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Hazy Days: Forest Fires and the Politics of Environmental Security in Indonesia

Scott Adam Edwards and Felix Heiduk

Abstract: The Indonesian "haze" that engulfs Southeast Asia is a result of the burning of forests and has a detrimental effect on the health of millions of people. Indonesia is currently the third largest emitter of carbon dioxide in the world. In response to the dangers posed by forest fires to national and global environmental security, the then Indonesian president publicly declared a "war on haze" in 2006 and called for the use of all necessary measures to stop the deliberate setting of fires. Although his strong "securitising" rhetoric received much public support, it is yet to produce results. The Indonesian authorities have had little success in preventing fires or prosecuting the culprits. Indonesia thus appears to be a null case – that is, a case of an unsuccessful securitisation. We argue that this unsuccessful securitisation needs to be understood against the backdrop of Indonesia's vast decentralisation process, which resulted in certain powers being devolved from Jakarta to the provinces. We find that it is the ability of local and regional elites (often entrenched in patronage networks with plantation owners) to curtail environmental policies which explains the continuation of forest fires. With regard to securitisation theory, our findings suggest that securitising moves and audience acceptance do not necessarily lead to the successful implementation of emergency measures. It appears that there are intermediate factors – in our case mainly linked to the nature of and the distribution of power within the political regime – that impact on the success of securitisation processes.

Scott Adam Edwards is a doctoral researcher at the University of Birmingham. His current research focuses on the development of trusting relationships within ASEAN and environmental security in the region. Personal website: <www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/government-society /research/doctoral-researchers/profiles/edwards-scott.aspx> E-mail: <SAE195@bham.ac.uk>

Dr. Felix Heiduk is a researcher in the Asia Research Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin. His current research focuses on traditional and non-traditional security in Southeast Asia. His recent publications include *Security Sector Reform in Southeast Asia – From Policy to Practice* (Palgrave MacMillan 2014) and "What is in a name? Germany's strategic partnerships with Asia's rising powers" (in: *Asia Europe Journal*). Personal website: <www.swp-berlin.org/en/scientist-detail/profile/felix_heiduk.html>
E-mail: <felix.heiduk@swp-berlin.org>

Introduction

Haze, the result of burning forestry, has been recognised as posing a consistent and severe environmental threat to Indonesia and its neighbours. Most of the fires have been deliberately set to clear peatland for commercial palm oil plantations. Ever since the mid 1990s, transborder haze has become a recurring summer blight that engulfs parts of Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei, and Singapore. There appears to be no end in sight for this trend: the 2013 haze was the worst ever recorded, while the 2014 haze began as early as March. Haze has negatively affected both human and economic security in the region. For instance, up to 70 million people are suffering from haze-related skin, eye, and chronic respiratory illnesses (Amul 2013). Moreover, an increase in mortality rates has been observed amongst vulnerable populations (Jayachandran 2008). The financial costs associated with the increased health problems, lost tourism, and decreased productivity have had a significant impact on the economy (Caballero-Anthony 209: 199). Estimates suggest that the 2013 haze caused losses of between USD 300 million and USD 1 billion for Singapore's economy alone (Chan 2013). Furthermore, haze has contributed to global climate change. Indonesia is now the third largest emitter of carbon dioxide on the planet – much of it the result of burning forests and peatland (Jaenicke et al. 2008; Hergoualc'h and Verchot 2011).[1]

Ever since the haze issue emerged on the regional and international agenda in the late 1990s, successive Indonesian governments have repeatedly framed haze as a security threat. Suharto's successor, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie,[2] linked haze to human security in the country and region, arguing it posed a significant threat to human life (Tay 2008: 231). The environmental damage caused by forest burning is also directly mentioned in the Indonesian Ministry of Defence's 2003 white paper (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Indonesia 2003: 20). In 2006 Indonesia's president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, publicly declared a "war on haze" and ordered officials to take pre-emptive action (*Singapore*

1　According to a recent study, forest fires were the primary proximate cause of deforestation (93 per cent) and net carbon emissions (69 per cent) between 1989 and 2008 in Indonesia (Carlson et al. 2012).

2　Habibie served as president of Indonesia between 1998 and 1999. He presided over Indonesia's first free elections in 1999, after which Abdurrahman Wahid became president of Indonesia (1999–2001). Abdurrahman Wahid was succeeded by Megawati Sukarnoputri in 2001. Indonesia's president, at the time of writing this article, was Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who was elected president in 2004 and then re-elected in 2009. Yudhoyono was succeeded by Joko Widodo ("Jokowi") in 2014.

Business Times 2006). His "courage" in environmental affairs saw him lauded internationally (*The Economist* 2013). Thus, it can be assumed that the Indonesian government attempted to "securitise" the haze issue[3] – that is, Jakarta invoked specific rhetorical utterances to depict haze as a dangerous threat to Indonesia and its people, thus making it a socially constructed threat. Such a securitisation then allowed the government to implement extraordinary measures in its "war on haze" (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 23–26).[4] In fact, successive Indonesian governments have passed a plethora of laws and regulations outlawing the clearing of land by burning and have provided increased funding and training programmes to enhance firefighting capacities.

However, despite attempts to securitise haze, policy outcomes continue to fall short, and the country remains far from winning the "war on haze" – which is evidenced by the fact that 2013 was the worst "haze year" on record. To complicate the situation further, Indonesia's palm oil industry – the primary instigator of the haze – continues to grow: the country surpassed Malaysia as the biggest producer of palm oil in 2006 and expects to double national production levels by 2020. This development of the palm oil industry will see it become an increasingly important provider of state revenues and of economic benefits to parts of Indonesia's rural communities (Obidzinski et al. 2012). This all suggests that without a change in policy with regard to palm oil production, the haze issue will become even more severe for the region. Overall, Jakarta's strong proactive rhetoric has not translated into an effective capacity to prevent land clearing by burning or to prosecute the culprits. At first glance this would seem to demonstrate that there is an apparent gap between the national government's strong political rhetoric, which frames haze as a national and regional security threat, and effective poli-

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3   "Securitisation" is a theoretical concept developed by the Copenhagen School (see Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998)

4   A somewhat similar case is Brazil, where deforestation through forest fires was initially regarded as a legitimate way to achieve greater economic development. However, international pressure from NGOs and other organisations driven by the growing realisation of the importance of the Amazon rainforest to global climate change started to transform the way in which Brazil's government perceived deforestation (Hurrell 1991). As a result, the rainforest increasingly became a referent of security that required protection to guarantee Brazilian (and global) environmental security, whilst deforestation was increasingly depicted as a security threat (McDonald 2003: 83). This change in perception triggered a slew of policy changes, such as the establishment of state secretariats of the environment, the creation of large conservation areas, and a general focus on sustainable economic development in the country.

cies that reduce haze. Therefore, the case of Indonesia thus appears to be what Salter referred to as a "null case," an unsuccessful securitisation (Salter 2010).

Against this background the present article aims to identify the factors that have effectively constrained the securitisation of the haze issue in post-Suharto Indonesia. We pose the following question: How can we explain the failure of the Yudhoyono government to successfully securitise the haze issue and its consequent failure to implement measures designed to win the "war on haze"? We contend that the inability to reduce haze needs to be understood within the context of Indonesia's rapid decentralisation and devolution process after the fall of Suharto. Devolution, we argue, has led to a wide array of actors with often diverging or competing jurisdictions and interests becoming stakeholders in the political process; this has in turn produced a confused and often contested decision-making process, which has provided increased opportunities for corruption and collusion. With this as our starting point, we assert that a key factor for the continuation of forest fires and for Jakarta's lack of success in dealing with the haze issue is the ability of local and regional elites to severely limit the scale and the depth of the effectuation of policies introduced by Jakarta.

As with most case-based research projects, employing a "purist" approach – that is, using a single theoretical framework (securitisation theory) and a single method to attain our research objectives – was not possible. To fully explain the multidimensional phenomenon under study in this article, we were required to use a number of methods. To that end, we brought together insights gained from a number of expert interviews conducted with plantation owners, NGO representatives, and journalists in Indonesia and Malaysia and an analysis of public communications by Indonesian political elites in order to be able to account for the similarities and differences in actors' discursive constructions of haze as an environmental security concern. To determine the level of audience acceptance, we then looked at data derived from the Pew Global Attitudes Project and the Lowy Institute Indonesia Poll. We sought to further substantiate our initial findings by consulting secondary sources, such as reports of domestic and international NGOs, media reports, and the findings of earlier scholarship on the devolution of power in post-Suharto Indonesia and its impact on environmental politics. This article proceeds as follows: After distilling the main insights securitisation theory can provide for this analysis, we explore the extent to which haze has been securitised in Indonesia by analysing relevant "speech acts," the degree of audience acceptance of such "speech acts," and the measures

designed and implemented as a result. We then direct our attention to the extensive decentralisation process that occurred in Indonesia after the fall of Suharto and the impact this had on environmental policy. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings for environmental security in Indonesia as well as for the more general debates surrounding securitisation theory.

Securitisation Theory and Environmental Security

The theoretical concept of securitisation rests on a number of propositions that centre on the importance of discourse for human action. It argues that any understanding of "(in)security" essentially rests on a discursive construction of various issues as threats and security problems. Holding that security is self-referential in nature, the Copenhagen School posits that an actor can "argue" about the urgency and priority of an issue and thus transform it an existential threat; this in turn allows for an extreme form of "politicisation," which brings the issue into public policy and breaks it free from standard procedures and rules (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 23–26). The enunciation of security therefore constructs (in)security and potentially enables actors to "do" security by legitimising extraordinary measures (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 25, 31). According to the Copenhagen School, such an enunciation is referred to as a "securitising move" and represents the first stage of a securitisation. A securitising move is based on the urgency of a threat and argues that survival will be threatened if priority of action is not given (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 26). However, such a securitising move can only be regarded as successful if it is accepted by a "sufficient audience" during the second stage of the securitisation process. It is audience acceptance that elevates an issue beyond the realms of normal politics and thereby permits the use of exceptional measures and resources to tackle the threat (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 204).

With regard to linking environmental concerns to security, the Copenhagen School has argued that environmental issues are amongst the hardest issues to successfully securitise (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 80). This is due to a number of constraints: First and foremost, environmental security is an issue which by and large resides at the global level. Climate change impacts not only one or two states but rather the entire globe. Hence, the referent object of a potential securitisation of an environmental concern is often located at the global level (i.e. "humankind') and thus beyond the boundaries of the nation state. Second, envi-

ronmental security, much more than other sectors, is shaped by two different agendas: a scientific agenda and a political agenda. Although they overlap, environmental security is "typically embedded in the (mainly natural) sciences" and "constructed outside the core of politics, mainly by scientists and research institutions" (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 72). In addition, this and the fact that environmental security has "only recently asserted" itself – emerging as a security-linked issue only in the past two decades (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 77) – make environmental security a highly contested field, which renders securitisation moves much more susceptible to opposition.

> Crucial for environmental security is whether states, major economic actors, and local communities embrace the scientific agenda. In other words, even when the concern is global, its political relevance is decided at the local level. (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 91)

Third, environmental security is "made complicated" by the overlap of a great variety of issues, such as energy problems, the disruption of ecosystems, demographic developments, and food problems, amongst others (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 74).

These insertions notwithstanding, the assumptions underlying the general concept of securitisation have remained fundamentally anchored at the discursive level. As a "discourse-heavy" theory, securitisation theory focuses on "speech acts" and how they enable the intersubjective construction of security threats, which in turn become performative in the sense that rhetorical utterances of danger or threat are constitutive of political action. It follows that the legitimisation of exceptional measures and resources to tackle a security threat is evidence of a successful securitisation. More recent scholarship, however, has taken issue with some of the premises underlying the Copenhagen School's theoretical concept – specifically, the reduction of "securitisation" to a mere rhetorical structure whereby simply "by uttering the term security the previous state of affairs changes" (Balzacq 2005: 180). By holding that securitisation as a practice is only successful or complete when "the warning/promise made in the speech act is followed by a change in relevant behaviour by a relevant agent […] that is justified by this agent with reference to the declared threat" (Floyd 2011: 429), the analytical focus shifts from audience acceptance to the government's role in designing policies in response to the securitising discourse. This results in the introduction of a third stage of the securitisation process: behavioural change at the government level. This stage may encompass anything from an increase in funding to tackle a security threat to the creation of new offices or pro-

grammes even to the establishment of international agreements or re-
gimes to deal with a security threat.

While this expansion of securitisation theory has facilitated a more
thorough understanding of the way in which securitisation moves can
facilitate a change in behaviour, it has nonetheless often been unable to
explain the actual outcomes of securitisation processes. In a recent study
on climate change policies in Australia, McDonald demonstrates that
neither the government's construction of climate change as a threat to
Australia's national security nor the acceptance of this constructed threat
by large parts of the Australian public led to the implementation of
emergency designed measures to tackle the threat (McDonald 2012). In
her study on migration control in Europe, Boswell similarly finds that
the practices of the bureaucratic organisations tasked with migration
control on the ground have changed little despite the prevalence of a
post-9/11 securitising discourse which has attempted to link the influx
of migrants with counterterrorism policies (Boswell 2007). Hameiri and
Jones reveal that different security arrangements can emerge even when
threats are "similarly securitized" (Hameiri and Jones 2013: 462).

The apparent gap between securitising rhetoric, audience acceptance,
and the formulation of threat-oriented policies, on the one hand, and
either the failed pursuit of these policies on the ground or the "variegat-
ed patterns" (Boswell 2007: 590) that emerge, on the other hand, has led
scholars to stress the importance of the socio-political context as the
"facilitating conditions" (McDonald 2008: 564). Greenwood and Wæver
have recently conceded that more analytical work needs to be undertak-
en "on the instalment of political frameworks – the institutions and con-
texts for disagreement and struggle" (Greenwood und Wæver 2013: 50).
Hence, the assumption underlying much of securitisation theory – name-
ly, that "securitisation co-constructs threats, reference objects, and
means simultaneously" – has attracted much critical scrutiny (Hameiri
und Jones 2013: 465). Essentially, what these critics argue is that in prac-
tice there is often no automatic transmission belt between discursive
changes and changes in security governance. Rather, the outcomes of
securitisation processes are determined by a complex array of "mutually
reinforcing dynamics at the national and international level, intervening
between stated policy aims and policy outcomes" (McDonald 2012: 588).
It has been argued that the socio-political landscape, which is deemed to
be crucial for the effectuation of securitisation, is undertheorised in the
works of the Copenhagen School (Stritzel 2007: 359; Balzacq 2011: 1, 2).

These critical observations led us to consult the literature on Indo-
nesia's decentralisation process in order to obtain insights into the socio-

political landscape in which attempts to securitise haze effectively have occurred throughout the last decade. There is widespread consensus in the scholarly literature that Indonesia's rapid decentralisation process after the fall of Suharto profoundly changed environmental governance (Barr et. al 2006; Budi 2012; Siswanto and Wardojo 2012). This is not to say that environmental mismanagement, such as illegal land clearing by fire, is purely a post-Suharto phenomenon. Quite the contrary, it was under Suharto that the haze problem began. However, recent studies suggest that the decentralisation process which ensued after 1999 severely exacerbated the problems associated with environmental mismanagement (Adrison 2013). Specifically, the transfer of authority over natural resource management, including forests, gave district heads (*bupatis*) unprecedented power and allowed them to allocate permits for logging and for converting forests into oil palm plantations (small-scale concessions consisting of areas up to 100 hectares) to generate additional revenue for their own constituencies. While Indonesia's Basic Forestry Law technically led to the Ministry of Forestry retaining control over state forests, district heads interpreted the law in their favour and awarded an "excess" of permits (Bullinger and Haug 2012). In a revision of the 1999 decentralisation laws, Jakarta partially returned authority over forest management to the Ministry of Forestry and the provincial governors (*gubernurs*). Since then, plantation-permit procedures have entailed a number of different permits, which have to be obtained from a range of different government agencies at the national, provincial, and district level.[5] Although the formal plantation permitting process involves various stakeholders (ranging from the Ministry of Forestry to rural communities) in order to ensure there are checks and balances in place to mitigate corruption and the illegal conversion (mostly by burning) of forests into plantations, various studies – some of which have been commissioned by the Indonesian government itself – illustrate widespread non-compliance with, or even open violation of, the legal process. One reason for this is that the devolution of power from Jakarta has created overlapping, at times competing, jurisdictions between the district level, the provincial level, and the national level (Quitzow, Bär, and Jacob 2013).

What is more, decentralisation has altered the incentives with regard to the management of natural resources and the environment at the district level. Local governments, now accountable to their constituen-

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5   For an overview of the plantation permitting process in Indonesia, see Environmental Investigation Agency 2014: 8–9.

cies through direct elections, are predominantly interested in enhancing economic growth to generate jobs and tax revenue – something the issuing of permits for the exploitation of natural resources allows them to do (Mietzner 2010). Against this background there are a number of documented cases in which local officials have defied national policies as a direct result of pandering to local pressure groups and their particular interests. Given that "the exact balance of power between the centre and regions is still being worked out" (International Crisis Group 2012: 4), open defiance of national policies currently carries little risk for local officials – after all, Jakarta's response is usually very slow and for the most part ineffective. "This weak implementation environment is further exacerbated by high-levels of local-level corruption" (Quitzow, Bär, and Jacob 2013: 15). A number of studies have shown how centralised networks of patronage, collusion, and corruption – which were tightly controlled by Suharto and his cronies – gave way to more decentralised corruption networks after 1999, which enabled local officials to participate in the extortion and illegal taxation of domestic and international firms (Rock 2007: 4; Aspinall and Fealy 2003; Hadiz and Robison 2004). Endemic corruption at all levels of government and the collusion of local elites and plantation owners, more specifically, has enabled district heads to issue permits in violation of existing laws at an estimated illegality rate of 80 per cent of all palm oil concessions in Indonesia (Environmental Investigation Agency 2014: 8). With these observations in mind, we now turn to the haze issue in post-Suharto Indonesia.

The Haze Issue in Post-Suharto Indonesia: Securitising Moves, Audience Acceptance, and Political Action

Securitising Moves

Ever since haze emerged on the regional agenda, various Indonesian governments have framed haze as a potential security issue. Towards the end of the "New Order" (*ordre baru*), President Suharto declared haze a national catastrophe. He also stated that haze could have a grave impact on future generations, apologised to neighbouring countries, and ordered the relevant ministries to ensure future prevention of haze (Gordon 1998). Suharto's successor, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, linked haze to human security in the country and region, arguing it posed a significant threat to human life. Such natural disasters, he contended, needed to be

combated through serious attention, lest they occur as they did in 1997 (*The Jakarta Post* 1999).

Following Yudhoyono's election as president in 2004, the rhetoric surrounding the issue was intensified and revealed a new sense of urgency. For instance, Rachmat Witoelar, Yudhoyono's environment minister (2004–2009), labelled haze a "serious threat" to the economy, people's health, and the environment (Sijabat 2006). Yudhoyono himself used various public speeches to highlight the need to consider haze a "key concern, nationally and regionally" and "a troubling social, economic and regional problem" that is causing a great deal of damage (Yudhoyono 2011). Because of the imminent, existential danger haze poses to Indonesia, he publicly declared a "war on haze." In line with this, he called for the use of "every existing resource to fight the fires." Such rhetoric reveals the construction of an existential threat which necessitates the mobilisation of extraordinary resources in order to combat it, thus taking it beyond the space of normal politics.

President Yudhoyono linked the haze problem to the wider issue of global climate change, framing the latter not only as an existential threat to Indonesia but also a global concern. He declared that "global warming, climate change, and sea level rise present us with a clear danger" (Yudhoyono 2012b) and that "the crisis of planet Earth is real" and degradation is "compromising the ability of the planet to sustain life" (Yudhoyono 2012a). Whilst such comments can be interpreted as referring to climate change rather than haze and deforestation, it is Yudhoyono who linked the insecurity caused by climate change to deforestation by pointing out that "sustainable forestry is critical to [...] climate mitigation efforts" and that deforestation was "part of the reason that at one point Indonesia's greenhouse gas emissions rose dramatically" (Yudhoyono 2009b). Failure to prevent these practices will result in "More deforestation. More pollution. More global warming. More endangered species. More conflict between man and nature. And ultimately, more desperation for the human race" (Yudhoyono 2012a). By linking haze and deforestation with global warming, Yudhoyono was highlighting the fact that losing Indonesia's rainforests – "the lungs of the planet" – to deforestation would constitute not only a national disaster but a global one (Yudhoyono 2009b). Joko Widodo, Indonesia's current president, has not yet made such strong statements on the haze issue. However, it appears that he will continue along the same path as Yudhoyono given his pledge of zero tolerance of perpetrators of land burning, his call for greater accountability of district heads, and his visit to Riau (one

of the provinces worst affected by haze) – a trip which was framed as a hands-on look at the haze-suffering region (Ibrahim and Hussain 2014).

Audience Acceptance

Not only did Yudhoyono elevate the protection of Indonesia's forests to a national and global security issue, he also made environmental protection one of his main election campaign promises. In doing so, Yudhoyono was very much in line with popular opinion, which reflects increased public environmental awareness and support for political action designed to tackle climate change and environmental problems in the country. In a 2002 Pew Research Center survey, Indonesian respondents ranked "environmental problems" last in their list of dangers facing the world (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2002). However, in another Pew Research Center survey in 2007, 75 per cent of Indonesian respondents said that climate change[6] was either a very serious problem or a somewhat serious problem for the country (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2007). Public awareness of the dangers of climate change continued to steadily increase, with 86 per cent of respondents considering it a problem in 2010 (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2008, 2009, 2010).

In addition to providing information on increases or decreases in public awareness of climate change, the Pew Global Attitudes Project also offers data on levels of support for climate-protection political action. In 2007, for instance, only 46 per cent or respondents either completely agreed (13 per cent) or mostly agreed (33 per cent) with the following statement: "Protecting the environment should be given priority, even it causes slower economic growth and some loss of jobs." By 2010, however, 61 per cent either completely agreed (17 per cent) or mostly agreed (44 per cent) with the same statement. A similar pattern was revealed in the Lowy Institute Indonesia Poll 2012, in which only 13 per cent of Indonesian respondents doubted whether global warming was actually a problem and thought that the country "should not take any steps that would have economic costs," whereas 79 per cent believed that global warming did pose a threat and that steps should be taken either immediately and, if necessary, at significant cost (31 per cent) or gradually and at low cost (48 per cent) (Hanson 2012: 17). In short, we can see that public acceptance of climate change as a threat or security issue increased steadily over the period of a decade and remained high and consistent in the last few years of that period; the same patterns also

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6   From 2007 to 2009 Pew Global Attitudes Project surveys asked about "global warming"; from 2010 the surveys asked about "climate change."

apply to public acceptance of potentially costly (in economic terms) measures designed to combat climate change. It can thus be inferred that the Indonesian public's acceptance of haze securitisation did not decrease during the Yudhoyono presidency but instead steadily increased. Such a scenario would thus imply that there was a possibility to successfully securitise haze, which would have opened up avenues for the implementation of emergency measures – as according to the Copenhagen School, successful securitisation is decided by the audience not the securitiser (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 31). Given that haze has been securitized and has been accepted to this degree, extraordinary measures would be expected to follow.

From Words to Deeds: Combating Haze under Yudhoyono

Given Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's public declaration of a "war on haze" and his promises at the 2009 G8 meeting in Pittsburgh to reduce Indonesia's greenhouse gas emissions by 26 per cent from business-as-usual levels by 2020 and by 41 per cent with international support forthcoming (Yudhoyono 2009a), one would have expected Jakarta to move quickly on the issue – especially when we consider that the majority of the forest fires causing haze are set deliberately as a cost-efficient way to clear land. As early as 1998, the Indonesian National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) found that

> much of the burning was related to human activities, with little reported evidence of fires from natural causes. Human activities included traditional slash and burn for upland agriculture and conversion of secondary forest (logged forests) on peat soils to other forms of land use, giving rise to fires, which escaped into forested areas. (Bappenas 1998: xiii)

Additionally, recent studies have found more evidence of a link between illegal peatland and forest fires and commercial oil palm plantations by comparing the locations of fire hotspots with areas in which companies were granted concessions to establish oil palm plantations. In fact, it is estimated that about 80 per cent of forest fires are deliberately set by plantation companies in order to cost-effectively clear land for the planting of oil palms (Varkkey 2012: 315; Carlson et al. 2012; Greenpeace International 2013). The smoke resulting from these fires then accumulates into what is commonly known as haze.

Yet despite the fact that there is little dispute about the origins of or the perpetrators of haze, Jakarta has only made limited efforts to tackle

the issue. This is perplexing given the strong language used by Jakarta to condemn the fires and the comprehensive legislative basis upon which to prosecute those responsible for clearing land by fire – a criminal act according to both Government Regulation No. 4/2001 on the Management of Environmental Degradation and/or Pollution Linked to Forest or Land Fires and the Plantation Law of 2004. The legal framework to "combat" haze was further strengthened in 2009 with the passing of the Law on Environmental Management and Protection, which sanctions prison sentences for those engaged in illegal land clearing. Moreover, companies that fail to mitigate the risk of forest fires within their concessions also now face the risk of being punished by the government (Environmental Investigation Agency and Telapak 2012: 5). Rachmat Witoelar, Indonesia's then environment minister, stated that the government "will now hold responsible any plantation owners where there is fire, whether they started it or not," adding that

> If there are any burnings and we cannot get to the bottom of it, we will confiscate the land and put a police line there and that cannot be cultivated. So there will be no motive for anyone to consciously burn the land (*Agence France Press* 2006).

Despite anti-haze legislation being significantly enhanced in post-Suharto Indonesia, firefighting capacity has remained weak. Although Yudhoyono publicly called for the mobilisation of all resources to combat haze, the Indonesian government only deployed police units and a single firefighting aircraft borrowed from Russia to suppress the fires. Measures such as cloud seeding (to create rain) and mobilising the military (to fight the fires) have not yet been implemented. Similarly, plans to use foreign firefighters to support Indonesia's efforts to combat haze have also not materialised despite being approved by Yudhoyono. The lack of political will in Jakarta is a key factor. For example, the initial fund for new resources consisted of a mere USD 50,000. Furthermore, the enthusiastically received moratorium on deforestation signed by Yudhoyono under the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) scheme only covers new licences and primary forests, thus excluding pre-existing concessions and peatland areas (Vidal 2013).

Regardless of Yudhoyono's strong claims to be effectively dealing with the haze issue, and in spite of extensive legislation to combat the haze, illegal land clearing through fire continued, and most perpetrators acted with impunity. A dataset compiled by the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) shows that no significant reduction in forest fires was observable between 2006 and 2008. In fact, the total area affected by forest fires in Indonesia rose from 4,140 ha in 2006 to 6,793 ha

in 2008 (Indrarto 2012: 8). Another study found that the destruction of peatlands in Sumatra and Kalimantan for oil-palm plantations almost tripled between 2000 and 2010 (Koh et al. 2011). Moreover, Jakarta recently announced that it plans to double Indonesia's oil-palm production by the year 2020, for which a further 3 million ha of peatland have already been approved for conversion (Varkkey 2012: 323). The lack of political action so far can only be understood against the backdrop of devolution that took place in post-Suharto Indonesia. By taking into consideration the local dynamics of environmental governance – especially with regard to the increased competition for power and authority between the centre and the periphery, which has been a strong characteristic of Indonesia's vast decentralisation process – we hope to gain a more coherent understanding of the reasons for the hitherto largely unsuccessful "war on haze."

The Politics of Securitisation in Post-Suharto Indonesia

There is a general assumption in the securitisation literature that central governments retain prime agency over securitisation processes because they are able to "speak about security" as well as launch extraordinary measures (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 31). Scholarship on environmental security, however, has highlighted the importance of the distribution of power between the various stakeholders involved in the policy process, particularly in the field of environmental politics. It has been argued that the distribution of authority within the state matters specifically in the field of environmental politics due to the "multifaceted nature of environmental damage and pollution," which can range "from a fully localized affair to something with impacts on a global scale" and thereby involve a variety of actors (Bedner 2010: 38). Thus the manner in which environmental authority is distributed within the state is said to have a profound influence on "processes of standard setting, monitoring, and imposing sanctions in order to protect the environment" (Bedner 2010: 38). Questions regarding power and authority over environmental policy in Indonesia therefore require some elaboration (Jones 2011).

　　Changes in the distribution of state authority have been the subject of many scholarly debates since the end of the Suharto regime – during which time Indonesia has made significant strides towards democracy. The country's transition featured a general overhaul and liberalisation of the political system, including the establishment of a multiparty system, increased freedom of the press, and the introduction of open elections.

Furthermore, Indonesian democratisation entailed the transformation of one of the world's most centralised political systems (in which political power was to a large degree concentrated in the hands of Suharto and his cronies) into one of the most decentralised ones. The two main laws concerning Indonesia's decentralisation were Law No. 22/1999 (on regional autonomy), which has now been replaced by Law No. 32/2004, and Law No. 25/1999 (on fiscal balance). Law No. 22/1999 allowed for provincial governors and district heads, who previously were installed by Jakarta, to be elected by their respective local legislatures (Mietzner 2010: 176). As a result, the power of provincial and regional leaders has sharply increased in many ways in post-Suharto Indonesia, whereas the authority of the once all-powerful national government has significantly decreased (Bünte 2009).

This overall devolution of power has also impacted on environmental issues, especially on the exploitation and the protection of Indonesia's forests. During Suharto's "New Order," forest management lay entirely in the hands of the Indonesian government (Yasmi, Guernier, and Colfer 2009: 99). Most laws concerning the environment were made in Jakarta by the relevant ministries and then implemented by the branch offices of the respective ministry at the provincial and district levels (Bedner 2010: 39). In the natural resource management sector the main transformation that took place during decentralisation was that government agencies at the provincial and the district levels became key actors in forest management and environmental protection.

As part of Indonesia's decentralisation process, local governments were de facto given new powers to administer forests within their own jurisdictions. In particular, Law No. 22/1999 broadly endorsed regional autonomy by giving district and provincial governments greater authority in managing and exercising government functions in the areas of agriculture, land, and environment. Furthermore, Law No. 22/1999 states that "Local government has the authority to manage natural resources occurring in its jurisdiction and shall be responsible to secure environmental sustainability in accordance with laws and regulations." Since 1999 the authority to issue land conversion permits and logging permits of up to 100 hectares has rested in the hands of the district heads, whilst any areas extending beyond district borders have been under the control of the provincial governors. Plots of land exceeding 1,000 hectares remain entrusted to the Indonesian government (Colchester et al. 2006: 45). Yet according to a Human Rights Watch report, district heads and loggers have in the past "conspired to circumvent the national permitting process by creating large blocks of contiguous 100 hectare plots" (Human

Rights Watch 2009: 12). The devolution of authority over natural re-
sources management to the district level has led to excesses in logging
and the awarding of plantation permits as district heads use such means
to generate additional revenues for their own constituencies.

In 2004 the Indonesian government rescinded some of the powers
given to district heads by revising decentralisation legislation. This partial
recentralisation of natural resources management authority saw more
power returned to the Ministry of Forestry and the provincial governors
in an effort to create the checks and balances required to mitigate cor-
ruption and the illegal conversion of forests into plantations. Now the
permitting process involves a variety of government agencies, ranging
from the national level to the district level. The issuing of location per-
mits still largely remains in the hands of the district heads (or provincial
governors if the proposed concessions involve two or more districts),
though some spatial planning and land-use functions are now located at
the provincial level. Any conversion of national forests (*kawasan hutan*)
now additionally requires approval from the Ministry of Forestry in Ja-
karta. Although the participation of multiple government agencies was
supposed to lessen corruption and illegal land clearing, widespread non-
compliance with the official plantation permitting process, as well as
open violation thereof, is still the norm. One reason for this is that the
decentralisation process created overlapping and at times competing
jurisdictions (Austin 2014). As a result, new actors at the regional and
local levels (such as political elites and those with vested business inter-
ests) have become important stakeholders in the process (Buehler 2010).
Unclear jurisdiction and legal uncertainties have hindered the effectua-
tion of policies formulated in Jakarta. Hence, the allocation of permits in
Indonesia is "rarely consistent with the intentions of the national gov-
ernment" (Pfaff, Amacher, and Sills 2013: 27).

Moreover, endemic corruption at all levels of government – specifi-
cally the collusion of local elites and plantation owners at the local level –
has resulted in the issuing of permits in violation of existing laws. Ac-
cording to recent estimates, 80 per cent of all palm oil concessions in
Indonesia fail to comply with the formal legal permit procedures (Envi-
ronmental Investigation Agency 2014: 8). Hence the conflation of local
politics and business interests and the respective formation of patronage
networks involving local politicians, the security forces, and plantation
companies are also deemed to be central factors behind the continuing
instances of forest fires and the lack of action against the perpetrators. In
a report on illegal land clearing in Kalimantan it was claimed that despite
the arrival of tougher laws on environmental protection in 2009, hun-

dreds of plantation companies continue to operate outside the law – often "with the involvement of regency governments" (Environmental Investigation Agency und Telapak 2012: 3). Similarly, legislation requiring licensed plantations to be able to mitigate the risk of fires within their concessions is also not being coherently enforced on the ground, which has led to a widespread lack of capacity to fight fires at the local level (Tan 2005: 681). This is often exacerbated by the fact that local governments' monitoring and evaluation units are severely understaffed and underfunded. In a case study on Sambas, West Kalimantan, it is revealed that the district's monitoring and evaluation unit has "an annual budget of only IDR 50 million (USD 5,400) with which it is expected to look into the actions of all 35 oil palm companies and a myriad of other enterprises" (Colchester et al. 2013: 31). What is described as the "common modus operandi" behind the conflation of politics and business, which in turn is seen to be a crucial factor for the lack of success of Yudhoyono's war on haze, involves oil palm companies giving local and regional electoral candidates shares in their businesses to ensure that the respective candidate grants the required permits once elected (Indrarto 2012: 11). It also involves the appointment of senior government officials, police chiefs, and military officers to the boards of large plantation companies to act as "intermediaries" with government agencies and local communities (Varkkey 2012: 318).

With the management of Indonesia's natural resources now being partially under the control of local governments, local politicians and the security forces now have the opportunity to increase their revenue flows: the former by "taxing" oil plant companies on their concessions and the latter by running businesses protection rackets.[7] Chandra Hamzah, the deputy chairman of Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission, described the forestry sector as "a source of unlimited corruption" (Bachelard 2012). Despite a ban on issuing new plantation concessions on peatlands, local governments continue to issue such permits, thus "providing a veneer of apparent legality" to illicit activities (Human Rights Watch 2009: 12). Furthermore, because the conversion of forests and peatlands are likely to attract investments by palm oil companies – which often create employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth in rural areas (Hirawan 2011) – local governments often ignore illegal land clearings (Richardson 2010: 30) and therefore allow many companies to engage in such activities with impunity (Greenpeace International 2013). It thus comes as no surprise that local politicians often

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7   Interview (name withheld), Wilmar International, Singapore, 15 August 2013.

downplay the damage caused by haze, simply referring to it as an "in-convenience" that has merely "caused some complaints on health disturbances" (WWF Indonesia 2006).

However, devolution in Indonesia has also empowered other actors – namely, the media and civil society organisations – to speak about and engage in environmental politics. The involvement of NGOs in environmental politics actually dates back to the Suharto era, when organisations such as WALHI gathered strong grass-roots support by leading lawsuits against state-owned plantation companies and high-ranking state officials and became beacons for political activists. By acting, in the eyes of many Indonesians, on behalf of threatened ecosystems and local communities, the NGO sector managed to obtain a significant amount of social capital (Bryant 2001: 28; Swadaya 1994: 19). Through their advocacy, both national and international NGOs have highlighted the threats posed by haze and the forest fires that cause it. For example, international NGOs like the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have referred to the forest fires as a "planetary disaster," linking haze to global climate change and climatic security (WWF Indonesia 2012). Greenpeace has also framed the threat as such, arguing that the government "needs to wake up to the climate crisis" and claiming that Indonesia is "frying the forest" to meet India's palm oil needs, which is having a devastating effect on the global climate and thus makes it one of the "greatest threats humanity has ever faced" (Greenpeace India 2012). National and local NGOs have stressed the negative impact of haze on human security, addressing concerns about human health, human welfare, land rights, and the survival of indigenous communities in plantation areas (WALHI 2011). Hence, it seems safe to state that NGOs have played a part in the securitising process in the context of the declared "war on haze." Nevertheless, whilst NGOs have sought to securitise the haze issue, relatively speaking, their power remains limited due to a lack of funds, personnel, and access to political decision makers.[8]

In addition, NGOs' impact on the securitisation process is at times restricted by their lack of media exposure. With the media, especially television and print media, being the primary channel to reach large parts of the Indonesian population, it is deemed to play a significant part in the social construction of threats (Vultee 2011: 79). In post-Suharto Indonesia the relaxation of restrictions on the mass media (at least for-

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8   Interview (name withheld), WWF Indonesia, Jakarta, 13 July 2012; interview (name withheld), WALHI, Jakarta, 13 July 2012.

mally) has seen the media proliferate (Collins 2003: 77).[9] However, despite various instances of critical reporting on prevailing corruption, Indonesia's media landscape is riddled with corruption and subject to the influences of business interests (Reporters Without Borders 2015).[10] NGO activists contend that mainstream media outlets often do not report illegal land clearings over fears of having their advertisement budgets cut by the large palm oil companies, which are often behind the illegal clearings (Winarni 2012). Consequently, Indonesia ranks a low 138 on the press freedom index – down significantly from 100 in 2008 and 117 in 2009 (Reporters Without Borders 2015). This explains why the majority of reporting on hotspots and haze outbreaks is extremely general, consisting of information about "predictable haze" movements and air pollution levels.

Attempts to securitise haze have encountered a powerful counter-narrative: national development and economic growth. Indonesia is now the world's largest palm oil producer, and national palm oil production is to double by 2020. Once land has been cleared through fires, whole districts become economically dependent on the production of palm oil. Besides providing profits to private and state-owned palm oil companies (which employ an estimated one million workers), the palm oil sector offers benefits to various other parties – most notably, the hundreds of thousands of independent small-scale producers and those deemed to be part of the supply chain (an estimated 400,000 employees). World Growth, a pro-business think tank, estimates that the livelihood of up to 20 million Indonesians directly or indirectly depends on palm oil production (World Growth 2012). The perceived benefits of increased palm oil production for Indonesia's economic development have featured prominently in debates on economic development and environmental protection alike. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, for example, stressed the increasing contribution "of the forestry and agriculture sectors to [Indonesia's] national economy," which "contributed approximately 3.5 per cent of the national economy" and provided "employment for around 3.76 million people" (Yudhoyono 2013). In order to bolster prices in what he perceived to be a "crucial sector" for Indonesia's economic growth, he also called for new policies to boost national consumption of biofuels, which are largely based on palm oil (Rusmana 2013). The result is the paradoxical situation in which haze is framed as a security hazard while palm oil production is simultaneously framed as a crucial driver of Indo-

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9   Interview with Kornelius Purba, senior editor of the *Jakarta Post*, Jakarta, 14 July 2012.
10   Interview with freelance journalist (name withheld), Jakarta, 11 July 2012.

nesia's economic development. As in many other so-called developing countries, championing economic growth has become a primary "desecuritisation" technique, whereby attention is discursively shifted away from environmental protection to economic growth (Nomura 2007), and an ostensive dichotomy is created between the two (Elliott 2007).

Conclusion

In our analysis we showed that the Indonesian government has attempted to securitise haze – a phenomenon that has adversely affected the health of millions of people in Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia, as well as those countries' economies – by declaring a "war on haze" and framing haze as a threat to the well-being of its people. We also demonstrated that the general public has become increasingly receptive to securitising moves aimed at environmental issues. Survey data indicates that environmental awareness has continuously risen throughout the last decade and that Indonesians also increasingly support strong political action – even if these policies were to negatively affect the country's economic growth. We further showed that the Indonesian government, within the context of its "war on haze," passed a series of laws and regulations that criminalise the illegal clearing of peatland by fire and also prohibit the conversion of large areas of Indonesia's peatlands into palm oil plantations. Yet, the securitising moves initiated by Jakarta combined with high audience acceptance and legal reforms enabling the prosecution of those engaged in land clearing by fire have only resulted in a minimal change in behaviour on the ground. In fact, haze remains an annual phenomenon despite the government's securitising efforts and despite the increasing levels of environmental awareness amongst the Indonesian population. We tried to explain these findings by tracing the impact Indonesia's decentralisation process had on environmental governance. The (partial) devolution of power from the national to the provincial and district levels multiplied the number of actors involved in the policy process and created overlapping, at times contradictory, jurisdictions, which resulted in a confused and often contested decision-making process and increased opportunities for corruption and collusion. The shift of some implementation powers from the national level to the district level led to the creation of local "fiefdoms" (Varkkey 2012), in which district leaders have been complicit in facilitating illegal land conversion in order to create revenue streams independently of the central government.

We also revealed that the multiplication of actors as part of Indonesia's decentralisation process has not led to a more transparent and open environmental policymaking process. Although decentralisation has definitely created political space for civil society actors and the media to engage in environmental politics, local governments largely seem to be more responsive to the demands of powerful plantation companies. This appears to be primarily due to the persistence of patronage networks that consist of plantation firms and government officials in combination with rampant corruption in the forest management sector. Against this backdrop of collusion between political and business interests, securitising moves by NGOs at the national and local levels have often been unsuccessful despite their contribution to passed legislation that criminalises land clearing by fire and the conversion of peatland into palm oil plantations.

We also identified a counter-narrative to the "war on haze" narrative that is in use at all levels of government: the economic growth narrative. Parallel to the target of reducing the number of forest fires and carbon emissions, the Indonesian government has set a target of 7 per cent annual growth, which is to be driven in part by the commercial exploitation of Indonesia's forests to produce palm oil. Such levels of economic growth has enabled various actors to undermine the urgency of the securitising rhetoric, downplay the dangers posed by the haze, and shift policy priorities away from environmental protection towards the commercial-scale expansion of palm oil production.

With regard to securitisation theory, our findings suggest that securitising moves and audience acceptance do not necessarily lead to the successful effectuation of emergency measures. It appears that there are intermediate factors (in our case mainly linked to the nature of and the distribution of power within the political regime) that affect the success of securitisation processes. This suggests that there is a need to reconsider the conceptualisation of securitisation as a top-down process in which the government is the main securitising agent. We found that in the case of Indonesia, securitisation processes in the field of environmental security involve a multiplicity of state and non-state actors who often have jurisdictions and interests that overlap and even sometimes, in the case of the latter, diverge; in our case this makes the securitisation process much more bidirectional and multipolar.

It would appear that securitisation theory's notion of "audience" is inadequate as it tells us little about what constitutes a "sufficient audience" for the successful securitisation of an environmental threat. In instances where the general population is adversely affected (as is the

case with haze), do people have to be convinced of the imminence of the threat? What sort of support should the audience provide to the securitising actors? In this analysis, we showed that despite a steadily growing awareness amongst the Indonesian public about environmental threats, it appears that crucial actors of the state and within the business sector continue to detract from the urgency of haze rhetoric and, perhaps more crucially, from the policy responses to the threat. Public pressure for the protection of Indonesia's forests has failed to weaken the power of those who benefit from the (often illegal) exploitation of natural resources in the country. At the very least, this demonstrates that the relationship between the securitising agent and the audience is often more complex than suggested by the Copenhagen School. Taking this into account, future research should attempt to more closely theorise on the factors that influence how actors respond to securitising moves at various stages of a securitisation process in order to be able to explain why certain securitisations succeed and others fail.

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