

Original article

## Environmental protection in NATO policy

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### ABSTRACT

Environmental protection issues emerged in NATO's political concepts in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Until the end of the 1980s, the Alliance was preoccupied with Cold War confrontation. In the 1990s, the geopolitical and geostrategic situation shifted. New countries joined the Alliance, and interest in environmental protection increased globally. The Pact member states began to realise the importance of environmental security. New concepts and trends emerged. Appreciating the importance of environmental protection, NATO quickly joined the mainstream of scientific research and practical projects. Their goal was, and is, to understand the causes of environmental degradation and its implications, especially in the context of safety, and to take appropriate remedial measures. NATO has been facing environmental security challenges for many years. This includes climate change, extreme weather conditions, sea level rise, risk of flooding, depletion of natural resources, land degradation, desertification and pollution. These are factors that can ultimately lead to humanitarian disasters, regional tension and violence. NATO's latest 2030 Strategic Concept highlights the security impact of climate change resulting from a lack of proper environmental protection as the Alliance's primary focus. At a time of progressive environmental threat, accompanied by rapid climate change, the activities of the Alliance in the field of ensuring environmental security cannot be overestimated.

### KEYWORDS

NATO, environmental protection, environmental security



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## Introduction

The article aims to analyse the issue of environmental protection in NATO policy because, for many years, the environmental threat has been growing on the one hand, and environmental protection action has been increasing, on the other. While many governmental and non-governmental organisations have not always achieved visible results, as the presented text shows, NATO operations are planned, organised and have yielded some tangible results.

For the purpose of this article, a working hypothesis was formulated: NATO's long-standing activities in the field of environmental protection are carried out in a coordinated manner, are based on sound science and have real effects. The Alliance's environmental security policy

should serve as a model for many governmental and non-governmental institutions. The following research questions have been posed. How have concepts related to environmental security issues evolved in the Alliance's operations over recent decades? What factors have influenced the evolution of these concepts? What specific actions have been taken regarding environmental security and, finally, what policy is the Alliance pursuing in this area at present?

In order to answer these questions, research was carried out based on a critical analysis of the research material, which was primarily official Alliance materials published on the organisation's website and materials from governmental and scientific research institutions. The presented material was subjected to critical analysis, elaborated, and conclusions were drawn.

## **1. The essence of environmental safety – a theoretical approach**

The concept of environmental security has various, sometimes contested, meanings. This is due to the combination of two concepts – environment and security – and the diverse range of disciplines and schools of thought engaged in the study of these issues. How an individual or group understands each of these concepts influences their understanding of the combined concept of environmental security. In general, the environment refers to the biological, physical and chemical components and systems necessary to sustain life. The environment is a transnational issue and its health is an important dimension of peace, national security and human rights. Environmental security is central to national security and encompasses the dynamics and interconnectedness between people and natural resources. Based on these assumptions, there are many different approaches to defining environmental security, most of which originate from international policy debates [1, p. 553]. A comprehensive overview of the meanings of environmental safety was provided by Rita Floyd in her monograph on safety and the environment [2, p. 9-28].

Environmental security is a component of national and homeland security. It includes, but is not limited to, the mitigation and prevention of energy hazards, including threats to sources and lines of supply, and environmental hazards and associated stresses that directly contribute to political and economic instability or conflict. Environmental security issues include, but are not limited to, nuclear contamination, spent nuclear fuel and waste, threats to energy resources, pollution, degradation or depletion of essential environmental resources or environmental problems resulting from infrastructure failures that may compromise security [3].

Environmental security examines the risks posed by environmental events and trends to individuals, communities or nations. It may focus on the impact of human conflict and international relations on the environment or how environmental problems cross national boundaries. It considers the capacity of individuals, communities or nations to cope with environmental threats, changes or conflicts or limited natural resources. Environmental security is an important concept in three areas: international relations, and international development and human security. In academia, environmental security is defined as the relationship between security concerns, such as armed conflict, and the environment [4].

## **2. Origins of the activity**

In the late 1970s, NATO began to develop its environmental policy, which resulted in a series of guidelines and standards that over the years adapted to the changing environment. The Alliance began to engage in civil preparedness and crisis response to environmental disasters in the 1990s. In the same decade, it began working with partner countries, responding to

requests for joint action in a number of key priority areas, including environmental safety. In the late 1990s, the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center (EADRCC) was launched. The 1999 Strategic Concept stated that NATO plays a key role in identifying and addressing current and emerging security challenges due to an awareness that the relationship between the environment and security was quickly becoming a major political problem for governments around the world. Environmental degradation due to depletion of natural resources, cross-border problems due to access to water resources, pollution, etc. can ultimately lead to regional tension and violence. Through the Science for Peace and Security (SPS) program, NATO countries help partner and Mediterranean Dialogue countries deal with environmental security through scientific cooperation that delivers concrete results [5]. Since 1969, SPS has been supporting collaborative actions related to environmental security issues, including defence. Ever since NATO began working with partner countries in the 1990s through scientific activity, partners have cited environmental security as a top priority, seeking Alliance support for cooperative ventures to address those issues that threaten the security of their country and beyond.

It is clear from the text quoted here that the Alliance began to shape and develop policies related to environmental safety early on, in the late 1970s. It was one of the forerunners in this field. As the years passed, this gradually progressed.

### **3. Concept development**

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, NATO has been dealing with environmental security issues that can lead to humanitarian disasters, regional tension and security threats. The Alliance provides disaster relief, focuses on environmental threats to military operations and security in general, including environmental factors affecting energy supply, and is looking for ways to improve the military's energy efficiency through innovative technologies.

It should also be recalled that the Alliance has also helped partner countries, especially former members of the Warsaw Pact, to get rid of ageing and dangerous stocks of equipment, ammunition and other military materials that posed a significant environmental threat. The NATO/PfP Trust Fund Mechanism was established in 2001 to assist NATO partner countries in the safe destruction of stockpiles of anti-personnel mines, small arms, ammunition and to help manage the consequences of defence reform. All NATO/PfP Trust Fund projects are based on voluntary contributions from NATO member and partner countries. The first joint project of the NATO and OSCE Trust Fund concerned the elimination of harmful military chemicals in Moldova (a NATO partner country since 1994) [6].

In 2003, the NATO Military Committee developed an overarching political document: NATO's Military Principles and Policy for Environmental Protection, subsequently updated in 2011. In its 2010 Strategic Concept, NATO recognised climate change as a security challenge for the first time. In 2012, the NATO Science and Technology Organization (STO) was established to promote and conduct research in several areas, including environmental issues.

In 2004, Allied Command Operations (ACO) appointed an environmental manager to the Alliance High Command, responsible for offering environmental policy advice and expertise to commanders and staff officers. Training in the field of environmental protection also plays an important role. According to Nate Whelan, program manager of the US Army's Integrated Training Area Management in Europe and chairman of NATO's Environmental Training Group of Specialists, "awareness and training are key ways to protect the environment" [7]. The

United States, which relies on geographic information systems to map the locations of flora and fauna, as well as to store a database of all related biodiversity (biodiversity) information, is one of many NATO nations that have begun to actively train its soldiers in environmental protection. However, it should be remembered that environmental protection is a balance in many respects. Even the best intentions of soldiers can turn out to be destructive if not reinforced by environmental laws. However, too many instructions may result in training soldiers being naturally reluctant to acknowledge and use them.

On 12 March 2008, the NATO Scientific Forum on Environmental Security was held at the Pact's headquarters in Brussels. Over 20 key speakers and 120 environmental security experts were invited from NATO member states, partner countries and Mediterranean Dialogue countries. The aim was to find the linkages between the environment and security and to analyse current initiatives to help solve problems and mitigate conflict [8]. In order to support NATO in identifying future environmental threats and security challenges, the Scientific Forum addressed potential problems related to environmental security, presenting specific recommendations and proposing real projects contributing to security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area [9].

On 13 November 2008, a conference on the environmental dimensions of security was held in Brussels. Its aim was to join forces of international organisations of individual countries in order to identify key environmental and security issues threatening the regions of Central Asia, South-eastern and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. Through its Public Diplomacy Division, NATO has contributed to its initiatives by providing financial and technical support to selected activities that are in line with the Alliance's geographic and thematic priorities under the SPS. In turn, the SPS and NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) program began developing projects directly related to the priorities of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) [10].

On 10-12 December 2009, scientists and experts cooperating with NATO met in Vieques, Puerto Rico to review the situation related to environmental security and protection. During the SPS-funded workshop, discussions focused on the escalation of conflicts over natural resources such as oil, water and farmland, and climate change, seen as significant environmental risk factors affecting national and international security.

Environmental security research in relation to hostilities is recognised as an increasing priority by NATO and its partner countries. A group of 25 experts from the OSCE, the United Nations, Harvard University, the University of Puerto Rico, the Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust and other government bodies helped define and develop the field known as "the ecology of war". Scientists and experts provided a comprehensive overview by analysing the case studies and discussing their policy implications. Research priorities have been established to develop this field of study. The meeting also led to the creation of working groups devoted to specific areas in the field of, inter alia, environmental protection, such as research support, publications, opportunities for scientific interaction, education and training policy [11].

NATO recognises that it is facing many environmental challenges, in particular due to the threats of climate change, and has been taking action in response to these challenges for many years. The Alliance is committed to civil preparedness and emergency response to environmental (ecological) disasters such as floods, forest fires and violent wildfires caused by inappropriate or even lack of environmental protection. It also focuses on increasing energy efficiency and reducing the use of fossil fuels in the armed forces. New energy and fuel technologies are also being developed.

On 9-11 February 2009, another meeting of NATO working groups dealing with environmental issues and its impact on security was held. The environmental dimension of security is acknowledged to refer to the threats posed by the physical environment and the ability of societies to adapt to natural or man-made changes. It covers the spectrum from evolving environmental stewardship standards to physical change, and its scope can affect both the immediate and long-term aspects of the Alliance's operations and strategy [12].

NATO has become increasingly aware of environmental threats as a result of a lack of environmental protection. During deployment to areas with adverse climatic conditions, characterised by extreme weather events, the Alliance's armed forces have become aware of how climate change affects their own operations [13].

Issues related to the security implications of climate change are analysed by both the Alliance and its individual members. For example, the official US Department of Defence document for the White House, *The National Security Implications of a Climate Change*, emphasises that the consequences of climate change for national security are far-reaching, as they may exacerbate existing stressors, contributing to poverty, degradation and political instability, thus creating favourable conditions for terrorism. Climate change affects key sectors of the economy such as agriculture and water management, and can have a profound impact on food security, posing a threat to overall stability. Rising sea levels, coupled with storm surges, will increase the risk of severe coastal damage such as military and associated infrastructure causing temporary or permanent flooding of airports, harbours, roads, railways, tunnels and bridges. Extreme weather events also affect power plants, causing power outages of various lengths and sizes, and affecting other energy-dependent infrastructure. The increasing risk of flooding affects the safety and health of people, property, infrastructure, the economy and the environment [14]. A US intelligence report states that "climate threats such as extreme weather conditions, warmer temperatures, droughts, floods, wildfires, storms, sea level rise, soil degradation and ocean acidification are increasing, threatening infrastructure, health, water resources and food" [15]. The Pentagon informed members of the Alliance about the threat to most of the coastal infrastructure, both military and auxiliary. This is the effect of extreme weather phenomena resulting from neglect of environmental protection [16].

In 2010, at the NATO summit, climate change was determined to have a negative impact on security. It was established that environmental and climate change will shape the future security environment. Significant implications for the alliance's planning and operations were highlighted [17].

For many years, groups of experts employed by NATO have dealt with environmental issues. The result of their work is the already mentioned official political document "Military Principles and NATO Environmental Policy", agreed by the NATO Military Committee in 2003 and updated in 2011. This document describes the responsibilities of military commanders in the field of environmental protection during the preparation and conduct of activities. It also recognises the need to harmonise environmental rules and policies for all NATO-led military activities. Instructs Alliance commanders to use the best practicable environmental measures to reduce the environmental impact of military operations. The document is supplemented by several other NATO Standardization Agreements (STANAG) and Allied Joint Environmental Protection Publications (AJEPP). The focus is on protecting the environment during Alliance-led military operations and on environmental best practices for the sustainable development of military training areas [18].

Analysing the available material, it can be concluded that NATO's environmental activities have accelerated significantly since the beginning of the new millennium. The focus has been on disaster relief, environmental threats to military operations and security in general, including environmental factors affecting energy supply. An important issue was the quest to improve energy efficiency in the military through the implementation of modern technologies. It is important to note the creation in 2004 of the post of environmental manager at the Alliance's Supreme Command. The result of the Alliance-appointed expert groups dealing with environmental issues is the official policy document entitled "NATO Military Principles and Policy on the Environment", agreed by the NATO Military Committee in 2003 and updated in 2011. NATO's activities in the field of environmental protection have been characterised by rapid development based on science and research.

#### **4. The Present**

From the beginning of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, NATO has stepped up its environmental action. In 2013, NATO agreed to define the environment as the environment in which an organisation operates, including air, water, land, natural resources, flora, fauna, people and their interrelationships, i.e. biotopes, biocenoses and their ecology. Military activities were acknowledged to have a regular negative impact on the environment in which they occur. Environmental damage caused by these activities can threaten livelihoods, ecosystems and ecotones, and contribute to instability. Many taxa may be at risk. The conclusion is that NATO should have a responsibility to protect the natural environment in which operations and training take place. Since the 1960s, environmental experts have suggested that the military should take steps to protect the environment from the damage it causes. Environmental degradation creates social and economic instability and generates new tension, while preserving the environment during a military operation can enhance stability and promote lasting security. Therefore, minimising environmental damage during military training and operations is of great importance to the overall success of the mission.

NATO's environmental policy became more relevant as it grew clear how the environmental threat increases in the event of armed conflicts. Their negative impact on biodiversity is widespread and complex, although not inevitable. Armed conflicts and insecurity can harm biodiversity by directly damaging ecosystems – for example, from vehicle traffic or pollution. Indirect effects, while often more difficult to isolate from the other drivers of biodiversity loss, are also widespread. For example, areas affected by hostilities are often sites of illegal or unregulated deforestation, poaching or illegal mining. Such activities stem from a variety of reasons, from conflict financing to resupplying soldiers, or as part of a coping and survival strategy by displacing communities. Studies have shown that wild animal populations in areas affected by hostilities may have a lower reproductive rate, and may even result in the collapse or extinction of a particular taxon [19].

Established on July 1, 2012, the NATO Science and Technology Organization (STO) promotes and conducts research on military-specific technical challenges, including environmental issues. To this end, the technical and scientific subcommittees of STO, composed of experts from NATO and member countries, are looking for more ecological solutions by conducting studies and research.

NATO member states are aware of the environmental challenges in military operations and have adopted rules and regulations to protect the environment. Alliance measures include the protection of hazardous materials (including fuels and oils), wastewater treatment, the

reduction of fossil fuel consumption and waste management, as well as the implementation of environmental management systems during Alliance operations. In line with these objectives, NATO integrates environmental protection measures in all its military endeavours [20].

The Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation (CMRE) STO, located in La Spezia, Italy, conducts research to quantify the environmental impact of operations and vice versa. One large-scale CMRE study has improved our understanding of how sonar systems affect marine mammals. Based on these results, NATO developed a code of conduct on the use of active sonar to protect marine mammals in the Alliance's maritime operations. Another project focused on monitoring the climate in the High North, with a focus on how climate change is changing the Arctic seas and surrounding areas.

In the context of the SPS program, environmental experts from NATO member and partner countries have been active in developing policies and technical solutions to reduce the environmental and energy footprint of Alliance-led activities. This includes monitoring energy use in military camps to identify opportunities to improve energy efficiency and thus the overall effectiveness of the operation [21].

At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO leaders adopted a Green Defence Framework and announced that the Pact will continue to work to significantly improve the energy efficiency of its armed forces [22]. NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller at an informal meeting of EU defence ministers on 29 August 2019 in Helsinki announced how the Alliance intended to proceed in relation to environmental protection. At the working session on climate change and defence, she stated that climate change affects the security of allied and partner countries. She outlined five ways NATO was tackling climate change: through strategic analysis, supporting scientific cooperation, increasing the military's energy efficiency and environmental protection, building disaster resilience, and strategic planning [23].

In the publication entitled "A Strategic Analytic Approach to the Environmental Security. Program for NATO", US Army General W. Chris King defined environmental threats resulting from non-existent or inadequate protection of the natural environment. These threats include air and water pollution, global climate change, rising levels of CO<sub>2</sub>, depletion of the ozone layer in the atmosphere, deforestation, desertification and inappropriate waste disposal. He stressed the importance of determining the environmental parameters that affect safety and stability in order to be able to take appropriate measures to protect the environment. Actions to be taken by NATO include analysis of future threats, forecasting the effects of regional changes in key environmental factors, planning and training. The conclusions state that environmental parameters can be strongly correlated with political and social stability, and so the strategic security analysis must include environmental security. Environmental security analysis is a powerful tool for defence planning and offers hope to reduce and mitigate future threats. *Summa summarum*, it was stated that "Environmental degradation is the main threat to peace and stability in the world" [24].

To improve the coordination of its activities, NATO has joined other international institutions and organisations to address environmental issues that threaten security. These are: the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations (UN), the European Commission Economic Community (UNECE) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) under the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC). As a first step, ENVSEC facilitated regional meetings with relevant stakeholders (experts, NGOs, government authorities) to consult and agree on

regional issues highlighting priority issues posing a security risk. In the second stage, ENVSEC raised funds to solve the identified problems [25].

The implications of climate change are extremely important for the Pact in matters related to environmental security. These changes result from inappropriate environmental protection. NATO has repeatedly emphasised that phenomena such as desertification, extreme weather phenomena, melting ice caps, and diminishing freshwater resources may lead to escalating regional and global tension. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg explicitly called climate change a “threat multiplier” and stressed the consequences it could have on resource availability, migration, extreme weather events and ultimately the security of the Alliance [26]. At the 2019 meeting of the Pact’s leaders in London, NATO committed to a far-sighted process that led to the ‘NATO 2030’ initiative, highlighting the security implications of climate change as the Alliance’s primary focus [27].

On September 17, 2020, Stoltenberg took part in a seminar at NATO Headquarters in Brussels on “NATO and nature, a changing climate: why the environment is important to NATO and what to do about it”. It was confirmed that climate change would shape the future security environment in NATO’s areas of interest and could have a significant impact on Alliance planning and operations. The seminar highlighted the importance of cooperation between NATO and other international organisations, including the European Union, the United Nations and the African Union in the field of climate change research [28]. At the NATO Summit in Brussels on 14 June 2021, Alliance leaders agreed on a Climate Change and Security Action Plan with the goal of making NATO the leading international organisation in understanding and adapting to the security impacts of climate change.

In November 2021, at the 26th United Nations Conference of Parties on Climate Change (COP 26) in Glasgow, Stoltenberg explained the main goal of NATO’s new environmental and climate change policy and its security action plan, in particular the key points of awareness-raising, mitigation and adaptation [29]. The Alliance also aims to address environmental threats related to military activities and security. For example, environmental factors can affect the energy supply of both civilians and military operations.

NATO began developing its environmental policy in the late 1970s, when NATO’s expert groups and processes were created to address environmental challenges, which resulted in a series of guidelines and standards. At present, NATO policy states that NATO-led forces must strive to adhere to environmental principles and policies under all circumstances.

At present, environmental issues are dealt with by two specialised NATO groups. Their task is to promote the topic and at the same time cooperation and standardisation between the Alliance and partner countries, as well as between various NATO bodies and international organisations. These are:

- Environmental Protection Working Group (EPWG) operating within the Joint Standardization Council of the Military Committee, which reports to the Military Committee.
- The Specialist Team on Energy Efficiency and Environmental Protection (STEEP) as part of the Maritime Capability Group “Ship Design and Maritime Mobility”, which is subordinated to the NATO Conference of National Directors through the Naval Weapons Group Armaments.

The goal of the EPCG is to reduce the possible harmful effects of military activities on the environment by developing NATO policies, standardisation documents, guidelines and best



practices for the planning and implementation of operations and exercises. STEEEP, on the other hand, aims to integrate environmental protection and energy efficiency regulations with the technical requirements and specifications for armaments, equipment and materials on vessels in allied and partner naval forces [30].

To comply with NATO standards, military forces must receive appropriate environmental training. While this training is primarily a national responsibility, NATO is determined to provide Allied forces with a joint environmental and energy efficiency education. The aim is to build environmental awareness into the daily duties of military personnel and to increase their personal responsibility in this regard. To achieve this goal, NATO has appointed staff officers to implement environmental protection at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. The NATO Oberammergau School conducts environmental protection courses at the operational level and the NATO Military Engineering Centre for Excellence (MILENG COE) at the tactical level. NATO is also using exercises to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of energy-efficient military equipment. In various logistic exercises, the Alliance has shown how integrating renewable energies such as wind and sun, combined with energy storage, has reduced diesel consumption in forward military camps. This successful combination of fossil fuels and renewables has shown that energy efficiency and a reduced environmental footprint do not have to come at the expense of operational efficiency. This is another example of the Alliance's efforts to protect the environment [31].

NATO has developed six STANAG environmental standardisation guidelines.

- Best practices and environmental protection standards for military camps in NATO operations: STANAG 2582 (AJEPP-2, dated November 28, 2018).
- Environmental management system in NATO operations: STANAG 2583 (AJEEP-3 of 3 May 2017).
- Joint NATO doctrine on environmental protection during military operations conducted by NATO: STANAG 7141 (AJEEP-4 of 8 March 2018).
- Common NATO requirements for waste management during military operations conducted by NATO: STANAG 2510 (AJEPP-5 of 31 October 2012).
- CAMP NATO environmental document during a NATO-led operation: STANAG 6500 (AJEEP-6 of 26 August 2015).
- Best environmental protection practices for the sustainable development of military training areas: STANAG 2594 (AJEEP-7 of 3 July 2015) [32].

Environmental protection is not only about the nature of the conducted exercises or military operations. Due to their restricted accessibility, military areas are also important refuges for wild flora and fauna. According to Col. Piotr Sołtykiewicz, head of the Department of Environmental Analysis and Protection of the Ministry of National Defence: "Polish military training grounds are located within large forest complexes with limited economic activity (...) This creates favourable conditions for the protection of various types of biotopes, which have virtually no chance of surviving in other areas". Moreover, he stated that the best way to protect the environment is broadly understood environmental education. Before starting the training, commanders instruct soldiers on how to protect flora and fauna, and pay attention to their places of occurrence on the map [33].

Based on a broad definition of security that recognises the importance of political, economic, social and environmental factors, NATO takes into account all security challenges arising from the environment. Environmental protection is an integral part of NATO's policy in research,

logistics, planning, training, as well as humanitarian and combat operations. The Alliance is trying to best respond to environmental threats to security in general, as well as those that directly affect military operations.

NATO works towards sustainable development as the only way to ensure the proper development of natural ecosystems and the life of species, including *Homo sapiens*. It promotes the policy of environmental protection by establishing specific rules for its protection. Moreover, it implements appropriate projects and undertakes specific preventive action to prevent damage to the natural environment through human fault.

Summing up NATO's current environmental activities, it is clear that the Alliance has one of the best policies among all governmental and non-governmental organisations. Its activities are perfectly planned, carried out in a coordinated manner and the effects are visible. NATO's environmental policy became extremely topical when environmental risks were proved to increase in the event of armed conflict. The next step was the creation of the NATO Science and Technology Organisation to carry out, among other things, scientific research on environmental issues. In the following years, environmental degradation was emphasised as a major threat to peace and stability in the world.

In order to improve the coordination of its operations, NATO has joined international institutions and organisations to cooperate in terms of the environment. In November 2021, at COP 26 in Glasgow, Stoltenberg presented the main objective of NATO's new environmental and climate change policy and security action plan, in particular the key points of awareness raising, mitigation and adaptation. At the next stage, two dedicated working groups were set up to better coordinate environmental activities. Environmental issues are being analysed on an ongoing basis by Alliance experts. An analysis of Alliance documents makes it clear that NATO is significantly engaged in environmental activities at the present time.

## **Conclusion**

From the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of environmental protection increasingly emerged in NATO policy. The Alliance is first and foremost a military and political institution and, in principle, environmental issues should not be of interest to it. However, realising the importance of environmental security, the Alliance began research and implementation of practical solutions. Cooperation was established with international and national institutions and organisations dealing with environmental protection. The environmental threat has been defined as extremely dangerous to regional and global security. For several years, NATO has defined the environment as involving two concepts: security and protection. First, environmental safety reflects the responses to environmental safety challenges. Second, environmental protection is defined as the protection of the environment against the damage caused by military action. One of NATO's priorities is to monitor and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by its own military forces. Great importance is attached to global climate change and the resulting global warming.

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## **Conflict of interests**

The author declared no conflict of interests.


### Author contributions

The author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

### Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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## Ochrona środowiska w polityce NATO

### STRESZCZENIE

Kwestie ochrony środowiska pojawiły się w koncepcjach politycznych NATO w ostatnich dekadach ubiegłego wieku. Do końca lat 80. XX w. Sojusz zaabsorbowany był konfrontacją wynikającą ze scenariusza zimnej wojny. Lata dziewięćdziesiąte przyniosły zmienione sytuacje geopolityczną i geostrategiczną. Nowe państwa przystąpiły do Sojuszu, a w skali globalnej nastąpił znaczący wzrost zainteresowania problematyką ochrony środowiska. W krajach członkowskich Paktu zaczęto sobie uświadamiać znaczenie bezpieczeństwa środowiskowego. Pojawiły się nowe koncepcje i trendy. Doceniając znaczenie ochrony środowiska NATO szybko włączyło się w nurt badań naukowych i praktycznych przedsięwzięć. Ich celem było i jest poznanie przyczyn degradacji środowiska naturalnego, implikacji towarzyszących temu zjawisku, zwłaszcza w kontekście bezpieczeństwa oraz podejmowanie odpowiednich środków zaradczych. NATO od wielu lat zajmuje się wyzwaniami bezpieczeństwa związanymi ze środowiskiem. Obejmuje to zmiany klimatu, ekstremalne warunki pogodowe, podnoszenie się poziomu morza, ryzyko powodzi, wyczerpywanie się zasobów naturalnych, degradację gruntów, pustoszenie i zanieczyszczenia. Są to czynniki, które mogą ostatecznie prowadzić do katastrof humanitarnych, napięć regionalnych i przemocy. Najnowsza koncepcja strategiczna NATO 2030 podkreśla wpływ zmian klimatycznych na bezpieczeństwo, wynikających z braku należytej ochrony środowiska, jako główny punkt zainteresowania Sojuszu.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE** NATO, ochrona środowiska, bezpieczeństwo środowiskowe

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