edp   galp energia   REN Redes Energéticas Nacionais

ipris   FUNDAÇÃO LUSO-AMERICANA   FCT Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia   IPAD Instituto Português de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento   ISG Escola de Gestão

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   Articles in journals: Paulo Gorjão, "Japan's Foreign Policy and East Timor, 1975–2002" (*Asian Survey*, Vol. 42, No. 5, September/October 2002), pp. 754-771.
   Articles in newspapers: Paulo Gorjão, "UN needs coherent strategy to exit from East Timor" (*Jakarta Post*, 19 May 2004), p. 25.
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Climate change as a security issue in the European Union

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The environment–security nexus

Since the end of the Cold War, the links between environment and security have been progressively explored. Although in the early 1980s many were already arguing for a need to redefine security in order to include environmental considerations, the end of the bipolar confrontation allowed for the development of a broader debate on the inclusion of environmental issues in the security agenda.[2]

The emergence of the environment as a new, non-traditional, security issue was part of a larger effort to deepen and broaden security studies. While the deepening of security took into consideration other referent objects than the state as 'things' to be secured, the broadening considered threats beyond those with a military nature.

One of the most influential approaches regarding the environment-security nexus is that which concentrates on the links between environment and conflict. This debate owes a lot to the work developed in the early 1990s by Thomas Homer-Dixon, who explored the potential for violent conflict in the event of environmental scarcity. Working with selected case studies, the research conducted by Homer-Dixon and his team on the Project on Environmental Change and Acute Conflict demonstrated that the degradation and depletion of environmental resources interacts with population growth and unequal resource distribution to cause violent conflict.[2]

Another important emerging focus is on human security. In this case, the concern is more because the potential for environmental degradation to threaten the basic needs, development and human rights of populations and communities. The central premise is that human security is linked to the population's access to natural resources and its vulnerabilities towards the natural environment.[3]

In the context of the environment-security debate, climate change has emerged as the most pressing environmental problem in our day, since it not only intensifies existing environmental problems, but also creates new ones. Consequently, associating climate change with security has given renewed impetus to the environmental security debate.[4]

This article analyses the re-framing of climate change as a security threat in light of the securitization framework of the Copenhagen School, an essential tool in the

comprehension of how issues reach the sphere of security. It then discusses the implications of this process, namely in terms of policy changes regarding climate action. It focuses on the European Union (EU), which since the 1990s has been claiming leadership in global environmental politics, most notably in the area of climate change.

The main argument is that although climate change is at present a securitized issue in the realm of the EU, emergency measures have yet to be adopted to address the issue. Nevertheless, the fact that the EU has raised the profile of climate change is still significant since the EU is a policy shaper in international environmental affairs, disseminating its practices and generating policy imperatives.

Climate change as a security issue

Climate change is gradually becoming the focus of the environment-security debate as it is increasingly being viewed as the most pressing environmental issue facing the world today. The importance attributed to climate change relates to its perceived role in exacerbating existing environmental problems as well as creating new ones.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the leading scientific body for the assessment of climate change established by the United Nations Environment Program and the World Meteorological Organization, defines climate change as a "change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g. using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. It refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity".[5]

Climate change remains a controversial topic as a certain degree of uncertainty still exists regarding climate science. However, there is growing consensus about the existence of anthropogenic drivers of climate change, mainly greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere.[6]

The international community has reached some level of agreement regarding the anthropogenic contribution to changes in the climate. The majority of the states are parties to the 1972 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which recognizes that global warming is in part attributable to human activity.

Climate change is seen as a cross-cutting issue, whose predicted impact ranges from the aggravation of resource scarcity to the disappearance of entire coastal areas; from dislocating masses of population to giving rise to extreme weather. These impacts are reaching the status of security concerns, as many actors warn on climate change's potential as a threat multiplier, exacerbating tensions and instability across the globe.

In this context, a language of security has pervaded the speech on climate change, as a number of actors from the political, academic and public spheres are classifying climate change as a threat to security. A significant example is the adoption of resolution

A/RES/63/281 by the United Nations General Assembly in 2009, which addresses the security implications of climate change. Though it is a non-binding resolution, the fact that this resolution was approved unanimously indicates that the international community acknowledges the existence of an explicit connection between climate change, peace and security.

As climate change is gradually being viewed as a threat to security, peace and stability, it is becoming widely recognized that addressing the security implications of climate change entails addressing both causes and consequences. Regarding the former, scientific research indicates that if mitigation action is taken now, it is still possible to reverse the observed changes in climate patterns. The latter refers to adaptation measures to deal with parts of climate change that are unavoidable.

Climate security in the European Union

The EU is one of the biggest actors pushing for the integration of climate change in the international security agenda. An analysis of the evolution of the climate debate in the EU suggests that climate change is being raised to the level of security threat. Increasingly, the discourse of political leaders, both at the EU institution and member-state levels, is framing climate change as a threat to national, European and global security. Moreover, a number of official documents addressing the links between climate change and security have been produced.

A milestone in the acknowledgement by the EU of the security implications of climate change was the 2008 joint report by EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana and the European Commission on Climate Change and International Security. The report addresses the security impact of climate change, namely conflicts over resources, negative economic impacts, risks to coastal cities and infrastructures, loss of territory and border disputes, environmentally-induced migratory movements, political and social fragility, tensions over energy supplies and pressures on international governance. These are seen as posing security risks that directly affect European interests and addressing these issues is considered preventive security policy.

Following this report, the European Council adopted a *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy - Providing Security in a Changing World*, which added climate change to the list of key threats to security to be considered in the European Security Strategy. Hence, the core document of European security and defense policy, which defines the Union's strategic objectives, has since placed climate change alongside traditional security threats such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and more recent but widely recognized threats such as international terrorism and organized crime.

A number of member-states have also included climate change in their national security strategies. The 2008 National Security Strategy for the United Kingdom identifies

climate change as potentially the greatest challenge to global stability and security, and therefore to national security. Besides being acknowledged as a "driver of insecurity" in itself, climate change is also viewed as an important element in exacerbating other "global challenges", such as competition for energy resources, demographic pressures, and food and water insecurity.

The French *White Paper on Defense and National Security* of 2008 portrays climate change as a new risk that needs to be addressed on a global scale and whose security impacts need to be calculated rapidly. According to the document, violent climate accidents can cause widespread social disruptions, representing a new scale of risks. Moreover, the strategy recognizes climate change's potential contribution to violent conflict.

Regarding Germany, the 2006 National Security Strategy already referred to climate change's potential for exacerbating security problems. More recently in 2008, Chancellor Merkel's CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group presented a proposal for a new national security strategy, where climate change is acknowledged as a security threat. The Parliamentary Group argues that climate change should figure among the key challenges and strategic objectives of German security policy. Although this document is merely a policy paper, it is nonetheless relevant because it reveals how the political group in power aims to raise climate change's profile as a security issue within Germany.

Besides accounting for the security impacts of climate change in their respective national security strategies, the EU and its member-states have also been active in raising the profile of climate change at the international level. One of the most noteworthy efforts was the UK's role in taking climate change to the United Nations Security Council in April 2007, calling its first-ever meeting on the impact of climate change. Although no statement or resolution were adopted, this was a symbolic first-step towards the acknowledgement of climate change as a security issue, since the Security Council has primary responsibility, under the UN Charter, for maintaining international peace and security.

Overall, the language of security that has pervaded European speech on climate change and the progressive inclusion of climate change in strategic thinking and security planning indicate that a securitization process of climate change is underway in the EU. Once an exclusively environmental problem, climate change is being re-constructed as a security issue.

Following the securitization framework

The reconstruction of climate change as a security issue can be better understood through the securitization framework, which constitutes an essential tool in the comprehension of how issues are moved to the sphere of security. This theoretical framework, developed by Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan and others, is the only one providing a structured analysis of

the process of construction of security, evidencing the mechanisms through which issues reach the security agenda as well as the actors involved in the process.

According to this framework, securitization occurs when an issue is successfully moved from the politicized level, where it is part of the public policy sphere, to the securitized level, where it is presented as an existential threat, thus calling for emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal boundaries of political practice. This elevation of issues to the security level occurs in a two-stage process, where in the first stage a securitizing actor performs a securitizing move by using rhetoric of existential threat and urgency to address an issue, and then the relevant audience accepts it, allowing for extraordinary measures to be adopted.[7]

Following this framework, the analysis of the rhetoric used to address climate change by a number of political actors in the EU realm clearly shows that it follows a security speech pattern. Hence, it can be argued that the European institutions and at least some member-state governments are performing a securitizing move regarding climate change. In doing so, their aim is to secure European standards of living and the stability of the EU itself, referent objects which are threatened by the negative effects of climate change.

In security studies, referent objects are things that are seen to be existentially threatened and have a legitimate claim to survival. The environment-security debate might suggest that the environment as such is the referent object of security. After all, disruption of ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, desertification, deforestation, disruption of the global water cycle, pollution and the depletion of the ozone layer, all represent threats to the natural environment. Nevertheless, these threats are only perceived as vital because they pose a risk to human existence on the planet. Hence, the preservation of existing levels of civilization is a predominant concern in much of the debate surrounding environment and security.[8] This is because the above-identified threats to the environment are also a threat to human living standards.

Although the EU recognizes the environment, or the global ecosystem, as something to be protected, most of its climate related securitizing moves aim to secure the standards of living in Europe and the stability of the EU itself. The EU's main concerns are climate change's impact on international stability, world economy, energy security and migratory pressures. In the EU's perspective, European interests are affected by climate change, which will not only affect the natural environment but also sections of European society, economy and security.

Regarding the second step of securitization, wide media coverage of the security threats posed by climate change to this referent object indicates that the securitizing move has reached a wide European audience. The European media have been extensively framing climate change as a cause for violent conflict, social unrest, mass migration and other sources of insecurity. A significant number of news displayed alarming headlines comparing the threat of climate change to that of weapons of mass destruction or global terrorism.[9]

Moreover, opinion indicators also reveal that European public opinion is increasingly aware of the security implications of climate change, identifying it as a severe risk facing Europe and the World. It also indicates that Europeans are progressively more willing to accept the adoption of exceptional measures to address climate change, namely concerning resource allocation and policy prioritization.[10]

The consequences of securitizing climate change

The securitization of climate change has entered the international agenda, generating both concerns of a militarization of the management and mitigation of its negative effects, as well as an expectation of effective change due to the fact that security constitutes a high politics matter *par excellence*. The different reactions to this process are explained by the prediction that the securitization process will lead to policy change regarding environmental issues in general, and climate change in particular.

In light of this, it is necessary to address the implications of handling climate change from a security perspective. In fact, the securitization framework proponents argue that one of the purposes of this approach is to evaluate whether an issue is better handled in the security realm or within normal politics.[11]

Although we have seen that European political speech on climate change suggests a securitization of the issue, the means envisaged to tackle it are not traditional security measures. Simultaneously to performing a securitizing move regarding climate change, securitizing actors argue that its causes and consequences should be addressed through mitigation, adaptation and international cooperation.[12] Regarding EU and member-state action on climate change, the policies and strategies adopted to deal with the issue are not traditional security measures either. Instead, they refer to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to curb climate change and adaptation action to deal with its unavoidable impacts.

If the securitization of climate change did not generate a militarization of the actions to address climate impacts as many feared, neither did it produce effective change at the policy level as many wished. An effective climate policy change – or the adoption of extraordinary measures to follow the securitization logic – would imply the creation of a new structure to address the issue or a paradigm shift in climate protection.

Consequently, the adoption of such measures would entail the application of a much higher degree of rigor and control in environmental policies. This would mean, for example, international emission reduction targets monitored by the United Nations Security Council, with the imposition of sanctions for non-compliant states, or the closing of all polluting companies by states.

Yet, the consequences of climate change are being dealt with through "environmental politics as usual". International negotiations and agreements continue to be the primary

framework for action, with special relevance of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. Emissions are not being drastically cut as the Polluter Pays principle still applies, allowing those who can afford it to continue polluting. Moreover, the European greenhouse gas emission allowance trading system also allows some countries continue with their level of emissions, or even increase it.

Several reasons concur to hinder the adoption of extraordinary measures regarding climate protection. These include the institutional path-dependency of environmental institutions that resist this shift and the environmental resolution tradition of non-binding negotiations, the role of powerful economic actors, and the degree of uncertainty and controversy that still exists regarding this subject. However, if climate change is a matter of national and international security as so many actors have argued it, these issues should be overcome and climate change should gain priority above other issues, principally economic interests.

Beyond climate change securitization

Even if there were no extraordinary measures adopted to deal with climate change, one cannot ignore that some degree of change did occur regarding climate policy in the EU. Using Peter Hall's model of policy change, one can argue that although there was no paradigm shift in EU climate action, the securitization of climate change originated a first order change in European environmental policies.

Hall identifies three central variables involved in the policy making process, namely the overarching goals that guide policy, the policy instruments used to attain those goals, and the precise settings or levels of those instruments. A paradigm shift occurs when all three variables suffer an alteration.[13]

In the specific case of climate change securitization in the EU, the overall goal of climate policy was maintained – to reduce climate change – and so were the policy instruments to attain these goals – mitigation and adaptation measures. However, the levels of the policy instruments were modified by framing climate change as a security threat, which led for instance to higher targets for emission reductions and to an integration of mitigation and adaptation measures into development aid policies.

Going beyond the Kyoto Protocol requirements, in 2007 EU leaders made a unilateral commitment to cut European emissions by at least 20% of 1990 levels by 2020, a measure being implemented through a package of binding legislation. The prioritization of climate change in the European agenda is also evidenced by the creation of a Directorate General for Climate Action and of the post of European Commissioner for Climate Action, both in 2010.

Security practices are traditionally linked to paradigm shifts in Hall's interpretation, or to the creation of new structures through extraordinary politics in Gramsci's

logic.[14] However, a wider understanding of security should allow for the emergence of broader security practices. In this sense, M. J. Trombetta argues that "The analysis of environmental security discourses and the securitization of climate change have shown that transforming an issue like climate change into a security issue is not about applying a fixed meaning of security and the practices associated with it. Rather, it is a reflexive and contextualized process that generates meanings and practices". [15]

Moreover, the author argues that since the EU has traditionally emphasized a preventive approach to security, the securitization of many environmental issues has resulted in security practices inspired by the environmental sector to guarantee safety, adaptation and resilience. This is why she argues that in this context, emergency measures for environmental security have been developed in the realm of normal policy.[16]

Hence, whereas mitigation and adaptation measures remain the basic policy instruments to address climate change, one can argue that they are invested with a security feature, thus acquiring a level of urgency in their implementation. Contrarily to common predictions of militarization, securitization created an increase in the urgency attributed to climate change which is transforming the level of response to the issue.

Arguably, this was one of the main goals of those calling for the securitization of climate change: raising awareness and investing climate change with a greater sense of urgency. The designation of an issue as a matter of international security means that this issue is more important than others and should take absolute priority.[17] And so, the goal of securitizing actors was to give climate change priority in the international agenda.

Conclusions

Climate change has now become a major concern at the global level, being gradually viewed as a security threat. The EU has been a relevant actor in reframing climate change as a threat to peace and security on a global scale. However, we have seen that despite this reframing of climate change, both causes and effects are being dealt with within the realm of normal environmental politics: adaptation and mitigation measures, with a commitment to climate research and international cooperation.

Nevertheless, a higher level of awareness and urgency was brought about by climate change securitization. This can be regarded as a positive development. As Oli Brown, Anne Hammill and Robert McLeman so eloquently put it: "a 'securitized' climate debate might be able to marshal sufficiently compelling arguments to encourage the politicians to do something about reducing emissions and investing (carefully) in adaptation. These are things the international community should be doing anyhow and, done well, are consistent with enhancing security and reducing the potential for conflict at all scales. So if securitization speeds their implementation, it will serve a useful purpose".[18]

The fact that the EU is considering this level of urgency is all the more significant since the EU is a policy shaper in international environmental affairs, disseminating its practices and generating policy imperatives.[19] However, much more ambitious action is needed to produce perceivable results in slowing climate change. Scientific evidence increasingly shows that tackling the impacts of climate change will entail a radical alteration in emission patterns. This means that an effective policy change is needed, which includes the adoption of emergency measures to curb climate change.

Radical goals and measures need to be agreed on a global level and implemented domestically. Here it should be stressed that this much needed paradigm shift, one that focuses on implementation rather than just on goal setting, does not entail a militarization of climate policies. As we have highlighted previously, the necessity of addressing the security implications of climate change challenges the understanding of security measures as just military measures. As the securitization framework opens the possibility for non-traditional security issues to become security matters, one can argue that this widening of security allows for non-traditional security measures to be adopted as means of enhancing security.

For the EU the challenge ahead is to move from a "proclaimed" to an effective securitization of climate change that is met by appropriate action. But the EU cannot go it alone. Efforts from the entire international community are needed to tackle this issue and its harmful effects. For this reason, and given that it aims for a leadership role in global environmental politics, the EU should continue to push for the elevation of the climate change profile on a global level, while giving the example at the domestic level.

(Endnotes)
1   See for example: Richard H. Ullman, "Redefining Security" (*International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Summer 1983), pp. 129-153.
2   See for example: Thomas Homer-Dixon and Jessica Blitt, *Ecoviolence – Links among Environment, Population, and Security* (Lanham: *Rowman & Littlefield*, 1998).
3   Jon Barnett, Richard A. Matthew and Karen L. O'Brien, "Global Environmental Change and Human Security: An Introduction", in Richard A. Matthew, Jon Barnett, Bryan McDonald and Karen L. O'Brien (eds.), *Global Environmental Change and Human Security* (Cambridge: *MIT Press*, 2010), pp. 3-32.
4   Rita Floyd, "The Environmental Security Debate and its Significance for Climate Change" (*The International Spectator*, Vol. 43, No. 3, September 2008), pp. 51-65.
5   Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report* (Valencia: IPCC, 2007).
6   Idem.
7   Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: a New Framework for Analysis* (London: *Lynne Rienner*, 1998), pp. 23-25.
8   Idem, p. 75.
9   Media analysis compounded relevant climate related news, extracted from nine newspapers with Europe-wide diffusion and distinct political backgrounds.
10 Based mainly on Eurobarometer surveys.
11 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *op .cit.*, p. 34.
12 Some exceptions do exist: the German CDU/CSU security strategy proposal argues that the United Nations Security Council should be authorized to act in major breaches of environmental legislation.
13 Peter A. Hall, "Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain"

(*Comparative Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 3, April 1993), pp. 275-296.

14   Benedetto Fontana, "Gramsci on Politics and State" (*Journal of Classical Sociology,* Vol. 2, No. 2, July 2002), pp. 157–178.

15   Maria Julia Trombetta, "Environmental Security and Climate Change: Analyzing the Discourse" (*Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 4, December 2008), pp. 585-602.

16   Idem, p. 594.

17   Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *op cit*., p. 24.

18   Oli Brown, Anne Hammill and Robert McLeman, "Climate Change as the 'New' Security Threat: Implications for Africa" (*International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 6, November 2007), p. 1154.

19   Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor* (New York: *Routledge*, 2006), p. 105.