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"Climate security" as a new paradigm of global governance: Mandate expansion or political instrumentalisation?

Abstract. The purpose of this study was to examine the process of incorporating climate issues into the concept of "security" as a politically and socially determined phenomenon that influences the transformation of the architecture of international relations and contributes to the formation of new forms of stratification. The study employed a combination of comparative, discursive, and legal analysis, which enabled a comprehensive investigation of the institutionalisation of climate security in global politics. It was established that the evolution of the security concept has progressed from the military-political paradigm of the Cold War to a multidimensional approach that integrates economic, environmental, humanitarian, and climate dimensions. In this context, climate security has emerged as an integral category that combines elements of scientifically substantiated threats and political construction. Analysis of the activities of the United Nations demonstrated that it has provided climate security with universal legitimacy through the Paris Agreement, the Kyoto Protocol, and other normative frameworks. The European Union has interpreted climate security as the core of its own identity and an instrument of global influence. The United States of America has defined climate challenges through the prism of military power and technological competition, employing laws and presidential executive orders. China, in turn, has integrated climate policy into its own strategies of energy security and economic development, relying on an emissions trading system. Overall, comparative analysis demonstrated that climate security functions simultaneously as a universal framework for global coordination and as a mechanism of new stratification of the international order. It was confirmed that the expansion of the concept of security to the climate sphere serves as an instrument for legitimising new hierarchies, dominated by states with access to finance, technologies, and regulatory standards. Such dynamics are reformatting the international order and forming structural inequalities in the global system. This research can serve as a theoretical and analytical foundation for the further development of international policy strategies that take the climate factor into account in the context of security

Keywords: risks; international discourse; technological leadership; global community; renewable energy sources

Introduction

The development of international relations in the 21st century is characterised by growing attention to climate change as a key threat to global stability and security. The climate factor is gradually being integrated into political, economic, humanitarian, and security dimensions. Interpretations of this connection vary: from approaches that emphasise existential risks to humanity, to concepts that underscore the political constructiveness of climate security discourse. Discussions regarding whether climate change is a direct determinant of conflicts or a factor mediated by socio-economic and political conditions remain open. The topicality of the subject is determined by the fact that exaggeration or reductionist interpretation of climate threats may distort scientific understanding and

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influence the formation of international policy, instrumentalising climate for narrow geopolitical or economic purposes. This underscores the necessity for critical analysis of various scientific and political approaches to the interrelationship between climate, conflicts, and security. Previous research has demonstrated a broad spectrum of interpretations of the connection between climate change and conflicts. G. Daoust & J. Selby (2023) emphasised that political discourse on climate threats systematically exaggerated their actual impact on conflict generation, which contradicted scientific data. Using Lake Chad as an example, it was demonstrated that such a narrative emerged as a political construction that combined unsubstantiated scientific interpretations with geopolitical and economic interests. Simultaneously, K. Bodewig (2024) focused on the feminist approach to climate policy, arguing that consideration of gender aspects and protection of the most vulnerable segments of the population are necessary conditions for achieving climate justice. The example of Guatemala showed that a deficit of international solidarity led to increased migration, deepening poverty, and deteriorating health, emphasising the inequality in the distribution of climate risks. M. Daoudy (2021) demonstrated that environmental conflicts were not a direct consequence of climate change, but rather reflected elite politics and structural inequalities. The examples of Syria and Sudan confirmed the role of political decisions as determinants, whilst the experience of Morocco testified to the possibility of reducing risks through effective governance. Analysis of the energy dimension is also presented in the work of A. Lawrence (2021), which highlighted the limitations of traditional economic models of the energy market based on the assumption of constant growth. A. Lawrence developed an alternative vision of energy economics that takes into account environmental sustainability and social factors, opening space for new interpretations of climate-security challenges. Research by H. Achziger (2025) demonstrated how the government of Tuvalu strategically interpreted its own existential vulnerability through the prism of traditional security, presenting the climate threat as a matter of national survival, territorial integrity, and sovereignty. This highlighted the use of political language, symbolism, and legal innovations (including digital sovereignty) to legitimise moral claims and strengthen the country's international influence. In turn, J. Tosun (2023) demonstrated that the European Union (EU), despite pressure from the energy crisis caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine, managed not only to avoid dismantlement but also to adapt and continue its environmental policy. The European Green Deal programme after 2022 not only maintained priority in the bloc's political agenda but also transformed into an instrument of geostrategic mobilisation of internal resources, reduction of dependence, and promotion of strategic autonomy in response to the war. The publication by L. Maertens (2022) emphasised that debates in the United Nations Security Council regarding the Sahel and Solomon Islands demonstrated the process of climatisation of international security policy, where climate change became a key frame for interpreting conflicts, migration, and humanitarian crises. Research by C.H. Gerosideris (2021) illuminated the phenomenon of climate change from the perspective of the evolution of international institutions such as the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). This enabled the systematisation of global and regional environmental vulnerabilities and an assessment of their significance for the formation of foreign and domestic policy of the EU and individual member states, particularly Greece. Despite the diversity of approaches, the literature has insufficiently analysed the connection between scientific conclusions and political interpretations of climate security. The systematic nature of the gap between empirical data and political discourse, its impact on international policy, and the peculiarities of institutionalisation of climate-security narratives remained unexplored. Also insufficiently studied is how the framing of climate security integrates humanitarian, gender, institutional, and geoeconomic aspects, forming a multilevel system of interaction between actors. The purpose of this research was to investigate the process of integrating climate issues into the concept of "security" as a politically and socially conditioned phenomenon that contributes to the transformation of international architecture and the formation of new hierarchies in the global order.

Materials and Methods

The research was based on a complex of methods and materials that ensured the systematisation and analysis of the development of the security concept in international relations and the identification of climate security as a separate object of study. The use of generalised classifications and approaches proposed by S. Shah (2021), M. Tayie (2023), and M. Qadeer *et al*. (2024) provided a systematic understanding of the expansion of the subject field of security studies and enabled the differentiation of main theoretical directions: realism, neorealism, liberalism, institutionalism, constructivism, and critical studies. The comparative method was applied to juxtapose traditional forms of security (military, economic, environmental, humanitarian) with the development of climate security discourse. Discursive analysis ensured the interpretation of climate security as both an objective category and a political construction, demonstrating how different actors form competing narratives regarding climate threats to legitimise their own political strategies. In the context of the UN system, key materials included United Nations Framework Convention… (1992), Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations… (1997), and The Paris Agreement (2015). A separate normative reference point was the strategy United Nations (2015), which defined the Sustainable Development Goals as a foundation for international policy. The results of Conferences of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change also entered the source base of the research, including The Glasgow Climate Pact… (2021), Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan (2022), and COP28 Declaration on Climate… (2023). The European context was additionally elaborated based on analysis of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 (2020), Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 (2021), Regulation (EU) 2023/956 (2023), which present the institutionalisation of climate security. Analysis of Directive (EU) 2022/2464 (2022) and European Commission (2021a) provided a foundation for the international positioning of

the EU as a climate leader. The aforementioned acts were considered not in isolation but as an integral system that forms the legal and administrative basis of climate security policy. The research methodology also included institutional analysis, which enabled an assessment of the political weight of climate security in the foreign and domestic policy of the United States of America (USA). For this purpose, materials from FedCenter (2021) and DTIC (2021) were utilised. The complex of methods formed an integral methodological framework, where comparative and legal analysis provided a normatively measured overview of the institutionalisation of climate security, whilst discursive analysis illuminated the political and constructivist aspects of the process, including the construction of new hierarchies and the promotion of contradictory interests by different actors.

Results

Theoretical-conceptual foundations of climate security. The evolution of the notion of "security" in international relations is one of the processes that defined the transformation of the world order in the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Initially, security was interpreted exclusively in military-political terms, where the state's primary priority remained the protection of territorial integrity and sovereignty from external aggression. Such a paradigm reflected the logic of the bipolar system of the Cold War, within which military power, nuclear deterrence, and balance of power were defining elements of international stability. In this context, security was understood as the absence of military threat, and the state was recognised as its principal subject. However, after the end of the Cold War and the growth of globalisation processes, an awareness emerged that the military sphere is only one component of a broader spectrum of challenges. Global problems – financial crises, environmental catastrophes, mass migrations, pandemics – demonstrated that the concept of security must extend beyond the framework of the traditional military paradigm. It is precisely for this reason that in scholarly debates an expanded understanding of security gradually formed, encompassing economic, environmental, humanitarian, and social dimensions. Economic security began to be interpreted as a guarantee of stable development, protection from systemic financial shocks and inequality that threatens social stability (Qadeer *et al*., 2024). Environmental security, in turn, emerged in response to the awareness that environmental degradation, climate change, and resource depletion are capable of causing large-scale conflicts and humanitarian catastrophes (Tayie, 2023). Humanitarian security was directed towards the individual as an object of protection, emphasising human rights, access to basic resources, and counteracting mass violations of humanitarian law (Aygun, 2024).

In this expanded field of conceptual searches, the notion of climate security emerges, which gradually becomes an integral element of global political debates. Its origins can be traced to the 1980s-1990s, when within the UN framework, issues of climate change began to be considered as a factor that creates new forms of instability (Maslin *et al*., 2023). Initially, climate threats were considered in the context of environmental security, but subsequently they emerged as a separate discourse, as their scale and duration began to be regarded as a direct challenge to the existence of states and the international system. The theoretical substantiation of climate security remains a subject of scholarly discussions. Classical approaches in the sphere of security (realist and neorealist theories) interpret climate change as a factor that influences military-political balances, threatens the resource base of states, and may provoke conflicts over territories and access to water or energy (Tenlik, 2025). Such an approach preserves a state-centric perspective in which climate is viewed as yet another element of the environment that determines national interests and strategies. Constructivist concepts, however, emphasise that climate security is a product of political discourse in which new ideas about threats and hierarchies are formed (Simonsson, 2025). They draw attention to the fact that it is the interpretation of climate as a security issue that creates grounds for mobilising political resources, forming new norms, and strengthening the role of certain actors (including international organisations or regional unions). In this sense, climate security is not only an objective category but also a construction that can be used to legitimise new forms of global governance. The evolution of the security concept in international relations is reflected in Table 1.

Table 1. Evolution of the security concept in international relations

Stage	Main focus	Key threats	Object of security	Dominant theories
Military security (1945-1990)	Protection of the state from external aggression	Military invasion, nuclear threat	State, territory	Realism, neorealism
Economic security (1980-2000)	Stability of the global economy and national financial systems	Crises, resource deficit, inequality	State, economic systems	Liberalism, institutionalism
Environmental security (1990-2000)	Preservation of the environment as a condition of stability	Pollution, resource depletion, climate change	State and global community	Liberal approaches, global governance
Humanitarian security (1990-2010)	Protection of rights and life of the individual	Famine, epidemics, genocide, terrorism	Human being, society	Constructivism, critical studies
Climate security (2007 – present)	Climate as a factor of survival of states and communities	Climate change, migrations, conflicts over resources	State, global community, individual	Realism (resources and wars), constructivism (discursive construction)

Source: developed by the authors based on S. Shah (2021), M.S. Tayie (2023), J. Joseph (2023), M. Qadeer *et al*. (2024), G. Aygun (2024)

Analysis of Table 1 enabled tracing the gradual shift of emphases in international security discourse. If at the initial stage the state was the principal beneficiary and object of protection, over time the individual and the global community increasingly became the focus of attention. This was determined not only by the growing complexity of threats but also by the fact that classical military approaches proved insufficient for responding to 21st-century challenges. Climate security in this context appears as a logical continuation of the expansion of the paradigm, but simultaneously emerges as a debatable category: some interpret it as objective reality, others as a product of political construction that opens space for instrumentalisation of the global order. It is precisely this duality that makes climate security unique, as it simultaneously relies on scientific data about climate change and on political strategies that determine the hierarchy of actors and norms in international relations. The institutionalisation of climate security became a natural consequence of the growth of international community attention to the consequences of climate change as a multidimensional threat capable of influencing political stability, economic development, and social cohesion. If at initial stages climate issues were the prerogative of narrowly specialised environmental forums, from the early 2000s onwards they began to be integrated into the broader security agenda. For the first time at the level of the UN Security Council in 2007, a discussion took place during which climate change was identified as a potential threat to peace and security, which meant actual recognition of its political significance (McIntosh, 2024). From this moment, climate security gradually transformed into a permanent element of UN rhetoric and also became reflected in strategic documents such as The Paris Agreement (2015) and the Sustainable Development Agenda United Nations (2015).

In the rhetoric of the EU, climate security gained weight in connection with the implementation of the concept of The European Green Deal (2019) and A Global Strategy for the European… (2016). European institutions actively promote the thesis that climate change can act as a "threat multiplier", that is, a factor that amplifies existing conflicts, provokes new migration crises, and exacerbates problems of access to resources. It is precisely in this context that the EU, according to the position of I. Manners (2002), positions itself as a "normative power" that uses climate security to legitimise its foreign policy, promoting sustainable development standards in relations with third countries. The institutionalisation of climate security in the activities of international organisations demonstrates that this concept is no longer peripheral. Simultaneously, this very process generates a series of theoretical dilemmas concerning the universality and legitimacy of this category. The first dilemma is the question of the universality of climate security. S. Naz *et al*. (2022) emphasised that climate change is an objective global phenomenon that threatens all countries regardless of their level of development or political system. They believe that the formation of climate security as a universal category enables mobilising collective efforts, creating common standards, and strengthening international cooperation. The argument in favour of universality is reinforced by the fact that climate catastrophes, unlike military conflicts, have no borders and are capable of transforming into global chain reactions – from economic crises to large-scale humanitarian migrations. However, there also exists an opposing position that views climate security as a product of political instrumentalisation. From this perspective, the rhetoric of climate security is an instrument for changing hierarchies in international relations, where leading states and international organisations use this discourse to promote their own interests (Çelik, 2022). Thus, the EU through emphasis on climate security gains the opportunity to influence the policy of partner countries by imposing environmental standards, whilst the USA applies this concept to legitimise military or strategic decisions. In this sense, climate security emerges not as a universal category but rather as a political resource that provides additional legitimacy to foreign policy actions.

Discursive analysis of actors of global governance. The institutionalisation of climate security within the UN framework occurred through the gradual fusion of the environmental agenda with security discourse and the transfer of climate risks from the plane of "soft" development policy to the core of global governance. The normative foundation was laid by United Nations Framework Convention… (1992), which defined the stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations as a common goal of states and created a stable negotiating architecture. Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations… (1997) institutionalised the first generation of quantitatively defined commitments to reduce emissions for a group of developed countries, transforming climate policy into a subject of legally binding agreements. The Paris Agreement (2015), as a legally binding treaty under the auspices of the UNFCCC, introduced a universal model of nationally determined contributions, transparency mechanisms, and periodic review of ambitions, thereby relaunching global legitimisation of climate issues at the level of heads of state and government. Parallel to the environmental treaty system, United Nations (2015) integrated the climate dimension into the general set of development goals and objectives, which gave climate security the status of a horizontal principle in policies of health protection, food security, water resources, and resilient infrastructure. The supporting framework for security interpretation of risks was formed by Sendai Framework for Disaster… (2015), which connected threat assessment, preparedness, early warning, and recovery into a unified risk management policy, effectively bringing together humanitarian and security approaches.

At the level of political legitimisation of the security dimension, debates in the UN Security Council played a role, which since 2007 have periodically returned to the theme of climate as a "threat multiplier" for international peace and security. Although no universal UN Security Council resolution has been adopted that would directly codify "climate security" as a separate threat category, the practice of including climate factors in mission mandates, in resolutions on specific regions, for example, the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, Somalia, and in requests to the Secretary-General for analytical reports, has formed quasi-precedential law and the political custom of taking climate into account in conflict-sensitive contexts (Kazeem, 2024). The Glasgow Climate Pact… (2021) recorded an increase in the level of climate commitments and outlined the need

to accelerate emission reductions. Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan (2022) expanded the financial architecture of climate policy, including through the introduction of new adaptation mechanisms. COP28 Declaration on Climate... (2023) integrated the climate agenda with humanitarian tasks of recovery in peacekeeping. Collectively, this transferred climate security from the discursive plane into risk management through early warning tools such as World Meteorological Organization (WMO, 2023), humanitarian clusters, and through operational guidelines for peacekeeping missions.

The European Union institutionalised climate security as the basis of its own "normative power", combining internal decarbonisation reform with foreign policy instruments. The European Green Deal (2019) defined the long-term goal of climate neutrality by 2050. Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 (2021) gave this goal legally binding status. The document established intermediate targets and created monitoring mechanisms for implementation. The "Fit for 55" package transformed regulations in the spheres of energy, transport, and industry, bringing them closer to new climate tasks (Council of the European Union, n.d.). The updated strategy CSET (2023) provided institutional instruments for managing climate-determined emergencies, including cross-border interaction of response services. The external dimension was enshrined in Regulation (EU) 2021/947 (2021) on the NDICI (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument) – Global Europe instrument, which defines climate target shares in financing EU external activities and envisages the application of conditional-incentive approaches in partnership relations. The EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence nominates climate as a factor in changes in the operational environment and infrastructure resilience, whilst regular EU Council Conclusions on climate and energy diplomacy emphasise the use of decarbonisation standards as an instrument of external influence (Kyrydon & Troyan, 2022). Through these acts, the EU converts the energy transition into a regulatory lever that influences the structure of global value chains, access to markets, and the movement of financial flows.

"Normative power" manifests itself not only in the establishment of internal standards but also in the creation of their extraterritorial effect. Regulation (EU) 2023/956 (2023) introduced the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which transferred climate policy into the sphere of trade security and geoeconomics. Its function consists in introducing tariff-like measures for imports of energy-intensive products from countries that have lower emission reduction standards. CBAM stimulates emission reduction in third countries through several interconnected mechanisms. Firstly, it equalises the cost of carbon between producers in the EU and exporters from outside its borders, forcing companies in third countries either to pay carbon adjustment or to reduce the carbon intensity of production to minimise financial losses. Secondly, the mechanism creates economic incentives for introducing low-carbon technologies, modernising production processes, and transitioning to renewable energy sources with the aim of preserving access to the EU market. Moreover, CBAM exerts indirect regulatory pressure on governments of third countries, encouraging them to introduce or strengthen national carbon pricing systems in order to avoid loss of export competitiveness. Regulation (EU) 2020/852 (2020) (sustainable finance taxonomy) directs private investments towards "green" projects by introducing a unified system for classifying environmentally sustainable types of economic activity, which reduces regulatory uncertainty and increases transparency of financial markets. Whilst Directive (EU) 2022/2464 (2022) ensures corporate transparency through non-financial reporting requirements. Collectively, these mechanisms form global standards for climate risk management. Simultaneously, the policy expands the concept of security to the spheres of industrial policy, logistics, critical infrastructure, and food chains, whilst foreign policy instruments – from climate diplomatic dialogues to the "green" component of the "Global Gateway" initiative – direct financial and technological resources to partner countries, forming new hierarchies of access to "green" capital, technologies, and sales markets (European Commission, 2021b). Both in the UN system and in EU policy, the normative acts mentioned above not only define goals and commitments but also create administrative procedures, indicators, and control mechanisms. It is precisely the ability of normative frameworks to transform abstract climate risks into concrete institutional mechanisms, including programme cycles, budgetary priorities, standards, and sanction regimes, that determines the establishment of institutionalisation of climate security as one of the key directions of contemporary global governance and simultaneously reveals tensions between universalist approaches and politically determined forms of their application.

In the United States of America, the formation of climate security occurs in the context of strategic and ideological motives, where environmental threats are inscribed in the framework of "national resilience" and geopolitical competition. The normative foundation of this framework is set by Presidential Executive Order No. 14008, which for the first time directly integrated climate into foreign policy and national security planning, instructing agencies to assess risks for defence, diplomacy, and economic policy and make them a subject of interagency management (FedCenter, 2021). The order not only defined principles but also launched internal mechanisms, including the creation of interagency councils and preparation of sectoral adaptation plans, which enabled transferring climate issues from the "value" level to the level of executive procedures, budgeting, and oversight. Security rhetoric in the USA received systematic enshrinement in the National Security Strategy of 2022, where climate change features as an "existential" challenge alongside systemic rivalry with great powers (Johnston, 2023). The key interpretation is climate as a "threat multiplier" for US interests, affecting the conflict potential of regions, supply chains, critical infrastructure, and public health. Through the NSS (National Security Service), climate security becomes a criterion for diplomatic positioning, conditionality of development assistance, and defence planning, and therefore an element of the ideology of "restoring American leadership" in global governance institutions. The materialisation of the security dimension is served by mandatory documents of the national defence sector. DTIC (2021) defines the impact of extreme events on combat capability, base operations,

logistics, and theatres of operations, requiring consideration of climate scenarios at all planning levels. Department of Defense (2021) establishes procedures for hazard assessment, early warning, and infrastructure modernisation in terms of resilience. In combination with Executive Order No. 14008, these documents institutionalise climate in the defence risk management system in the same way as cybersecurity or counterterrorism were previously institutionalised. The ideological motive of "clean energy advantage" was reinforced by U.S. Department of Energy (2023), which, despite its fiscal title, is the largest climate law in US history: it establishes long-term tax incentives for renewable energy, electromobility, industrial decarbonisation, and localisation of supply chains. Through this law, climate policy transitions into the plane of energy and industrial security, reducing dependencies on fossil imports and forming a new architecture of "critical" green technologies. It is precisely here that security rhetoric combines with protectionist elements of industrial policy, determining the redistribution of global investment flows. The practical dimension of climate security manifests itself in ensuring management of real threats to military infrastructure, including coastal degradation and storm surges on island bases. Specific cases, such as damage to ranges on the atolls of the Marshall Islands and the necessity of creating nature-based engineering barriers, demonstrate that the category "climate = security" reflects material risks, being not only discourse but also a direct factor in ensuring continuity of strategic operations and preservation of high-technology facilities (Quintanilla, 2023).

The People's Republic of China (PRC) constructs its own configuration of climate security, tied to the triad node of development, energy, and geopolitical balance. The programme framework is set by The 14th Five-Year Plan… (2021), which formalises green transition in industry and energy efficiency as instruments of long-term competitiveness. This document sets a hierarchy of priorities: "first development and resilience, through which – climate stabilisation", from which follows a pragmatic approach to the pace of decarbonisation taking into account social stability and technological sovereignty. The normative backbone of Chinese climate policy is Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide… (2021), which details structural changes in energy, transport, construction, and industry, and also creates a management vertical from the State Council to provinces regarding control over peak trajectories. One of the instruments of security logic in the economy is International Carbon Action Partnership (ICAP, 2021). Launched in 2021 for the energy sector, ICAP transforms climate policy risks into market signals, disciplining large enterprises and simultaneously accumulating data for strategic planning. In 2024-2025, expansion of the Emissions Trading System (ETS) to cement, steel, and aluminium began with the first compliance cycle based on 2024 emissions. Even with moderate free allocation of quotas, this means readjustment of costs in basic export sectors and forms a new "carbon" competitive equilibrium with respect to external markets, including reaction to the EU's CBAM. China's own "geopolitics of transition" manifests itself in combining climate goals with energy security: diversification of supply sources, localisation of technological chains (from photovoltaic elements to batteries), grid modernisation, and increasing the share of renewable energy sources (RES) are presented as means of reducing external vulnerabilities. The very construction of "climate security" in Chinese discourse appeals less to humanitarian rhetoric and more to macroeconomic stability and industrial policy, which distinguishes it from the American emphasis on "value leadership" and norm projection. Comparison of these models demonstrated that climate security is simultaneously universalised and instrumentalised. It is universalised through the UN as a framework of common purpose, but instrumentalised as a mechanism of regulatory, financial, and technological advantage in the EU, USA, and PRC. The hierarchies being formed are not purely political or military; they are hierarchies of access to standards, finance, technologies, and markets, enshrined by specific normative acts and regimes. Aspects of climate security in the discourse of the UN, EU, USA, and PRC are reflected in Table 2.

Table 2. Climate security in the discourse of the UN, EU, USA, and PRC

Dimension of comparison	UN	EU	USA	PRC
Ontology of threat	Climate change is viewed as a global transboundary threat-multiplier that undermines basic dimensions of security, in response to which the UN uses the Paris Agreement and Kyoto Protocol as framework instruments for mitigation and adaptation	Climate change is viewed as a systemic transformational threat that undermines the socio-economic model and strategic autonomy of the Union; implements comprehensive regulatory package European Green Deal, applies sectoral and extraterritorial instruments ("Fit for 55", CBAM) to reduce energy dependence and enhance resilience	Climate change is defined as a direct challenge to national security, threatening defence capability, critical infrastructure, and economic resilience; response includes climate security frameworks, investment incentives, and integration of climate risks into federal and defence planning	Climate change is viewed as a development-determined risk, combining decarbonisation with maintaining economic growth and stability; policy focuses on infrastructure adaptation, monitoring and early warning, as well as on planned-market instruments within the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2022-2035 with scaling up of RES capacity
Referent object of security	Humanity/global community; in specific mandates – states and communities, vulnerable groups	European demos and Union economy; strategic sectors and critical infrastructure	State, primarily economic and military capability; supply chains	State and socio-economic stability; industrial and energy sovereignty

Table 2. Continued

Dimension of comparison	UN	EU	USA	PRC
Policy instruments	COP decisions, transparency mechanisms, climate finance funds, humanitarian and DRR instruments; integration into mission mandates	Regulatory export of standards, internal quotas/ reporting, CBAM, taxonomy, civil protection, external assistance NDICI – Global Europe	Tax incentives, federal procurement, infrastructure standards, defence planning, climate coalition diplomacy	Planned-market instruments: ETS, indicative targets in sectors, industrial roadmaps, state financing of RES production capacities
Operationalisation of security	Risk assessments, early warning, inclusion of climate in humanitarian/ peacekeeping cycles	Critical infrastructure resilience, civil protection, strategic autonomy, "green" industrial recovery	Protection of bases and facilities, network and logistics resilience, localisation of "green" technologies	Modernisation of energy-intensive sectors, control of social risks
Discursive framework	"Common but differentiated responsibility", "leave no one behind"	"Normative power" and "just transition" within strategic autonomy	"Existential challenge" + "technological leadership" and "economic security"	"Balanced development", "energy security", "internal stability"
Mechanisms of external influence	Norms, forums, monitoring and transparency; soft influence through universal rules	Conditionality of access to market/capital, sustainable finance standards, trade incentives/restrictions	Standard coalitions, technology export, economic/security agreements	RES/battery supply chains, bilateral energy agreements, "green" component of infrastructure initiatives
Hierarchical effects	Dependence on access to climate financing and procedures; representation asymmetries	Priority for suppliers complying with standards; "external Europeanisation" of regulations	Advantage for producers/ countries capable of meeting localisation/ standards requirements; redistribution of investments	Dependence of others on Chinese production of RES technologies; pricing and standards through scale

Source: developed by the authors based on The Paris Agreement (2015), The European Green Deal (2019), B. Wu *et al*. (2021), Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 (2021), CSET (2023), U.S. Department of Energy (2023), C.M. Scartozzi (2022), F. von Malmborg (2023), U.S. Framework for Climate Resilience… (2024), Council of the European Union (n.d.)

In the UN, climate change is interpreted as a global, transboundary threat-"multiplier" that weakens food, water, and energy security, increases the risk of forced displacement, and exacerbates conflict vulnerabilities. Therefore, the UN promotes multilevel early warning mechanisms, integration of climate risks into mandates of humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, and global agreements, including the Paris Agreement and Kyoto Protocol as framework instruments for joint efforts in mitigation and adaptation. For the EU, climate is a systemic transformational threat that undermines the socio-economic model and strategic autonomy of the Union; in response, the EU implements the regulatory package The European Green Deal and enshrines goals through Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 (2021), and also applies sectoral reforms and extraterritorial instruments such as "Fit for 55" and CBAM to reduce energy dependence and "economic pressure" on suppliers that do not meet standards. In US state discourse, climate emerges as a direct challenge to national security: extreme events and vulnerability of critical infrastructure threaten combat capability, supply chains, and economic leadership; the response includes state frameworks and resilience strategies, for example U.S. Framework for Climate Resilience… (2024), large-scale investments and incentives, and integration of climate risks into federal adaptation plans and defence planning. The PRC defines climate as a risk "that is driven by development": the priority is preserving economic growth and internal stability during decarbonisation. Beijing's policy focuses on infrastructure adaptation, strengthening monitoring and early warning systems, and using planned-market instruments within the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2022-2035, integrating these measures with growth in RES production capacity. The totality of normative acts and practices of the four centres of power demonstrates that climate security performs the function of stratification of the international order at three levels:

1. Legal: universal UN treaties provide legitimacy, whilst specific law enforcement regimes are formed predominantly in regional and national systems: in the EU – through legal instruments of direct effect with high density of requirements, in the USA – through legislative-fiscal mechanisms and executive directives, in the PRC – through planned-normative acts with an implementation vertical.

2. Financial-economic: taxonomies, non-financial reporting, and CBAM in the EU, tax credits and priority procurement in the USA, state lending for RES and large-scale production programmes in the PRC direct investments in favour of actors that comply with established norms or control critical production.

3. Technological-industrial: standards regarding batteries, hydrogen, energy grids, and cyber resilience, as well as requirements for carbon footprints in production chains, form new hierarchies of access to technologies and production capacities.

Thus, climate security increasingly serves as an instrument for creating new hierarchies in the international order; however, it is precisely through universal UN legitimisation that these hierarchies acquire the form of "managed stratification", where space for reviewing rules

remains open through mechanisms of transparency, participation in COP processes, and development of climate finance institutions.

Discussion

Climate security serves as a mechanism of institutional and market hierarchisation through regulatory export of norms, financial filters, standards, and control over technologies. The formation of hierarchies is not limited to the traditional "North-South" division but depends on the capacity of states and corporations to institutionally transform climate risks into manageable processes – from stress tests and data disclosure to grid modernisation, decarbonisation of key sectors, and social cushioning of the transition. Actors that combine normative capacity, financial levers, and technological cycles form climate security as a field of advantage. Consideration of scientific research that emphasises the interconnections between climate challenges and the transformation of the international order enables expanding the explanatory potential of the study and refining its conceptual framework. The work of J. Sjöstrand (2025) emphasised differences in the ways climate threats are framed by small island states and the EU. Whilst for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) climate danger acquired primarily an anthropocentric dimension, being closely connected with population survival, the EU accentuated institutional response and the formation of regulatory mechanisms in global governance. This is confirmed by the findings of this research, where it was also established that the EU used climate security as an instrument for promoting normative power and strategic autonomy. However, unlike the anthropocentric logic of SIDS, the analysis showed that the EU directed efforts towards constructing new economic and technological hierarchies, demonstrating a less humanitarian and more systemically political approach. Research by A. Nazareth *et al*. (2024) emphasised structural inequality in UNFCCC negotiations, which reproduced broader geopolitical and social imbalances. The authors demonstrated that formal inclusiveness of the negotiating process did not guarantee fair distribution of power and resources, especially in the context of vulnerable population groups and countries most susceptible to climate risks.

In comparison with the analysis of A. Elkhatat & S. Al-Muhtaseb (2024), who substantiated the necessity of integrating sustainable energy transition into the foundation of international policy as a means of achieving balance between climate stability and energy security, the results of the conducted research demonstrated a more multidimensional character of the climate security concept. The energy aspect undoubtedly emerges as one of the basic elements of discourse, as it is precisely this that ensures the connection between emission problems, economic development, and geopolitical interests. Simultaneously, it was revealed that the energy dimension does not function autonomously but intertwines with humanitarian, environmental, and institutional levels that form the multilayered architecture of climate security. Whilst A. Elkhatat & S. Al-Muhtaseb emphasised the imperative of accelerated transition to renewable energy sources as a universal solution, the analysis showed that leading actors (EU, USA, and PRC) apply the energy factor in the context of strategic planning and geoeconomic competition. This gave it not only technical or environmental significance but also transformed it into political instrumentalism, where energy transition is used as a means of regulatory control, market formation, and strengthening global positions in the technological sphere. M. McDonald (2024) accentuated the problem of legitimacy of international security institutions, particularly the UN Security Council. Despite awareness of the scale of the climate threat, these institutions are inclined to avoid direct responsibility for initiating emergency measures, which created a certain gap between the declarative level of policy and practical implementation. In comparison with the obtained results, where it was shown that the UN provided climate security with universal legitimacy through the conclusion of global agreements, integration of risks into sustainable development programmes, and financial mechanisms, M. McDonald's conclusions emphasised institutional weakness precisely in practical realisation. Such juxtaposition enabled outlining the duality of the UN's role: on the one hand, the organisation performed the function of establishing universal frameworks and giving political weight to the notion of climate security; on the other hand, it remained limited in the sphere of effective responsibility and internal institutional transformation.

The analysis also revealed connections with the approach proposed by S.C. Aykut & L. Maertens (2023), who interpreted climate change as a process of "climatisation" that extends climate logic to all spheres of global governance. Their conclusions align with the tendency revealed in the research of universalisation of climate security as a coordination framework capable of integrating into different levels of international policy – from economic and energy to humanitarian and security. Research by N. von Uexkull & H. Buhaug (2021) showed that climate security issues have progressed from marginal to leading interdisciplinary topics, integrating knowledge from political science, sociology, ecology, and security studies. In comparison with the results of this research, substantial commonality was revealed: emphasis on the multidimensionality of climate-security relations and the dual nature of the category of climate security, which simultaneously exists as an objective threat and a political construction. Simultaneously, the difference lay in focus: whilst N. von Uexkull & H. Buhaug concentrated predominantly on causal connections between climate and conflicts, the conducted analysis emphasised the institutional dimension and the capacity of the UN, EU, USA, and PRC to form climate security through normative, administrative, and strategic instruments. The article by J.N. Hardt (2021) interpreted UN Security Council discussions about including climate risks in the body's mandate as a process of gradual transformation of international security architecture. Three-dimensional analysis enabled revealing both common conceptual foundations and contradictions between states, emphasising the potential for emergence of a new agreed paradigm. The work of S.B. Arias (2022) advanced a different approach, accentuating pragmatic motives for securitisation of climate threats within the UN framework. A review of speeches in the General Assembly showed that permanent members of the Security Council actively use climate danger rhetoric to expand institutional influence,

whilst the most vulnerable states avoided securitisation. This testified to the limited effectiveness of the Council as a platform for resolving climate problems and confirmed that climate security simultaneously acts as an objective challenge and a political resource that contributes to forming new hierarchies in international relations. Comparative analysis of scholarly works revealed a common tendency: all research confirmed that it functions not only as a universal framework for global coordination but also as a mechanism of political stratification.

Conclusions

The analysis showed that the transformation of ideas about security occurred in stages: from the classical military-political paradigm of the Cold War period, when the state was the sole object of protection, to a comprehensive multidimensional approach that integrates economic, social, humanitarian, environmental, and climate aspects. This determined a shift in emphasis from a state-centric model to orientation towards the individual and the global community, whilst simultaneously generating discussions regarding the legitimacy and political instrumentalisation of climate security. The institutionalisation of climate security at the level of key actors of international politics confirmed its dual character. The UN provided universal legitimacy by enshrining the climate dimension in mechanisms such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, and integration of climate risks into UN Security Council mandates. These steps operationalised climate security through financing of adaptation programmes, development of early warning mechanisms, and risk management. The EU, positioning itself as a "normative power", made climate security a component of its own identity and foreign policy, using it as a regulatory lever for promoting standards, forming markets, and expanding influence through such instruments as CBAM. The USA interpreted climate change through the prism of military power, technological competition, and protection of critical infrastructure. The PRC integrated climate goals into the system of ensuring socio-economic stability, energy sovereignty, and technological leadership in the sphere of renewable energy, using the ETS. Comparative analysis showed that climate security functions as a universalising framework of global coordination and as an instrument of stratification of the international order. At the level of discourse, it forms the image of a common threat requiring collective response, whilst at the level of practices it serves as a means of redistributing resources, technologies, and norm-making authority. This process transforms the international order and simultaneously produces structural inequalities, where access to "green" finance, advanced technologies, and decision-making mechanisms becomes a new dimension of global stratification. Prospects for further research lie in quantitative assessment of the effectiveness of climate security instruments in achieving national security and sustainable development goals, which will enable clarifying their actual impact on the international system.

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