# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action

There should be no doubt that the anthropogenic climate change is real, that it is human-induced and that climate change can have fatal and disastrous consequences for all facets of this planet. In recent years, one can observe the international community's securitization of climate change. The securitization of an issue generally raises the awareness of a topic and one can be absolutely sure, climate change deserves the highest attention possible. But, what are the consequences of climate change entering the stage of high politics and is discussed as a security threat? One could argue that the international community is concerned about the effects of climate change and that they work in cohesion to avert them. This essay critically examines the narratives that emerge through the securitization of climate change and argues that labeling climate change as a threat by constructing dystopian worst-case scenarios run into danger, doing too little to address climate change appropriately. Scholars, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), politicians, think tanks, supranational institutions, and international organizations depict climate change as a 'threat multiplier' that consequently leads to conflicts and migration in the global south, and has already in Darfur and Syria. Some go even further, arguing that climate change would promote terrorism in western countries. These associations and causal assumptions are problematic and this essay demonstrates why.

It starts with the explanation of how the notion of security changed in the post-Cold War world and briefly explains what a securitization implies with the theoretical framework of the Copenhagen and Paris Schools. Then it shows the nexus between climate change and security is portrayed with a short critique of the Copenhagen School. After that, an overview of opinions towards the securitization of climate change is provided and it is explained what 'appropriate responses' to climate change are – mainly, the reduction of greenhouse gases. The main section of this text critically reveals the narratives that emerge through the securitization of climate change. It is showed that the narratives are futuristic, dystopian and misleading for the immense challenge of tackling climate change. Conflicts in Syria and Sudan serve as little case studies. Even though they are depicted as 'the first climate wars', the case studies show that this depiction is wrong. Furthermore, it is probable that these crisis narratives are misused to achieve western interests in the global south. This essay argues that the international community does not need the crisis scenarios to react to the challenging task of reducing the climate change effects. Moreover, a re-politicization of the topic is necessary in order to adapt the global world to the impacts of climate change and further important mitigation measures.

**From Security to Securitization**

The traditional understanding of security in international relations changed after the Cold War. Prior to this shift, a security threat was understood as the central danger of military attack from another nation-state; the referent object was the nation-state (Dannreuther, 2013). This understanding of security is the main pillar in the common theories in international relations – realism and liberalism (Walt, 1991). This narrow, state-centric security notion only focussed on military aspects. In the aftermath of the bipolar world, non-military threats, such as environmental degradation, gained attention (Dannreuther, 2013). Critics of traditional security understandings demanded a widening concept of security, arguing that challenges to security can arise not only through the military of another state but through economic, social and environmental contexts (Buzan et al, 1998).

# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action

Written by Laura Ningelgen

The critical rethinking of security led to the development of the *theory of securitization*. The theory was influenced and developed by Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan and Jaap de Wilde, which is summed up as the *Copenhagen School* (CS). It combines a wide and a narrow notion of security with two implications: First, the widening of the term 'security' towards issues of non-military threats like environmental and economic concerns. Second, the deepening of security towards referent objects beyond the national state (Buzan / Hansen, 2009). Per this theory, a security issue is socially constructed and the result of a speech act: '[W]e can regard 'security' as a speech act. In this usage, security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance itself is the act. By saying it [security], something is done […]. By uttering 'security', a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it.' (Wæver, 1995: 35)

According to the CS, a successful securitization is tied to several conditions: First, it requires a *securitizing actor*, who has social capital and authority. Second, for the speech-act of the authority to be successful, it is necessary to identify an *existential threat*. Thereby, the speech-act underpins the assumption that the survival of the *referent object* is endangered existentially. The referent object varies from the whole world to a state or a specific sub-population. Then, the actor justifies *extraordinary measures*, which go beyond the normal political procedure and implies possible rule-breaking, as the actor points out the *priority of action*. If the audience accepts the issue as an existential threat, the securitization of an issue is successful (Buzan et al, 1998).

In this respect, the CS's securitization theory is useful because it focusses on the consequences of a securitization and helps to explain why and how a topic became a threat, instead of seeing a security threat as objectively given. Further, it helps to explain how certain measures against the threat are justified by policy-makers while focussing on the speech-act and the performativity. Nevertheless, the securitization theory has also limits when one wants to explain how climate change became securitized. To explain how and why climate change got securitized, the securitization theory by the CS is not fully applicable. In the climate change debate, this essay argues, that the securitization of climate change is an ongoing process, rather than a single speech act. In the recent years, one can find endless speech-acts by different actors that posit climate change as a threat and a security issue. The securitization by the CS requires extraordinary measures, but so far, one cannot locate these measures (Trombetta, 2008). In this sense, it is not surprising, that climate change was not securitized in the view of the CS (Buzan et al, 1998)[1].

Climate Change is too complex, in some sense too abstract, invisible, and intangible, to be tackled with classical security measures like military intervention – greenhouse gases cannot be bombed from existence. The securitization of climate change is not a linear act, but a process on many levels through many different actors. Several scholars critiqued the approach of the CS and developed other theoretical approaches to explain securitization. For instance, Balzacq (2011) and McDonald (2008) argue that the theory of securitization is too prescriptive and narrow. The *Paris School* sees a securitization not as inevitably linked to a speech-act and extraordinary measures. Rather, 'the Paris School takes a more political–sociological approach to security in analyzing how bureaucratic actors construct security through their routine practices of categorization and definition' (Bigo, 1996 in van Munster, 2007: 236). This is helpful to explain the securitization of climate change and seems to fill the gaps of the CS.

Therefore, Trombetta (2008: 600) argues that climate change became a security issue through 'meanings and practices' and is more a 'reflexive and contextualized process'. Furthermore, she argues that the securitization is successful when policies become legitimized that were not established without the climate-security discourse (Trombetta, 2011). In this sense, Corry (2012) expands this thought, explaining the securitization of climate change as a risk-concept: the so-called *riskification*. He distinguishes between security threats, which can be eliminated through common security measures[2] and risk threats, which can be controlled through mitigation and adaption measures. He states that '[r]iskification does not involve the same danger of creating unhelpful friend–enemy logics or legitimising exceptional means, but it does run the risk of legitimising extensive governance programmes of the valued reference object itself' (Corry, 2012: 257). Accordingly, the riskification focusses on long-term processes and less concrete risks like climate change, helping to explain how governmental mitigation and adaption measures became possible (Corry, 2012). This essay argues in accordance with Corry (2012) and Trombetta (2008 / 2011) and focuses on policies that would not have become possible without framing climate change as a security threat,

# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action
Written by Laura Ningelgen

instead of measuring the success of a securitization by extraordinary measures.

## Climate – Security – Nexus

Since the end of the 1980s, different scholars brought climate change and security together[3]. Yet, until the mid-2000s the whole debate about climate change as a security issue accelerated and the topic entered the stage of high politics. The shift to a nexus between climate change and security began in the mid-2000s and peaked in 2007 (Brzoska, 2009). In this year, climate change experienced ultimate attention, many studies and reports where published like the 'National Security and the Threat of Climate Change' by the *US Center for Naval Analyses* (CNA), 'The Age of Consequences: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Global Climate Change' by the *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (CSIS) and the *Center for a New American Security* (CNAS), and 'A Climate of Conflict' by *International Alert*. At this juncture, climate change became the referent object of security. 2007 culminated in Albert Arnold Gore in his organization *International Panel on Climate Change*'s (IPCC) award of the Nobel Peace Prize. This international prestigious award finally showed the connection between peace and climate change. Simultaneously, as insights from the IPCC about the human-induced climate change became public, climate change advanced as a topic of security. Climate change became depicted as a security threat and was discussed in international debates even by supranational institutions (European Union, 2008) and international organizations like the United Nations. In 2007, the United Nations Security Council debated over an environmental issue for the first time in history. Further debates in 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2015 by the Security Council and the UN-General Assembly followed (Werrell / Femia, 2015). Climate change was discussed in combination with security consequences, such as war, conflict or even terrorism. These debates did not abate in the coming years: Climate Change is a central topic of the *National Security Strategy* (Cabinet Office, 2015) of the United Kingdom, while the *Climate Change Adaption Roadmap* by the U.S. Department of Defence (2014) introduces adaption strategies for the impacts of climate change, interpreting climate change as a major threat for national security of the United States of America (U.S.).

A report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) favors the securitization of climate change in the European Union because it raises the general political awareness of this topic (Rodrigues de Brito, 2012). Floyd (2007) states the securitization of climate change has two faces. It can promote climate action and supports mitigation because climate change became a security issue. Although she points out that it can also have negative impacts on the appropriate mitigation measures of climate change. Brzoska (2009) argues that the securitization of climate change could lead to wrong measures like an arms race between rich nation states or the general investment in an increase in military forces, while Hartmann (2010 / 2014) takes the view that a securitization undermines appropriate responses to climate change. She criticises the Malthusian view that underlies in the climate change dystopias and the securitization of climate refugees and argues that this serves western security interests. Selby (2014) calls for a re-politicization and a debate guided by academics, given that the positivist interpretation of climate-conflict is problematic.

## Appropriate Responses to Climate Change

Before addressing the research question, it is necessary to give a brief overview of what is meant by 'appropriate answers' to climate change. As previously mentioned, the root cause of climate change is human activity, especially the burning of fossil fuels, which leads to an increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere – greenhouse gases absorb warmth. In other words, the more greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, the warmer our planet becomes (IPCC, 2014a: 4). Therefore, the main goal to tackle global warming and to limits the impacts of climate change[4] is the reduction or the complete replacement of fossil fuels and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. To achieve this goal, mitigation measures are required. Adaption and mitigation measures are manifold; for instance, the general development of alternatives such as wind-power, biodiesel or compostable plastic would reduce the greenhouse gas emission (Biello, 2007), while the International Monetary Fund (2017) proposes fiscal instruments like a carbon tax. The income could be used to develop further mitigation strategies, for example, the investments in geoengineering, e-cars, and fossil fuels-alternatives. It will be impossible to entirely halt the effects of climate change; simply making the international community aware of its dangerous is not enough of a solution anymore. Cooperation and fairness between all international and national actors is essential for the gigantic challenge of greenhouse gas reduction

# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action

Written by Laura Ningelgen

(IPCC, 2014: 5). In this respect, individualism and selfish actions for own interests are counterproductive (IPCC, 2014: 5).

Having now demonstrated the securitization of climate change and 'appropriate responses', the next section will address the narratives which emerge through the securitization of climate change and show how these narratives negatively influence climate action.

## Constructed Crisis Narratives about Climate Change

As an outcome of the securitization of climate change, conflict and mass migration are brought into a causal relationship with many politicians, scholars, and reports alike. It is implied that climate change will lead to violent conflicts, has done so already in Darfur and Syria, and will continue to lead to mass migration. This essay hereby argues that a causal relationship is wrong and problematic. First, there is too little evidence thus far to assume that climate change automatically leads to war and migration. Second, the securitization and its created narratives fail to consider important further factors and ignore the context of conflicts and migration. Third, this relationship hampers climate action in general. The following section is divided into three parts. The first reconstructs the narratives through the securitization of climate change, while the second focuses on the 'first climate wars' in Darfur and Syria. The last one critically examines the outcomes of the crisis narratives and if they support or hinder appropriate responses to the effects of climate change.

### Interpretation of Constructed Narratives

'Because climate change is likely to have profound effects on agriculture, settlement patterns, natural disasters, disease, and economic activity more generally, many have begun to speculate about future scenarios and potential human impacts.' (Salehyan, 2008: 315)

In recent years, many governments, organizations, scientists, institutions, policy-makers and the media have created future 'disaster' scenarios. These future dystopias link climate change directly to violent conflict and mass migration, while the conflicts mostly occur in the global south, where water shortage and food scarcity is already given (Brzoska, 2009). Brzoska (2009), who evaluates the content of four influential studies from 2007, sums up that all studies predict the increase of conflict, mass migration, and through migration terrorism. All studies propose military intervention 'to prevent humanitarian catastrophes […] [and] destabilization of states' in poor countries (Brzoska 2009: 139). For example, the influential CNA (2007: 7) report claims that: 'Climate change acts as a threat multiplier for instability in some of the most volatile regions of the world […] causing widespread political instability and the likelihood of failed states.' Further, the CNA (2014: 2) argues that: '[T]he projected impacts of climate change will be more than threat multipliers; they will serve as catalysts for instability and conflict. In Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, we are already seeing how the impacts […] are posing security challenges to these regions' governments. We see these trends growing and accelerating. To protect our national security interests both at home and abroad, the United States must be more assertive and expand cooperation with our international allies to bring about change and build resilience.'

In a New York Times article, Homer-Dixon (2007) warns that 'climate-change will be as dangerous – and more intractable – than the arms race […] during the cold war,' while Margaret Beckett, former secretary of state of the United Kingdom, proposes that violent conflicts based on resource scarcity will increase through the warming of the south (Borger, 2007a). Rasmussen (2009), the secretary general of NATO, argues that climate change 'will put pressure on peace' and Gore says (2007) in his Nobel Peace Prize-speech that 'climate refugees have migrated into areas already inhabited by people with different cultures, religions, and traditions, increasing the potential for conflict.' In addition, International Alert called climate change[5] a 'threat' or 'risk multiplier' in three recent studies (International Alert, 2015a; 2015b; 2016) and links conflict and migration directly to climate change. A paper from the high representative and the EU commission also sees a connection between climate change and conflict. The paper states that climate change will increase religious radicalization and entail migration (European Union, 2008). In addition, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2016) writes that '21.5 million people have been forcibly displaced by weather-related sudden onset hazards […] each year since 2008 […]. Climate change is

# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action
Written by Laura Ningelgen

also a "threat multiplier" in many of today's conflicts, from Darfur to Somalia to Iraq and Syria. Climate change sows seeds for conflict, but it also makes displacement much worse when it happens.'

Speaking for the UNHCR, Guterres (2011) names climate change as the 'key factor accelerating all other drivers of forced displacement'. Hartmann (2014: 759) points out that the international community agrees that sub-Saharan Africa will suffer the most of climate change. With this assumption, African males, in particular, become 'othered' with barbarian-stereotypes of refugees or future terrorists that pose a security threat for western countries, whereas African females 'symbolise the humanitarian imperative' by killing two birds with one stone: 'reducing the woman's fertility' and through little offspring 'magically reducing vulnerability to climate change' (Hartmann, 2014: 772).

All these reports, statements, and studies weave a common thread: that climate change will lead to political instability, fights over resources, violent conflict, migration or even terrorism and radicalization. In addition, these consequences will begin in the already poor countries of the global south (Brzoska, 2009 / Hartmann, 2014), but their tide will reach the borders of Western countries. These accounts are all alarmist, worst-case, pessimistic scenarios; all these visions of what might happen do not include what could happen if counter-measures were established (Brzoska, 2009).

*Sudan and Syria as the first climate-wars*

Recent conflicts in Sudan (especially in Darfur) and Syria are depicted as the 'first climate wars'. In the case of Darfur, Ban Ki-Moon argued 'that the Darfur conflict began as an ecological crisis, arising at least in part from climate change' (Borger, 2007b). Rasmussen (2009) opines that the drought was 'one of the main causes' and 'climate change in Sudan has been a major contributor to this tragedy.' Mazo (2010) dedicates a whole chapter to Darfur in his polarizing book *Climate Conflict: How Global Warming Threatens Security and What to do About It* , naming Darfur the 'first modern climate-change conflict'.

A similar situation emerged during the Syrian war since 2011. There is a high consensus in newspaper articles and between politicians and scholars: the Syrian civil war emerged because of several droughts in the Eastern Mediterranean since 2006 and its destabilizing consequences. Richard Seager (Welch, 2015), a climate scientist, explains '[t]he drought increased the risk that the country would unravel, and climate change was almost certainly a factor in the drought'. International Alert (2016: 2) states that Syria 'illustrates how climate-induced drought, in interaction with other factors, can contribute to unrest and protests, through the loss of livelihoods and distress migration.' A report published by the World Bank (Wodon et al, 2014), argues similarly that climate change and the drought is a key factor in the Syrian conflict.

By creating oversimplified and depoliticized explanations for conflicts like Darfur and Syria, mostly through western politicians and scholars, several problems occur. First, the fact that climate change is ultimately linked to conflict cannot be properly proven with existing evidence (Selby et al, 2017). For the case of Syria, Selby et al. (2017) refute this easy, causal claim and illustrate that socio-economic grievances were the key factor in the civil war – not droughts. Furthermore, they argue that economic liberalization was responsible for inner-state migration in Syria. In other words, the evidence is too thin to assume a causal relationship between conflict and climate change, while the assumption falls back on ethnic stereotypes of the populations in the global south (Hartmann / Selby, 2015). In the case of Darfur, the IPCC (Adger et al, 2014: 773) ascertained: '[m]ost authors identify government practices as being far more influential drivers than climate variability, noting also that similar changes in climate did not stimulate conflicts of the same magnitude in neighbouring regions, and that in the past people in Darfur were able to cope with climate variability in ways that avoided large-scale violence.'

Second, the depiction by scholars, studies, and politicians cited above show that they undermine that fact, that cooperation in times of 'environmental problems' can occur, even between 'hostile parties' (Brzoska, 2009: 142). Hartmann (2014) sums up the finding of scholars that scarcity of goods can lead to a peaceful togetherness[6] and will not consequently lead to a higher ability of conflict. Third, when causes of conflicts are oversimplified, and one automatically assumes that shortage of water and food leads to conflict over resources, measures for preventing conflict can be overlooked and ignored (Brzoska, 2009). Syria and Darfur exemplify consequences of socio-

# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action
Written by Laura Ningelgen

economic grievance that have been seriously undermined and ill-attributed to the climate (Selby, 2017 / Adger et al, 2014). It is to assume that conflicts, in general, are always complex and involve social, religious, economic, and political factors—it would be naïve to assume climate might be the sole factor of violent conflict.

*The implications of crisis narratives*

If the nexus between climate change, conflict, and migration is already wrongly assumed, the question is if the narratives that emerge through this context, which lead to a securitization, are useful for tackling climate change appropriately. It is argued a securitization is useful because it raises awareness of the issue, importantly hoping that the climate change receives greater attention from policy-makers. 'But even the best of intentions cannot obscure that we don't live in a win-win world' (Hartmann, 2010: 239). This essay shows that the securitization of climate change hinders appropriate responses to the issue, while the negative Malthusian view deeply influences the rhetoric about climate change (Hartmann, 2014). Through the securitization, serious efforts of climate change mitigation will be undermined, and developments in foreign policies can be recognized that seem to support climate action but if one takes a closer look, they remain questionable. If climate change is portrayed as a danger to security, it supports those who address climate change through conventional security measures and the securitization serves western security interests (Brzoska, 2009).

Accordingly, Brzoska (2015) examines military forces and if climate change leads to their increase. He concludes that the 'general perception of the importance of climate change […] seems to feed the expectation that climate change will amplify already existing priorities of armed forces' (Brzoska, 2015: 187), while the military is not getting more sustainable. A military upgrade is expensive – this money could be used to invest in mitigation measures for climate change. In addition, if there is a lack of evidence proving the climate-conflict-nexus, more military is not needed for climate change reasons. Nonetheless, the narratives of climate change, combined with an increase of armed forces, help to justify armed interventions. For the U.S. for instance, it is important to maintain military supremacy. For the actors of the national security, it is important 'to continue to operate in a world where climate change impacts are increasing' (Brauch /Scheffran, 2012: 6). Hartmann (2010 / 2014) agrees that the threat narratives serve the U.S. as a security actor in Africa. It is argued that AFRICOM[7] is justified officially through economic and political objectives. In a broader sense, the climate change narrative fits to justify military assistance (Hartmann, 2010). It becomes evident that this is not an appropriate answer to climate change. A militarization will not help to reduce greenhouse gases but it will only enforce the security interests of the respective country.

In relation to migration, the term 'climate refugees' is too simple. The notion 'climate refugee' overvalues the 'role of demographic pressure' and as with climate-conflict – the reasons for migration are 'complex and context-specific' (Hartmann, 2010: 235). Furthermore, 'framing migration as a threat leads to policies that do little to control migration but that limit the benefits of migration to migrants and their original and destination communities' (Commission on Climate Change and Development, 2009 in Hartmann, 2010: 241). Hartmann (2014: 769) goes further and states that the 'causal chain between poverty, overpopulation, environmental degradation, migration, and ultimately political unrest' serves a 'Malthusian Anticipatory Regime for Africa'. This helps the enforcement of defense strategies of western countries, as well as the new land enclosures in sub-Saharan Africa, by the depiction of Africans as a threat (Hartmann, 2014). These narratives about climate refugees imply that 'we', the western world, depict ourselves as victims. 'The silenced 'Other', with no agency and driven by desperation, easily becomes the unpredictable, wild 'other' that threatens ''us''.' (Manzo, 2010 in Bettini, 2013: 70). This colonial thinking leads to the depiction of climate refugees as a 'destitute victim' instead of a political subject.' (Bettini, 2013: 70). Subsequently, the narratives around climate refugees have the potential for policies that affect migrants and not climate action.

In addition, the securitization of climate change supports the marketization and militarization of nature (Dunlap / Fairhead, 2014). Climate change creates and transforms access to new markets for carbon, biodiversity, biofuels and climate-secure food. Climate security thus entails more than a concern for 'bad weather' but generates new climate commodities that produce 'climate conflicts'. The emerging conflict occurs as political elites 'grab' these environmental markets – animated by the securitization of climate threats. In short, 'Environmental conflicts intensify with the further abstraction of nature as a service provider and the commodification of these services.' (Dunlap / Fairhead, 2014: 947) That the neo-liberalization of the nature fuels conflicts is for instance already well-documented

# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action

Written by Laura Ningelgen

and described in cases like Indonesia and Kenya during the PES programme UN-REDD+[8] by the United Nations (Dunlap / Fairhead, 2014: 947).

Even if the securitization and the alarmism of climate change leads to a rising awareness in the international politics, a causal relationship between conflict and warming, as is claimed in several studies, combined with the worst-case scenarios, raises yet another question: how shall the reduction of greenhouse gas be central to political decisions, if studies do not properly demonstrate that the negative effects of climate change can be avoided through an appropriate installation of measures (Brzoska, 2009)? The impacts of climate change are convincing and fearsome without the inadequate depiction of climate wars and climate refugees. These dystopian narratives and the increase of armed forces fail to lead to a higher degree of cooperation between states and fail to limit the emissions of greenhouse gases. The securitization runs into the danger of 'doing very little – and may even obstruct or distract attention from – the huge challenge of […] stemming global anthropogenic climate change' (Selby / Hoffmann, 2014: 754), while the dramatizing tone could lead to a militarization (Brzoska 2009: 138), the neo-liberalization of the nature (Dunlap / Fairhead, 2014) and the enforcement of western interests (Hartmann, 2014). As shown above, securitization further leads to a stereotypical depiction of 'othered' Africans and to isolation policies of western countries. North African states, like Morocco, already cooperate with European states to bring the 'phenomenon [of climate refugees] under control' (Hartmann, 2014: 776). This essays argues for a 're-politicisation of academic discourse on climate security' (Selby / Hoffmann, 2014: 752) and demonstrates that framing climate change as a threat has little potential to combat the effects of climate change correctly while supporting climate action.

## Conclusion

The discourse of climate change and its harmful impacts is omnipresent in society. This essay first explained how the security notion shifted after the Cold War while explaining the theoretical framework behind securitization with the CS and the Paris School. A brief overview of the important literature on the topic is the evidence revealed that the topic is controversial and well discussed by international scholars, with varying levels of agreement. The followed section provided information on what climate action is and which measures would lead to a containment of the emission of greenhouse gases to prove the core part of this essay, which pursued the reconstruction of the crisis narratives that emerge through climate change's securitization. It showed several findings: First, it highlighted that the narratives are futuristic, dystopian and pessimistic, not fact-driven, while these narratives typically connect climate change to conflict and migration. Second, it demonstrated – with examples of Syria and Darfur – that the common assumption of climate change as a driver for violence and conflict is misguided. Third, it critically examined the consequences of the narratives while evaluating if the narratives help or hinder the support of climate action. As it is proven above, these constructed scenarios do not help tackle climate change appropriately. Furthermore, these scenarios advance western interests – it is showed that military forces will increase through existing climate change rhetoric. Furthermore, climate refugees posed as national security threats for western countries, support isolation policies.

In general, I would argue for the securitization of climate change only if it would raise enough political awareness for climate action to be properly addressed – not if it were to produce these conflict narratives. Instead, I do not see any smart moves or more climate action as an outcome of these constructed speculative narratives. The national security of western countries becomes the focus of national states when securitizing climate change and the political economy sees monetary incentives in framing climate change as a threat. Due to scholars who identify drawbacks of climate change securitization, the climate-conflict orthodoxy and its dangers are being questioned in newspaper articles[9] and publications of organizations, like the IPCC. One can only hope, that international policy-makers also become aware of the drawbacks of the securitization of climate change and that such critique leads to a reconsideration of the challenging task of climate action. In the words of Selby and Hartmann (2015): '[The international community] should drop the climate war rhetoric. Instead, the focus should be on how climate policy can be a road to the international cooperation required for a rapid transition from fossil fuels to alternative energy systems.' Even though the current climate-conflict logic becomes questioned more and more, the conflict rhetoric is still worryingly present in contemporary political discourse. For the future, I hope for a shift towards an expedient debate with climate action at its core.

## Bibliography

# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action
Written by Laura Ningelgen

Adger, W.N. et al. (2014). 'Human Security', in: Field, C.B. et al. (eds.)*Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.* Cambridge: University Press, 755-791.

Balzacq T. (2011). 'Enquiries into methods: a new framework for securitization analysis', in Balzacq T. (ed.) *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve.* London and New York: Routledge, 31-54.

Bettini, G. (2013). 'Climate Barbarians at the Gate? A critique of apocalyptic narratives on 'climate refugees'', *Geoforum*, 45, 63-72.

Biello, D. (2007). '10 Solutions for Climate Change', *Scientific American*, 26 November [online]. Available at: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/10-solutions-for- climate-change/ (Accessed: 02.01.2018)

Borger, J. (2007a). 'Climate change could lead to global conflict, says Beckett', *The Guardian,* 11 May [online]. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com /world/2007/may/11/politics.greenpolitics (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

Borger, J. (2007b). 'Darfur conflict heralds era of wars triggered by climate change, UN report warns', *The Guardian*, 23 June [online]. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2007/jun/23/sudan.climatechange (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

Brauch, H. G. and Scheffran, J. (2012). 'Introduction: Climate Change, Human Security, and Violent Conflict in the Anthropocene', in Scheffran, J. et al. (eds.) *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict*. Springer: Berlin, 3-40.

Brzoska, M. (2009). 'The securitization of climate change and the power of conceptions of security',*Security and Peace*, 27, 137-145.

Brzoska, M. (2015). Climate change and military planning,*International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management*, 7 (2), 172-190.

Buzan, B. and Hansen, L. (2009). *The Evolution of International Security Studies*. Cambridge: University Press.

Buzan, B. et al. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Cabinet Office (2015). *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015 – A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, London [online]. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/555607/2015_Strategic_Defence_and_Security_Review.pdf (Accessed: 02.01.2018)

Corry, O. (2012). 'Securitisation and 'Riskification': Second-Order Security and the Politics of Climate Change', *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, 40 (2), 235–258.

CNA Corporation (2007). *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change*, Alexandria: CNA Corporation [online]. Available at: https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/national%20security%20and%20the%20threat%20of%20climate%20change.pdf (Accessed: 02.01.2018)

CNA Corporation (2014). *National Security and the Accelerating Risks of Climate Change*, Alexandria: CNA Corporation [online]. Available at: https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/MAB-201406508.pdf (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

Dannreuther, R. (2013). *International Security: the contemporary agenda*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Dunlap A. and Fairhead, J. (2014). 'The Militarisation and Marketisation of Nature: An Alternative Lens to 'Climate-Conflict'', *Geopolitics*, 19 (4), 937-961,

# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action
Written by Laura Ningelgen

European Commission (2008). *Climate Change and International Security – Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council*, Brussels [online]. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/99387.pdf

European Commission (2017). *Climate Change Consequences*, Brussels [online]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/change/consequences_en (Accessed: 04.01.2018)

Floyd, R. (2007). 'Towards a Consequentialist Evaluation of Security: Bringing Together the Copenhagen and the Welsh Schools of Security Studies', *Review of International Studies*, 33 (2), 327-350.

Gore, A. A. (2007). *Al Gore – Nobel Lecture*, Oslo: Nobel Prize [online]. Available at: https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2007/gore-lecture_en.html (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

Guterres, A. (2011). *Statement by Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Intergovernmental Meeting at Ministerial Level to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness* [online]. Available at: http://www.unhcr.org/afr/admin/hcspeeches/4ecd0cde9/statement-mr-antonio-guterres-united-nations-high-commissioner-refugees.html (Accessed: 02.01.2018)

Hartmann, B. (2010). 'Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict: Rhetoric, Reality and the Politics of Policy Discourse', *Journal of International Development*, 22 (2), 233-46.

Hartmann, B. (2014). 'Converging on Disaster: Climate Security and the Malthusian Anticipatory Regime for Africa, *Geopolitics*, 19 (4), 757-783.

Hartmann, B. and Selby, J. (2015). 'Time to Drop the Climate War Talk', *Common Dreams,* 1 December [online]. Available at: https://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/12/01/time-drop-climate-war-talk (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

Homer-Dixon, T. (1991). 'On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict', *International Security,* 16 (2), 76-116.

Homer-Dixon, T. (2007). 'Terror in the Weather Forecast', *New York Times,* 24 April [online]. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/24/opinion/24homer-dixon.html (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

International Alert (2016). *Understanding Compound Risks, shaping Effective Responses – The Case of Syria – Topic Brief* [online]. Available at: www.international-alert.org/publications/understanding-compound-risks-shaping-effective-responses-the-case-of-syria (Accessed: 02 01 2018)

International Alert (2015a). *A new climate for peace – Taking action on climate and fragility risks* [online]. Available at: http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/NewClimateForPeace_FullReport_small_0.pdf (Accessed: 02 01 2018)

International Alert (2015b). *Climate change, violence and young people – Report for UNICEF UK* [online]. Available at: http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Climate_ViolenceYoungPeopleUnicef_EN_2015.pdf (Accessed: 02.01.2018)

International Monetary Fund (2017). *Climate, Environment, and the IMF* [online]. Available at: http://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Climate-Environment-and-the-IMF (Accessed: 02.01.2018)

IPCC (2014). *Climate Change 2014 – Mitigation of Climate Change – Summary for Policymakers and Technical Summary.* Cambridge: University Press.

Kaplan, R. D. (1994). 'The Coming Anarchy', *The Atlantic* [online]. Available at:

https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/02/the-coming-anarchy/304670/ (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

Mazo, J. (2010). *Climate Conflict: How Global Warming Threatens Security and What to Do About it* . London: Routledge.

McDonald, M. (2008). 'Securitization and the Construction of Security', *European Journal of International Relations*, 14 (4), 563-587.

Rasmussen, A. F. (2009). *Speech – by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on emerging security risks, Lloyd's of London*, London: NATO [online]. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/opinions_57785.htm (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

Rodrigues de Brito, R. (2012). 'The securitisation of climate change in the European Union', in OECD (ed.)*Global Security Risks and West Africa: Development Challenges*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 119-134.

Salehyan, I. (2008). 'From Climate Change to Conflict? No Consensus Yet', *Journal of Peace Research,* 45 (3), 315-326.

Selby, J. (2014). 'Positivist Climate Conflict Research: A Critique', *Geopolitics,* 19 (4), 829-856.

Selby, J. and Hoffmann, C. (2014). 'Rethinking Climate Change, Conflict and Security', *Geopolitics*, 19 (4), 747-756.

Selby, J. and Hulme, M. (2015). 'Is climate change really to blame for Syria's civil war?', *The Guardian*, 29 November [online]. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/29/climate-change-syria-civil-war-prince-charles (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

Selby J. et al. (2017). 'Climate change and the Syrian civil war revisited', *Political Geography*, 61 (C), 232-244.

Trombetta, M. J. (2008). 'Environmental security and climate change: analysing the discourse',*Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 21(4), 585-602.

Trombetta, M. J. (2011). 'Rethinking the Securitization of Environment: Old Beliefs, New  Insights' in Balzacq, T. (ed.) *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*. Abingdon: Routledge, 135-149.

U.S. Department of Defence (2014). *2014 Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap*, Washington D.C. [online]. Available at: http://ppec.asme.org/wp-content/uploads/ 2014/10/CCARprint.pdf (Accessed: 02.01.2018)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2016). *Frequently asked questions on climate change and disaster displacement* [online]. Available at: http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/11/581f52dc4/frequently-asked-questions-climate-change-disaster-displacement.html

United States Africa Command (2017). *About the Command* [online]. Available at: http://www.africom.mil/about-the-command (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

van Munster, R. (2007). 'Security on a Shoestring: A Hitchhiker's Guide to Critical Schools of Security in Europe', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 42(2), 235-243.

Wallace-Wells, D. (2017). 'The Uninhabitable Earth', *New York Magazine,* 9 July [online]. Available at: http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans.html (Accessed: 09.01.2018)

Walt, S. M. (1991). 'The Renaissance of Security Studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, 35, 211-239.

Wæver, O. (1995). 'Securitization and Desecuritization', in Lipschutz, R. D. (ed.) *On Security*. Columbia: University

# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action
Written by Laura Ningelgen

Press, 46-87.

Welch, C. (2015). 'Climate Change Helped Spark Syrian War, Study Says', *National Geographic*, 02 March [online]. Available at: https://news.nationalgeographic.com/ news/2015/03/150302-syria-war-climate-change-drought/ (Accessed: 03.01.2018)

Werrel, C. and Femia F. (2015). 'UN Security Council Meeting on Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier for Global Security', *The Center for Climate Change and Security*, [online]. Available at: https://climateandsecurity.org/2015/07/ 08/un-security-council-meeting-on-climate-change-as-a-threat-multiplier-for-global-security/ (Accessed: 02.01.2018)

Wodon Q. et al. (2014). *Climate Change and Migration. Evidence from the Middle East and North Africa*, A World Bank Study. Washington D.C.: World Bank Group [online]. Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/7 48271468278938347/pdf/893710PUB0978000Box385270B00PUBLIC0.pdf

**Notes**

[1] To demonstrate the problems with the securitization theory and climate change, a short comparison with the securitization of terrorism after 9/11 is useful. George W. Bush depicted terrorism after 9/11 as an essential threat to the national security of the United States of America. The following invasions in Afghanistan and the establishment of stricter airport security checks can easily be described as the 'extraordinary measures' required by the CS as a necessity for a successful securitization.

[2] for example military interventions

[3] For further reading see the Toronto Group, especially Homer-Dixon (1991), who argues that climate change will have a major impact on the national and international security. Also influential was an article by Kaplan (1994), named *The Coming Anarchy* where he predicts climate change as a supporting factor for conflicts in Africa.

[4] Impacts of climate change are already noticeable: melting glaciers, the general rising of sea levels and extreme weather events like droughts or floods (European Commission 2017).

[5] One of the studies was commissioned by the G7 member states, the other one was commissioned by UNICEF UK – therefore one can assume that they were influential.

[6] As an example, Hartmann (2014: 771) names Northern Kenya, were violence was less during a shortage of goods.

[7] AFRICOM is a U.S. military command for Africa. The official reasons are the disruption and neutralization of ,transnational threats', the protection of ,U.S. facilities and personnel', and peacekeeping and peacebuilding in general (United States Africa Command, 2017).

[8] PES is an acronym for 'payment for ecosystem services'. The REDD+ is a programme by the United Nations to support the reduction of emission from deforestation and forest degradation in the global south. ,Becoming the largest PES programme to date, REDD+ combines aspects of fortress and community conservation, participatory techniques, and most importantly the market, attempting to place higher financial value on forests standing rather than cut down' (Dunlap / Fairhead, 2014: 949).

[9] For instance, the Guardian published an article, written by Hulme and Selby (2015), where it is argued that one cannot blame climate change for the civil-war in Syria. An IPCC Publication (2014: 773) as cited already above, includes studies that argue for caution, when it comes to causal assumption in the case of Darfur. The Commission on Climate Change and Development (2009: 69 in Hartmann, 2010: 241) sees the 'pessimistic literature' about the effects of climate change critically.

# The Depiction of Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier and How It Hinders Action

Written by Laura Ningelgen

*Written by: Laura Ningelgen*
*Written at: University of Sussex*
*Written for: Akanksha Mehta, Jan Selby*
*Date written: February 2018*