICF) identifies climate change as a 'threat multiplier' within 'fragile' states. The UK's 'Integrated Review of Defence, Security, Development, and Foreign Policy', published in March 2021, claimed that tackling climate change and biodiversity loss was its 'number one international priority' and identified African countries as vulnerable to climate change, which would amplify insecurity, migration and instability on the continent.

It is hard to tell what percentage of UK aid has gone to climate security, given that DFID's spending accounted separately for climate change and security programmes. The language and framework of climate security also differ from one agency to another. For instance, DFID framed it in terms of poverty, vulnerability and resilience and the FCO in terms of national and international security. This makes it hard to separate responses that rely on militarised solutions from those that contribute to peace-building. Security imperatives typically override other imperatives, however, and the merging of DFID and FCO in September 2020 has certainly exacerbated this trend, as DFID's distinctive approach has been subsumed in favour of FCO goals. So, while it is hard to assess the climate-security dimensions of UK aid, it is clear that there is an emerging trend to connect climate, conflict and security in development aid. This might also explain the increase in climate-related aid in 2015 (see Figure 1), following the Paris Agreement, and a 2015 report by the UK Joint Committee on the NSS stating that 'climate change presents a risk to national security, ranging from economic instability to environmental crisis'.

Figure 1: UK-climate specific aid

£ millions, not adjusted for inflation
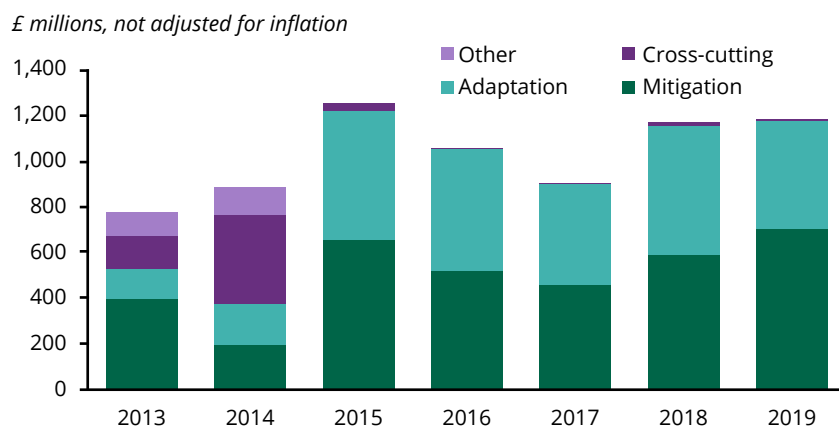
Source: House of Commons Library 2021. Data from European Environment Agency, UK reporting under Article 16 of EU MMR regulation, last updated in 2020

Bilateral aid agencies are starting to employ the language of security in their strategies. In 2022, the US State Department and USAID requested $11 billion for international climate finance, including a $1.6 billion contribution to the Green Climate Fund. In 2022 the Climate and Security Advisory Group (CSAG), a group of US-based military, national security, homeland security, intelligence, and foreign policy experts chaired by the Center for Climate Security (CCS), a US-based institute that is a leading proponent of climate-security policies, released a 'Challenge Accepted' report which boasted that its 2019 recommendations had been partially incorporated in the Biden administration's security plans. The report also states that climate finance and aid are necessary to minimise future climate risks and prevent 'climate-driven fragility and conflict', and recommends creating a 'Climate Security Conflict Prevention Framework' for State and USAID, based on USAID's 2023–2030 Climate Strategy. USAID's 2023 new budget request of $60.4 billion indeed includes 'a commitment to national security and administration priorities, including the climate crisis', through a Global Development Partnership Initiative. USAID and the Department of State Programming's 2023 budget to address the climate crisis increased to $2.3 billion.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has prioritised a climate portfolio since 2009 and has since 2015 provided more than $2.6 billion annually in climate finance.[4] Sida defines climate change as an indirect cause of conflict in 'fragile states and conflict-affected societies', and has prioritised funding in this area since 2015, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2018 Sida allocated $104 million to conflict resolution, peace, and security. According to a 2020 study by SIPRI on Sida's climate-security policy documents and interviews, Sida is one of a few aid agencies to approach the environment and climate in an integrated fashion, though it has challenges in translating the policy into practice, creating ambiguities and tensions in language and concepts between expert and general knowledge. This is due to the multiple framings Sida uses in its approach to climate and security which, according to SIPRI's analysis, depend on the policy area (whether it is environment, climate, peace, or conflict security), level (global, regional, bilateral) and unit (the different divisions at Sida and their geographic areas). SIPRI argues for an integrated approach to climate aid that focuses on context-specific issues, cross-sector collaboration, and long-term processes that prioritise peace-building efforts. Several interviewees from this study claimed that resilience, part of the UN 'New Way of Working', has 'the potential to become a unifying concept for Sida's work on integrating different perspectives'. As with the concept of security, it is important to question whose resilience is prioritised, and whether the strategies will tackle the underlying causes of injustice that make people vulnerable. If resilience means maintaining current systems of inequity, then like security it ends up becoming a system of managing injustice rather than confronting and resolving it.

It is still difficult to quantify how much climate finance and development aid is tied to militaries, police, and border forces in L&MICs under the agenda of 'climate instability' especially as many countries rely on the military for disaster relief, as explained earlier. The lack of consistent and transparent information on climate finance makes it difficult to track the flow of money. There is also no publicly available data on the level of private finance that is being mobilised which might be going to the security industry. However, looking at the geographical focus of foreign aid and climate finance spending might suggest some patterns of climate securitisation. For instance, if climate funding is allocated in areas considered as 'fragile', 'high risk' and 'conflict-affected', there may be a tighter link between climate security and military-led responses. The donor government

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4   For information on Sida's climate finance, see the 2022 brief by CONCORD Sweden.

is also another potentially relevant factor in tracking climate aid; for instance, historically strong military powers like the US and the UK are likely to have more militarised approaches to climate than countries like Sweden. Past experience suggests that power imbalances often prevail to strengthen the interests of the powerful, whether the military or the private sector, including the arms and security industry, where the rhetoric of war and security, for instance Europe's repressive approach to migration, has served to justify increased border funding and externalisation, leading to devastating consequences for forcibly displaced people and fuelling further conflicts, violence, and repression.

All of this of course is tied to the larger history of imperialism and colonialism that left a legacy of debt through unjust trade rules that have kept L&MICs subordinate to the priorities and finance of countries of the Global North.

At the same time, it is important to note that framing set by the most powerful countries does not necessarily translate into significant changes in policy within aid-recipient countries. In Mexico, for instance, according to Franziskus von Lucke, who analysed documents and conducted interviews on the emerging climate-security nexus in Mexico, the narrative of climate security was introduced by external actors, pushed first by an international coalition of NGOs called Partners for Democratic Peace International (PDCI) and then by security policy-oriented British think tank RUSI together with the British Embassy in Mexico City. Von Lucke argues that these two attempts to securitise climate change in Mexico have to date had limited influence on policies and climate debates in Mexico, emphasising the role local actors can play in embracing or resisting donors' priorities. It is also important to highlight the risks of adopting 'climate security' in Mexico, a country with very high levels of militarisation related to the failed 'war on drugs', whose police forces have also received technical support and training from the US in the past decade. The establishment of Mexico's National Guard in 2019 as the country's main public security institution and the president's proposed legislative reforms in 2022 to further increase its militarisation has been denounced by international organisations as it will lead to more human rights violations and perpetuate state impunity.
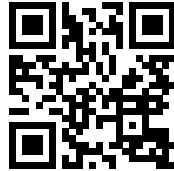
Towards new definitions of 'security'

Climate security is still not the dominant position or priority of most L&MICs but as this discussion paper has shown, the increasing finance and priority given by powerful nations such as the US, UK and EU member states is starting to make the language and frameworks of security global. When it combines with advocacy by nations such as Niger, or the strategic interests of regional powers such as India, the increasing adoption of climate security is only going in one direction. Not all countries will embrace the same policies or approaches to achieve 'security', but increased militarisation of most societies is likely to favour 'hard' security approaches rather than more integrated efforts rooted in peace-building. Vulnerable and marginalised communities will most suffer from these consequences. The use of the concept of climate security in the Global South is unhelpful and even dangerous if it is not accompanied by an acknowledgment of how systemic racism, colonialism, extractivism, deep economic structural inequality, and decades of neoliberal economic policies have contributed to countries' vulnerability to climate change.

In the face of climate instability, there is a need to radically reimagine security and find new concepts to protect and enable all people to thrive. We need to support the work of grassroots organisations, scholars, policymakers and policies, frontline activists, and civil society groups that focus on climate justice and demilitarisation. A just climate adaptation agenda is built on a vision of ecological security for all and on principles of restorative justice, decolonisation, reparations, abolition of state and police repression, and intersectional feminism. Commitments to provide climate finance to L&MICs will keep being broken if global military expenditure continues to grow. The establishment of Loss and Damage Finance Facility (LDFF) that has been articulated by low-income countries would close the finance gap. Moreover, if sovereign debt was cancelled, low-income countries could tackle the impacts of climate change impacts for which they bear little responsibility without heavily relying on aid. Transparency and accountability mechanisms are necessary to track foreign aid and climate finance and ensure that money is not being used to fund solutions based on securitising and militarising solutions, but rather enabling governments and communities to develop their own systems of adaptation and resilience. UNFCCC's embodiment of the notion 'common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities' (CBDR-RC)' is only a small step to address wealthy countries' responsibility to provide aid and transfer technology to L&MICs.

One such proposal is a Global Green New Deal that takes into account all voices, confronts global inequality, and pushes for a just transition to a zero economy. The Third World Network (TWN) has also been doing important work to centre the voices of the Global South in international policy arenas. UK-based War on Want includes demilitarisation in its proposal for a Global Green New Deal, which it is articulating with allies in the Global South. Others have emphasised the need for a Feminist and Decolonial Green New Deal (GGND) that transforms systemic inequalities of the capitalist, neoliberal, and colonial structures and provides debt justice and climate reparations. This is what some activists call a reparative multilateralism that includes debt cancellation, scales up climate finance in form of grants and not loans, and centres indigenous leadership. All of these represent efforts to reimagine security, by rejecting the prevailing approach that seeks to maintain a system that most contributed to climate change through symptoms-led solutions and that perceives the victims as potential 'threats'. Rather, they seek to address the root causes of this unjust and exploitative system, proposing regenerative pathways to global crises, finding peaceful solutions to conflicts, and putting the needs of those most affected by the climate crisis at the centre of climate policy.

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