Geopolitical Influence of Italy on the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road"

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Securitization and Climate Change

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After having been widely conceptualized as a security concern, climate change is being recently questioned about whether it is or even should be a security issue (Von Lucke et al., 2014). This paper argues that the answer to this question depends on how states frame or understand the climate change issue and implement corresponding policies that lead to complex consequences. In the case of climate change, this paper believes concluding the yes or no simplifies the states and institutions' evolving and contested framing process.

Securitization is a transforming process where an issue is dramatized through speech acts, and finally becomes a prioritized security topic to legitimize certain actions (Peters, 2018). In other words, whether an issue is a security issue depends on how states frame and define it. Otherwise, climate change will just be a worthen governing entity in normal politics (Corry, 2012). Then, this paper wants to clarify two dimensions of framing climate security discourses. On the one hand, there are two logics of securitization. First, threat-based securitization considers the issue as the direct cause of harm (Corry, 2012). Its corresponding policies call for defence against the threat through exceptional measures, such as militarization and adaptive measures (Von Lucke et al., 2014). Second, the risk logic believes the issue is a possible condition of harm, meaning the issue is located in the future and cannot be eliminated (Corry, 2012). Compared with threats' logic, the riskification removes the immediacy and friend-enemy thinking in policy design, and requests to enhance resilience and construct precautionary measures in managing the long-term impacts, such as increased cooperation and governance (Corry, 2012). On the other hand, there are two climate security discourses based on different objects. First, environmental conflict focuses on the potential conflicts over resources, which requires interventions to ensure the stability of states (Detraz & Betsill, 2009). This discourse emphasizes a sense of urgency to construct short-term adaptation strategies and prioritizes the state's security over human populations (Detraz & Betsill, 2009). Second, environmental security considers a wide range of threats and vulnerabilities of climate change that negatively affect human populations (Detraz & Betsill, 2009). The focuses of this discourse include both long-term and short-term strategies with various actors for combating climate change (Detraz & Betsill, 2009). These two logics and two discourses construct the framework for states to define climate change as a specific type of security issue that requests different policies and generates various influences.

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In practice, states can integrate or intertwine different dimensions or discourses in constructing a particular frame of climate change. For example, the Chinese government uses human rights concerns to frame climate change as an external and existential threat (Trombetta, 2019). Moreover, the framing process of climate change is a gradual process, which means the interpretations of climate change are evolving and being contested within and across states (Peters, 2018). For example, the European Union (EU) experienced changes from constructing climate change as an environmental issue in the 1980s to risk in the mid-1990s, and finally to a global threat after 2001 (Dupont, 2019). Given this evolving process of securitization, this paper believes that deciding whether states should frame climate change as a security issue depends on a holistic analysis of the limitations and advantages of securitization. For now, almost all discourses come with their own problems but also benefits (Von Lucke et al., 2014).

On the one hand, different securitizations suffer criticisms about their scope of policy options, performative effects, and even underlying logic. First, environmental conflict discourse may generate counterproductive effects in facilitating global response to climate change by narrowing policy options and shifting focus. For example, a discursive shift toward an environmental conflict perspective in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will result in narrow policy options that centralize the solutions in states' military apparatus, and marginalize other human security issues or optional mitigation strategies (Detraz & Betsill, 2009). Also, introducing this new discourse has already created Global South and North tensions that may constrain the UNSC's ability in climate governance (Detraz & Betsill, 2009). For instance, Egypt and India argue that framing an environmental conflict discourse will make the Northern states shift the focus from controlling greenhouse gas toward addressing potential climate-related conflicts through military strategies, especially in the poor Global South states (Detraz & Betsill, 2009). Second, threat-based securitization comes with exceptional measures that may ignore social inequality and implemented issues. For example, constructing climate change as a threat legitimizes India to concentrate decision-making power at the highest political level while ignoring the asymmetrical energy consumption between the poor and rich populations (Sahu, 2019). Besides these disadvantages of exceptional measures, the underlying logic of friend-enemy thinking is problematic in the context of climate change, since there is not an external aggressor that requires defending against others like war, but an internal danger against humans (Corry, 2012). Hence, such a defending logic may not transform into an opportunity to reduce future violence through adaptive measures and benefit people (Corry, 2012). Third, constructing a risk-based securitization on climate change can also raise disagreement in evaluating effects and determining policy measures. On the one hand, it is hard to reach an agreement on to what extent a tolerable level is enough for all states (Von Lucke et al., 2014). The acceptable level for some states may still threaten the survival of small island states (Von Lucke et al., 2014). On the other hand, compared with urgent and observable measures from

threat-based discourse, riskification may lead to a permanent and infinitive status that raises the difficulties of monitoring and implementing measures in the long term (Von Lucke et al., 2014).

Despite these criticisms, it is unfair to deny the benefits of securitization that give reasons for states to securitize climate change. First, because of employing environmental conflict thinking in constructing climate change in the security sector with exceptional actions, the US think tank and politicians can separate this narrative from traditional frames, such as left-wing environmentalist framing, which helps them to overcome the political division in Congress and finally mobilize adaptive measures (Diez et al., 2016, p.61). This case shows that securitization can forge political coalitions among actors with different positions, and transform disagreements into real actions. Second, the EU provides a successful example of collective securitization through recursive interactions in the framing process and adopting measures, which persuades domestic and international audiences, especially fossil fuel states, to accept global climate securitization and take action (Dupont, 2019). These two successful examples show that securitization enables states to establish domestic and international collaboration in addressing climate change issues.

In conclusion, the point of whether climate change is a security issue depends on how states frame it. As for which type of security issue the climate change is, it depends on whether states frame on a threat- or risk-based logic, and which climate security discourses are chosen by states. Despite the criticisms of the underlying logic, policy options and implementation, securitization enables states to build effective coalitions domestically and internationally in addressing climate change concerns. In this way, whether states should securitize climate change must be based on a holistic analysis of the limitations and advantages. However, the framing process is always evolving and contested, meaning it is still too early to conclude whether climate change is or should be a security issue permanently.

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