

Our vision: Climate-Security Leadership and Youth Engagement in 2027

Ytze de Vries

Keywords

*Climate Security,
Civil-Military Cooperation,
Youth Engagement, Natural Disasters,
Humanitarian Aid,
Climate Change Mitigation*



Information Author

Ytze de Vries (25) is a graduate MSc Energy Science at Utrecht University (UU), founder of the Youth Climate Security Talks. He is a reserve officer at the Royal Netherlands Army and mainly interested in the military energy transition and the role of armed forces within the climate security debate. He writes on personal title for the YCS research team.

[LinkedIn](#)

Information YCST

Climate change will be one of the largest security threats in the (near) future. Yet, in recent years, little to no attention was paid towards climate change in the security domain. We understand the importance of supplying future decision makers with knowledge and skills to understand climate change and negate the challenges which it will bring. Hence, YCST was created in November 2021. The YCS Research Team was founded in September 2023, to further build upon this project. The Research Team gives young professionals and students the opportunity to write about climate security related topics and put their articles into public discourse.

[Website](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

A future to fight for

Leadership has to arise when we are in a crisis. Right now, the security of all humanity is facing a large threat: the climate crisis. Climate change is threatening global security in many different forms. Millions of people are at risk. This crisis demands a complete change from our current way of working and living. This requires leadership. A form of leadership that needs to be fueled and driven by the younger generations, the leaders of the future. In this vision document we from the Youth Climate Security Research team propose a better future, one worth fighting for.

What is happening in the world?

Imagine the year 2027. The effects of climate change on global security are more evident and pressing than ever. Global temperature increase and sea level rise have caused a record amount of extreme weather events. Hurricanes, wildfires, droughts, floods and storms. These devastating events have not only increased in frequency, but in intensity and duration as well. As a consequence, food has become scarcer, water even scarcer, ecosystems are degrading and losing their natural redundancy, economic damage is higher than ever, and public health is facing a huge risk.

In 2027, the number of disasters and call for humanitarian assistance has reached a new record. With life becoming tougher, people suffering and nations struggling to guarantee prosperity; global, regional and national security are under increased pressure. No corner of the globe is immune from the devastating consequences of climate change. Already fragile states are pushed further into instability. A lack of resources and livability is increasing criminality and radicalization. And as a consequence, millions of people are forced to leave their homes. Worldwide we see millions of climate refugees seeking a new place to live. Western countries will have to deal with increasing tensions at their borders. At the same time, these countries will face the disrupting effects of climate change within their own borders in the form of more extreme weather events. The increased criminality and radicalization in fragile states is also posing a threat in the form of terrorism.

The future of armed forces

To deal with the increased instability caused by climate change, we rely on our armed forces more than ever. For today, national security can no longer be used by the military as an excuse not to act. Climate change is national security. Climate change will define how the military can defend territory and interests, conduct crisis management operations and support of civil authorities. Adaptation and mitigation therefore provide the much-needed license to operate and freedom to maneuver, the two prerequisites of a credible and effective military. In 2027, military leaders and decision makers understand the relationship between climate change and security; and know how to act accordingly. They feel the urgency to embed the climate challenge into leadership and security doctrines.

We see armed forces fulfilling three important roles in relation to climate change. First of all, armed forces will function as climate change mitigators. By actively reducing their own climate footprint and reducing greenhouse gasses emissions. This will be achieved by stimulating innovation and sustainable development. Second of all, armed forces will be climate proof organizations. Armed forces have adapted to extreme weather and can now operate in even tougher circumstances, extreme temperatures and weather. Finally, armed forces will act as a climate security operator. By using their unique capability to operate worldwide in any environment, armed forces will bring climate security to fragile regions worldwide. They help fragile regions to become climate resilient, through innovations,

trainings and knowledge. In 2027 it is therefore usual that military operations are accompanied by researchers and climate experts, who can help to incorporate climate aspects in military humanitarian aid, disaster relief and peace building operations.

Climate-Security Leadership

In 2027, rapid climate-security action is achieved through large-scale youth engagement. Our leaders acknowledge that civil students and future military officers are the future leaders that will face the most severe security implications of climate change. Our leaders understand the importance of engaging with the youth and using their problem-solving capabilities. Our leaders feel urgency to stimulate youth climate-security leaders. Together with the youth our leaders look into the future, steer the ship and change the future for the better.

The first step: A Youth Climate Security Research Team

However, climate-security leadership and youth engagement will not develop spontaneously. This needs to be organized. We from YCST will take a first step by rallying youth from across the globe in a Youth Climate Security Research Team. In this research team, youth from different nations and with different backgrounds work together to investigate the climate security nexus based on their personal interests, knowledge and skills. They view relevant climate security topics from their unique national/cultural/expertise views, discuss amongst each other and eventually compile their insights in a short paper. The papers are distributed freely on our media channels and aim to help decision makers within the climate security nexus make more informed decisions. We aim to spark imagination of how we can together design a more secure world for all, posing challenges *and* solutions within the complex nexus of climate security.

Conclusion

In sum, this vision document from the Youth Climate Security Research Team envisions a future marked by the urgency of addressing the global climate crisis as a fundamental threat to humanity's security. We emphasize the need for climate-security leadership and youth engagement, to bring about transformative change in the way we live and work. The text suggests that armed forces (and other security institutions) will play a pivotal role in mitigating climate change, adapting to extreme conditions, and promoting climate security worldwide. The proposed Youth Climate Security Research Team aims to organize and channel the collective efforts of young individuals from diverse backgrounds to address climate security challenges and contribute to informed decision-making. Ultimately, this vision document calls for collaborative efforts and innovative solutions to create a more secure and sustainable world for future generations.

'If you care about peace and security, you care about the climate'

Something to think about

Consider the future you wish to see unfold. Is it one where leaders actively collaborate with the youth to address climate change and ensure global security? Envision a world where emerging leaders are equipped with the knowledge and skills to shape a climate-resilient future. Picture armed forces standing prepared for the profound challenges brought by climate change.

We invite you to contribute to the realization of this future. Share your ideas, insights, and perspectives as we delve into the intricate intersection of climate and security. Your unique viewpoint is essential in fostering a comprehensive and inclusive understanding of this critical topic.

Perspectives from other members of the YCS Research Team on the article

Jurre Kok (21)

MA European Policy student at the University of Amsterdam

Climate change is indeed one of the most challenging problems the last generation(s) did not accomplish to solve entirely. Future generations must therefore take on the topic, including the complications climate changes brings forth, e.g. societal, economic, natural, and security implications. Due to the fact that climate change is a global problem which transcends national borders, states must cooperate and integrate on a inter- and transnational scale to achieve effective policy. Although there currently is a discussion regarding the securitization of climate change in political, policy and academic discourse, it is certain that the military/security field should work on the long-term implications of climate change, how they should adapt to these implications, and how the member-states of NATO can integrate inter- and transnationally to be prepared for future climate related security challenges. These future scenarios regarding NATO / EU strategies on climate security, and how the West should cooperate/ integrate, are discussed in my paper, which is published around the same time as this paper as well.

Marieke Jacobs (27)

MSc Earth Science & MSc Energy Science at Utrecht University, working-student at Defensity College

As an earth scientist, specialized in how the Earth systems function, I have observed that a large part of society does not seem to understand that the damage due the changing climate and biodiversity has the potential to damage society much more than any human army could ever do. Also, I see that most people underestimate how vulnerable and reliant we are on nature and how sudden a climate crisis can happen, just as sudden as an earthquake occurs, how new wars started and how the pandemic took over the world. That's how the planet works. So let's prepare, act, try to prevent, and invest in young leaders for the sake of global safety.

Tor Lovell (21)

BA Philosophy, Ethics and Religion student at the University of Leeds

From an ethical perspective, longtermism and the arguments in favour of long term thought around climate change are really strong. There is a lot to be said about the rights of future people and future generations and their lives, and our current duties and responsibilities to think about them as well as us. This probably relates more to Jurre's paper where he speaks more about long term problems and solutions, but it's a very good perspective to take.

Catrin Snaith (24)

MA Intercultural Communication student at the University of Sheffield

Research has already shown that climate change is a contributing factor towards internal displacement of vulnerable peoples; a phenomenon which is bound to only continue without action. Our generation knows the severity of the situation, yet seems to be stuck in a state of paralysis. We know what we have to do, but no one is brave enough to take the first steps towards solving it. Here, Ytze hits the nail on the head regarding our need for climate-security focused leadership; for individuals who are committed to making tangible changes in local and international policy.