The Securitization of Global Environmental Policy: An Argument Against

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Received: 10 May 2022 / Accepted: 6 September 2022 / Published online: 15 September 2022 © The Author(s) 2022

Abstract
Arguing from the traditional point of view with regard to the concept of securitization, this work analyses the effects securitization has on international environmental policy on the example of four case studies—the Rio Conference, the climate change regime, the ozone depletion regime as well as the fragmented forest regime. Contrasting securitization to the variables of regime complexity and the national interest, its twofold effects become evident. While succeeding in “raising the stakes” of an issue, securitization at the same time provokes conflicts between either the actors involved (e.g., forest convention negotiations) or the actors and the regime itself (e.g., climate change regime).

Keywords Securitization · Global environmental regimes · National interest · Sovereignty · Cooperation

1 Introduction

Whether or not a securitization of the environmental sphere of global politics is desirable has been under discussion for decades and became even more prominent today. Proponents emphasize the benefits they expect to come along with securitizing the environmental sector, first and foremost the increased efficiency of environmental policies gained out of extraordinary measures for which securitization paves the way. The opponents, in turn, remain sceptical and remind the proponents of the
conflict-laden mind-set connected to the notion of security that heavily impinges upon international cooperation, and, instead, favors competitive up to straightaway hostile behavior due to the “logic of war” \(^1\) (Weaver, 1995, p. 54) that is eventually evoked as a result of making an issue a matter of national security.

Among the most prominent thinkers that emphasize the problematic nature of securitization and the dangers its usage yields are Ole Weaver, the concept’s developer, and Barry Buzan who is a leading expert in the analysis of the security concept (see e.g. Buzan, 1984). In their famous book “Security: a new framework for analysis”, 1998, Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde suggest that “When considering securitizing moves such as “environmental security” […] one has to weigh the always problematic side effects of applying a mind-set of security against the possible advantages of focus, attention, and mobilization “ (p. 29). Another prominent scholar clearly against the linkage of those two concepts is Daniel Deudney who empathized: “First, it is analytically misleading to think of environmental degradation as a national security threat, because the traditional focus of national security—interstate violence—has little in common with either environmental problems or solutions. Second, the effort to harness the emotive power of nationalism to help mobilize environmental awareness and action may prove counterproductive by undermining globalist political sensibility” (Deudney, 1990, p. 461).

The proponents answer that argumentation by claiming that the zero-sum logic behind the traditional concept of security can be overcome by broadening the concept as to include other issues than national security or to even re-define `security` as to be understood not in terms of national security, but in terms of individual security (e.g. Rothschild, 1995; Trombetta, 2007) or global security (Ullmann, 1983; Westing, 1989). There is, however, some conceptual and logical error behind this argument.

The conceptual error lies in the simple fact that in case a concept is redefined, it changes its meaning, thus, it becomes a semantically different concept. As argued by Waever, in case of broadening, “the concept of security becomes all-inclusive and is thereby emptied of content” (Waever, 1995, p. 51). As a result, the concept becomes too abstract to retain its analytical value (Ibid.). The logical error entails many aspects. Let’s quickly discuss them one by one starting with the lowest level of analysis- the individual.

Individual security is a concept that is “inseparably linked to the state and the institute of citizenship” (Gordeeva, 2016, p. 111), since it is the state that provides a mechanism through which individuals seek to obtain security (Buzan, 1983). This mechanism is embodied by the prerequisite of security—the means to implement it, thus, by the `means of violence` \(^2\) that are only available to a state. Therefore, the pursuit of individual security becomes possible only within the borders of a state in which the individual is located. On the international arena, there can be no such concept as individual security, as individuals do not act within the structure of the

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\(^1\) Concept originally by Carl von Clausewitz (2018), describing a situation in which the initial political purpose is replaced with the ultimate aim of war—victory.

\(^2\) Features of the state by Weber (1978).
international system, but within the structure of the state. To speak of individual security in a global context is, therefore, to speak of national security.

There is an entire set of problems with the doctrine of “environmental security” related to national security. Within the state, the tensions created by the “securitization of the environment” might lead to a group of people being “classified as the “aggressors” in an environmental conflict situation and therefore become targets of environmental conflict solutions implemented by the state” (Detraz and Betsill, 2009, p. 315). As a result, the individual security of these people will decrease. When the object or process identified as causing an environmental threat is located outside the own state’s borders, the situation becomes even worse, since such a reference either entails a direct threat to the national security of the state within which borders the said threat was identified, or simply becomes a non-operational, “empty” presumption. Both outcomes are likely to result in the opposite rather than in achieving a higher level of national security, since the other states will feel threatened and might take measures in return (Herz, 1950; Butterfield, 1951; Jervis, 1982). Consequently, the security of the individuals inhabiting those states will decrease sharply and so will the overall level of security in the international system. This is due to the fact that a security doctrine opens the way for such military strategies as “ecological interventions” or any sorts of economic or other sanctions.

Finally, there is the argument of framing security as a collective, global good to be achieved by means of cooperation (Westing, 1989). Given the rule of anarchy that governs over the international system and the lack of global citizenship, such reasoning can be put aside as utopian. The author himself admits that it would require “economic re-ordering, and social adjustments on truly grand scales—with the major powers presumably taking the lead in the necessary action” (Westing, 1989, p. 130).

An alternative way of approaching environmental security without the changing of the definition of “security” is to link environmental causes to traditional national security outcomes, such as conflicts over scarce resources and migration (Barnett, 2001; Homer-Dixon, 1994). Detraz and Betsill, 2009, have referred to this conception as “environmental conflict”. In this case, however, the same competitive logic as described above applies and the discussion shifts from environmental goals to traditional national security goals. Therefore, this type of a security discourse is irrelevant for this work and will therefore not be considered.

Thus, supporting the sceptic’s view on the matter, this work intends to elaborate on the concerns related to the securitization of global environmental politics. In order to achieve this goal, the work will be divided into a theoretical and an analytical part both dedicated to an elaboration and validation of the claim made above.

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3 Referencing to the agent-structure logic by A. Wendt (1987).
2 Objects and Actors

To avoid any semantic misunderstandings, we need to clarify the definitions straight from the beginning. Throughout this work, securitization is understood in the way the concept’s developers—the Copenhagen School, have defined it. Thus, securitization is understood as a discursive process—a speech act—through which an issue is linked to an existential threat that allows for the usage of extraordinary measures. The concept is inevitably linked to the logic of war and the notion of power: “to study securitization is to study the power politics of a concept” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 32). A concise definition to “securitization” was given by Geogrios Karyotis who defined it as a “process through which an issue becomes a security one, not necessarily because of the nature or the objective importance of a threat, but because the issue is presented as such” (Karyotis, 2007, p. 3).

For securitization to “set in”, the following elements that can best be phrased in terms of questions must be present: “Who/what is to be protected?” “From whom/what?” and “By whom?”. The “who/what is to be protected”—element entails two components, I believe. The first one is what Buzan et al. (1998), have referred to as the referent object, thus, “things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survive” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 36). As further argued by the authors, “security action is usually taken on behalf of, and with reference to, a collectivity” (Ibid.), e.g., a nation. In the case of environmental securitization, the global population or a specific community might be referred to as well. The second component entails an object or a process that is supposed to be protected in order for the referent object to survive (to be thereafter referred to as object of securitization). In the case of environmental securitization, an object might be a river or a forest, while a process could be, e.g., the global climate.

The next question behind securitization that needs to be answered is from whom or what the object of securitization needs to be protected. For Buzan et al. (1998), the element answering that question was referred to as functional actors, thus, those actors influential in the sector that is to be securitized without being either the referent object or a securitizing actor, e.g., a polluting company in the case of environmental securitization (p. 36). However, since securitization is about invoking the friend-enemy logic, it is more conducive to this analysis to simplistically refer to this category as “the enemy”, since “functional actor” is too neutral to suffice to the logic of the securitization concept. Its neutral nature and detachment from the friend-enemy logic makes the concept of “functional actor” a better fit for a category of the risk management concept as in line with Robert Castel, 1991.

Finally, the “by whom?”—element requires attention. This element of securitization was labeled by Buzan et al. (1998), as securitizing actors, referring to the “actors who securitize issues” (p. 36), thus “someone or a group, who performs the security speech act. Common players in this role are political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists and pressure groups” (Ibid., p. 40).

Another aspect of the concept of securitization pointed out by Buzan et al. (1998), and relevant for this analysis is that it should not be confused with the
concept of politization. While the authors agree upon the idea that “[…] in one sense securitization is a further intensification of politization” (Ibid., p. 29), there is a substantial difference between the two concepts that basically lies in the distinction about whether an issue is simply requiring public attention, government decision and perhaps local governance or whether an “issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying action outside the normal bounds of political procedure” (Ibid., pp. 23–24).

Thus, in our analysis, we need to differentiate between politization and securitization as well as to identify the components of securitization (object of securitization, referent object, securitizing actors and “the enemy”) for each of the four cases that are to be analyzed throughout this work. The cases are the global sustainable development regime embodied by the Rio Conference, 1992, the global climate change regime institutionalized by the Paris agreement, 2015, the global forest regime (if we accept the current global construct of forest-related policy as a regime) and the ozone depletion regime created by the 1985 Vienna Convention and substantiated by the Montreal protocol in 1987. The cases were chosen, because each of the regimes is thought to protect a global resource (with the exception of the forest regime, in which the forests can be seen as both a national resource and as a global good) and in each case, attempts at securitizing the regime were made, either explicitly or less so. Given these similarities, the differences in outcome with regard to both the effectiveness of the securitization attempts and the resulting type of regime made the cases especially interesting objects of study.

The regime types were identified following the definitions suggested by Levy et al. (1995), who differentiates between dead letter regimes, tacit regimes, classic regimes and no regime with the help of two scales—formality and convergence of expectations. While staying aware of the concept’s complexity (Young & Levy, 1999), regime effectiveness was interpreted throughout this work in terms of direct effects in order to make the study feasible. As argued by Young and Levy (1999), “In most cases, direct effects center around behavior involving compliance with regime rules and participation on programmatic activities” (p. 12).

3 The Case Studies

After the precedential usage of the phrase “environmental insecurity” by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1987), there have been continues and numerous attempts by different actors to securitize the environmental policy sector. Let’s have a look at the selected case studies (summarized in Table 1):

3.1 Case 1: The Sustainable Development Regime

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, also known as the Earth Summit, can be regarded as a central component of a global environmental regime, since it formulated a global
| Case                  | Object of securitization                  | Referent object                                                                 | Securitizing actor                                      | "the enemy"                                                                 |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rio Conference       | Global environment                        | Global population, indirectly through economic and social wealth                | Brundtland Commission                                    | No clear reference                                                           |
| Climate change regime| Global climate                            | Global population, indirectly through economic and social wealth                | States (heterogeneous), strong role of NGOs              | Unsustainable economies and certain industries                                |
| Ozone depletion regime| Stratospheric ozone layer                 | Global population, directly                                                   | States (homogeneous)                                    | Specific substances used by a specific industry                               |
| Forest regime complex | National forests of the regime participants | Global population, overall indirectly                                          | Some interested states, environmental activists          | Unsustainable forest management, mostly in relation to “southern” forest-rich countries |
concept of environmental preservation and was signed by virtually all states of the Earth. The conference, however, focused not solely on the natural environmental, but also on economic and social issues, which together formed the “sustainable development” concept introduced into global politics by that Conference. It would therefore be more precise to say that the major goal of the Conference was not so much environmental preservation for the sake of itself, but that it was rather perceived as a means to achieve economic growth and social well-being.

Yet, the Rio Conference, reaffirming and building upon the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, did officially recognize environmental preservation as a global goal, succeeded in adopting respective agreements—even if formally legally non-binding, and to set up two legally binding conventions—the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and The Convention on Biological Diversity. Among the agreements there was the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development defining the rights and responsibilities of states, Agenda 21 outlining a program for global action in sustainable development as well as a Statement of Forest Principles aimed at promoting sustainable forest management.

Even though the Rio Conference builds upon the Brundtland report which has set a precedent by using the phrase “environmental security”, there were no such analogies to be found in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (nor is such a reference to be found in the 1972 Conference on the Human Environment which the Rio Conference reaffirmed). It is, however, found in Agenda 21, although mostly in the context of food security and occasionally referring to social security (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. 1), A/Conf.48/14/Rev.1). Thus, there is no reference to environmental security per se, but to indirect security threats that might arise out of environmental degradation. This finding confirms the spirit of the Conference, which was centered around the concept of sustainable development in which environmental protection is a means to achieve economic and social welfare rather than the ultimate goal.

Consequently, it would be incorrect to claim that an attempt at securitization was made by the Rio Conference. However, an attempt at securitization can be found in the Brundtland report—which is an important paper in the context of the Rio Conference. Stretching over 300 pages, the Brundtland commission’s report mentions the word “security” 121 times. Out of the 121 mentions of security, a considerable part is directed at food security, while, however, a direct link is made between national security threats and environmental degradation on several occasions. Three times, the term “environmental security” is used, two times—environmental insecurity” (Brundtland report, 1987). Hereby, no clear “enemy” to environmental security is identified, the language used to describe “the enemy” is held general, while the primary focus is on describing the threat itself.

Thus, we can conclude that a securitization attempt was undertaken by the Brundtland commission, yet it failed already at the stage of agenda setting and resulted in the politization of the matter as in line with Edkins (Edkins, 1999). Evidence for its failure is most illustratively displayed by the lack of reference to environmental security in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and its rather blurred presence in Agenda 21.
With regard to the regime’s type, the Rio Declaration can be categorized as a dead letter regime, I would argue. Reason for this is its high degree of formalization and the rather modest expectation that the rules formulated by the regime will be followed. Indeed, as was concluded by Myers and Macnaghten (1998), despite the widespread use of the sustainability rhetoric, a real behavioral change did not occur in politics and society. Yet, the regime was successful in introducing this rhetoric and establishing the concept of sustainable development as a new political norm. It also succeeded in paving the way for the biodiversity regime (not covered by this paper) and the climate change regime (to be discussed next). Therefore, while the sustainable development regime was successful in introducing a new political norm of sustainability and in paving the way for follow-up regimes, the regime itself does not fulfil the requirements to be classified as a classic regime.4

3.2 Case 2: The Global Climate Change Regime

The 2015 Paris agreement builds upon the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and can be regarded as a more successful attempt at securitization than the Rio Conference. Unlike the Kyoto protocol—which can be regarded as unsuccessful due to the following reasons: the USA did not ratify it; Canada withdrew from it; the majority of the world, among them key industrial counties, did not accept any binding targets or did so in a very limited way—under the same umbrella treaty (1992 Convention on Climate Change), the Paris agreement is both global in scope and partially legally binding.

The Paris agreement entails both legally binding and non-binding elements, which is most clearly illustrated in the language used. So, generalizing, one can summarize that the “shall” are the binding parts, whereas the “should” and the like are not. Analyzing the agreement, it becomes clear that the binding parts mostly concern the communication and reporting parts of the agreement, whereas its adoption into national policy with the respective responsibilities and subsequent implementation remains the sole responsibility of the agreement’s member states (A/RES/70/1). This finding is in line with the “pledge and review” (Keohane & Oppenheimer, 2016) mechanism established by the Paris agreement, according to which member states should feel pressured by the review and mutual control mechanism to which they have agreed.

Here, the ‘securitizing move’ made by several actors—including an unprecedented participation of NGOs—during the agenda setting phase of the policy cycle has made it through policy formulation and into (international) policy adoption. Throughout the text of the agreement, terms such as “threat of climate change” were used and continued references to “food security” were made (which mirrors the Rio Conference). By this, unlike in Rio, ‘environmental security’ has made it into the text of the international agreement. In this regard it is interesting to note that no direct references to a threat to individuals or groups of people posed by climate change or general environmental degradation were made. The threat was sought to

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4 “Classic regimes exist in those issue areas in which in addition to explicit rules and regular references to them, rule-consistent behavior is widespread” (Levy et al., 1995, p. 272).
rather be directed toward the climate itself and affect individuals and societies indirectly through economic and social losses. An “enemy” was also named in the process, even though not strikingly open. So, unsustainable economic practices, mostly related to fossil fuels, have been identified as the “enemy” by the Paris agreement.

Yet, despite references to security in the official text of the Paris agreement, no actual securitization of the issue took place, at least not globally. As argued by Buzan et al. (1998): “A discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitization—this is a securitizing move, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such “ (p. 25). This was not the case within the climate change regime. This can mainly be explained by scientific uncertainties with regard to causes and consequences of climate change which are coupled with the fact that not all countries can be expected to be affected by global warming in the same negative way (Lang, 1991). As a result, no clear and direct threat to their existence to derive from climate change was felt by world population in its entirety. The perceived threat was most prevalent in counties/regions that can be expected to be most negatively affected by global warming. These countries, consequently, turned out to be the most active actors within in the climate change regime. That was not the case with, e.g., the ozone depletion regime, where the majority of the world population felt directly and immediately treated by the “ozone hole” (Lang, 1991, p. 167).

Despite a potentially successful design of the measures adopted by the agreement, its actual implementation was anything but effective. This claim is supported both by the wider academic literature [a substantial literature review by Raiser et al. (2020)] as well as the data presented at Climate Action Tracker (2020). With the withdrawal of the United States, it can even be argued that it is a failed regime that has dissolved into several regional interest groupings out of which one full-fledged sub-regime has emerged (the Green Deal in the European Union (EU)). Up to now it is not clear which consequences the re-joining of the United States to the agreement will have and whether the recently held Glasgow Climate Pact will suffice to make the Paris Agreement more “operational”.

### 3.3 Case 3: The Global Ozone Regime

The ozone depletion regime is constituted by the Vienna Convention (1985), and the ensuing Montreal protocol, 1987, which specified the provisions adopted in Vienna after the `ozone hole` was discovered over the Antarctic and the issue of ozone depletion was successfully securitized (Lang, 1991). Article 2 of the Vienna Convention explicitly points out the reference object of securitization as well as the “enemy” identifying the goal of the regime to “protect human health and the environment against adverse effects resulting or likely to result from human activities which modify or are likely to modify the ozone layer” [Ch XXVII 2, (Vol 2)]. The securitization move made by the Convention, which was signed by virtually all states of the Earth, was embraced by the public, which was highly sensibilized by the threat deriving from the loss of the ozone protection layer that shields the planet from deadly radiation.
The successful securitization of the ozone depletion regime was warranted by two major factors. The straightforward nature of the threat identifying one clear danger—the loss of the stratospheric ozone layer, which was successfully visualized in the minds of the public by means of the `ozone hole’ metaphor, was the first factor of success (Wettestad, 2001). The second factor was the low cost associated with the measures provided for by the regime. In fact, only four countries were truly affected by those measures (due to big production facilities of CFC\(^5\)s)—the USA, Germany, France and Britain,— while the availability of substitutes made the phasing out of the harmful substances a comparatively “easy” target (Grundmann, 2018). The relatively low cost implied no conflict of interest between the regime and the national interest of its participants.

Thus, the global acceptability of the security threat deriving from the problem was largely owed to its simplicity, immediacy and the lack of conflict between the national interest of the regime’s key participants and the regime’s goals. As a result of the interplay between those factors, the regime turned out effective enough to be seen as an example or even a raw model for successful environmental regimes by many observers (e.g., Grundmann, 2018; Lang, 1991; Velders et al., 2007; Wettestad, 2001).

3.4 Case 4: The Global Forest Regime

Whether or not there is a global forest regime depends on the definition used. As argued, among others, by Pirlot, 2018, if one takes the presence of a multilateral legal framework for a prerequisite of a regime, there is currently no global forest regime, as the multiple attempts to agree upon a global forests convention have failed so far. However, if one accepts a fragmented, “patchwork-type” structure of a regime, then we very well can refer to the global construct of forest policy there currently is as a regime (Ibid.) or a regime complex (Giessen, 2013). As was observed by Humphreys, “despite the failure of states to agree upon a forests convention, there is broad agreement that an international forests regime has emerged […] However, the forests regime differs from most other environmental regimes which are structured around a single convention and subsequent protocols. The hard legal provisions of the forest regime exist under different covers […]. Other issues are subject to soft law” (Humphreys, 2001, pp. 133–134).

Throughout the history of the struggling over a global forest convention, several attempts at securitizing forest policy were made. In their attempt at securitization, the actors mostly portrayed forests as a global good which was to be protected for the sake of humanity. A similar move, though without the explicit usage of the “security” rhetoric, was undertaken during the UNCED negotiations on forests by a number of states (mostly economically developed states of the North, most notably Canada) for different reasons; yet, it was rejected by numerous (mostly economically developing) states primarily for reasons of sovereignty concerns—e.g., Malaysia and Brazil (Humphreys, 2005, pp. 4–6). Apart from sovereignty, forest industry

\(^5\) Chlorofluorocarbons.
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As a result of the serious involvement of national interest conflicts with regard to global forest policy, the securitization attempt did not make it into the official UNCED Treaty text or into any other subsequent international forest-related legislation. On the contrary, the parties seemed to deliberately “strip the international arrangement [in reference to the UNFF] of substantive content (Dimitrov, 2005, p. 10).

4 Securitization, Regime Complexity and the National Interest

Having discussed the four cases addressed in this analysis, let us combine the two variables I consider key for regime effectiveness—regime complexity and compatibility with the national interest, with that of securitization and apply the findings to the analyzed regimes.

As illustrated in Table 2, the key variable for international regimes effectiveness is compatibility with the national interest. In case of a conflict between the regime and the national interest of its key participants, the regime can be expected to either not be created at all (the forest regime) or fail at some point (climate change regime). When there is no strong conflict between the regime’s goals and the national interest of the regime’s participants, the second determining variable—regime complexity—sets in to influence the degree of the regime’s effectiveness (Wettestad, 2001; Grundmann, 2018). The “easier” the solution to a problem offered by the regime, the higher the degree of the regime’s effectiveness.

An example of such a case is the ozone depletion regime. Its unique combination of a “tame” problem that can be solved at a comparatively low economic and political cost and is accompanied by substantial domestic political gains (though

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6 United Nations Forum on Forests.

7 In a low political regime such as any regime within the environmental political domain, the power position of a regime participant is often determined not so much by the external relative power it yields (as would be the case in a high political regime), but by his bargaining power. The bargaining power of a regime participant is predominantly determined by the either the availability of the resource which is to be protected or the industries which harm the object/process which is to be protected by the regime.

8 Term by Grundmann (2018).
extensive public approval) makes the ozone depletion regime an exception. In most cases, the issue addressed by an environmental regime will be less straightforward and might meet resistance from competing national interests of at least a number of its participants. In that case, the regime can either be expected to not be created at all (the forest regime), fail (climate change regime) or become a “dead letter” (sustainable development regime). In that case, the resulting type of regime will to a great part depend on the variable analyzed throughout this work—securitization. Let us have a closer look at the interplay between securitization and the national interest then.

The Rio Conference represents an example of a dead letter regime. Since there is no direct conflict involved between the regime and the national interest of its participants—which is mainly for reasons of its “loose” nature that became possible due to the failed securitization attempt—, the regime can be expected to run mainly for the sake of public opinion as well as to satisfy the individual norms of the regime’s participants [in reference to the norm of environmental multilateralism by Dimitrov (2005)]. This will continue as long as no explicit conflict between the regime and the national interests of its participants arises. As soon as it does, the regime can be expected to lose its integrity. Exactly this is what happened to the climate change regime. Unlike most analysts who blame the “looseness” of the Paris Agreement for the regime’s ineffectiveness and complain about the too big role that was attributed to nation states (Raiser et al., 2020), I see this “looseness” as the only factor that has allowed the regime to be created in the first place. It dissolved after a while, though, as nation states felt increasingly pressured by the regime—something that has resulted in the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

But why was the Paris Agreement concluded in the first place? I believe that the variable of securitization has played a role in that process. By referring to the logic of security, the regime has attempted to raise the stakes, which has resulted in the nations involved being “forced” to subscribe to something that potentially contradicted their national interest. They did so to escape the growing pressure originating from both domestic civil society (largely influenced by NGOs) as well as NGOs which presence and participation was exceptional throughout the Paris agreement negotiations. I further believe that the conclusion of the regime was only possible due to the relative freedom of adoption it offered at the national level. However, as soon as the regime started to impinge upon the national sovereignty of its participants (which entails the freedom to decide over one’s national policies), the regime lost its integrity.

In case of the global forest regime, the factor of national interest is even more present than it was in the three other examples. This is primarily due to the fact that the global forest regime was aimed at dealing with a national resource. This is unlike the other cases where the object of securitization was a global resource. Resulting therefrom, a serious conflict between the regime and the national interest of most if not all its participants arose in one way or another. This has led to the non-conclusion of the global forest convention and the resulting very fragmented construct of global forest policy we see now.

As becomes evident from the cases analyzed, the role of the security rhetoric in relation to the regime outcome is strikingly different. While it contributed to
The establishment and overall effectiveness of the ozone depletion regime, its role with regard to the other three regimes was a different one. The failed securitization attempt of the sustainable development regime has allowed it to be successfully created and remain in place until today even though its influence has been mainly normative. While no securitization of the global sustainable development regime took place, the securitization of the climate change regime was successful in forcing the regime into existence. However, since the variable of national interest does not go well with securitization, the result was the regime’s ineffectiveness. This case becomes even more illustrative on the example of the global forest regime complex. As became obvious during the UNCED negotiations, already the slightest reference to forests as a global resource led to massive conflict among the potential regime participants. Being a concept inescapably linked to power, securitizing an issue of national interest to an actor means to challenge him and to provoke a conflict.

Summing up, it was established that securitization becomes a negative factor for the effectiveness of environmental regimes when it is applied to an issue that is of national interest to one or several key regime participants. This rule does not apply to high political regimes, of course, which themselves deal with issues of the national interest. In low political regimes, however, the level of concern with a common problem (which is a requirement for regime formation) should not go beyond that of politization. I believe that keeping environmental issues as technical as possible in order to avoid getting in conflict with the national interest of one or several of the regime’s participants would allow to achieve a higher level of cooperation within the respective regime. To put it in the words used by Ole Waever, what is required is “less security, more politics!” (Waever, 1995, p. 56).

Concluding the discussion, it should be added that a possible solution to the inherent conflict-laden notion of security is seen by some observers to lie in the “de-personalization” of the concept of security as in line with Castel, 1991, through its shift toward risk management. Indeed, approaching “security” issues in terms of “risks” was suggested as a solution to the problem linked to the traditional meaning of security, among others, by Beck, who argued to observe a change in the traditional security concept toward that of a global risk society in several of his works (e.g., Beck, 1994, 2006). However, in order for such a shift to occur, it requires a completely different set-up of the international system from what we have now. As was rightfully observed by Waever, 2002, in the realm of international relations, zero-sum logic is inescapably linked to the notion of security, while the logic of risk in relation to security is possible only at the level of a state. Thus, as long as there is no world government or any comparable entity, thus, as long as the international system is made of states that compete over resources and power in an anarchical system, any such reasoning—not to speak of references to a global society—remains utopic and the practice of securitization, in what form so ever, with regard to low political issues requiring global cooperation remains a dangerous and overall counterproductive undertaking.
5 Conclusion

This work thought to provide arguments against the claim that securitizing the environmental domain is a good idea. In order to achieve its goal, the paper provided a short theoretical discussion on the matter and elaborated on the notion of `securitization` as well as its components, while afterward offered examples of four global environmental regimes which shared certain features, while turned out completely different—the Rio Conference and the ensuing global sustainable development regime, the climate change regime, the ozone depletion regime and the fragmented forest regime.

Throughout this work, the concept of `securitization` and of `security` in general were understood in their traditional way as concepts inevitably linked to conflict, power, the military and the good old national interest. The mechanisms behind securitization were acknowledged to be a speech act and its subsequent acceptance/non-acceptance by the public. In case of acceptance, the securitization attempt can be seen as successful; in case of non-acceptance—as failed. Elements of securitization were established to be [in reference to Buzan et al. (1998)] the object of securitization, the referent object, the securitizing actor and the “enemy”.

The analysis of the Rio Conference has revealed that the attempt at securitization has failed at the agenda setting stage and did not make it into the treaty text. The regime turned out to be of a dead letter type, which is mainly due to its broad and non-restrictive (in relation to the national interest) nature. The climate change regime was established mainly because of the variable of securitization, which “forced” the nation states to conclude an agreement which contradicted the national interests of many participants. The result was the regime’s ineffectiveness. The ozone depletion regime shows an exceptional degree of effectiveness, which is a result of both a straightforward problem which can be solved at a low economic and political cost and displays no conflict with the national interest of its key participants. In that case, securitization played a positive role. As far as the forest regime is concerned, the negotiation of a global forest convention failed as a result of a strong involvement of the national interest variable, which, in relation to the national resource which forests constitute, did not have a positive effect on international cooperation. Any reference to forests as a global resource was met with resistance from the actors who felt threatened in their sovereignty. Had there been an attempt at securitization during the negotiations, more serious conflict between the participants would have been unavoidable.

Overall it can be concluded that securitization is a variable that does not go well with the national interest variable. Where they intersect, there is conflict. This, of course, does not apply to high political regimes in the same way, as they are inevitably and directly related to both security-considerations and the national interest. Here, these variables converge and practically become synonyms. As for low political regimes, securitization is an unfavorable practice, which should be abstained from in order not to impinge upon international cooperation, which is required to successfully pursue global environmental goals.
Acknowledgments I would like to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Dr. Norbert Weber for his thoughtful advice and constructive suggestions regarding this paper. I would also like to thank the reviewers who have invested their time in giving me valuable feedback that has helped to considerably improve my work.

Funding Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL. There is no funding to report.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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