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The EU as a Soft Power Superpower: Why a Green Marshall Plan for the Sahel Is Imperative

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Abstract

This research paper argues that the European Union should roll out a European Green Marshall Plan for ecosystem restoration and local governance in the Sahel region, located between the Sahara to the north and the Sudanian savanna to the south. Ecological degradation and related climate change put mounting pressure on the region. In combination with cyclical resource-related conflicts and the presence of terrorist and insurgent groups, this has created an increasingly volatile situation. European security and stability are indirectly at stake. The EU's 'Old War' footing and support for illegitimate, corrupt, and autocratic governments to 'mow the lawn' of terrorists and insurgents fails to address and often undermines fundamental human security needs in the region. The authors propose a remodelling of EU foreign and security policy to shift focus from current securitization efforts towards facilitating a green, bottom-up transition that empowers local communities' ecological stewardship by using their existing knowledge, skills, and dynamics, and Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR). Failure to make these changes toward a human security-centred approach means the EU's current security and climate-related policies risk further undermining rather than contributing to regional security.

INTRODUCTION

On June 3rd, 2021, a new joint report by the United Nations (UN) Environment Programme and Food and Agriculture Organisation called for urgent action to restore a minimum of 1 billion hectares of degraded land in the coming decade, an area roughly the size of China. Besides the immediate returns for the local population, increasing their food and water security, the report asserts that 'investing in ecosystem restoration…can be a tool for resolution and peacebuilding, reducing recruitment by terrorist groups, and alleviating pressure on people to migrate (Dickson et al. 2021, 25). One of the world's most precarious regions is the Sahel. It is estimated that, at present, more than 33.8 million people located between the Sahara to the north and the Sudanian savanna to the south will need humanitarian assistance and protection against violent non-state groups (European Commission 2021). The European Union (EU) ought to take the lead in this effort by rolling out a European Green Marshall Plan for ecosystem restoration and decentralized local governance in the Sahel. The focus should be on the region's environmental insecurity, moving away from the EU's reactive security policies. The premise here is that this is not a luxury option. Environmental insecurity in the region is a 'first-order' (cf. Mearsheimer 2001, 371-372) threat to Europe as it is for other poles in the new emerging multipolar order. In fact, noted realist Kaplan (1994) already observed this in West Africa in his 1994 work detailing the effects of environment stress. European interests are clear. The 2015 migrant crisis has shown the deep interconnectedness between adjacent geographical regions, feeding into populist furore and internal political instability from Rome to Berlin.

So far, European lead-nations' efforts in the Sahel region have insufficiently focused on improving environmental and human security on the ground, focusing instead on (counterproductive) securitization (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). While the EU has underscored the direct and indirect impacts of so-called 'climate-related security risks' (CRSRs), it has been notoriously lagging when it comes to implementing policies that make an actual real-life difference for those that are in most danger (Remling and Barnhoorn 2021). The need for EU leadership in addressing ecological (in)security is underlined by the fact that other foreign actors like Russia, that has inserted mercenaries of the Wagner Group into the region, provide no viable alternative (Lynch, Mackinnon, and Gramer, 2022).

Since 2013, European powers have supported several military deployments in the Sahel to shore up stability in the region and stem the flow of migrants (see e.g. Bettini in the 2014 special issue of *Critical Studies on Security* 2 (2)). Despite these efforts, militant groups including Al-Qaeda affiliate Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, have continued to operate in the region. The overall security situation has in fact worsened rather than improved over the last years, casting doubt on the efficacy and desirability of the EU's intervention strategy.

How European powers should allocate resources to provide and sustain security is subject to debate, especially in light of today's interdependent and globalized system with a range of diffuse threats that originate from the non-traditional realm. The increased severity of climate change and its (acute) consequences, has given the post-9/11 debate on "transnational threats" new impetus. Environmental change challenges traditional notions of borders and the nation-state, 'transcend[ing] the North-South binary and the 'rich-poor' dichotomy' (Barnett, Matthew, and O'Brian 2010, 4). The climate change-human security nexus has gained increasing traction in this debate (Uexkull and Buhaug 2021 and that year's special issue of the *Journal of Peace Research*; see e.g. Froese and Schilling 2019), especially since the authoritative and much-cited Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report by Adger and Pulhin et al. (2014).

This research paper contributes to this debate. It takes a normative, maximalist conception of transnational human security (Battersby and Siracusa 2009, 24ff; see further, theoretically, *Security Dialogue* 35 (3) of September 2004) that goes beyond traditional Western-focused security studies (following Buzan and Hansen 2009, 200ff) and argues that the EU should focus on tackling the key exacerbators of insecurity (including food insecurity) in the Sahel region: ecological degradation and related climate change. In making this argument, it moves away from the EU's reactive short-term security policies as the typical response to perceived (future) uncertainty and insecurity (Lacy 2005, 1; Booth and Wheeler 2008, 5). The facts on the ground and the local population, customs, traditions, and dynamics in the Sahel should be the guiding principle to effective policy, not transplanted Western liberal norms and practices.

SAHEL AT DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGHER RISK

While climate change does not cause conflict, it acts as a 'risk multiplier' that worsens structural vulnerabilities (UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs 2021; Kahl 2006; Barnett and Adger 2007) and the risk of conflict. The effects of climate change 'present an additional burden for already weak institutions and socio-ecological systems, further elevating the risk of potential onset of conflict' (Goxho (2021, 6-7), Benjaminsen et al. (2012)). Still, as of yet, there is no empirical evidence to support a direct causal relation between climate change and armed conflict (as argued by Hsiang, Burke, and Miguel (2013) (see Buhaug, Nordkvelle, and Von Uexkull (2014, 391-392). Instead, research suggests that climate change exacerbates the environmental and physical insecurity in parallel (Raineri 2020, 3).

First, on the climate challenge, the drylands and least developed countries of the Sahel (and to a lesser extent the Sudanian Region) are at a 'disproportionately higher risk' of the adverse consequences of climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2019, 9). There is general confidence that climate change has resulted in extreme hot periods and the observed change in agricultural and ecological drought (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2021, 12). Protracted droughts due to altered precipitation patterns and temperature rises is projected to drastically decrease the amount of arable land and water in the next two decades that is necessary to sustain human habitation (US National Intelligence Council 2021, 14ff). This is problematic as about 60% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa rely on agriculture and livestock to make ends meet. With limited financial resources to adapt, their already harsh environment will become unliveable with a forecasted 3 to 6 degrees temperature rise by 2100 (McKinsey & Company 2019; Amu 2020). For centuries, Sub-Saharan Africa has seen deep-rooted cyclical conflicts (Cilliers 2018, 6) between agriculturalists, pastoralists,

and fishermen related to the availability, distribution, and use of natural resources (Brottem, 2020). Climate change puts additional pressure on this already fragile equilibrium, creating an increasingly volatile environment that is severely worsened by poor governance structures (Osasumwen, Joshua, and Olanrewaju 2020; Schmauder 2020). Corruption, political favouritism, and poor resource management has resulted in the marginalisation of specific demographic groups – often herders – that are structurally disadvantaged from accessing resources and securing livelihoods (International Crisis Group 2020). To add to these pressures, Africa is the only continent where the birth-rate is forecasted to go up instead of down (Kazeem 2020), resulting in a growing young, unemployed, and disenfranchised population. Women face a dire predicament, as many have limited agency in decisions related to marriage, reproduction, health care and employment. In Niger, Chad, and Mali, an estimated 36-40% of women give birth as a child (Graves et al. (2019, 283).

Second, on armed conflicts and overall physical insecurity, terrorist and insurgent groups have made clever use of existing grievances to offer an alternative agenda (Ba and Benjaminsen 2021; Okfora and Piesseb 2017): security in exchange for commitment. As these groups gain control in the remote rural areas of the Sahelian belt and popular and tribal militias arm in self-defence, the centuries old conflicts over access to water and arable land obtain a dynamic of organised violence (Vellturo and Dick 2020). This is particularly worrisome given the flow of increasingly sophisticated weaponry (and unemployed mercenaries) from the north after the 2011 Libyan war, against which the poorly trained and equipped African armies stand little chance. On the ground, African states control only a portion of the country with large swaths of land in the hands of 'spoilers' (Pérouse de Montlos 2021, 7; Okoli 2021; Raineri 2020, 1). Emblematic of Kaldor's (1999) 'New Wars', the semi-arid Sahel has porous borders and is rife with (ethnic) separatist groups, transnational criminal networks, smuggling rings, and weak local (and national) governmental institutions (Suleiman, Onapajo, and Maiangwa 2017). Groupings are organised in loose and non-hierarchical structures (and ideational 'franchises') and benefit from the war economy through kidnapping, looting, and exploitation. The local grievances that allow spoilers to sustain operations pertain to human rights violations by local state forces (Nsaibia 2020), long-standing ethnic divisions and feelings of exclusion (Brottem and McDonnell 2020), the unavailability of proper public services, and, quite straightforwardly, poverty and a lack of job opportunities to make a decent living. As the situation deteriorates further, Western states (and their militaries) are presented with the 'fragility dilemma' (Osland and Erstad 2020): if left inadequately addressed this situation can snowball into not just failed states but a failed region.

CURRENT SECURITISATION: TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

Nonetheless, the current EU strategy in the Sahel retains elements of an 'Old War' footing focused on conventional military force to obtain either a settlement (a top-down peace deal) or a total defeat of the adversary. It follows the long-tried security-development approach (Venturi 2017) and the assumption that providing aid and augmenting state capacity suffices to bring stability (see e.g. Debos 2016). The current insecurity and regional spill-over effects suggest that these deployments have not achieved the intended stability (dynamics described in Kaldor 2007; Frowd and Sandor 2018, 73-75). The EU's support for illegitimate, corrupt, and autocratic governments to 'mow the lawn' of terrorists and insurgents and prevent migrants from reaching a safe haven in Europe has only furthered instability. The absence of the (sovereign) state's monopoly on the use of force in the Sahel – not to mention any semblance of a social contract – has meant that EU support reinforces state weakness, ineffective local governance, and creates perverse incentives for elites whose fortunes have become intertwined with EU financing (Raineri, Luca, and Strazzari 2019, 547). Mali is exemplary of this dynamic. Despite the securitisation initiatives that have deployed in Mali since 2013, in May 2021 yet another coup d'état took place (Paquette 2021) and in March and June of 2021, 58 people were killed in Niger and 100 in Burkina Faso respectively (BBC 2021; Peltier 2021). Realising the limited success of Western stabilization efforts, President Macron of France announced in July the withdrawal of about half of its forces from the Sahel (Charlton and Petesch 2021). This

underlines the need for the 'Sahel Alliance' to shift focus from a mere mitigation of direct security threats to put its own transformative goals formulated in 2015 and again in April of 2021 front and centre (Council of the European Union 2015; Council of the European Union 2021).

There is a wide disconnect between the state-centric approach employed today and the people-centric approach that is needed to cater to the populations' immediate hardships on the ground, including the complex climate-related vulnerabilities and the related governance deficits (Gnoumou and Fofana 2021). Climate finance has become one of the fastest growing dimensions of EU external policy (Lazard and Youngs 2021). Yet, the EU's current Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) fails to grasp the set of risks that arise from systematic ecological stresses and the agricultural lands that it affects, the EU's own role in accelerating these risks, and integrating this understanding in and across fields of political, climate, security, and development. The security complex discussed above and the failed policies enacted in the past 15 years underlines the need to (re)focus the debate and move from a security-oriented focus to a climate and ecology-oriented focus. What is needed is a whole-of-society strategy (Martin, Bojicic-Dzelilovic, and Benraïs 2019, 175). Taking away recruiting grounds, local or regional forces should lead and be seen to lead in every way, aided by assistance from Western forces in training and the provision of ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance). The truth is that while Europe is exhausted from decades of 'endless wars' and wants to be done with violent extremism and terrorism, these threats are far from done with Europe. Moving away from the 'short termism' with the span of generally one or two Western cabinet runs, the EU needs to recalibrate towards eliminating the deeper roots of conflict and think in terms of decades, not years. Just as Biden – craftily – does not frame his whopping $ 6 Billion budget as mostly aimed at redistribution but casts it in terms of great power politics (Brooks 2021), so should the EU primarily 'sell' the proposed transformative package as the indivisible security interest that it is.

BRINGING IN THE HUMAN SECURITY PARADIGM

Viewed with the typical realist lens, climate change and related security threats cannot be 'defeated' by relying on traditional tools of statecraft such as power balancing, alliance formation, or military technological competition. The globalization of insecurity means that security does not arise from an imagined outside against which a nation-state can immunize itself (Bsumek, and Kinkela, and Lawrence 2013, 18). Climate change pays no heed to artificial geographical borders. In a context where global and transnational climate-related security risks have grown – as has popular cognisance thereof – the nation-state has become insufficient as the central unit of analysis. In fact, we already see an increased convergence between global priorities going well beyond the 2016 Paris Agreement, and the stipulated policies of (Western, in particular European) states. Yet, such a conception contradicts the sovereign prerogative on which the modern Westphalian nation-state has been founded and that today's nation-states still cling on to (Broadhead 2002, 2). Closing the gap between climate-related security risks and the political tools and instruments needed to address them requires reassessing the role of the nation-state alongside (and versus) local and supranational entities. Environmental historians have long urged nation-states to embrace the 'transnational turn' that pushes spatial and temporal boundaries to overcome challenges and commit for the 'longue durée' (Bsumek, and Kinkela, and Lawrence 2013, 7). This turn requires redefining the narrative and ontology underpinning current conceptions of state security to embrace 'security cosmopolitanism' (Burke 2013), seeing human security as global in nature.

An EU Green Marshall Plan ought to encourage both decentralised good governance and ecological and agricultural rejuvenation. The Sahelian population that largely depends on agriculture cannot survive, let alone thrive, without good governance – on which North African and European security are both dependent. In today's euros, such a Green Marshall Plan would amount to roughly $135 billion (Steil and Della Rocca 2018) and consist of both gifts and loans, funded by

the member states, and supplied by European enterprises. To compare: the US spent, unsuccessfully, more than $2, 261 trillion in remote Afghanistan and Pakistan over the last two decades (Brown University Watson Institute); a few billion is not a Marshall Plan (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2021). The UN Environment Programme (2021) concluded that investments in nature must triple by 2030 and increase four-fold by 2050 from the current level to make a serious contribution to saving ecosystems. In short: we still have a long way to go.

The first prong of a tailored strategy ought to deal with structural political reforms in administering localities, and bringing (non-state, tribal) oppositions into decision-making processes, something that can be called the 're-founding' of the state (Schmauder, Soto-Mayor, and Goxho 2020). Only in this way can a sense of autonomy, ownership, and inclusion be created. A sustained and decades-long commitment should be agreed upon to drastically increase the number and presence of well-trained civil servants drawn from the communities where they serve. Authoritative local chiefs that embody social norms and customs should be empowered to play an administrative role in tandem with these local officials. There are successful precedents of the inclusion of local consultation and resolution mechanisms in the management of lands and natural resources in Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger to replicate (see Ursu 2018, 62-63).

The second prong of the proposed strategy, say 4/5th of the budget, should focus on tackling the drivers of environmental insecurity and coordinate efforts to build local resilience and restore the Sahel region ecosystem and agricultural lands. If current conditions are left unchanged, by 2050 between 50 and 700 million people are expected to migrate due to climate change and land degradation (see UN Sustainable Development 2021 for the UN Convention to Combat Desertification). The goal should be to stop and reverse the process of further desertification and prevent the resultant wave of migration (Darkoh 1998; Borderon, Sakdapolrak, and Muttarak et al. 2019). People do not leave their lands because they want to but because they (feel they) absolutely need to. Investing in ecological restoration comes down to a simple choice: 'delay and pay, or plan and prosper' (Environmental and Energy Study Institute 2019). First and foremost, there is no technical 'one-size-fits-all' solution. Policies must be bottom-up, context-specific, population-owned, and process-led to ensure populations feel ownership and are willing and able to sustain initiated policies (cf. e.g. Raineri 2020, 1). To be successful requires an inclusive and participatory form of governance (OECD 2021) where vulnerable groups (youth, women, nomadic indigenous communities) carry equal voice in dialogue, planning, decision-making, and execution of restoration work. Women and youth are often predominant users of natural resources while indigenous communities manage about 28% of the world's land surface and 37% of the remaining natural lands. Moreover, they have accumulated generations of valuable traditional knowledge on the workings of the ecosystem (Garnett 2018, 370). Ecological elements must be included in cooperation and conflict mitigation agreements (Dresse, Fischhendler, Nielsen, and Zikos 2019) to foster interest-based stakes among conflict actors that depend on the integrity of the environment. This ensures that environmental security is discussed at the negotiation table – a complex endeavour in conflict environments where conflict actors, including political elites, depend on extractive politics to sustain their hold on power (Kaisa 2019; Grego 2020). Based on a scientific understanding of global and local linkages between ecosystems, efforts should start at the highest risk regions and countries in the Sahel region and then move to areas at lesser risk of conflict to gradually eliminate remaining pockets of insecurity (Mills 2006, 16).

To achieve the first and second prong requires investing in (at least) four key enablers for action that should be implemented simultaneously and in a complementary way. The first enabler is education, awareness raising, and capacity building at the local, sub-local, regional, and national levels that capitalise on existing (traditional) knowledge, skills, and dynamics (Makondo and Thomas 2018). This starts with building better appreciation of the benefits of restoration for long-term economic progress and the complex interconnections between ecosystems and the impact of restoration efforts (and lack thereof) in one place on ecosystems elsewhere. The second enabler is the collection, synthesis, and understanding of

data (Ladouceur and Shackelford 2021) to inform and guide decision-making on the creation of an integrated degradation risk assessment. This should be based on status, usage (ecosystem services), potential for restoration, and the integration of stakeholders' interests and priorities. The third enabler is the development, democratisation, and proliferation of ecological restoration technologies (ERT) (Lin, Huimin, Yunfeng, Zhichao, Yu, Gaodi, Jianxia, and Jijun 2017) and innovation to accelerate citizen participation and create an attractive environment for private sector buy-in, something that could be called a 'stability-multiplier' (private sector investment in nature-based solutions attracts a small 14 per cent of funding for nature per year, amounting to $18 billion, UN Environmental Programme 2021, 24). Starters include geospatial tools and technologies for remote monitoring to identify degraded areas using data collected by satellites, drones, and airplanes (Reif 2016, 614). To prevent barriers to implementation, technologies must match local needs and enhance users' capacity to assess and use them. In many African countries, technologies related to land and ecosystem management and restoration are inefficient, poorly documented, and costly, with limited capacity to adapt them (UN Environmental Programme 2018, 16). The fourth enabler is financial support by private funds, concessional loans, foreign direct investment, and official development assistance from both EU and non-EU donor countries.

THE 'GREEN' IN OUR PROPOSED 'SOFT' SOLUTIONS

In practical terms, ecological restoration starts with an appropriate assessment of the structure and function of the native ecosystem as it was prior to degradation. This should be based on core ecosystem attributes vis-à-vis its diversity, complexity, and resilience, and includes gauging appropriate levels of nutrient cycling, decomposition, growth and productivity, species interactions, and discerning whether the ecosystem is appropriately integrated into the larger landscape through abiotic and biotic processes. The assessment must also entail an articulation of the constraints preventing ecosystem recovery – in the literature referred to as 'filters' or 'barriers' –which include human causes of degradation and its consequences for the ecosystem, such as loss of biodiversity, intrusion of invasive species, absent or altered niches, growth of unsuitable substrates, and seed dormancy (Gann et al. 2019, 8 en 29).

Desertification already affects around 45% of Africa's landmass, resulting from climate change and unsustainable agricultural practices and deforestation (ELD Initiative and UN Environmental Programme 2015, 12). There is growing evidence that natural regeneration of agricultural land through Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) has great potential to restore essential ecosystem functions (Chomba et al. 2020). FMNR, the centrepiece in the proposed 'soft' solutions, is a form of agroforestry whereby farmers actively manage the regrowth of trees on agricultural land by planting and pruning plants that grow from seeds or re-sprouted rootstock (UN Sustainable Development 2021). The practice focuses on balancing tree and crop cover to increase soil fertility, water retention, and biodiversity. At the same time, it decreases wind and heat damage and soil erosion, thereby boosting the productivity of agricultural land while thwarting further desertification. FMNR consists not of one specific technique but utilises a combination of multiple sustainable agriculture techniques that enable farmers to adapt regenerative agriculture solutions to their own capacities and needs. A good example of tree species that have shown to be effective for improved crop yield in Africa is the *Faidherbia albida*, a tree that sheds its leaves at the start of the wet cropping season, releasing nutrients to crops when they most need it. While its roots keep the soil from eroding, the fact that they are leafless over the cropping season reduces competition for light, nutrients, and water (Garrity et al. 2010, 200).

Depending on the state of the ecosystem, the approach to regenerating it through FMNR differs. Areas with (relatively) low degradation and high recovery potential due to their retention of topsoil and habitat connectivity can enable nearby species to recolonize and seeds to germinate from nearby sites. These areas can recover through natural or 'passive' regeneration after cessation of harmful activities such as the removal of contamination, the prevention of overgrazing

and fishing, and creating artificial restriction to water flows (Grubb and Hopkins 1986). More degraded areas require the cessation of harmful activities as well as active and holistic interventions to reverse abiotic and biotic damage. Triggering recovery by simulating natural cycles or by providing key resources, these kind of interventions could for instance be active remediation of substrate physical or chemical conditions; reforming water courses, utilizing artificial disruptions to prevent seed dormancy, installing habitat components such as woody debris piles, creating soil micro-niches, controlling invasive species and reintroducing species unable to migrate to the restoration zone without support (e.g. the rewilding of animals or the reintroduction of plant species, Chazdon et al. 2017); and the augmentation or reinforcement of depleted populations of species where genetic diversity is insufficient. Highly degraded areas with low to no potential for natural recovery require all or a large proportion of desirable biota to be reintroduced to drive recovery of ecosystem functions. Often, a combination of approaches is required whereby some parts of a degraded ecosystem can be restored through natural regeneration while others require active reconstruction.

Success of these cost-effective ecosystem restoration solutions in the Sahel can generate a strong incentive for support and further exploratory research into the possibilities of FMNR in other regions. Catalysing its potential requires investing in FMNR farmers' willingness and ability to support the regrowth of trees through bottom-up processes. This in turn hinges on giving local communities the ownership to manage their shared resources and the tools to exercise that ownership effectively through the provision of technical training and assistance, improved farm inputs such as more resilient seeds, and guaranteed access to regional markets. The argument is simple. The local communities that benefit most from the healthy functioning of the ecosystem are also the ones that will be most personally invested to sustain its effective management (Chow and Weeden 2012). While FMNR should be anchored in decentralised governance, top-down governance processes from the centre on down should not be overlooked entirely. Success of FMNR is often coupled with shifts in formal and informal policies that impact peoples' access and rights to local resources. This relates to by-laws aimed at managing relations between pastoralists and farmers and the degree of state interference herein. In Niger, for example, reduced interference by forestry officials and changed land and tree tenure enhanced feelings of ownership over trees and encouraged FMNR (Chomba et al. 2020, 9). Similarly, in Ethiopia government recognition of communities' user rights as a group rather than as individuals encouraged communal regeneration of trees on farms (Brown et al. 2011, 322).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS: INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES A MUST

While European governments have come to terms with the acute need to address human induced climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, they have largely shunned the responsibility to address the impact that have already radically altered living environments in the developing world. Yet, ecological degradation and the loss of agricultural lands present an existential security risk that impacts not only local and regional security in North Africa but also touches on European security and stability. In the most vulnerable regions, climate change puts pressure on peoples' ability to sustain their livelihoods, all made more difficult by violent terrorist and insurgent groups that offer false promises of a better future. Notwithstanding current support for development projects, by and large, Europe has engaged in 'Old War' approaches that have not adequately integrated human security as a core element. This paper has argued that twentieth century state-based security policies cannot remedy twenty-first-century security challenges. The EU CSDP should therefore move toward an institutional paradigm shift and incorporate conditions-based climate and ecosystem vulnerabilities to fill the current security gap (Beebe and Kaldor 2010, 4). Ecological vulnerabilities, when interacting with the economic, social, and political realities in the Sahel, multiply (and perpetuate) existing risks. Principally, remodelling the EU foreign policy-making framework requires a conceptual redefinition of climate-related security risks (CRSRs) into ecology-related security risks (ERSRs) as the foundation for the EU's CSDP. We must recognise the profound negative impact that current policies have, which includes the $500 billion per year that is spent on subsidizing harm to biodiversity: ten-fold the financial flows spent on biodiversity conservation (OECD 2019, 11). This also requires taking a forward-looking approach to the green transition (including the EU Green Deal) and the global impacts of this transition on ecological security, climate change, resource scarcity, and instability. The European Environment Agency (2021) has rightly voiced concern about the current transition model that impacts the quality and quantity of critical raw materials available in the often already fragile areas where extraction takes place. In this regard, the EU faces a wicked problem. Its renewable future depends on extracting the critical raw materials that often result in (additional) ecological degradation. Here, too, remodelling should focus on the empowerment of local communities to achieve better ecological stewardship according to a human security centred approach that bypasses the central state and state-building efforts that harm the long-term health of ecological systems. A failure to make these changes means the EU's climate change and security policies risk further undermining rather than contributing to regional security. Indeed, all round and truly inclusive ecological security must be the foundation if we are to achieve (and retain) any other kind of security.

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