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**A climate of insecurity?
A short review of discussions on
security implications of climate change in the
United Nations, the European Union and Germany**

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Johannes Herbeck / Michael Flitner

A climate of insecurity?

A short review of the discussions on security implications of climate change in the United Nations, the European Union and Germany*

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1. Introduction: Climate change as a security problem

Climate change has developed into a key concern of a globalised world, with huge attention in popular and media discourses and with consequences in virtually all fields of science and politics. As a cross-cutting issue, climate change is connecting distant and sometimes highly controversial fields. Hence it is not surprising that climate change is also grouped together with all imaginable regional and global conflicts. And, when applying a rather broad understanding of conflict, it is generally quite plausible that climate change is going to have an effect on intra- and international tensions.

The security implications of climate change are still a relatively new issue in the evolution of the climate change debate. In the run-up to the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon stated that climate change is likely to "(...) become a major driver of war and conflict" (UN NEWS CENTRE 2007: 1). At about the same time, a study was released by a think tank funded by the US Department of Defence (DoD), focussing on the impacts of climate change for the national security of the United States and explicitly dealing with strategic and operative challenges for the US military (CNA 2007). In the following, a number of similar studies have been released by consulting agencies, para-statal and non-governmental organisations, of which the study of the German Advisory Council on Global Change entitled "Climate Change as a Security Risk" attracted special interest in the German-speaking world (WBGU 2008). Taking a more essayistic approach, a book entitled "Klimakriege" (Climate wars) by cultural psychologist Harald Welzer was published little later (Welzer 2008), further spreading the debate into a wider public. In the US, just recently the issue was picked up by journalist Gwynne Dyer and published under the same title (Dyer 2010). By now, the issue is well established, if still heavily debated, both within public and even more within scientific discourses on the social impacts of climate change.

With regard to those rather loose, often unspecified connections recently established in different types of publications, it seems quite apt to talk about a 'securitization' of climate change, if this term is understood as describing nothing more than a growing association of a topic with security issues. In general, this trend of connecting conflicts to changing environmental conditions builds upon an older debate regarding the impacts of natural resource scarcity on conflicts (for many others *see* Homer-Dixon, 1999). Dalby (1992), Flitner & Soyez (2006), Oßenbrügge (2007) and Korf & Engeler (2007) have pointed out that linking natural degradation processes to security issues usually results in a problematical decrease of analytical perspectives and reduced options for problem solving.

The term 'securitization' has been specified in political sciences, where it is mainly associated with the Copenhagen School around Ole Wæver and Henry Buzan. Their securitization approach takes a constructivist perspective in analyzing how a political issue which is traditionally *not* part of security debates is introduced into the realm of security. In their view, security is a "particular type of politics" (Buzan et al. 1998: vii) that can be applied to virtually any topic. Security studies do then not stop at analyzing military and political sectors that classically deal with security issues, but also focus on other political spheres. By extending the view of security studies to, for example, the

environmental or economic sector, they are able to show similar processes and mechanisms of securitization in different political environments.

The main argument of the Copenhagen School is that security threats are constructed by speech acts rather than objective realities, and that in this perspective, almost any issue can be transformed into a security issue. The interesting question is then, of course, how this transformation works. Buzan et al. describe the mechanism as follows:

“(…) when a securitizing actor uses a rhetoric of existential threat and thereby takes an issue out of what under those conditions is ‘normal politics,’ we have a case of securitization. Thus, the exact *definition* and *criteria* of securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects.” (ibid.: 25)

It is central to the argument that an issue is transferred into security politics and withdrawn from ‘normal’ political deliberation exclusively through rhetoric means of an actor targeting on the re-evaluation of a potential threat. Consequently, the focus of securitization analyses is on speech acts of political actors and their success with regard to the enforcement of extraordinary measures:

“The way to study securitization is to study discourse and political constellations: where does an argument with this particular rhetorical and semiotic structure achieve sufficient effect to make an audience tolerate violations of rules that would otherwise have to be obeyed? If by means of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat the securitizing actor has managed to break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by, we are witnessing a case of securitization.” (ibid.: 25)

The Copenhagen scholars clearly distinguish between the mere attempt to reframe an issue as security-related and the impact of such attempts on decision-making processes: only when a securitizing move culminates in an avoidance or circumvention of normal political procedures and rules, the Copenhagen School talks about a successful securitization:

“A discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not itself create securitization – this is a *securitizing move*, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such. (...) Securitization is not fulfilled only by breaking rules (which can take many forms) nor solely by existential threats (which can lead to nothing) but by cases of existential threats that legitimize the breaking of rules.” (ibid.: 25)

In their speech-act centered approach to security, the followers of the Copenhagen School distinguish between three units of securitization. First, the “referent object” describes the social entity that is declared as threatened by the potential peril. Second, “functional actors” are actors that do not perform the securitizing move, but in any way influence the sector that is subject of a securitization. The third unit is the “securitizing actor” which is of special interest for this report. Identifying a securitizing actor is a critical step in securitization theory and refers mainly to questions of legitimacy and representation:

“A securitizing actor is someone, or a group, who performs the security speech act. Common players in this role are political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists, and pressure groups. (...) Ultimately, individuals can always be said to be the actors, but if they are locked into strong roles it is usually more relevant to see as the

‘speaker’ the collectivities for which individuals are designated authoritative representatives (...)” (ibid.: 40f.)

In the following sections, we will particularly focus on the suggestions, ideas, comments, and acts of political actors who are able to sanctify security-political acts in different political arenas.

Based on documents and political processes on the part of the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and German political actors, a potential “securitization” of climate change will be analysed and debated (2). The results of our analysis raises major doubts, that the respective actors are performing a securitizing move with regard to climate change in the sense of the Copenhagen School, and even more so, that we are witnessing a successful securitization in that sense.

At the same time, our analysis shows a clear differentiation of the security concept: traditional military/national security concepts are being supplemented and even more and more replaced by the broader concept of ‘human security’, which brings its own problematic implications (3). These results are finally summarised and some future research perspectives are highlighted (4).

2. Climate change as security issue in different political arenas

2.1. Climate change and security in the United Nations

On 17 April 2007 a meeting of the United Nations Security Council was called by Great Britain to discuss the potential impacts of climate change on peace and security. The session had been preceded by a background report of the British representative in the UN Security Council, identifying climate change as potential multiplier of existing conflicts (UN Security Council 2007). During the meeting, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon expressed his concerns regarding climate change and its potential for conflicts:

“The Secretary-General outlined several ‘alarming, though not alarmist’ scenarios, including limited or threatened access to energy increasing the risk of conflict, a scarcity of food and water transforming peaceful competition into violence, and floods and droughts sparking massive human migrations, polarizing societies and weakening the ability of countries to resolve conflicts peacefully.” (United Nations 2009)

Even though doubts were raised that the UN Security Council was the adequate board to discuss climate change, the meeting was followed by a series of meetings, public statements and resolutions. With Resolution 63/281, all Member States were asked to comment on the relation between climate change and security matters (UN General Assembly 2009a). The resulting statements show that the positions towards the issue diverge significantly. Whereas for example the reaction of the United States emphasises that “global climate change will have wide-ranging implications for many countries’ national security interests as impacts become more pronounced” (US Ambassador to the UN 2009), some governments show a fundamental scepticism towards the security aspects of climate change. For example, the Chinese UN ambassador replied:

“There are fundamental differences between climate change and traditional security factors. (...) International cooperation in climate change should not place too much empha-

sis on the implications of climate change for international security. Otherwise, it will do no good to the negotiation process for climate change, or tackling the problem at its root causes.” (Chinese Ambassador to the UN 2009)

Summing up the different inputs of the member states and the materials previously released by the different stakeholders, the Secretary General compiled a second report on the nexus (UN General Assembly 2009b). In line with the sceptic position of some governments, this report is also characterized by a rather careful approach to the issue. To be sure, climate change is identified as potential threat to national and international security in line with the earlier inputs by the British government. But it is mainly regarded as threat multiplier and not as a major source of conflict itself. The report identifies five channels through which the destabilizing effects of climate change come to play, namely the direct negative effects on human well-being, on overall economic development, secondary effects of uncoordinated adaptation strategies, threats to national sovereignty or territoriality, and finally international conflicts regarding natural resources (ibid.: 1). Yet the report does not establish any direct and causal relationship between climate change and violent conflicts. In contrast, it states that the interrelation has to be put into perspective, since other factors (such as structural poverty, uncontrolled urbanisation and unemployment) have to be regarded as crucial pre-condition for the eruption of violent conflicts.

The report proceeds giving a quite general description of the social impacts of climate change; it is thereby primarily concerned with the predicted consequences for human well-being, whereas conflicts in general and intergovernmental conflicts in particular are hardly mentioned. Only later the report takes note of expected changes in territorial and intergovernmental conflicts, especially in the chapters dealing with environmental migration, resource conflicts and imminent territorial loss. Again it is pointed out, that the information provided should not be taken as an indication for a causal relationship between ecological changes and conflicts:

“The empirical evidence on the relationship between climate change and conflict remains sparse and largely anecdotal. (...) even with improved models and data, it remains very difficult to predict conflict occurrences and events.” (ibid.: 17)

The report of the Secretary General finally concludes that the UN Security Council is not the key forum for dealing with climate change and its negative effects: in the recommended proceedings, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is identified as central body for climate change negotiations. The activities suggested in the final chapters of the report are multi-faceted and do not include measures of ‘classical’ security policy. Instead, it is suggested that the international community should concentrate on the two main pillars of climate change policies, mitigation and adaptation, facilitated mainly through (financial) efforts of the developed countries. Besides that, it is mainly the concept of sustainable development that is considered to be suitable for reducing vulnerability towards climate change and therewith preventing climate-change induced conflicts. The international community should therefore

“(...) redouble its efforts to ensure the sustainable and equitable development of all countries, notably through developed countries meeting their international commitments on development assistance.” (ibid.: 28)

The course of the discussions in the UN Security Council show that there was no clear shift towards reframing climate change as a security issue. The initiative of the British government was toned down to a large extent and was mainly discussed as a development issue. This is not only to be traced back to a scientifically motivated scepticism regarding the conceptualization of a climate change/security nexus. More importantly, critical voices were increasingly concerned that a major role of the UN Security Council would put at risk the achievements of the UNFCCC processes. Scott (2008) has shown that it were especially the less developed countries that prevented the UN Security Council to deal with the subject more intensively:

“Labelling climate change a threat to international peace and security opens up the possibility of the UNSC [United Nations Security Council, author’s note] taking a lead role in addressing the causes and consequences of climate change, and drawing on its (...) powers to require states to take action on the scale needed to really make a difference. (...) Developing countries have equated the move to securitize climate change as a move away from the principle of CDR [common but differentiated responsibilities, author’s note] and an attempt on the part of the rich to impose policies on developing countries while abdicating responsibility for the climate change crisis.” (Scott 2008: 616).

Nevertheless, the fact alone that the UN Security Council as the key committee regarding global security issues did deal with the subject had a major impact on the perception of security matters in the political debate on climate change at large. As it has been reflected in news coverage on the different sessions and in scientific discussions alike, the decision to take up the issue has been understood as a signal of a growing relevance of climate change for matters of (inter-)national security. The recognition of the debate through the highest international body of security politics has “(...) elevated climate change to a new level” (Sindico 2007: 33).

2.2. Climate change and security in the European Union

The EU debate on security implications of climate change was mainly based on a report by the European Commission that had been initiated under the German EU Council Presidency in 2007 and published in March 2008 under the title “Climate Change and International Security”. Therein, the European Commission and the EU High Representative, Javier Solana describe expected climate-change-induced security threats, both in a global and a more specific EU perspective (High Representative and European Commission 2008).

According to the report, there are a number of fundamental configurations in which climate change could be a critical factor escalating existing or even provoking new conflicts: those are conflicts over resources, economic damage and risk to coastal cities and critical infrastructure, loss of territory and border disputes, environmentally-induced migration, situations of fragility and radicalization, as well as tension over energy supply (ibid.: 3ff.). In addition, the international climate policy itself is believed to carry the inherent danger of fuelling already existing conflicts between the countries mainly responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and the countries that will be affected most by climate change. This could result both in North-South conflicts as well as South-South

conflicts (as e.g. in the case of China and India), and consequently lead to further destabilisation of the international system.

The report looks at threats with a classical, realistic conceptualization of security, focusing mainly on threats to national security in a strict sense. In doing so, the report's perspective is anyhow not limited to member states of the EU, but also identifies security threats in other regions of the world. Potential conflicts, which are expected for example in Africa and Southeast Asia, but also in the Middle East and Central Asia, are considered to have direct and indirect impacts on the EU. As a consequence, the mitigation and adaptation efforts of international climate policy are regarded as part of a preventive European security policy (ibid.: 1). Thereby, the whole political reaction to global climate change is declared a security measure. The report does not stop at this definitional question. It is clearly stated that the prospects of the European Union with regard to climate change-related security threats are not limited to the generally accepted measures of international climate policy. Rather, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) are assigned to play a specific and accompanying role when addressing the expected "security risks":

"The report considers how the full range of EU instruments, including Community and CFSP/ESDP action, can be used alongside mitigation and adaptation policies to address security risks." (ibid.: 2)

In this context, special consideration is given to the potential of monitoring and early warning systems to be able to observe potentially threatening developments in non-EU regions:

"Monitoring and early warning needs to include in particular situations of state fragility and political radicalisation, tensions over resources and energy supplies, environmental and socio-economic stresses, threats to critical infrastructures and economic assets, border disputes, impact on human rights and potential migratory movements." (ibid.: 9)

Furthermore, it is stated that the EU should enhance capabilities in civil protection, as well as civil and military instruments of crisis management and disaster response.

In the subsequent report of the EU High Representative, this position is largely confirmed (High Representative 2008). Again, the support of adaptation efforts in countries particularly affected by climate change and enhanced dialogue structures are pointed out. However, it is maintained that

"Climate change represents a fundamental challenge, and should be in the mainstream of EU foreign and security policies and institutions" (ibid.: 1).

The increased use of geographic information systems and satellite data is again a top priority among the suggested measures by which the Union should prepare itself to arising threats. In Africa, for example, these systems aim at the use of data obtained from climate and migration observation networks (ibid.: 2). The close connections between those surveillance systems and security interests of the EU is underlined by the aims of the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) project, an EU-led initiative for earth observation. Besides providing land, marine and atmosphere data, GMES should increasingly deliver climate change information and at the same time security-related data:

“The GMES services will allow policy-makers in particular to:

- prepare national, European and international legislation on environmental matters, including climate change;
- monitor implementation of this legislation;
- have access to comprehensive and accurate information concerning security matters (e.g. for border surveillance);” (Commission of the European Communities 2009: 3)

The security interests of the EU are here intermingled with environmental concerns and introduced by the back-door of general programs and initiatives related to environment and technology.

Once more, the geographical focus of the High Representative’s report is remarkable: whereas the first report has taken a relatively broad perspective, the regions explicitly discussed in the second paper are Africa, the Middle East and the Arctic. This can partially be explained with the relative proximity to EU sovereign territories, but it seems at least remarkable in view of energy security and resources relevant for the Union.

To sum up, the different position papers by the EU Commission and the High Representative show some signs of planning long-term exterritorial measures with military involvement that are being legitimised by taking recourse to the climate change/security nexus. However, the overall development of the discussion in the EU can hardly be seen as a broad securitization of climate change. Most importantly, there are no signs so far for an avoidance of the common decision making mechanisms and established rules of the EU institutions by declaring a state of emergency, nor for other exceptional measures which would be necessary to establish a successful securitization as described by the Copenhagen School.

2.3. Climate change and security in Germany

The discussions in Germany on security implications of climate change have been primarily influenced by the special report of the German government’s Advisory Council for Global Change (WBGU 2008). The basic statement of the report is that climate change is going to have implications which could soon overburden the adaptive capacity of societies in the most seriously affected countries and therewith contribute to “(...) destabilization and violence, jeopardizing national and international security to a new degree” (ibid.: 1). Climate change is not only seen as exacerbating factor in existing conflicts, but as possible root cause for new conflicts, both on a national level and for the international system as a whole:

“Climate change could well trigger national and international distributional conflicts and intensify problems already hard to manage such as state failure, the erosion of social order, and rising violence. In the worst affected regions, this could lead to the proliferation of destabilization processes with diffuse conflict structures. These dynamics threaten to overstretch the established global governance system, thus jeopardizing international stability and security.” (ibid.)

The study focuses on a series of conflict constellations (such as fresh water scarcity or environmental migration, especially induced by sea level rise) which could ignite the described processes. After giving an overview over expected hot-spots of climate-change induced conflicts, the study suggests an abundance of possible strategies how to

counteract the described developments. The differences between the two parts of the report are huge: whereas the analytical part on possible conflict constellations and their geographic distribution is characterized by a rather classical notion of conflict, the latter part does hardly suggest measures that would have to be taken by security policy. There is only one short section that clearly calls for the involvement of security actors in dealing with the arising threats:

“The specific conflict constellations (...) will be almost impossible to manage without support from police and military capacities, and therefore pose a challenge to classic security policy. In this context, a well-functioning cooperation between development and security policy will be crucial (...)” (ibid.: 6)

In contrast, the overwhelming majority of recommended measures emphasize the need for a strengthening of cooperative elements in the international system, with a focus on greenhouse gas mitigation, climate change adaptation with supportive measures for countries mainly affected and, more generally, a reform and stabilisation of international governance systems.

The German parliament (Bundestag) was provided with the WBGU report together with an accompanying commentary of the German government (Bundesregierung). The commentary shows that the German executive takes a rather careful position regarding the link between climate change and security. It is pointed out that climate change should neither be declared as the greatest threat to humanity, nor should different threat scenarios, e.g. terrorism or poverty, be seen as competing (Deutscher Bundestag 2008: IV). This contrasts significantly with one of the main requirements for securitization as formulated by the Copenhagen scholars:

“In the case of security, textual analysis (...) suggests that something is designated as an international security issue because it can be argued that this issue is more important than other issues and should take absolute priority.” (Buzan et al. 1998: 24)

Although arguing on the national level, the government’s position is interesting enough. It clearly refuses a prioritisation of climate change and emphasises that other issues do not play a subordinate role. The criticism of the government is anyhow not limited to this positioning of climate change in security discourses. Shortcomings are also identified in the analytical content of the report and the empirical methods are partly considered to be unclear and speculative.

The German government raises general doubts that it will be possible to scientifically confirm the actual impact of climate change on existing or emerging conflicts as it has been claimed with regard to the Darfur conflict (Deutscher Bundestag 2008: V). Nevertheless, the government states that climate change could be an issue of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) in the context of disaster management and preventive security measures and is therefore integrated in current strategic analyses for the mid- to long-term orientation of the armed forces. Furthermore climate change is declared an issue also for early warning systems of civil and military intelligence services (ibid.: VII). All in all, the remarks however demonstrate a general scepticism towards the conjunction of climate change with security matters. This becomes even clearer when looking at the policy recommendations the government itself draws from the WBGU expertise. In the second half of the commentary for the Bundestag, the government describes a set of

possible measures to counteract the impacts of climate change as they become increasingly felt. The overwhelming majority of those measures is clearly not part of the security sector. In only one of them, a traditional security perspective is taken when the government calls for an extension of global monitoring and early warning systems with possible adjustments in secret service activities (ibid.: IX). The other possible instruments involve a number of political fields, with the main stress being put on development policies. The government discusses enhanced dialogue processes, both within the EU and the UN; a strengthening of civil conflict prevention; adjustments in the European and the German development aid towards a growing significance of water management and rural development projects; the support of UN reforms with regard to development, humanitarian aid and environment; the peace-building effect of an increasing renewable energy production etc. (ibid.: VII ff.) To sum up, climate change is primarily considered to be a matter of development and foreign policy.

3. Human Security: an alternative to the military logic?

In light of our short review of the developments and discussions led at different political levels, a securitization of climate change in the narrower sense of the Copenhagen School seems to be questionable. The processes described in this theoretical framework match most closely with the developments in the EU where, at least to some extent, decidedly military perspectives have been included in all position papers of the Commission and the High Representative. These perspectives have thus been sanctioned by the highest executive authorities of the Union.

Yet in our view the securitization approach can also be helpful in explaining why the other political settings analyzed in this study have shown relatively *little* sign of an increased interpretation of climate change as a security-political issue by decision makers, although popular and media discourses on the issue have been increasingly widespread. The rejection of a securitizing speech act and, in our case, even the partial de-securitization by the executive authorities in Germany and the UN can be explained by the extensive and unclear implications that a re-framing of climate change in that sense would have brought about. Governments and international institutions may hesitate to declare a highly complex, multi-sited and cross-cutting issue like climate change a security threat precisely because they know about the manifold possible implications and repercussions of such a “securitizing move”.

Otherwise our results give reason to doubt an intrinsic, “neo-Schmittian” logic of security discourses, which would imply that fields once declared as security issue by authorized speech acts could hardly be re-converted into arenas of ‘normal’ political deliberation. Though strong securitizing speech acts by executive institutions do definitely exist in the example of the EU, the security-related activities with regard to climate change can well be interpreted as an “incremental normalisation”, just as NEAL (2009) has suggested in his analysis of origins and activities of the European border agency FRONTEX. He concludes:

“While securitization theory has done much to problematize the construction of security threats, practices of government have become too complex, too plural and too diverse to

maintain the plausibility of a sovereign centred, nominalist understanding of security. (...) This study has shown that although the spectacle of discursive securitization can be identified fairly easily in the institutions of the EU, any causal relationship with policy changes or outcomes is much harder to discern. (...)

Given that this complexity far exceeds that of the political theatre of securitization, we should be less concerned with a spectacular dialectic of norm/exception and more concerned with an ongoing process of incremental normalization that is not quite spectacular or controversial enough to draw attention to itself.” (Neal 2009: 351ff.)

He maintains that the peculiar difference between a strong security language by EU representatives and a far more subtle change in European policies can be put down to three circumstances that prevent a direct impact on security practices: the complexities of organizational behaviour, a lacking capacity to effectively decide upon measures of sovereign exceptionalism, and a growing pluralism of security and risk (ibid.). In this environment, it is difficult to draw a clear line between a state of exception and normal politics:

“These processes and practices are driven not simply by a logic of crisis, emergency and exception, but through the formation of linkages between diverse policy areas, different technologies and security professionals of different specializations. It could be considered that these linkages constitute a ‘security continuum’, rather than a discrete sphere of security that can be distinguished from ‘normal’ politics.” (ibid.)

In our view, the discussions on security implications of climate change in the EU follow a similar logic: securitizing moves by the European Commission can be identified, but clear policy outcomes are lacking. Rather, the climate change discussion contributes to the establishment of a preventive security policy in which environmental and security concerns are increasingly discussed together and implemented in joint programs. Nevertheless, the European policies do thereby not rely on the proclamation of a state of exception and do not involve irregular decision-making processes. It could be shown that the global (as well as the European and the German) debates on security implications of climate change are led with a broader approach to security, increasingly detaching it from its classical binding to foreign policy and its primarily military logic. Suddenly, thus, new issues come into the focus of security debates: poverty and survival strategies of local communities, health issues and questions of political freedom and participation. The United Nations have summarized those concerns in their Millennium Goals with the calls for *freedom from want* and *freedom from fear* (ANNAN 2000). In this context, military security is complemented or even replaced by the concept of *human security* - a term that has been established by the United Nations Development Program when discussing a possible peace dividend after the end of the Cold War (UNDP 1994). Since then, the term has also spread rapidly in human geography (Bohle & O’Brien 2006; Barnett & Adger 2007; Nordas & Gleditsch 2007).

This transformation of security concerns holds the advantage of shifting the main focus towards the concerns and vulnerabilities of affected individuals or social groups. Simple neo-Malthusian explanations are dismissed and processes and structures of poverty and oppression are brought into the focus. The military logic of safeguarding national interests is hence replaced by development-oriented perspectives, sometimes in a outspokenly critical perspective (Bohle & O’Brien 2006).

Brzoska (2008: 205) has already pointed out, however, that there are only minor differences in the analyses and projections regarding the climate/security nexus in the diverse, newly published reports – regardless of the fact that different concepts of security are applied and widely diverging measures are suggested. Moreover, the discourse on human security does not automatically exclude military options. The report of the UN General Secretary treated above, for example, considers the impacts on human and national security right next to each other (UN General Assembly 2009b: 4), and the WBGU report states that support from the police and military forces is required to address the development and security concerns that may emerge from the “failure of disaster management systems after extreme weather events and increasing environmental migration” (WBGU 2008: 6).

Based on this lack of a clear distinction from classic, arms-based security concepts, Chandler (2008a, b) has sharply criticised the concept of *human security*. Two of his arguments are of particular interest in our context: First, he argues that the concept is based on a strong and analytically indistinct exaggeration of emerging security threats after the Cold War:

“It is clear that political elites and radical advocates of human security approaches both share a normative desire to exaggerate the existence of threats. It is here that human security advocates come into their own (...) with their assertions that, in our globalized world, everything is interconnected and interdependent (...). In the absence of traditional enemies, human security approaches fill the gap with the securitization of every issue from health, to the economy, to the environment.” (Chandler 2008a: 435)

As a result, today’s societal problems, be they drugs and diseases or terrorism and environmental problems, are all declared as highly interdependent security threats, adding up to even bigger risks for humanity. Second, these threats are localised mainly in developing countries, where failed states serve as background for the alleged threats.

“The sharpened focus of the threat stemming from non-Western states can be seen in the human security concerns around the dangers posed by the ‘failed state’ and the need for policy to be framed in the terms of the security-development-‘nexus’ – that is, the focus on the interplay between human rights, poverty-reduction, good governance and state capacity-building. (...) The problematization of the non-Western state, facilitated by the human security framework, is as central to the security discourses shaped by the unilateral ‘realist’ ‘war on terror’ as it is to the multilateral ‘critical’ discourses of poverty-reduction, sustainable development and climate change adaptation.” (ibid.)

Thus, the well-meaning discourse on human security results in a new kind of securitization that involves all possible political fields and opens the road for humanitarian intervention as well as for unilateral, “realistic” measures. As the hegemonic industrial states are not able to pursue all their diverse and sometime contradictory goals equally, Chandler argues, with the human security concepts they now hold a *‘carte blanche’* in hands, providing them with total freedom in their foreign and security policies towards developing countries. The discourse on human security in effect justifies everything and doesn’t require anything:

“The attraction of human security approaches would appear to be that they, on the one hand, reflect this confusion, portraying the external world as a complex and ever more threatening environment, and, on the other hand, legitimize and institutionalize the lack

of policymaking capacity, encouraging the shedding of policy responsibility and viewing the world less open for intervention.” (Chandler 2008a: 436).

The critique offers important insight into the intrinsic political risks of extended security concepts. This is especially valuable in view of the growing tendency to link climate change to security issues: here, the moral geography of a human security shifts the actual security problems into the Global South, allowing the industrialized countries as the main emitters to distract from their historical responsibility for climate change (cf. Trombetta 2008: 593). Local actors and institutions in developing countries are primarily drawn as vulnerable and in need of protection and therewith subordinated to interventions that can be connected to military measures. The paradigm of *human security* is then no longer in opposition to the discourses originally criticised by it; it can rather serve as background for an interest-driven national security policy.

4. Conclusion

With regard to the political actors and statements presented in this paper, a securitization of climate change in the sense of the Copenhagen school can only be observed to a limited extent. All relevant statements by authorised decision makers at the three different levels illustrate that the original initiatives – both from the relevant committees themselves and from external sources – have been weakened during the discussion and transformed into broader security concepts. The concept of human security itself, which in many cases replaced the classic, ‘realistic’ security concept, entails questionable implications. In particular, it lacks the essential analytical sharpness, thus possibly contributing to arbitrary expansions of security notions and initiatives.

	<i>‘Strong’ securitization</i>	<i>‘Humanitarian’ securitization</i>	<i>‘Popular/media’ securitization</i>
<i>Notion of security</i>	Mainly military security, traditionally oriented at nation states or international bodies	‘Human security’, oriented at individual well-being	Referring to varying types of violent conflicts
<i>Underlying concepts</i>	Speech acts, political constructivism	Vulnerabilities of individuals and groups	Determinism, (neo-)Malthusianism
<i>Authors (a.o.)</i>	Buzan et al. (1998) Brauch (2009)	IHDP (1999) Barnett & Adger (2007)	Homer-Dixon (1999) Welzer (2008)

Fig. 1: Types of securitization

In a wider conceptualization, three types of securitization should therefore be distinguished (cf. Fig. 1): first, a ‘strong’ securitization as represented by the Copenhagen School, mainly based on linguistic constructions and their effects in terms of a traditional security policy. Second, a ‘humanitarian’ securitization in terms of development politics, primarily focused on the broadly defined security of individuals and social groups. In this type of securitization, military answers play a secondary role. Third, a media-based, popular, and largely affirmative kind of securitization, with deterministic, often neo-Malthusian scenarios as the basis for a broader discourse on security issues and an influential background for the two former types.

With these distinctions, however, little is said about the concrete results for implementation and action 'on the ground'. The broader understanding of securitization gives the opportunity to involve and search into other actors than political elites, and activities far beyond speech acts. Furthermore, concrete practices of actors in the relevant fields of security politics and policies fields have to be analysed (cf. Bigo 2000; Neal 2009). With the increasing reference being made to the concept of human security, the actors and activities in the humanitarian field are of particular interest.

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