

Dennis Tänzler, Alexander Carius (eds.)

# Climate Diplomacy in Perspective

From Early Warning to Early Action



Federal Foreign Office



BWV

BERLINER WISSENSCHAFTS-VERLAG



adelphi





ISBN 978-3-8305-2802-9

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Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-8305-2802-9

This project is supported by a grant  
from the German Federal Foreign Office.

Cover illustration:  
UN Photo/Mark Garden.

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Markgrafenstraße 12–14 · 10969 Berlin  
E-Mail: [bwv@bwv-verlag.de](mailto:bwv@bwv-verlag.de) · Internet: <http://www.bwv-verlag.de>  
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# Contents

<b>Introduction &amp; Acknowledgments:</b>	
<b>Climate Change and International Security: Why Foreign Policy Must Meet the Challenge</b>	7
<i>Hinrich Thölken and Weert Börner</i>	
<b>Overview: Towards Preventive Climate Diplomacy</b>	9
<i>Dennis Tänzler and Alexander Carius</i>	
<b>I. Climate and Security as Challenge for International Politics</b>	
<b>Climate Diplomacy in Perspective</b>	17
<i>Cornelia Pieper</i>	
<b>Climate Change as a Cross-cutting Challenge</b>	21
<i>Achim Steiner</i>	
<b>Climate Change and Security: The Challenges for Bangladesh</b>	25
<i>Hasan Mahmud</i>	
<b>Climate Change and Security: The Challenges for Small Island States</b>	31
<i>Mohamed Shareef</i>	
<b>II. Water Diplomacy</b>	
<b>Diplomacy for Water Security</b>	35
<i>Mark Zeitoun</i>	
<b>Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia</b>	47
<i>Iskandar Abdullaev</i>	
<b>Water Security and US Foreign Policy</b>	57
<i>Michael Werz</i>	
<b>Water Diplomacy and Climate Change</b>	65
<i>Annika Kramer and Alexander Carius</i>	

### III. Food Security

<b>The Prospects of Global Food Security</b>	71
<i>Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher</i>	
<b>Food Security as Key Element of Livelihood Security: Insights from the Sahel</b>	75
<i>Dennis Hamro-Drotz</i>	
<b>Climate Diplomacy and Warring States: Finding Solutions in India and Pakistan</b>	81
<i>Malini Mehra</i>	
<b>A Twin Challenge for Diplomacy: Climate Change and Food Security</b>	89
<i>Salomé Bronkhorst and Dennis Tänzler</i>	

### IV. Coastal Stability

<b>Coastal Vulnerabilities and Climate Change: Insights from Bangladesh and beyond</b>	97
<i>A.N.M. Muniruzzaman</i>	
<b>Coastal Regions, Global Security, and Environmental Change</b>	111
<i>Cleo Paskal</i>	
<b>Coastal Instability: Altering Geographies, Shifting Priorities</b>	119
<i>Tom Spencer and Achim Maas</i>	

### V. Conclusions

<b>Reflections on Next Steps for Climate Diplomacy</b>	127
<i>Viktor Elbling</i>	
<b>Elements of a New Era of Climate Diplomacy</b>	129
<i>Alexander Carius and Dennis Tänzler</i>	
<b>Permissions and Credits</b>	133
<b>Abbreviations</b>	135
<b>Authors</b>	137



## **Introduction & Acknowledgments:**

### **Climate Change and International Security: Why Foreign Policy Must Meet the Challenge**

The risks of large-scale climate change are growing. The major cause, carbon dioxide emitted by human activity, is not under control. The consequences of climate change are already starting to threaten the livelihoods of millions of people around the world: floodings and tropical storms cause more damage than ever; melting glaciers will lead to water scarcity in the long run; rising sea levels limit the future of the biggest cities and make low-lying island states disappear; changing rainfall patterns endanger agriculture and food security in many regions. Time to reverse the trend of unlimited global warming is running out.

However, if you take a look at world politics, most governments are preoccupied with financial and economic crises, conflicts such as in Syria, the threat to the non-proliferation regime, the endeavors to stabilize states such as Afghanistan, or hundreds of short-term national interests. Against this background, two crucial questions remain largely unanswered: 1. How do we get the existential risks of too much climate change within the 21st century on top of the international agenda? 2. Which elements of our global governance do we have to rethink, to develop, to transform in order to meet the challenge?

In 2011, the German Foreign Office initiated an open debate in the United Nations Security Council on climate change and its possible impacts on peace and security. The outcome of this lively debate encouraged us to organize, together with our partner adelphi, a series of dialogues and events, one being an international conference in October 2011, held at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin on “Climate Diplomacy in Perspective: From Early Warning to Early Action”. This publication offers the major contributions of this conference from leading politicians, scholars, and experts in a compact manner.

Meanwhile, as several months have passed, this initiative has been taken up by others; more and more politicians and diplomats realize the urgency of the topic and the need for coordinated action on climate diplomacy that looks beyond the yearly negotiation rounds. Our British colleagues in the Foreign and Security Office continued with a follow-up conference, “A Climate and Resource Security Dialogue for the 21st Century”, in March 2012 in London. The Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is willing to take up the relay baton with a conference on the same subject at the end of 2012/beginning of 2013 in Seoul. Many more climate security dialogues involving also diplomats have come up in South and South East Asia, in Southern and Northern Africa, in the Caribbean and the Andean regions.

This is not only about raising awareness. We know that we are on a steep learning curve; that many foreign ministries, as well as many individual diplomats, have yet to become familiar with climate security thinking; that they have to use their general convening power also in this field, too long left to climate/environment experts; that they have to build many more bridges – not only between nations but between globalized scientists, activists, business representatives, politicians, and citizens – with the aim to combat climate change, to transform our economies into low-carbon economies, to adapt to those effects of climate change that cannot be avoided. It is about preventive planning in our societies, promoting ambitious national climate protection policies, funding important pilot projects, exchanging best practices, and getting things done on the ground.

This compilation contains insightful contributions made by the speakers and participants of the Berlin Conference in October 2011; much of it is published for the first time. The credit for the success of the conference goes to these outstanding individuals, who have demonstrated far-sightedness, commitment, and courage. Any mistakes that may have slipped into this book are solely in our responsibility.

We wish you instructive reading.

June 2012

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# Overview: Towards Preventive Climate Diplomacy

*Dennis Tänzler and Alexander Carius\**

During the UN Security Council debate of 20 July 2011 the Council unanimously expressed concern about the possible impacts of climate change on peace and security. The debate clearly underlined the need for climate protection and early action to address the security implications of climate change. The Berlin Conference “Climate Diplomacy in Perspective” in October 2011 aimed at moving the debate beyond the improvement of early warning related to climate security threats. The discussions in Berlin revealed that urgent action is needed that complements and stretches beyond international climate negotiations. Dialogue on climate change and security has to be deepened and further developed, building on and improving early warning capacities and fostering cooperation and partnerships for early action and conflict prevention. An explicit call for preventive climate diplomacy was the major outcome of this conference. In the light of the discussions of three dedicated working groups on water resource management, food security, and rising sea levels that threaten coastal areas and low-lying island states, some key features of a climate diplomacy approach become gradually clearer.

## **Towards a Geopolitical Change Management**

Climate diplomacy has to consider ways for a geopolitical change management that takes into account effects of global environmental change on governance structures. Even though global climate negotiations are the center piece of global climate change policies, additional regional and bilateral activities and new modes of cooperation and policy learning are necessary, not least to avoid the well-known deadlocks of international negotiations. Future challenges go beyond political borders and need to transcend existing concepts of national sovereignty. Climate change rarely impacts single countries but affects regions of common exposure such as river basins or rich biodiversity ecosystems which require eco-regional approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation. As prerequisite for such a geopolitical change management, awareness-raising for shared vulnerabilities, opportunities for regional policy making, and a preventive approach of addressing climate induced risks and threats are needed. In order to initiate dynamic mitigation and adaptation processes, such an approach needs to reflect broader trends of globalization, industrialization, and demographic change beyond the consequences of climate change. Today, climate change is more than climate

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negotiations; it is climate-sensitive economic, trade, investment, finance, population and development policy which affects the overall development of nations.

Climate diplomacy needs to accompany the output of international climate negotiations, such as adaptation and climate finance, competitiveness, and economic development with a strong foreign policy impetus. This can result in developing guidelines for conflict sensitive adaptation practices or building capacities to spend climate funds coherently and transparently with a special view to the governance challenges of fragile countries and regions. Climate diplomacy is more than government to government relations and benefits from well-established and functioning networks and leadership initiatives in the private sector and by non-governmental stakeholders.

The need for a new era of climate diplomacy is vividly described by the introduction to the Berlin conference. German Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office Cornelia Pieper, UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner, Bangladesh's Minister of Environment Hasan Mahmud, and Mohamed Shareef, Minister of State in the Republic of Maldives' Environment Ministry outline different aspects of the security implications of climate change and ask the participants for innovative ways to address these challenges. The dedicated working groups on the specific challenges of water management, food security, and coastal stability reveal that there is no silver bullet to address the security implications of climate change but a number of activities that can help preserve peace and stability and support confidence building through strengthened networks and institutions. As the following main arguments of the working group discussions – based on the contributions by the panellists, the working group chairs, and the rapporteurs – indicate, there are various entry points into a new era of climate diplomacy.

## **Water Diplomacy**

The discussions on water diplomacy challenges during the Berlin conference underlined the importance of multi-level diplomacy for peace and stability. Iskandar Abdullaev, Regional Advisor of the GIZ Programme “Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia” in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, identifies three types of water conflict risks that deserve special attention: Conflicts related to (a) the quantity and quality of water resources, (b) the allocation and distribution of water resources and (c) the access costs and economical limits. These types of water conflicts can occur at three different levels: At the local level, water disputes and conflicts between individual users or groups of users are likely. At the “mezzo” level, water riots take place between rural areas and cities or between different sectors. At the regional level, violent water conflicts can occur between riparian countries of transboundary basins. Proper institutional arrangements and technical and infrastructural measures are important alike – not only to ensure a sustainable water management at all levels but also to promote proactive water cooperation efforts.

Against this backdrop, Mark Zeitoun, Senior Lecturer and Director of the Water Security Research Centre at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom, argues for a sound knowledge base on specific climatic, political, and social contexts of water conflicts. He illustrates how effective water diplomacy can help to tackle water conflict risks. Internationally agreed standards like the United Nations Watercourses Convention are crucial to enable diplomats to serve as neutral mediators in conflicts. Here, a closer cooperation between diplomats, scientists, and development practitioners is required. In addition, water security can only be reached by also reflecting challenges related to food, energy, climate, as well as human and national security.

Michael Werz, Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C., asks to what extent foreign policy structures are capable of addressing the multi-level challenge of water security and climate change. He provides insights of how climate change and security issues are taken up in the United States policy discourse under the Obama administration. The climate change and security nexus needs policy solutions that combine elements of diplomacy, development and security policies. The foreign affairs community in the United States is increasingly accepting this cross-cutting challenge. Such an early engagement can, in particular, be beneficial to promote trans-regional solutions in regions like the northwest of Africa, where water and climate challenges overlap with areas of existing insecurity and migration routes.

The discussions among working group participants in Berlin have revealed that water and climate diplomacy heavily depends on generating knowledge and developing diplomatic and cooperative capacities. However, transferring efforts for policy learning to translate existing knowledge and legal frameworks into decision-making is still in its infancy. In addition, the suggested review of existing institutional and legal arrangements in the light of climate change will require strong and enduring coalitions in order to achieve capable institutions that can address the climate – water – security nexus.

## **Food Security**

Climate change is likely to reduce food production globally, with large parts of Africa and Asia suffering particularly negative impacts. Achieving food security will not be the only challenge, as many countries still rely heavily on the agricultural sector for their livelihoods, including subsistence and income generation. Since the numerous tensions caused by increasing food prices in 2008, global food security became a major global concern. But food security policies have hardly formed a distinct policy regime and policy initiatives are yet fragmented and rarely part of comprehensive adaptation policies.

Tewelde Berhan Gebre Egziabher of the Environmental Protection Authority of Ethiopia identifies strong interconnections of food shortage, distribution problems, en-

vironmental degradation and population growth which may result in conflicts and social instability. He recommends putting a policy focus on supporting food production at the local level and using already existing means to plant mixed crops.

Dennis Hamro-Drotz, programme manager at the Post-Conflict and Disasters Management Branch of the UN Environment Programme in Geneva, emphasizes the potential contribution of climate change to the risks for peace and security by outlining three main food security risks related to climate change. First, the impacts of climate change on livelihoods, particular of those dependent on natural resources such as farming, fishing, and herding, and the consequent food and water insecurity. Second, migration pressures due to disasters, conflicts, and loss of livelihoods and third, increased competition and conflict over scarce water and land. To tackle these risks Dennis Hamro-Drotz asks for designing conflict – and migration – sensitive adaptation policies and programs as well as for increased support of regional cooperation.

The enormous challenges for diplomacy are illustrated by Malini Mehra, director of the Indian think tank Centre for Social Markets (CSM) in Bangalore. Referring to the example of the 2011 floods in Pakistan, she highlights the importance of informal diplomacy to address climate change aspects such as an endangered food security. As an example, she presents the Track II Indo-Pakistani Cooperation Initiative, facilitated by the World Economic Forum in cooperation with Young Global Leaders. Furthermore the linking of institutions on a sub-national level across nations can serve as a helpful exchange platform for sustainable solutions in the realm of food security.

Future food security and the avoidance of violent conflict will depend on improved early warning systems going beyond national borders – a message of outmost relevance also for other climate change affected risks. To address the challenge of food security, participants ask to reflect on the contexts at regional and local levels and to develop capacities for joint risk mapping. Climate diplomacy should support early action to formulate enabling national and international policies and laws and ensure their early implementation at the local level. Early action, in particular, needs to be promoted in conflict-prone regions. By developing guidelines for conflict-sensitive adaptation practices, climate change impacts such as land degradation and changing precipitation patterns can be addressed in these regions. This includes strengthening preventive action, resource rights, and means of dispute resolution. In addition, capacities need to be developed to spend climate funds coherently and transparently – especially in fragile countries and regions. Finally, participants identify the need to support cooperation also between groups at the sub-national level. This, too, can help link Track I and Track II initiatives, including mechanisms of informal diplomacy, to reflect on the interests of the affected populations. Climate diplomacy activities can strengthen confidence building among practitioners in jointly addressing climate change risks.

## **Coastal Stability**

Unprecedented in recent history, climate change-induced sea-level rise may alter maritime territories and increase the severity of extreme weather events and natural disasters. This will affect coastal communities and livelihoods, including their infrastructure, trade, and ultimately their borders. Concurrently, changes such as the melting of the Arctic or varying marine economic zones can create new conflict constellations over maritime resources. Low-lying countries are highly vulnerable to these changes, as political and physical infrastructures were created under stable environmental and climate conditions. Flooding is already a regular event leading to the evacuation of thousands of people. Salt water intrusion is increasingly affecting agricultural production and rising sea levels threaten critical infrastructure, such as pipelines, in coastal areas. Weakened infrastructure and vulnerable economic sectors are most prone to natural disasters that will have disproportionate regional and global effects, given the nature of interconnected markets and population displacement.

A.N.M. Muniruzzaman, President of the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS), illustrates these risks by an example from Bangladesh, where 35 million people live close to the sea and are severely impacted by sea-level rise. Implications of climate change for the coastal belt regions are shoreline erosion and land inundation, coastal flooding, and natural calamities such as increased cyclones and storms, loss in coral reefs and marine fisheries, loss in marine biodiversity, salinity intrusion, crop failure, displacement and migration, and health hazards. Furthermore, large uncontrolled population movements could lead to political and social destabilization of the region.

However, it would be misleading to assume that only coastal areas of low income countries will be affected by climate change. As described by Cleo Paskal from the Royal Institute for International Affairs, even industrialized countries are ill-prepared to address risks of climate change. Major commercial hubs are situated in low-lying coastal areas susceptible to sea-level rise and disasters. Furthermore, most critical infrastructure in coastal areas is not designed to accommodate large-scale environmental changes. The same is true for international legal infrastructure. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), for example, does not mention sea-level rise. Cleo Paskal recommends expanding risk assessments for buildings in coastal areas, the adaptation of infrastructure (physical, economic and legal) and the integration of environmental change in planning of infrastructure.