

February 2022

SOS NEWSLETTER

Secure Our Sustainability

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Sustainability in a changing security landscape

Dear Reader,

The year has just begun, but the “new years resolutions” from COP 26 have already lost the power to maintain the attention of our leadership and media. Instead of focusing on increased cooperation to tackle global problems with global solutions, we are faced by heightened tensions on the international stage.

- Russia's saber-rattling and the threat of military escalation is captivating our attention. Putin seems to be prodding the boundaries of '*international acceptance*', provoking reactions, and attempting to solidify the control over some of the last '*Non-Nato*' stretches on Russia's western border - outcome unknown.
- China is using this time of distraction to probe its reach in the South-China Sea and the Strait of Taiwan and is [watching intently how the Ukraine/Russia](#) situation unfolds, drawing conclusions on actions regarding its “One-China” doctrine. The "*Olympic Spirit*" has certainly changed its connotation.
- The US is getting stretched thin in its attempts to contain competing powers and support its allies in Europe and Asia. All the while the Biden Administration is struggling to repair its wounded democracy and pass legislation that would support *decisive* action against climate change.
- The European nations have to find a way to *balance* its ties to the US and Russia, without betraying their own interests and ideals. The partially contradicting interests within the Union complicate this process.
- Globally the *democratic project* is under pressure “with the percentage of people living in a democracy falling to well below 50% and authoritarian regimes gaining ground.” ([Democracy Index 2021](#))

Overall, these are exactly the kinds of 'distractions' that impair effective action in a time that calls for increased cooperation. The last decade can be fairly summarized with '*big decisions postponed*' and these developments might well be a result of that. Humanity and Earth can't afford to continue on this pathway. The current developments illustrate powerfully that without a stable global security landscape there will be no global cooperation towards the change we so direly need.

In this context, our guiding principle, “no security without sustainability - no sustainability without security” rings ever more true.

With the threat of military conflict looming again over Eastern Europe and beyond, this seems to be an appropriate occasion to remind us of the commonly neglected direct and indirect impact the military-industrial complex has on climate change mitigation.

The 2022/23 budget of the US military has been passed with little opposition and is estimated to reach a record **~\$770 billion**. Biden's Build Back Better plan 'only' includes **555 billion over 10 years (~55bn/year)** for climate related policies and is facing significant opposition. This indicates clearly the political priorities across party lines.

It further solidifies a global trend of rising military expenditures (**~2 trillion in 2020**) that stands in stark contrast to the money spent on Climate Change. While reliable public spending statistics on climate change don't exist, green energy investments in 2021 have risen to **755 billion globally**. Most of this money stems from private investments and **falls severely short** of what is needed.

And this is only the monetary side of things. Looking beyond that reveals that military GHG emissions are not systematically tracked and have been exempt from emission accounting since the Kyoto protocol in 1997 - following pressure from the US military. No wonder, its estimated emissions exceed those of **most countries** (e.g. **Denmark and Portugal**). In the EU there are **signs of change** on the horizon, but rising international tensions might derail such efforts quite effectively.

In this vein, our newsletter highlights **QuickLooks, reports, organizations, and events**, that explore avenues to understand and mend global divisions, pay attention to non-traditional security risks, and/or identify the interlinkage of security & sustainability issues.

Thank you for reading!

Friedrich Hirler
Managing Editor

PS: If you want to learn more about the interlinkages of sustainability and security I recommend this course by UNCC:Learn on "**Climate Change, Peace and Security: Understanding Climate-Related Security Risks Through an Integrated Lens**".

For more on the topic of Green Defense check out the **recent analysis** from the International **Institute for Strategic Studies**.

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QuickLooks

Our QuickLooks give a *quick* overview over important issues and topics and a selection of organizations engaged in that field.



Global Risks and Challenges

Global Security is an elusive term with several definitions. According to Ken Booth, Global Security Threats can be divided into global existential threats and global emancipatory threats. Global existential threats, notably climate change and major wars, are mostly related to survival. These dangers do not distinguish between regions, nations, or ethnic groups. Global emancipatory threats are “glocal” challenges where “ideas and structures that promise to lift humans out of oppression are seriously challenged.” They include hunger and poverty, religious fundamentalism ...

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Regional Security

Today we live in a world with numerous centers of power and no adequate institutions to address its contemporary security challenges. For instance, China and other countries in the Southeast Asian region argue over the sovereignty of the South China Sea, which is an essential route for maritime trade and has extensive reserves of oil and natural gas.



Human Security

While the traditional notion of security aims to defend a nation-state in its territorial integrity through increased military means, human security focuses on the individual. This concept of security is linked to human development, understood not as macroeconomic growth but as expanding people’s capabilities and freedoms.

Youth Groups



The hope for resolving our world's greatest problems is nested in future generations: in the power of youth and organized youth groups. Since adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (2015), recognition of young people as a positive force in preventing and resolving conflict, and building sustainable peace, has gained significant momentum.

[More QuickLooks](#)

New Reports

There are as always too many relevant reports out there to cover in one newsletter. This selection will hopefully provide a good overview of what's out there, to see more check out the [Notable Online Reports](#) section on our website.



The World Climate and Security Report 2021

A flagship publication of the International Military Council on Climate and Security (IMCCS), that “warns of the compound security threats posed by the convergence of climate change with other global risks, such as COVID-19”. It signals that climate hazards will stress military and security services worldwide.

[Read More](#)



DoD Climate Risk Analysis

The Department of Defense describes how climate change is modifying the geostrategic, operational, and tactical landscape. This has significant consequences for the U.S. national security and defense. It looks at threats like increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and frequent, intense, and unpredictable extreme weather conditions.



The UN Security Council and Climate Change

This report, explores the intersection between Climate Change and International Security. It looks into the possibility of engagement that the UN Security Council has, to promote the necessary action to maintain peace. For this reason, it divides the content into different sections to cluster insights about the current status of climate affairs in the UN body.



The Security Threat That Binds Us:

The Unraveling of Ecological and Natural Security and what the United States can do about it

Describes the present ecological predicament and analyzes the security implications arising from this ecological disruption. In this sense, threats without “actors or explicit actor intention, such as infectious disease outbreaks, pandemics, and intensified natural disasters that harm people and infrastructure, present threats to which national



Global Risks Report 2022

This year edition of The Global Risks Report presents the results of the latest Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS). The survey includes several sections: COVID-19 Hindsight, Future Outlook, Horizon, Severity, Effects and International Mitigation that underpin the report. The report concludes with reflections and analysis on enhancing resilience, drawing from the lessons of the last two

security structures and agencies in the U.S. and elsewhere must adapt, and restructure where necessary” in order to meet their missions in the coming years and decades.

years of the COVID-19 pandemic.” As such, it presents the following key findings:



Nineteen Policy Recommendations for the Future of Great Power Arms Control and Strategic Stability

A digital multimedia report based on the the works of a group of Chinese, European, Russian, and US experts. It proposes pathways to manage competition, re-learning Cold War lessons, improving crisis communication, maximizing decision-making time in an escalating crisis. The 19 policy recommendations are organized in clusters such as general principles, low-hanging fruit, and more ambitious goals to exemplify the scope of each solution proposed.

[More Reports](#)

Featured Organizations

We want to highlight some organizations that merge security and sustainability perspectives to inform their work.



Center for Climate and Security

A non-partisan institutewith a vision to create “a climate-resilient world...which recognizes that climate change risks are unprecedented in human history, and does not wait for absolute certainty before acting to mitigate and adapt to those risks.”



Planetary Security Initiative

Lead by the Clingendael institute this initiative “aims to catalyze action in affected contexts” and reduce “climate-related risks to conflict and stability, thus promoting sustainable peace in a changing climate.”



Weathering Risk

A trans-organizational and interdisciplinary project run by [Adelphi](#) and the [PIK](#) focused on the linkages between climate change and security risks.



International Military Council on Climate and Security

A “group of senior military leaders, security experts, and security institutions across the globe dedicated to anticipating, analyzing, and addressing the security risks of a changing climate.”



Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies

A research centre focused on NTS issues and challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Non-Traditional Security focuses on security threats “from non-military sources, such as climate change, resource scarcity, infectious diseases, natural disasters, irregular migration, food shortages, people smuggling, drug trafficking and transnational crime.”

For more related organizations have a look at our collection of [Security and Sustainability](#) organizations.

Featured Events

- [Climate Security in 3D: Sustaining Peace for the Most Vulnerable](#); 08 Feb 2022 (available online): - A panel discussion “exploring practical opportunities for addressing climate-related security risks to promote climate justice.”
- [The Arctic in transition: energy, resilience & national security](#); 8 February 2022 (available online): Highlights “the opportunities of the Arctic region to ensure environmental protection and resilience, common security, appropriate resource development, and the rights of Indigenous inhabitants.”
- [Munich Security Conference 2022](#), 18 - 20 Feb 2022 (Munich): An

event that will be overshadowed by the current developments. Other than in previous years it will “introduce a number of innovative participatory formats to complement the more traditional activities.” See also their [annual report](#).

- [Fragility Forum 2022](#); 7 Mar 2022 - 18 Mar 2022 (Washington, D.C. and online): Aims “to exchange innovative ideas and knowledge to improve development approaches in fragile, conflict and violence-affected (FCV) settings to foster peace and stability.”
- [2022 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development](#); 23 May 2022 - 25 May 2022 (Stockholm and online): Hosted by [SIPRI](#) this event focuses on how environmental degradation and climate change are affecting human security, and what solutions exist to tackle these challenges.

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The Security and Sustainability Guide

2021 Guadalupe Street, Suite 260

Austin, TX, 78705

info@securesustain.org



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