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Book Review Essays

Security Domains in Conflict?

Gregory White

Anceschi, Luca, and Jonathan Symons. 2012. *Energy Security in the Era of Climate Change: The Asia-Pacific Experience*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Biresselioglu, Mehmet Efe. 2011. *European Energy Security: Turkey's Future Role and Impact*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Brown, Marilyn A., and Benjamin K. Sovacool. 2011. *Climate Change and Global Energy Security: Technology and Policy Options*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Security is an elusive and contested concept. One entity—a person, a community, a country, or a regional grouping—might understand what constitutes its security in a way that threatens another. For example, one village's self-regarding decision to build a dam to create a reliable water supply can threaten the security of downstream communities. Or in strategic affairs, a security dilemma invariably emerges when one country's arms buildup prompts another's, which in turn escalates tensions. In these examples, the predicament is clear, yet so is the solution. By establishing frameworks for negotiation and crafting institutions, distrust can be overcome and cooperation nurtured.

But what happens when security is not about reconciling different actors' competing interests? When it is not about one's pursuit of what it deems necessary threatening another? What if a perfectly established notion of security in one domain is completely at odds with what constitutes security in another domain? A clear example of this problem is traditional approaches to energy security, which is conventionally defined as a country having enough reliable, affordable energy to ensure steady economic growth. Energy security is often associated with national security logics, as a country depends on energy to power its economy. In practice, of course, countries do cooperate with one another to obtain sufficient supplies of energy at a good price. Yet, as readers of this journal know well, such cooperation has long been heedless of the impact of greenhouse gas emissions, not to mention the greater environmental impact of unconventional fossil fuel resources, such as tar sands, when traditional sources become scarce. Put bluntly, the pursuit of energy security as conventionally understood leads to climate insecurity.

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What is striking about *climate security*, in contrast to such domains as national security, societal security, and—yes—energy security, is that even within a discourse of securitization it has a more collective or universal ambience. A stable climate benefits *all* human activities, not just one community or country. Yet if one goes so far as to make a typical securitization move on behalf of climate security—e.g., specifying climate change as an urgent threat that requires immediate attention—then the concern has dramatic implications.

All three volumes discussed here grapple with the fundamental incommensurability of energy security and climate security. They display a wide range of methodological approaches, geographical scopes, political persuasions, and levels of optimism. In terms of J. S. Mill's method of difference,¹ comparing these books is like comparing an apple, an orange, and a carrot. Still, the authors share a concern with engaging energy security within the context of a warming climate. Can the existing way of life be sustained even as transformations need to be made? How can innovation and fundamental reform be introduced and nurtured, both short term and long term? What about the demands of rapidly industrializing regions of the world?

The apple and the orange—the pieces of fruit—are Biresselioglu's study of Turkey's central role in European energy politics, and Anceschi and Symons' edited collection on Asia and the Pacific Rim. Both books emerge from Palgrave Macmillan's Energy, Climate and the Environment Series (ECES). Despite their common rubric, the two volumes are different, not least because the latter is a collection. The carrot—the vegetable—is Brown and Sovacool's book, which stands out for its firm rejection of conventional definitions of energy security, its pursuit of solutions, and its accessibility.

For his part, Biresselioglu, in *European Energy Security*, offers a detailed, thorough analysis of Turkey's position as an energy transfer state: it plays the central role in the transfer of hydrocarbons from the East to the EU. In so doing, it ensures its diplomatic and geostrategic importance. From the theoretical issues associated with energy security, to the EU's insatiable demand for energy, to its abundant supply in the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, Turkey's centrality is undeniable. It is hard to imagine a country in a more strategic position in a more fraught region, and Biresselioglu does a superb job of tracing Turkey's complex, multilayered role. He performs an exhaustive analysis of the data and the historical emergence of Turkey as an "energy corridor between the producer countries in the east and consumer markets in the west" (p. 92). Replete with pie charts, bar graphs, and tables illustrating the quantitative dimensions of direction of trade, composition of trade, caloric values, production and consumption, and so on, the volume will be *the* reference for some time to come for scholars and policy makers interested in Turkey's role in the hydrocarbon commodity chain.

Some of the pie charts are difficult to read because of the lack of color il-

1. Lijphart, 1971.

lustration; grayscale can only do so much. Also, Biresselioglu refers to Turkey with the feminine pronoun. A full exploration of the gender politics in this usage is beyond the scope of this review. Suffice it to say, avoiding this usage is not merely a matter of political correctness but of analytic precision and moving away from anthropomorphizing a country. There are likely few analyses of Saddam Hussein's Iraq that refer to "her interests" or "her role" in international affairs.

A deeper concern is that climate change ultimately has a subsidiary role in the analysis. It is present at the outset in the series editor's preface. In the early chapters, too, climate change concerns are stirred in, especially in the effective treatment of the European Union's energy needs. Biresselioglu expertly analyzes how the EU's energy profile has changed, with a growing (but nonetheless too limited) emphasis on renewables as well as a reduction of emissions from fossil fuels. Yet as the analysis narrows to focus on Turkey and its go-between role, climate concerns fade away. There is brief attention to renewables in Turkey and its unique position in the Kyoto Protocol as the only OECD country with no emission targets. Biresselioglu notes that some of the promise of non-carbon energy has been realized with wind, geothermal, and solar power, but that there is a long way to go. But then the book becomes preoccupied with the geostrategic dimensions of pipeline politics as they actually are, not as they could or should be.

This focus is not surprising given the European economy's reliance on conventional hydrocarbons and the abundant supply in Asia. In this regard, Biresselioglu's book is indicative of the incompatibilities between energy security and climate security, especially when energy security is crafted in conventional terms. In the end, the book offers little indication that Europe's pursuit of energy security—and Turkey's crucial role—might change in a way that does not threaten climate security. One is left without much hope that Turkey's transfer role could be part of a more sustainable energy provision.

On this issue, the Anceschi and Symons volume is refreshing. As with any edited volume, the selections are heterogeneous. *Energy Security in the Era of Climate Change* emerged from a conference at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. In part one, some of the chapters are primarily theoretical and not at all preoccupied with a specific empirical case. For example, Maximilian Mayer and Peer Schouten's sharp, engaging first chapter, "Energy Security and Climate Security under Conditions of the Anthropocene," interrogates the very foundations of security discourses. The authors view discourses not merely as social constructs but as *assemblages* with very real, empirical manifestations. They examine how "externalities [are] silenced by energy security" (p. 22). In mainstream discourse by military and civilian policy makers, issues of corruption, support for plutocratic regimes, the resource curse, the environmental impact of extraction, the military as a massive polluter, the impact of consumption, and the undermining of weak states are cast aside as inadvertent and, perhaps, correctable. From Mayer and Schouten's perspective, however, the pursuit of energy

security goes in tandem with disinformation by corporate interests, militaries, and governments as part of a deeper agenda.

Another provocative chapter is Mark Diesendorf's "Can Energy Security and Effective Climate Change Policies Be Compatible?" It offers an appealing technological optimism about the prospects of moving toward a system of energy efficiency, energy conservation, and renewables by 2050. Much damage would be done in the four decades leading to that date. But the author makes a persuasive case that sustainable technologies such as solar hot water and wind could be fully implemented by 2020, far sooner than less appealing nuclear or "clean fossil" (e.g., using carbon capture and storage) fuels.

In part two of the volume, seven chapters drill into empirical cases of specific locations: China, India, Japan, Russia, Indonesia, Central Asia, and Australia. Unfortunately, Diesendorf's optimism and Mayer and Schouten's sharp normative orientation seem to get left behind. While the chapters are thorough, they tend to share Biresselioglu's treatment of conventional energy security as a dimension of national economic development. Tulsi Bish's chapter on India's Integrated Energy Policy and National Action Plan on Climate Change praises the steps that policy makers have made, yet concludes that in the end India will necessarily remain reliant on fossil fuels in its pursuit of economic development. Similarly, Akihiro Sawa's chapter on Japan, completed just after the Fukushima catastrophe of March 2011, is sober in its outlook. Japan has taken important steps to decrease its reliance on fossil fuels and reduce its emissions. Nonetheless, its massive energy demand is likely to contribute to climate change. One way Japan is leading is in technological innovation and in transferring its energy technology to other countries. This development is a step in the right direction but does not go far enough.

Taken together, these empirical case chapters are a treasure trove of analyses and data for scholars interested in respective accounts and stories. Yet, like Biresselioglu's book, they illustrate a fundamental problem: the tendency to use nation-states as the unit of analysis. Alas, this approach is common in all kinds of domains. Think of the ways analyses of the so-called Arab Spring dwell on individual national stories—Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen—even as the transnational nature of Mediterranean and Gulf security arrangements, the financial machinations in the region, the interconnectedness of oil markets, labor migration patterns, and rising commodity prices render country-by-country analyses incomplete.

The four chapters in the final section return to a more theoretical plane and focus on transnational, multilateral, and meta-governmental forms of cooperation. True, Peter Christoff's "Energy Security and Climate Change—Tensions and Synergies" remains preoccupied with states, although it is explicitly comparative. Jim Falk's "Rethinking Energy Security in a Time of Transition" takes on a more temporal and spatial preoccupation. It is a stimulating piece that suggests the need to rethink "adaptation." Adaptation, of course, sounds pleasant and even peaceable. Yet, of course, it will likely be riddled with conflict.

Falk is pessimistic, writing, "A species which continues to disrupt the stability and sustainability of its environment is not likely to navigate an adaptive course" (p. 252). Finally, coeditor Symons' concluding chapter makes a fascinating and necessary call to transcend the national unit and move toward a more effective, multilateral governance. Whether this transcendence can ever be achieved is questionable, but the volume concludes with the strong case that there is little choice.

Brown and Sovacool's *Climate Change and Global Energy Security*, the carrot of the three books, is the most engaging, largely because of its can-do optimism. It is hardly naïve; it does not ignore the dirty water in the half-full glass. As Bill Cosby is said to have quipped, the question is not whether the glass is half full or half empty, but who's pouring the water. Brown and Sovacool know full well that the human thirst for hydrocarbons has poured polluted water into the glass and that it is not going to get clean on its own. Thus, they are passionate about solutions. Although the book is serious and weighty, it is quite accessible. Whereas the ECES books are more suitable for scholars and policy makers, Brown and Sovacool's is also appropriate for the classroom.

Above all, Brown and Sovacool refuse to accept the construct of energy security as useful *unless* it incorporates climate security. They reject the conventional understanding on display in the ECES books. In introducing their *socio-technical approach*, they define energy security as "the equitable provision of available, affordable, reliable, efficient, environmentally benign, properly governed, socially acceptable energy services to citizens" (p. 3). That is a tall order, but the difference is palpable. They refuse to accept that a country or region is achieving energy security worthy of the name if it is enmeshed in pipeline politics or if it is a developing country seeking to grow its economy.

To a certain extent, they are adopting the theoretical approach of Mayer and Schouten's chapter in *Energy Security in the Era of Climate Change* while also exploring practical solutions for achieving reform. The book is successful in part because it is not limited to one country, as Biresselioglu's book is, or broken up into discrete chapters, as is the Anceschi and Symons volume. The authors consider different economic sectors (electricity supply, transport, agriculture and forestry, and waste and water) and the technological innovations that can reduce emissions as well as facilitate adaptation. They also consider potential technological innovation, geo-engineering solutions such as removing CO₂ and enhancing the albedo effect to cool the Earth. Throughout, they are cognizant of political and economic challenges to reform. They advocate an approach that takes into account multiple levels of engagement and myriad stakeholders.

The authors complete their analysis by examining eight cases from around the world where actors have taken concrete steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The eight were drawn from seventy case studies that satisfied strict criteria. Each case had to address real challenges with electricity, transport, deforestation, waste and water, and climate change; be holistic and polycentric; and be successful and original. The authors' treatment of the cases is complete and criti-

cal. For example, Brazil's Proálcool program and promotion of flex-fuel vehicles is presented as a net positive development, but the myriad challenges of bio-fuels are not underplayed. The extensive analyses of respective cases are models that, again, make the book especially useful as a heuristic tool in the classroom. Even as they, too, look at individual countries, Brown and Sovacool are challenging policy makers (and scholars) to stop thinking in terms of national security logics. Indeed, several of their cases are local/urban-level projects.

In recent decades, the concept of security has been vandalized, as traditional notions of national security—familiar from realist scholars in international relations—have been extended to include myriad other ostensible security concerns: human security, environmental security, food security, water security, and, of course, energy security and climate security. Securitizing something heightens its importance. British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett linked climate change to security in the run-up to the 2007 Security Council debate on climate change, for exactly this reason.² Nevertheless, the problem is that a securitization gambit has a realist hangover; it suggests a friend–enemy distinction, an existential threat requiring exceptional measures, and a move outside of politics. It is striking how policy makers (and scholars) remain mired in a national security logic when approaching energy security. In the end, securitizing energy has prompted the current predicament with the environment.

How then might we desecuritize energy? What would it mean to move away from a security discourse that empowers interests that benefit from the current assemblages of power? Can we envision a restructuring over the next twenty to forty years, such that we will look back upon this decade as the beginning of reforms that liberated humans from dirty fossil fuels? At a minimum, if we insist on thinking in terms of “energy security,” we have to change what we mean by security. The good news is that there are strands in the current literature that suggest we are at the dawn of a realization that domestic “energy security” is meaningless unless it incorporates ecological imperatives for sustainability and adaptation.

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2. Detraz and Betsill 2009.