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# Links

## China

### China – otherization

#### The plan promotes securitization of the arctic and the construction of China as a threat and an “other”.

**Kirkegaard, Doctorate in Peace and Conflict Studies, 20**

[Dr. Ane Kirkegaard, “Securitization and the Power of Language”, Malmö University, Spring 2020, sections: 4.1.2-4.2 <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1482596/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, July 10, 2025, HDSW-JWS]

‘Securitization’ as a concept was first defined by Ole Wæver in 1995 in reference to the **discursive construction of threats**. Since language constitutes the social world, this also includes security and its features (Köhler, 2019:42). **Securitization**, as explained by the Copenhagen School, is the discursive process in which, “**an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority**; thus, by labelling it as security an agent claims a need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means” (Buzan et. al, 1998:26). Wæver argues that security and **threats are not an objective matter**. Instead, **security discourse is characterized by the endeavor of which actors construct issues as threats to security**, and granting an issue utmost priority. In essence, **the issue is a verbal construction and presented as an existential threat.** A prerequisite is that the issue of concern has to be accepted by a relevant audience in order for political leaders to be suspended from normal politics and enabled to take the emergency measures needed. Following this notion, security is a form of negotiation between speaker and audience, though significantly conditioned by the extent to which the speaker holds a position of authority within a particular group (McDonald, 2013:72). According to Wæver, a successful securitization tends to involve the articulation of threat, “only from the specific place, in an institutional voice, by elites” (Wæver, 1995:57). These articulations of threats come in the form of ‘speech acts’, which is a term borrowed from language theorist John Austin (Buzan et. al, 1998). Speech acts are, “conceived as forms of representation that do not simply depict a preference or view of an external reality but also have a performative effect” (McDonald, 2013:72). Speech act theory puts emphasis on the function of language and focuses on the performance or words, sentences and symbols (Balzacq, 2011:4). In other words, **the act of speaking is** rule-guided action that possesses reality-making powers, and therefore, stating is a performative act (Köhler, 2019:44). In this sense, security is what the Copenhagen School notes as **a ‘self-referential practice’,** because by presenting an issue as a security matter, it becomes one (Buzan et. al, 1998:24). Originally, the speech act in itself was regarded as the process of securitization but due to conceptual development, an issue is only successfully securitized if and when the audience accepts it (McDonald, 2013:73). The audience’s = acceptance is dependent on the form of speech acts, the position of the securitizing actor and features that are historically associated with the threat. These components of the speech acts work under what is referred to as inter- nal and external facilitating conditions (Buzan et. al, 1998:32). The three facilitating conditions are (1) the demand internal to the speech act of following the grammatical plot of designating an existential threat and arguing for urgent untypical action, (2) the social conditions regarding the position of authority for the securitizing actor (the relation between the securitisizing actor and the audience) and, (3) features of the alleged threats that either facilitate or impede securitization (Buzan et. al, 1998:32). That is to say, the first facilitating condition is concerned with the ‘grammar of security’ which lays the ground for a discursive plan that involves: **an existential threat, point of no return and a possible way out**. Secondly, a condition involves the social capital of the securitizing actor, who must be in a position of authority. Since the audience is not necessarily fully informed, it often relies on the discourses of state officials since they are the site of constitutional legitimacy and therefore, must have ‘good reason’ to declare an issue as a threat to the state’s survival. Therefore, it is typically, in a sense, easier for actors who hold influential positions in the security sector based on their political capital to successfully securitize an issue. Lastly, the condition relating to the threat **involves the usage of objects that are generally understood as threatening** in order to more successfully **produce the idea of an existential threat.** In sum, the theory of securitization has two central concepts which are the three components of securitization - the speech act, the securitizing actor and the audience -, and the three facilitating conditions outlined above. In a 15 sense, the Copenhagen School looks at what security is by looking at what it does (Rych- novská, 2014:10). For the Copenhagen Scholars, the nature of present security issues is deeply related to the politicizing of issues. Security politics, are in their regard, not only about emphasizing the preexisting threats, but also about the performative activity that makes certain issues visible as threats (Coskun, 2011:12) **Securitization is a further intensification of politicization**, however in another perspective politicization of issues presents them as a matter of choice and decision while the process of securitization present an issue as urgent and existential and therefore should be dealt with accordingly by political leaders (Buzan et. al, 1998:29). So, politicized issues are regarded as the body of everyday politics involving debates and decisionmaking, while a securitized issue is placed ‘above’ normal politics. Security is thus perceived as a negative by the Copenhagen School, since it concerns a failure to deal with issues as normal politics (Buzan et. al, 1998:29). Central is the fact that actors and their audi-ences securitize certain issues as a specific form of political act (Buzan et. al, 1998:33). The theory of securitization provides a framework for analyzing matters of security and the process of securitization. What the framework of securitization can bring to an analysis is the means to identify something as a securitization move or as the maintenance of a security discourse. An analysis within the framework of securitization therefore, does not set out to assess some objective threat, but to understand the process of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat. Securitization is studied by assessing the discourse and political constellations presented. That is done by studying when and how an argument with the particular rhetorical structure achieves sufficient effect that makes an audience tolerate violations of established rules (Buzan et. al, 1998). A successful securitization is reliant on the features and quality of the security speech acts. The analyst is interested in the construction of the existential threat, since securitization can never be imposed and therefore requires the speaker to argue the case. The Copenhagen Scholars state that, “the existential threat has to be argued and just gain enough resonance for a platform to be made from which it is possible to legitimize emergency measures or other steps that would not have been possible had the discourse not taken the form of existential threats, point of no return, and necessity” (Buzan et. al, 1998:25). The representation of the existential threat is thus central to the analysis of the securitization process. Therefore, as formerly touched upon, threats are not just threats by nature, but have to be **constructed through language by the speaker.** Specified by Wæver, “a threat argument must perform to justify extraordinary measures: it must establish (1) that there is a threat; (2) that the threat is potentially existential; and (3) the possibility and relative advantages of security handling compared to non-securitized handling” (Wæver, 2011:473). The designation of a threat is closely related to the framing of such. To frame is, “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient” (Entman 1993:53) The understanding of framing is a specific type of discursive practice which come close to and is often present in securitization. The exploration of threat framing offers an insight to what traits and features are emphasized in order to construct the idea of an existential threat. Typically, the speaker seeks to generate a

‘we-feeling’ and **to create an ‘us’** which the audience can identify with. **The construction of**

**the ‘other’ or ‘they’** is an automatic reflection of the ‘us’ and as explained by Harle, “one

cannot comprehend oneself fully if one has no appreciation of who and what one is not”

(2000:15). From a securitization perspective the interest lies within the attributions of security

problems rather than the actual origins of these. **Often the speaker will attempt to ‘actorize’ the ‘other**’, meaning that “the other [is] a willful chooser rather than a chain in a series of events” (Buzan et. al, 1998:44). When the ‘other’, who is responsible for the perceived threat, is viewed as a strategic actor able to make decisions, the threat perception is = strengthened and thereby enables the issue to be put onto the security agenda. This perception holds that the ‘other’, as a decisive actor, “has the potential of outwitting us, of having intentions, or of bending or suppressing our will to replace it with its own” (Buzan et. al, 1998:44). Aside from the threat perception constructed, the urgency of the security issue is a central layer in securitization studies. Legitimatization of political action often connects the past, present and future creating a timeline. The present is portrayed by political actors as a time where critical decisions have to be made and vital action has to be taken. These actions are often related to a cause, which happened in the past, and a consequence, which might hap- pen in the future. In political discourse, actors present a projection of the future according to the actions taken in the present (Reyes, 2011:793). Therefore, only according to the performance of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat, where the speaker has managed to break free of ordinary rules that the actor would have been bound by, the securitization of an issue has successfully occurred (Buzan et. al, 1998:25). Moreover, throughout the analysis specific words and phrases alluding to feelings, interests and needs will be scrutinized. An exploration will be done on the adjectives and verbs used to describe features and actions of the ‘self’ and the threat, pursuing to strengthen the threat perception. Likewise, metaphors along with linguistic tactics that seek to attract and engage the audience will be studied. The outline of the process of securitization and its framework show that securitization theory is not a political statement called on by the analyst but that it rather is a tool for analysis with which the analyst can trace incidences of securitization. Therefore, it is important to recognize that it is the speaker, and not the analyst who chooses, whether some- thing is to be presented and handled as an existential threat. In all instances, however, the analyst is obliged to question the intended achievements of the securitizing speech acts (Buzan et. al, 1998:42). The goal of the study of securitization is summed up accordingly: “based on a clear idea of the nature of security, securitization studies aims to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results and, not least, under what conditions” (Buzan et. al, 1998:32). The Copen-hagen School thereby seeks, with the securitization framework, to provide a means to investigate both the rules of ‘speaking security’ and how the power of ‘spoken security’ unfolds (Köhler, 2019:43). Securitization theory thus seeks to answer the question: what does security do?

#### The plan continues a string of sinophobic securitization policies that lead to a feedback loop of resentment for China and the people of its heritage.

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**Kuo, MA in East Asian Studies from the University of Arizona, 25**

[KAISER Y KUO, “We’ve Lost the Plot: Sinophobia and the Collateral Damage of American Primac”, Sinca, MAY 31, 2025, <https://www.sinicapodcast.com/p/weve-lost-the-plot-sinophobia-and> , July 10th HDSW-JWS]

We’ve seen this before: **paranoia dressed up as patriotism**, a government casting suspicion by ethnicity. This time, it’s Chinese students. And it won’t stop there. On Wednesday, under orders from Secretary of State and National Security Advisor Marco Rubio, the Trump administration announced it would begin “aggressively” revoking visas of Chinese nationals — those studying in “critical fields,” or with supposed “connections to the Chinese Communist Party.” The language was deliberately vague. The implementation, characteristically blunt. But the message was unmistakable: Chinese students are no longer welcome. We can all speculate over whether this originated with Rubio himself, who, after all, has been an unstinting China hawk throughout his time in the Senate, or whether this came from the Oval Office, where its narcissistic occupant, seething under the humiliation of the deeply funny TACO meme, felt compelled to lash out, look tough, and show the world that Trump does not, in fact, Always Chicken Out. At the very least, it’s about the permission structure — the license within the administration coming from the top that permits open bigotry. This has nothing to do with genuine security review. If it did, we’d see defined criteria, credible evidence, and some pretense of due process. What we’re seeing instead is performance — a display meant to project toughness to a domestic audience conditioned to see China as threat and Chinese identity as inherently suspect. The most worrying outcome isn’t just the personal devastation for students or the blow to American higher education, though both are considerable. It’s the way this kind of **policy spills outward, accelerating a broader wave of Sinophobia**. When the federal government treats Chinese students as latent threats, **it doesn’t stay confined to visa holders**. It bleeds into the popular imagination and expands its targets. Most Americans don’t stop to parse the difference between Chinese nationals and Asian Americans, or between Han Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese. In this climate, phenotype stands in for affiliation. This won’t stop with PRC passport holders. It never has. What’s taking root is something more ambient and more dangerous: the idea that anyone who looks East Asian is suspect by default. To be absolutely clear, it wouldn’t be remotely acceptable if it did stop at people with “Party connections,” or Chinese STEM students, or even PRC nationals. That would be bad enough, and more than sufficient reason for outrage. But we’ve all seen how this plays out. After 9/11 and the San Bernardino attacks, turbaned Sikh men — men who were not terrorists, not Arabs, not even Muslims — were assaulted and even killed by people unable to even try to distinguish between religious identity and imagined enemy. Again, it would have been no less bad had they been Arabs or Muslims. I share the view of the Sikhs who said they were uncomfortable describing that violence as “misdirected” because, as this report notes, “that invites questions about violence being correctly targeted at Muslims.” My point is simply that just as anti-Islamic and anti-Arab bigotry spills its boundaries, so too does Sinophobia. After COVID, there was a surge of anti-Asian hate crimes across the country: verbal harassment, vandalism, beatings, even murders. Most of the victims weren’t Chinese, but that didn’t matter. The people committing these acts had absorbed a message: these people don’t belong. They’re not us. No one will pause, before hurling the epithet, or the fist, or the brick, to ask my daughter, my son, or my wife whether they have “ties to the Communist Party,” or whether they’re STEM students, or whether they’re even mainland Chinese, or ethnic Chinese at all. What’s infuriating is that even to point this out — to suggest that anti-AAPI hate is fueled by Sinophobia, by ideological or political animosity toward China or its ruling party — is to invite suspicion in some circles. To say that Sinophobic rhetoric has real consequences — that it travels from press briefings and Truth Social posts to sidewalks — is to risk being accused of “repeating CCP talking points,” of “carrying water for the CCP.” But that very accusation proves the point. It reflects how deeply the logic of rivalry has sunk its roots into the American political discourse. Some of us are now so afraid of conceding narrative ground to Beijing, of letting Beijing score a point, that even acknowledging racism at home is treated as suspect. To me, that only proves how the zero-sum thinking on China, the very hallmark of Sinophobia, has endured. To confront the anti-AAPI hate that will assuredly follow in the wake of this (and is already frothing up, to judge from MAGA world’s enthusiasm for Rubio’s announcement), we need to speak plainly about Sinophobia. This policy of visa revocations and expulsions isn’t just paranoia; it’s moral panic masquerading as national security. When concern for civil rights is made subordinate to geopolitical positioning, we’re no longer acting out of principle — we’re reacting out of neurosis. There’s something uncomfortably revealing about how easily this country now accepts the logic of collective suspicion when it comes to China. Would we be pursuing the same policies, with the same vindictive fervor, if our strategic competitor weren’t a nonwhite, one-party state with a vastly different political culture? I doubt it. The racial dimension is not incidental. It helps explain both the vehemence of the reaction and the blindness to its consequences. We’re living in a time when loyalty is judged by phenotype. And where noticing racism is itself seen as subversive. We have e**ntered a feedback loop in which Sinophobia is both a byproduct and a driver** of strategic rivalry. **It fuels the antagonism, and the antagonism legitimizes the prejudice**. And in the meantime, real people — scientists, students, ordinary Asian Americans — are swept up in it, forced to prove loyalty or endure scrutiny simply because of their heritage. (On the subject of “proving loyalty,” if you try telling me that the right reaction to this is for the “good” Asians to drape themselves in the American flag, we’re going to have a problem.) This is not a theoretical danger. We saw it with the “China Initiative,” which ruined lives and careers before being (partially) abandoned in disgrace. We see it now as universities quietly shift policies on research collaboration, or turn away from China-related partnerships out of fear of political reprisal. We see it in faculty lounges and corporate boardrooms, in grant applications and tenure reviews, where being Chinese — or even “too close” to Chinese colleagues — starts to feel like a liability. And we’ll see it again, in uglier ways, as the broader public takes its cue from the government’s posture. That’s how this works. When the state racializes a threat, the public follows. That threat becomes ambient, and the policing of it moves from institutions into everyday life. This could have been avoided. The U.S. has every right to protect national security, but it can do so without targeting ethnicity, without collapsing individual identity into collective guilt. It is possible to view immigrants and international students not as liabilities, but as bridges. That’s what many of them, like my parents, came here to be. But when we start treating affinity for America as a test that must be passed and passed again by people whose only disqualifying trait is that they were born in a different country, we don’t just betray them. We betray ourselves. We give up the very idea that anyone can belong here if they choose to. We begin to believe that allegiance is racial, and trust is conditional. This isn’t just a soft power loss. It’s a lethal tear in the fabric of our civic culture. And if we can’t reverse this — if we keep allowing suspicion to stand in for strategy, and rivalry to justify racism — then we may well succeed in keeping out some Chinese students. But we will also have shown, quite plainly, that our professed ideals are no longer meant for everyone. We forfeited much of the world’s admiration long ago. But there was still, in some places, a residue of respect for our openness, our education system, our ideals. If we make it clear that those, too, are expendable in the name of rivalry, we shouldn’t be surprised when even that last member goes cold.

#### Sinophobia leads to WW3 conflict

**Jackson, Professor of International Relations at Victoria University, 2025**

[Van Jackson, “The Anti-China Consensus is a Matter of World War III”, Center of International Policy, February 12, 2025, <https://internationalpolicy.org/publications/the-anti-china-consensus-is-a-matter-of-world-war-iii/> July 8th, 2025 HDCSW- JWS]

Team Biden might have left office believing that it kept America out of World War III, but it made so many decisions with a militarist bent that it’s far too early to declare even that much.

**Zero-sum biases plague US foreign policy**, especially **toward China**. And Trump has inherited a China-obsessed war machine that’s even more lethal than the one he presided over during his first term. So if the end of everything were to happen in the coming years, Biden’s choices to heighten rather than **ameliorate rivalry with China**—the world’s other greatest power—will almost certainly have been among its conditions of possibility. For our planet to survive this era, the United States needs to adapt to China (and the world) in a more relational and less predatory way. But not only is that a tall order; the US national security state itself actively impedes it. A breakthrough toward a more just and stable world will require resorting to politics, not simply the bureaucratic production of policy. And while violence is intrinsic to how Trump operates, he is, ironically, making himself essential to keeping us out of World War III even as he makes it more likely over the long run. The “**Competition” Consensus** Substantial evidence now exists that, whatever **disagreements about China** may **reside within the US foreign policy community**, they are minor, tactical, relative to the larger shared consensus in favor of viewing China as a threat and a competitor that ought to be America’s foreign policy priority. While power hoarding and military superiority have been a means and end of US foreign policy since at least the 1980s, it is newly incompatible with the world as it actually exists. We are no longer in the “unipolar moment.” A foreign policy that tries to **claim a lopsided share of global power** in a multipolar world **pushes the US to be more aggressive**, revisionist, as it flails against the tide, unable to secure the position of domination it long took for granted. Because US goals are so extreme and mismatched to reality, the result is what we have seen over the past four years: heightened ethnonationalisms, **the securitization of everything**, a breakdown of economic interdependence in favor of a shift toward economic decoupling, and a fixation on preparations for major-power war unseen since the Cold War. In Washington, these ingredients for Armageddon find expression in the simple shorthand “great-power competition”—a phrase that Trump has scarcely uttered but that all of his foreign policy appointments have repeatedly stressed. Marco Rubio, for example, declared great-power competition the priority of an “America-First foreign policy” in his first cable instruction to the State Department. The anti-China consensus that Trump presided over in his first term—but that in fact started under Obama—not only endures but is a profound obstacle for those wishing to avoid World War III. A shift to something more peaceful and enlightened than geopolitical rivalry is unlikely to come from within the US national security state, which has fully retooled for conflict with China. The hawkish groupthink that pervades how Washington relates to China is hard to break when the US national security state has banked the legitimacy of its institutional existence on indefinitely chasing China’s shadow around the world while optimizing for a war that no sane person should want. The solution to Sino-US rivalry lay in adopting a different approach that rejects primacy in word and deed, but the ability to do that can only come from political forces outside the national security state. What Is to Be Done The most enlightened policy wonks in Washington advocate for “competitive coexistence” or “congagement” (competition and engagement in parallel). This is more or less what Biden attempted. But pursuing the brutality of great-power rivalry with guardrails never made much sense, and neither did his China policy. Sure, a new Cold War in which adversaries talk to each other is preferable to a Cold War without direct communications; nobody should want to live in a state of perpetual Cuban Missile Crisis. But zero-sum statecraft is a dead end. Any policy agenda premised on a net-antagonistic relationship between the great powers facilitates a process of hawkish outbidding within domestic politics, and as we have seen the past decade, that divides America rather than unites it. A more stabilizing, **war-averting existence** would accommodate power realities rather than resist them at the point of a gun. The reason why it is so hard to take America off the path to World War III is precisely that the things that need to be done to better the world situation do not lend themselves to simple policy interventions. Suspending **military competition**, especially in nuclear modernization, is essential but literally the opposite of what a foreign policy of great-power competition demands. Keeping China interdependent with the world—rather than trying to sever it from the US and world economy—encourages Chinese restraint in foreign policy, but is contrary to the economic nationalism that has become en vogue. Increasing domestic consumption in China would help alleviate the need for Xi Jinping to rely on ethnonationalist appeals to sustain his political legitimacy, but only the CCP can take that decision. And US financing of Chinese green tech for export in exchange for China extending sovereign debt relief to the global South would catalyze a virtuous cycle: Making good on a global green new deal—>resolving China’s overproduction of electric vehicles and solar panels—>and growing consumer markets in the global South to provide a new source of global growth. But coordinating a grand green bargain of this ambition presumes habits of cooperation and mutual good will that do not exist. None of these ideas amounts to pulling a lever or pushing a button—that’s the wrong way to think about changing the world. Rather, they are worldmaking projects that cannot happen within a strategy of primacy, whether described as an “America-First foreign policy” or a “foreign policy for the middle class.” Such slogans mask the assumption that security is a scarce resource that must be hoarded at others’ expense. And that is just not true. Overcoming Washington’s hawkish groupthink requires agents of change capable of contesting, overriding, or redirecting the national security state’s anti-China fetish. The tragedy and the silver lining in this regard are the same: Trump. American militarism cannot be tamed by those who are its purest embodiment. As General Charles Horner once quipped, “…don’t count on the Pentagon to change the Pentagon…it has to come from outside…The executive branch has to provide leadership.” Where, then, to turn? Popular sentiment against war and **China-bashing** is worth cultivating. Organized labor has been mostly aligned with anti-militarism and peace activists in recent years—the transformative potential of labor and peace is immense. But the reality is that Trump is showing every sign of weakening labor activism and criminalizing peace protests. The alternative, materialist prospects for overcoming the China hawks, then, lay with two other forces: the imperial presidency and the capitalists most dependent on a globalization-style world. To take the latter first, the capitalist class is disunified and consists of sections that either benefit or are harmed by the ethnonationalist world of rivalry that is emerging. American exporters (especially in agriculture) as well as firms who rely on foreign markets to survive (like Hollywood) thrived in the old world of neoliberal globalization. Crucially, they still need an interconnected world for their business models to work. That makes them a well-resourced power bloc on behalf of, if not peace, then at least keeping war at bay and limiting the encroachment of “national security” into every aspect of the economy. A different section of capital directly benefits from great-power rivalry and the preparations for World War III it entails. The defense technology industry, cryptocurrency speculation, artificial intelligence infrastructure, and semiconductor production are among the few promising growth sectors for Silicon Valley venture capital (VC). In a peaceful world, these investments have little promise but a world of nationalist conflict puts them in the black. What all this means is that, as a political force, some capitalists, in lobbying for restraint on the Trump administration out of their own interests—as Elon Musk has appeared to do on behalf of Tesla’s business in China—will be doing work that rubs against the great-power competition enthusiasts who run Washington. The decisive force in the balance between war hawks and everybody else is Trump himself. Trump’s key political appointments on China—Marco Rubio, Pete Hegseth, Elbridge Colby, Mike Waltz, and a slew of lower-level staff— have so far all been extreme hawks favoring great-power rivalry. And yet, Trump talks as if he is a conditional dove on China. Trump had a friendly call with Xi Jinping upon inauguration. The opening tariffs he imposed on China (10%) were lower than what he had previously foreshadowed (and lower than what he announced for Mexico and Canada). In his inauguration speech, Trump laid down a desirable rhetorical marker: “We will measure our success not only by the battles we win but also by the wars that we end. And, perhaps most importantly, the wars we never get into. My proudest legacy will be that of a peacemaker and unifier. That’s what I want to be. A peacemaker and a unifier.” Marco Rubio, taking his cue from Trump, had a call with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on January 24 where he reportedly said that: “The United States does not support ‘Taiwan independence’ and hopes that the Taiwan issue will be peacefully resolved in a way accepted by both sides of the Taiwan Strait.” This is jarringly restrained and defies popular expectations. China, so far, is even responding to the Trump administration more favorably than it ever did to Donald Trump is no dove. He did much to propel the anti-China hysteria that today plagues Washington during his first term. And the national security state, now led by Trump’s China hawks, is poised to continue pursuing great-power rivalry, which is tantamount to playing Russian roulette with the world’s fate. How ironic, then, that we are all somewhat trapped, relying on Trump to be a much-needed voice of restraint in Sino-US relations because the national security state and the Democratic Party have refused the job. It is an unhappy situation, but such are the dire straits that US policymakers have foisted upon us.

#### World War III goes nuclear. Nuclear war is Existential

**Gayle, Master of Arts in Newspaper Journalism from City, St George's, University of London, 25**

[Damien Gayle, “Why nuclear war, not the climate crisis, is humanity’s biggest threat, according to one author”, Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/15/why-nuclear-war-not-the-climate-crisis-is-humanitys-biggest-threat-according-to-one-author>, July 12th 2025, HDSW-JWS]

Climate breakdown is usually held up as the biggest, most urgent threat humans pose to the future of the planet today.But what if there was another, greater, **human-made threat** that could **snuff** out not only human **civilisation**, but practically the entire biosphere, in the **blink of an eye?** As you read this, about **4,000 nuclear weapons are poised for a first strike** across the northern hemisphere, enough atomic firepower to kill as many as **700 million people from blasts and burning alone.** And that is just the start. The explosions and fires – like nothing seen on Earth since the comet strike that led to the Cretaceous mass extinction – would loft enough soot into the stratosphere to cast an impenetrable shadow over the globe. No light means no photosynthesis, the basis of planetary foodwebs. No heat means that the surface of the Earth would plunge into an icy, years-long winter. That is the message of Mark Lynas, a British writer who for two decades has worked to help people understand the science of climate breakdown while pushing for action on carbon emissions. But after three years of research for a new book, published last month, he now sees nuclear war as an even greater threat. “There’s no adaptation options for nuclear war,” Lynas said. “Nuclear winter **will kill virtually the entire human population.** And there’s nothing you can do to prepare, and there’s nothing you can do to adapt when it happens, because it happens over the space of hours. “It is a vastly more catastrophic, existential risk than climate change.” Lynas got started on his work on nuclear war in 2022, soon after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Like many born into the era of the cold war, he was aware of the concept of nuclear winter – the likely environmental impact of a global thermonuclear exchange. But what emerged from his research was far more horrifying. As the rest of the world gradually forgot about the nuclear threat, researchers began applying the new models of climate science – the same ones used to predict the developing threat of climate breakdown – to understand its dramatic implications. “The burning of the cities is the mechanism that causes nuclear winter,” Lynas said. “You get soot that’s lofted through pyrocumulonimbus clouds – big, fire-generated thunder clouds – which pump [it], like a chimney, into the stratosphere.“Once it gets above the tropopause, into the stratosphere, it can’t be rained out. And because it’s dark coloured, it catches the sun, heats up and gets higher and higher. It gets probably totally dark at the surface for weeks, if not months.” A deactivated Titan II nuclear misisle in a silo in Arizona. **A new nuclear arms race is beginning.** It will be far **more dangerous** than the last one. The temperature rapidly drops below freezing. And it stays there, for years. “There’s never another harvest for humanity. The food will never grow again. Because by the time the sun comes back out and temperatures rise again, within a decade or so, everyone’s dead.” How likely is this scenario? Surely no one could be so reckless as to start a nuclear war? Actually, says Lynas, they could. After all, the US did use nuclear weapons against civilians in Japan in 1945, and since then there have been numerous moments when the world stood minutes from nuclear war, whether by accident or brinkmanship. Today, both the **US** and Russia have espoused **first-strike doctrines** that threaten the **use of nuclear weapons even against conventional attacks** (China, notably, has a policy of “no first use”). Meanwhile, nuclear weapons continue to proliferate. The US and Russia hold the biggest arsenals, with about 12,000 between them. China is racing to catch up, with an estimated 500 as of 2024. Also armed are Britain, France, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea, with Iran apparently on the cusp developing its own weapon – a step that onlookers fear it may be more likely to take after last week’s attacks by Israel. And the potential for error is also high. If US early warning systems went off, its nuclear doctrine would give Donald Trump six minutes to decide whether it was a glitch (which has happened) or to respond in kind. Russia is said to have a “dead hand” system that would launch ballistic missiles automatically in the event its own command and control structures were disabled. So what can be done? We could stop ignoring it, for a start. Lynas calls for the revival of an anti-nuclear weapons movement on a scale to match that of the present-day climate movement, although he has criticisms of past such movements. “On the success side, it had some very dedicated people who devoted their whole lives to this issue, in quite large numbers,” he said. “But it was also politically very, very left of centre, very kind of hippy, peace movement type thing – women-only spaces. And that kind of stuff, of course, then means that anyone who’s politically centrist or right centre isn’t involved. “And if you have a very narrow political base in your movement, you’re going to have a very narrow success rate.” Lynas disavows unilateral nuclear disarmament as naive, and maintains – unlike previous anti-nuclear campaigners – that nuclear power is not only not a threat, but possibly a massive benefit to human civilisation, not least because of its potential for producing low-carbon energy. Nevertheless, some of his suggestions are quite radical, including treating everyone in the chain of command in the “nuclear nine” states, from leaders down, as a potential war criminal, subject to legal restrictions and sanctions in states that choose not to hold nuclear weapons. In spite of all the grim possibilities, Lynas sees hope – and in unusual places. “Trump gets credit for basically shaking things up in a way which could lead to a more positive outcome,” he said. Much as it took another Republican president, Ronald Reagan, to kickstart the US and Soviet disarmament of the 1980s, so Trump could do what Democrats, eager to prove their strength, could – or would – not. “And you know, maybe his bromance with [Vladimir] Putin and Kim Jong-un or whatever will bring them to the table.”

## Research Securitization

### Research Advantage links

#### Securitization runs deeper than just defense– It’s the systematic exclusion of countries who are deemed threats. It’s being intentionally planted in academia and overly justified by a “need for protection”.

Nojonen, **Professor of Chinese Culture and Society at University of Lapland, 25**

Matti, Restrictions on and consequences of Russian and Chinese Research, “Securitization Narrative in the West and its Restrictive Impact on Research on Russia and China”, Published in: Arctic yearbook January 2024.<https://lacris.ulapland.fi/ws/portalfiles/portal/41971232/C6_Nojonen_2024.pdf>, July 2024, HDCSW - JA

The securitization process has led Western governments to impose direct and indirect restrictions on research concerning Russia and China. Following the Russian war on Ukraine, the European Union Commission decided to suspend cooperation with Russian entities in research, science and innovation. A great majority of the EU member states (with the exception of Hungary), Norway and Great Britain gave national level ministry level bans forbidding universities and research institutes collaborating with their Russian counterparts.The collaboration and partnerships with Chinese research institutes, enrolling Chinese researchers and academic work on China has also been subjected to restrictions. This process began during Trump’s first presidential term as a part of his China containment policies. Trump famously stated in August 2018 that “[A]lmost every student that comes over to this country [from China] is a spy”ii As a part of this policy the Department of Justice launched their “China Initiative” campaign that carried out detailed investigations on US university researchers affiliated with China or being of Chinese origin. Despite the campaign directed at finding Chinese spies on US campuses the result was embarrassing – no one was convicted or even charged with spying in any China Initiative case. The Initiative reportedly largely targeted individuals based on any connection to China or scientists of Chinese heritage, and increasingly targeted “research integrity” issues and was accused of racist practices rather than economic espionage and hacking. iii These policies also reached Europe where nation states and security authorities restricted and warned universities of China related collaboration. The Russian war on Ukraine in 2022 and Beijing’s open reluctance to condemn the illegal war of aggression created a situation where all China-related research and collaboration are seen as a security risk. The securitization pressure on academia is even broader. For instance, US embassies are contacting university leaders and funding agencies behind the curtains asking universities to align with Western policies against China and domestic security apparatus are warning of perceived risks involved in China collaboration.

#### The Securitization narrative enables western hypocrisy and suppresses objective knowledge

Nojonen, **Professor of Chinese Culture and Society at University of Lapland, 25**

Matti, Consequences of securitization measures and narrative, “Securitization Narrative in the West and its Restrictive Impact on Research on Russia and China”, Published in: Arctic yearbook January 2024.<https://lacris.ulapland.fi/ws/portalfiles/portal/41971232/C6_Nojonen_2024.pdf>, July 2024, HDCSW - JA

The silencing force of the securitization narrative and measures are legally questionable as these measures can be seen as hindering the freedom of academic research and freedom of expression guaranteed by laws and constitutions in Western liberal democracies. This silencing is not conducted under Martial Laws of these countries, but merely as ministry level stipulations or EU Commission decisions. Furthermore, different universities in given countries are interpreting these ministry-level orders differently. The most famous case being the treatment of Emeritus Professor Lassi Heininen of University of Lapland and Visiting Researcher at Aleksanteri Institute of Helsinki University. Heininen participated in an international conference arranged in Moscow together with a number of other Western scholars. Consequently, the University of Lapland stripped him of his Emeritus Professor contract whilst Helsinki University did not punish Heininen for participating in this conference. Notably, no other Western participant was punished by their home universities. This kind of treatment questions the principle of equality in and between respective countries. The securitization narrative is most visible in the news media and how news media selects the specialists for interviews. When news is solely produced through a security lens, not only policy-makers receive a limited perspective but the wide public gets a skewed and negative stigmatizing understanding of these countries. This limited perspective reinforces a cycle in which perceived threats are amplified, and the danger of denouncing all Chinese and Russian people as potential threats becomes “a truth”. Funds for research critical of securitization policies are increasingly limited, pushing scholars toward self-censorship or pro-securitization narratives. Consequently, researchers fearing repercussions may avoid controversial topics or choose an approach that aligns with prevailing securitization narrative. This self-censorship can also spill over to publications, where editors may be reluctant to publish work that could be seen as challenging the dominating Western views on Russia or China. Furthermore, the securitization cloak limits our possibilities to discuss with liberal and critical Chinese or Russian researchers who have deep personal knowledge of their domestic societal moods and potential policy trajectories. By keeping in contact with these researchers we can also express our support for them. These chilling consequences have implications for fact-based policy making due to limited access to Chinese or Russian liberal voices. One-sided news broadcasts combined with self-censorship omit insights to potentially alternative trajectories of these societies. When certain narratives or interpretations are prioritized over others, and others are silenced, the actual hard-core security and other policy making becomes one-sided due to a lack of diversity in perspectives.

#### The intentionally misleading narrative of securitization causes limited academia, a broken western liberalist image, and authoritarianism rise, and Nojonen,

Professor of Chinese Culture and Society at University of Lapland, 25

Matti, The Dangerous Paradox, “Securitization Narrative in the West and its Restrictive Impact on Research on Russia and China”, Published in: Arctic yearbook January 2024.<https://lacris.ulapland.fi/ws/portalfiles/portal/41971232/C6_Nojonen_2024.pdf>, July 2024, HDCSW - JA

The securitization narrative restricts academic freedom, drives self-censorship, and narrows the scope of scholarly inquiry related to Russia and China. It will cast a long shadow over research related to these countries. By emphasizing security over a broader and open approach to these countries, we miss opportunities for gaining understanding of potential alternative societal trajectories of these countries and are not able to have constructive engagement that could have significant global implications. The prevailing securitization trend raises ethical, legal and practical questions about the boundaries of academic freedom. Maybe the most alarming is that the securitization narrative and practices harm the actual democratic values we cherish. This paradox has not gone unnoticed in China and Russia and is, as a matter of fact, providing powerful propaganda tools for autocratic rulers boosting their political legitimacy. By displaying this paradox Chinese and Russian state-lead media expose our Western “double speak” – how we speak of freedom of speech whilst we readily silence domestic critical voices. There is a danger that we have entered a securitization dominated world where only very few brave academics voice their concerns. This is reminiscent of the Communist Party governed Poland that reminded “a room where people unanimously maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot,” in the words of Polish Nobel laurate of literature (1980) Czesław Miłoszv . It is notable that the Nobel Committee recognized him for his writing in dissident silencing Poland of the 1980s, which "with uncompromising clear-sightedness voices man’s exposed condition

## Health Securitization

### Health and disease securitization links

#### Securitization justifies the daily suffering of minorities through inadequate healthcare, more in favor of prioritizing potential diseases with pervasive impacts

**Innes, PhD Political Science, University of Kansas, 24**

Alexandria, “Un-siloing securitization: an intersectional intervention”, international politics June 2024, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7>, July 2025, HDCSW- JA

**Health as an issue of national security has been well-established over the last three decades. Jeremy Youde provides a useful discussion of both advantages and disadvantages of health securitization, identifying that while health securitization can garner attention for an issue (evidenced in the AIDS epidemic), and resources to address it that might be activated on a global scale, it simultaneously can feed into an us-versus-them mode of thinking (Youde** [**2022**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR96)**). Youde identifies the negative elements of increased surveillance, and the reproduction of paternalistic relationships between global North and South. Stefan Elbe (**[**2006**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR21)**) looked closely at the global AIDS pandemic through the lens of securitization theory, as revelatory of the normative dilemma at the heart of securitization of health (Elbe** [**2006**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR21)**). This normative dilemma is characteristic of securitization in general: while securitizing something may raise awareness and, crucially, may direct state funds towards a targeted issue, it simultaneously invites military responses that often involve the suspension of civil rights and liberties, and it raises a threat-defence logic (2006).**

**The racialised dimensions of AIDS are well-established in health literature with racial and ethnic disparities evident in infection rates and outcomes (Stone** [**2012**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR77)**; Bhana** [**2006**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR7)**; Elbe** [**2006**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR21)**). While there are racialised tendencies to apportion ‘blame’ and to control movement, minoritized people are more likely to die from AIDS: this is not a discretionary behaviour of the virus, rather it reflects extant health inequalities that can be observed both globally and more locally in individual states. As Youde (**[**2008**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR95)**) warns in his discussion of the potential securitization of Avian flu H5N1, securitization of health involved ‘us-versus-them’ thinking, and evoked efforts to guarantee flu vaccines (Youde** [**2008**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR95)**). The effort to prepare for a pandemic in case it happened *in America* before human-to-human transmission was known, was the priority and arguably displaced AIDS and other real-but-distant ongoing crises such as Malaria from the global health agenda. As Sophie Harman (Harman** [**2021**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR34)**) succinctly argues:**

**The health issues that threaten millions of lives in low- and middle-income countries but pose very little risk to high-income countries are rarely considered to be matters of global health security and so are not prioritised, while simultaneously people living in low- and middle-income countries are then framed as the threat to the West, as vectors of disease, and are thus subject to discrimination which is often highly gendered and racialized. Global health security thus both exacerbates and reproduces inequality by creating a hierarchy of health issues (Harman** [**2021**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR34)**: 607).**

#### In the face of infectious diseases, or even the possibility of them, minorities are the most negatively impacted.

**Innes, PhD Political Science, University of Kansas, 24**

Alexandria, “Un-siloing securitization: an intersectional intervention”, ”, international politics June 2024, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7>, July 2025, HDCSW- JA

**Infectious disease lends itself to securitization, as Metelmann et al. argue (Metelmann et al.** [**2022**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR59)**). Of course, the securitization of Covid-19 is the quintessential example of securitization justifying the suspension of civil liberties on an extreme scale, albeit one that varied by country, in the context of a health emergency. Metelmann et al. explore the implications for non-communicable disease, and specifically disease treated by surgery—but this could also be applied to other public health issues. These authors find that surgery specifically has low securitizing potential and this is in part due to its high infrastructural demands: surgery requires public investment. The authors note that there is a bias towards prioritising infectious diseases because the means of addressing them are relatively simple and do not always necessitate high-level medical expertise (such as containment, and vaccine programmes). Surgical disease on the other hand cannot be contained or addressed in the same way: for example, appendicitis is not infectious and cannot be prevented with a vaccine programme. The authors demonstrate this argument with the evidence that the ‘Public Health Emergency of International Concern’ (PHEIC) declarations of the last decade all referenced an infectious disease despite the fact that public health, and therefore public health security, is of course much broader. What is perhaps as—if not more—significant than resources, is that non-communicable disease such as appendicitis does not lend itself to an us-versus-them logic and therefore does not evoke the logic of security.**

**In terms of global health security, the WHO has taken an increasingly significant role on deciding the security exception (Hanrieder and Kreuder-Sonnen** [**2014**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR31)**). As Hanreider and Kreuder-Sonnen discuss, this top-down institution with no direct enforcement capability can usefully draw on security language to activate the capacity of states to enforce containment of infectious disease. While the WHO might be the securitising actor in this context, the audience that co-constitutes the threat is the state, and states retain the responsibility to make and implement security policies.This can operate as a means of protecting the most vulnerable. Nevertheless, there are varied and intersectional forms of vulnerability, exacerbated by massive inequality in the world. Recent work on the Covid-19 pandemic has begun to draw attention to some of these significant vulnerabilities attached to inequality and power. Where the spread of the infectious virus was securitised, it raised significant insecurities for people at risk of suffering domestic abuse (Kourti et al.** [**2021**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR48)**). Risks linked to low socioeconomic status such as unstable income and financial uncertainty that are linked to mental health and heightened stress were exacerbated by lockdowns (Patel et al.** [**2020**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR66)**). A special issue of *American Behavioural Scientist* explored the cross-cutting and intersectional inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic, revealing the interplay of race and ethnicity and socio-spatial inequalities (Kuk et al.** [**2021**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR49)**), and the gendered disparities produced by home-schooling and gendered domestic structures (Bariola and Collins, 2021). Additionally digital inequalities, which might be socioeconomic but also intersect with other variables such as age, education, and disability, were linked to bodily stress and anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic (Robinson et al.** [**2020**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR68)**,** [**2021**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR70)**). The relevance here is not to make an argument about the efficacy of lockdown or to critically assess responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, but to demonstrate that there are particular public health-based insecurities and vulnerabilities that can be directly produced by an act of health securitization. Securitizing acts in one area produce insecurity and vulnerability in another.**

#### While inclusion is necessary for disease control, its also used as a guise for minority control and bias resource relocation.

**Innes, PhD Political Science, University of Kansas, 24**

Alexandria, “Un-siloing securitization: an intersectional intervention”, ”, international politics June 2024, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7>, July 2025, HDCSW- JA

**The securitization of health is by necessity inclusive when dealing with communicable disease, or at least it is acknowledged that an inclusive approach is necessary (while the objective is still the security of the in-group, the inclusion of outsiders is by necessity rather than true inclusivity). Yes, the inclusivity is simultaneously *exclusive*: while including those with the potential to spread communicable disease within the country in public health efforts such as vaccine programmes, where spread can be controlled marginalised populations tend to be controlled. Health inequality tracks societal inequality: the worst outcomes of endemic disease can be seen in the poorest communities (Whitehead et al.** [**2021**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR91)**). Visibly oppressive mechanisms include the tendency to apportion blame. For example, Sjostedt (**[**2010**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR74)**) marks that HIV/AIDS in the US structured the disease as affecting ‘guilty victims,’ drug addicts and homosexuals who could be dissociated from society, and ‘innocent victims,’ people who were susceptible to the disease through no fault of their own such as haemophiliacs and the spouses and children of carriers. It is only through publicity of the suffering and death of an ‘innocent’ victim that the disease captures the public imagination as a security threat. That threat concerns ‘the military’s ability to defend the homeland, or whether immigrants posed a threat to the American nation (Sjostedt** [**2010**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR74)**: 158). This reality was played out in the internment of Haitian refugees in 1993, who were not permitted to enter the USA because they were HIV positive (Ibid). Indeed, immigration controls are exercised on even—or especially—the most vulnerable populations as a means of making security for citizens.**

**The means of pursuing health security, such as closing borders and policing the body, clearly evidence the overlap between health securitization and immigration securitization: indeed, borders closed during the Covid 19 pandemic, and covid passports circumscribed entry to particular spaces—at national borders but also in local social environments. The securitization of health also targets resources: a means of directing needed resources to health services highlights simultaneously resource scarcity that feeds into the othering processes that might be applied in terms of deservingness attributed through the hierarchies of citizenship, but also in terms of resource extraction. This is simultaneously fed by the securitization of immigration, where economic security and the idea of protecting social services compose part of the identified threat. For example, pregnant migrants may be seen as a drain on resources and therefore face racism and discrimination in the community. Here, introducing gender as an intersecting vulnerability logically follows. In health care settings pregnant migrants are often charged for services. In the UK, the national healthcare system introduced charges for pregnant migrants in 2015, which amount to 150% the cost of care. Thus, migrants in need are overcharged, an act which reiterates the idea that they are a burden on healthcare services, not just in terms of expense but time and resources. The effect is a reduced uptake of antenatal care, which can lead to increased complications and vulnerabilities later on in pregnancy, birth and post-natal (Fair et al.** [**2020**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR24)**). Disability, and health conditions might be discriminated against and bodies devalued where health is securitized. Age offers another vector through which inequality in health securitization might be apparent. There are specific obscurities with regard to female and reproductive health that are significant points of inequality in the context of health securitization.**

#### The healthcare securitization allows for under-represented groups, specifically immigrant women to be overlooked during resource/fund allocation and pandemics/diseases.

**Innes, PhD Political Science, University of Kansas, 24**

Alexandria, “Un-siloing securitization: an intersectional intervention”, ”, international politics June 2024, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7>, July 2025, HDCSW- JA

**One of the few places that violence against women can be and is evidenced is through healthcare systems (Viero et al.** [**2021**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR86)**; Davis and Padilla-Medina** [**2021**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7#ref-CR19)**). Violence might not be disclosed, but if medical treatment is sought then violence is often detectable. Healthcare settings may be one of the few places a woman can safely disclose abuse—this is particularly true of populations that face barriers to disclosing violence or abuse to the police (Thiara and Roy, 2020). Healthcare settings tend to capture—by necessity—populations that are conventionally hard-to-reach. This information-capture is not perfect but is often better than that of other services. Yet, identifying violence against women is not always a priority in pressured healthcare systems, particularly during winter months when efforts to treat seasonal illness require resources, and resources are overstretched and underfunded. When health is securitized such as in the case of communicable disease or pandemic, this lack is exacerbated. The effect then, on immigrant women in insecure statuses and with no access to public resources or funds, is that they are made more vulnerable and more insecure. Further inequality can be linked to immigrants in insecure status with complex health needs or disability. The securitizing actions in the context of health and immigration do not create this vulnerability, which is already there as normalised everyday violence. They do, though, make this vulnerability more acute. Attending to these securitizing actions and their intersectional effects through considering the experience of *being securitized* can help make visible vulnerability, inequality and violence.**

## Development link

#### Development in the arctic follows neocolonial securitization, a history of robbery of native peoples and of neocolonial capitalist ambitions

**Elena, Master of Arts - MA, 20**

[Plotnikoff, Elena, “Activists or active threats? : how the state securitization of critical infrastructure impacts environmental and Indigenous activists in Canada and the United States”, University of British Columbia, August 22, 2020, <https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0394048> , July 14, 2025 HDSW JWS]

**Securitization**, as conceptualized by the Copenhagen School, involves the **legitimation of**

**exceptional** means to defend a valued object. Security threats are discursively constructed by an authoritative actor using security language to compel a political community to recognize the

threat.11 If the threat is recognized, the response is shifted from normal politics to security

politics where exceptional measures are permitted.12 Successful securitization entails actions

related to policing, surveillance, and the violation of rights and rules that a democratic

government would otherwise be expected to abide by.13 Discourse is used to study securitization since securitizing moves follow a “grammar of

security” in which a serious and imminent threat is described that can only be dealt with using

exceptional measures.14 Discourse can be defined as a “specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities”.15 Social realities are not merely **described but are created**; they produce actions and **exercise power**.16 Additionally, discourses are historical and exist within particular cultural and social contexts.17 As I will elaborate further, the post-9/11 environment in the extractivist, **settler colonial societies** of Canada and the US provided the conditions for critical infrastructure to be conceptualized as under threat and for environmental and Indigenous activists to be considered threats. Securitization entails further questions such as what must be protected, what threatens it, and who accepts the existence of a threat. The specific referent object is critical infrastructure, but it represents a larger way of life facilitated by extractivism. Post-9/11, countries, their citizens, and

the liberal, democratic, capitalist way of life were believed to be in need of protection. Critical

infrastructure was included as a threatened object in this context because its obstruction or

destruction could be life threatening and it would also impede regular capitalist functions.

Though critical infrastructure can be threatened by a variety of factors such as weather events

and lack of maintenance, security policies are concentrated on the threat of intentional sabotage

to critical infrastructure. The audiences accepting security measures to protect critical

infrastructure against terrorism were politicians, and the citizens they represent, who supported

new security policies. The audience accepting that environmental and Indigenous activists

specifically threaten critical infrastructure is limited to security agencies and corporations as they

were the creators and recipients of this specific discourse, not the wider public.

Not all security moves are made within the public eye, yet they still fit this security

model.18 Post-9/11 an initial securitizing move was made in the US and other countries that

claimed that there was a serious and urgent threat to their way of life which necessitated

measures that had to be kept secretive. In the legislation that emerged from this period in Canada and the US, critical infrastructure was included as an object threatened by terrorism and hence its protection is primarily dealt with in the realm of security. Later discourse from security agencies specifying environmental and Indigenous activists as threats to critical infrastructure was not public. However, the construction of activists as threats was still authorized by the post-9/11

security conditions which allowed security measures to operate out of the public’s view.

Though the Copenhagen School advocates for studying public discourse to prove

securitization without concern for underlying motives, I expand my aims. Beyond establishing

the securitization of critical infrastructure in public discourse, I also examine documents that

were intended to be kept out of public view as they illustrate how environmental and Indigenous activists have specifically been targeted and how this was done to protect **extractive industries.** Given the secretive nature of these matters, the accessibility of information was limited. For public documents, I analyze national publications, policies, and legislation. The private government and corporate documents that I examine were leaked or published through news reports or other researchers. Prior to the examination of this discourse, I will review some

conditions that facilitated the securitization of critical infrastructure including the importance of

extractivism, the past treatment of environmental and Indigenous activists, and the features of the 3. Extractivism and the Settler State

Under extractivism, **natural resources are a commodity** whose production is necessary for

capital accumulation and consumption.19 Extractivism extends back to the foundations of modern capitalism and has carried forward to the present day with the same characteristics of

exploitation and unrestricted growth. Extractivism has global dimensions. Imperialist countries

exploited resources in colonies in South America, Africa, and Asia to support their capitalist

development, patterns which have continued to this day. Countries in the Global North rely on

extraction in the Global South to fuel their consumption, and resource rich countries in the

Global South rely on exporting natural resources to sustain their economies.20

The movement of resources is not exclusively from the Global South to the Global North,

however. Extractivism crosses borders in many ways as countries in the Global North engage in

extractivism domestically as well as internationally. Regardless of the country, extractivism is

marked by inequality. Extractivism most benefits corporations and those in power while

negatively impacting the communities where the extraction takes place in ways relating to their

health, safety, and human rights.21In Canada and the US, **extraction projects are** commonly located in marginalized communities with dominantly poor, racially marginalized, and

**Indigenous populations.2**2 Settler colonialism in Canada and the US is based on accumulation and private property.23 In the present day, **settler states still expect unimpeded access to Indigenous lands and**

**resources to exploit** and extract from for profit.24 **Private corporations remove the resources from Indigenous lands, supported by settler governments** who praise the economic opportunities for citizens.25 The vested interests of governments and corporations in extraction **compel the use of security measures to address actions that impede this process.**26 The protection of critical infrastructure is also the protection of the underlying ideologies of extractivism which corporations and governments in Canada and the US seek to preserve. The operation and expansion of critical infrastructure, specifically energy infrastructure, fuels consumptive ways of life and access to the market. Oil and gas account for 5.6% of Canada’s gross domestic product (GDP) and approximately 8% of the US’ GDP.27 Data from 2018 show that Canada was the fourth largest exporter of crude oil and fifteenth largest importer while the US was the seventh largest exporter and second largest importer.28 Though these numbers are 22 For more examples of environmental racism in the US, see Sarah Mittlefehldt, “Wood Waste and Race: The significant, they alone do not account for the importance of extraction in Canada and the US. Government leaders work in collaboration with extractive corporations to boost job creation or GDP figures for political support, to receive financial contributions from such corporations, or because of their personal interests and investments in extractive industries.29 Oil and gas companies operating in Canada and the US devote substantial amounts time and money lobbying politicians.30 In 2019, oil and gas companies spent over $125 million dollars lobbying American politicians.31 In Canada, though lobbying contributions are not publicly available, records show that oil and gas companies and associations enjoy frequent meetings with politicians.32

Corporations further influence governments to act according to their established interests in

Extraction. Threats to the extractivist system like those coming from environmental and Indigenous activists which challenge not only the expansion of infrastructures but the ideologies of extraction, are pacified so that governments and corporations can continue to benefit from it. In Canada and the US, this has been done through the construction of environmental and

Indigenous activists as security threats to critical infrastructure.

14. The Security State

Following the 9/11 attacks in New York City, the US and several of their allies, including

Canada, fortified security states characterized by the policing and surveillance of groups perceived to be threats, a blurring of criminal/extremist/terrorist categories, information sharing across police and security networks, and expanded police mandates.33 Successful securitization permits exceptional actions and this environment facilitated new and expanded security Measures. Those who contradicted the prevailing capitalist, extractivist logic had been targeted by security agencies in Canada and the US previously. The surveillance of Indigenous activists is not a distinctly post-9/11 practice. Indigenous people asserting their sovereignty and protecting their land have been policed by settler colonial states from the beginning of colonization.34 Colonial policies were implemented to survey and control Indigenous peoples, carried out by departments and policing forces which exist to this day.35 Environmental activists have previously been pursued by security agencies, particularly in the US. Throughout the 1990s, corporations that were criticized and vandalized by environmental activists lobbied for serious security measures against them.36 It was not until the post-9/11 environment facilitated the broader security mandate and impetus for results that environmental activists were pursued as

“eco-terrorists” but this process demonstrates the alliance between the government and

corporations on matters of security and the weakened distinction between criminal and terrorist

activities.37 While there are features of the security state that predate 9/11 and environmental and Indigenous activists have previously been targeted by these measures, the post-9/11 period marks an important transition because there was widespread recognition of a threat, more expansive security measures were legitimized, and these security measures were authorized to take place out of the public’s view. 4.1 Security Measures in the US

The security state in the US involves agency and stakeholder collaboration to pursue

wide mandates using secretive and heavy-handed measures. The Patriot Act, passed shortly after 9/11, authorized an expansive set of security measures and provided large budgets and

organizational structures to enact them.38 The Patriot Act allowed surveillance and information

gathering like wiretaps and weakened the need for probable cause or transparency.39

Additionally, collaboration between government agencies was encouraged and institutionalized.

The US government supported fusion centers which facilitate intelligence sharing between local,

37 Examples of security measures include the pursuit of terrorism charges for environmental activists, see Potter, “The Green Scare,” 673-675; the use of private security firms hired by corporations to watch and infiltrate environmental organizations, see James Ridgeway, “Black Ops, Green Groups,” Mother Jones, state, and federal agencies as well as the private sector.40 These fusion centers allow for the exchange of information that certain agencies would not otherwise have access to.41 4.2 Security Measures in Canada

The presence of a serious attack close to home and pressure from the US as Canada’s major

defense and trade partner influenced Canada to expand their security state.42 Similar to measures introduced in the US, Canada’s 2001 Anti-terrorism Act expanded police powers, the scope of surveillance, and the budgets provided for security purposes.43 With the expansion of police powers, matters of conventional crime and matters of national security became muddled.44 Canada’s security network, like the US’, involves a range of agencies and departments that consult one another, share information, and collaborate with the private sector. These institutional and cultural changes to security in Canada and the US provided the conditions which allowed the securitization of critical infrastructure to take place.

5. Discourse on the Securitization of Critical Infrastructure

Critical infrastructure and the continued access to extraction that it facilitates are protected by

the Canadian and American governments. Public documents establish the threat to critical

infrastructure without naming specific actors as threats. Private documents reveal connections

between extractivism and national interests and claim that environmental and Indigenous

activists are threats to these practices. I will now analyze public and private documents from

Canada and the US that illustrate the securitization of critical infrastructure.

5.1 American Securitization of Critical Infrastructure

The Patriot Act defines critical infrastructure as

(S)ystems and assets, whether physical or virtual, so vital to the United States that the

incapacity or destruction of such systems and assets would have a debilitating impact on

security, national economic security, national public health or safety or any combination

of those matters.45

While specific facilities are not named, this definition establishes the connection between

infrastructure and national security threats. President George W. Bush stated that terrorists

sought to attack critical infrastructure “to threaten national security, cause mass casualties,

weaken (the) economy and damage public morale and confidence”.46 This statement pairs the

loss of lives with the weakening of the economy as well as linking the proper functioning of

critical infrastructure to the identity of American citizens. Critical infrastructure is established as

a valued object and its potential destruction is taken seriously due to these suggested effects.

The President’s National Strategy for Homeland Security issued in July 2002 expands on

the Patriot Act’s definition of critical infrastructure to cover more sectors. The Strategy includes

the agricultural, public health, emergency services, telecommunications, transportation,

chemical, finance, and energy sectors as critical infrastructures and links them to freedom,

security, and the economy.47 Critical infrastructure policies emphasize the need for collaboration with private corporations and integrate them into security processes through practices like information sharing.48 This partnership is not unreasonable as 85% of critical infrastructure is owned by the private sector, however, by asserting that critical infrastructure is threatened by

terrorist attacks, expansive security measures become authorized which can be used to

accomplish corporations’ aims. 49

Recent state legislation illustrates government and corporate interests in safeguarding

ongoing extraction. In December 2017, the American Legislative Exchange Council released a

policy model called the Critical Infrastructure Protection Act, inspired by a law enacted that

same year in Oklahoma. The model uses the Patriot Act’s definition of critical infrastructure to

criminalize trespassing on critical infrastructure facilities including oil and gas pipelines.50 By

making the offense related to trespassing rather than destruction, a wide range of activities,

including peaceful ones, can be captured by such laws. The fine amount and jail term are left

blank on the model legislation for states to fill in with their own specifications. The punishments

have ranged from $250 to $100,000 fines and thirty days in jail to ten years imprisonment 19

depending on the state and the nature of the offence.51 The model legislation has inspired laws in numerous states and bills are already in the legislative pipeline in others.

The model legislation or the laws based on it do not name specific groups. The model is

worded broadly in order to encapsulate any actions that could damage or obstruct the function of critical infrastructure and thus impact the profits of the corporations that own it. While these

states already have laws for trespassing and vandalism, the new laws emphasize the seriousness of disruptions to the extraction of resources. Though this is state, not federal, legislation and it does not address security measures specifically, these laws are another representation of how critical infrastructures are seen as valued objects under threat by opponents whom must be deterred through extreme measures, in this case hefty fines and jail time. The crafting and promotion of the model legislation reveals even more about the

interconnectedness of government and corporate interests. The American Fuel & Petrochemical

Manufacturers lobbying group representing America’s largest oil and gas companies helped to

draft the policy model and promote it to states in response to the Dakota Access Pipeline

protests.52 Governments and corporations protect extraction through criminal legislation but can simultaneously or alternatively use security measures to remove and deter opposition. The role of extractive industries in drafting the legislation shows that these corporations were concerned about environmental and Indigenous activists and wanted to expand their abilities to handle potential disruptions to their profits in the future. Leaked documents further indicate the specific targets of critical infrastructure protection. In

an unclassified document from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) titled “Threats to Keystone XL Pipeline Projects within Houston Domain”, protesters were labelled as

“environmental extremists” while the pipeline was described as “vital to the security and

economy of the United States”.53 This document suggests that critical infrastructure is protected because of its economic benefits and activists are purposefully targeted because they can impede profits. A field report from the Department of Homeland Security, in collaboration with several state fusion centers, uses a similar term, “environmental rights extremists” to refer to pipeline protesters.54 The field report makes an additional connection to depict protesters as threats to national security by claiming that Indigenous activists from Canada who travelled to join the Standing Rock protests included “violent extremists” who came with weapons and riot gear.55 Economic interests and national security interests are conflated in matters of critical

infrastructure, giving its protection the sense of importance and urgency that is needed for

securitization. Cross-border support for activists is interpreted as foreign interference to national

interests. This idea of foreign interference is only applied to the actions of activists and not to

proponents of extraction projects. Pipelines often have international dimensions since many cross through the Canada-US border and are owned by companies from various countries, yet these 53 Paul Lewis and Adam Federman, “Revealed: FBI violated its own rules while spying on

corporations are not accused of foreign interference because extraction is seen as a national

Interest. 5.2 Canadian Securitization of Critical Infrastructure

Canada’s conception of critical infrastructure is detailed in the 2009 National Strategy for

Critical Infrastructure by Public Safety Canada. Critical infrastructure refers to processes, systems, facilities, technologies, networks, assets and services essential to the health, safety, security or economic well-being of Canadians and the effective functioning of government…Disruptions of critical infrastructure could result in catastrophic loss of life, adverse economic effects, and significant harm to public confidence.56

This definition juxtaposes “catastrophic loss of life” and “adverse economic effects”, indicating

that they are of similar importance.57 As with the American definition, the Canadian conception

of critical infrastructure emphasizes its importance to the function and identity of the country.

Connections between security and national interests in extraction are further revealed

through Canada’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy which defines critical infrastructure as “energy,

transportation and oil and gas assets” rather than a broader conception that includes other

sectors.58 Critical infrastructure protection is placed directly within the realm of security. The

Anti-terrorism Act of 2015 includes “interference with critical infrastructure” as an activity that

undermines the security of Canada.59 The Act authorizes security measures including

information sharing among government departments and the broad discretion of security services

to reduce threats to the security of Canada. Corporations are integrated into critical infrastructure protection as the Canadian government makes clear that it is achieved through partnerships with corporations and that the goals of the private sector are aligned with those of the country.60 Canada’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy represents an unusual public document as it openly alludes to environmental and Indigenous activists as threats. The Strategy notes that domestic

extremism often relates to “environmentalism and anti-capitalism” and can resort to violence.

These forms of domestic extremism are compared to the Oklahoma City Bombing and the 2011

Norway attacks, which likens social issue protests that have largely remained nonviolent with

two far-right terrorist attacks that killed nearly one thousand people.61 Even though this

document does not specifically claim that environmental and Indigenous activists are violent, the

association between deadly terrorist attacks and the activities of these groups serves to connect

them with one another. These government documents clearly identify critical infrastructure as a

valued object that is threatened by terrorism and extremism, including from domestic actors.

Private documents indicate the motives for the securitization of critical infrastructure and

clarify whom security agencies declare as threats. Declassified reports from the Royal Canadian

Mounted Police (RCMP) show that security agencies are concerned with a “radicalized

environmentalist faction” and about specific environmental organizations such as Greenpeace

and the Council of Canadians.62 The RCMP and other government agencies also consistently

investigate and monitor Indigenous rights activists including those opposed to resource

“Aboriginal extremists” and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The

assessment emphasizes the potential for, or presence of, violence among these groups.65

The wording of the RCMP assessment connects Canadian identity and well-being to the

petroleum industry and evokes suspicions of foreign interference by highlighting the foreign

(mainly American) donations to environmental NGOs.66 The assessment treats environmental

concerns and the connections between resource extraction and climate change as mere claims

while supporting extractive industries.67 The assessment even quotes the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers’ assertion that “Canada is uniquely positioned to supply an abundance of safe, secure energy”.68 Though the assessment was not intended for public view, it shows how extraction is framed as a crucial practice to Canada. Claiming that extraction is important to national interests enables security agencies to treat opposition to extraction as a security concern.

The assessment expands on the securitization of critical infrastructure in public discourse that

identifies it as a valued object under threat. As a private document, it shows the intentions of

security agencies in targeting environmental and Indigenous activists to protect extractivism.

Discourse from Canada and the US shows the securitization of critical infrastructure. Though

policies in both countries recognize that critical infrastructure can be threatened by accidents and

natural events, they clearly assert that critical infrastructure is threatened by intentional sabotage.

To protect critical infrastructure, agencies and departments have been created or re-organized, budgets have been allocated, security measures have been approved, and permissibility has been granted for these efforts to be kept secret.69 Security measures and the secrecy in which they

operate were authorized because of a perceived threat of terrorism in the post-9/11 environment

but they continue to operate in Canada and the US beyond a state of emergency or imminent

threat. These security powers are used to advance economic interests and target environmental

and Indigenous activists by suggesting that they engage in, or have the potential to engage in,

serious acts of criminality, extremism, or terrorism.

The securitization of critical infrastructure in the US is more secretive in some senses and

more explicit in others. Security powers are broad and hidden in America. Public security

documents establish that critical infrastructure is threatened by terrorism but keep the conception

of terrorism broad. State critical infrastructure laws also do not name specific groups but their

creation by oil and gas executives in response to the Standing Rock protests make it clear that

critical infrastructure is protected because of profits which environmental and Indigenous

activists can challenge. In Canada, critical infrastructure protection is undertaken in a securitized

way, though the use of more public critical infrastructure criminal charges could be used in the

69 Philip Boyle and Shannon Speed, “From protection to coordinated preparedness: A genealogy of critical future.70 Public documents provide evidence of a securitizing move establishing the importance

of critical infrastructure and its threatened nature. In practice, and as shown through private

documents, security measures to protect critical infrastructure are directed at environmental and

Indigenous activists specifically because they obstruct extractivism.

While the majority of infrastructure in Canada and the US is privately owned and its function

is important for the well-being of citizens, the security state’s actions to protect critical

infrastructure go beyond the intentions of safeguarding citizens to safeguarding capital. Security

and policing forces in Canada and the US have acted alongside corporations to protect

continuing extraction. Confrontations between security agencies and environmental and

Indigenous activists in Standing Rock and Wet’suwet’en lay bare the security state’s real targets. 70 Alberta has passed a similar law to the American Legislative Exchange Council’s model legislation, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act. This law imposes significant fines and possible jail time for individuals who damage or obstruct critical infrastructure. See Sean Fine, “Alberta tables bill that would jail pipeline protesters for up to six months, impose major fines,” The Globe and Mail, February 25, 2020,

#### Securitization of the arctic leads to climate change and food scarcity of the indigenous.

**Khan, commentator on global security issues, 21**

[Sahar, 6-17-2021, "The Arctic’s Securitization", Inkstick, <https://inkstickmedia.com/the-arctics-securitization/>, July 15, 2025, HDCSW-SH]

Securitization is the process of something becoming a security threat or a security issue. It happens when something — such as immigration — is labeled as dangerous, threatening, and as an existential crisis by someone, and then that framing is accepted by an audience. Importantly, securitization implies that security issues are not just out there. Instead, by creating security threats in the way we speak, we create security issues. While the Arctic might seem like a peripheral region globally, there is evidence that it is beginning to rise in importance. Concerns about China, Russia, and resource competition are causing real changes to occur in how states treat the Arctic. The United States, for example, has announced the establishment of the Arctic Regional Center, which will be housed within the Department of Defense and focus on the “unique challenges and security concerns related to the Arctic region.” As climate change has resulted in new shipping lanes and easier access to resources in the Arctic, the interests of Arctic states — United States, Russia, Canada, Norway, Iceland, Finland, Denmark, and Sweden — and non-Arctic states — China, United Kingdom, and EU to name a few — have grown. The Arctic presents virtually untapped amounts of oil, gas, and minerals that attract both Arctic and non-Arctic states. A United States Geological Survey 2008 report also described the Arctic continental shelves as potentially constituting “the geographically largest unexplored prospective area for petroleum remaining on Earth.” While it is true that some states, such as China, are finding investment opportunities with Arctic states to build infrastructure as part of the Polar Silk Road (part of the Belt and Road Initiative), it is by no means a necessity to treat Chinese influence as inherently negative. By the same logic, Russian investment and military actions in the Arctic might seem overtly negative, but it is important to contextualize Russian interest in the Arctic as not recent, but historic. Instead, the rhetoric around these issues has treated them as critical security risks, painting the Arctic as the next theater of a new Cold War. But is the Arctic really the next theater? Rather than focusing on these interstate threats, there are more serious concerns, such as climate change and insecurities that stem from it — such as food, water, environmental, and health security concerns — that affect individuals and impact their quality of life. For example, Alaskan communities are suffering from food insecurity because sea ice is melting, causing traditional sea mammals that they would otherwise hunt, to move elsewhere and decreasing their protection from the large ocean waves that have in some cases caused devastating infrastructure damage. On Little Diomede Island, for example, a late storm caused serious damage to a water treatment plant, leaving the town without clean water and without power. By over-emphasizing “hard” security issues from Russia and China, therefore, the rhetoric surrounding Arctic politics ignores other important questions that impact people on the ground, particularly Indigenous people whose livelihoods and societal resilience are threatened by climate change. The most significant concern when it comes to treating the Arctic as a theater of great power competition is the danger it presents in putting the Arctic on a trajectory of becoming a securitized region. While it can be argued that as it stands, the Arctic is not a contested region or a region fraught with wars, such as the Middle East and parts of Africa, it could be if the trajectory of treating the Arctic as this region of competition and security continues. Regions of the world do not become theaters of competition and conflict overnight, but instead become that way after years of construction that involves a range of activities from rhetoric and to military buildups. Crimea is a telling example of this, where both Ukraine and Russia slowly began ratcheting up bellicose discourse over time which was followed by militarization. Now, Crimea is a point of severe tension between the two states.