



Broadly Incorporating Climate into Unilateral and Multilateral Systems

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In regards to the question of what climate impacts are insufficiently addressed by the current international institutional framework, the answer depends considerably on the specific institutional framework under consideration. Climate change is increasingly recognized as a global phenomenon that has wide ranging implications for [foreign policy](#), [international security](#), sustainable development, and human mobility. The 2015 Paris Agreement has led to advancements to [better understand climate risks and to inform global action](#). The European Union is working to better address climate-related security risks. The Biden Administration has, through Executive Orders and National Security guidelines, begun the process of integrating climate change into U.S. Government analysis and decision-making.

Despite this growing attention, climate change discussions and decisions remain largely siloed in practice. This lack of climate considerations' integration into broader decision-making has at least three consequences:

1. The risks posed by climate change are not fully or accurately understood, leading to absent, ineffective, or inadequate responses
2. Climate responses run the risk of [unintended consequences](#) (e.g., exacerbating or creating new tensions/conflicts)
3. Without considering how climate change interacts with existing

dynamics, there is a missed opportunity to implement climate-related investments and interventions that [foster broader stability](#), bolster livelihoods, and [minimize forced displacement](#).

Intentional integration of climate expertise and analysis would benefit not just climate decision-making but inform smarter and more effective foreign policy, conflict prevention and stabilization efforts, and development assistance. That is to say, the very process of developing the integrated and interdisciplinary coordination required to respond to climate change would, in and of itself, be an impactful exercise for policymakers.

From climate tipping points to climate's 2nd and 3rd order effects, the sweeping effects of a changing climate on ecosystems, social and political stability, international relations, and power structures requires that we rethink the flow of information and engage more strategically across scales of decision-making. Improving coordination with partner states, local governments, and non-state actors to ensure that global initiatives improve local resilience to climate-fragility risks is critical. However, this intentional engagement of non-state and subnational actors isn't just to the benefit of local communities; it also creates a critical avenue for civil society, local leaders, and traditional knowledge to inform more effective multilateral processes by more accurately identifying risk pathways and shaping responses to them.

This broader integration of climate change should not be unilateral. That is to say, institutional frameworks and initiatives focused explicitly on climate change must also consider how existing systems and dynamics—whether environmental, political, social, economic, demographic, etc.—interact with climate change. In the UNFCCC negotiations, for example, there has not been enough attention to climate’s connection to fragility and opportunities for peacebuilding. Many of the countries most exposed to climate change are also affected by fragility and conflict. Without a conflict-sensitive lens, climate responses run the risk of, at a minimum, falling flat; worse, they can feed further instability or create new tensions.

Fully harnessing today’s climate ambition will require [new modes of multilateralism](#) and overcoming the traditional barriers that separate sectors, communities of practice, and policymakers from the local to global. And it will require national governments and international institutions to take the lead in providing access and resources for non-state and subnational actors to ensure that those traditionally excluded from decision-making have the capacity to engage.