

Climate Change as a Security Issue in North Cyprus: Securitization of Water Resources and Agricultural Lands

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CLIMATE CHANGE AS A SECURITY ISSUE IN NORTH CYPRUS: SECURITIZATION OF WATER RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Abstract

Climate change has become increasingly security threat globally. Environmental organizations playing a crucial role in framing it as a security threat. In North Cyprus, environmental organizations; Chamber of Environmental Engineers (*Çevre Mühendisleri Odası-ÇMO*) Cyprus Turkish Biologists Association for Research and Protection of Nature (*Kıbrıs Türk Biyologlar Doğayı Koruma ve Yaşatma Derneği-Biyologlar Derneği- BİO-DER*) and Cyprus Green Action Group (*Yeşil Barış Hareket-YBH*) are playing a crucial role in framing it as a security threat. This study explores how water resources and agricultural lands, have been securitized by environmental organizations in North Cyprus by analyzing their speech acts since 2021. The theory of securitization, which is developed by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, provides a framework for analyzing the process of constructing a security threat. This article examines how environmental organizations in North Cyprus frame climate change as a security issue by employing qualitative research methods, including discourse analysis and also benefited from both primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: Climate Change, security, environmental security, securitization, water resources, agricultural lands

Introduction

Climate change has emerged as a critical global issue. In regions like Northern Cyprus, the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly evident through rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and water scarcity. According to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007, serious negative effects of climate change such as temperature increases and decline in rainfall levels, are expected to be experienced by Cyprus as part of Mediterranean Europe. Zachariadis (2012) states that the estimated adverse effects of climate change are projected on nature, water availability, agricultural production, energy needs and human health. Such effects of climate change are not inevitable and according to Zachariadis (2012) coping with these effects with proactive actions of both the public and the private sector is possible.

‘Climate security’ have emerged as a relatively recent effort for integrating environmental concerns into the security discourse. Despite this attempt, the connection between environmental change and security remains contested; framing the environment as a security issue is also subject to debate. (Trombetta, 2009) In the 1980s, with the emergence of global warming, the debate on environmental security gained momentum and in 1978, the publication of *Our common future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development introduced the term "environmental security" into international discourse. Environmental security raises the importance of environmental issues on the political agenda. Buzan (1991) states that, environmental security pertains to the preservation of both local and global biospheres, which serve as the fundamental support systems upon which all human activities depend. The concept of climate security slowly gained popularity and in 2007, the United Nations (UN) Security Council addressed the security implications of climate change. The relationship between climate, energy and security was discussed but no statement or resolution was adopted. In full-day debate the representatives of the states were divided on whether climate change and, more broadly, environmental degradation should be regarded as security issues. This debate marked a symbolic first step toward recognizing climate change as a security issue, given that under the UN Charter for maintaining international peace and security, UNSC has primary responsibility.

Environmental organizations in North Cyprus, have recognized the urgency of addressing climate change, emphasize its potential existential threats and increasingly framed climate change as a security threat. The securitization framework has been applied to explain the rise of

non-traditional security issues, such as climate change. The theory of securitization which is developed by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, provides a framework in the process of constructing security

Securitization, according to this framework, occurs when a securitizing actor identifies and presents an issue as a fundamental threat to a referent object. For securitization to be complete, the relevant audience must acknowledge and accept this framing. (Buzan, 1997, Waever 1998)

In Northern Cyprus, environmental organizations have emphasized the threat posed by climate change to vital sectors such as water resources and agricultural lands. This article draws its main data from the statements of environmental organizations leaders between the years 2021-2026. This article aims to explore how environmental organizations in North Cyprus have securitized water resources and agricultural lands within this framework.

Methodology

This article benefited from qualitative methodology, including discourse analysis, and also build on both primary and secondary sources. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the leader of Chamber of Environmental Engineers (*Çevre Mühendisleri Odası-ÇMO*) and Cyprus Turkish Biologists Association for Research and Protection of Nature (*Kıbrıs Türk Biyologlar Doğayı Koruma ve Yaşatma Derneği-Biyologlar Derneği- BİO-DER*). The purposive sampling method is used with the aim of acquiring primary data. At the end of this manuscript, the questions asked can be found. In addition to interviews, this work draws its data from the newspapers using discourse analysis method. Both interviews and newspapers are used to explain how securitization is constructed through speech acts.

Security Studies: Realist and Copenhagen Perspectives

Realist understanding of security

The Copenhagen School is a school of thought in the discipline of International Relations that challenges and expands upon traditional definitions of security. In the state-centric view of the realist school of thought, states were seen as the primary referent objects, with threats primarily understood in terms of external and military concerns (Wolfers, 1956). Sulovic (2010) argues that the realist school of thought, define security as the absence of any tangible military threat to a state's survival within an anarchic international system. In accordance with the realist approach, the primary responsibility of the state is to safeguard its citizens from both internal and external threats. (Saleh, 2010, p. 230)

In other words, states are safe and secure when their physical borders are protected, and when there are no threats to their national security. (Wolfers, 1952) Realists focus on safeguarding physical borders and national security through the use of military power, viewing it as the essential means to ensure national defense.

In this framework, the concept of security is more closely tied to the state than to its people (Saleh, 2010, p. 230). Within the realm of security, states are both the referent objects and the subjects of the perceived threats. The collapse of the Cold War led to the emergence of alternative approaches in understanding and contextualizing the concept of security. After the end of bipolar international system, the security studies have begun to focus on individual and social groups. In a new political and economic order, critical security approaches emphasized the role of threat perception and the social construction of security (Bosco, 2019; Wæver 1993)

The Copenhagen School of Security Studies

A significant contribution of contemporary security studies in the post-1990 era has been the emergence of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. The Copenhagen School's most distinctive contributions are the concepts of societal security and the theory of securitization. The leading figures of the Copenhagen School, Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, challenge mainstream security studies by asking, "*What quality makes something a security issue?*" This question lies at the heart of their debate with traditional approaches. (Buzan 1983; Wæver 1993; Sulovic, 2010) The concept of security has evolved beyond its traditional military focus to encompass

political, societal, economic, and environmental concerns. This shift places greater emphasis on individuals rather than the state (Saleh, 2010; Stone, 2009; Sulovic, 2010).

Buzan asserts that the security of "human collectivities" is influenced by five major sectors: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental, each with its own set of threats. Military security pertains to the dynamic interaction between states' offensive and defensive military capabilities and their perceptions of one another's intentions. Political security relates to the stability of states, governance systems, and the ideologies that legitimize them. Economic security focuses on access to essential resources, financial systems, and markets necessary to maintain adequate welfare and state power. Environmental security involves preserving both local and global ecosystems, which serve as the foundation for all human activities. Societal security, on the other hand, refers to a society's ability to maintain its traditional language, culture, social associations, religious and national identities, and customs within conditions that allow for their natural evolution. Buzan emphasizes that these sectors are interconnected and do not function in isolation (Paul, 2019, p. 2).

In today's international system, threats have become increasingly complex, and multiple security referent objects exist. Furthermore, there is no clear consensus on the primary referent object in the concept of security.

The Theory of Securitization

The concept of "securitization" was first introduced by Danish scholar Ole Wæver. He famously stated, "By saying the words, something is done" (Wæver, 1995, p. 55). According to Wæver (2010), recognizing an issue as a security concern is always a political decision. When an issue is framed as a security threat and accepted as such by the audience—often through the influence of functional actors like the media—it becomes securitized (Wæver, 1998). Without discourse or speech acts, security threats do not exist. As Sulovic (2010, p. 4) puts it, "...Language exists prior to security."

Securitization is fundamentally a political choice, where an issue becomes a security threat through discursive practices. According to Sulovic (2010), it is a process of ongoing negotiation between the securitizing actor, who raises the issue, and the audience, who decides

whether to accept or reject the proposed agenda. Securitization requires the audience's consent to legitimize the implementation of extraordinary measures. (Sulovic, 2010)

Securitization of Climate Change through speech acts during 2021-2025

Security is understood as a "process of socially constructing threats" from the perspective of the Copenhagen School. Therefore, this process involves three key elements: a securitizing actor, a referent object, and an audience. In this process, Who is the securitizing actor? is one of the key question. The securitizing actor, according to Buzan and Wæver, who presents a particular issue as an existential threat to a referent object.

In this study, referent objects are; water resources and agricultural lands, and the threat to the security of the referent object is shaped by discourse and speech acts. An issue is labeled as "security threat" by a speech acts and becomes a security threat. When an issue which is part of the public policy sphere moved from the politicized level to securitized level where it is framed as an existential threat, justifying the need for emergency measures. In the processes of securitization the audience plays a crucial role. According to Wæver the issue is only securitized, in other words becomes a security matter, by the acceptance of an audience. As Roe (1999) emphasized, securitization is a socially constructed process.

As mentioned earlier, the study of securitization requires a discourse analysis. In North Cyprus case, in examining the "securitization" process, this article refers to the statements of three environmental organizations; ÇMO, BİO-DER and YBH leaders. Leaders of these organizations are labelling climate change as a threat and assert both the necessity and the right to address it through exceptional measures. This work is analyzing their speech acts since 2021 when these three organizations have begun to talk about climate change in terms of an existential threat to the water resources and agricultural lands in North Cyprus. Environmental organizations leaders are securitizing actors claim the climate change into question. Speeches, reports and papers of these organizations present climate change as an existential threat to the water and agriculture in the island. Audiences are the government and the political parties regarding the securitization of water resources and agricultural lands.

In this work, the analysis of the statements made by environmental organizations leaders between the years 2021-26 allow us to see how environmental organizations attempting to securitize water resources and agriculture.

BİO-DER issued a 14-point manifesto in 2021, calling for a healthy environment and the protection of water resources for future generations and urged political parties to adopt these principles in their election programs.(Yenidüzen, 2021) The manifesto included key demands such as: the establishment of a separate Ministry of Environment with adequate resources; revision of the Environmental Law and the creation of Environmental Courts, the establishment of a Climate Change Council, investment in renewable energy, the enactment of a Water Law, and urgent preparation and implementation of zoning plans across all regions. The need for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports that prioritize ecological protection, and effective policies on waste management and support of organic farming are also emphasized in the manifesto. Bio-Der additionally proposed measures included preventing biological smuggling, establishing a biodiversity database, and safeguarding habitats through expanding natural protected areas. (Yenidüzen, 2021).

YBH issued a message on the occasion of 22 March ‘World Water Day’ and warning that water resources are under threat due to population growth, rising agricultural and industrial demands, and the escalating impacts of climate change. YBH stated that, “Global water demand is expected to rise by 55 per cent by 2050 while 40 percent water is projected as early as 2030. The statement also underlined concerns for the region, noting that Turkey currently as a water supplier country will fall into the category of “water-poor” countries within the next five years. YBH emphasized that, under these circumstances, within the country itself, it is essential to develop new and local initiatives to secure sustainable water solutions. (Özgür Gazete, 2021)

In its statement, YBH pointed out that over the past 25 years in parallel with the decline in forested areas in the country, it has been recorded that precipitation has also decreased. YBH proposed a solution in its statement, that in parallel with the efforts to increase forest cover; if it becomes possible to retain even 10% of the available precipitation, this would be adequate to meet the water demands of North Cyprus. YBH called for the immediate registration and monitoring of pools, wells, and wastewater through the implementation of appropriate regulatory measures. (Özgür Gazete, 2021)

Several environmental organizations, trade unions and political parties in Cyprus organized a rally against the global climate crisis, joining similar actions held worldwide in 2021. Greek Cypriot political parties; The Progressive Party of the Working People (*Halkın Partisi-AKEL*), Cyprus Green Party (*Kıbrıs Yeşiller Partisi*) and Turkish Cypriot political parties; Republican Turkish Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi-CTP*), Communal Democracy Party (*Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi-TDP*), United Cyprus Party (*Birleşik Kıbrıs Partisi-BKP*), New Cyprus Party (*Yeni Kıbrıs Partisi-YKP*), environmental organizations; Cyprus Green Action Group (*Yeşil Barış Hareketi-YBH*) trade unions such as Cyprus Turkish School Teachers' Union (*Kıbrıs Türk Öğretmenler Sendikası-KTÖS*) took part in this demonstration. A joint statement was read in both Turkish and Greek during the demonstration, stressing the urgent measures needed to implement for the climate change—an issue vital for the survival of the planet—and calling for a struggle toward a more peaceful world (Bugün Kıbrıs, 2021) In a joint statement the following actions were outlined to address the climate crisis: Rapidly transition of our energy production to renewable sources, prioritize local food production, including empowering suburbs to become productive food gardens, gradually reduce and phase out the use of many chemicals used in industrial agriculture, ensure that parties fulfil their Paris Agreement obligations and focus on protecting biodiversity. (Bugün Kıbrıs, 2021)

In 2021, YBH issued a written statement and warned about the escalating impacts of climate change. The statement emphasized that scientists have identified the region as the “centre of climate change” globally, highlighting that five countries surrounding Cyprus will soon face unprecedented extreme weather events. Havadis Kıbrıs, 2022) It further warned that average temperatures in the region could rise by up to 5°C—well above the internationally accepted maximum increase of 2°C and rising sea levels will lead to the disappearance of coasts, coastal settlements, and agricultural areas (Havadis Kıbrıs, 2022) YBH, also underlined the urgent need to protect natural areas, wetlands, groundwater, and coastlines, and called for an immediate measures to stop the destruction of coastal settlements. In the statement, YBH additionally stressed that water, energy, and agricultural policies must be redefined with a focus on conservation and sustainability (Havadis Kıbrıs, 2022).

Statements of environmental organizations reveal the importance of protecting the water resources and agricultural area. These speeches refers to an existential threat and also the

necessity to protect the valued “referent objects”, i.e. water resources and agricultural land. In other words, environmental organizations, some political parties and trade unions labelled the water resources and agricultural land as a security matter which is ultimately securitized by their speech acts.

Former President of the Bio-Der Hasan Sarpten observed that, drying is seen in several ponds each year and this constitutes a significant warning signal, yet climate change continues to receive insufficient attention in the northern part of Cyprus. Hasan Sarpten, emphasized that both natural life and underground water resources are facing increasingly critical threats and the transfer of water from Turkey through pipelines cannot provide a comprehensive solution (Yenidüzen, 2023) Sarpten argued that the current measures remain insufficient to address the issue and highlighted the inevitability of severe drought conditions in the near future, adding, “Many experts have shared their views on this matter. It is clear that the water issue cannot be solved solely by transporting water through pipelines, and a severe drought is unavoidable.” (Yenidüzen, 2023) Hasan Sarpten highlighted that, the country is located in an arid climate zone, the Eastern Mediterranean region is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change which has been affecting the over an extended period. Sarpten stated that, these impacts are primarily manifested through change in precipitation patterns and increased droughts, adding that, “underground resources are inadequately replenished and natural life is negatively affected by this.” (Yenidüzen, 2023)

Hatice Benan, President of the Bio-Der, stressed that the climate crisis is the main cause of seasonal changes and the drying of wetlands. She underscored the urgent need for some measures such as comprehensive environmental policy and a climate crisis action plan. Benan added that, “This is actually the key solution to the problem” (Yenidüzen, 2023)

“Global climate change calculated as a future scenario, but today we are living through it and it has reached a state of crisis,” said Doğan Sahir, Secretary of YBH. Sahir emphasized that the country’s ponds are no longer being replenished and he noted: “Because we failed to develop policies to retain water. We did not maintain our ponds, we did not manage them. Necessary measures should have been taken to prevent them from drying up, but we did not do that either.” (Yenidüzen, 2023)

The statements of the leaders of environmental organizations illustrate the emergence of speech acts and feeling of insecurity pertaining to water resources in North Cyprus. These statements show to how water resources become a referent object. The YBH and Bio-Der as “securitizing actors”, claimed the existence of a threat; climate change vis-à-vis water resources. Water resources became securitized, because the issue is accepted and legitimated by the members of both the YBH and Bio-Der.

Hasan Sarpten, former president of the Bio-Der, drew attention to the seriousness of the increasing climate crisis in the Mediterranean by citing the floods in Spain, in which 205 people lost their lives. (Kıbrıs Gerçek, 2024) Sarpten emphasized that these events should not be regarded as rare disasters occurring once every 40 years. On the contrary, he noted that, they are a clear indicator of the dangerous effects of climate change in the Mediterranean region. He the urgent need for preventive action, stating: “We must take precautions before disasters occur. A climate emergency should be declared and crisis desks should be established” (Kıbrıs Gerçek, 2024)

Greek Cypriot climate scientist Dr. Giorgos Zittis warned that up to half of Cyprus’ beaches could disappear within the next 50 years due to rising sea levels. About the impacts of climate change, he noted that Cyprus is becoming hotter and drier, which threatens not only the coastal areas but also its ecosystems, water resources, and overall quality of life. (Yenidüzen, 2024) Describing the statement of climate scientist Dr. Giorgos Zittis as one of the worst scenarios, Mustafa Altunç, President of the Chamber of Meteorological Engineers, said: " It is essential to prioritize afforestation and take measures to protect our forests.”. (Yenidüzen, 2024) Altunç also emphasized that the government should consult the opinion of the Chamber of Meteorological Engineers before taking any action, including zoning plans, and said, “Otherwise, it may be too late.” (Yenidüzen, 2024)

Hatice Benan, President of the Biologists' Association, said, that water, food and energy crises are at the door and she added that, "The consequences of the climate crisis we are currently experiencing will make the island uninhabitable in 10 years. The state needs to create an urgent climate change prevention and adaptation policy and take action” (Yenidüzen, 2024) Emphasizing that they are also a member of the Association of Biologists of European Countries, Benan said, "We call our country ‘the north’, but we cannot separate the environment only as the

north. The ecosystem respects neither borders nor soldiers. We need to think as a whole."
(Yenidüzen, 2024)

The Cyprus Green Action Group, Chamber of Forest Engineers, Cyprus Erosion Control and Afforestation Foundation (*Kıbrıs Erozyonla Mücadele ve Ağaçlandırma Vakfı- KEMA*), The Chamber of Turkish Cypriot Doctors (*Kıbrıs Türk Tabipleri Birliği-KTTB*), Lefke Environment and Tourism Association (*Lefke Çevre ve Tanıtma Derneği*), Cyprus Turkish Biologists Association for Research and Protection of Nature (*Kıbrıs Türk Biyologlar Doğayı Koruma ve Yaşatma Derneği-Biyologlar Derneği, Bio-Der*) , Universal Patient Rights Association (*Evrensel Hasta Hakları Derneği-EHHD*), Chamber of City Planners (*Şehir Plancıları Odası*) formed the Environmental Platform and organized a demonstration in İskele for “protecting the island's water and soil resources, raising environmental awareness and a sustainable future”. (Kıbrıs Gerçek, 2024), In the press statement during the protest was emphasized that the increasing environmental degradation in the country is leading to the rapid depletion of vital resources such as water and soil, and it was noted that, the protest have been organized to say “stop” to this destructive trend and to protect the island’s natural beauty. Criticism was directed at the government, the importance of planned development was highlighted, and it was proposed that a crisis committee be established with the participation of all stakeholders and guided by experts. (Kıbrıs Gerçek, 2024)

In the Green Action Group statement on ‘World Water Day’ on 22 March, it was noted that droughts in regions experiencing water shortages, such as the island of Cyprus, pose a serious threat to both ecosystems and human health due to the rapid depletion of water resources. (Gündem Kıbrıs, 2025) The statement emphasised the urgent need for action on water management, stating, ‘Protecting our water resources and using water efficiently is everyone's responsibility.’ (Gündem Kıbrıs, 2025)

In a written statement, President of the BİO-DER Mustafa Kofalı said that the fires that occurred in Turkey and Southern Cyprus in the last few days showed ‘the point climate change has reached.’ Kofalı stated that the fires in Southern Cyprus caused irreversible ecological damage in an area of 100 square kilometres, adding that the losses from the fires were not only a loss for the Greek Cypriot community, but also a shared loss for all people living on the island and future generations. Kofalı called on Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot scientists, nature

conservation organisations and local authorities to develop joint and urgent measures against such climate change-related disasters, and for post-fire ecological restoration efforts to be carried out on a scientific basis across the entire island. (Kıbrıs Postası, 2025)

In an interview, Mustafa Kofalı, the President of Bio-Der, said climate change constitutes a significant and multifaceted global security threat and its consequences extend beyond environmental degradation and increasingly affect public health, economic stability, food and water security, and social resilience. (Interview with Mustafa Kofalı, 2026) Kofalı added that, prolonged drought conditions, shifting rainfall regimes, and increasing climate variability are reducing water availability, while rapid urbanisation and environmental pollution continue to diminish the extent and quality of productive agricultural land. (Interview with Mustafa Kofalı, 2026)

The President of the ÇMO, Vijdan Şengör, stated in an interview that climate change should be regarded as a multidimensional global security threat due to its profound economic, social, and environmental consequences. (Interview with Vijdan Şengör, 2026)

In Vijdan Şengör words

Water, energy, food security, and biodiversity are interconnected components of a complex socio-ecological system. The conversion of productive agricultural land to non-agricultural uses, declining soil quality due to intensive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, the loss of nutrient-rich topsoil through heatwaves and rising temperatures, collectively, all of these factors, reduce domestic agricultural production and increase dependence on imported food. Furthermore, the absence of policies, legal regulations, implementation measures significantly elevates the risk of food insecurity. Alongside food import dependency, rising prices and difficulties in accessing healthy food will lead to economic and health problems. In such circumstances, a rise in crime rates and migration are inevitable. . (Interview with Vijdan Şengör, 2026)

As it is mentioned before, The theory of securitization refers to “the construction of security through a speech-act” (Waeber, 1995) Securitizing actors, that is those who define an issue as an existential threat, will refer to an issue as a matter of security. In light of this, this part examines how water resources and agricultural lands were securitized by environmental

organizations through various speech acts during the period 2021-2026. The issue becomes securitized when it is accepted and legitimated by the audience.

The government and the political parties as an audience in the securitization process

According to Buzan (1998), securitization is an inter-subjective process. For Roe (2005), studying securitization means studying discourses. As Sulovic (2010) emphasized, securitization is the process of an ongoing negotiations between securitizing actor, who brings the issue on the agenda, and the audience, who has a choice either accept or reject it. Sulovic puts emphasize on that securitization cannot be imposed and consent of audience is essential.

In 2023, Turkish Cypriot Political and Social Research Centre (*Kıbrıs Türk Siyasal ve Toplumsal Araştırmalar Merkezi*) organized the Northern Cyprus Climate Summit. ‘Nicosia Climate Agreement’ was signed at the Summit, with the objective of addressing the impacts of the climate crisis in the country, contributing to the development of national prevention and adaptation strategies, preparing the ground for the creation of emergency action plans and mobilizing decision-makers with non-governmental organisations and society”.(kk tcb.org, 2023) President Ersin Tatar, Prime Minister Ünal Üstel, Deputy Prime Minister Fikri Ataoğlu and Tufan Erhürman, the president of the Turkish Cypriot Republican Turkish Party and the head of the main opposition party (Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi, CTP) signed the agreement.

In his speech here, President Tatar stated that the state and the people are sensitive to the environment, but the necessary steps against the recent constructions could not be taken in time. He emphasized that, it is time to take the necessary measures for public health and environmental awareness. (kk tcb.org, 2023) In this context, he highlighted the water supply project from Turkey, noting its potential to enrich underground resources and expand agricultural use. (kk tcb.org, 2023) Furthermore, Tatar argued that the adoption and promotion of green energy could constitute a sustainable solution to the country’s dependence on fossil fuels, noting the Republic of Turkey also supports this project. (kk tcb.org, 2023) Additionally, President Tatar observed that cooperation on water and electricity could be mutually beneficial for both Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and Southern Cyprus. He emphasized that, such collaboration has not been undertaken due to concerns regarding the potential effect on the recognition of the TRNC as a sovereign state (kk tcb.org, 2023)

Prime Minister Ünal Üstel, in his speech at the ‘Northern Cyprus Climate Summit’, said, “Climate is no longer a change but a crisis. We are experiencing the effects of global warming and the climate crisis much more frequently in our country. We know that the weather changes, increasing temperatures, floods with increasing rainfall and forest fires are the results of the climate crisis we are going through.” (basbakanlik.gov.ct.tr, 2023) “We must take action without wasting any time,” he said in his speech. “Our country is taking a significant step toward green energy with the transition to an interconnected energy system.

With this development, we will be able to use both solar and wind power more effectively and efficiently.” (basbakanlik.gov.ct.tr, 2023) Üstel continued his speech and added that, “the use of fossil fuelled power plants will be significantly reduced. This is an important first step for our country. We are continuing our efforts to protect forests, to replant those destroyed by fire, and to increase our forest assets not only preserving them but also by expanding them” (basbakanlik.gov.ct.tr, 2023) ‘I would like to announce here that we will take action by making the necessary consultations with all political parties in order to fulfil the requirements of the Paris Agreement, which we passed the parliament unanimously in 2023,’ said Üstel in his speech. He emphasised that the global Climate Crisis has largely been driven by major industrialised nations, while smaller and less developed countries most suffered of its impacts. Stressing the principle of fairness, Üstel underscored that “climate justice is extremely important.” (basbakanlik.gov.ct.tr, 2023)

In his speech, CTP leader Tufan Erhürman emphasised the long-term planning. Erhürman stated that although the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) occupies a relatively small area in the world, it must prepare for global developments. Erhürman underlined importance of planning for the next five years to protect the nation’s seas, forests, agricultural lands, and water resources. He emphasized sustainable management of these areas is vital for the country’s future. (Star Kıbrıs,2023) Stating that population planning is important for protecting the environment, seas, and forest areas, as well as for keeping the country clean in every aspect, Erhürman pointed out that there are still many unknown issues regarding the environment. (Star Kıbrıs,2023)

In North Cyprus, water resources and agricultural lands has been specifically securitized by the environmental organizations. In this particular case, the audience encompasses the

government and the political parties. It can be observed that, statements of the targeted audiences; President Ersin Tatar, Prime Minister Ünal Üstel and the CTP leader Tufan Erhürman acknowledge that climate change is existential threat and measures are required for successful securitization. In line with the Copenhagen School, it can be said that, in North Cyprus case, environmental organizations as an actor, the government and the political parties as an audience, together decided on climate change is a security issue. The consent of audience justifying or legitimizing the extraordinary measures taken.

Measures taken to protect environment

Securitization occurs as a result of the discursive practices of securitizing actors who construct a particular issue as an existential threat. Through this process, the issue in question is framed as a matter of security, thereby elevating it to a position of political and policy priority. According to the Ole Weaver's theoretical approach on securitization, once an issue is securitized, measures must be taken. In other words, once the issue has increased to the level of an existential threat, emergency measures (emergency action) are required to address it.

In April 2022, applied to the High Administrative Court with the request for an interim order regarding the tender of the Marina Hotel by Lapta Municipality. (Yenidüzden, 2022) The application emphasized that the tender did not have an Environmental Assessment Report(ÇED) and project and violated the Good Governance Law. (Yenidüzden, 2022)

In June 2025, the court decided to cancel the tender decision of the municipality on the grounds that there was no Environmental Assessment Report(ÇED) report. The court also ruled that the costs of the plaintiff be covered by the defendant. (Yenidüzden, 2025) Secretary General of the Green Peace Movement Feriha Tel made a statement after the court , "Of course, investments will be made. Of course, we all aim for the betterment of our country and economic development in every region. But while doing these, public interest, protection of the environment and works that do not violate the law should be the basis."(Yenidüzden, 2025)

In October 2023, The Green Action Group initiated another court case, against the Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources over the coast in Kayalar Village were leased to a private person and a construction company and the court issued an 'interim order'. (Yenidüzden,

2023) After the hearing Feriha Tel, President of the Green Action Group, said that, "Even though we are happy with this interim order today; on the other hand, we are also questioning when will this order of ranting and rent-seeking come to an end! When we lose all our coasts and forest lands?" (Yenidüzen, 2023) In his statement, Emre Efendi, the lawyer of the case, emphasised that "the struggle should be waged all over the country (Yenidüzen, 2023)

Mustafa Kofalı stated that,

Immediate and decisive action is required. However, the effective implementation of emergency measures depends on the comprehensive climate action plan. The development and adoption of an action plan should establish priorities, objectives, and policy instruments to guide governmental decision-making. A multidisciplinary climate action plan would provide the foundation for coordinated interventions across sectors, including water management, land-use planning, biodiversity conservation, agriculture, energy, and public health. Without a coherent long-term strategy, it will be difficult to define, implement, and evaluate meaningful targets over the next decade and beyond. (Interview with Mustafa KOfalı, 2026)

In Vijdan Şengör also stated that

A holistic and integrated approach to the management of water, food, energy, and biodiversity is urgently required. Priority should be given to the development of wastewater treatment infrastructure to strengthen water security and use in specific agricultural applications.

Simultaneously, reducing and regulating the use of agricultural pesticides would contribute to the restoration of soil health and the conservation of biodiversity.

Agricultural policies should prioritise support for small-scale farming systems and permaculture-based practices, which often provide greater ecological resilience than large-scale, intensive agricultural models.

Comprehensive data collection and monitoring systems must also be established as a matter of urgency. Evidence-based assessments should be undertaken to identify areas where interventions can generate the greatest and most immediate impact, thereby informing investment priorities and budget allocation decisions. The development and implementation of a national climate change adaptation plan would provide the strategic

framework necessary to coordinate these actions effectively. (Interview with Vijdan Şengör, 2026)

Conclusion

The main motivation behind this article is to analyze how environmental organizations see climate change as a threat to water resources and agricultural lands in North Cyprus.

The data of this article draws largely from a qualitative methodology, including discourse analysis to explain how securitization is constructed. With using the primary and secondary sources, this article analyses how climate change has become a security threat for environmental organizations in North Cyprus since 2021.

This article employed the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, led by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, and using this approach this article demonstrate how water resources and agricultural lands seen as a referent object of securitization.

In the light of the statements, discourses or more precisely “speech acts”, this research finds that there has been growing feeling of insecurity in relation to the climate change.

This article shows that there is a necessity to securitize water resources and agricultural lands in North Cyprus, because temperature rise has already affected the water resources in turn shifting water availability can negatively impact on agriculture and food production. According to Zachariadis (2012), “Mediterranean countries are expected to be severely affected by climate change and will face most adverse effects on natural conditions for crop cultivation, leading to higher economic losses”. Payab and Türker’s (2023) research reveals that, “The reductions due to droughts in the production of olive, barley, and wheat were stark, with average reductions of 49%, 28%, and 37%, respectively” and the severity of drought strongly influenced the extent of these losses.

It can be stated that as a final word, this article, both theoretically and methodologically, is aimed to introduce a new perspective on climate change in North Cyprus. Employing its theoretical building blocks from the Copenhagen School coined by Buzan and Weaver, this

article attempted to analyze how climate change is seen as a threat for water resources and agricultural lands by environmental organizations and what kind of measures are taken by them.

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Author's Interviews in 2026

Interview with Mustafa Kofalı- The President of the BİO-DER (*Biyologlar Derneği* -Cyprus Turkish Biologists Association for Research and Protection of Nature)

Interview with Mustafa Kofalı Vijdan Şengör- The President of the ÇMO (*Çevre Mühendisleri Odası*-Chamber of Environmental Engineers

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