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“NOW WHAT?”

Addressing the Climate-Gender-Security Nexus at NATO

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INTRODUCTION

At the 2021 Brussels Summit, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) endorsed its first-ever Climate Change and Security Action Plan,¹ with the aim to “mainstream climate considerations into NATO’s political and military agenda.”² The Action Plan focuses on four key areas – (1) awareness to understand the impact of climate change on NATO’s strategic environment, missions, and operations; (2) adaptation by incorporating climate considerations into NATO’s core tasks; (3) mitigation by helping

Allies reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from their respective militaries; and (4) outreach with its partner countries, other international organizations, civil society, and industry to enhance the global response to climate change. Notably, NATO calls out the need to include gender perspectives as part of its climate change awareness efforts in the context of NATO’s Women, Peace and Security (WPS) policy.³ NATO began formally recognizing gender issues⁴ and environmental challenges⁵ in 1961 and 1969, respectively, but 2021 appears to be the first time NATO has officially acknowledged the intersection of these two global

1 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), NATO Climate Change and Security Action Plan, June 14, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_185174.htm.

2 NATO, “Environment, climate change and security,” April 18, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91048.htm.

3 NATO, “Women, Peace and Security,” March 7, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91091.htm.

4 NATO, 40th anniversary of the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives,” May 31, 2016, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_131710.htm.

5 NATO, “Environment, climate change and security,” April 18, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91048.htm.

agendas, emphasizing the need for allied militaries to understand the “climate, gender, and security” nexus.

The climate, gender, and security nexus calls attention to “the linkages between climate change and conflict and how gender is a cross-cutting lens through which people experience both issues.”⁶ This nexus amplifies how the impacts of climate change, either slow-onset events like sea level rise and desertification or sudden-onset events like floods and droughts, have gendered implications for local populations and can also precipitate conflict that exacerbates existing gender inequality.⁷

For example, increased drought is negatively impacting the livelihoods of women and girls for whom agriculture is an important employment sector⁸ and, in some countries, has led to an increase in child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as families feel compelled to marry off their girls to secure dowries to support the family.⁹ A flood may worsen poverty and conflict conditions, forcing men to migrate to find alternate work and placing them at a heightened risk for human trafficking.¹⁰ While four times more

people are displaced by extreme weather events than by conflict, the two are often interrelated.¹¹ The academic research on the climate, gender, and security nexus is deep. In practice, militaries should look out for how this nexus compounds destabilizing circumstances within their current and future operating environments.

Experts have extensively demonstrated that addressing climate change and its impacts on security is critical to NATO’s mission and core tasks.¹² If NATO is to become “the leading international organization when it comes to understanding and adapting to the impact of climate change on security,”¹³ it will need to understand and be responsive to the climate, gender, and security nexus.

There are challenges to doing so in an environment of limited resources at the alliance and member-state level, including concerns related to perceived tradeoffs between NATO’s traditional mission and the gender and climate agendas, as well as tradeoffs between the gender and climate agendas. However, these challenges are easily surmountable without “reinventing the

6 Dr. Jessica Smith, Lauren Olosky, and Jennifer Grosman Fernández, *The Climate–Gender–Conflict Nexus*, Washington, DC: Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, 2021), <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/the-climate-gender-conflict-nexus/>.

7 Kanta Kumari Rigaud, Alex de Sherbinin, Bryan Jones, Jonas Bergmann, Viviane Clement, Kayly Ober, Jacob Schewe, Susana Adamo, Brent McCusker, Silke Heuser, and Amelia Midgley, *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration*, (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2018), https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29461/WBG_ClimateChange_Final.pdf.

8 United Nations, “Women suffer disproportionately from ravages of drought, desertification,” June 13, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/06/1137777>.

9 United Nations Fund for Children, “Child marriage on the rise in Horn of Africa as drought crisis intensifies,” June 28, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/child-marriage-rise-horn-africa-drought-crisis-intensifies>.

10 International Organization for Migration (IOM), *The Climate Change–Human Trafficking Nexus*, (Bangkok, Thailand: IOM, 2016), https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mecc_infosheet_climate_change_nexus.pdf.

11 United Nations, “COP24 addresses climate change displacement ahead of crunch migration meeting,” December 8, 2018, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/12/1028011>.

12 Erin Sikorsky and Sherri Goodman, “A climate security plan for Nato: collective defence for the 21st century,” Policy Exchange, April 13, 2021, <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/climate-security-plan-nato-collective-defence-21st-century>.

13 NATO, “Brussels Summit Communiqué – Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels 14 June 2021,” June 14, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm.

wheel.” Instead, NATO can focus on cross-integration: better embedding a gender perspective into its climate security work and incorporating a climate perspective into its WPS efforts. If intentionally pursued, this approach could help NATO address the climate, gender, and security nexus while optimizing the Alliance’s limited resources for both agendas - and, in doing so, enhance NATO’s overall mission. In this context, recommended actions include:

1. Continue to embed relevant climate considerations into NATO’s gender analyses for military operations.
2. Review NATO missions to develop a body of use cases on the impact of the climate, gender, and security nexus on NATO operations.
3. Identify the most likely climate, gender, and security considerations that impact military missions to help allied militaries incorporate these considerations more willingly and consistently.
4. Conduct organizational assessments prior to hiring external climate advisors to optimize their expertise and alignment within military structures.
5. Ensure Gender Advisors and Climate Advisors can help each other gain access to military processes and procedures to incorporate climate, gender, and security considerations.
6. Continue to advance the climate, gender, and security nexus within NATO’s broader climate awareness, adaptation, and outreach efforts.

ALIGNING NATO’S GENDER AND CLIMATE AGENDAS

As with many “non-traditional” security issues, the Alliance and its member militaries have historically been able to identify climate, gender, and security issues (“what”) but have struggled to understand how this information is relevant to their operations (“so what”) and importantly, how this information should shape the way a military operation unfolds (“now what.”) Formally acknowledging the interlinkages between these agendas is a critical first step toward what should be a long-term objective: gendering NATO’s climate policy and climatizing NATO’s gender policy - where it makes sense to do so.

NATO aligning these agendas isn’t simply “the right thing to do.” Instead, integrating climate, gender, and security helps close implementation gaps for both agendas. It is also a helpful tool as NATO for plans for the future operating environment - an operating environment that is already rapidly evolving.

There are currently understandable - but not insurmountable - implementation challenges around both agendas at the Headquarters and member-state level. However, integrating the two is a low-resource effort - focusing largely on better policy and better organizational structures over significant investments - with the potential for high-value impact. Appropriately leveraging the co-benefits of these agendas will stretch scarce resources and more rapidly demonstrate impact and relevance to the mission, offering benefits not just in Brussels, but also to the civilian populations affected by NATO missions.

CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

NATO's own 2023 Climate Change and Impact Assessment acknowledges that climate change can “compound existing grievances and exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities, including those linked to gender, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual identity and socio-economic status,”¹⁴ but it is unclear to what extent allies understand how to accommodate this critical nexus as part of their climate change efforts if they even recognize the relationship between climate, gender, and security at all. There is no explanation of how or to what extent initiatives in the compendium of best practices for NATO's climate action plan incorporate gender perspectives or WPS considerations.¹⁵ There are likely a few reasons NATO is slow to move from rhetoric to action in addressing this nexus. First, NATO is a consensus-based bureaucracy, and garnering the needed political will for both the climate and WPS agendas at the national level can be a challenge as members face budgetary constraints and green backlash in their domestic political spheres. This can limit the extent to which members can politically support or contribute to either agenda.

Second, the climate and WPS agendas at NATO are justifiably pursued separately. Both have set lofty goals for the alliance and seek to transform how NATO, as a political-military institution, performs its role in the global security environment. At NATO headquarters, foundational changes are needed across multiple implementation areas to advance NATO's forward-leaning climate agenda, including “political and institutional structures, mechanisms for anticipating climate risk, and operational resilience.”¹⁶ Indeed, progress has been made identifying “climate breakdown and loss of biodiversity”¹⁷ as a top risk (per Allied Command Transformation's 2023 Strategic Foresight Analysis), but implementing climate mitigation strategies – particularly the transition away from greenhouse gas-dependent technologies at the member level – remains understandably slower.¹⁸ For the WPS agenda, NATO has made similar progress advancing WPS in high-level policies and directives, through its partnerships, deploying Gender Advisors, and integrating gender perspectives in some military plans, operations, training, and exercises.¹⁹ Still, its efforts remain under-resourced, under-prioritized, and unevenly applied at the member level.

Finally, climate change and the WPS agenda are both “non-traditional” issues that often do not neatly fit

14 NATO, The Secretary General's Report: NATO Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment, (Brussels, Belgium: NATO, 2023), https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230711-climate-security-impact.pdf.

15 NATO, NATO Climate Change and Security Action Plan: Compendium of Best Practice, (Brussels, Belgium: NATO, 2023), https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230710-climate-change-best-practices.pdf.

16 Anum Farhan, Signe Kossman, Armida van Rij, Preparing NATO for climate-related security challenges, (London, UK: Chatham House, 2023), <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/07/preparing-nato-climate-related-security-challenges/03-priorities-nato-1>.

17 NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT), 2023 Strategic Foresight Analysis, (Brussels, Belgium: NATO, 2024), https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SFA2023_rev2.pdf.

18 NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT), “Allied Command Transformation Strategic Foresight Work,” Accessed May 21, 2024, <https://www.act.nato.int/activities/allied-command-transformation-strategic-foresight-work/#:~:text=The%202023%20Strategic%20Foresight%20Analysis,considering%20diverse%20perspectives%20and%20expertise>.

19 NATO, “Women, Peace and Security,” March 7, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91091.htm#:~:text=Drawing%20from%20the%20UN%20Security,and%20management%2C%20and%20cooperative%20security.

into traditional perceptions of the military mandate. This creates a tradeoff perception that implementing the climate and WPS agendas takes away from maintaining the primary defense responsibility many militaries have to their national governments. When asked to “do more” for different “non-traditional” security issues, militaries often ask what they should stop doing, citing finite time, finite resourcing, or mission creep. This can stall implementation and cause issues like climate and WPS to compete for resources, leadership time, and staff bandwidth.

However, these implementation challenges are surmountable through doable actions within NATO’s existing gender and climate efforts. These actions will reinforce NATO’s core tasks rather than subtract from them and avoid incentivizing unnecessary tradeoffs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the Alliance marks its 75th anniversary, questions remain about how NATO – and its members – will meaningfully institutionalize efforts to make progress against these two “non-traditional” security agendas. However, NATO has a unique opportunity to capitalize on the lessons learned from its approach to its WPS policy implementation to better address the climate, gender, and security nexus in line with NATO’s traditional mission and by reinforcing both the climate and gender agendas, rather than creating tradeoffs between them.

In this context, the recommendations below do not attempt to “reinvent the wheel.” Rather, they are focused on where NATO can better include a gender perspective in its climate security work, and a climate perspective in its WPS work. This approach can help NATO optimize its finite resources for both agendas in service of bolstering its core tasks.

(1) Continue incorporating relevant climate considerations into NATO’s gender analyses for military operations. Conducting a gender analysis for military operations is a cornerstone of NATO’s WPS implementation. A gender analysis examines differences in behavior, decision-making, and security needs between men, women, boys, girls, and gender-diverse people within an operational environment.²⁰ It determines if gendered dynamics will impact or be impacted by the planned military operation and then uses this information to shape military planning – most often to mitigate civilian harm and address the different security needs of the population. The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations,²¹ NATO’s Department head charged with training Gender Advisors who serve across NATO structures and missions, previously developed a Military Gender Analysis Tool (MGAT)²² designed to serve as an iterative step-by-step process for incorporating a gender perspective within military operations. Though this tool does not yet explicitly call out climate, it does include secondary indicator questions across the Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, and Information domains within the tool that address the climate, gender, and security nexus. For example,

20 Oxfam GB, “Quick Guide to Gender Analysis,” January 30, 2014, <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/quick-guide-to-gender-analysis-312432/>.

21 Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM), Accessed May 21, 2024, <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/swedint/nordic-centre-for-gender-in-military-operations/>.

22 Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, Military Gender Analysis Tool, (Stockholm, Sweden: NCGM, 2022), <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/english/swedint/engelska/swedint/nordic-centre-for-gender-in-military-operations/ngcm-mgat-tool.pdf>.

in the Infrastructure domain, it asks, “How are different groups (women, men, girls, boys) experiencing food insecurity?” Under the Economic domain, it asks, “What is the role of women and men in different economic areas, such as agriculture, industry, or finance?” During future updates to the tool, the MGAT should incorporate more explicit linkages to climate, such as under the Social domain: “How, if at all, does the local climate pattern impact men’s/women’s access to resources, including water and reliable food sources?”

Though NATO has not standardized the inclusion of a gender analysis within its military planning and operations, it is often incorporated into NATO training and exercises. This makes it a helpful framework for embedding climate considerations because militaries are already being trained on how and when to use a gender analysis and its value to military operations. Furthermore, if done properly, adding relevant climate considerations within a gender analysis framework could help mitigate the perception that a separate climate analysis is needed to understand the impacts of climate on civilians in an area of planned military operations.

Relevant climate considerations would include information that detects the impacts of climate on civilian patterns of life and interaction; how climate changes may contribute to conflict between local populations; different risk factors for men and women associated with sudden onset events, such as flooding; and the ways in which climate is exacerbating existing gender norms. Importantly, however, a gender analysis framework cannot accommodate information used to assess

military installation, equipment, or asset resilience to climate change. Those assessments must, therefore, still occur separately.

Supplementing existing gender analysis frameworks to include climate considerations - and standardizing the inclusion of these frameworks in military planning - can ensure that operationally relevant climate and gender dynamics are included in military operations and help leaders connect the dots between these issues and their equities on the ground.

(2) Review NATO missions to start a body of use cases on the impact of the climate, gender, and security nexus on NATO operations. Some of the foundational use cases that shaped NATO’s understanding and scope of its WPS implementation came from NATO operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo. NATO was in Afghanistan for roughly twenty years before withdrawing all Resolute Support Mission forces in August 2021,²³ and NATO has been leading a peace-support operation in Kosovo²⁴ – the Kosovo Force, or KFOR – since June 1999. These countries also uniquely feel the different effects of a warming climate. These missions have both sought to incorporate gender perspectives into their operations and activities but may not have done so proactively or intentionally until 2007 after the first NATO WPS policy was established.²⁵ NATO’s implementation of its WPS agenda has had the benefit of reviewing its operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo to identify where gender perspectives could have been better incorporated to protect civilians, engage women’s local networks, and assess threats.

23 NATO, “Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan (2015–2021),” May 30, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/top-ics_113694.htm.

24 NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Forces Europe (SHAPE), “NATO Mission In Kosovo (KFOR),” Accessed May 21, 2024, <https://shape.nato.int/ongoingoperations/nato-mission-in-kosovo-kfor->

25 NATO, “Women, Peace and Security,” March 7, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91091.htm#:~:text=NATO's%20first%20policy%20on%20Women,of%20integration%2C%20inclusiveness%20and%20integrity.

This begs the question: what security challenges did NATO not realize at the time were related to climate exacerbating existing gender dynamics within these missions? How might NATO have better detected and accounted for climate, gender, and security considerations within its Afghanistan and Kosovo operations? Neither climate nor gender inequality are emerging phenomena, but militaries knowing how to detect their influence on the security environment is relatively new. Leveraging the resources and expertise of its new Climate Change and Security Center of Excellence, NATO could accelerate its understanding of the climate, gender, and security nexus by determining where climate considerations could have better informed their operations and understanding of security issues facing the local population.²⁶ Such cases can then be used to build awareness and knowledge among militaries by translating an abstract concept into military operational examples.

(3) Identify the most likely climate, gender, and security considerations that impact military missions to help allied militaries incorporate these considerations more willingly and consistently. Since adopting its first WPS policy in 2007, NATO has emphasized that a gender perspective should be mainstreamed into everything NATO does. While this helpfully demonstrates NATO's political support for the agenda, this guidance is difficult to interpret on the military side and often creates more questions among military planners because a gender perspective may be more impactful for some mission sets than others. The same is true of the climate, gender, and security nexus. NATO should identify and specify which missions allied militaries

should prioritize their efforts to incorporate the climate, gender, and security nexus. In the long term, such considerations should be included across all alliance actions, but helping militaries understand where they should initially focus their efforts improves their ability to identify people and resources to act and mitigates the issues being dismissed entirely.

Militaries have a finite time to plan and respond to a crisis. Planners also rely heavily on intelligence assessments to inform their understanding of the operational environment. Though they may try, military planners often cannot incorporate all available information, so they must decide what information is the most relevant given the mission at hand. For gender and climate considerations, many militaries often struggle with where to start and how to determine which information they should incorporate into their planning. Once that information is identified, existing military processes may be adapted to enable the consistent detection, collection, and inclusion of such information.

One area of opportunity is the military's humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) and civil preparedness effort because both missions benefit from incorporating gender and climate considerations. As extreme weather events become more frequent and destructive, militaries will be increasingly called upon to identify and respond to the different effects of extreme weather events on the population. For example, in "February and March 2024, the Military Responses to Climate Hazards (MiRCH) documented 21 military deployments in response to floods, extreme precipitation, droughts,

26 NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence, "What the CCASCOE will accomplish," Accessed May 21, 2024, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/nato-otan/centre-excellence.aspx?lang=eng#:~:text=The%20CCASCOE%20is%20jointly%20led,to%20respond%20to%20these%20challenges.

and wildfires in 12 countries.”²⁷ One foundational pillar of the global WPS agenda is to improve women and girls’ access to relief and recovery in the event of a disaster. As RAND research on the UK Ministry of Defense recommends, building templates for HADR delivery that ensure equitable access to aid and strengthening connections with local networks on the ground improve the military’s ability to respond to a disaster comprehensively.²⁸ Incorporating climate and gender considerations – such as gendered labor distribution around bodies of water, sociocultural norms associated with swimming capability, or opportunities for engaging with local women’s leadership – into HADR response templates builds resiliency and strengthens the relationship between civilians and the military in advance of an extreme weather event. It also specifies what gender and climate considerations look like in practice for the military. While climate change and gender inequality are too complex and dynamic to simplify in a checklist format, enough information is available today to identify and narrow down the most frequently occurring climate and gender considerations to give militaries a helpful starting point.

The climate, gender, and security nexus may not play out as strongly in all military mission sets. However, providing guidance or specificity on which missions are most likely to be influenced by this nexus helps militaries scope their efforts and take action.

(4) Conduct organizational assessments prior to hiring external climate advisors to optimize their expertise and alignment within military structures. One key challenge to institutionalizing gender and climate considerations within military operations is that to do so comprehensively and effectively often requires knowledge of military processes, doctrine, and capability; experience that climate and gender experts frequently lack. Conversely, military training and educational institutions have not yet fully adapted their programs of instruction so that tactical to strategic military leaders get the right knowledge at the right time in their military careers to incorporate climate and gender considerations into the occupational specialties they are trained to perform. Capitalizing on a best practice from implementing NATO’s WPS policy, NATO could encourage the hiring of civilian experts from academia, non-governmental organizations, or industry to provide advice and expertise on climate issues to militaries, akin to NATO Gender Advisors while concurrently building the capacity of internal experts and broadening the knowledge on these issues among military personnel. Gender Advisors are military or civilian personnel responsible for advising military leadership on the impact of gender perspectives on their operations and activities to advance the WPS agenda. A lesson learned from establishing Gender Advisors across NATO commands, however, is that dedicated experts cannot be solely responsible for establishing the policies, processes, and procedures that enable militaries to incorporate gender considerations in their plans and operations – it takes a

27 Ethan Wong, “February/March 2024 Update: Military Responses to Climate Hazards (MiRCH) Tracker,” Center for Climate and Security, April 9, 2024, <https://councilonstrategicrisks.org/2024/04/09/february-march-2024-update-military-responses-to-climate-hazards-mirch-tracker/>.

28 Lucia Retter, Anna Knack, Zudik Hernandez, Ruth Harris, Ben Caves, Martin Robson, Neil Adger, Crisis Response in a Changing Climate Implications of Climate Change for UK Defence Logistics in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) Operations, (United Kingdom: RAND Corporation, 2021), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1024-1.html.

combination of gender experts and military personnel to bridge the knowledge and process gaps each possesses.

Additionally, through its Bi-Strategic Command Directive 040-001 on “Integrating a Gender Perspective into the NATO Command Structure,” NATO encourages its commands and allied militaries to align their Gender Advisors in the command group so that they have direct access to the commander who they are charged with advising.²⁹ This alignment is also intended to demonstrate a prioritization, not sidelining, of the WPS agenda and its relevance to the mission. However, militaries remain cautious about taking on external experts and advisors to their commanders with every new “non-traditional” security issue. This expands the number of experts vying for the commander’s time and minimizes the impact these experts can have on the mission. Militaries also know that not every commander needs a Gender Advisor, just as not every commander needs a climate advisor, so identifying and prioritizing which missions or functions would benefit the most from such advisors is key. When hiring external climate expertise, militaries should first conduct organizational assessments to understand where such experts should be aligned across their command structures so that their contributions have the most proximity to and impact on mission sets that benefit most from climate considerations. Hiring a strategic-level climate advisor will have a different influence and impact on a mission than a tactical-level climate advisor embedded in a smaller military unit. They also serve different purposes. A strategic level advisor has more opportunity to influence the processes and procedures that enable military action by subordinate components to account for climate considerations. However, they

will not be on the ground acting on this information. A tactical-level advisor can provide real-time assessments and advice on climate considerations to tactical unit leaders as they execute a mission. However, they take their direction and orders from higher headquarters and may be constrained if higher headquarters’ guidance or processes do not enable their efforts. Both are valuable, but militaries can optimize the time and impact of external climate experts by identifying their optimal organizational placement while improving the baseline awareness of other military personnel on the effects of climate and gender on military operations.

(5) Ensure Gender Advisors and Climate Advisors can help each other gain access to military processes and procedures to incorporate climate, gender, and security considerations. It should not be assumed that Gender Advisors are climate experts and Climate Advisors are gender experts. It is important to note that these two roles serve specific purposes, particularly at a tactical level, and each advisor comes with their own professional background that shapes their expertise. However, if placed at a strategic or operational-level military organization, climate and gender advisors may pursue similar paths to integrate their considerations into military planning and operations and can help each other. For example, they both may be engaging with the intelligence directorates to identify information requirements for their issue areas; they may both be working with military planners overseeing specific plans for missions, such as civil preparedness, to add tasks that accommodate gender or climate impacts to a failure of critical infrastructure; or they may both be designing gender or climate-specific injects for military exercises. Since climate and gender are perceived

29 NATO, “Bi-Strategic Command Directive 040-001 (Public Version): Integrating Gender Perspective into the NATO Command Structure,” October 20, 2021, https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Bi-SCD_040-001.pdf.

as “non-traditional” security issues, their advisors in military organizations still face institutional, organizational, and cultural³⁰ hurdles to accessing the military processes and functions they are intended to advise. Importantly, gender advisors may have gained access to military processes that climate advisors have not and vice versa.

To advance the climate, gender, and security nexus within military planning and operations, climate and gender advisors should first have a baseline understanding of each other’s subject matter and, second, should understand each other’s role, function, and purpose in the organization. Armed with this knowledge, climate and gender advisors can then help their military organizations identify when the other advisor should also be present. For example, a climate advisor conversant in the climate, gender, and security nexus may not be a technical gender expert. Still, they should be able to highlight to military planners that planned military operations would benefit from the gender advisor’s expertise. It is a goal that all military personnel become trained in a baseline understanding of climate, gender, and security considerations so that they know when to bring in their respective gender or climate advisor to provide more technical expertise. However, until climate, gender, and security awareness training is developed and available, climate and gender advisors can be allies in advancing each other’s respective issue areas by highlighting this nexus.

(6) Continue to advance the climate, gender, and security nexus within NATO’s broader climate awareness, adaptation, and outreach efforts.

NATO’s rationale for its climate awareness efforts is similar to its rationale for WPS implementation: to understand the impact of these issues on NATO’s strategic environment, missions, and operations to be better prepared for future security challenges. Once these impacts are determined, this information can be used to inform NATO resilience efforts, civil preparedness, defense planning, training, exercises, and disaster response – critical areas identified for NATO’s climate adaptation and similar areas currently being pursued for NATO’s WPS implementation. This is where climate and WPS can work together within the same processes and mission areas to amplify the climate, gender, and security nexus. For example, NATO’s WPS implementation has incorporated gender-based considerations into its intelligence preparation of the operational environment as conflict or crisis early warning indicators and as part of observing people’s patterns of movement. As part of those processes, NATO can similarly incorporate climate considerations to intentionally see how climate exacerbates or influences the gender-based considerations being perceived. Furthermore, NATO seeks to strengthen its outreach on climate change and security issues through exchanges with partner countries, international and regional organizations, and civil society to contribute to the global response to climate change. A foundational component of NATO’s WPS implementation has been its partners, including those non-NATO member countries and international organizations³¹ and NATO’s Civil Society Advisory Panel on WPS,

30 Megan Bastick and Claire Duncanson, “Agents of Change? Gender Advisors in NATO Militaries,” *International Peacekeeping* 25 (4):554–77, <https://genderandsecurity.org/projects-resources/research/agents-change-gender-advisors-nato-militaries>.

31 NATO, “NATO’s partnerships,” March 7, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_84336.htm.

which was first established in 2016.³² Such WPS partnerships are primed for and have already started advancing the discussion on NATO's understanding of the climate, gender, and security nexus.

CONCLUSION

Accounting for the climate, gender, and security nexus in military operations is admittedly complex, but it's not insurmountable – and NATO is taking active steps to address it through developing resources³³ and hosting expert exchanges,³⁴ among other efforts. As the Alliance pursues alignment between its climate and gender work, NATO should focus on the areas of mutual reinforcement between the climate and WPS agendas and capitalize on the lessons learned from NATO's implementation of its own WPS policy. Together, this approach highlights tangible steps for addressing the climate, gender, and security nexus while reducing the tradeoff perception that implementing the climate and WPS agendas distracts from NATO's core mandate. The 75th NATO Summit presents an opportunity to take stock of progress made and focus future efforts on deepening the Alliance's climate, gender, and security work. The commitments from this historic summit will serve as a road map for NATO over the next year. Whether NATO translates these deliverables into action will demonstrate if the organization is truly accelerating the institutional change needed to be the leading international organization on climate change and security.

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32 NATO, "NATO starts talks with civil society on Women, Peace and Security Policy update," January 26, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_221854.htm.

33 NATO IMS Office of the Gender Advisor, "Climate Change, Gender, and Security Perspective," April 12, 2022, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/4/pdf/220412-IMS-GENAD-Climate-factsheet.pdf.

34 NATO, "Deep Dive Recap: Understanding the impacts of Climate Change, Gender Perspective and Security," April 12, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_194842.htm?selectedLocale=en.