Climate change, securitisation and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

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Abstract

Securitisation theory serves as a useful corrective to the 'climate determinism' evident in mainstream debates on the security effects of climate change, but there are divergences within this approach over what constitutes 'successful' securitisation. For the Copenhagen School, climate change has not been securitised because relevant state actors do not yet accept that emergency measures are necessary to tackle 'dangerous' climate risks. In contrast, 'sociological' proponents of securitisation theory identify 'successful' securitisation evident from climate policies that would not otherwise have been undertaken without the political mobilisation of crisis narratives concerning threats to human and ecosystem health.

These marked differences over climate change reflect, I argue, divergent spatialities deployed within securitisation theory. The Copenhagen school posits state-bounded territoriality as the power container dominating global security dynamics, viewing climate change as a weaker, deterritorial source of securitisation. Sociological approaches admit a wider set of security effects arising from the political mobilisation of climate threats, because securitisation is claimed to emerge from diverse performative spaces. A critical application of securitisation theory to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reveals insights from both strands on the outcomes of attempts to portray climate change as a regional security threat. However, I contend that the spatial analytics of securitisation theory miss vertical forms of power that, in the case of Israeli occupational practices, feature use of a climate threat scenario to reinforce processes of military-political domination.

Keywords: Israel-Palestine, climate change, security

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Given the highly securitised context of Israeli-Palestinian relations, it might be expected that the forecasted harmful impacts of climate change in the region would feed into, or even intensify, the reproduction of enmity that sustains the conflict. Thus, it is not surprising to see climate change presented as a 'threat multiplier' for the Middle East, particularly in relation to an anticipated collapse in available water resources (Bromberg et al 2009, 116; Lee 2009, 102-3; Sowers *et al.* 2011, 600). Various regional and external actors have constructed climate change as an existential threat to peoples and political institutions separate from, but ultimately compounding, other drivers of the conflict. Furthermore, both Israeli and Palestinian political authorities have acknowledged global warming as a serious risk to their populations, yet have at the same time publicly treated the issue as a challenge for environmental policy-making rather than a justification for exceptional, security-related responses.

For the Copenhagen school of securitisation theory, in situations, as above, where governmental actors reject emergency measures as necessary to tackle an acknowledged existential threat, securitisation is incomplete or unsuccessful. A distinctive spatial ontology is at play here: as I argue below, the Copenhagen School of security studies posits state-bounded territoriality as the main arena of power shaping security dynamics, while climate change is seen as a weaker, deterritorialising source of securitisation. In contrast, so-called 'sociological' proponents of securitisation theory recognise a wider set of security arising from the political mobilisation of climate threats, because securitisation is located in a diverse array of performative spaces, encompassing state and non-state actors. Thus, climate securitisation may still be judged successful if, in the absence of security

responses, crisis narratives have provoked policy responses that would not otherwise have been undertaken. The climate policies adopted both by the Israeli Government and Palestinian Authority can be explained in these terms, as can rising levels of donor funding committed to climate change initiatives in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

In this paper I critically apply securitisation theory to account for the nature and scope of climate securitisation in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The article is informed by an interpretive analysis of climate change documents and interviews in the region with state and non-state actors, undertaken in November-December 2008, May 2009 and June 2012.[i] After setting out the conceptual premises of securitisation theory, I identify those high-profile discursive moves which have popularised the notion of climate change as a threat multiplier for the region. I then examine how Israeli and Palestinian political authorities have responded to these securitising claims: their public preference for normal rather than security decision-making in relation to 'dangerous' climate change reflects instrumental motives, though the strategic reasoning is different for each side. The Copenhagen School and sociological variants of securitisation theory provide insights on the particular trajectories of threat construction in this example. However, I contend that the selective spatial analysis of securitisation theory miss vertical forms of power that, in the case of Israeli occupational practices, feature use of a climate threat scenario to reinforce asymmetric military-political influence. In the conclusion I draw several political-policy implications from the findings, highlighting why efforts to understand climate security claims and effects in the Israeli-Palestinian context need to acknowledge the systemic reproduction of violence.

Securitisation theory and climate change

Securitisation denotes ‘the active processes of invoking security and setting in motion policies and actions on the basis of presenting matters as threatening’ (Dalby 2009, 47). For traditional security studies, fed by realist presuppositions, security threats are above all military dangers to states thrown up by an adversarial, interconnected world. The key intellectual contribution of the Copenhagen School of security studies, over the past two decades, has been to formulate securitisation as a more complex construction of danger, focusing methodologically on speech acts identifying threats as needed urgent political attention. In these terms, securitisation refers to discursive processes through which communities treat an issue as an existential threat and are prepared, at least tacitly, to accept measures which may violate normal legal and social rules (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 23-5; Buzan and Hansen 2009, 212-7). The greater the political recognition and uptake of such discursive moves, the more securitisation is deemed to have succeeded. Part of the academic attraction of this approach is that its constructivist framework allows analysis of a wide universe of securitisation – including economic, social and environmental threats – that seems to capture more accurately than (neo)realist security studies a real world proliferation of security discourses and institutions.

For the Copenhagen School, environmental issues have a novel securitising potential on account of their high dependence on scientific findings: for environmental risks or hazards to justify emergency measures, targeted audiences have to accept the validity of relevant scientific claims and the urgency of prescribed actions. At the same time, the singular epistemology of environmental threats raises major hurdles to their securitisation as threats to human life; firstly, because the indirect, unintended nature of much environmental degradation bears little resemblance to the direct pathways of threatened or actual violence typically invoked by securitising moves (Trombetta 2008; 2011; Floyd 2010, 46). ‘Global warming’ represents a particular challenge in this respect due to the

distant and scrambled cause lines attributed to climate change, hence the political significance attached both to the scientific credibility of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and its current view that, without far-reaching international measures on climate mitigation, global greenhouse gas emissions are likely to lead to irreversible impacts on planetary conditions of life (IPCC 2007, 53-4). Even if relevant audiences accept the construction of climate change as an existential threat, a second hurdle to successful securitisation – common to other global environmental problems – concerns the strong disincentives to unilateral or collective political action facing states, which are compounded if only emergency or other exceptional measures are treated as recognisable security practices. It cannot be said that the UN climate regime has created state obligations that legitimise or constitute emergency measures. Thus, it is not surprising to read Copenhagen School scholars state that global warming has not been successfully securitised (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 464-5; 2009, 271-2).

However, within the securitisation literature several scholars have argued that the Copenhagen School has failed to register the distinctive set of institutional practices fostered by securitising moves in the environmental sector. Trombetta identifies 'successful' securitisation in those environmental policies that would not otherwise have been undertaken without the political mobilisation of crisis narratives concerning threats to human and ecosystem health, citing effective international action of stratospheric ozone depletion and, despite their modest results, global efforts to tackle climate change. Here the absence of emergency or other exceptional measures signifies a *transformation* rather than negation of security logics – from reaction to prevention, confrontation to cooperation, and national security to human security (Trombetta 2008; 2011). These are more than discursive shifts as it is a core claim of the sociological approach to securitisation that the different pragmatic contexts of security claims also co-determine their impacts; in other

words, that securitising moves have wider conditions of possibility and performative consequences than the 'self-referential' discursive effects stressed by the Copenhagen School (Floyd 2010, 42; Balzacq 2011, 20-1). For while the latter acknowledges that successful securitising moves require both internally consistent linguistic expression and socially appropriate conditions of use (Buzan et al 1998, 32-3), critics have charged that the latter conditions are, at best, under-determined (Salter 2008, 323; Balzacq 2011, 20-1).

These theoretical differences over the conditions and effects of climate securitisation also reflect the use of divergent spatialities to account for security dynamics. I highlight now a key contrast between the Copenhagen School focus on state-bounded territoriality and the analytical interest of sociological approaches in diverse performative spaces. Both spatial framings are of great relevance to geographers exploring securitisation (including in Israel/Palestine), but warrant critical interrogation.

First, the Copenhagen School posits *state-bounded territoriality as the power container dominating global security dynamics*, and this is judged to hold in the face of deterritorialising sources of securitisation, including from global warming and economic globalisation (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 464-8). To be sure, classic securitisation theory has developed a multi-scalar model of security interdependencies – encompassing local, domestic, regional and global levels – which opens analytical room for studying both territorial and non-territorial security constellations, as well as accommodating non-state actors (Buzan and Wæver 2003; 2009). Yet there remains also a constant premise that security threats tend to express a distance-decay function: as most threats travel more easily over short distances than long ones, security interdependencies are therefore usually bounded, it is claimed, by proximate state relations (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 11-12, 461-3).

Sociological security theorists have unsettled this cartographic framing, highlighting instead *relational contexts of securitisation where interactions are more autonomous and geographically differentiated in their effects*. The theoretical basis for their claim that security has multiple scalar expressions is a different interpretation of the speech act theory informing the Copenhagen School: in short, that a broader notion of performative force is needed to capture not only the communicative ('illocutionary') effects of discourses invoking existential threats and emergency responses, but also the behavioural ('perlocutionary') effects, if any, induced by such security claims (Stritzel 2007, 363; Floyd 2010, 52). Salter's work on security settings is emblematic of this perspective. Settings constitute the stages of interaction for securitising moves directed at particular audiences: employing Erving Goffman's metaphor of 'front-' and 'backstage' to emphasise the dramaturgical spacings of securitising moves, he shows how the control of discursive settings via selective disclosure can serve political interest positions on security, encompassing state and non-state actors (Salter 2008; 2011). As discussed below, there is at least one trajectory of climate securitisation in the Israeli-Palestinian case exhibiting strong front- and backstage differences symptomatic of differential control over settings.

Parallel to sociological securitisation theory, *critical political geographers have similarly adopted a broad notion of performativity to investigate the spatial projection and embodiment of security claims*. Here perfomativity denotes a discursive production of security effects as (re)iterated through communicative acts and technological renderings (Bialasiewicz et al 2007; Williams 2011). For critical geographical work on climate change, this has entailed examining the means by which popular imaginings of global warming have fed alarmist scenarios of conflict and insecurity (Barnett and Adger 2007; Grove 2010). More generally, critical geographers have challenged the idea, expressed by the

Copenhagen School, that securitisation necessarily expresses a centripetal geopolitical force, identifying more complex geographies of (in)security, including extra-territorial securitisations of fear, threat and risk (Hyndman 2007; Ingram and Dodds 2009; Gregory 2011). The claim here is not that territorial relationships are superseded, for the protection of territorial integrity from external (and internal) threats remains a key rationale for state-endorsed securitisations (Elden 2009). What critical geographers problematise is the notion of territory as horizontally bounded, registering for example under 'vertical geopolitics' how overhead projections of force, amplified by technologies of surveillance and war, realise security goals (Graham 2004; Adey 2010). Below I show that vertical vectors of power, expressing rigid Israeli control over Palestinian airspace and (sub)terranean water resources, are especially relevant to explaining the nature and scope of climate securitisation within this conflict. First, I indicate the extent to which climate change has been constructed as a threat multiplier in the Middle East.

Climate change as a Middle Eastern threat multiplier

The risk in the Middle East of harmful impacts from climate change raises the prospect of new patterns of securitisation and their relationship with existing security dynamics. For the Copenhagen School, the Middle East (extending from the North African Maghreb though the eastern Mediterranean to Iran and the Arab Gulf states) constitutes a 'regional security complex' (RSC) – a geographically coherent system of security interdependencies structured by proximate power relations and distinct patterns of amity and enmity: more precisely, the Middle Eastern RSC takes the form of a 'perennial conflict formation' where expectations of the use of violence routinely inform political relations. And the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, at the heart of a 'Levant subcomplex', marks the major faultline for antagonistic relations between Israel and the wider Arab world. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is therefore regarded in some ways as the key source for the

concentrated processes of securitisation spatially delimiting the Middle Eastern RSC according to domestic hostilities and the securitising interventions of external powers (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 43-53, 190-5).

Buzan and Wæver argue that the dominant security dynamics in the Middle Eastern RSC are *territorial*, notably inter-state disputes in the historical wake of decolonisation: these include of course a series of military clashes between Israel and neighbouring Arab states but encompass also the Gulf Wars (2003, 215-8). There are complex, shifting inter-regional alliances in the Middle East, as with the ebb and flow of Gulf Arab (and Iranian) support to various Palestinian factions. Moreover, security alignments with outside powers have significantly altered the Middle Eastern conflict formation. Since the end of the Cold War, the US in particular has scaled up its interventions in the region, boosting Israeli military capability and supporting Arab states who have made peace with Israel (Egypt, Jordan) or who serve US economic interests (the Gulf states). Of the latter, alongside its global geo-economic significance as an oil-exporter (which, as noted below, shapes its position in international climate negotiations), Saudi Arabia plays a key geopolitical role working to unite the main Palestinian factions – the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority and the Hamas-led government in Gaza – behind a pan-Arab peace plan. The Copenhagen School profile of the Middle Eastern RSC acknowledges the securitising role of such pan-Arabist (and Islamist) collective identities, for which the 'loss' of Palestine/Jerusalem fuels enmity against Israel. However, these ideological currents are ultimately seen as subordinate to state territorial interests.

Indeed, so over-determined is the conflict structuring the Middle Eastern RSC that, for the Copenhagen School, any *non-territorial* source of securitisation will tend to be re-territorialised within inter-state rivalries (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 256-7). Climate change

has recently become a major source for such security claims: various high-profile international efforts at climate securitisation have identified the Middle East as vulnerable to conflict escalation because of projected global warming. Global securitising moves directed at climate change have gathered pace since April 2007, when the UN Security Council held its first debate on the security implications of climate change. The meeting was convened under the UK Presidency, reflecting the political priority given to 'climate security' by UK Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett. At a ministerial speech the following month, Beckett warned that water shortages in the Middle East exacerbated by climate change could trigger new hostilities between Israel, Egypt and neighbouring countries (Beckett 2007). Her use of the 'threat multiplier' motif acknowledged an influential report on the threats of climate change to US national security issued by CNA Corporation and endorsed by an advisory board comprising retired high-ranking members of the US military. According to the CNA report, forecasted climate change impacts will compound governance and societal failings across volatile regions of the world, including the Middle East (CNA Corporation 2007). This securitising move was mirrored in a wave of subsequent reports released by North American and European think-tanks and NGOs – all representing the Middle East as a region under high risk of political instability and conflict as a direct or indirect consequence of climate change (Smith and Vivekananda 2007; WBGU 2008; Mabey 2008; Brown and Crawford 2009; Mazo 2010; International Institute for Strategic Studies 2011). I note in the next section that both Israeli and Palestinian authorities acknowledge such a potential for conflict, but at the same time publicly reject security-related measures as necessary to mitigate or adapt to climate change impacts.

Portrayals of climate change as a threat multiplier for the Middle East pay little attention to how 'climate' is securitised in the region, instead seeking to read off conflict trends from such 'climate-induced effects' as food insecurity, increased water scarcity and population

displacement. This climate determinism misses a major geopolitical division on climate change *within* the Middle East between the oil-exporting Gulf monarchies and the resource poorer Arab states. The former group of states, dominated in UN climate negotiations by the self-appointed leadership of Saudi Arabia, has taken an obstructionist stance to proposals for reductions in domestic greenhouse gas emissions, attributed by commentators to the interests of governing elites in protecting high oil revenues (Depledge 2008; Luomi 2010). In this context, the potential negative economic costs of international action on climate change mitigation are perceived as more of an existential threat to domestic political regimes than the physical impacts of climate change. However, for hydrocarbon-poor Arab countries and the Palestinians, forecasted climate impacts are of major concern, particularly in relation to food and water availability (UNDP 2009, 47-9). Similarly, attempts by the Gulf States to appropriate the global climate adaptation agenda to include the transition costs they face in moving away from fossil fuel dependence have compounded the political divergence from other Arab states, who are acknowledged within the UN climate regime to have pressing needs for assistance to reduce their climate vulnerability. This geopolitical divergence amongst Arab representations of climate change cautions against simplifying assumptions about threat multiplication in the region.

A failed securitisation? Israeli and Palestinian responses to climate securitising moves

Securitisation theorists argue that military-political disputes over territory dominate security dynamics in the Middle East. At the same time, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is seen as a special case of territorial rivalry – a 'domestic conflict' – because only Israel exercises sovereign responsibilities and capabilities over security (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 195). For the Palestinians of course there is no sovereign authority: their limited political self-governance fractured after the 2006 legislative elections, leaving a Hamas-led Islamist

government in Gaza and the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.[ii] The Palestinian territory under military control by Israel since 1967 has consistently been recognised by the UN as subject to 'belligerent occupation': this designation is disputed by Israeli governments, while at the same time claiming to comply *de facto* with the provisions of international humanitarian law in the Gaza Strip and West Bank (Gordon 2008, 31-2; Dinstein 2009, 20-5).[iii] Indeed, Israel's political-military stance on the 'disputed territories', bound up with the deep securitisation of its own state apparatus, conditions significantly both Israeli and Palestinian framings on climate security. It is the nature of Israel as a security state, under a constant emergency footing, that gives force to claims that it embodies a 'state of exception' in its occupation of Palestinian territory, evident in the use of military exclusion, detention without trial, expulsion and extrajudicial execution (Lentin 2008: Hanafi 2009).

Critical geographical surveys have exposed the complex territorial logic informing Israel's overwhelming control over Palestinian lives and livelihoods, moving beyond the flat geometry of occupation sketched by securitisation theorists. As noted above, the notion of vertical geopolitics allows a more nuanced register of how political violence is spatially enacted. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, Eyal Weizman's (2007) intricate mapping of the verticality of occupational practices is an exemplar of this approach. Making no claim here to cover the full morphology of the Israeli control over Palestinian territory, I will highlight two vectors of vertical power that, I argue, are particularly relevant to climate securitisation – (sub)terranean and aerial domination. To be sure, these are linked to a precise occupational regime initiated following the outbreak of the first Palestinian *Intifada* at the end of 1987 and consolidated by the Oslo Accords (1993): Israeli government justification for this shift in the structure of occupation has invoked a 'separation principle' facilitating a

strategic interest in ‘managing’, rather than seeking to resolve, conflict with the Palestinians (Gordon 2008, 34-8; Ghanem 2010, 21-37).

The materiality of this policy is manifest in the ‘security fence’ or barrier complex constructed by Israel first along the border with Gaza in 1987, and then, since 2002, as a separation barrier from the West Bank, running mostly within the Palestinian side of the 1949 armistice line and encompassing major Israeli settlements in occupied territory. Alatout (2009) characterises this wall as a vertical technology of occupation spatially regulating Palestinian (and Israeli) bodies and populations: its public justification as an anti-terrorist measure conforms to an established Israeli security discourse that prescribes border practices designed to entrench and protect Israeli territorial integrity at the same time as erase Palestinian territorial contiguity (Falah and Newman 1995, Roy 2012). Less familiar perhaps is the means by which the vertical architectures of control extend to subterranean space, notably the groundwater aquifers below the West Bank and Gaza. The separation wall blocks and impairs Palestinian well access to major groundwater supplies (notably from the Western Aquifer), while studies suggest deep-well drilling by Israel in the Jordan Valley has reduced water quantity and quality for Palestinians (World Bank 2009, 25-7; B’Tselem 2011, 21-3). Joint governance rules and water allocations were established under the 1995 Oslo Interim Agreement (‘Oslo II’), but these have institutionalised highly unequal procedural and distributive terms in favour of Israel (Selby 2003; Zeitoun 2008, 115-8). In the Gaza Strip, where groundwater resources are severely degraded by over-extraction and pollution, an Israeli blockade since 2007 has delayed planned investments in water and sanitation, including local desalination capacity and wastewater treatment (UNEP 2009, 55-62; Mason *et al.* 2011, 290).

Israeli vertical domination also extends upwards. Refusing to recognise Palestinian sovereignty over its airspace, Israel maintains constant aerial surveillance and military

strike capability over the entire Palestinian territory (Williams 2010, 55-6). Arguably the starkest technological enactment of this airborne power is the use by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) of armed drones for targeted assassinations and combat operations. Hostile relations between Israel and Hamas have resulted in extensive use of such drones in Gaza, which despite IDF claims to 'precise targeting' have killed dozens of civilians (Human Rights Watch 2009). Israeli claims that it must maintain control of a unified airspace over a prospective Palestinian state plausibly cite the country's vulnerability to short-range rocket attacks, as with the thousands of Qassam rockets launched from Gaza since 2001. Security needs are also invoked to assert Israeli vertical control over the electromagnetic spectrum, for its public, private and military communications networks are rendered vulnerable, it is claimed, by the possibility of Palestinian exploiting their topographic advantage in the West Bank mountains to disrupt or jam these systems (Dekel 2011).

There is a striking contrast between the vertical projection of Israeli territorial power over Palestinian areas and the deterritorial rendering of climate change as an external threat to regional security. Domestically, environmental NGOs have been the main source of climate securitising moves. For example, Friends of the Earth Middle East – which claims unique scope in including Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians in its active membership – has had significant media impact (especially in Israel) with a campaign identifying a 'climate crisis' for the region on the basis of scientific projections of increased water scarcity and sea level rise (Friends of the Earth Middle East 2007; Bromberg *et al.* 2009). Its diagnosis of security threats arising from these climate impacts borrows the 'threat multiplier' thesis of the CNA Corporation (2007), sharing the focus of the latter on state security and inter-governmental cooperation as the most effective means of preventive action. Climate change is thus viewed as an additional source of instability for Israeli-

Palestinian relations, but purely in exogenous terms: there is no consideration of the social or ecological or social vulnerabilities to climate hazards produced by the occupation. The (re)production of enmity fuelling the conflict is also erased, though one Israeli security think-tank has forecast a climate change-induced intensification of conflict with its scenario of a Jewish state facing hostility from adjoining Arab countries unable to cope with the rising social, economic and environmental costs of regional warming (Interdisciplinary Center for Technology Analysis and Forecasting 2007).

At least publicly, however, Israeli governments have avoided framing climate change as a threat to security and/or as a problem justifying exceptional measures. This is in spite of their acknowledgement of scientific claims that serious climate impacts are forecast for the region over this century. Indeed, since Israel ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in June 1996, and produced its first national implementation plan (Blaustein Institute for Desert Research, 2000), the anticipated impacts of climate change have become more severe.[iv] According to the first national report on climate adaptation, reviewed by some fifty scientific and policy experts, by the end of the century: at least 25% less water will be available from natural sources, average temperatures could rise by up to 5^0C, more frequent extreme climate events are expected (e.g. extreme droughts and heatwaves), and the Mediterranean sea level is forecast to rise up to 10cm every decade (Office of the Chief Scientist 2008). In response to these threats, a mix of planning and policy measures is proposed that reflects accepted norms of environmental protection in Israel (eg developing climate change-resilient crop varieties, land zoning for flood control and improving coastal breakwater barriers). More significant is that, consistent with the separation principle of occupation, the Palestinian territory and its inhabitants are not treated as an Israeli responsibility within the climate adaptation report. Only in a brief commentary on the implications of climate change on water sources is it

noted that climate-induced water shortages may lead to deteriorating political relations with the Palestinian Authority and Jordan (Office of the Chief Scientist 2008, 73-4).

Israeli climate change policy is ostensibly an arena of political bargaining rather than securitisation. Agenda-setting on climate change, spearheaded by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Israeli environmental NGOs, resulted in the creation of an inter-ministerial committee to develop a national action plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It recognised significant Israeli emissions abatement potential in improved energy efficiency and renewable energy development (McKinsey and Company 2009); and this accords with a dominant technocratic framing in which climate threats are addressed through a mix of policy measures, centred on investments in low-carbon technologies. There is a resonance here with wider 'biopolitical' narratives of Israeli environmentalism, which eschew their territorial conditions of possibility arising from sovereign power over both Palestinian and Israeli terrain (Alatout 2006). Diplomatically, Israeli climate managerialism also harmonises with UNFCCC discourses on climate mitigation and has allowed successive governments to garner international credit for signing up to significant climate mitigation commitments. At the UN climate conference in Copenhagen, President Peres announced the goal of Israel, by 2020, to reduce its CO_2 emissions by 20% compared to a business as usual scenario (Peres 2009).

The normalcy of Israeli government policy on climate change is sustained by the separation principle, allowing Israel to disavow its role as occupying power with overriding control of Palestinian territory; thus in December 2009 Shimon Peres enjoined the Palestinians at the Copenhagen climate conference to collaborate 'with' Israel on a regional environmental taskforce. At the UNFCCC meeting, the Palestinian delegation framed its climate challenge in explicit security terms as the vulnerability of its people to

the impacts of climate change under conditions of belligerent occupation. In his address to the conference, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad stressed the enormous disadvantages Palestinians face even before the projected effects of climate change are considered, including discriminatory water policies, land confiscation, and movement restrictions. He also raised the spectre of climate change posing a geopolitical risk in a region already susceptible to water scarcity and food insecurity: 'this threat includes increased regional competition over access to more scarce resources like water or arable land, increased tensions over existing refugee populations in the case of forced migration as a result of drought or desertification, as well as further instability should climate change lead to greater economic hardship and a rise in poverty and unemployment' (Fayyad 2009). The mirroring here of the threat multiplier thesis reveals an awareness of relevant securitising moves issuing from Western think-tanks and NGOs. Nevertheless, for Fayyad the main existential danger to Palestinians was posed not by climate change but the circumstances of a coercive occupation.

Securitising the Israeli state as a grave threat to national survival is of course a recurring theme of Palestinian narratives of liberation, so it is unsurprising that Fayyad would use the high-profile international arena afforded by UN climate conference in Copenhagen to relay Palestinian grievances concerning the conflict. Both the Palestinian Authority environment minister and prominent Palestinian environmentalists state that climate change risks could compound the threats to lives and livelihoods posed by Israeli military-political control (Isaac 2008; Abu-Safieh 2009). Yet, bending to the 'post-conflict' agenda of bilateral and international donors, the Palestinian Authority has in practice developed a formal policy response to climate change informed by neoliberal 'good governance' norms, which maintain the fiction of a functioning political authority. As in Israel, an inter-ministerial climate committee has been created to integrate climate change considerations

in national policy-making, though with a focus on climate adaptation actions, e.g. expanding the scope both of wastewater collection and climate-resilient agricultural practices (Palestinian Authority 2010, 27-8; Katbeh-Bader 2012). In practice Palestinian climate planning is notably weaker than in Israel, reflecting the limited capacity of the Palestinian Authority to monitor and model rainfall variability and long-term climate change (UNDP 2010, 19-20). European donor assistance is targeting technical capacity-building of Palestinian Authority institutions to address climate risks (Barghothi 2012), but for the time being the Israeli government has superior scientific competence in modeling regional climate processes, giving it epistemological authority in exchanges with Palestinians over climate-induced changes forecasted for shared water resources.

The donor-driven efforts by the Palestinian Authority to demonstrate professional competence in climate policy-making, divorced from the exceptional conditions of the Israeli occupation, reflects both its dependence on international financing and the diplomatic strategy of the Middle East Quartet (US, EU, Russia, UN) to support a docile Palestinian Authority whilst marginalising a Hamas government in Gaza unwilling to accept the so-called Quartet Principles (nonviolence, recognition of Israel and the acceptance of the Oslo agreements). In these terms, 'normal' climate decision-making by the Palestinian Authority becomes additional evidence of Palestinian fitness for statehood, though not at a time of their own choosing. It is significant that Palestinian efforts to achieve formal recognition within the UNFCCC have been blocked by the US and Israel, rejecting the precedent set by Palestinian membership of UNESCO. Hamas rejects the Palestinian Authority's embrace of policy normalisation as a precondition for statehood, affirming a right to resistance against the occupation which encompasses its framing of environmental policy (Ikhanweb 2006). Not surprisingly, Hamas has been excluded even from donor-

driven climate vulnerability assessments undertaken in the Gaza Strip (Mason *et al.* 2011, 288).

As leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Mahmud Abbas claims authority for the Palestinian people in negotiations with Israel over a final status peace agreement. In closed technical discussions designed to inform such an agreement, there is evidence of the Israeli government securitising climate risks to water supplies. This securitisation is a *reterritorialising move* insofar as it comprises an assertion of sovereign control over shared groundwater resources. While the inequality in water allocations between the Israelis and Palestinians is acknowledged by both sides, there is an impasse between, on the one hand, Israel's defence of its historical water usage and the operational integrity of its national water management system and, on the other, Palestinian claims to sovereign authority over all water resources in the oPt (Feitelson and Fischhendler 2009, 737-8; Lautze and Kirshen 2009, 193-4). Rapid growth in Israeli desalination capacity (with plans to supply 80% of domestic water consumption by 2013) has raised hopes of a positive-sum outcome in Israeli-Palestinian water negotiations (e.g. Brooks and Trottier 2010). Yet climate change-induced water scarcity and increased aridity have been cited by Israeli negotiators as exceptional reasons for not reallocating additional water resources to the Palestinians (PLO Representative 2008). The *backstage* nature of this climate securitisation – communicating privately to Palestinian representatives that, as climate change impacts pose a strategic threat to Israeli water interests, the continuation of its military-political authority over shared water supplies is justified – corroborates the claim of sociological securitisation theorists that security claims vary between different arenas of disclosure. By itself, though, a particular spatial representation of a security claim does not account for its full performative force. In this case, there is of course a spatiality of asymmetric power that underpins Israel's securitising use of a climate threat narrative; in

particular, its vertical geopolitical control over Palestinian water resources. The Israeli securitising move is unlikely to go unchallenged: it clashes, for example, with a core norm of international humanitarian law that an occupied population retains permanent sovereignty over its environmental resources (Daibes-Murad 2005, 55-8; Okowa 2009, 244-5).

Conclusion

Various state and non-state actors have represented climate change as a threat multiplier for Israeli-Palestinian relations, especially with regards to forecasted stresses on water availability, food production and public health. That these securitising moves have, in the midst of a lingering conflict, had minimal impact on Israeli and Palestinian governing authorities indicates the discursive hold of more immediate existential threats – for the State of Israel, ongoing security dangers from political violence and, for the Palestinian Authority, the threats to Palestinian national survival posed by a deepening occupation. Yet the pronounced *normalisation* of climate change decision-making by both parties is sustained, I argue, by strategic interests. Under the separation principle of occupation, Israel disavows any legal responsibility for mitigating the climate vulnerability of the Palestinian population, restricting its UNFCCC obligations to its domestic territory and national citizens (including Israeli settlers in the West Bank). In the case of the Palestinian Authority, managing climate change risks within its regulatory purview demonstrates to internal and external audiences its growing maturity as a governmental body ready to assume sovereign authority over the Palestinian territory and population.

Securitisation theory provides limited explanatory value in accounting for climate security claims within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the Copenhagen School, which hypothesises that deterritorial sources of securitisation, such as climate change, will

only have an enduring impact on national political authorities if they are seen to threaten their territorial integrity, the findings in the Israeli-Palestinian case offer evidence of a 'failed' securitisation. Climate risks are crowded out by proximate existential threats and have, at most, indirect geopolitical influence in terms of rival territorial claims to shared water. This theoretical position rests, I argue, on a flawed distance-decay spatiality of securitisation, which misses a more complex geography of security claims and effects. Political-policy as well as analytical consequences arise when understanding securitisation this way. In the Israeli-Palestinian case, the Israeli erosion of Palestinian territorial contiguity (both within the West Bank/East Jerusalem and between these areas and Gaza) as a result of land appropriation and movement restrictions constitutes a foreclosure of Palestinian sovereignty; and as security decision-making is a sovereign prerogative under the Copenhagen School, Palestinians are ontologically denied the conditions for creating their own security practices. Delimiting securitisation according to state-based territoriality is especially problematic for a protracted military occupation in which the sovereign authority *is itself* the main threat to the well-being of the governed population.

The sociological variant of securitisation theory promises a more differentiated take on the diverse spaces of security practices. This reflects an analytical interest in relational contexts of securitisation in which multiple actors make securitising claims, and an associated argument that securitising moves can provoke significant behavioural changes even if state actors do not have recourse to exceptional or emergency powers. As I note above, this allows a reading of 'successful' climate securitisation from the climate policy responses of Israeli and Palestinian governmental authorities to climate threat narratives largely generated by external non-state actors. It also encourages a wider survey of security practices – one open to context-specific projections of securitisation, as noted in reference to the closed arena of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. However, I argue that this

preoccupation with discursive settings misses the embedding of security claims within wider spatialities of power. To have analytical weight, any study of climate securitisation applied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict needs to register the vertical geopolitical reality of Israeli hydrological and aerial domination of Palestinian lives. The political implications arising in this case from the adoption of such a geographical approach would include, I contend, a critical scrutiny of climate threat narratives and 'post-conflict' policy responses, as well as the advocacy of a rights-based framework that considers the distribution of corporeal and social vulnerabilities according to the distinctive political ecology of violence produced by a belligerent occupation.

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Endnotes

[i] The interviews in 2008 and 2009 were conducted as part of a UNDP-sponsored project on Palestinian climate vulnerability and adaptation (contract no. SSA08/09/072): see UNDP (2010). The argument in this paper is that of the author alone. Thanks to the journal referees and editor for their very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

[ii] A May 2011 reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah was formally ratified in February 2012 at a meeting in Doha, although continuing antagonisms between the two factions are, as at August 2012, delaying the planned formation of an interim unity government. Any such reconciliation is opposed by Israel, which treats Hamas as a terrorist organisation.

[iii] While Israel has stated that its status as an occupying power in the Gaza Strip has finished (following its unilateral withdrawal in September 2005), it still maintains effective control of the Strip and thus remains bound by international humanitarian obligations (Dinstein 2009, 276-80).

[iv] Relevant regional climate projections include: Kitoh *et al.* (2008), Somot *et al.* (2008) and GLOWA (2009). It should also be noted that there are studies claiming that regional warming is already taking place: El-Kadi (2005), Khatib *et al.* (2007), Kafle and Bruins (2009); Hoerling *et al.* (2012).