



SECURITIZING CLIMATE CHANGE: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL  
SECURITY FRAME ON UTAH POLITICAL ELITES

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The partisan divide over climate change in the United States has led to long-term inaction in creating policies aimed at mitigating and adapting to the changing climate. This study explores one option for bridging the gap: reframing the discussion of climate change to better appeal to those who do not view addressing the issue as a priority. Democrats tend to consider climate change as a much more urgent concern compared to Republicans (Norman, 2017). Republicans, on the other hand, tend to be particularly concerned with national security issues, among other topics (Winter, 2010). Thus, this study examines whether framing climate change as a national security issue will cause Republicans to be more concerned with climate change and more willing to take action to address it. Because the general public tends to take cues from political elites on highly partisan issues (such as climate change-related issues), the study was focused on political elites in Utah (Druckman, Peterson, & Slothuus, 2013). Members of the Utah House of Representatives were used to represent Utah's political elite. Through a two-stage interview of both Republican and Democratic representatives, the efficacy of framing climate change as a national security issue was tested. It is unlikely, however, that framing climate change as a national security issue (or at least as framed in this study) was effective at elevating Republican representatives' concerns about climate change. It does seem likely, though, that more closely linking climate change to air quality and to the economy would more effectively increase Republican representatives' willingness to substantively address climate change through policies aimed at mitigation and adaptation.