

THE SECURITY THREAT THAT BINDS US

The Unraveling of Ecological and Natural Security and What the United States Can Do About It

Strains on critical Earth systems, such as water, food, forests, fisheries, and wildlife populations, are increasingly contributing to global conflict, political instability, and economic harm while also heightening the risks of future pandemics. This disruption of our planet's natural systems poses a significant and growing threat to our national security, including to our health and our economy.



The new report from the Converging Risks Lab of the Council on Strategic Risks (CSR) shows the worldwide loss of nature and decline of natural systems as one of the most undervalued national security threats of our time. It recommends several actions that the United States can take to better prepare for and confront this looming security threat and the risks it poses to America and its interests around the world. At the heart of these recommendations is a fundamental principle: *the U.S. needs a reboot of its national security doctrine* — one that is deeply informed by the science of ecological disruption and backed up by a significant increase in resources to address these emerging threats, including through U.S. foreign assistance.

8 Key Actions the United States Can Take to Address This Threat

1. Amplify and elevate ecological and Natural Security issues within the U.S Government, including at the State Department, Department of Defense, and National Security Council.
2. Promote international agreements and mechanisms to reduce and reverse the drivers of ecological disruption, including as part of climate change efforts and sustainable food systems.
3. Assert global leadership on climate and ecological security by strengthening international alliances, bringing together security communities, and developing shared defense frameworks to address them.
4. Promote expanded protection and better management of critical natural systems and transboundary resources, and work to counter state actions that threaten them.
5. Treat environmental crimes as serious crimes, including prioritizing anti-corruption efforts and promoting effective prosecutions and deterrent penalties.
6. Prevent pandemics at the point of origin by preventing zoonotic spillover, particularly at frontiers of tropical deforestation and in the wildlife trade.
7. Initiate an ecological and natural security research agenda.
8. Engage the public on ecological and natural security issues.