

REIMAGINING POLITICAL SCIENCES' CONTRIBUTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AS A REINFORCEMENT TO THE LEGAL APPROACH

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Abstract -This study seeks to emphasize the contributions of Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver in expanding the scope of urgent issues to include environmental concerns, recognizing their significance alongside political matters. Instead of solely securitizing political issues, they advocated for addressing environmental threats as well.

In our research, we explored the perspective of the Copenhagen School of Security, which incorporated the environmental dimension into security studies, thereby amplifying the urgency of environmental problems. Consequently, the security implications of environmental issues garnered the attention of both governmental and non-governmental organizations. Numerous conferences were held, and international treaties were concluded to promote sustainable development in response to these concerns.

Keywords: Securitization; environmental threats; Copenhagen School; sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

The deterioration of the environment worldwide has sparked discussions within the scientific community, including the field of political science. These discussions explore the consequences of environmental problems on a global scale and highlight their incorporation into the political agenda, given the imminent danger posed by human actions towards the environment.

Following the end of the Cold War, the concept of security expanded, thanks to the Copenhagen School, to encompass environmental issues as security threats. This led to the inclusion of environmental security in the international security agenda, with political elites emphasizing environmental problems and attributing them with a security dimension. As a result, environmental concerns gained prominence as priorities for countries and international organizations.

The significance of this study lies in highlighting the contributions of political science research in environmental protection and the attainment of sustainable development. It aims to underscore the importance of social sciences, particularly political science, in addressing pressing national and international issues, such as environmental preservation and sustainable development, which have garnered significant attention from political science scholars and thinkers.

Consequently, the following problem is posed: To what extent do political science studies, employing the theory of securitization, contribute to environmental protection and the achievement of sustainable development? This problem will be examined through two main focal points:

- Environment and sustainable development - a conceptual approach -
- The role of securitization theory in including environmental issues as security threats.

1. Environment and sustainable development - a conceptual approach -

First: the concept of the environment

The meaning and conceptualization of the environment can vary among different branches of social sciences, as each researcher defines it based on their own perspective and specialization. The term "environment" is commonly used in both the scientific community and by the general public, resulting in multiple definitions that depend on the human relationship with the environment. It can be understood as the place or habitat where individuals reside¹.

The term "environment" is derived from the verb "boa," which refers to the place, surroundings, or dwelling where living organisms exist. While the term has become commonly used, it remains challenging to establish a specific definition for it due to the variation in its meaning based on the type of relationship that humans have with it. Researchers and specialists have differing opinions on a specific definition that everyone agrees upon, resulting in various definitions in this regard. The

¹ Hassouna Abelhani. 'Legal protection of the environment within the framework of sustainable development'. PhD thesis in, (Algeria: University of Biskra, 2012), 17



environment can be seen as the physical surroundings in which humans live, including water, air, space, soil, living organisms, and the infrastructure humans have built to meet their needs.

Specialists in the natural sciences provide a scientific definition of the environment as the combination of conditions and external factors in which living organisms exist and that influence their vital processes. The environment can also be described as the medium or spatial field in which individuals live, being both influenced by and affecting everything within that spatial field. This includes natural elements such as rocks, minerals, energy sources, soil, water resources, and climatic factors like heat, pressure, wind, rain, as well as natural plants, marine and terrestrial animals. It also encompasses human-created elements contributed to by humans, such as urbanization, transportation and communication networks, farms, factories, and dams².

Buzan also sees the environment as the preservation of the biosphere and the planets, as they provide the fundamental support for the system upon which all other human institutions depend³.

Second: Ecosystem: There are several definitions of the ecosystem, the most important of which are mentioned as follows:

The first definition: "It is a group of elements that integrate and interact regularly to form a complete unit."

The second definition: It is a group of interacting elements with each other, and it gains its inputs from the environment and conducts a conversion process on it, and then the outputs are returned to the external environment, and this reflects the need to rely on environmental inputs and outputs."

The third definition: "Any area of nature and what it contains of living organisms and living resources in their interaction with each other and with environmental conditions and the exchange they generate between living and non-living parts. Examples of ecosystems are the forest and the sea."

After careful consideration, the following reframed definition of an ecosystem can be proposed: An ecosystem is a complex network comprising living and non-living components, including resources and organisms, that interact with one another within a delicate equilibrium, relying on the diverse environmental conditions necessary for its continued existence⁴.

An ecosystem contains living and non-living elements intertwined in one system: An ecosystem consists of both biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) components. Biotic elements include plants, animals, microorganisms, and humans, while abiotic elements include air, water, soil, sunlight, and other physical factors.

The system is governed by perfect harmony and coherence: Ecosystems are characterized by the interdependence and interconnectedness of their components. The various organisms and environmental factors within an ecosystem interact and rely on each other in a way that maintains a delicate balance.

The ecosystem exchanges its inputs and outputs with the surrounding environment: Ecosystems are open systems that interact with their surroundings. They receive inputs such as energy and nutrients from the environment, process them through various biological and physical processes, and release outputs such as waste and energy back into the environment.

Any major imbalance in this system leads to weakness and decay: Ecosystems are resilient, but they have limits to their capacity to absorb disturbances. Significant disruptions or imbalances, such as pollution, habitat destruction, or the introduction of invasive species, can disrupt the functioning of an ecosystem and lead to a decline in its health and stability.

A group of systems form a large-scale system: Ecosystems are part of a hierarchical structure, where smaller ecosystems make up larger-scale ecosystems. For example, a forest ecosystem may be part of a larger terrestrial ecosystem, which is part of the overall biosphere.

Man occupies a special place in the ecosystem: Humans have a unique role in ecosystems due to their intellectual and psychological development. Unlike other organisms, humans have the ability to

² Ibid. at 22

³ Trombetta Maria Julia.. 'Enviromnetal security and climate change: anlysing the discourse'. Cambridge review of international affairs, (2008, december) 585-602

⁴ Mashan Abdelkareem. 'The role of the environmental management system in achieving the competitive advantage of the economic enterprise'. A memorandum submitted for obtaining a master's degree in economics and management sciences, (Algeria: Setif University, 2011,2012) 24

significantly impact ecosystems and their balance. Responsible behavior and sustainable practices are essential for maintaining the health and stability of ecosystems⁵.

Ecosystem Elements: Every ecosystem is composed of the following components:

1- Abiotic factors: These include both organic and inorganic substances present in the environment, as well as physical factors like temperature, humidity, and light.

2- Biotic factors: Biotic factors can be divided into two main groups:

A- Autotrophic organisms: These organisms have the ability to produce their own food using simple inorganic materials, such as green plants that carry out photosynthesis. During photosynthesis, autotrophic organisms consume carbon dioxide and release oxygen into the atmosphere.

B- Heterotrophic organisms: Heterotrophic organisms are unable to produce their own food and rely on consuming other organisms, including plants, to obtain the necessary nutrients to build their tissues and bodies.

Based on the information provided, we can conclude that an ecosystem comprises both non-living and living organisms. The living organisms can be further classified into autotrophic organisms and non-autotrophic organisms. The autotrophic organisms have the ability to produce their own food through processes like photosynthesis, while the non-autotrophic organisms rely on consuming other organisms for their nutritional needs. Together, these components interact and contribute to the functioning of the ecosystem.

Second: Embracing the Principles of Sustainable Development

The process of development has undergone significant transformations, both in terms of mindset and objectives, giving rise to new concepts of development. Initially, economic development was seen as the key to addressing underdevelopment. However, the notion of independent development emerged, emphasizing the importance of self-reliance, scientific and technological advancements, and the cultivation of human resources. Accompanying this shift were administrative changes aimed at liberating countries from exploitation, populism, ignorance, diseases, and poverty. Consequently, it became imperative to make independent decisions regarding the utilization of local resources and the approach to engaging with the global community⁶.

At the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the concept of sustainable development gained prominence, particularly in the third agenda item which focused on the pursuit of the right to development. This entailed meeting the financial needs of present and future generations while ensuring the well-being of the environment. The fourth agenda item emphasized the integration of environmental protection into the development process. It became evident that development cannot be considered in isolation from the environment, thus calling for the revitalization of development efforts within the framework of environmental preservation and respect for the rights of future generations.

Sustainable development consists of a series of basic concepts, namely:

1- Interdependence: Recognizing the interconnectedness between the environment and the economy at various levels, from local to global, and understanding how they rely on each other.

2- Citizenship and Stewardship: Emphasizing the responsibilities of individuals within society to actively contribute to making the world a better place.

3- Needs and Rights of Future Generations: Considering the essential requirements of present society while also understanding the long-term consequences of our actions on future generations.

4- Diversity, Respect, and Appreciation: Valuing and respecting cultural, social, and economic differences as important facets of sustainability.

5- Quality of Life: Acknowledging that achieving global equality and social justice are crucial aspects of sustainability and fundamental needs that should be fulfilled worldwide.

6- Uncertainty and Precaution: Recognizing the need to adapt to ever-changing situations and adopting sustainable learning methods that account for uncertainties.

7- Sustainable Change: Understanding the limitations of resources and the negative impacts that unsustainable lifestyles can have, leading to the need for positive and lasting changes⁷.

⁵ Ibid. at 36

⁶ Muhammad Abbas Ali, 'Security and development', (2013), 26

⁷ Mubarak Fatima. 'Sustainable development: its origin and origin'. Electronic Cities Magazine (13), (2016, January) 14



There is a prevailing belief that sustainable development encompasses three key aspects: economic growth, social justice, and environmental protection. Let's reframe the paragraphs to present the information in a different way:

Sustainable development comprises three essential elements: economic growth, social justice, and environmental protection. These components work in tandem to ensure the optimal utilization of natural resources, the eradication of poverty, and the overall well-being of society. The prioritization of basic needs for impoverished populations is a fundamental principle within the economic aspect of sustainable development.

The social dimension of sustainable development focuses on the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. It encompasses efforts to improve access to essential healthcare and education services, establish minimum security standards, uphold human rights, foster cultural diversity and pluralism, and encourage grassroots participation in decision-making processes.

The environmental aspect of sustainable development centers around the preservation and enhancement of the Earth's physical and biological resources and ecosystems. While these elements are interconnected, the perspective on sustainable development varies depending on the approach or analytical background. Economists tend to emphasize economic goals, environmentalists prioritize nature conservation, and socialists emphasize social justice and quality of life improvement. It is important to note that these divergent perspectives contribute to a comprehensive understanding of sustainability. This viewpoint is widely shared among researchers in the field⁸.

2. The Influence of Securitization Theory on the Political Dimension of Environmental Issues

First: the environmental sector

In his book "People, States and Fear," Barry Buzan proposed that achieving security involves expanding its scope across various sectors, including the economy and the environment. He advocated for the expansion of security sectors to encompass political, economic, societal, environmental, and military dimensions, highlighting their interconnectedness and their collective contribution to overall security.

Buzan asserts that the security sectors serve as analogies that help us understand and depict the state of the international system. Historically, the military sector held the highest significance as material threats directly impacted a state's survival, making military strength crucial.

Political security pertains to the strength of institutions and their cohesiveness based on the legitimacy of the political system.

Economic security refers to a country's ability to ensure the well-being of its citizens, access open markets, and achieve prosperity. Buzan highlights that mega-corporations can pose threats to national economies.

Community security, considered the most important sector, recognizes identity as a potential source of threats.

Environmental security addresses global concerns such as gas emissions, melting ice in Antarctica, drought, and desertification. These issues pose risks to the safety and security of all nations. The aim of environmental security is to assess the level of threats, recognizing that climate change can exacerbate multiple challenges⁹.

Hence, a significant correlation exists between environmental degradation and security. The severe repercussions of environmental damage are now acknowledged to be of higher priority than external threats. This is because they can lead to armed conflicts akin to crises arising from the scarcity of natural and energy resources, particularly concerning water scarcity, which has gained prominence in recent years.

The growing prevalence of threats has elevated the significance of environmental security, prompting the need to reassess existing perspectives and make informed decisions to address this challenge¹⁰. Unfortunately, environmental security has been overshadowed by the focus on counterterrorism

⁸ Ibid. at 34

⁹ Gogaili Sid Ahmad, 'Critical security studies', (2014) 44

¹⁰ Al-Masry Khaled. 'Structural theory in international relations'. Damascus University Journal of Economic and Legal Sciences, (2014) 326

efforts, resulting in a diminished sense of urgency regarding environmental threats. However, the discourse surrounding climate change is playing a pivotal role in reinvigorating the concept of environmental security and mobilizing action to mitigate the consequences of climate change across both sides of the Atlantic¹¹.

Second: Securitization of environmental issues

Drawing on language theory, Weaver's perspective defines security as an act of communication. This understanding is rooted in Austin's theory, where speech is considered performative and has the power to shape actions. According to this view, security encompasses not only the absence of actual threats, but also the absence of discourses that engage in the process of "securitization." Securitization refers to the act of labeling an issue as a security concern, even if it was not initially perceived as such. It involves defining certain actors and issues as security threats through the act of speaking about them in a security-oriented manner¹².

Austin's speech act theory highlights that language serves a purpose beyond conveying information. Even when language is primarily used for informational purposes, it often carries additional meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. This is particularly evident in phrases that constitute a form of verbal or social action, such as expressions like 'thank you', 'you're fired', 'I promise', 'I bet', 'I nominate', and so on. In these cases, speakers employ language not only to describe something but also to perform a specific action or function¹³.

According to securitization theory, many issues can be transformed into security concerns through successful speech acts that gain acceptance within the political community. Security is viewed as a social practice¹⁴. A relevant example is the global spread of the COVID-19 virus, which has prompted political elites worldwide to address it as a security issue. Precautionary measures, including curfews declared in some countries, represent the securitization process of the coronavirus. The virus is perceived as a rapidly spreading global threat that has resulted in numerous deaths. This situation aligns with the assumptions of the Copenhagen School, which emphasize that security is not limited to physical structures. The COVID-19 pandemic serves as an invisible transnational threat that has instilled fear in governments, leading to declarations of failure by the Italian political elite in the face of the virus's rapid spread.

In such circumstances, the sovereign holds the authority to temporarily suspend democratic procedures and establish a state of exception when perceiving an actual or potential threat, such as the emission of gases. To legitimize extraordinary or emergency measures, obtaining public approval becomes crucial. The success of securitization hinges on achieving a sufficient level of acceptance among the public. Failure to attain this acceptance may undermine the securitization process¹⁵.

There are three main directions that have emerged to elevate environmental problems to the level of extreme policy or a state of emergency, aligning with the securitization process:

The first direction involves raising awareness about the environment and its resources through a plethora of writings, research, studies, and articles. The aim is to educate people about the consequences of human misuse of the environment, the devastating effects of the resulting imbalance, and the importance of preserving the ecological balance for the well-being of humanity. The second direction manifests in the interest shown by international forums, global and local organizations, and bodies in organizing seminars and conferences on environmental issues. These gatherings address the impact of the environment on human beings and global civilization. Such conferences bring together representatives from industrialized and developing nations to discuss the rights of the global community to a healthy environment, sufficient food, adequate housing, and clean water. During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a shift among scientists from social concerns to

¹¹ See Trombetta, above n.3 at 540

¹² Trombetta, M. J. 'The securitization of the environment and the transformation of security' Delft university of technology, (2007) 2-23

¹³ Barry Buzan, Lene Hansen. 'International security' (debating security and strategy and the impact 9-11), Los Angeles (2007) 361

¹⁴ Trombetta, above n.3 at 413

¹⁵ Yassin Saidi. 'New security challenges in the Maghreb'. A memorandum submitted for obtaining a master's degree in political science and international relations, (Oran University 2016) 28

urgent and complex problems related to human survival, such as global temperature rise, depletion of the ozone layer, and desertification's threat to agricultural lands.

The third direction involves the recognition of the security implications of climate change. In 2007, the Security Council discussed the security implications of climate change, highlighting its potential to disrupt social and political stability¹⁶.

These three directions reflect efforts to emphasize the urgency and gravity of environmental issues and to frame them within the context of security and emergency measures.

The third trend involves the efforts of industrialized countries to establish ministries, departments, and governmental bodies dedicated to environmental affairs. These entities formulate plans to regulate and manage environmental issues, aiming to support ecological balance. This is often done through the utilization of media.

Media, including radio, television, and newspapers, play a crucial and influential role in raising public awareness about environmental preservation. This role is not new and has been present even before the heightened focus on the environment. Environmental media refers to the use of media platforms by individuals with environmental expertise to raise awareness about environmental issues and foster a positive and engaged public opinion towards these issues. Environmental media is a vital tool in preserving the environment by creating awareness, disseminating knowledge, and empowering the public to adopt behaviors that contribute to environmental preservation. It encompasses various forms of media, including printed newspapers, magazines, books, reports, pamphlets, guides, posters, as well as audiovisual media such as television, videos, cinema, and the Internet. Additionally, special events like environmental exhibitions, competitions, conferences, and seminars also contribute to environmental media efforts.

Environmental media plays a crucial role in promoting positive environmental trends and engaging the target audience in solving environmental problems. Its objectives include:

- 1- Changing harmful behaviors: Environmental media highlights various aspects and manifestations of environmental damage, shedding light on actions and decisions that have a negative impact on the environment. By doing so, it aims to encourage individuals to change behaviors that harm the environment.
- 2- Providing information for decision-making: Environmental media serves as a source of enlightenment by providing information that helps individuals make informed decisions. It motivates positive change and fosters legitimate and attainable aspirations without exaggeration. It calls for participation in changing behavior and encourages popular engagement by presenting environmental policies in a simplified manner that the general public can understand.
- 3- Motivating participation and shared responsibility: Environmental media strives to motivate and develop a sense of shared responsibility between the public and executive authorities. It invites individuals to contribute to the implementation of environmental plans by motivating them and fostering their sense of responsibility towards the environment.
- 4- The role of the press: Daily newspapers, through dedicated "environmental pages," can explain various environmental issues, mitigation strategies, the government's plans to address them, and the role of individuals in these efforts. This helps in disseminating information and engaging the public in environmental initiatives¹⁷.

Overall, environmental media aims to educate, inspire, and mobilize individuals to take positive actions for environmental preservation and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of environmental problems and global epidemics has elevated these issues to the attention of political elites through the process of securitization. This has led to the formulation of ideas and programs to address environmental problems and the inclusion of these issues in the agendas of various governments. As a result, national and international public opinion has been shaped to support efforts in dealing with these problems.

Political science has played a significant role in making environmental issues global concerns that affect people worldwide. It has contributed to the development of environmental culture by

¹⁶ Trombetta, above n.3 at 550

¹⁷ Mashan, above n.4 at 22

emphasizing the importance of environmental education at various levels, from basic education to university education. Many universities around the world have introduced academic disciplines focused on environmental culture.

The contributions of political science in making environmental issues global stem from the understanding that environmental problems transcend national boundaries and require collective action for the preservation of the planet and human survival. By integrating environmental concerns into political agendas, governments can prioritize sustainable development and work towards addressing environmental challenges. This recognition has been crucial in shaping policies and generating public support for environmental protection.

However, despite progress, studies have shown that the influence of environmental media is still concentrated in journalism, reaching primarily literate recipients. The message of environmental media often fails to reach large segments of society, particularly those with limited reading and writing proficiency. Research has also highlighted the relative lack of environmental media materials provided through radio and television, which are more widely accessible compared to print media. Inclusion of the environment as an urgent issue has proven to be key in achieving sustainable development. This involves governments prioritizing environmental concerns, utilizing media platforms to raise awareness, and fostering a societal upbringing that promotes positive coexistence with the environment. By integrating environmental issues into political, educational, and media spheres, there is a greater chance of achieving a sustainable future.

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