Security in Climate Change Discourse: Analyzing the Divergence between US and EU Approaches to Policy

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Climate change has become a foremost concern for societies globally, yet European Union and United States responses vary dramatically. This divergence prompts the question: how do domestic factors condition the differences in climate change policy outcomes? We focus on the role of security narratives in the construction of climate change. Our argument is not that the EU-US policy divergence is directly caused by security discourses. Instead, our use of securitization theory and discursive analysis identifies the sources of policy divergence, the conditions under which actors invoke security discourses, and the strategies that political agents use to socially construct climate change policy and the structural factors that shape responses.

Examining climate change through the lens of security highlights important issues. First, climate change presents existential threats to individuals and collectives.[1] Second, the diffused and collective nature of the phenomenon makes the "power centralizing" aspects of security attractive.[2] Third, security discourses powerfully affect the relationship between state and society. If discourses create and construct the social world,[3] understanding the role of security discourses in the debate over climate change has important ramifications for understanding climate change policy.

With respect to climate change, political leaders can ignore it, tackle it through normal political processes, or address it as a security threat requiring extraordinary measures. Insights from the Copenhagen School of security studies shed light on the significance of security in environmental discourses, as well as the limits of security and normal politics in addressing globalized environmental issues.[4]

We find that security discourses vary significantly in US and EU constructions of climate change. Security discourses occupy a much more prominent

1. Lacy 2005.
2. Detraz and Betsill 2009.
3. Barry, Ellis and Robinson 2008.
4. Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998.

position in the US than in the EU. Interviews and discourse analysis suggest that both cultural and political structures underpin this divergence. European discourses emphasize scientific findings and themes of opportunity and leadership, the latter also contributing to a pan-European identity. By contrast, American discourses emphasize security. In the US, climate change science is disputed and climate policy skeptics have influential access to the machinery of policy. In the EU, political space between EU institutions and the public insulates EU policy-makers, enabling expensive short-term policies without resorting to security politics. Climate change policy also functions to cement EU policy-making authority because it is an issue that cannot be addressed at the level of individual member states.

This article proceeds in four parts. First, we examine relevant literature, review securitization theory, and discuss our multi-method empirical approach. Then, we examine and contrast the role of security in US and EU climate change discourses. We discuss patterns in the data and conclude with our views on the future of climate change policy.

Climate Change Scholarship and Security

Climate Change Policy

Rational institutionalist frameworks lie at the heart of theoretical discussions of environmental problems within international relations theory.[5] Underlying these studies is the assumption that rational, economically oriented calculations are the primary motivations for the relevant actors.[6] Yet, climate change and the human behaviors that drive it are complex phenomena, spanning levels of analysis as well as social and cultural boundaries. Sociologically focused perspectives hold the potential for important insights on the forces behind and responses to climate change. Applying securitization theory to the issue of climate change, we stress the importance of speech in constructing climate change.

Many studies address climate change policy in the EU[7] and the US[8], but few explicitly compare EU and US climate change policy.[9] Much of the literature focuses on states as unified actors,[10] although scholars have begun to take more seriously sub-state and regional aspects.[11] Where studies do make explicit comparisons, the focus and findings are divergent and difficult to categorize. Harrison and Sundstrom's two studies created a three-fold framework.[12] First,

5. Keohane and Victor 2011, Luterbacher and Sprinz 2001, MacNeil and Paterson 2012, Paterson 1996.
6. Cass 2006, 1.
7. Harris 2007, Jordan et al. 2012, Ringius 1999, Schreurs and Tiberghien 2007.
8. Bryner 2008, Harrison 2010, Lisowski 2002, Steurer 2003.
9. Sandvik 2008, 334.
10. Harrison and Sundstrom 2007, 2.
11. Below 2007, Selin and VanDeveer 2011, Steinberg and VanDeveer 2012.
12. Harrison and Sundstrom 2007, Harrison and Sundstrom 2010.

economic costs influence policy—echoing the focus of much of the literature on cost-benefit calculations. Second, environmental values influence climate policy either by changing the electoral incentives or personal beliefs of politicians. Third, political institutions can enable minority voices to push the climate change agenda or diffuse policy-making authority, thus creating multiple veto points for those opposed to climate change policy.[13] Similarly, Cass's analysis of US, EU, British, and German climate policy documents how international climate change norms interact with domestic political contexts.[14] Busby and Ochs argue that the American political system allows parties opposed to climate change policy to impede the process, while in Europe policy-makers instead confront politically well-organized environmental movements.[15]

These studies show how and why Europe and the US have diverged on the issue of climate change, but they provide an incomplete account. For example, Harrison and Sundstrom's framework points to the importance of public attention to the subject of climate change but does not address how public attention is generated or channeled nor how climate change is understood in different political contexts.[16] Climate change construction has important implications for all elements of their framework, from the willingness of the public to engage on the issue, to calculations of cost and benefit, to the ability of actors to block policy. Cass's analysis provides important insights on comparative responses to climate change and focuses on maneuverings of political elites, but likewise leaves aside questions of broader political audiences and structures within polities.[17] Discursive constructions are crucial to understanding how international prerogatives get translated into domestic socio-political systems. We identified an opportunity to explore discursive constructions of climate change and their political effects, and the relationships between political institutions, society, and climate change policy.

Discursively Constructing Climate Change: Applying Securitization Theory

Securitization theory—which posits that political speech creates security issues[18]—provides a useful analytical approach for exploring gaps in the literature. The essence of security is the securitizing move: a securitizing actor (an individual with sufficient socio-political credibility) makes the claim that a referent object (intersubjectively agreed to be worth preserving) faces an existential threat. If the target audience accepts both the claim of threat and the valuation of the referent object, normal debate and contestation are marginalized and political power is centralized to enable response to the existential threat.

13. Harrison and Sundstrom 2007, 2; Harrison and Sundstrom 2010, 3–4; Knox-Hayes 2012.
14. Cass 2006.
15. Busby and Ochs 2005.
16. Harrison and Sundstrom 2007.
17. Cass 2006.
18. Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998.

Successful securitization does not produce a theoretically pre-defined outcome, but instead empowers political actors to breach the boundaries of normal politics.

As a negotiation between securitizing actor and audience, what constitutes "security" varies across time and socio-political space. Agency and structure shape variation in the actors vested with authority and in security practices, as actors initiate and perpetuate securitizing moves. Changes in social structures also produce shifts, although usually at a much slower pace. Analyzing security discourses across polities brings differences in social structures and the decisions actors make into sharp relief. Through the marginalization of normal political processes and concentration of decision-making authority, securitization has tremendous implications for policy outcomes.

Securitization involves the manifestation of both agency and structure. Political agents use security to achieve political objectives, for example, to delegitimize opposition or to access the power-centralizing aspect of securitization. Weber and Stern point to the importance of framing in climate change policies.[19] However, securitization takes place within a social space that gives it power. For example, the EU is not constituted as an actor that can "speak" security. Conversely, the US president is an actor clearly constituted to speak security, and "very important" issues are discursively constructed as security, making the issues worthy of concentrated political attention. Differences in discourse are a product of how Americans assign meaning to important issues as compared to Europeans. Neither agency nor structure alone explains the emergence of security discourses. Instead they interact to create both the space in which security exists and how security is used.[20] Here, we emphasize the agential aspects of securitization as a means of exposing the structural factors that shape policy.

Securitization theory also highlights structural problems, in that securitization may enable action on environmental problems without producing beneficial outcomes. Securitization of development policy has decreased aid to Africa,[21] and securitization of HIV/AIDS has increased the authority of traditional security actors vis-à-vis civil society.[22] In the US, there are indications that a similar empowerment of the military has taken place.[23] The US military has also been an important securitizing and responding actor to climate change.[24]

Given the pervasiveness of the economic activities that generate climate change, the traditional beneficiaries of securitization may be least capable of dealing with the issue.[25] Relying on securitization, with its logic of imminent threat and immediate response, to generate action may result in short-term

19. Weber and Stern 2011.
20. Hayes 2013.
21. Abrahamsen 2005.
22. Elbe 2006.
23. Floyd 2010.
24. CNA Corporation 2007; Suzanne Goldenberg. US military warned to prepare for consequences of climate change. *The Guardian,* November 9, 2012.
25. Deudney 1990, Homer-Dixon 1991.

policies that lack long-term public support. Because of the power centralizing and debate marginalizing characteristics of security, securitization has the potential to disempower skeptics as well as many members of Congress to speak on climate change.

Securitizing climate change also sheds light on socio-political differences between states. Scholars have highlighted the dangers securitization poses to democracies,[26] so understanding how states approach issues like climate change has the potential to increase our understanding of the adaptability and health of modern democracies as they confront increasingly globalized problems.[27] Specifically, securitization of climate change can impede the collective action required to address the issue through a focus on immediate action and self-survival irrespective of others. Successful securitization might divorce the US from coordinated efforts in the UN to alter economic activity on a sustainable and equitable basis. It might also distort policy-making to focus on obvious policy action at the expense of critical structural changes.

Scholarship has begun to draw on securitization theory and apply it to environmental problems. Detraz and Betsill use a discursive approach to examine security and climate change discourse in the UN and find an emphasis on discourses of environmental security as climate change degrades human welfare.[28] In a separate piece, Detraz highlights the potential costs of empowering state security over human security, because understanding climate change as a matter of human security presents the best possibility of enacting policies designed to address vulnerability to climate change.[29] Trombetta argues that the securitization of climate change is moving the concept away from the state and exceptional measures and toward prevention and human security.[30] Finally, Floyd challenges securitization theory through the prism of US environmental policy and argues that securitization can be morally beneficial or detrimental depending on outcome, while desecuritization can be morally unacceptable if it results in depoliticization of important issues.[31]

Our approach contributes to the application of securitization theory to climate change. We are principally focused on a comparative and domestic perspective, seeking to understand how climate change securitizing moves do or do not play out and to what end. This approach compliments Detraz and Betsill's more systemic level focus, and shares Floyd's attention to outcomes and the intentions of securitizing actors. However, in interpreting the significance of securitization we are closer to the original Copenhagen framework. We also draw attention to the ways in which socio-political structures shape securitization, a

26. Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998.
27. Floyd 2010 points out that securitization may not necessarily produce negative outcomes. Much depends on which actors are empowered in the process.
28. Detraz and Betsill 2009.
29. Detraz 2011.
30. Trombetta 2008.
31. Floyd 2010.

significant gap in the broader securitization literature. Finally, we probe various roles of security in different socio-political contexts, an agenda that furthers Trombetta's arguments and deepens the original Copenhagen framework.

Methodology

To analyze the discursive constructions of climate change in the US and Europe we conducted discourse analysis of policy documents. To analyze the role and socio-political significance of security within those discourses, we interviewed policy-makers and analyzed polling data. Specifically, we performed discourse analysis of policy statements and documents to examine the role of security in discursive constructions of climate change. We focused on the narratives of political leaders in the US and EU, but recognize that security discourses come from various actors and are often contradictory.

Securitization theory has traditionally emphasized discourse analysis as the primary means of establishing a securitizing move. We supplement this discourse analysis with 26 interviews with policy-makers in Europe and the US regarding how political structures and cultural identity influence the use and reception of security frames.[32] The perspectives of political actors who seek to shape the political narratives add depth to the analysis of securitizing moves in policy. In the US we interviewed staffers of congressional sponsors of domestic climate change legislation. In the EU we took a broader approach, interviewing environmental advisors to major EU political groups and policy-makers in the Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment. We interviewed a range of staffers rather than politicians to account for the political logics behind climate change policy, because staffers are often closer to the policy issues over which they have jurisdiction, while policy makers usually have broader mandates.

We focus our analysis on the years 2008–2009. This period is significant because it encompasses the transition from the Bush to the Obama Administration and leads up to the pivotal December 2009 Copenhagen Conference of Parties (COP), where leaders sought to put in place a post-Kyoto Protocol framework. During this period, the Obama Administration broke with Bush Administration policies and sought domestic support to engage with the international climate regime. This shift in leadership serves as a useful focal point because of the critical role agency plays in initiating and perpetuating securitizing moves.

It might be argued that 2008–2009 is inappropriate in the European context because the term "climate change" may have already taken on security content in prior climate debates (2000–2005). Two points mitigate this issue. First, the Europe interview data directly probe the use of security by EU-level policy-makers in framing climate change. Even if climate change had been securitized

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32. Due to confidentiality agreements all interlocutors are reported anonymously.

in the 2000–2005 period, the logic of security should also appear in discourse during 2008–2009. Second, given the importance of the Copenhagen COP for global and European climate policy,[33] discourse in this period can be expected to reflect core foundations of how climate change is constructed in Europe.

The Cases

Securitization in the US

Shortly after the 2008 presidential election, President-Elect Obama and congressional allies sought to construct climate change as a security threat. In November 2008, Obama addressed a meeting of state governors. He claimed that climate change posed an existential threat: "Sea levels are rising. Coastlines are shrinking. We've seen record drought, spreading famine, and storms that are growing stronger . . . Climate change . . . if left unaddressed, will continue to weaken our economy and threaten our national security."[34] Obama reiterated this "climate change-as-security-threat" argument in December 2008, claiming, "[T]his is a matter of urgency and national security, and it has to be dealt with in a serious way."[35]

In January 2009, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Senator John Kerry (D-MA) similarly linked climate change to US national security:

> Many today do not see global climate change as a national security threat, but it is profoundly so . . . In Copenhagen this December, we have a chance to forge a treaty that will profoundly affect the conditions of life on our planet itself.[36]

Kerry suggests two referent objects: the state and life on Earth. Obama continued the security theme in January 2009: "the long-term threat of climate change, which if left unchecked could result in violent conflict, terrible storms, shrinking coastlines and irreversible catastrophe."[37] Secretary of State Hilary Clinton made a similar securitizing move:

> [C]hief among [21st century challenges] is the complex, urgent, and global threat of climate change. From rapidly rising temperatures to melting arctic icecaps, from lower crop yields to dying forests, from unforgiving hurricanes to unrelenting droughts . . . our world is facing a climate crisis . . . It is at once an environmental, economic, energy and national security issue with grave implications for America's and the world's future.[38]

33. Schreurs and Tiberghien 2010.
34. Revkin, Andrew C. Obama: Climate Plan Firm Amid Economic Woes. *New York Times,* November 18, 2008.
35. Broder, John M. The Caucus: A Power Meeting. *New York Times,* December 10, 2008.
36. New York Times. Senate Confirmation Hearing: Hilary Clinton. *New York Times,* January 13, 2009.
37. Obama 2009.
38. Clinton 2009.

All of these quotes explicitly use threat logics. Republicans also made securitizing moves regarding climate change. Retired Senator John Warner (R-VA) testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

> Leading . . . security experts have publically spoken out that . . . global warming could increase instability and lead to conflict in already fragile regions of the world. If we ignore these facts, we do so at the peril of our national security.[39]

In a Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works hearing, Warner furthered the claim of climate change as an existential threat: "If you stop for a minute and decide that the world does nothing, I mean does nothing, and just continues to go on the path we're going the consequences are going to be catastrophic . . . If we do nothing, we can be sure nothing else is going to be done of any consequence."[40] Acting to prevent incapacity is central to the logic of security.[41] In the same hearing, Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) claimed, "For many years, the world's experts on security have been telling us that global warming is a threat to our nation's security, and a danger to peace and stability around the world."[42]

Space constraints limit the discursive data presented here to a small representation of the efforts made by policy-makers throughout 2008–2009 to securitize climate change. Indeed, the construction of climate change as a security threat is rarely absent from climate discourses during this period, raising the question of why the logic of security is so prevalent in US policy discourses.

Interviews with policy-makers in Washington DC confirm the intentionality to securitize climate change and provide some rationale for the turn to security. First, respondents identified the issue of political structure. When asked about the importance of security language in legislation, one staffer commented that climate change gained more policy traction when framed in security terms:

> There became more interest in tying the climate wagon to the energy security horse . . . the more climate policy is shaped like energy security the more likely it is to pass.[43]

Legislators realize the difficulties with moving legislation that relates to climate change. With only 100 members and requirements for a supermajority to overcome filibuster, the Senate is vulnerable to political deadlock. This pressure gives each individual senator significant power to block legislation, especially in narrowly divided legislative sessions. Connecting climate change to accepted security threats, such as dependence on foreign oil, provides leverage for

39. Warner 2009.
40. U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works 2009; Samuelsohn, Darren. Senate Democrats Tie Climate Effort to National Security. *New York Times,* July 31, 2009.
41. Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 24.
42. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) 2009.
43. Counsel and Legislative Assistant to U.S. Senator (Independent) 2008.

climate policy advocates to move climate change away from normal politics in the Senate.

One interviewee, a legislative assistant, stated:

> There is a political resonance. People understand the concept of dependence on foreign oil. When prices get as high . . . they are exporting a couple of billion dollars for oil a day. It is also the importance of strategic locations that wouldn't otherwise be concerned.[44]

Interviewees also identified uncertainty regarding the science of climate change.[45] The absence of certainty is used to support the argument against climate change policy. Constructing the argument around existential threats eases policy justification:

> Climate change is a scientific issue, which requires complex information. It can take time to translate, whereas gas price is pretty basic. Making links between the two can be very useful.[46]

Moves to securitize climate change represent an effort to overcome public uncertainty and disengagement. Public opinion polling throughout 2008 found climate change to be a low priority. A May 2008 survey ranks climate change last (tied with global poverty) behind issues like healthcare and global economic competition as a "serious, long-term challenge" confronting the US.[47] In a June 2008 Transatlantic Trends poll, only 8 percent of respondents indicated that they felt climate change should be the top priority.[48] Weber and Stern show that between 2008 and 2010 Americans did not accept climate change as a policy priority.[49] The reticence of Americans to acknowledge climate change as a priority for normal politics makes security politics an attractive route towards achieving success.

European Constructions of Climate Change

Framings of leadership and economic opportunity play a prominent role in European discourses. At the outset of 2008, the European Commission established an ambitious climate change policy titled *Europe's Climate Change Opportunity:*[50]

> Europe showed itself ready to give global leadership: to tackle climate change, to face up to the challenge of secure, sustainable and competitive energy, and to make the European economy a model for sustainable development in the 21st century . . . A political consensus has crystallised to put

44. Legislative Assistant to U.S. Representative (Democrat) 2008.
45. United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007.
46. Legislative Assistant to U.S. Senator (Democrat) 2008.
47. Research!America 2008.
48. German Marshall Fund of the US and Compagnia di San Paolo 2008.
49. Weber and Stern 2011, 318.
50. Commission of the European Communities 2008.

this issue at the heart of the European Union's political programme: a guiding theme for the Union.[51]

The claim that climate change lies at the heart of the EU's political program suggests that it can generate political authority for EU-level institutions as well as cohere EU "actorness." Climate change also provides an opportunity for Europe to modernize its economy and in the process enable a better life.

The themes of leadership and opportunity also appeared consistently in European Council discourses throughout 2008 and 2009. After a June 2008 meeting the president of the European Council reported:

> [T]o maintain international leadership and credibility the European Union must rapidly reach an agreement on its climate and energy package. The European Council therefore welcomes the progress achieved to date . . . [and] calls on the Commission to bring forward as soon as possible a mechanism to incentivise Member State and private sector investment.[52]

The invocation of leadership suggests the EU as a unified actor on the international stage. The emphasis on intergovernmental procedure also suggests the importance of developing and strengthening EU institutions. Reports after the March,[53] June,[54] October,[55] and December 2009[56] meetings were similar. The December meeting was remarkable for its technocratic tone and appeal to science, calling for "commonly agreed, transparent, international standards for measurement, reporting and verification" to meet the "science-based two degree limit."[57]

The European Commission echoed the theme of European leadership and agency: "The European Union is showing the way forward. It has committed to a set of far-reaching climate and energy targets and is putting in place concrete measures to achieve them."[58] The theme of opportunity was also strongly present:

> The shift towards a low-carbon global economy is a huge opportunity for business, especially in terms of technological innovation, which can drive economic growth and the creation of new jobs.[59]

Speeches by Commission President José Manuel Barroso mirror these discourses. In October 2009, Barroso emphasized the importance of science as a basis for climate change policy in the EU.[60] Barroso also highlighted the moral obligation of developed countries to future generations and to developing

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51. Commission of the European Communities 2008, 2.
52. Council of the European Union 2008, 12.
53. Council of the European Union 2009.
54. Council of the European Union 2009.
55. Council of the European Union 2009.
56. Council of the European Union 2009.
57. Council of the European Union 2009, 12.
58. European Commission 2009, 5.
59. European Commission 2009, 8.
60. Barroso 2009a.

countries least able to adjust to climate change. Economic opportunity also played a significant role in the speech. In a subsequent speech Barroso summed up the motivations for addressing climate change as, "scientific, moral, and economic," a clear break with the securitized frames prevalent in the US.[61]

A February 2009 parliamentary resolution emphasizes EU leadership and society-wide response:

> The foundations of future production methods and consumer behaviour will be definitively laid by the political decisions of the present, which call for far-sightedness and political leadership, but whereas a more sustainable lifestyle will not be possible without the contribution of the economy, science, the media, organised civil society and the citizens.[62]

A March 2009 resolution expressed similar sentiments,[63] and in a subsequent resolution parliament invoked the "voice of ambition," calling for EU leadership on climate change policy.[64]

Interviews support the conclusion that security threat discourses are minimal in the construction of climate policy in the EU:

> On a practical level, no one argued that [climate change] is a threat to the EU . . . Security is not used to convey policy positions to the public, no. The EU security conception focuses on positive contributions to peace like the unification process and having contacts with developing countries.[65]

When climate change is linked with mass-migration from Africa, it is viewed as an aid issue.

> Their living conditions are getting worse, so there will be more immigration [from North Africa]. There is some concern, but it is not really a driving force for legislation . . . It is more of a guilt trip than a security issue.[66]

Supporting this point, polls across 2008 and 2009 Europeans consistently indicate that "poverty, lack of food and drinking water" ranks as the world's most serious issue.[67]

Interviews also highlighted the importance of a global perspective:

> The old colonial states . . . seem to have more of a feeling of responsibility for the world. The Netherlands and the UK . . . have a sense of guilt, and they follow the . . . affairs of Africa and Asia. It's much higher in their public awareness.[68]

61. Barroso 2009b.
62. European Parliament 2009a.
63. European Parliament 2009b.
64. European Parliament 2009d, European Parliament 2009c.
65. Advisor to Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats Group in European Parliament 2009.
66. Advisor to Green Political Party 2009.
67. TNS opinion & social 2008, TNS opinion & social 2009a, TNS opinion & social 2009b.
68. Advisor to Green Political Party 2009.

Interviewees also point out that the climate change issue expands the role of the EU as a domestic and international actor and counterpart to China and the US:[69]

> The EU has no other competence in foreign affairs . . . whereas the environment is a competence. Climate change legislation has to some extent unified the EU . . . even in the UK, which is more [EU] skeptical and conservative[,] there is acceptance that to fight climate change has to be a global level. So the EU should lead.[70]

Collective action requirements centralize authority by lending credibility to EU political identity. Climate change is an issue that pulls authority away from the member states towards the EU. It cannot effectively be addressed at the national level, and increasing economic integration makes policy harmonization critical.

One point that emerges in the interviews but not the discourse analysis is the importance of separation between the EU policy-making bodies and the European public in climate policy:

> [The Commission] is very technocratic. It produces scientific impact assessments. They are the initiator of policy . . . When asked if you trust the Commission, they say they don't understand it. It's a different process from the national legislation. It's driven by an unelected body because the commissioners were chosen.[71]

As suggested in the previous quote, interviews draw attention to the importance of science for climate change policy. In part this theme may arise from cultural factors, but it is also an outgrowth of the issue's nature:

> How [do] we tackle the issue? That very quickly becomes an issue of experts. So it is top-down. It's bottom-up in establishing the importance of the issue, but it is so complex and involves all sectors . . . with climate change . . . [it] is extremely complicated and fast becoming a topic of the expert community.[72]

Note here public acceptance of the importance of climate change. An interlocutor tied this back to the acceptance of science as mediated by national media outlets:

> There was a Eurobarometer report asking how important people consider climate change. Eighty percent said it was their top priority. In Parliament, those who were opposed did not want to be seen as opposing climate change . . . There is consensus that climate change is happening and it's caused by humans.[73]

69. Wettestad, Eikeland and Nilsson 2012.
70. Advisor to EPP Group in European Parliament 2009.
71. Advisor to EPP Group in European Parliament 2009.
72. Assistant to Deputy Director General of European Commission 2009.
73. Advisor to EPP Group in European Parliament 2009.

Polling supports this point. In Eurobarometer polls, significant majorities—58 percent in March 2008 and 55 percent in August 2009—indicated that EU policy was insufficient to address the problem. The European citizenry also see the possibility that climate change policy might produce economic gains for the EU zone. In 2008, 56 percent of respondents agreed that "fighting climate change can have a positive impact on the European economy," while in 2009 the number was over 60 percent. Support for addressing climate change comes from the bottom up, but determining the specific policies is left to the discretion of the EU political institutions. The European approach to climate change arises from European culture (acceptance of science, global perspective) as well as political structures (political space between the EU and stakeholders). The distance of EU political structures from the public precludes the need for a securitization move to centralize authority, while bottom-up support precludes large-scale resistance against policies that are expensive in the near term.

Discussion

Security plays different roles in the US and the EU. While securitizing moves in the US have been unsuccessful in terms of generating broader public support,[74] they play an important role in efforts of political leaders to martial support for climate change policy. Despite a general failure to shift public constructions of climate change, the heavy reliance on security discourses in the US has had some impact in terms of shifting policy processes and empowering traditional security actors. The military has been tasked as a responding institution of climate change,[75] issuing reports on the security implications of climate change[76] and making highly visible efforts to "green" military equipment.[77] Securitization and the empowerment of the military have the potential to alienate the US from global efforts to resolve climate change on the basis of consultation, cooperation, discussion, and compromise. These processes are often at odds with the logic of security, which demands immediate action and often constructs the world in adversarial self-other terms. In stark contrast, militarization is not present to any significant degree in the EU.

Securitizing moves in the US name a range of referent objects threatened by climate change: the US, human civilization, life on earth, and economic development. In the discourse and interview data, the role of energy security plays a strong supporting role. In Europe, the language of leadership and economic

74. By success we mean that the issue has moved from normal into security politics. In securitization theory, there is ambiguity as to whether this occurs when a majority of the audience comes to believe the issue is one of security (Hayes 2012) or when actual behavior changes (Floyd 2010). By either metric, securitization has not occurred in the US.
75. Broder, John M. Climate Change Report Outlines Perils for U.S. Military. *New York Times,* November 9, 2012.
76. United States Department of Defense 2010, xv,84; Goldenberg, Suzanne. Pentagon to rank global warming as destabilizing force. *The Guardian,* January 31, 2010.
77. Gardner, Timothy. 2010. U.S. military leads climate change combat: Pew. *Reuters,* April 20, 2010.

opportunity is far more prevalent. These logics are in many ways the opposite of security in that opportunity emphasizes gains rather than losses. We find evidence for both cultural and political institutional factors driving the divergence.

The findings indicate that culture plays an important role in shaping climate policy as well as driving the use of security. Interview and polling data suggest that most Americans are either skeptical or inattentive to the science of climate change.[78] Conversely, European cultural indicators suggest security assumes a far less predominant role. Issues that are global in scope occupy positions of greater concern, and emphasize the importance of a normative commitment to the global commons.[79] Interviews suggest that Europeans are more attentive to, and trusting of, scientific authority than their American counterparts.[80] The role of the media in generating this dynamic is notable. Interlocutors noted the importance of media portrayals of science in building public confidence. The presence of media outlets like Fox News in the US, which undermine climate change science, undoubtedly play an important role in shaping public opinion.[81] However, there is insufficient reason to believe that media alone can account for the high value placed on climate change science by Europeans. Our data provide some indication that European culture plays a role in facilitating climate change policy, however the nature of the influence of culture is in need of further investigation.

Our findings suggest that governance structures play a substantial role in shaping climate change policy. In addition to the role of diffusion or concentration of authority,[82] we find that the level of technocratic versus political policymaking in the governance system has an impact on the use of security discourses and the ability to develop effective climate change policy. In the US, the legislative process is penetrated by a variety of interest groups who seek to influence policy according to parochial concerns.[83] The relatively small number of actors and relatively important interests of each can result in ineffective policy

78. Longitudinal polling of "Generation X" by scholars at the University of Michigan shows disengagement to be the modal response (41 percent of respondents) (Miller 2012).
79. Harrison 2007.
80. The literature on public understanding of science (PUS) is massive and contentious (Allum, Sturgis, Tabourazi and Brunton-Smith 2008, 36), making a summary here impossible. There is support for the contention that acceptance of science is in part cultural (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982, Leiserowitz 2006, Sturgis and Allum 2004), grounded in trust of scientific authority (Wynne 1992). It may be that respect for science is conflated with acceptance of the precautionary principle—which has been ascendant in Europe while declining in the US (Vogel 2012).
81. Lahsen 2005 notes that the democratization of scientific information in the United States has, in the context of climate policy, led to dysfunction as scientific symbols have been used to undermine the distinction between good and bad science.
82. Harrison and Sundstrom 2007.
83. A recent report details the nature of corporate lobbying on climate change in the United States (Union of Concerned Scientists 2012). Neither the UCS nor our study identifies why corporate actors invest so much. Their ability to access the policy-making process in the US seems a plausible explanation.

outcomes. On January 14, 2010, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) made this point:

> We will need at least [60 votes] for two reasons: One, because any bill that seeks to rein in global warming pollution will be fought very hard by the same companies that profit most heavily from polluting. And two, because the rules of the Senate make it easy for a determined minority to stand in the way.[84]

The most recent climate change legislation (HR 2454) passed the House of Representatives but not the Senate. In this context, securitization is an attractive political tool because the principal effects of a successful securitization act—the suspension or limiting of normal political processes and the centralization of power—enable political actors seeking action on climate change to bypass problems associated with diffuse political power. If climate change is a matter of security, dithering in the Senate becomes unacceptable and political opposition becomes a liability. Thus, securitization is a mechanism for empowering proponents of action at the expense of opponents.

Again, the situation in Europe is different. Evidence from interviews suggests a political gap between EU institutions and the public. The EU is politically and physically removed from most of the public, with the European Parliament—which cannot initiate legislation—being the only directly elected European institution. The lack of coverage of European policy-making in national media adds political insulation. The gap between EU institutions and the public means that constituencies interested in blocking climate change policy are less capable of hindering policy-making, mitigating the need for the power centralization that accompanies securitization. The perceived technocratic nature of the EU perpetuates political separation and adheres with European cultural acceptance of scientific expertise. Finally, policy-makers at the EU level had significant incentives to develop a coherent and unified climate change policy because it enhanced the EU's international actorness and domestic policy-making authority.

Conclusion

The divergence between US and European approaches to climate change provides the central problématique for this paper. Probing the role of security discourses, we find that security plays a prominent role in the discourses of proponents of policy action in the US. Conversely in Europe, discourses of leadership and opportunity dominate. Our data identify two motivating factors, culture, and governance structure. Our findings move the literature forward and highlight two issues—culture and technocratic decision-making—that have heretofore largely been overlooked. Our findings also highlight the importance of

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84. Harry Reid (D-NV) 2010.

looking at how climate change is constructed in order to understand climate policy outcomes. These findings go beyond climate change. Increasingly, the boundaries of the domestic and the international are eroding as globalization expands the scope of human and natural processes. The ability of international actors to deal with these problems will play a strong role in determining humanity's collective future.

Classical realists have long debated whether democracy could survive the threats facing it.[85] The end of the Cold War seemed to answer that question, but environmental challenges renew the debate. Given the chronic nature of climate change, it is unlikely that securitization represents a viable and durable political approach, but alternative policy mechanisms available to US leaders remain unclear. Continued European leadership—particularly if it comes with economic benefits—may prod US political leaders to action. However, the world may have to wait until catastrophic natural events in the US homeland lend sufficient external legitimacy to securitizing moves to push them to success. Of course, by that point legislation would be too little, too late.

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