## Securitizing Global Warming: A Climate of Complexity.
by *Delf Rothe*
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As this issue of IFSH news special is being written, world leaders are gathering in Paris to negotiate and adopt an international treaty that would save the planet from the dangerous impacts of climate change. Just two weeks before the Paris talks started the heads of the 20 most powerful nation states had confirmed their commitment to fighting dangerous climate change at the G20 meeting in Belek, Turkey. Global warming is back on the international political agenda. The fact that climate change is considered a higher order geopolitical concern at least partially stems from a process that Delf Rothe analyses in a new book published by Routledge: the securitization of climate change. Starting from the observation that since 2007, political and public discourse has increasingly portrayed climate change in terms of international or national security, the book explores the reasons for this discursive shift that took place, notwithstanding the highly uncertain and disputed empirical basis of the climate-security link. In three detailed case-studies the book traces the political implications of the securitization of climate change at the international level of the United Nations, at the regional level of the Euro-Mediterranean, and nationally in the United Kingdom.

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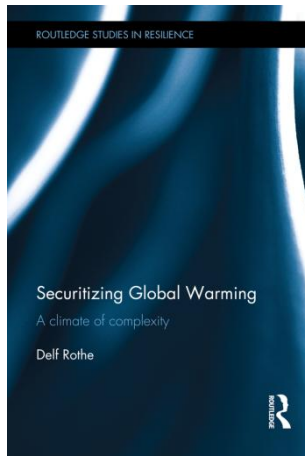
The resilience conundrum and logics of securitization

The starting point of the book is an apparent puzzle: on the one hand, it is generally acknowledged today that from the mid-2000s on we have seen a securitization of climate change. Since then actors as diverse as Western policy-makers, defense and intelligence officials, think tanks or environmental and humanitarian NGOs have painted a dramatic picture of climate change as a potential threat to international and/or national security. In short, climate change is assumed to threaten security by destabilising already fragile countries

or regions, by inducing larger waves of international or internal migration, or by fuelling conflicts over already scarce resources. While discourses thus often followed an alarmist script and presented climate change as an existential threat, the proposed policy measures to cope with the climate-induced threats follow a completely different logic. At their heart lies the *creation of resilience* through often mundane, local, everyday practices like empowering communities, informing households and raising the adaptive capacities of vulnerable regions in developing countries.

The book uses the analytical insights from the climate case to develop a critique of the Copenhagen School's securitization framework and its concentration on a narrow understanding of security that revolves around the notions of existential threats, national survival and exceptional measures. As an alternative the book suggests to differentiate between *different logics of securitization*. These logics provide answers to the question of how and why climate security discourse could spread internationally notwithstanding the weak empirical foundation of the discourse. A first logic takes securitization as a result of the establishment of a climate security *discourse coalition*. Starting with the articulations of a few academics and ministerial employees in the early 2000s the discourse coalition won over more and more actors from different subject positions in the course of the mid-2000s: climate celebrities like Al Gore or Ban Ki-moon, victims of climate change such as Pacific small island states, industrialized countries such as the UK as forerunners of climate security, humanitarian and environmental NGOs as well as security related think-tanks. While these actors often promoted quite different understandings of climate security their articulations converged around a few consensual issues. Such *nodal points* were for example the concept of climate change as a threat multiplier, the issue of climate-induced migration, and particularly emblematic cases of climate-security linkages such as the conflict in Darfur, or the fate of the low-lying island states in the Pacific.

A second logic understands *securitization as an export*: climate change and security rationales were able to become so prominent because they were actively exported by Northern actors in order to induce an awareness of the climate change threat in the South – as the example of the Euro-Mediterranean region shows. For example, initiatives such as the Mediterranean Security Initiative used expert workshops as well as methods such as participatory mapping exercises to raise awareness of those vulnerable to climate change in the southern Mediterranean. Thirdly, *securitization* might be understood as a form of *translation*. The argument here is that climate security discourse was able to become so strong because it managed to integrate and translate a whole range of other political issues and problems, including desertification, water security or the question of resource conflicts. But even issues like international migration, political radicalization and other non-traditional security threats have been translated into climate security language.

A final logic explicitly seeks to address the resilience conundrum outlined above and hence the question of why the securitization of climate change did not translate into extreme or exceptional measures in the sense of the Copenhagen School. As the case of the United Kingdom showed, the adoption of climate change and security rationales by governmental and bureaucratic actors followed mainly a logic of *climate security mainstreaming*. This refers to the fact that, while actors adopt and integrate climate security into their own work, they do so on the basis of their established institutional routines. As a result you get a complex assemblage of (often rather bureaucratic and mundane) practices and policies, which are loosely connected through their common orientation towards climate security, but no overall UK climate security policy.