

Climate Change, Social Stress and Violent Conflict
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Abstract

**Security as a weapon:
how cataclysm-discourses frame international climate negotiations**

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This paper argues that while scientific facts about the security implications of human climate change are far from reliable, the perception of climate change as a security threat today already affects international climate politics considerably. Yet, opposing the assumptions of the securitization account, the paper argues that this will not lead to the adoption of exceptional measures in international climate politics. Rather the climate/security narrative serves as an argumentative strategy of different actors in international climate governance to disclaim responsibility, lay the blame on other actors or build coalitions for their own goals.

The discursive hegemony of the climate/security narrative results from its establishment as an empty signifier. The conceptual openness of security – enforced by the emergence of broader security concepts like human security that include economic and social factors – enabled as diverse actors as security officials and developmental NGOs to refer to it at the same time. Yet, the decisive feature of every security story-line – regardless whether drawing on soft or hard concepts of security – is that it includes some form of offering. Every utterance of security is drawing a boundary between an inside or friend (the victims) and an outside or enemy. The exclusion of an outside thereby guarantees coherence along the elements of the inside. This makes playing out the security card a strong argumentative strategy to build coalitions or to accuse other actors.

Drawing on the method of an argumentative discourse analysis the paper firstly identifies different strands of a climate/security narrative in science. Secondly it is asked which actors of international climate politics adopt these story-lines and which policies they promote in the post-Kyoto negotiation process. Thirdly the success of the strategy for policy-outcomes is interpreted against the background of the applied narratives. It will be argued that the result of the post-Kyoto negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009 will heavily depend on which version of the climate/security narrative will succeed to be accepted publically.