

**Recent European and NATO Developments on Climate Change & Security**  
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During his mission to Afghanistan in September 2008 CIMIC Major Piet Wit, attached to the Dutch NATO effort in Uruzgan, spoke with the Director of the Agricultural Service in Afghanistan.

The director warned about the impacts of the drought affecting the country in that period: continuous droughts, to be expected because of on-going climate change, would chase young farmers from their lands – they would go to Pakistan, and as he said, fall into the hands of fundamentalist madrassas and return as Taliban fighters to Afghanistan.

Major Wit is a strong advocate of an integral water management plan for Afghanistan, which has to look at the condition of the groundwater reservoirs, the rivers and the glaciers draining into the country from the surrounding Himalayas.

As to the groundwater one has to note the existence of a system of underground irrigation channels, the so-called *kareshes*, which could easily be disturbed by using diesel pumps to get the water quickly in one place, but depleting it elsewhere.

An additional security consideration is that the production of wheat needs much more water than the growing of poppy, which unlike the previous Taliban-regime, now is used to finance the purchase of arms and equipment to continue the rebellion, not unlike the FARC and the paramilitary in Colombia finance themselves.

Part of such an integrated water plan has to be reforestation and terrassing of hillsides to fix the soils, prevent sedimentation of the rivers and to buffer the rainfall. According to Major Wit, the Taliban also cut the trees and sell the wood to finance their activities. A former high official of the UNHCR programme in Afghanistan told me a couple of years ago: “There are three things Afghanistan needs: trees, trees and trees.”

Water security, as a condition for food security is obviously a key element of a durable peace in Afghanistan, which in itself requires the human security which NATO is trying to achieve, at a high cost. You all will remember what President Obama recently said when asked whether the war in Afghanistan was being won....

Because of the prominent presence of Dutch NATO Forces in southern Afghanistan, the focus of Dutch development cooperation on fragile states, amongst them Afghanistan and the active involvement of Dutch-based international NGOs such as Oxfam Novib and Healthnet International, intensive discussions are going on about indeed the civil-military interfaces: environmental restoration done by or close by uniforms, may be perceived as

done by those who –by accident– killed or maimed a beloved relative and their work may be rejected. How to organise the transition from a necessary military phase to an effective civilian phase with full community participation and ownership of the work done, will be one of the major challenges for the NATO in its currently most important theater of operation.

This subject is bound to be a top item on the agenda of the high-level international conference on Afghanistan to be held on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March in The Hague.

A very important element in a water management plan for Afghanistan will be how to face the melting of the glaciers and snowcaps in the Himalayas and on the Tibetan Plateau as a result of on-going inevitable climate change, affecting the water supply of Afghanistan, its neighbors and the other countries in Central, South and Southeast Asia.

From a security perspective Pakistan needs special attention. For its water it depends to a large extent on the Indus River which originates on the Tibetan Plateau, North of the Himalayas, then flows through India to Pakistan. Water stress, aggravated by climate change and by the building of dams by India in the Indus basin, will further destabilize Pakistan.

Increased water stress may, amongst others, be the result of a knock-on effect if China would continue with its plans to divert water from the Brahmaputra to the dried-out Yellow River, forcing India to rely more on the other rivers, one of them the Indus. So far, the World Bank-brokered 1960 Indus Water Treaty, regulating the division of water between India and Pakistan has held, but will it in the future with growing demand and decreasing quantity and quality?

All the more reason for NATO therefore, to look at the role of climate change with its impact upon the water security of the “AfPak” region, as a necessary condition for political and social stability in that region.

Together with the representatives of the security community of South, Southeast Asia (and of China!) and from the other parts of the world vulnerable to climate change (Latin America, depending on the glaciers of the Andes and the rainfall from the Amazon, Africa suffering from increasing droughts) a strong signal should be sent to the climate negotiations in December in Copenhagen that indeed formidable cuts in the greenhouse gas emissions have to be agreed upon to not further destabilize the global climate with its resulting impacts upon political and social stability.

The need to include a clause to that extent in the Political Declaration to be adopted at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NATO on April 3<sup>rd</sup> in Strasbourg has been communicated by IES to, amongst others, the Director of Policy Planning at NATO Headquarters, the new U.S. Ambassador to NATO and the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and his staff.

[NATO has a good history in paying attention to the relations between environment and security: many studies and reports published by its Commission on the Challenges of Modern Society, with the landmark report No. 232 *Environment & Security in an International Context* of 1999, the conference and resulting publications on the security implications of desertification in the Mediterranean of 2003 and, especially of course, the speech by Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on the Security Implications of Climate Change, given for the HERA Foundation on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2008, pointing to the need for NATO to look at the consequences of the melting of the ice in the Arctic, water security in Central Asia and the Caucasus as part of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) with UNEP, UNDP and the OSCE and to prepare for situations where “*NATO may provide assistance or protection for relief efforts or even undertake certain relief operations on its own, particularly in areas that are considered too dangerous for civilian agencies.*”]

The Executive Secretary of the Climate Convention told me at the previous Conference of the Parties held last December in Poznan, Poland, that he would tremendously welcome such a signal from the military and security community, as it would help raise the sense of urgency needed for a successful outcome of these crucial negotiations. It may help if the new Secretary of NATO will be the actual Prime Minister of Denmark, Anders Fogh Rasmussen. He will definitely want his colleagues to succeed at these negotiations!

While the world will look at the Obama Administration to play a leading role in Copenhagen, the EU will also want to continue its leadership role especially in the field of securing commitments to reduce GHG emissions from the use of fossil fuels and by the conservation of forests, the stopping of deforestation and the promotion of massive programmes on reforestation (global cooling). (Because of deforestation and forest burnings, Indonesia and Brazil are the nos 3, respectively 4, in the global emissions of GHGs, after China and the U.S.

The policy documents guiding the EU from a security perspective are first of all the Solana Paper of March 14<sup>th</sup> 2008 *Climate Change and International Security*, which of course also refers to the full range of EU instruments of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), and secondly, the European Parliament Resolution of 19 February 2009 on the European Security Strategy (ESS) and ESDP.

This resolution refers of course to the Solana report and to the need that an updated ESS and the future new NATO Strategic Concept should be mutually coherent and that this should be reflected in the Declaration to be adopted at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NATO on 3 and 4 April 2009 in Strasbourg and Kehl. Very specifically it says that “*the security interests of the Union include (...) the security of energy supply and sea lanes, the protection of its space assets and protection against the consequences of climate*

*change;*” and it welcomes the fact that these subjects have been taken up by the ESS and the ESDP, but deplores the unclear manner in which this has been done. It also deplores the fact that European Council (of ministers) has not considered the proposal by the Parliament for a new EU-NATO partnership.

The resolution addresses many other items of a more regional (cooperation with NATO on relations with Russia) or organisational nature (technical coordination between EU Member states on defense matters), the use of the EU Galileo and GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) systems for security and defense purposes, e.a.

If it is still true, as U.S. defense analyst and journalist Leo Michel observed a few years ago at an IES conference in the European Parliament, that the EU and NATO “are in the same city , but on different planets”, then one may that the planets at least have come closer to each other. Climate change will bring them further together so that they can jointly continue their journey through the universe.