



Working Paper Series

Working Paper 9 (May 2015)

The Attempted Securitisation of Climate Change in Mexico: Explorations into Actors, Processes and Consequences

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ClimaSec Working Paper #9 (May 2015)

Abstract

Besides being discussed as an environmental or economic issue, climate change has increasingly been evoked as a security problem as well. However, research on the securitisation of climate change mostly concentrates on the global level and on countries and actors in the Global North. Thus, there is a growing sentiment in the field of Critical Security Studies that there is a need to include countries from the Global South into the analysis as they are supposed to be most affected by the security effects of climate change. Using a revised securitisation framework that distinguishes between six different climate security discourses, this paper takes a closer look at the eventually failed securitisation of climate change in Mexico. By focusing on a defined domestic context, this paper shows how securitisation processes play out at the micro level, how different discourses matter and what role securitisation actors and the context of the securitisation play. By concentrating on an instance of failed securitisation this case study also allows for new insights into the general conditions for success or failure of such processes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is part of a broader project (ClimaSec) at the University of Tuebingen that analyses the securitisation of climate change in different countries. I owe a great deal of thanks to the research assistants, Thea Güttler, Josefa Velten and Schielan Babat for their invaluable help in researching data for this paper and editing the manuscript. In addition, many thanks to the other project members Thomas Diez and Zehra Wellmann for lively discussions and helpful comments on earlier versions of this text. Research for this article has been funded by the German Science Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), Grant No. DI 1688/2-1.

1. Introduction: The Securitisation of Climate Change and its Political Consequences

Since the mid-2000s climate change has increasingly been pictured not only as an environmental or economic issue but also as a security problem. Various scientists, governments, NGOs and think tanks¹ have linked climate change to security concerns. Most of them come from the Global North (especially the United States, the UK and Germany) while they point to security problems in the Global South – the common mantra is that the poorest will be hit first and hardest (Campbell *et al.* 2007: 7, 56, 72; WBGU: 1). They emphasise that the human security of southern populations is at risk (Rogers and Gullede 2010: 40; CNA Military Advisory Board 2014: 2, 8) or that climate change could lead to the destabilisation of southern countries, to violent conflict and to mass-migration (Campbell *et al.* 2007: 56; Foley and Holland 2012: 12; Werz and Manlove: 1).

The academic debate, too, has taken up the climate-security nexus. There have been intense debates about whether climate change really has an effect on the onset or intensification of violent conflict (Nordas and Gleditsch 2007; Raleigh and Urdal 2007; Scheffran *et al.* 2012a) or on the well-being of affected people and their human security (Barnett and Adger 2007). In addition, a growing literature analyses the political and academic debates about climate change from a securitisation perspective focusing on how representing climate change as a security issue can change the political debate². Surprisingly, this research has, apart from notable exceptions (Boas 2014; Hartmann 2010), mostly overlooked the Global South, even though it is the main target of climate related security scenarios. Most of the existing studies focus on the global securitisation process (Trombetta 2011; Corry 2012; McDonald 2013; Brauch 2009; Oels and Lucke 2015; Oels 2011; Detraz 2009), or concentrate on how climate change has been securitised in specific industrialised countries and by northern actors (Brzoska 2009), often looking at the United States (Floyd 2010; Richert 2010), the UK (Rothe 2013) or Australia (McDonald 2012). What is missing, therefore, is an analysis of discourses on climate security in countries in the Global South that are themselves pictured as being threatened by climate change (see Boas 2014). The interesting point is that on the one hand one would expect these countries to be more open to securitising arguments, as it is the case with small island states (Oels 2012; Stripple 2002). On the other hand, many developing countries and emerging economies have actively argued against a security framing of climate change during the debates

¹ Brauch (2009); WBGU (2007), UNSC (2007a, 2011a), CNA (2007); Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) and Center for a New American Security (CNAS) (2007); Smith and Vivekananda (2007); Solana and EU Kommission (2008).

² Trombetta (2011); Trombetta (2008); Oels (2011); Oels and Lucke (2015); Corry (2012); Hartmann (2010); Detraz and Betsill (2009); McDonald (2013); Brzoska (2009); Brauch (2009); Floyd (2010); Richert (2010); Methmann and Rothe (2012).

in the United Nations Security Council in 2007 (UNSC 2007a) and 2011 (Boas 2014; UNSC 2011a). Thus, considerable differences exist in the reception of attempts to securitise climate change in this group of countries. This makes it all the more urgent to include them into the analysis. In fact, there is a growing group of scholars in the broader field of Critical Security Studies (Barkawi and Laffey 2006; Bilgin 2010) and in the analysis of the environmental- and climate-security-nexus (Boas 2014; Bettini 2014; Dalby 1999; Leboeuf and Broughton 2008) that calls for a shift of the focus towards developing countries and emerging economies.

This paper engages in this debate by analysing climate security discourses in Mexico, which is a particularly interesting case for various reasons. Despite being a developing country that only recently underwent a democratisation process after 60 years of autocratic rule, the country has been a striking forerunner when it comes to domestic as well as international climate policies. Hence, one might suspect that the climate security debate played an important role in raising attention for the topic in the country. However, it was precisely the successful politicisation of climate change together with some crucial contextual factors and developments at the micro-level that eventually hindered a securitisation of climate change on a broader scale. Thus, it is particularly this case of an attempted but eventually failed securitisation of climate change that enables me to generate insights into the conditions for success or failure of securitisation and its relation to politicisation in general.

Theoretically, I build on an extended Copenhagenian framework of securitisation (Buzan *et al.* 1998) developed elsewhere (Lucke *et al.* 2014a) that allows me to distinguish between six different climate-security discourses. This addresses the broad consensus in the securitisation literature that there is not only one way to securitise an issue. Instead, there are many different forms that can lead to divergent political consequences (Floyd 2007; McDonald 2013; Oels and Lucke 2015). The main purpose of this paper is to uncover exactly how climate change has been securitised in Mexico, whether this securitisation has been successful or not, and whether it has had any political consequences. By focusing on a defined domestic context in the Global South, I demonstrate how securitisation processes play out at the micro level in a country that is supposed to be heavily affected by the security effects of climate change. I also show how different security discourses matter in terms of the political consequences and what role securitisation actors and the context of the securitisation play in the process. Moreover, the paper will also give some preliminary insights into the question of how securitisations relate to a parallel politicisation of the same issue. Hence, this allows me to address various points that have come up in the theoretical debates on securitisation, and at the same time enhance the understanding of the actual empirical case.

The structure of the paper is as follows: The next section briefly introduces the theoretical approach and methodology. To situate the analysis into the broader context, thereafter I give a short description of the general climate debate in Mexico since the late 1980s. Based on the theoretical framework, the fourth section explores which climate security discourses and actors were dominant, what political effects materialized and what contextual conditions eventually impeded a more successful securitisation.

2. Theory and Methodology: Six Different Climate Security Discourses

The best-known approach to study securitisation processes has been developed by the Copenhagen School (Buzan *et al.* 1998). The authors understand securitisation as a process in which political elites present an existential threat to a valued referent object in front of a relevant audience. If this speech-act is approved by the audience, the topic is elevated above all others into the realm of security and extraordinary (and often undemocratic) measures are legitimised to counter the perceived threat (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 21). However, this approach has come under increasing criticism for its narrow and fixed security logic, which focuses on states and builds on a military centred security conception (Trombetta 2011; Balzacq 2011). When it comes to securitisations outside the military sector, for example in connection to climate change, the approach has its limits. Some authors have convincingly shown that the security logic itself has undergone changes during the climate security debate and that the measures legitimised are not necessarily extraordinary or undemocratic (Trombetta 2011, 2012). Moreover, others have argued that securitisations differ when it comes to what kind of threats they propose, what referent objects are deemed to be threatened and also what measures are proposed to counter the threat (Corry 2012; McDonald 2013). Hence, what is necessary is a framework that can distinguish between very different discourses able to securitise a topic that also have different political consequences that do not necessarily fall within the category of extraordinary measures. The framework developed by Lucke *et al.* (2014a) does so by starting out from two assumptions. Firstly, it proclaims that one has to distinguish between different referent objects of the securitisation, and secondly that one has to differentiate between two different logics of threat construction, namely between security and risk.

2.1 A Reworked Securitisation Framework

The first argument concerning the referent object of the securitisation process builds on the existing literature on environmental and climate security, in which various authors distinguish between different conceptions of security and different referent objects (Barnett 2001; Pirages

2013; Dalby 2002). However, these are rarely combined in a systematic fashion to construct a framework for different securitisation discourses (see McDonald 2013 for an exception). The most common security concepts used in connection with climate change are national security with a focus on states, human security with individuals as its main referent objects and environmental security with nature as such or the planetary ecosystem at the centre of attention. Thus, one can distinguish between three levels of referent objects: territorial, individual and planetary.

The *territorial level* is derived from the common argument within the climate-security debate that climate change could lead to or intensify violent conflict over scarce resources (Nordas and Gleditsch 2007; Scheffran *et al.* 2012b). This “climate-conflict-discourse” (Detraz and Betsill 2009: 304) is mainly based on the ideas of Thomas Homer-Dixon who predicted a heightened potential for conflict in the face of a growing population and deteriorating environmental conditions (Homer-Dixon 1999, 1991). Within this discourse, the threatened *referent object* is primarily the state or a particular territorial order. The main *threats* are the second-order socio-economic and political problems that could arise in the course of climate change. An example would be violent conflicts over water or arable land, which could destabilise states and eventually whole regions especially in regions that are already under stress. The main legitimised actors in this discourse are states and their agents and the recommended *counter measures* include military interventions in regions that are in danger of being destabilised by climate change.

The *individual level* is based on the debates about a broadening of traditional conceptions of security (Ullmann 1983; Booth 1991, 2005) and new concepts such as “human security” (UNDP 1994). In connection to the climate-security debate this line of thinking has been discussed as “environmental-security discourse” (Detraz and Betsill 2009). The threatened *referent object* is not the state but individuals or a global community of individuals. The main *threats* are the direct physical effects of climate change such as droughts, famines, and natural disasters that directly threaten the daily lives and physical well-being of individuals. Common *counter measures* focus on development aid or disaster relief operations to increase the resilience and coping capacity of threatened individuals. Legitimised actors are not only states but also a broad spectrum of civil society actors such as environmental or human rights NGOs, but also religious organizations.

The *planetary referent object level* draws on the debates about environmental, ecological and climate security (Barnett 2001; Dalby 2002; Pirages 2013), thus the threatened *referent object* is the ecological balance of the whole planet (Grauvogel and Diez 2014). The

main *threat* is the increasing man-made emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs), which leads to a warming of the planet and has devastating consequences for various ecosystems and species. To counter the threats, prevalent *counter measures* are international regimes to restrict GHG emissions, a transformation of the global economic system, or specific measures to preserve endangered ecosystems (Brauch 2009). Main actors are the international community of states or groups of the main GHG producer states. Environmental NGOs or climate scientist often use this discourse to draw attention to the problems posed by climate change.

The second analytical dimension concerns the distinction between *security* and *risk*. On the one hand, it is derived from the empirical observation that particularly in the environmental sector one often cannot identify clear-cut threats or enemies; instead the literature talks about possibilities and risks that mostly lie in the distant future (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 71, 83). On the other hand, the distinction is based on the theoretical debates about extending the classical Copenhagen School of securitisation to also include more long-term and risk-oriented securitisation processes. In the literature, this dimension is present in sociological works on risk (Beck 2000; Aradau and van Munster 2007, 2011), in the Paris School of Securitisation (Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2008), in publications that draw on Foucauldian ideas and concepts (Elbe 2009; Oels 2011; Lucke 2014), as well as in the debates on vulnerability (Adger 2006; O'Brien *et al.* 2007). With regard to the securitisation of climate change, Olaf Corry (2012) has put forward the idea to speak of two different logics, namely traditional securitisation as proposed by the Copenhagen School, and a second mode named “riskification”.

Several features help to distinguish between security and risk. *Firstly*, when looking at the risk dimension the *construction of the threat* differs considerably. Risk poses a long-term potential threat that is characterised by a radical uncertainty and leads to a more diffuse sense of unease (Goede 2008; Corry 2012). Security threats are existential, direct and urgent whereas risk often seems manageable and is only potentially an existential threat (Beck 2002; Boyle and Haggerty 2012; Rose 1996). Furthermore, security threats tend to be identifiable, whereas risk is often more diffuse concerning both threats and referent objects (e.g. certain risk-groups, risk-areas, potentially risky behaviour) (Corry 2012: 244, 246; Beck 2000: 41).

Secondly, when looking at the suggested *counter-measures*, security threats have to be eliminated or alternatively call for a clear strategy of defence against the threat. Risks on the other hand cannot be eliminated, they call for precaution, and risk reduction programmes (Corry 2012: 245, 247). Furthermore, security threats are uninsurable because they lead to destruction, whereas risk is typically the object of insurance. A security logic calls for emergency measures to prevent the threat from materialising under any circumstance, whereas a risk-based approach

tries to mitigate the possible consequences and also aims to tackle their constitutive causes (Corry 2012: 247).

Combined with the differentiation between three levels of referent objects this theoretical framework leads to the assumption of six different climate-security discourses: *territorial security*, *territorial risk*, *individual security*, *individual risk*, *planetary security* and *planetary risk* (see Lucke *et al.* 2014a for a more thorough discussion of these six climate-security discourses and their political consequences). The following *table 1* gives an overview of the discourses and examples of typical speech acts within each discourse:

Logic of Discourse Level of Referent Object	Security	Risk
Territorial <i>Speech act Example</i>	Territorial Security <i>Climate Change as increasing violent conflict that threatens state security</i>	Territorial Risk <i>Climate change as long term risk for states located in risk areas</i>
Individual <i>Speech act Example</i>	Individual Security <i>Climate Change as threatening daily food and water supplies</i>	Individual Risk <i>Climate Change as increasing the risk of periodical flooding</i>
Planetary <i>Speech act Example</i>	Planetary Security <i>Climate change as destroying the ecosystem</i>	Planetary Risk <i>Climate change as creating ecological imbalances with unforeseeable consequences</i>

Table 1: A Typology of Climate Security Discourses

2.2 Methodology

This paper builds on a qualitative in-depth case study of the attempted securitisation of climate change in Mexico between 1990 and 2014³. To understand how climate change was securitised and which of the six discourses were dominant, a systematic analysis of the relevant secondary literature and available internet sources was conducted in a *first step*. The aim was to identify the most relevant actors and documents in the Mexican climate-security debate (I identified 15 organisations as most active on climate change in general and four organisations that were actively engaged in the climate-security debate). The level of influence of the documents was determined according to the secondary literature, by expert interviews in the country and by cross-references between the documents. In a *next step*, I conducted a discourse analysis of these documents to find out which climate security discourses were dominant (relevant factors were: the frequency and strength of the arguments and their relative position in the document). In a *third step*, I conducted interviews with experts of the most relevant NGOs, think tanks and

³ Although the whole timeframe has been analysed, the focus will be on the time between 2008 and 2012 because it was mainly during this period that the climate-security debate generated attention in Mexico.

departments of government that were involved in the climate-security debate in Mexico (in total 20 interviews were conducted between April and October 2014). The objective was to understand the actors' motives for picking up climate security arguments and the connections between different actors. *Finally*, to account for the political effects of the attempted securitisation, relevant parliamentary debates in the Senate (*Senado de la República*) as well as governmental documents and major newspapers in Mexico were analysed.

3. Mexico and Climate Change: Failed Securitisation but Successful Politicisation?

In order to contextualise the analysis of the climate-security debate in Mexico and to understand the enabling contextual conditions, this section firstly gives a brief introduction into the overall climate debate in the country since its beginnings in the 1980s (for a more thorough discussion of Mexico's general climate politics and policies see Lucke 2013; Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009).

3.1 The General Climate Debate: Mexico as International Forerunner

Compared to many other developing countries and emerging economies, Mexico can be considered a forerunner concerning environmental and climate policies and its integration into international environmental regulation regimes. Mexico's more active dedication to environmental topics began in the 1980s when after years of political and economic isolation under the authoritarian regime of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), the country started a gradual policy of economic opening (Peters and Maihold 2007: 8; Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 4). During this process, strengthening economic and political ties particularly with the United States led to the need for stronger environmental regulation⁴. The first actors that considerably pushed the topic of climate change came from the scientific sector. Especially the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM) and the *Instituto Nacional de Ecología* (INE) stood out in this respect. After the establishment of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) in 1992 (which was ratified by Mexico in 1993), UNAM and INE were mostly responsible for the creation of Mexico's *Programa Nacional Científico sobre Cambio Climático Global*, which helped to coordinate the research on the topic within the country. When in the course of the 1990s the climate debate entered the political sphere on a global scale and the research on the topic intensified, it became apparent that Mexico would be quite vulnerable to the effects of climate change, thus the country was eager

⁴ At that time the United States could still be considered a forerunner concerning environmental and climate policies.

to address the topic internationally and domestically (Salazar and Masera 2010; Wolf 2007). One further facilitating factor for the formulation of the Mexican climate strategy was the *US Countries Studies Program* which was supposed to support developing countries in designing a strategy towards climate change (Pulver 2006: 51; Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 3–5). It eventually led to the publication of Mexico's national greenhouse gas inventory in 1995 and the first national communication to the UNFCCC in 1997⁵ (Pulver 2006: 51). With the concrete formation of the *Kyoto Protocol* during the mid and late 1990s (which Mexico ratified as non-annex I country in 2000) the interest for climate matters in Mexico grew even stronger because of the prospect of accumulating foreign investment through the *Clean Development Mechanism*⁶ (CDM) (Pulver 2006: 55–56).

After a brief period of neglect of climate matters during the early 2000s under President Vicente Fox of the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN)⁷, the topic regained momentum under newly elected President Felipe Calderon (PAN) in 2006. One reason for this was Calderon's personal dedication to climate matters. Yet, probably even more importantly, Calderon also used the climate topic to boost his domestic popularity by taking advantage of the political credit Mexico accumulated through its role as vanguard in climate matters on the international level (Akerberg 2011: 37; Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 5–7; Interview 2014b). The preparations for the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP-16) of the UNFCCC that took place in Cancún, Mexico in 2010 further added to the growing importance of climate matters in Mexico. Regarding concrete domestic policies, the *National Development Plan 2007-2013* for the first time explicitly addressed climate change. At the same time, Mexico adopted a *National Strategy on Climate Change / Estrategia Nacional de Cambio Climático* (ENACC) in 2007, which then contributed to the establishment of the *Special Program on Climate Change / Programa Especial de Cambio Climático* (PECC) in 2008. Yet, the most notable policy outcome was the *General Climate Law / Ley General de Cambio Climático* that was adopted in the year 2012 and that commits Mexico to emission reductions of 30 per cent below the levels of 2000 by 2020 and of 50 per cent by 2050. The successful adoption of this law was quite a remarkable development, since at that time Mexico was one of the very few countries worldwide that actually adopted a binding domestic climate law. Hence, Mexico's role as forerunner in climate

⁵ Mexico is one of the few developing countries that managed to send in these communications to the UNFCCC on a regular basis ever since and just submitted its 5th communication UNFCCC (2014).

⁶ The *Clean Development Mechanism* is part of the *Kyoto Protocol's Flexible Mechanisms* and is supposed to facilitate mitigation projects in developing countries financed by industrialised countries that in turn get *Certified Emission Reduction Units* that can be used in emission trading schemes.

⁷ One important reason was the rejection of the *Kyoto Protocol* by the United States, which meant that the opportunities for investments through the CDM were seriously restricted.

matters is also mirrored in international climate indices, which all rank Mexico as one of the most progressive countries when it comes to climate policies⁸.

3.2 The Attempted Securitisation of Climate Change in Mexico

Let us now turn to the core question of this paper that is the role of the attempted securitisation of climate change. This section gives a detailed account of the climate-security debate in Mexico and explores which climate-security discourses dominated in Mexico, which were the most important actors, what political consequences followed and what contextual conditions played a role in enabling this unique securitisation process.

3.2.1 Dominant Securitisation Attempts: Climate Risks for Individuals

The first phase of the global climate security-debate⁹ took place in the early and mid-1990s and was particularly influenced by the works of Thomas Homer-Dixon and others on the connection between deteriorating environmental conditions, population growth and violent conflict behaviour (Homer-Dixon 1991, 1994; Myers 1989, 1995). Interestingly, Homer-Dixon (together with Philip Howard) was also one of the first who put forward this argumentation about Mexico, namely when he drew a connection between the Chiapas uprising in 1994 and problems in the surrounding environment. The argument was that continuous degradation of cropland in the area due to environmental factors further added to the economic and political marginalisation of the indigenous people living in the southern parts of Mexico and eventually contributed to the uprising (Howard and Homer-Dixon 1996). Although not directly mentioning climate change, this argumentation can be seen as the first instance of a climate-security discourse in Mexico. However, the debate remained mostly scientific and unlike in the United States (see Lucke *et al.* 2014b: 12–16; Floyd 2010) these arguments were not actively picked up by political actors in Mexico at that time.

The first phase of the global climate-security debate gradually faded throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s and was partly replaced by a more economic framing of climate change (see for example Stern 2006). It gained renewed momentum in the year 2007 when several think tanks (CNA 2007; Campbell *et al.* 2007), NGOs (Christian Aid 2007), and governmental advisory bodies (WBGU 2007; Solana and EU Kommission 2008) published reports that

⁸ Mexico always ranked among the top 15 of the *Climate Performance Index* in recent years (Burck *et al.* (2013) and its efforts to fight climate change are considered “Medium” according to the *Climate Action Tracker* (Höhne *et al.* (2012).

⁹ This debate was closely connected to a more general environmental security debate that took place in political as well as academic circles (Floyd (2010), Dalby (1992, 2002), Deudney (1990).

highlighted the climate-security connection. Moreover, in 2007 and 2011 there were debates in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on the security implications of climate change in which Mexico participated.

On the domestic level, it was in the year 2008 that the climate-security debate began to become more important in Mexico on the political level. One important starting point was the “*Globe Americas Legislators Forum*” organised by *GLOBE International* and the *World Bank* in the lower house of the Mexican parliament (*Camara de Diputados*) that included a discussion of the possible security-related impacts of climate change in Mexico (Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 7; World Bank 2008). Thereafter there were above all two international actors (PDCI and RUSI/British Embassy) in collaboration with several Mexican NGOs that tried to establish the link between climate change and security in the political debate (CCC 2008; Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009; Feakin and Depledge 2010; Deheza 2011; Deheza and Mora 2013; Brodziak *et al.* 2011). Concerning the prevailing climate-security discourses in the overall debate in Mexico, although security focused argumentations were used to a certain extent¹⁰, the risk dimension overweighed¹¹. When drawing the connections between climate change and security, most argumentations focused on potential risks in the future instead of immediate and clear-cut security threats, as this quote from a report of the British think tank *Royal United Services Institute* (RUSI) exemplifies¹²:

“The potential security impacts of climate change highlighted in this report are not inevitable; this study functions as a risk assessment to highlight important areas of concern. How proactively governments investigate and incorporate climate-driven risk assessments into their future planning will have a direct bearing on how severely climate change impacts their security situations in the coming years” (Feakin and Depledge 2010: 21)¹³.

Concerning the level of the referent object, the individual level was most common. Thus the most prevalent narrative was that poor people living under already difficult conditions now

¹⁰ For examples see Feakin and Depledge (2010: v, 2); Deheza (2011: 7, 20); Deheza and Mora (2013: xiv); CCC (2008: 4); Brodziak *et al.* (2011: 7).

¹¹ it was not always possible to find the ideal typical distinction between security and risk in the empirical material. Naturally, the reports often mix up different argumentations to make their point. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a general direction in which the argumentations lean and to take that as a starting point to assess the political consequences of such climate security discourses.

¹² Due to space constrictions, in this paper I can only give some exemplary citations for each discourse, while in the actual empirical analysis of course I found many more instances.

¹³ For further instances of the risk dimension see CCC (2008: 4, 8); Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* (2009: 3, 8); Brodziak *et al.* (2011: 7); Feakin and Depledge (2010: 7, 28); Deheza (2011: 8, 20).

were at risk of being hit by a wide range of natural disasters exacerbated by climate change: “The physical effects (see Figure 1) of climate change, such as hurricanes, droughts, floods, extreme hydrometeorological phenomena, forest fires and heat waves, directly affect the quality of life and increase people’s vulnerability” (Brodziak *et al.* 2011: 11)¹⁴. Besides being used independently, there were also instances when the individual level was connected to the territorial level. Yet, most of the time, the territorial argument had only a supporting role and the core referent object remained the well-being of individuals¹⁵:

“However, an adversarial reaction could exacerbate existing tensions and social anxiety if things are not resolved, which could, in turn, lead to violent conflict and thus further decrease the quality of life and increase the vulnerability of people [...]” (Brodziak *et al.* 2011: 21)¹⁶.

The planetary referent object level was also used at times, though much less frequently than the other two, and also mostly in connection with the individual level (Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 3).

In addition to being discussed in reports of non-governmental actors, climate-security argumentations also entered into parliamentary debates to a certain extent. In the analysis of the parliamentary debates in the Senate between 1992 and 2014 I found 14 debates where securitising formulations were used in connection to climate change. Whereas in the 1990s there were only very few occurrences, climate-security arguments appear more often from 2000 and especially from 2008 onwards where they are also much more explicitly referring to threats and risks of climate change (Senado de la Republica 2008: 2). The greatest intensity of the debate in parliament could be observed in debates over the Mexican Climate Law during the timeframe 2011-2013. This corresponds to the attempts by PDCI and RUSI to securitise the topic between 2008 and 2013 and to the peak of the global climate security debate. Paralleling the findings from the non-governmental reports in Mexico, risk discourses were more prominent in parliamentary debates than security based ones (Senado de la Republica 2011b: 8, 10). Concerning the level of the referent object, the individual and territorial levels are both common, while the planetary level is used slightly less frequently (Senado de la Republica

¹⁴ For further examples see: CCC (2008: 4); Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* (2009: 8); Deheza (2011: 9).

¹⁵ The finding that although territorial and individual considerations were used together, the individual level prevailed, is particularly interesting in comparison to other cases of the securitisation of climate change (e.g. the United States) where it is the other way around (Lucke *et al.* (2014a: 10).

¹⁶ For more examples see: Brodziak *et al.* (2011: 8, 15); Feakin and Depledge (2010: 29); Deheza (2011: vi)

2008: 2). As in the non-governmental reports, the territorial and individual level are regularly linked together, albeit with endangered individuals remaining at the core of the argument, as this quote from a debate in the Senate exemplifies:

„This scenario requires immediate action and views climate change as a question of national security, yet this conception of security includes food security, health care, water supply, energy consumption and disaster control as important questions of the national interest.”
(Senado de la Republica 2013: 4, translation from Spanish by the author).

Aside from the debates in parliament, climate security arguments were also mentioned in Mexico's media, particularly between 2008 and 2011 (La Jornada 2009; Reforma 2010). Regarding the general public, but also to some extent the political debate, climate-security arguments in Mexico got particular attention in the aftermath of natural disasters that affected parts of the population (Interview 2014a). This corresponds to the finding that the individual level was dominant in most of the analysed reports. In general the dominance of the risk dimension and the individual level can be explained partly by an active strategy of the involved actors to establish new, non-traditional and broader conceptions of security with a focus on the risk for individuals (Feakin and Depledge 2010: 12; Brodziak *et al.* 2011: 10–11). Moreover, a focus on the direct impact of climate change on the daily lives of people makes sense in Mexico, since it is predicted to experience more natural disasters due to climate change and also has a high percentage of poor people that are especially vulnerable to these events (Wolf 2007: 36).

Despite the various attempts to link climate change to security or risk considerations, the climate-security debate never got a permanent foothold in the Mexican climate debate and was far from being the dominant framing of climate change. Rather, the dominant climate discourse continued to focus on environmental, economic and development considerations (Interview 2014c, 2014d).

3.2.2 Main Actors: International Influence Ahead

Matching the limited attention the climate security debate received in Mexico, it were only a few actors that actively tried to securitize the topic. Moreover, they were only partly successful in generating attention for climate security matters and in placing some climate security arguments on the political agenda. Interestingly, it were mostly international actors that initiated the relevant securitisation attempts. Besides the event hosted by *GLOBE International* and the

World Bank that only very briefly discussed climate security arguments, the first major attempt to connect climate change with security came from an international coalition of NGOs called *Partners for Democratic Peace International* (PDCI). This organization cooperated with the Mexican NGO *Centro de Colaboración Cívica*, a couple of further NGOs¹⁷ and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to organise a dialogue process in the lower chamber of the parliament (*Camara de Diputados*) between November 2008 and 2009. The goal of this initiative (*Programa de Diálogo y Construcción de Acuerdos: Cambio Climático y Seguridad Nacional*) was to raise awareness for climate matters in political circles (and to encourage necessary mitigation and adaptation policies), to create a dialogue between civil society and political practitioners, and to link aspects of climate security to Mexican policies (CCC 2008; Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 9–12). Contrary to what the title – Climate Change and National Security – of the project suggests, in most of its documents and discussions it rather relied on the individual level and risk conceptions (CCC 2008: 1, 8; Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 8). One reason for the usage of the notion of “national security” could have been that in Mexico security as a political concept often is still tied to this term (Feakin and Depledge 2010: v, 12; Deheza and Mora 2013: 15). During the dialogue process PDCI and its partners carried out workshops and conducted interviews with various non-governmental stakeholders of the Mexican climate field and members of the *Camara de Diputados* to discuss the connections between climate change and security. The largest share of funding for this undertaking came from the *British Embassy* and the *Tinker Foundation* (CCC 2008: 11)¹⁸. In 2011 PDCI published a further study on the connections between climate change and conflict as part of a broader international project¹⁹ funded by the EU commission. This study focused slightly more on the territorial level and on the security dimension, though often linking this to endangered individuals (Brodziak *et al.* 2011: 7, 11, 15). The motives of PDCI and the other involved organisations to approach the climate matter from a security/risk perspective were firstly a genuine concern with the adverse effects of climate change for Mexico and its people, but secondly also a strategy to break down this often complicated and technocratic topic to a more accessible political argument (Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 8–9; Interview 2014d).

¹⁷ Centro de Colaboración Cívica (CCC), Centro Mario Molina (CMM), Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental (CEMDA), Comisión de Estudios del Sector Privada para el Desarrollo Sustentable (CESPEDES).

¹⁸ Further funding came from the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Fundación Hewlett, UNDP, Congreso de la Unión, CEMDA, CESPEDES, CMM. Particularly the funding of the British Embassy – through the Global Opportunities fund with 155.580 pounds sterling in total Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* (2009: 11–12) – is interesting as they also conducted a climate-security project of their own, which will be explained in the following.

¹⁹ Initiative for Peacebuilding – Early Warning Analysis to Action (IfP-EW) (<http://www.ifp-ew.eu>).

The second major attempt to securitise climate change came from the security policy-oriented British think tank *RUSI* together with the *British Embassy* in Mexico City. One reason for the overall preoccupation of the British actors in Mexico with the security dimension of climate change was the importance of the climate security debate in the United Kingdom itself at the time (Rothe 2013: 213). The timing of these attempts in Mexico (between 2008 and 2012) can be partly explained by the fact that at that time Mexico had not yet developed an all-encompassing climate strategy of its own and was thus still open for suggestions (Interview 2014c).

RUSI and the British Embassy conducted two projects between 2008 and 2013 commissioned by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and partly funded by the British *Prosperity Fund*. The projects included workshops with several Mexican and international climate NGOs²⁰, Universities (UNAM, Universidad Iberoamericana) and the publication of two larger reports. Both projects were part of *RUSI*'s "Climate Change and Security Programme" that they had been conducting since 2006 and which was supposed to engage traditional security actors in a dialogue about climate change (Feakin and Depledge 2010: title pages 3). The first project was conducted between 2008 and 2010 under the lead of *RUSI* together with some regional organisations²¹ with the final report being published at the end of the project: "*Climate-Related Impacts on National Security in Mexico and Central America*" (Feakin and Depledge 2010). As the title suggests, it was targeted at the larger region and was supposed to accumulate information about the connection between climate change and security in Mexico and Central America and about the knowledge and opinions of the local stakeholders. Moreover, it was designed to raise awareness amongst politicians and security practitioners for the security aspects of climate change. Concrete recommendations were to include climate change into Mexican security planning schemes as well as to improve inter-departmental and regional cooperation on the topic (Feakin and Depledge 2010: 65–66; Interview 2014c). With regard to climate security discourses, this first report mostly focused on the territorial level and used security as well as risk based threat constructions (Feakin and Depledge 2010: v, 21).

This was directly followed by a second project that was based on the findings of the first one, but focused exclusively on Mexico. The country was chosen because of its vulnerability

²⁰ Besides others CEPAL, GLOBE, SEMARNAT, CONAGUA, INE, INM, CISEN, CEMDA, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, OXFAM, IMCO und Greenpeace Feakin and Depledge (2010: title page 2); Deheza and Mora (2013: vii).

²¹ Fundación para el Ecodesarrollo y la Conservación (FUNDAECO), Comisión Centroamericana de Ambiente y Desarrollo (CCAD), and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCC) Feakin and Depledge (2010: title page 1).

to the effects of climate change and its many different climatic zones that could exemplify the broad variety of climate change effects. Thus, Mexico represented a perfect example to show how the security effects of climate change could become relevant. Moreover, RUSI picked Mexico as example because it was highly engaged in the international climate debate. One of the main characteristics of this second project was its close interconnectedness with Mexican stakeholders, especially with various governmental departments relevant for climate change and also for security matters²². The idea was to create the report together with the Mexicans so that eventually it would be regarded as their own, instead of as being imposed from the outside (Interview 2014e; Deheza and Mora 2013: v–xi). Yet, this endeavor failed in the end (see the next section). Apart from raising general awareness especially for the problems of individuals due to climate change, its aim was to integrate climate security into Mexican policies, particularly into the 5th communication to the UNFCCC and into the Mexican National Security Programme (Deheza and Mora 2013: 82–85; Interview 2014c). The main focus of this second report was originally the nexus between climate change, migration, organised crime and security. However, in the midst of the project the part on organised crime had to be taken out because of objections of the Mexican Foreign Ministry that feared interference in Mexican security policy and also deemed the topic of organised crime too sensitive to be handled by outsiders. In the end the second project produced one interim report in 2011 (Deheza 2011), which still contains a lengthier section on organised crime, and a final edited version: “*Climate Change, Migration and Security. Best Practice and Operational Options for Mexico*” (2013), in which this chapter is absent (Deheza and Mora 2013).

Concerning the particular security discourses used in the two RUSI projects, the participants were aware of the fact that security issues could be a quite sensitive topic in Mexico, particularly with regard to drug trafficking and organised crime. Thus, they actively tried to establish a new conception of security that differed from the traditional understanding and focused on seemingly “softer” notions of security, for instance on risks to individuals due to the physical effects of climate change. The advantage of this approach was that it corresponded to some events happening at that time such as severe droughts in the northern parts of Mexico (Interview 2014c). However, there were also considerable differences between the two reports of RUSI. While the first reports still regularly refers to “national security” and more often applies the territorial climate-security discourse (Feakin and Depledge 2010: v, 21), the second

²² Instituto Nacional de Ecología y Cambio Climático (INECC), Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT), Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional (CISEN), Comisión Nacional del Agua (CONAGUA) Deheza and Mora (2013: v).

report actively tries to avoid this term and focuses much more on the individual level and on the risk dimension (Deheza and Mora 2013: 94; Interview 2014e). Accordingly, the recommendations of the two reports differ as well. Whereas the first report focuses more on integrating climate change into the security planning schemes of traditional security actors (Feakin and Depledge 2010: 65–66), the second one is much more concerned with the problems of individuals and with how climate risks to their lives can be adequately handled by the authorities (Deheza and Mora 2013: 82–85).

3.2.3 *Connected Policies: A Case of Failed Securitisation?*

All in all the securitisation of climate change has to be considered failed or at least very limited in its influence on Mexican policies and the overall debate on climate change in the country. It was, apart from some exceptions, not able to transform the overall debate on climate change in a sustained manner or to legitimise important new policies. However, the two most relevant securitisation attempts did raise some awareness for a limited period of time and were able to place some climate security arguments in the political discussions. Moreover, when looking at the few political consequences that can be found, it becomes apparent that they indeed corresponded to the climate security discourses that dominated the securitisation attempts in Mexico.

The first securitisation attempt by *PDCI* and its partners had considerable problems to convince the political stakeholders of the importance of the climate-security framing. Firstly, this argument was quite new and unconventional for Mexico and did not have a long political tradition²³. Secondly, it was difficult for *PDCI* to establish their argument on a long-term basis because they organized their workshops on climate security in the *Camara de Diputados* that only foresees non-consecutive three-year terms for its members²⁴. Hence, because the project started in the middle of a legislative period many politicians left parliament shortly after having built a connection with the project (Interview 2014d). Furthermore, although they started out with the motivation to discuss the security aspects of climate change, in the course of the process the focus shifted towards a more general discussion of climate change (Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 40). In 2009 the process ended prematurely after two workshop sessions in the *Camara de Diputados* due to different conceptions of the goals of the project between *PDCI* and the

²³ Unlike for instance in the United States where environmental and climate security debates already took place in the 1990s and were firmly established in the thinking of many politicians and military leaders when in the 2000s climate change was again connected to security(see Lucke *et al.* (2014b: 12).

²⁴ With hindsight, some participants of the project thought that it probably would have been more effective to also work with the Senate, as its members are elected for a longer time period and are more influential in general Interview (2014d).

British Embassy that led to the end of the funding. While the main goal of PDCI had been to foster an open-ended dialogue process, the British were more interested in concrete policies as results of the process (Interview 2014d; Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009). Despite its problems, the project was able to exert some influence, though not all of it is directly linked to the security implications of climate change. It succeeded in influencing some minor laws in the environmental sector, for instance concerning the vulnerability of certain sectors towards climate change effects (see Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 15 for a detailed list of the outcomes). Furthermore, it led to a non-binding political declaration in which the signatories declared that they would attempt to integrate the security impacts of climate change into Mexican policies, to establish working groups on the topic in the *Senate* and in the *Comision Intersectorial de Cambio Climatico* and to inform the public about their efforts (Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 16–17). Finally, it strengthened the dialogue between civil society and politicians and particularly improved the coordination between the various non-governmental actors themselves. Eventually this led to the founding of the *Grupo de Financiamiento para Cambio Climático* in 2010, a consortium of 15 climate NGOs that focuses on the effective implementation of Mexican climate policies and has exerted considerable influence in Mexico (Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 15; CEMDA 2010).

The second securitisation attempt under the leadership of *RUSI* and the *British Embassy* was able to generate some attention in Mexico and also beyond its borders, at least for a limited timeframe²⁵. Its workshops in the country were well-attended by various NGOs and governmental actors and due to good connections between the embassy and higher-ranking members of the executive in Mexico its message was circulated in political circles as well²⁶ (Interview 2014c). Yet, the first report was merely a first step and mainly accumulated information on the topic and had no immediate impact on concrete policies. The second report aimed more concretely at Mexican policies and particularly was supposed to influence Mexico's 5th communication to the UNFCCC and the National Security Programme and Law in particular, though eventually it encountered severe problems when it came to the dissemination of the results in Mexico. The main problem was a misunderstanding between the project and the *Mexican Foreign Ministry* that eventually led to considerable diplomatic annoyances. Despite the efforts of the project to avoid traditional security conceptions and to

²⁵ RUSI participated in various events around the world and presented its findings, for instance at the US Wilson center in Washington DC Wilson Center and RUSI (2013).

²⁶ Especially the close cooperation with the head of GLOBE at that time, Carolina Hernandez, was crucial for getting the ideas of the report to the Mexican senators and members of the Camara de Diputados Deheza and Mora (2013: 5); Interview (2014e).

include the Mexican counterparts into the research process, the *Foreign Ministry* got the impression that the UK and RUSI (as outsiders to Mexico) were interfering with and criticising Mexican security policy. Hence, the Mexican authorities declined using the climate security argument in its official policies on climate change but allowed its ministries to use the findings of the project internally (Interview 2014c). The final report was banned from publication for six months and during this period even considered a threat to Mexico's national security itself. This went as far as communication being restricted to letters between the Foreign Ministries of Mexico and the UK (Interview 2014e). Eventually, the publication of an edited version (without the chapter on the nexus between climate change, security and organised crime) of the report was only possible after the election of a new government under President Enrique Peña Nieto in 2012. However, at that time much of the momentum of the arguments had dissolved and especially the connections to important political practitioners in Mexico were lost because a large portion of the personnel was replaced after the election so that a previously planned follow-up project could not be realised (Interview 2014e). Subsequently, Mexico increasingly developed its own approach to climate change and was much less receptive to suggestions from the outside. Thus, the window of opportunity to influence its policies towards the climate-security discourse had closed for the time being.

Although the attempts by PDCI/CCC and RUSI/UK Embassy to establish climate security arguments in Mexico encountered several problems and were limited in their immediate influence, some climate security arguments did enter into Mexican policies eventually. They appeared in debates of the Mexican parliament, as well as in planning schemes, laws and government programs. In the Mexican parliament climate security arguments were used to legitimise climate policies, especially in the debates about the Mexican Climate Law and several amendments to it between 2011 and 2013 (Senado de la Republica 2011a, 2011b, 2013). Although the law does not explicitly address climate change as a security problem, it contains some references to food security (Mexican Congress 2012: 5, 16, 30).

Climate change is as well getting increasingly more important in Mexico's disaster prevention and management planning schemes, with a clear focus on risk-management-based measures. This can be at least partly attributed to the unique climate security debate in Mexico that particularly focused on the well-being of individuals and the risks posed by natural disasters amplified by climate change. Examples are initiatives by the Ministry of Social Development to create risk and vulnerability atlases, disaster prevention and management plans, as well as the establishment of disaster funds (FONDEN, FOPREDEN) (Deheza and Mora 2013: 72–

73)²⁷. Also in line with the often risk-based climate security discourse, there is a widespread distribution of agricultural insurance schemes²⁸ in Mexico, both by private companies and government agencies (e.g. SAGARPA's Agrosemex) (Deheza and Mora 2013: 76).

There are few examples where Mexican officials have eventually integrated climate change into considerations and documents of the security sector. There were two attempts to reform the *Mexican National Security Law* (Mexican Congress 2005). One originating in Congress in 2009, which pressed to make some amendments to the law to explicitly address climate change as a national security threat under article 5 of the law. A second initiative coming from the leftist opposition party PRD in 2011 that particularly tried to include human rights considerations into the law (Deheza and Mora 2013: 79; Taniguchi 2011). To date (January 2015), however, this reform is still pending. As one of the most important developments, climate change has recently been integrated into the *Mexican National Security Program 2014-2018* as an important topic that is even addressed in a message of President Nieto at the beginning of the programme (Mexican Government 2014: 17)²⁹. This integration had been an important goal of the political declaration reached by the PDCI project as well as an aim of RUSIs work in Mexico (Sánchez Gutiérrez *et al.* 2009: 16–17; Deheza and Mora 2013: 82). Apart from these developments, there have been discussions in the Mexican *Centre for Intelligence and National Security* (CISEN) to do more research on the security aspects of climate change and to include it into the *Annual Risk National Agenda* (that CISEN develops for the National Security Council and that forms the basis for the National Security Program). There even existed a plan to open a new department focusing entirely on climate change, though this has not happened yet (Deheza and Mora 2013: 80; Interview 2014e)³⁰.

In summary, the direct attempts to securitise climate change were initially not successful and did not lead to a wider recognition of climate change as a security issue in Mexico. Thus, the security argumentation is still far from being the defining climate discourse in the country. However, in recent years there were several instances where climate security or risk arguments were discussed and also entered into policies or planning schemes. Interestingly, most of these policies can be considered in line with the individual level and the risk dimension that also

²⁷ However, in an interview with the author in 2014, climate security arguments were not very well known in the Mexican disaster prevention department CENAPRED. Thus, the integration of climate change into the disaster planning schemes cannot be directly associated with the climate-security debate.

²⁸ For example against a higher frequency of droughts in the north or flood damage in the south of Mexico.

²⁹ The former National Security Program 2009-2012 did mention climate change, but only as a side issue amongst other environmental risks Mexican Government (2009: 5).

³⁰ The role model for this development is the US Central Intelligence Agency that had opened a centre for climate security in 2009, although it was already closed down by Congress in 2011.

dominated the securitisation attempts in Mexico. Hence, this can be seen as confirming the expectation that the specific climate security discourse used in a securitisation process leads to particular political consequences. Furthermore, it also gives some preliminary support to the idea that even securitisations that appear to have failed at first sight (because no immediate measures can be found and the prevailing non-security discourse is not challenged) can nevertheless exert some indirect influence. They do so by placing certain discourses on the agenda, by incrementally changing the broader context in which the securitisation takes place and thereby slowly changing the perceptions of what is considered normal and legitimate (see the Paris School, Bigo and Tsoukala 2008).

3.2.4 The Context of the Attempted Securitisation in Mexico: Politicisation Beats Securitisation

How can we understand the limited success of the securitisation of climate change in Mexico? Besides the concrete reasons elaborated in the previous section, several contextual factors impeded the successful securitisation of climate change and a widespread dissemination of climate security arguments. Ironically, one primary reason was the relatively successful and influential general climate debate in Mexico, so to speak the politicisation of climate change. Mexico had integrated climate change quite early into its policies and had granted considerable political weight to the climate debate. Hence, there was no immediate need to generate further attention for the topic by securitising it. This finding is reinforced by statements of various Mexican climate NGOs claiming that they had fairly good relationships with the government, and generally speaking were quite content with what the government had done on the matter (Interview 2014b, 2014a)³¹. Accordingly, the main problems in Mexico was not a lack of laws on climate change but rather their effective implementation, especially on the local level.

A further structural factor was that the number of NGOs actively focusing on climate matters was fairly small in Mexico, especially compared to similar countries (concerning size, broader region and the level of economic and social development) such as Brazil. One important reason for the small number of NGOs and their limited influence is the only recent democratisation of the country in the year 2000 (Peters and Maihold 2007: 36). Although the preparations for the international climate negotiations in Cancún in 2010 led to a rise in NGOs tackling climate change, many of them only took up the topic as an opportunistic strategy and only very few organisations had deeper knowledge of climate matters and a longer tradition in advocating climate policies (for example the Centro Mario Molina or CEMDA). Hence, this

³¹ Of course this is not true for every aspect or every organisation. For instance, some NGOs like Greenpeace and the German Boell Foundation pursued a more confrontational approach (ref).

lack of influential genuine Mexican NGOs and the connected fact that the only attempts to securitise the issue originally came from international actors also can explain in part the limited success of climate security discourses. Particularly the UK/RUSI attempt eventually failed because these actors were perceived as outsiders to Mexico and lacked long-term political connections to all relevant parts of government.

An additional impeding condition was that the political importance of several “hard” security problems such as narco-trafficking and organised crime did not leave much space for a “soft” security problem such as climate change, which was mostly considered to only materialize in the future (Interview 2014b, 2014d). The following table 2 gives an overview of the most prevalent climate security discourses, the main actors and events, and the influence on policies in Mexico.

The Attempted Securitisation of Climate Change in Mexico	
Dominant Discourses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Risk, Territorial Risk • Both partly mixed with security dimension
Main Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Embassy, RUSI, PDCI, CCC
Main Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2008-2011 PDCI/CCC project • 2009-2011 British Embassy and RUSI project • 2011 End of climate-security debate
Influence on Policies	Low to medium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only a few debates in the parliament • Some minor influence on laws and policies • Climate change is mentioned in National Security Programme 2014-2018

5. Conclusion

In this paper I set out to uncover how climate change was securitised in Mexico, which actors and structural conditions played a role, whether this securitisation was successful, and what political consequences were enabled. The analysis revealed that the climate-security discourses in Mexico mostly focused on the individual level and on the risk dimension, albeit with other discourses present to some extent. However, it has also become apparent that despite two attempts to securitise climate change by RUSI/British Embassy and PDCI and its partners, the whole process has to be considered a failure or at least only very limited in its influence on Mexican political debates and policies. Unlike in other countries, e.g. the United States, the climate security argumentation never gained enough momentum in Mexico to seriously challenge or transform the mainstream discourse of climate change as an environmental and economic topic. The main reasons for this failure were on the one hand developments at the micro-level of the securitisation process, and here especially a serious clash between the

Mexican Foreign ministry and RUSI/British Embassy, which in the end made it almost impossible to further pursue the climate security argument in the country. On the other hand, several structural conditions hindered a successful securitisation of climate change. Ironically, it was particularly the successful politicisation of climate change that turned out to be a major hindrance for its securitisation. Alongside the successful politicisation that eventually led to Mexico becoming an international forerunner in climate issues and enabled the country to adopt a progressive domestic climate law, securitisation was just not necessary and thus did not meet great resonance amongst political actors as well as NGOs or think tanks. The predominance of other “hard” security issues, as well as the absence of a longer tradition of climate security arguments and the high fluctuation of political personnel were further impeding factors for a widespread and influential securitisation. These findings shed some light on how securitisation functions in general and how it relates to a parallel politicisation of the same issue. More concretely it shows how the actors, the developments on the micro-level, the context and the specific security discourses matter.

Firstly, regarding actors, the case study shows that in order to be successful in a domestic context, securitisations need strong domestic actors that are firmly rooted in the country’s political system. To have a sustained impact and to place the argumentation in the relevant political circles these actors need expertise in the matter, long standing political connections and the trust of the political decision makers. Not all of this was present in the Mexican case. Moreover, in order to be successful on a broader basis and over a longer period, it does not suffice if only a few actors pick up the securitising arguments, but it instead requires a rather broad coalition of actors, such as in the case of the United States.

Secondly, the Mexican case offers us some interesting insights into the micro-level of securitisation processes and shows that it is worthwhile to include this level into the analysis, as the most relevant developments might be overlooked by a more macro-oriented analysis. It also underlines the need for more in-depth case studies of securitisation that include a profound understanding of the local dynamics and interviews with the actual actors that were involved. Otherwise, one can easily overlook important turning points such as the diplomatic confrontation between RUSI and the Mexican Foreign Ministry.

Thirdly, the case reinforces the argument about the need to include the context of the securitisation. More concretely, it became clear that without a longer tradition of security arguments in the respective field, the resonance in political circles can be quite limited, especially if there are other “hard” security issues, as it was the case in Mexico. Furthermore, securitisation can have a hard time if there is a successful politicisation of the same issue, which

renders the security argumentation obsolete. This reinforces the argument that the relationship between politicisation and securitisation is more complicated than often assumed. Thus, while a politicisation can under certain circumstances lead to a securitisation, it can also hinder the securitisation, as it has been the case in Mexico.

Finally, although the securitisation in Mexico was only limited in its success and the case can therefore give only some tentative insights, it shows, that the climate security discourses that dominate a securitisation attempt indeed matter with regard to the policy consequences. Thus, one should not see securitisation as a monolithic and exclusively negative endeavour, but has to regard it as multifaceted process that can only be understood and judged after a careful examination of each individual case.

In future studies it would be useful to broaden the analysis to include other cases of securitisation and to approach the issue from a comparative perspective. Likewise, it might be interesting to conduct a more thorough network analysis of the actors involved. Nonetheless, I hope that the findings of this case study can provide a starting point to explore the mentioned dynamics in more detail and to encourage an empirical research agenda of securitisation that includes countries from the Global South.

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