



“I believe man-made climate change is one of the most serious threats that this country and this world faces. That is why we have the world’s first green investment bank here in Britain...That is why we have set out, year after year, carbon budgets in this country. They talk a good game about it but it actually takes people to come in, govern effectively and deal with it.”



David Cameron, United Kingdom Prime Minister¹

The United Kingdom is an island nation in the North Atlantic. Because of its heavily indented coastline, no location is more than 125 km from tidal waters, leaving it vulnerable to coastal erosion, a rise in sea levels, and increasingly common extreme storms.²

The government’s latest climate change risk assessment identifies flood risk, and particularly flooding from heavy downpours, as one of the key climate threats for the UK, alongside stresses on water resources, threats to biodiversity and natural habitats, and the repercussions for the UK from climate change impacts abroad. Extreme flood events could become more frequent and severe, putting homes, businesses and infrastructure at greater risk.³

Summary

Country: **United Kingdom**

Region: **Europe**

ASP Assessment:

Vulnerability: **Medium**

Perception of Climate Change: **Security Threat**

Capacity: **High**

Preparedness: **High**

Overall Assessment: **Excellent**

The Climate Threats

Regional Disaster Vulnerability

- Torrential rainfall
- Rise in sea levels causing widespread erosion
- Summer droughts and winter flooding⁴
- Farming communities threatened by flooding

The Need to Adapt

- Climate change deniers in government⁷
- Reliance on oil production
- Further development of oil fields off coast⁸

Links Between Climate and Conflict

- Supporting responses to international conflicts arising from environmental migrations⁵
- Highly concentrated urban areas at risk from extreme weather⁶

Direct Threats to Homeland Security

- Displaced coastal communities
- Damage to infrastructure resulting in non-effective transportation⁹



How is the Country Preparing for Climate Threats

Preparing for Disaster Response

“The scale of the risk posed by coastal or tidal flooding has the potential to exceed even that posed by the fluvial and surface water flooding of last summer.”

- Prime Minister’s Office, The National Security Strategy for the United Kingdom⁹

Breaking the Link between Climate and Conflict

“Threats and risks are driven by a diverse and interconnected set of underlying factors, including climate change, competition for energy, poverty and poor governance, demographic changes and globalization.”

- Prime Minister’s Office, The National Security Strategy for the United Kingdom¹⁰

Adapting Installations

“We are undertaking a systematic detailed analysis, region by region, of how the impact of climate change is likely to affect the UK; analyzing our water and food security issues to ensure sustainable and secure supplies’ and increasing our overall investment in climate change research.”

- Prime Minister’s Office, The National Security Strategy for the United Kingdom¹¹

Planning for Homeland Security Threats

“Our security is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and its impact on food and water supply. So the concept of national security in 2010 is very different to what it was ten or twenty, let alone fifty or a hundred years ago.”

- Prime Minister’s Office, The National Security Strategy for the United Kingdom¹²

Analysis

The United Kingdom has been the global leader in addressing the threats posed by climate change since the then-Foreign Secretary chaired the first UN Security Council meeting on climate change in 2007. It has specifically focused both on how to address the challenges of climate change by the military and shown that only actions by the whole of government – and indeed the world – can actually address the problem. To communicate this, it has detailed a high-level envoy for climate security from the Royal Navy (Rear Admiral Neil Morisetti) to discuss this around the world. As a country that firmly understands how climate change threatens national security, the United Kingdom ranks, Excellent, “moderate vulnerability, but highly prepared.”

The American Security Project’s Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change is an examination of how international governments and militaries plan for and anticipate the strategic threats of climate change.

For more information and references see:

globalsecuritydefenseindex.org