

# AGAINST SECURITISATION



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Noor & The Polis Project

## *Against Securitization*

**Noor** is a feminist and movement-driven think and do tank devoted to building the power of gender justice and progressive movements to obstruct far-right agendas and advance our transformative visions. We coordinate a transnational network, expose and oppose the resurgent right, and facilitate strategic alignment and strategy development. We organize to help bring systemic alternatives into reality.

Website: <https://wearenoor.org/>

**The Polis Project, Inc.** is a New York–based global magazine of dissent and a hybrid research and journalism organization. It documents communities in resistance and investigates the rise of authoritarianism, centering racial, class, and caste injustice, Islamophobia, and state oppression worldwide.

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Against securitization

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## INTRODUCTION FROM NOOR: WHY SECURITIZATION? WHY NOW?

Noor is a feminist and movement-driven think-and-do tank that works from the understanding that far-right power today is exercised through everyday governance, rather than moments of exception. We approach repression as a structured and institutional process, embedded in security regimes that anchor the far right's political and economic project and reorganize everyday life.

This narrative landscape mapping builds on earlier analyses of securitization that have traced how security frameworks, technologies, and narratives strategically converge to close civic space. We take this body of work as a starting point. Our intervention is to situate securitization within longer historical trajectories and wider geographies, where emergency has hardened into a semi-permanent mode of rule rather than a temporary response to crisis.

For Noor, grounding this analysis in Global South contexts is an analytic necessity. Techniques now framed as exceptional in the Global North, such as counter-terror legislation, biometric identification, militarized policing, and border externalization, have long been made routine in postcolonial states shaped by imperial governance. Reading securitization from these sites makes visible how contemporary security regimes are produced through diffusion of laws, narratives, technologies, capital, and doctrine. In this frame, the Global North appears as one node within a broader imperial architecture.

To push for this 'node-reading' of the world-order, this paper advances two core arguments. First, securitization exceeds the state. While states retain the authority to declare threats, security is enacted through corporate and infrastructural systems including platforms, data brokers, defense industries, and logistics chains – and normalized through fundamentalist and fascist actors' narratives. Second, securitization operates as a war on movements, regulating mobility, assembly, organizing, and solidarity across both macro-political and everyday terrains.

We chose to collaborate on this project with The Polis Project because of their sustained commitment to tracing power through institutions, infrastructures, and political economy. Together, we offer this paper as a tool for movements confronting the security playbook in its contemporary forms of repression and surveillance.

We hope readers will join us in refusing what power presents as security as a horizon for justice, and in collectively imagining forms of safety grounded in liberation, joint struggles, and shared political life.

## SECURITIZATION AS A POLITICS OF DEATH

“Security is a never-ending and always unfulfilled project: never fully attainable, it is essentially a pretext for its own pursuit... [it] precludes the consideration of abolition and indeed the admission that reparations, rather than repentance, are the only way to move the conversation forward beyond tweaking it at its edges.”<sup>1</sup>

We are witnessing genocide over livestreams, the spread of virulent and exclusionary anti-rights and anti-gender narratives, the policing of borders to criminalize people fleeing systemic socio-political violence, and the coercive integration of artificial intelligence and surveillance in our daily lives.

Many of these phenomena are connected by a common thread: they are justified in the name of security. What is claimed to be protected can range from securing national borders and sovereignty, shielding lives of ‘citizens’ within such borders, maintaining economic stability, preserving limited resources, safeguarding traditional culture, defending religious ideology, and protecting the rights of vulnerable communities, to name a few. The power to securitize primarily rests with states, but fundamentalist and fascist movements<sup>2</sup> (elaborated more in Noor’s Report *In the Shadows of Hate*) and Big Tech play a significant role in building, furthering and doubling down on securitization narratives for political gain and to enhance their profits, foment hatred and division.

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<sup>1</sup> P. 50, Manchanda, N. (2021). The banalization of race in international security studies: From absolutism to abolition. *Security Dialogue*, 52(1\_suppl), 49–59.

<sup>2</sup> Fascist and Fundamentalist (FF) movements are a form of relationship that organizes life through the exploitation, dispossession, and killing of many to satisfy the economic, cultural, and ideological dominance of a few. See p. 4, Noor. (2024). *In the Shadows of Hate*. <https://wearenoor.org/in-the-shadows-of-hate/>



Securitization is an inherently political process by which state and non-state actors transform ordinary socio-political governance issues into existential security threats, which justify ‘extraordinary’ state measures such as emergency powers and surveillance.<sup>3</sup>

Who is presented as vulnerable and deemed deserving of security, and who is labelled a threat? How do we contest crackdowns on freedom of speech, collectivization and organizing, and human rights violations when they are claimed to serve collective interests? How can we demand accountability from states and private actors who collude to normalize states of perpetual emergency while failing to provide basic sustenance, education, shelter, and freedom from violence and inequality? How can we ensure that we remain vigilant of co-option into such narratives and continue defending and advocating for those blamed for ‘insecurity’ and deemed disposable?

This narrative landscape mapping will unpack how securitization is increasingly used as a tactic by authoritarian, fundamentalist and fascist movements and actors to defend and advance capitalist, racist, heteropatriarchal, ableist, colonial, anti-migrant and ethnonationalist ideologies; not the rights and freedoms of people they instrumentalize in this process. In summary, securitization functions as a politics of death that criminalizes freedom of expression and dissent, and manufactures ‘threats’. This resource is in response to the increasing normalization of securitization logics and technologies in our everyday lives and the impact of securitization on closing civic space, and suppression of transnational solidarity against oppression. Feminist and progressive social justice movements must collectively resist both its violence and its co-option.

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<sup>3</sup> Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner; Wæver, O. (1995). ‘Securitization and desecuritization’, in R. D. Lipschutz (ed.), *On security* (pp. 46–87). Columbia University Press.

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In this narrative landscape mapping, we will briefly share what we mean by ‘securitization’, highlight its historical background and ongoing manifestations in post-colonial and neocolonial states, and analyze how securitization is sustained through narratives, legal institutions, laws and practices that otherize, criminalize, surveil, and police in the name of abstract and undefined ‘national security’ interests. We present this resource as a call to introspection, critical thinking and action within feminist and social justice movements who may lean on similar narratives to advance progressive goals and whose activism and advocacy may be co-opted by Big Tech and fundamentalist and fascist actors to solidify their destructive and violent agendas. This resource may also be valuable to feminist and social justice movements who are advancing similar critiques to securitization and may benefit from shared knowledge on the narratives and tactics integral to securitization processes.

The field of securitization studies is dominated by Anglo-American thinking, with a focus on militarization and ‘counter-terrorism,’ and most literature is concentrated on securitization enacted by the Global North.<sup>4</sup> Securitization studies were historically confined to the discipline of International Relations, and in the last two decades we have seen inter-disciplinary scholarly contributions: such as those addressing the deployment of securitization to ‘control’ the mobility of migrants and refugees;<sup>5</sup> to tackle the climate crises by capturing land and dispossessing Indigenous communities;<sup>6</sup> and to further marginalize religious, cultural and ethnic minorities.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Charrett, C. (2009). *A critical application of securitization theory: Overcoming the normative dilemma of writing security*. International Catalan Institute for Peace, Working Paper, (2009/7).

<sup>5</sup> Bigo, D. (2002). ‘Security and immigration: Toward a critique of the governmentality of unease’. *Alternatives*, 27(1\_suppl), 63–92; Hammerstad, A. (2014). The securitization of forced migration. In E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, G. Loescher, K. Long, & N. Sigona (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of refugee and forced migration studies*. Oxford University Press; Huysmans, J. (2006). *The politics of insecurity: Fear, migration and asylum in the EU*. Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> Rangelov, I., & Theros, M. (2025). *Climate Emergency and the Future of Civic Space: Lessons from the War on Terror*, Conflict & Civiness Research Group, LSE IDEAS, London School of Economics and Political Science. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/projects/conflict-and-civiness-research-group/publications/Climate-Emergency-and-Civic-Space-Rangelov-Theros.pdf>; Cohn, C. & Duncanson, C. (2022). *Securitizing Climate Change: How to Not Think about the Climate Crisis*, The Global Observatory, International Peace Institute, 12 October, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2022/10/securing-climate-change-how-to-not-think-about-the-climate-crisis/>

<sup>7</sup> Kim, E., Dinco, J., Suamen, L., Hayes, M. & Papsch, T. (2017) ‘The impact of securitisation on marginalised groups in the Asia Pacific: Humanising the threats to security in cases from the Philippines, Indonesia and China’, *Global Campus Human Rights Journal* 414.



Non-government organizations (NGOs), feminist collectives, and social justice movements have been developing intersectional critiques of securitization processes, reclaiming security through collective action and social transformation in opposition to militarization, authoritarianism and closing civic spaces, and urging actors working on human rights and freedoms to interrogate how they utilize the framework of securitization in their work.<sup>8</sup>

More recently, academic research and analysis collectively dubbed as ‘Feminist Security Studies’<sup>9</sup> provide a range of critiques of the dominant approaches to securitization – from the lack of gendered analysis in the what/where/why/when/how of securitization,<sup>10</sup> to the need to securitize gender-based violence as a national issue in order to justify more resources, attention and efforts,<sup>11</sup> as well as the intrinsic racism, patriarchy and colonial bedrock of securitization theories.<sup>12</sup>

Feminist theorists have argued that securitization obscures how states are primarily responsible for perpetuating gendered violence and patriarchal norms, and that securitization of gender misses the forest for the trees by exacerbating the root causes of violence and not

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<sup>8</sup> See: Civic Futures (2024). *New reports highlight how the Security Playbook is eroding human rights in Kenya*, <https://civic-futures.org/new-reports-kenya-security-playbook/>; Transnational Institute (2022). *Securitisisation*, <https://annualreport.tni.org/2022-annual-report/securitisation/>; Kvinna Till Kvinna (n.d.). *Women, peace and security*, <https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/about-us/what-we-do/wps/>

<sup>9</sup> See Cohn, C. (2011). ‘“Feminist Security Studies”: Toward a reflexive practice’, *Politics & Gender*, 7(4), 581–586; Shepherd, L. J. (2013). ‘The state of feminist security studies: Continuing the conversation. *International Studies Perspectives*, 14(4), 436–439.

<sup>10</sup> Hansen, L. (2000). ‘The Little Mermaid’s silent security agenda and the absence of gender in the Copenhagen School’, *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 29(2), 285–306.

<sup>11</sup> Hudson, N. F. (2005). ‘Securitizing women’s rights and gender equality’, *Journal of Human Rights*, 8(1), 53–70.

<sup>12</sup> Bertrand, S. (2018). ‘Can the subaltern securitize? Postcolonial perspectives on securitization theory and its critics’, *European Journal of International Security*, 3(3), 281–299; Gomes, M. S., & Marques, R. R. (2021). ‘Can securitization theory be saved from itself? A decolonial and feminist intervention’, *Security Dialogue*, 52(1\_suppl), 78–87.

dismantling them.<sup>13</sup> By co-opting feminist issues such as gender-based violence, gendered health disparities and safety of women, states may end up causing insecurity and enact paternalistic, patriarchal and militarized interventions,<sup>14</sup> which often limit the mobility and freedoms of women, queer and gender-diverse persons, and marginalized communities and expose them to perpetual surveillance. Securitization narratives imbibe patriarchal logics: it is harder to contest measures imposed in the name of protection, as it invites scrutiny and suspicion of acting against the state: fascist and fundamentalist actors use this to delegitimize movements considered ungrateful and questioning of a state's goodwill.

This knowledge resource will build on socio-legal, feminist, postcolonial and criminological theorizing to expand on what is conventionally understood as securitization, and draw on examples from Global Majority countries to highlight how post-colonial states continue to utilize the securitization playbook to criminalize dissent; police populations; generate and sustain moral panic against 'dangerous others'; exacerbate religious, ethnic, class, caste, and regional divisions and suppress grassroots social justice movements.

Informed by critical feminist readings of securitization, which highlight its gendered and intersectional violence and its reproduction of patriarchal, racist, and colonial power, we caution our own movements against reclaiming narratives of securitization that traditionally serve the status quo and systems of power. Instead of re-thinking and re-working securitization to become more inclusive, intersectional and 'workable', we seek to contribute to existing denunciations of securitization in its entirety.

As you sift through these pages, here are some reflective prompts:

- What comes to your mind when you first think of 'security'?
- What do protection and safety look like for you, your communities and your movements?
- How can we redefine security beyond the state and carceral responses?

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<sup>13</sup> True, J. 'Review of *Securitizing Feminism or Feminist Security Studies?*, by Laura Sjoberg'. *International Studies Review* 14, no. 1 (2012): 193–95.

<sup>14</sup> True, J. 'Review of *Securitizing Feminism or Feminist Security Studies?*, by Laura Sjoberg'. *International Studies Review* 14, no. 1 (2012): 193–95.



## 1. SECURITIZATION AS THE MEANS AND THE END

‘Securitization theory is based on the premise that the word ‘security’ has a performative character – that is, it does not only describe the world but can also transform social reality.’<sup>15</sup>

This section begins the paper’s core argument, i.e., securitization works simultaneously as a method of governance and as a self-justifying ideology that expands the coercive and patriarchal power of the state, fascist and fundamentalist movements, and Big Tech in our everyday lives.

States use securitization narratives to justify the suspension of basic human rights and freedoms, alter the functioning of democratic institutions and enact measures like curfews, increased police presence, monitoring of mobility and identity cards, and often introduce new laws and policies to combat what they classify as ‘threats.’ States, in collusion with fundamentalist and fascist movements<sup>16</sup> and Big Tech, have the monopoly to declare who or what is a threat, what the security measures should be, and until when they will continue. Questioning this monopoly means risking being categorized ‘anti-national’, ‘traitors’ of the nation and of weakening one’s state against foreign enemies.<sup>17</sup> Securitization also blames insecurity on the ‘threats’ themselves, which obscures critical analysis and scrutiny of the obligations of states, institutions and powerful actors such as Big Tech to protect and uphold human rights.

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<sup>15</sup> Balzacq, T., Léonard, S., & Ruzicka, J. (2015). ‘‘Securitization’ revisited: Theory and cases’, *International Relations*, 30(4), 494–531.

<sup>16</sup> Fascist and Fundamentalist (FF) movements are a form of relationship that organizes life through the exploitation, dispossession, and killing of many to satisfy the economic, cultural, and ideological dominance of a few. See p. 4, Noor. (2024). *In the Shadows of Hate*. <https://wearenoor.org/in-the-shadows-of-hate/>

<sup>17</sup> See Kaul, N. (2021). ‘The Misogyny of Authoritarians in Contemporary Democracies’, *International Studies Review*, Volume 23, Issue 4, December 2021, Pages 1619–1645.

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Securitization manifests in multiple dimensions, including spatial, tangible, temporal, and psychological. For example, securitization can include the figurative and physical drawing of boundaries and frontiers to control and segregate populations of people (spatial). It can involve controlling physical spaces through the construction of borders and zones of exclusion where walls, fences, and checkpoints are used to keep ‘threats’ away from ‘citizens’ (tangible). Securitization relies on building relationships between threats and time; where states and fundamentalist and fascist actors collectively securitize threats to prevent future harm or ‘remember’ a past threat (temporal). These often take the form of prolonged political campaigns aimed at making sure such threats never present themselves again. When securitization involves framing issues as existential threats to mobilize societal anxiety, and specific problems or events are portrayed as a crisis or a danger, it taps into the collective and individual psyche to justify extreme measures to stay on safer shores (psychological). In the examples ahead, we demonstrate how multiple aspects of securitization are constantly at play, making it harder to identify and challenge.

In Myanmar, for instance, the state securitizes the Rohingya Muslim minority as an existential threat to national sovereignty and stability, legitimizing state-sponsored violence and forced displacement.<sup>18</sup> In Bangladesh, the state securitizes Rohingya Muslim refugees fleeing Myanmar as existential threats to limited socio-economic resources and environmental safety. They are deemed capable of inflicting violence against Bangladeshi citizens, justifying their restricted freedom within refugee camps, routine surveillance and detention, and limited access to employment, education and business opportunities.<sup>19</sup> In India, the states uses citizenship laws and policies like the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 and the National Register of Citizens to securitize citizenship: Muslim communities are primarily painted as threats to the territorial sovereignty of an imagined nationalistic ethnocentric state, paving the way for their exclusion from

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<sup>18</sup> Win, K.Z. ‘Securitization of the Rohingya in Myanmar’, in Chambers. J., McCarthy. G., Farrelly, N., Win, C., (eds.) (2018). *Myanmar Transformed?: People, Places and Politics*. Lectures, Workshops, and Proceedings of International Conferences. ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute; 2018:251-276.

<sup>19</sup> Rana, M. S., & Riaz, A. (2022). ‘Securitization of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 58(7), 1274–1290.



citizenship and its contingent benefits and rights.<sup>20</sup> In Malaysia, the state securitizes socio-economic order by labelling migrants from Indonesia as security threats compromising national stability, and their rights, mobility and freedoms are framed as issues of national security rather than invoking labour and migrant rights frameworks.<sup>21</sup>

While states often call for securitization through speech that is emotion-stirring, dramatic and heavily draws on nationalistic imagery and ideology, specific governance, bureaucratic and legal processes can institutionalize securitization as well.<sup>22</sup> For instance, the technologies and tools used to police migrants at borders, classify persons as citizens or ‘aliens’, and surveil movements of communities branded with criminality, are all forms of securitization. The constitutive elements of securitization include:

#### **A referent object whose existence is claimed to be threatened**

This could range from the generalized and symbolic notion of territorial sovereignty and national interests to concrete and specific resources such as jobs, food, shelter and even people deemed in need of ‘protection’.

Securitization narratives position referent objects in a way to mobilize popular support for their protection. States frame these narratives in a manner that is difficult to contest or interrogate. By emphasizing goals that are often collectively shared such as a safer community, nutritious food, decent jobs, accessible education and a cleaner environment, they obscure critical conversations

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<sup>20</sup> Sharma, C. (2024). ‘National register of citizens and citizenship amendment act 2019: Following the logic of citizenship securitization in India’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 50(19), 4850–4866.

<sup>21</sup> Arifianto, A. R. (2009). ‘The securitization of transnational labor migration: The case of Malaysia and Indonesia’, *Asian Politics & Policy*, 1(4), 613–630.

<sup>22</sup> Huysmans, J. (2006). *The politics of insecurity: Fear, migration and asylum in the EU*. Routledge.

on the most impactful and effective ways to achieve such goals. They frame the survival or protection of referent objects as essential, so any measures to protect them from danger are justified, including infliction of systemic violence and contravention of agreed upon human rights norms that is proudly broadcasted. For instance, fundamentalist and nationalist narratives build on racist, xenophobic and anti-migrant ideologies to position ‘women and girls’ as perennially vulnerable to violence by ‘outsiders’ or ‘others and their protection as a national duty. We can see European countries invoking such racialized and gendered narratives to justify securitizing migration (especially of male migrants who are not white),<sup>23</sup> and feminist pushback that counters the notion that anti-immigration policies help reduce gendered violence, rather they increase vulnerability of marginalized persons and limit options for redress.<sup>24</sup>

### **A call for immediate and urgent action**

Securitization often involves the invocation of ‘emergency’ measures, i.e., laws, policies, and practices that are reserved for ‘extreme’ situations. This is where everyday democratic governance may be suspended, accountability and due process safeguards are diluted, and vast resources may be diverted to protection from a designated threat. This is a form of crisisification where actors strategically frame issues as ongoing and perpetual crises, thereby normalizing extraordinary modes of governance. By portraying certain issues as crises, states and fundamentalist and fascist movements deploy securitization processes to draw attention away from the need to challenge oppressive structures, systems and practices such as racism, capitalism, imperialism and patriarchy that are the root causes of violence and inequality.<sup>25</sup> For instance, crisisification can form the normative basis for violent and racialized immigration policies targeting ‘unwanted’ refugees and people seeking asylum as in the case of tightened controls over ‘Fortress

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<sup>23</sup> Korac, M. (2020). ‘Gendered and racialised border security: Displaced people and the politics of fear’, *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 9(3): 75-86.

<sup>24</sup> End Violence Against Women Coalition (2025). *100+ women’s rights groups warn against racist weaponisation of VAWG*, 19 August, <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/100-womens-rights-groups-warn-against-racist-weaponisation-of-vawg/>

<sup>25</sup> Moussawi, G., & Reyes, V. (2024). ‘Crisis Feminisms: How Convenient Forgetting, Feminist Ambivalence, and Racial Gaslighting Maintain the Status Quo’, *Critical Sociology*, 51(7-8), 1665-1687.



Europe’,<sup>26</sup> even when the number of migrants entering the state may not be disproportionately high or non-routine. By categorizing such phenomenon as crises, states and fundamentalist and fascist movements detract attention from the structural causes of mass migration such as neoliberal and colonial policies imposed and implemented in the Global Majority causing political and social conflict, furthering violence against ethnic, racial and religious minorities and deepening economic instability and social inequality (which could be deemed crises themselves) to focus on the consequences of such geo-political policies, i.e., mass migration.<sup>27</sup>

We will elaborate on these more in the section detailing how states use laws and administrative processes as tools to create seemingly permanent states of emergency.

### **Mobilization of narratives to create ‘others’ and generate fear**

Without popular support, processes of securitization lose their legitimacy. The framing of security threats requires creating harsh division between who is seen as trustworthy and who is ‘dangerous’ and to be feared.<sup>28</sup> States and fundamentalist and fascist actors build on existing divisive narratives or create new narratives around identity, history, belonging and solidarity to define ‘security’ and who are seen as causing ‘insecurity’ to be successful in convincing populations that securitization is for their collective benefit.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Moreno-Lax, V. (2024). ‘Crisis as (Asylum) governance: The evolving normalisation of non-access to protection in the EU’, *European Papers-A Journal on Law and Integration*, 2024(1), 179–208.

<sup>27</sup> See Walia, H. (2021). ‘Introduction’ in *Border and rule: global migration, capitalism and the rise of racist nationalism*, Haymarket Books.

<sup>28</sup> P. 51, Huysmans, J. (2006). *The politics of insecurity: Fear, migration and asylum in the EU*. Routledge.

<sup>29</sup> P. 267, Hammerstad, A. (2014). ‘The securitization of forced migration’, in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., Loescher, G., Long, K., & Sigona, N. (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of refugee and forced migration studies*. Oxford University Press.

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Securitization narratives are neither neutral nor benign but are a continuation of colonial, capitalist and fascist legacies. They are such a powerful and potent form of knowledge production that even in the absence of concrete evidence to support their assertions, states and private actors have the monopoly to define what is dangerous and sustain this as unquestionable truth.

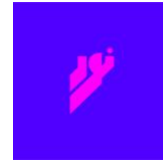
For instance, states often frame socio-economic issues including unemployment, debt crises, lack of housing for all, unsafe public spaces etc. as existential threats to political stability and the symbolic notion of the nation itself. In a securitization framework, the discontent, protest and demands for accountability from communities are strategically diverted. The onus of responsibility shifts from states, elected representatives and service-providers to those considered responsible for creating insecurity. Securitization of migration has historically been successful because it stokes ethnocentric and xenophobic fears coupled with collective despair around struggling or stagnant socio-economic conditions. One example is the conspiracy ‘Great Replacement’ Theory, popularly attributed to French writer Jean Renaud Camus, which claims that Muslim migrants and their descendants are deliberately infiltrating Europe to replace ‘original’ populations. This gained traction amongst fascist actors because of its foundations in white supremacy, eugenic philosophies and racial stereotypes.<sup>30</sup> This is an example of how fundamentalist and fascist movements mobilize resources to distract, misinform, and instill feelings of fear, anger, and disappointment, but also of superiority and pride among groups of believers. They heavily invest in narratives that create a strong sense of identity based on drawing rigid boundaries between ‘us,’ human, and ‘them,’ and pave the way for calls for ‘the destruction of what cannot be assimilated’.<sup>31</sup>

In this section, we established the constituent elements that we will keep returning to: securitization depends on naming ‘threats,’ doctoring urgency, and mobilizing fear. The next section will demonstrate how these narratives do not reduce harm but are used to deepen insecurity and justify violence against marginalized communities and individuals.

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<sup>30</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2020). “*The Great Replacement*” *A conspiracy claiming white Europeans are under threat*, ISD, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/The-Great-Replacement-ISD-External-August2022.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> P. 5, Noor (2024) *In the Shadows of Hate*, <https://wearenoor.org/in-the-shadows-of-hate/>



## 2. INVOKING SECURITY TO REINFORCE INSECURITY

Having mapped securitization's narrative and institutional components, this section shows how securitization is a trap: it distorts real or perceived social issues into moral panic and then manipulates that panic to rationalize expansion of state power and surveillance.

States and fundamentalist and fascist actors use securitization to tap into societal concerns about social, economic, political and cultural systems such as impoverishment, inequality, violence and discrimination. Securitization is also used to generate and stoke narratives that either distract, misdirect or shift attention to issues painted as more pressing or urgent. People's fears and anxieties about their everyday sustenance, future security and safety and redress for past injustices, are exploited to foster moral panic about immigrants, sexually and gender diverse persons, and religious minorities, which foments social divisions and exacerbates violence. Using securitization, states convolute concerns about structural systems and processes by projecting public anxiety onto vulnerable individuals and communities, and where public discontent does not exist, securitization manufactures it. For instance, in Lebanon, the state often scapegoats Syrian refugees as the reason for the country's socio-economic crises, and 'authentic' Lebanese masculinity is pitted against 'violent' and 'dangerous' refugee-outsider masculinity, which Lebanese women and girls need to be protected from through policing of vulnerable refugee communities.<sup>32</sup> Using securitization narratives, states and fundamentalist and fascist movements also try to divide social movements by positioning issues of safety and security as above and beyond and in isolation to other social justice concerns. For instance, positioning refugees and migrants as threats to women's safety and security may lead to tensions between women's rights and feminist movements and anti-racist and refugee rights movements, competition for scarce

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<sup>32</sup> Allouche, S. (2019). '(Dis)-Intersecting Intersectionality in the Time of Queer Syrian-Refugee-ness in Lebanon', University of Exeter, Journal contribution, <https://hdl.handle.net/10871/38820>

funding and conflicting narratives, when in fact gender equality, anti-racism and migrants' rights are interconnected issues.

By framing labor movements and organization as security threats, states and corporations justify intensified video surveillance, border militarization, and criminalization of collective bargaining, freedom of assembly and expression. By controlling a vulnerable and often migrant workforce whose precarity serves the interests of capital accumulation, securitization strengthens capitalist control over production. Analyzing the treatment of Bangladeshi migrant workers in Singapore, Loong in 2018 had noted how the state securitizes the migrant workers – on whom a country's economic power depends – and denies them a sense of belonging, safety or recognition of their rights as workers.<sup>33</sup>

Securitization impacts social movements by design as it enables states and fundamentalist and fascist movements to criminalize questions and dissent, suppress counter-narratives and cement state hegemony over discourse. The securitization of news leads to surveillance of journalists,<sup>34</sup> accusations of treason or foreign allegiances against activists, state-endorsed smear campaigns and the normalization of drastic and arbitrary internet shutdowns<sup>35</sup> such as during the protests against the morality police in Iran in 2024 and 2025,<sup>36</sup> and the prevention of possible protests and collective action against state violence in Kashmir, especially since 2014.<sup>37</sup> The securitization of 'family values', i.e., the narrative that family values are in danger of being fundamentally eroded, depicts feminists as destabilizing social forces attempting to erode traditional norms, and feminism, atheism and homosexuality may be categorized as extremist as

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<sup>33</sup> Loong, S. (2018). "This country, law very strong": Securitization beyond the border in the everyday lives of Bangladeshi migrant workers in Singapore', *Geoforum*, 90, 11–19.

<sup>34</sup> Martin, N. (2020). *The Securitisation of News in Turkey, Journalists as Terrorists?*, Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>35</sup> Thumfart, J. (2024). 'Digital Rights and the State of Exception. Internet Shutdowns from the Perspective of Just Securitization Theory', *Journal of Global Security Studies*, vol.9 (1).

<sup>36</sup> Amnesty International (2026). *Iran: Internet shutdown hides violations in escalating deadly crackdown on protesters*, Amnesty International, 9 January, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2026/01/internet-shutdown-in-iran-hides-violations-in-escalating-protests/>

<sup>37</sup> Internet Shutdowns (2026). *Jammu & Kashmir*, <https://internetshutdowns.in/static-page/jammu-kashmir/>



instituted in Saudi Arabia in 2019<sup>38</sup> and Russia in 2023.<sup>39</sup> Subsequently, states employ repressive laws to inhibit their participation in public discourse and activism aimed at advancing women's rights. For example, in 2022 in Saudi Arabia, a women human rights defender was detained and arrested under anti-terrorism charges after posting photos of herself online without an abaya and for social media posts supporting liberal dress codes for women and the abolition of male guardianship laws.<sup>40</sup> In 2022, the Iranian state framed the 'Women, Life, Freedom' movement protesting compulsory hijab laws as a Western-backed conspiracy threatening national values, leading to violent repression and widespread arrests.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, states and fundamentalist and fascist movements portray human rights defenders, who represent society's most marginalized groups, as threats to national security or cultural integrity to undermine their activism, advocacy and movement work. They frequently endure extrajudicial killings, extensive surveillance, arbitrary detention, and criminalization of protests and dissent. During the 2015 elections in Tanzania and 2016 election polls in Zambia and Uganda securitization discourses were used as a strategy of electoral manipulation to create militarized environments and restrict freedoms of assembly and expression of activists and human

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<sup>38</sup> Amnesty International (2019). *Saudi Arabia: Categorizing feminism, atheism, homosexuality as crimes exposes the Kingdom's dangerous intolerance*, Amnesty International, 12 November, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/11/saudi-arabia-categorizing-feminism-atheism-homosexuality-as-crimes-exposes-the-kingdoms-dangerous-intolerance/>

<sup>39</sup> Vitkine, B. (2023), 'In Russia, feminism is equated with 'extremist ideology'', *Le Monde*, April 18, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/russia/article/2023/04/18/in-russia-feminism-is-equated-with-extremist-ideology\\_6023295\\_140.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/russia/article/2023/04/18/in-russia-feminism-is-equated-with-extremist-ideology_6023295_140.html)

<sup>40</sup> P. 25, Front Line Defenders (2025). *Global Analysis 2024/25*, Front Line Defenders, [https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/1609\\_fld\\_ga24-5\\_output.pdf](https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/1609_fld_ga24-5_output.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Abbas Mirza, J. (2022). 'Are the protests in Iran fuelled by a Western conspiracy?', *The Dawn*, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1721264>

rights defenders demanding accountability from states and challenging authoritarianism and closing civic spaces.<sup>42</sup>

Information generation, dissemination and the creation of powerful narratives are crucial to influencing public perception. Misinformation, disinformation, censorship, and artificial intelligence-generated content are often produced by private corporations sanctioned by the state. These manipulate understandings of threats, democratic processes, elections, and conflict, and manufacture consent for violence and normalizing ‘emergency’ measures. Big Tech actors aiming to enhance their capital interests stand to benefit from disinformation and misinformation and this is an integral part of their business models.<sup>43</sup> While some feminist theorists and activists advocate for gendered disinformation to be securitized as a national-level threat that requires urgent and extraordinary responses, others caution against this call noting how it is states that often instrumentalize disinformation and misinformation to perpetuate patriarchal ideologies, and that securitization rooted in such ideologies will justify more surveillance of feminist activism, without safeguards or protections.<sup>44</sup> We need to address the root causes of disinformation and misinformation and problematize how and why Big Tech amplifies and supports state narratives, to prevent such systemic violence and seek accountability.

Securitization is a never-ending narrative. States, fundamentalist and fascist movements and Big Tech use securitization to reinforce the very logics of insecurity that justify it and create a self-perpetuating cycle of fear and repression. This divides and represses social movements, while enabling authoritarian actors to thrive. The danger of securitization narratives lies not only in the normalization of violence, discrimination and surveillance against ‘others’, but in how states and fundamentalist and fascist movements collectively obscure the structural causes of societal inequality and the crushing of civil society movements to challenge this and enact transformative

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<sup>42</sup> Jenkins, S. (2020). ‘The politics of fear and the securitization of African elections’, *Democratization*, 27(5), 836–853.

<sup>43</sup> Maréchal, N. & Roberts Biddle, E. (2020). ‘It’s Not Just the Content, It’s the Business Model: Democracy’s Online Speech Challenge’, Ranking Digital Rights, <https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/its-not-just-content-its-business-model/>; Khan, S. (2025). *Big Tech Profiteering of Political Misinformation Costs Human Rights in the Global South*, genderIT.org, <https://genderit.org/feminist-talk/big-tech-profiteering-political-misinformation-costs-human-rights-global-south>

<sup>44</sup> Mhajne, A. (2025). ‘The (in)security of securitizing gendered disinformation’, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1–24.



changes. The next section will help us understand why securitization narratives have withstood the test of time, by discussing the colonial and patriarchal histories that built these logics into laws, governance, international geo-political discourses, and ‘common sense.’

### 3. TRACING THE COLONIAL LEGACIES OF SECURITIZATION: WHERE DO WE STAND NOW?

This section historically situates securitization, as we unpack it as a colonial technology of population management, racial classification, and the normalization of exceptional violence against colonized populations as routine governance.

A historical arc of securitization can be traced through colonialism and slavery, the rise of capitalist economies, counter-insurgency and the ‘War on Terror’, and contemporary border-making and neocolonialism across Global Majority countries. Securitization has recurrently served as a tool for maintaining hierarchical control, managing populations viewed as threats, and legitimizing violence, often underpinned by racist, heteropatriarchal, ethnocentric and xenophobic ideologies.

The governing logic of European colonialism was rooted in the utilization of laws as a solution for all social, economic, political and cultural concerns, or ‘hyperlegality,’ which securitized marginalized communities who were racially different and also considered more ‘violent’, by portraying them as collective threats to the integrity of the state.<sup>45</sup> These criminal laws racialized dissent as collective criminality, fundamentally framing resistance to colonial domination as terrorism.

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<sup>45</sup> Finden, A., & Dutta, S. (2024). ‘Counterterrorism, political anxiety and legitimacy in postcolonial India and Egypt’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 17(2), 176–200.

The British colonial model institutionalized control by exporting repressive legal systems, initially experimented with in Ireland, to other colonies, folding emergency measures into routine administration. Penal laws were implemented that aimed to restrict Irish people from accessing institutions of power, expressing religious freedom, and claiming property rights in an effort to essentially ‘save’ Irish people from their own culture, which was largely viewed as primitive and uncivilized by English colonizers.<sup>46</sup> Intelligence services, professional policing, and quasi-military units, which had previously focused on population control, transitioned from last-resort tools to everyday governance. Curfews and detention without due process became standardized and legitimized, shifting state violence from exceptional to ordinary.

British colonial policing, first deployed in Ireland, was recreated in India, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, and South Africa, and relied on racialized categorizations of groups as ‘criminal tribes,’ ‘terrorists,’ or ‘alien’ populations to justify heightened surveillance, repression, and violence.<sup>47</sup> Laws such as the English Vagrancy Act of 1824 and migrancy codes – which are classification codes that identify the category or basis upon which someone was admitted into a country – were replicated throughout the empire, entrenching systemic discrimination that persists in many former colonies.<sup>48</sup> In 2020, the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights issued an advisory opinion condemning vagrancy laws (that essentially criminalized poverty, homelessness and unemployment) across Africa as discriminatory legacies of slavery, colonialism, and structural racism.<sup>49</sup> This ruling confirmed what lived reality has long shown. These oppressive

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<sup>46</sup> Howell, S. (2016). ‘From Oppression to Nationalism: The Irish Penal Laws of 1695’, University of Hawaii, HOHONU 2016, Vol. 14; Stephens, D.B. (2025). ‘The Penal Laws: How Britain Controlled Ireland Through Oppression, Division, and Fear’, Substack: Liberation Education Newsletter, <https://desireebstephens.substack.com/p/the-penal-laws-how-britain-controlled>

<sup>47</sup> Berda, Y. (2020). ‘Managing ‘dangerous populations’: How colonial emergency laws shape citizenship’, *Security Dialogue*, 51(6), 557–578. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010620901908>

<sup>48</sup> The penal codes of at least 18 former French colonies, including Algeria, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Republic of Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Senegal, and Togo contain similarly worded offenses of “vagabondage.”

<sup>49</sup> Open Society Foundations (2020). *Open Society Welcomes African Court’s Ruling against “Arbitrary” Vagrancy Laws*, December 4, 2020, Open Society Foundations,

<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/newsroom/open-society-welcomes-african-courts-ruling-against-arbitrary-vagrancy-laws>



infrastructures were never dismantled but merely transformed into new legal guises, thereby reaffirming how these securitization measures never aim to outgrow the othering project but rather reproduce and reframe it to fit the current state.

In contrast, the French model emphasized assimilation, deploying legal, cultural, and ideological enforcement to uphold white supremacy under the *mission civilisatrice* [civilizing mission] in the late 19th century and early 20th century.<sup>50</sup> Deployed in Algeria, the French Code de l'Indigénat established a dual legal order that enforced forced labor, restricted freedoms, and codified summary punishment backed by military and police power.<sup>51</sup> Forced labor camps in places like Martinique exemplified this brutality. Resistance to administrative violence was criminalized and reframed as a security threat, embedding coercion and surveillance within narratives of development and modernization. This logic persists today in penal and immigration systems, such as in El Salvador, Indonesia, and India, that record dissent and mobility as administrative risks (that would disrupt regular bureaucratic and governance processes); this is best exemplified by the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act in India, an anti-terror law that criminalizes activism and journalism related to Kashmir.

Portugal's colonization relied heavily on direct military repression, coerced labor, and militarized counterinsurgency. Notably, they recruited local African soldiers in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique to suppress uprisings and integrate them into the colonial security apparatus.<sup>52</sup> This cultivated the figures of “collaborators” and “forever prisoners,” a template

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<sup>50</sup> Burrows, M. (1986). “Mission Civilisatrice”: French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914’, *The Historical Journal*, vol. 29, no. 1, 109–35; Jain, S. (2024). ‘Civilizing Mission - mission civilisatrice of the European Colonial Powers with a commentary on Islamic Civilizing Mission (Da'wah) Mission Islamique 21st Century’, August 15, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4935203> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4935203>

<sup>51</sup> Mourouga, E. (2023) ‘The Code de l'Indigénat and Colonial Management in Algeria (1865-1944): Hierarchy, Ethnic Division, and Politicisation of Identity’, *The Beacon Journal*, 2023 Edition, 29-38.

<sup>52</sup> Borges Coelho, J.P. (2002). ‘African Troops in the Portuguese Colonial Army, 1961-1974:

echoed in contemporary counterterrorism. While the discourse of securitization measures was amplified after 9/11, its underlying logics have been in effect for centuries prior.

Spanish and Dutch colonial regimes enforced rigid racial classifications through legal codes and administrative divisions, from the Spanish *casta* system<sup>53</sup> to Dutch population categories<sup>54</sup> that structured social and economic control. Racialized security measures justified forced labor, disciplined mobility, and policed markets. These classifications and violently categorical structures built a fundamental ‘other.’ Creating and reinforcing this notion of the ‘other’ is essential to the practice of securitization, you must have a threat if you need to secure yourself. Modern incarnations of these mechanisms, although technologically evolved, preserve these core functions.

Looking at postcolonial policing and immigration enforcement in urban encounters between police officers and Afghan and Bengali migrants in urban Pakistan, Waseem has analyzed how racially securitized discourses and colonial institutional legacies shape contemporary police practice. Prejudiced security policies enable expansions in police power without addressing structural inequalities within the institution, structures and practices of policing.<sup>55</sup> The critique of counter-terrorism laws in post-colonial states demands a closer examination of the governing logics and epistemologies of European colonialism.<sup>56</sup>

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Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique’, *Portuguese Studies Review* 10 (1), 129-50. [https://www.ces.uc.pt/estilacos\\_do\\_imperio/comprometidos/media/African%20Troops%20in%20the%20Portuguese%20Colonial%20Army.pdf](https://www.ces.uc.pt/estilacos_do_imperio/comprometidos/media/African%20Troops%20in%20the%20Portuguese%20Colonial%20Army.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Ocaña Dessen, L. (2025). ‘Cuadros de Casta: A Pseudo-Scientific Means of Control and Racial Taxonomy in Colonial Mexico’, Young Historians Conference, 20.

<sup>54</sup> Dehmoune, A. (2016). ‘The Dutch: The Framers of Racial Superiority in South Africa’. *Revue Traduction et Langues* 15(2), 47-54; Cribb, R. (2010). ‘Legal Pluralism and Criminal Law in the Dutch Colonial Order’, *Indonesia*, no. 90 (2010): 47–66.

<sup>55</sup> Waseem, Z. (2022). ‘‘It’s like crossing a border everyday’: Police-migrant encounters in a postcolonial city’. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 44(8), 1716–1732; Waseem, Z. (2023). ‘A postcolonial condition of policing? Exploring policing and social movements in Pakistan and Nigeria’ in Aliverti, A., Aas, S.K., Da Costa, I.B.G., Galtung, S.M., Grewal, A.S.M., Løvlie, J.T.K. & Nilsen, P.N.T. (Eds.) *Decolonizing the criminal question: Colonial legacies, contemporary problems*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>56</sup> Finden, A., & Dutta, S. (2024). ‘Counterterrorism, political anxiety and legitimacy in postcolonial India and Egypt’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 17(2), 176–200.



Sociologists, criminologists, feminists and international relations scholars have critiqued predominant securitization theory for entrenching the colonial and racist ideologies that continue to operate in post-colonial and neocolonial states, with the Global North having hegemony over which nation states can be characterized as insecure and in need of foreign intervention. In particular, such critiques have pointed out how racist and imperialistic the notion of ‘normal politics’ is. Predominant securitization theory based in the Global North defines ‘normal politics’ as ‘reasoned’ and ‘civilized’ dialogue, and securitization as regressing into an ‘uncivilized’ state of nature; this discourse reinforces racial supremacy. White nations are seen to be the normal state of affairs and African countries are deemed to be either in need of securitization or already considered securitized.<sup>57</sup> Such a methodologically and normatively White framework that locates progress towards ‘normal politics’ and de-securitization centres becoming like the Global North as the moral imperative.<sup>58</sup>

Acknowledging the racial, colonial and heteropatriarchal logics of securitization is paramount to shaping our critiques of contemporary securitization projects and determining whether securitization can ever be redeemed as a world-making process or rightly identified as a form of structural violence.

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<sup>57</sup> Howell, A., & Richter-Montpetit, M. (2019). ‘Is securitization theory racist? Civilizationism, methodological whiteness, and antiblack thought in the Copenhagen School’, *Security Dialogue*, 51(1), 3-22.

<sup>58</sup> Howell, A., & Richter-Montpetit, M. (2019). ‘Is securitization theory racist? Civilizationism, methodological whiteness, and antiblack thought in the Copenhagen School’, *Security Dialogue*, 51(1), 3-22.

#### 4. NORMALIZATION OF SECURITIZATION THROUGH LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

This section will explore how various laws, policies and orders – spanning local law enforcement, policing units, border control forces, intelligence agencies, technological companies and regulatory authorities – are used to normalize securitization. States and fundamentalist and fascist actors weaponize legal instruments against activists, journalists, human rights defenders and social justice collectives and organizations to curb and criminalize dissent, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly and collectivization with disparate impacts on refugees, people seeking asylum and immigrants.

#### BITING THE HAND THAT ‘PROTECTS’ YOU: COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES ABOVE ACCOUNTABILITY

Across the world – from democratically elected governments to military regimes – vague, arbitrary and over-broad terms like national security, extremism, public safety, national unity, national stability, territorial integrity etc.<sup>59</sup> are increasingly finding a place in criminal laws. Grouped under ‘counter-terrorism’, they override constitutional rights to due process and legal representation. along with legal safeguards to protect from torture, seek bail, and contest arbitrary arrest, preventive or ‘protective’ pre-trial detention or unduly prolonged detention and incarceration. Activists are frequently subject to extrajudicial killings, extensive surveillance, arbitrary detention, and criminalization of protests and dissent.

In Venezuela, for example, more than 1000 peaceful protestors challenging the election process and outcomes were detained on charges of terrorism, incitement of hatred and incitement

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<sup>59</sup> International Review of the Red Cross (2022). *Counterterrorism policies in the Middle East and North Africa: A regional perspective*, IRRC No. 916-917, <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/counterterrorism-policies-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-916>



of public unrest in 2024.<sup>60</sup> In India, human rights defenders, poets, journalists and lawyers working on caste-based discrimination and violence, labor rights and unionization, and supporting marginalized communities have been under-trial for more than seven years (since 2018). They have been accused of “waging a war against the government of India” as alleged members of a banned Maoist organization, and a grand (and unsubstantiated) conspiracy to kill the Prime Minister, with one tribal rights activist dying in custody due to deprivation of basic healthcare.<sup>61</sup> Since 2016, Cameroon’s authorities have used criminal legal provisions such as ‘inciting revolt’, ‘inviting insurrection’ and ‘endangering national security’ to detain and prosecute journalists and activists.<sup>62</sup> In Argentina, human rights defenders were accused of sedition and ‘resisting’ authority in 2023 while protesting constitutional law reforms impacting Indigenous communities.<sup>63</sup> In Colombia, since 2012, activism is strategically linked to offences related to ‘destabilizing the state’ particularly for human rights defenders advocating for agrarian and rural reform, protesting against mining and energy projects and defending their right to land and protection of territories.<sup>64</sup> In Egypt, the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 94 of 2015 and the Terrorist Entities Law No. 8 of 2015 are being systemically used to harass, detain and arrest activists (particularly political opposition and

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<sup>60</sup> Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2025). *Venezuela: Serious human rights violations in connection with the elections*, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/2025/report-venezuela-serioushrr-violations-connections-elections.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Amnesty International (2022). *Bhima Koregaon 16*, Amnesty International, 10 December, <https://amnesty-indien.de/bhima-koregaon-16/>

<sup>62</sup> Amnesty International (2022). *Cameroon: More than a hundred detainees from Anglophone regions and opposition party languishing in jail for speaking out*, Amnesty International, 24 January, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/01/cameroon-more-than-a-hundred-detainees-from-anglophone/>

<sup>63</sup> P. 89, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2025). *Third Report: Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas*, 15 April, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/2025/Third-Regional-Report-HRD.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> P.89, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2025). *Third Report: Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas*, 15 April, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/2025/Third-Regional-Report-HRD.pdf>; Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos (2019). *Criminalización de la defensa de los derechos humanos en Colombia: La judicialización a Defensores/as de la tierra, el territorio, el medio ambiente y la paz*, [https://www.omct.org/files/2019/12/25637/la\\_judicializacion\\_web\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.omct.org/files/2019/12/25637/la_judicializacion_web_compressed.pdf)

those challenging government policies), freeze their assets and restrict their mobility.<sup>65</sup> In Morocco, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, China and Macau, Russia, Nicaragua, Iran, Uzbekistan and Algeria,<sup>66</sup> unspecific and over-broad definitions of terrorism have led to criminalization of views that question, critique or even simply disagree with the state's policies, especially to stifle civil society and coordinated protests against social welfare policies.<sup>67</sup>

At least 18 countries initially suspended their funding to UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), with the United States (US) and the United Kingdom maintaining their stance,<sup>68</sup> and several Global North countries suspended funding to civil society organizations extending support to Palestinians on unsubstantiated allegations of misuse of funds to support 'terrorist' activities. In blatant crackdowns on freedom of speech and expression, students expressing online solidarity with Palestinians in the US and United Kingdom have been referred to counter-terrorism programs such as Prevent.<sup>69</sup> This monopoly over categorizing what constitutes terrorism is steeped in colonial, racist and Islamophobic logics (intensified institutionally post 9/11 attacks). When this is the basis of defining terrorism, we can see how counterterrorism measures can be used to attack the right to peacefully protest and our freedom of expression. It renders any critical discussion about laws,

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<sup>65</sup> Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (2025). *Egypt: Government's unrelenting criminalization of human rights work through legislation and retaliation detailed in UPR report*, 23 January, <https://cihrs.org/egypt-governments-unrelenting-criminalization-of-human-rights-work-through-legislation-and-retaliation-detailed-in-upr-report/?lang=en>; Human Rights Watch (2025). *Egypt: Rights Defender Charged with Terrorism*, 22 January, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/01/22/egypt-rights-defender-charged-terrorism>

<sup>66</sup> Human Rights Watch (2025). 'Algeria: Events of 2024' in *World Report 2025*, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/algeria>

<sup>67</sup> International Review of the Red Cross (2022). *Counterterrorism policies in the Middle East and North Africa: A regional perspective*, IRRC No. 916-917,

<https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/counterterrorism-policies-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-916>; University of Oxford Faculty of Law (2025). *Transnational Repression of Human Rights Defenders: References, definitions and protections under International Human Rights Law*, [https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/inline-files/OPBP\\_Report%20TNR%20of%20HRDs\\_ISHR\\_1.pdf](https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/inline-files/OPBP_Report%20TNR%20of%20HRDs_ISHR_1.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> Human Rights Watch (2024). *Gaza: US, UK Outliers in Holding Back UNRWA Funding*, 18 July, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/18/gaza-us-uk-outliers-holding-back-unrwa-funding>

<sup>69</sup> Civicus Monitor (2024). *People Power Under Attack 2024*, Civicus, <https://civicusmonitor.contentfiles.net/media/documents/GlobalFindings2024.EN.pdf>



policies and practices that claim to ‘protect’ you as suspect; you are deemed unpatriotic, undeserving of state benevolence, and can face terrorism charges.<sup>70</sup>

## TYING OUR HANDS BEHIND OUR BACKS: TARGETING CIVIL SOCIETY

Citing threats of foreign interference in domestic policy-making and anti-national propaganda, at present, at least 50 countries have enacted laws and policies<sup>71</sup> to monitor the registration of non-profit organizations, their funding, activities, reporting, and particularly public campaigns and engagement around policies that do not further the state’s narratives.

For instance, a study documenting the securitization of civic space in Uganda, Mozambique, Eswatini, Tanzania, Kenya, and Zimbabwe demonstrated a pattern of branding protestors as ‘enemies of the state’; financial sanctions against non-profit organizations including freezing of assets and cancellation of registrations; and limiting public meetings and protests, citing national security and terrorism concerns.<sup>72</sup>

Popularly known as ‘foreign agent’ laws, these types of laws enable excessive government oversight (over NGOs, contrary to their purpose), burdensome reporting and registration requirements, and form the basis of suspending or cancelling the registration of organizations. Targeted organizations are often providing immediate relief and crisis support, supporting community-led advocacy and campaigning and challenging the systemic oppression of

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<sup>70</sup> Browne, B. C., Weizman, E., & Matchain, J. (2025). ‘Unpacking the crackdown on Palestine solidarity activism in the UK in a post-7 October reality’, *Third World Quarterly*, 1–18, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2025.2484796>

<sup>71</sup> Amnesty International (2019). *Laws designed to silence: The global crackdown on civil society organizations*, 21 February, Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act30/9647/2019/en/>

<sup>72</sup> Civic Advisory Hub, Defenders Protection Initiative and Spaces for Change (2024). *Sub-Saharan Africa Civil Society CFT-Conference 2024 Report: Together, Countering Financing of Terrorism (CFT) while Safeguarding CivicSpace in Sub-Saharan Africa*, <https://fatfplatform.org/assets/CFT-Conference-Report-v5.pdf>

marginalized communities. These types of laws also play a discursive role in shaping narratives, for example, that civil society does not deserve constitutional rights protections because they serve foreign interests, i.e., anyone in disagreement with the state is anti-state and cannot be trusted with serving society.

Russia had instituted such a law in 2012, which formed the blueprint for similar laws across far-ranging jurisdictions including El Salvador, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Nicaragua.<sup>73</sup> Such laws target groups receiving foreign funding and engaging in ‘political activity’ (deliberately ambiguous) by compelling them to register as ‘foreign agents’, ‘foreign representatives’ or as ‘organizations serving the interests of foreign power.’<sup>74</sup> Such laws not only legalize clampdowns on rights-based activism and advocacy within states, but criminalize cross-border solidarity and transnational efforts to challenge fundamentalisms and fascisms.

The labelling of human rights defenders, students, activists, and journalists as ‘economic terrorists’, ‘pseudo-defenders’, ‘defenders of criminals’, ‘enemies of the State’, ‘traitors’, ‘subversives’, and most importantly – ‘criminals’<sup>75</sup> has a chilling effect on critical inquiry, dissent and activism, while solidifying public support for a state that is simultaneously all-powerful and perpetually vulnerable to attack. The use of legal machinery to criminalize is often accompanied with state-sponsored smear and hate campaigns facilitated by Big Tech companies as was seen in numerous countries 2022 onwards including Honduras, Peru and Mexico where human rights defenders were attacked as ‘paedophiles’, ‘guerrillas’ and ‘terrorists’.<sup>76</sup> In 2023-2024, feminist and LGBTQI+ activists in Thailand were surveilled using Pegasus and targeted by misogynistic,

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<sup>73</sup> Pousadela. I.M. (2025). *Cutting civil society's lifeline: The global spread of foreign agents laws*, Civicus, [https://civicus.org/downloads/Foreign-agents-laws-report\\_EN.pdf](https://civicus.org/downloads/Foreign-agents-laws-report_EN.pdf)

<sup>74</sup> Human Rights Watch (2024). *Foreign Agent Laws in the Authoritarian Playbook*, 19 September, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/19/foreign-agent-laws-authoritarian-playbook>; Open Society Foundations (2024). *The Troubling March of "Foreign Agents" Laws*, Open Society Foundations, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/the-troubling-march-of-foreign-agents-laws>

<sup>75</sup> Pp. 102-103, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2025). *Third Report: Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas*, 15 April, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/2025/Third-Regional-Report-HRD.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> Pp. 102-103, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2025). *Third Report: Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas*, 15 April, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/2025/Third-Regional-Report-HRD.pdf>



transphobic and homophobic coordinated online campaigns.<sup>77</sup> Smear campaigns against civil society organizations are often promoted, enabled or supported by the state, especially those that receive visibility in state-controlled media platforms.<sup>78</sup>

Whether the regime is democratic or ‘undemocratic’, secular or with a state-religion, colonial or postcolonial, we can see common aspects of the ‘security playbook’<sup>79</sup> at play. The use of counter-terrorism laws to target any form of speech and action that opposes state policy has been so prevalent that even in the absence of a ‘foreign’ threat, states continue to expand, consolidate and prolong the use of ‘special’ laws in everyday situations. Pre-emptive security measures enable more securitization and are harder to contest in the absence of public information about what the ‘threat’ even is.

In 2024, the most common charges instituted against human rights defenders were defamation, national security or sedition-related charges, public order and assembly-related charges, and terrorism-related charges.<sup>80</sup>

By criminalizing civil society, securitization suppresses counter-narratives based on marginalized communities lived experiences, and states can continue to evade accountability and

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<sup>77</sup> Amnesty International Thailand (2024). *State-Backed Digital Violence Used to Silence Women and LGBTI Activists*, Amnesty International, 23 May 2024.

<sup>78</sup> Mwangi, O. G. (2021). ‘The securitization of civil society organizations, Islamism, and counter-terrorism in Kenya: A case study of MUHURI and HAKI Africa’, in Romaniuk S.N. & Thaddues Njoku, E. (eds.), *Counter-terrorism and civil society: Post-9/11 progress and challenges* (pp. 204–215). Manchester University Press.

<sup>79</sup> Sullivan, G. and Jones, C. (2022). *Is the global counter-terrorism agenda shrinking civic space?* Funders Initiative for Civil Society, <https://www.fundersinitiativeforcivilsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Is-CT-shrinking-civic-space-FICS-May-2022.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> Front Line Defenders (2025). *Global Analysis 2024/25*, 6 May, Front Line Defenders, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/global-analysis-202425>

transparency. Once this is normalized, there is no going back. Securitization is not exceptional; it becomes the new normal. It is our collective endeavor to ensure that we resist this.

## ENEMIES OF DEVELOPMENT

Securitization mutates easily: when states and corporations need access to land and resources, ‘development’ becomes the referent object, and communities resisting extraction are recast as threats. Environmental and Indigenous activism also increasingly face securitization by state actors because of capitalist and neo-colonial interests over land and resources. A 2025 report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, for example, recorded how in Antigua and Barbuda, Ecuador, Honduras and Peru, states and fundamentalist and fascist actors instigate smear campaigns, justify surveillance and threaten the lives of environmental, land and territory defenders (majorly belonging to Indigenous communities) by labelling them anti-development, enemies of development and ‘economic terrorists’.<sup>81</sup> In 2018, the Chilean state criminalized the Indigenous Mapuche community and their leaders for their work as environmental defenders, characterizing them as ‘internal enemies’ as their land continues to be illegally occupied and mined for resources.<sup>82</sup> In Mexico and Ecuador, human rights defenders exposing legal violations and malpractices by corporations extracting resources, and opposing extractivist mining projects are similarly criminalized under vague charges.<sup>83</sup> In Cambodia, activists from civil society organizations opposing corporate projects initiated without prior community consultations with disastrous environmental impacts were arrested in 2024 for receiving funding from ‘terrorist sources’ with an aim to ‘terrorize Cambodia’s peace’.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> P. 105, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2025). *Third Report: Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas*, 15 April, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights,

<https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/2025/Third-Regional-Report-HRD.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> Amnesty International (2018). *The criminalization of Indigenous leaders in Chile*, 23 April, Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/04/la-criminalizacion-de-lideres-de-pueblos-indigenas-en-chile/>;

Eichler, J. & Barnier-Khawam, P. (2021). ‘Criminalization, Securitization and other Forms of Illegalizing Indigenous Contestations in Chile: Responses from Constitutional Law and Inter-American Jurisprudence on Mapuche People’s Rights’, *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 13(2), July 2021, 357–385.

<sup>83</sup> P. 25, Front Line Defenders (2025). *Global Analysis 2024/25*, 6 May, Front Line Defenders, [https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/1609\\_fld\\_ga24-5\\_output.pdf](https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/1609_fld_ga24-5_output.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> P. 26, Front Line Defenders (2025). *Global Analysis 2024/25*, 6 May, Front Line Defenders, [https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/1609\\_fld\\_ga24-5\\_output.pdf](https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/1609_fld_ga24-5_output.pdf)



These practices are reminiscent of how colonial powers enacted counterinsurgency practices to combat resistance, framing threats to economic hegemony as racialized collective criminality. In India, Bastar, a forest, mineral and resources rich state, has been one of the most militarized regions in the country to eliminate Naxalism – an armed guerrilla movement by locals inspired by Maoist ideology – and pave the way for corporate capture. Since more than two decades, Adivasi community leaders, locals, journalists and lawyers speaking against militarization and corporatization of the region and its environment have been criminalized and vilified under special laws relating to terrorism such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of India (1967).<sup>85</sup>

#### REDEFINING CITIZENSHIP, REDRAWING BORDERS AND REVILING ‘OUTSIDERS’

As we can see, securitization does not revolve around ‘threats’ that are imminent or urgent. Through securitization, states actively produce ‘threats’ through political, legal, and discursive practices that determine who is protected and who is rendered disposable. Citizenship is most critical here: citizenship constitutes who is eligible to claim their rights under the state-based system, and as such, those who are rendered disposable are often those who are not considered citizens, whether formally or informally. This group often includes racialized or gendered groups, ethnic or religious minorities, political dissidents, activists, organizers, immigrants, asylum seekers, and even those experiencing impoverishment.

Securitization and border externalization manifest geographically in diverse ways. Examples include the EU funding of migration control in multiple African countries such as

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<sup>85</sup> Front Line Defenders (2024). *Arrest and crackdown against human rights defenders in Bastar District, Chhattisgarh State, campaigning against corporatization and militarization*, Front Line Defenders, 15 May, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/zh-hans/node/8431>; Sundar, N. (2019). *The Burning Forest: India's War Against the Maoists*; pp. 71-73, Front Line Defenders (2025). *Global Analysis 2024/25*, 6 May, Front Line Defenders, [https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/1609\\_fld\\_ga24-5\\_output.pdf](https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/1609_fld_ga24-5_output.pdf)

Somalia, Ethiopia, Libya and Niger<sup>86</sup> (to prevent entry of African migrants into Fortress Europe by instituting development projects); and the militarized borders between Afghanistan and Pakistan<sup>87</sup> and India and Bangladesh.<sup>88</sup> Australia's offshore detention centers in Nauru and Papua New Guinea,<sup>89</sup> and the United States' outsourcing of border enforcement to Mexico and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Removal Operations third-country deportation programs<sup>90</sup> illustrate how states externalize border control through regional agreements, physical barriers, and detention practices beyond their own territories.

The increasing securitization of migration, popularly known as the migration-security nexus, has led to the conflation of immigration enforcement and criminal legal systems, a process termed 'crimmigration.'<sup>91</sup> This securitization enables states and fundamentalist and fascist actors to frame migration as inherently violent and threatening. It is 'successful' when a large portion of society (the audience) leans into manufactured panic around racialized fear of the 'other' or the 'outsider'.<sup>92</sup> States invest substantial time, energy and resources to fuel anxieties about demographic change and declining birth rates, instigating fears that legitimize and intensify state violence and exclusion against marginalized groups. This violence deepens social crises, reinforcing the very anxieties that justify it, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of fear and

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<sup>86</sup> Oxfam International (2020). *The EU Trust Fund for Africa: Trapped between aid policy and migration politics*, Oxfam GB, <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620936/bp-eu-trust-fund-africa-migration-politics-300120-en.pdf?sequence=1#page=8&zoom=auto,-202,671>

<sup>87</sup> Daas, R. & Basit, A. (2025). *Nascent Adoption: Emerging Tech Trends by Terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 18 June, Global Network on Extremism and Technology, <https://gnet-research.org/2025/06/18/nascent-adoption-emerging-tech-trends-by-terrorists-in-afghanistan-and-pakistan/>

<sup>88</sup> Liang, L. (2025). *India equips Border Security Force at Bangladeshi border with biometrics scanners*, 30 July, Biometricupdate.com, <https://www.biometricupdate.com/202507/india-equips-border-security-force-at-bangladeshi-border-with-biometrics-scanners>

<sup>89</sup> Human Rights Law Centre (n.d.). *Timeline: Offshore detention*, Human Rights Law Centre, <https://www.hrlc.org.au/explainers/timeline-offshore-detention/>

<sup>90</sup> Ruiz Soto, A.G. (2025). *A New Era of Immigration Enforcement Unfolds in the U.S. Interior and at the Border under Trump 2.0*, October 2025, Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/new-era-enforcement-trump-2>

<sup>91</sup> Ajil, A., Jendly, M., & Mas, C. C. (2020). 'Yes, security, there is security. But other than that, nothing.': An empirical inquiry into the 'everyday (in)security' of Syrian and Iraqi urban refugees in Jordan', *British Journal of Criminology*, 60(6), 1395–1415.

<sup>92</sup> Bigo, D. (2002). 'Security and immigration: Toward a critique of the governmentality of unease', *Alternatives*, 27(1\_suppl), 63–92.



repression. In conjunction with fundamentalist and fascist movements, states portray immigrants as threats to social security, labor markets, and national sovereignty: a construction reinforced by surveillance, political discourse, and restrictive policies. Instead of focusing on the neoliberal and capitalist policies that actively dismantle the notion of a welfare state, romanticize gig economies and poor working conditions and increase the cost of living to prohibitive heights, our attention is carefully and strategically misdirected towards communities who are the most vulnerable, i.e., refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants.

Contemporary security and immigration policies redeploy colonial logics to racialize and criminalize refugees and internally displaced persons. For instance, in the name of combatting terrorism, the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan of Pakistan targets undocumented Afghan refugees through a combination of legal restrictions, police abuse, extortion, deportations, and control over humanitarian support, and it even affects those who were formerly guaranteed legal status.<sup>93</sup> In what has been termed the 'biggest mass disenfranchisement of the 21st century',<sup>94</sup> the National Register of Citizens, a flawed and discriminatory citizenship verification process in Assam (a state in India), excluded over 1.9 million people, including many who had lived in India for years, in some cases for their entire lives. Those excluded must prove their citizenship through the Foreigners Tribunals. The Bangladesh state securitizes Rohingya Muslims who fled genocide in Myanmar and escaped to Bangladesh, citing concerns of being recruited by Islamist militant

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<sup>93</sup> Farani, M. N. (2020). 'Migration-security nexus: A case of Afghan refugees in Pakistan after 9/11', [PhD thesis submitted to the University of Punjab in fulfilment of the requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations]. University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan; Al Jazeera. (2025). *Pakistan confirms its expulsion of more than 80,000 Afghans since April*, Al Jazeera, 18 April, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/18/over-80000-afghans-expelled-from-pakistan-as-deadline-nears](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/18/over-80000-afghans-expelled-from-pakistan-as-deadline-nears); Amnesty International (2025). '*Pakistan: Opaque Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan targeting Afghan refugees must be withdrawn*', Amnesty International, 26 March, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/03/opaque-illegal-foreigners-repatriation-plan-targeting-afghan-refugees-must-be-withdrawn/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/03/opaque-illegal-foreigners-repatriation-plan-targeting-afghan-refugees-must-be-withdrawn/)

<sup>94</sup> Joint Statement (2019). *The biggest mass-disenfranchisement of the 21st Century*, <https://files.institutesi.org/cso-joint-statement-on-assam-nrc.pdf>; Sharma, C. (2024). 'National register of citizens and citizenship amendment act 2019: following the logic of citizenship securitization in India', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 50(19), 4850–4866.

groups, causing demographic change and detrimentally impacting the environment.<sup>95</sup> The securitization of refugees included restrictions on movements, confiscation of mobile phones, ban of high-speed mobile internet, installation of barbed wire fences around the camps, increased surveillance, the expulsion of some NGOs, and reports of increasing human rights violations of refugees by Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies.<sup>96</sup>

Securitization of migration builds on xenophobic, racist and colonial narratives and amplifies them, especially in online discourse.<sup>97</sup> ‘Insiders’ are assured of security, because the danger is located in ‘outsiders’. This was vividly evidenced in the ‘refugee crises’ claimed by the European Union (for more than 15 years and still ongoing) where vulnerable populations from South-West Asia and North Africa escaping conflict zones, wars, armed insurrections and debilitating social crises risked their lives to try to seek safety and ironically, ‘security’.<sup>98</sup>

In an irrevocably globalized world, securitization of migration will remain uncontested unless we address why it has become normalized. Such strategies have worked because of the investments of politicians and private corporations in controlling populations within physical boundaries. By asking deeper questions that address the structural causes behind mass migration and politicizing the lack of stable, safe and healthy living environments, we can move from blaming migrants and refugees for societal issues to holding people and systems in power accountable. This section discussed how borders and citizenship are securitized projects. In the next section, we highlight how Big Tech is not a neutral tool but an active enabler and beneficiary of securitization’s violence.

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<sup>95</sup> Rana, M.S., & Riaz, A. (2022). ‘Securitization of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 58(7), 1274–1290.

<sup>96</sup> Human Rights Watch (2023). *Bangladesh: Spiraling violence against Rohingya refugees*, Human Rights Watch, 13 July, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/07/13/bangladesh-spiraling-violence-against-rohingya-refugees>

<sup>97</sup> D'Appollonia, A. (2012). *Frontiers of Fear: Immigration and Insecurity in the United States and Europe*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; D'Appollonia, A. (2017). ‘Xenophobia, Racism and Securitization of Immigration’, in Bourbeau, P. (ed.) *Handbook on Migration and Security*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishers, 252–72.

<sup>98</sup> Huysmans, J. (2000). ‘The European Union and the securitization of migration’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 38(5) pp. 751–777; D'Appollonia A. (2017). ‘Xenophobia, Racism and Securitization of Immigration’, in Bourbeau, P. (ed.) *Handbook on Migration and Security*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishers, 252–72.



## 5. THE ENABLER, BENEFACTOR AND DEFENDER: SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON BIG TECH

This section shifts the lens from state-centred narratives to the infrastructure that makes them scalable: Big Tech does not merely assist securitization; it profits from, operationalizes, and normalizes it across borders. The tactics used by securitizing states are transnational and rely heavily on technology created for this purpose. This includes advanced surveillance, categorizing softwares, militarized technologies, and algorithmically defined risk assessments that cross borders and become embedded within local governance. The fusion of public and private interests forms sprawling security assemblages that extend state power through surveillance, restrictions on NGOs, and policing of humanitarian aid.

### TECHNO-SECURITIZATION IN POLICING

Securitization strategies developed in Global North contexts, immigration enforcement tactics, predictive policing, and risk assessment algorithms have diffused transnationally to postcolonial states across Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA), South Asia, and Southeast Asia. This diffusion occurs through technology transfers, consulting services, training programs, and legal frameworks that local governments adapt. Once institutionalized, these tools reinforce existing social hierarchies and enable preemptive – even extrajudicial – state violence. In the past two decades, the Kenyan state has increasingly partnered with the US in efforts to respond to the Somali militant group Al-Shabaab. The US-trained Anti-Terror Police Unit (ATPU), a plain-

clothed death squad, functions as a ‘phantom-like power,’ committing invasive, deadly police tactics, including surveillance, arbitrary arrests, and disappearances.<sup>99</sup>

Colonial and fascist inheritances enable states to share militarized technologies of securitization. For instance, India, the US, and Israel share racist, ethno-nationalist and far-right ideologies that are embedded in their securitization processes of surveillance, spyware, policing, carcerality, and framing of minority or dissenting groups as terrorists. Christian nationalism, Zionism, and Hindu nationalism follow similar playbooks in their approaches to violent securitization. In Palestine, Israeli legal frameworks and military orders classify entire populations as potential threats, legitimizing surveillance, invasive checkpoints, and unduly broad restrictions on mobility,<sup>100</sup> which enable the theft of land, genocide, and death. Palestine has been used as a laboratory for Israeli weapons and border technology sold across the world.<sup>101</sup> India has adapted such violent military and securitization tactics and deployed them in the occupied lands of Kashmir.<sup>102</sup>

Mass surveillance infrastructure for securitization is intricately designed “where communities are not only exposed to a tremendous amount of constant monitoring, but also serves as a laboratory where law enforcement agencies at all levels of government test new technologies”.<sup>103</sup> The integration of technological advancements in everyday policing and

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<sup>99</sup> Al-Bulushi, S. (2024). *War-Making as Worldmaking: Kenya, the United States, and the War on Terror*, Stanford University Press, 24 November, <https://www.sup.org/books/politics/war-making-worldmaking/excerpt/introduction-excerpt>

<sup>100</sup> Tamleh Center (2023). *Tamleh Center issues a report on Israel's Surveillance Industry and Its Impact on Human Rights*, 19 December, <https://tamleh.org/post/tamleh-center-issues-a-report-on-israel-s-surveillance-industry-and-its-impact-on-human-rights>

<sup>101</sup> Al Jazeera (2025). *'The Palestine Laboratory' exposes Israel's export of unique systems of control and surveillance technology around the world*, Al Jazeera, 29 January,

<https://network.aljazeera.net/en/press-releases/%E2%80%98-palestine-laboratory%E2%80%99-exposes-israel%E2%80%99s-export-unique-systems-control-and>

<sup>102</sup> Asif Khan, M. (2025). *India's sinister alliance with Israel*, The Electronic Intifada, 7 June, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/indias-sinister-alliance-israel/50730>

<sup>103</sup> Guariglia, M., Quintin, C. & Maas, D. (2024). *Add Bluetooth to the Long List of Border Surveillance Technologies*, Electronic Frontier Foundation, 6 May, <https://www EFF.org/deeplinks/2024/05/add-bluetooth-long-list-border-surveillance-technologies>



securitization is also referred to as ‘techno-securitization.’<sup>104</sup> A glaring example is how states heavily invest in consolidating technology at border checkpoints through biometric databases, drone surveillance, satellites and automated weapons.<sup>105</sup>

Another notable phenomenon is the ‘Israelization of policing’, describing how Israeli military and police tactics and technologies transfer to law enforcement agencies globally. In Latin America, at the time the Somoza regime was overthrown in the late 1970s, Israel was supplying 98% of Nicaragua’s total military imports.<sup>106</sup> During this time, Israel was a leading supplier of arms to Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, and Guatemala, as well as supplying many other Latin American countries.<sup>107</sup> Israel has sold technologies of surveillance, genocide and ethnic cleansing to regimes in Mexico, Rwanda, the Balkans, Sri Lanka, Haiti, as well as South Africa.<sup>108</sup> Israel continues to train special forces and supply surveillance equipment and arms globally to genocidal regimes in Myanmar<sup>109</sup> and South Sudan.<sup>110</sup>

Since the 1990s, and especially as an integral part of the ‘war on terror’, thousands of United States’ officers have trained in Israel, where counterterrorism methods involving

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<sup>104</sup> Petit, P. (2020). ‘‘Everywhere Surveillance’’: Global Surveillance Regimes as Techno-Securitization’, *Science as Culture*, 29(1), 30–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09505431.2019.1586866>

<sup>105</sup> Marin, L. (2016). ‘The Humanitarian Drone and the Borders. Unravelling the Rationales Underlying the Deployment of Drones in Border Surveillance’, in Custers, B. (ed.) *The Future of Drone Use*, TMC Asser Press.

<sup>106</sup> Hooglund, E. (n.d.). *Israel’s arms exports: Proxy merchant for the U.S.*, American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee Background Paper #8, [https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC16\\_scans/16\\_ADC\\_IsraelArmExports.pdf](https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC16_scans/16_ADC_IsraelArmExports.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> Hooglund, E. (n.d.). *Israel’s arms exports: Proxy merchant for the U.S.*, American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee Background Paper #8, [https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC16\\_scans/16\\_ADC\\_IsraelArmExports.pdf](https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC16_scans/16_ADC_IsraelArmExports.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> Cook, J. (2017). *Israel maintains robust arms trade with rogue regimes*, Al Jazeera, 23 October, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/23/israel-maintains-robust-arms-trade-with-rogue-regimes>

<sup>109</sup> Amoroso, G. (2017). *Israel's (In)Security Business*, Istituto Affari Internazionali, 25 November, <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/c05/israels-insecurity-business>

<sup>110</sup> Arneson, B. & Cinamon, J. (2024). *Green Horizon: Fueling the Conflict in South Sudan*, Corruption Tracker, 6 February, <https://corruption-tracker.org/case/green-horizon-fueling-the-conflict-in-south-sudan>

militarized crowd control, checkpoints, and mass surveillance are standard.<sup>111</sup> These exchanges solidified the militarization of policing and disproportionately targeted marginalized communities in the name of securitization.<sup>112</sup>

## SURVEILLANCE AS THE BEDROCK OF SECURITIZATION

Since securitization narratives claim to pre-empt ‘threats’, surveillance is crucial for ‘protecting’ society. It is also necessary for data extraction and profit maximization for Big Tech, private corporations and billionaires.

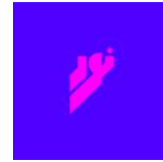
Surveillance includes tracking and monitoring movements, collating data, retaining and aggregating data, creating categories and profiling. This is done through biometric databases, citizen registries, spyware, artificial intelligence, armed drones, sensors, and smart barriers. Big Tech harvests information on human populations and translates it into data to be analyzed, stored, and sold; this extraction is both highly profitable and highly racialized due to the embedded biases in these algorithms. Nothing is private and everything is recorded. Human rights experts have cautioned against how counterterrorism infrastructures are using AI algorithms to aggregate and analyze ‘personal’ and ‘sensitive’ data including arrest and criminal records, associations with family members, friends and colleagues, patterns of crime and policing, social media networks and posts, communications data, travel information, employment records and personal information held in government databases for social, health, education and other services, when more often than not, states do not have adequate and rights-based data protection policies and laws.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>Amnesty International (2016). *With Whom are Many U.S. Police Departments Training? With a Chronic Human Rights Violator - Israel*, Amnesty International, 25 August, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/blog/with-whom-are-many-u-s-police-departments-training-with-a-chronic-human-rights-violator-israel/>

<sup>112</sup> Gadzo, M. (2020). *How the US and Israel exchange tactics in violence and control*, Al Jazeera, 12 June, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/12/how-the-us-and-israel-exchange-tactics-in-violence-and-control>

<sup>113</sup> Saul, B. (2025). *Governing Surveillance in the Counterterrorism Era: Legal Architectures and Global Perspectives*, [speech by United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism], Centre for Law as Protection, Deakin University, 24 November, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/terrorism/sr/activities/sr-ct-ai-remarks-24-11-2025.pdf>



The Internet of Things has now transformed into the Internet of Bodies. The Internet of Bodies “is an ecosystem of internet-connected devices that monitor the human body and collect personal biometric data.”<sup>114</sup> Despite its publicly promoted, neutral offering of revolutionized medical treatments, productivity, convenience, and ease, the Internet of Bodies poses human rights violations and privacy risks. Information always plays an essential role in the securitization of resources and power; this role has now only intensified through the marriage of surveillance and capitalism.

The exploitation of Data Bodies demonstrates the heightened surveillance of the everyday individual, enabling intensified policing and punishment which is unregulated and mostly coercive, non-consensual and involuntary. The shift from the physical to the data body marks a new phase of securitization in which Big Tech reconfigures colonial logics into neocolonialism. A data body strips the humanness of an individual and transforms them into digitized entities, or a body made of data, constructed from data gathered with or without their informed consent.<sup>115</sup> This transformation enables intensified forms of monitoring, policing, and punishment, especially for those already systemically marginalized. Together, these processes reveal a modern ecosystem of securitization that is largely untraceable and unaccountable.

Algorithms grounded in racial and colonial logics anticipate risks, manage perceived threats, and secure economic interests. For example, place- and people-based predictive policing technology, built on racialized algorithm bias, perpetuates racial bias, resulting in the disproportionate surveillance and policing of Black communities.<sup>116</sup> Predictive policing AI

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<sup>114</sup> Matwyshyn, A.M. (2018). ‘The Internet of Bodies’, *William & Mary Law Review*, (61)1, 1 January, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3452891](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3452891); Lee, M. (2022). *What is the Internet of Bodies?*, National Press Foundation, 22 December, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcNtQc9uIa8>

<sup>115</sup> Matwyshyn, A.M. (2018). ‘The Internet of Bodies’, *William & Mary Law Review*, (61)1, 1 January, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3452891](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3452891)

<sup>116</sup> The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (n.d.). *Artificial Intelligence in Predictive Policing Issue Brief*, NAACP, <https://naacp.org/resources/artificial-intelligence-predictive-policing-issue-brief>;

technologies fail at predicting crime, yet succeed at predicting policing due to their self-fulfilling design.<sup>117</sup> Under the current rise of technofascism<sup>118</sup> and the tech oligarchy, private corporations work with the government to build a police state. For example, Clearview AI, a facial recognition company, scrapes billions of faces from the internet to sell data to the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE), fueling America's largest mass deportation in US history.<sup>119</sup> Babel Street sells Babel X, a software used to screen travelers' social media, to Customs and Border Protection (CBP).<sup>120</sup> Palantir, an unaccountable force of mass surveillance, signs Investigative Case Management (ICM) and Falcon Technology contracts with the Department of Homeland Security for products for ICE, enabling integrated, consolidated searches and real-time monitoring of individuals for self-deportation.<sup>121</sup> All three technologies are parts of a larger algorithmic economy. For instance, they were used to target pro-Palestinian student protesters in the US, highlighting violations of rights to equality and non-discrimination, free speech, due process, and privacy.<sup>122</sup>

Both the state and Big Tech work together to invasively and invisibly collect, store, and share data, devising a surveillance apparatus that disproportionately exposes and exploits

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Pruss, D., Pullen-Blasnik, H., Stevens, N., Rahman, S., Belitz, C., Stapleton, L., Dharmaraj, M.G., Aizeki, M., Molnar, P., Pinch, A., Ryan, N., Lima, T., Widder, D.G., Tiwari, A., Xīnzhèn Zhǎngsūn Brown, L., Sexton, J.S. & Nunes, P. (2024). *Prediction and Punishment: Critical Report on Carceral AI*, 1 November, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=5017321](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5017321); American Civil Liberties Union (2024). *Comment on Law Enforcement Agencies' Use of Facial Recognition Technology, Other Technologies Using Biometric Information, and Predictive Algorithms (Executive Order 14074, Section 13(e))*, ACLU, 19 January, <https://assets.aclu.org/live/uploads/2024/01/ACLU-Comment-re-EO-14074-Sec-13e-1.19.2024.pdf>

<sup>117</sup> American Civil Liberties Union (2022). *How Automated Decision Systems are used in Policing*, ACLU, 26 December, <https://www.aclu-wa.org/news/ads-policing/>

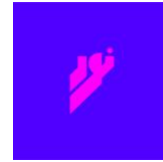
<sup>118</sup> Saito, K. & Sasaki, R. (2025). 'Rentier capitalism, technofascism and the destruction of the common', *Area Development and Policy*, 1–15, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23792949.2025.2557911>

<sup>119</sup> Campaign Zero (2025). *The Private Companies Quietly Building a Police State*, Campaign Zero, 2 October, <https://campaignzero.org/the-private-companies-quietly-building-a-police-state/>

<sup>120</sup> Cox, J. (2023). *Homeland Security Uses AI Tool to Analyze Social Media of U.S. Citizens and Refugees*, Vice, 17 May, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/dhs-uses-ai-tool-babel-x-babel-street-social-media-citizens-refugees/>

<sup>121</sup> Amnesty International (n.d.). *Palantir Technologies contracts raise human rights concerns before NYSE direct listing*, Amnesty International, <https://amnesty.org.nz/palantir-technologies-contracts-raise-human-rights-concerns-nyse-direct-listing/>

<sup>122</sup> Amnesty International (2025). *USA/Global: Tech made by Palantir and Babel Street pose surveillance threats to pro-Palestine student protestors & migrants*, Amnesty International, 21 August, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/08/usa-global-tech-made-by-palantir-and-babel-street-pose-surveillance-threats-to-pro-palestine-student-protestors-migrants/>



marginalized communities while censoring dissent against genocide, state sponsored violence, and other human rights abuses. We saw this with Facebook’s promotion of violence in the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar,<sup>123</sup> and now Meta’s enabling of anti-Palestinian narratives during the genocide in Gaza.<sup>124</sup> In authoritarian but also democratic regimes, states either ask Big Tech or compel smaller technology companies to censor ‘anti-national’ viewpoints, delete certain accounts, selectively remove or highlight political content and even impose blanket and targeted internet shutdowns with no due notice,<sup>125</sup> impacting millions of lives.

State and private actors operate through overlapping legal, technological, and informational mechanisms that obscure responsibility and diffuse power. Militarized mechanisms convert perceived threats into actionable targets, with private contractors, tech corporations, weapons manufacturers, and consulting firms such as Alphabet, Meta, Lockheed Martin, Elbit Systems, McKinsey, and Boston Consulting Group. Together they constitute a modern, state-legitimized security ecosystem whose violence against designated threats is formalized yet largely unregulated. They escape accountability because they are everywhere and simultaneously, nowhere. Actions against designated ‘threats’ occur across borders, institutions, and platforms, often leaving no clear path for redress. This is not a simple exercise of state power, but a dispersed, innovative architecture of control in which violence is endlessly rationalized and accountability is foreclosed by design. Contemporary securitization processes produce a heightened and invasive mode of governance that reinforces itself through every act of repression.

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<sup>123</sup> Amnesty International (2022). *Myanmar: Facebook’s systems promoted violence against Rohingya; Meta owes reparations – new report*, Amnesty International, 29 September, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/09/myanmar-facebook-systems-promoted-violence-against-rohingya-meta-owes-reparations-new-report/>

<sup>124</sup> 7amleh (2025). *New 7amleh Report: Meta’s Role in Amplifying Harmful Content Against Palestinians During Genocide in Gaza*, <https://7amleh.org/post/meta-s-role-during-genocide-en>

<sup>125</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2022). *Internet shutdowns: trends, causes, legal implications and impacts on a range of human rights*, Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/50/55, 13 May, <https://docs.un.org/en/a/hrc/50/55>

## 6. SECURITIZATION AS A RIBBON-TIED GIFT FROM US TO US

Discursive practices are central to the securitization of development, especially for digital tools advertised as instruments of social good while operating as mechanisms of surveillance within a state-endorsed infrastructure of control. The discourse of development and modernization centers on the efficiency and convenience of technology (despite massive gaps in digital access and literacy), portraying systems like artificial intelligence as hallmarks of progress. This, of course, is made simpler when state and corporate-owned media and social media outlets platform and visibilize these narratives, to the exclusion of others.<sup>126</sup>

Projects like Aadhaar in India enable the shift from pillars of public service to near-mandated infrastructure, where data mining and behavioural analysis are hidden.<sup>127</sup> Digitization is sold as an irreplaceable step toward advancement, obscuring how personal data is harvested, sold, and weaponized by the state and private enterprises to surveil and extract information about ‘populations’ being ‘managed’. We are collectively convinced that such surveillance is necessary for securitization, which is also announced as such, with increasingly limited scope for dissent, debate and interrogation. We can and must renounce such seductions and delusions.

### CAN SECURITIZATION BE RECLAIMED BY SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS?

As we have discussed, since securitization is politically seductive, movements can be compelled (by urgency, funding logics, or institutional pressures) into reproducing the very narratives that harm the communities they aim to protect.

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<sup>126</sup> Civic Futures (2023). *The Security Playbook*, <https://civic-futures.org/the-security-playbook/#whatissecurityplaybook>

<sup>127</sup> Thakur, A. & Saini, K. (2018). ‘Selling Aadhaar: What the UIDAI's Advertisements Don't Tell You’, *The Wire*, 23 August, <https://thewire.in/rights/aadhaar-advertisements-identity-citizenship-rights>; Sudhir, K. & Sunder, S. (2020). *What Happens When a Billion Identities Are Digitized?* Yale Insights, 27 March, <https://insights.som.yale.edu/insights/what-happens-when-billion-identities-are-digitized>



Some progressive and social justice movements have at times adopted securitization narratives by framing their struggles within dominant crisis logics, which can inadvertently reinforce the very frameworks of control they seek to dismantle. For instance, the climate justice movement’s emergency rhetoric,<sup>128</sup> while raising urgency, has risked legitimizing technocratic, authoritarian and securitized policy responses that marginalize communities most vulnerable to the ongoing impacts of climate crises. Global North states that blame immigrants for environmental stress can double down on their racist rhetoric, while postcolonial and Global South states turn to militarized solutions for mitigating the effects of climate change through desert warfare and heat-resilient technologies.<sup>129</sup>

Feminist organizations have also tried to frame gender-based violence as a national security agenda<sup>130</sup> or at the forefront of the ‘Women, Peace and Security’ agenda<sup>131</sup> to prioritize the issue, seek funding and stringent inter-governmental action, especially in situations of conflict and humanitarian crises.<sup>132</sup> Evidence shows that securitization of gender-based violence, or in

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<sup>128</sup> Rangelov, I. & Theros, M. (2025). *Climate emergency and the future of civic space: lessons from the war on terror*. Conflict and Civicness Research Group, LSE IDEAS, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

<sup>129</sup> Rangelov, I. & Theros, M. (2025). *Climate emergency and the future of civic space: lessons from the war on terror*. Conflict and Civicness Research Group, LSE IDEAS, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

<sup>130</sup> Hayes, C. (2022). *Why Ending Gender-Based Violence Matters to National Security*, New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, 20 December, <https://newlinesinstitute.org/gender/why-ending-gender-based-violence-matters-to-national-security/>; Gerhardy, E. (2025). *The hidden national security threat: Misogynistic extremism*, The Interpreter, Lowy Institute, 3 March, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/hidden-national-security-threat-misogynistic-extremism>; End Violence Against Women (2024). *VAWG is a national emergency, say police chiefs*, 23 July, <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/vawg-is-a-national-emergency-say-police-chiefs/>

<sup>131</sup> Ní Aoláin, F. (2024). ‘The Rise of Counter-Terrorism and the Demise of Human Rights’, *Emory International Law Review*, 39(1), <https://scholarlycommons.law.emory.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1343&context=eilr>

<sup>132</sup> Hudson, N. F. (2009). Securitizing Women’s Rights and Gender Equality. *Journal of Human Rights*, 8(1), 53–70.

particular, sexual violence, does not address the multi-faceted root causes of such violence,<sup>133</sup> fetishizes sexual violence<sup>134</sup> and paves the way for misguided imperialistic military interventions<sup>135</sup> (such as the infamous ‘rescuing’ of Afghan women from Afghan men by the US).<sup>136</sup> Securitization is rooted in colonial, patriarchal and capitalist logics – it cannot be saved from itself, let alone be effectively used to protect those at the intersections of oppression. It reproduces structural violence, diverts from grassroots interventions, enables criminalization of communities and activists at the forefront of preventing violence and exacerbates polarizing and divisive narratives.

We do not only need to abolish securitization at state levels, but also produce, disseminate and amplify feminist counter-narratives that demonstrate that security is not achieved by the elimination of threats, but by ensuring inclusion and collective well-being.<sup>137</sup>

### WHAT DOES DE-SECURITIZATION LOOK LIKE?

Within securitization theory, de-securitization is a measure to bring back securitized issues within the ‘ordinary public sphere’ to be dealt with according to liberal democratic governance structures.<sup>138</sup> De-securitizing an issue means removing its exceptional status and locating it within

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<sup>133</sup> Santone, G. (2024). *Gender-based violence in conflicts and securitization: problems, justice and a possible solution*, Human Rights Center Antonio Papisca, <https://unipd-centrodirittiumani.it/en/topics/gender-based-violence-in-conflicts-and-securitization-problems-justice-and-a-possible-solution>

<sup>134</sup> Meger, S. (2016). The Fetishization of Sexual Violence in International Security, *International Studies Quarterly*, 60(1), 149–159.

<sup>135</sup> Skovgaard Madsen, S. (2022). *The Securitization of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Against Women and the Myth of Protection in War*, Thesis submitted: Spring 2022, Malmö University Dept. of Global Political Studies Bachelor programme – IR103L. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1690914/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

<sup>136</sup> Azimi, P. (2024). *Decolonizing the Western Perception of Afghan Women: A Feminist Critique*, An Undergraduate Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial fulfillment of University Honors Program Requirements, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Spring 2024, <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1716&context=honorsthesis>

<sup>137</sup> P. 5, Kundnani, A. (2021). *Abolish National Security*, Transnational Institute, 17 June,

<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/abolish-national-security>

<sup>138</sup> Wæver, O. (1995). ‘Securitization and desecuritization’ in Lipschutz, R.D. (ed.), *On security* (pp. 46–87). Columbia University Press; Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner.



‘everyday understanding of politics’.<sup>139</sup> It can include ‘managing’ a security issue such as in the case of minority rights<sup>140</sup> or rejecting identity politics on which security claims for minorities may be based.<sup>141</sup>

For instance, over the last decade, the Scottish Government has consistently framed migrants as “New Scots,” emphasizing their integration, rights, and contributions to the society and economy, moving beyond identity politics that frame them as ‘border threats’. These de-securitizing narratives can be tangibly seen through policies aimed at expanding access to housing, health, education, and political participation for migrants.<sup>142</sup>

Just as much as securitization is a political phenomenon, de-securitization is inherently political.<sup>143</sup> It forces us to reckon with what political beliefs and values we want centered in discourses on migration, the rights of refugees and minorities, climate change, and gender-based violence to name a few. It requires us to go back to the drawing board to assess what we consider to be normal versus exceptional, and confronting the patriarchal, colonial and racist logics of securitization.

De-securitization has primarily been theorized through the lens of what states can do differently – through laws, policies and their institutions. As feminist and progressive social justice

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<sup>139</sup> P. 143, Huysmans, J. (2006). *The politics of insecurity: Fear, migration and asylum in the EU*. Routledge.

<sup>140</sup> Roe, P. (2004). ‘Securitization and Minority Rights: Conditions of Desecuritization’, *Security Dialogue*, 35(3), 279–294.

<sup>141</sup> Jutila, M. (2006). ‘Desecuritizing Minority Rights: Against Determinism’, *Security Dialogue*, 37(2), 167–185.

<sup>142</sup> Paterson, I., Rosher, B. (2025). ‘Wha’s like us? The desecuritisation of migration as ontological security-seeking in Scotland’, *Review of International Studies*, published online by Cambridge University Press, 7 November, [www.cambridge.org/core/journals/review-of-international-studies/article/whas-like-us-the-desecuritisation-of-migration-as-ontological-securityseeking-in-scotland/E936CDA2BBCD3A868B96C68E30C4B06B](http://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/review-of-international-studies/article/whas-like-us-the-desecuritisation-of-migration-as-ontological-securityseeking-in-scotland/E936CDA2BBCD3A868B96C68E30C4B06B)

<sup>143</sup> Aradau, C. (2004). ‘Security and the democratic scene: Desecuritization and emancipation’, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 7(4), 388–413.

movements, it is worth considering whether solidarity towards marginalized groups that are categorized as ‘threats’, rejecting the weaponization of identity politics to further hatred and exclusion, seeking accountability for actions done in the name of security (at home and abroad), and demanding just, inclusive and equitable policies count as de-securitization as well.

## 7. REJECTING LOGICS THAT WEAKEN, DIVIDE AND DEBILITATE OUR MOVEMENTS

Building on existing scholarship and interdisciplinary discourse emanating from international law, international relations, criminology, and socio-legal, feminist and post-colonial studies, this resource seeks to enrich our understanding of securitization processes as inherently political. Through securitization, social, political, cultural and economic issues are transformed into existential security threats, which justify ‘extraordinary’ state measures. States and fascist and fundamentalist movements use securitization to frame specific groups as threats whose elimination, containment, or marginalization is necessary to preserve security (which remains undefined and elusive). Securitization is used to convince us that these narratives are the truth and are meant to benefit us. This enables state violence and exclusion, systemic oppression, and renders entire communities expendable.

We argue that the normalization of securitization by states to criminalize, surveil, police and otherize marginalized individuals and communities is a problem. Securitization will not protect but further marginalize women, queer and gender diverse persons, and migrants, racialized and politically dissenting persons.

Securitization logics are rooted in colonial ideologies of population control and policing, and we demonstrate how post-colonial and neocolonial states continue to enact and adapt securitization through laws, policies and practices in the name of abstract and undefined ‘national security’ interests. Securitization is a process used by states and fundamentalist and fascist movements, in collusion with Big Tech, to create and aggravate social divisions, suppress dissent, foreclose possibilities of accountability and transparency and dismantle social justice movements.



Securitization is a self-perpetuating logic that manufactures fear, legitimizes extraordinary measures, and reinforces the very conditions of insecurity it claims to resolve. Across the contexts of border control, counterterrorism, climate change, socio-economic inequality, gender-based violence etc., states use securitization narratives to shift the responsibility of structural change from themselves. They strategically lay the blame for socio-economic inequality, limited freedoms and mobilities and lack of social cohesion on individual actors, foster moral panic and enact regimes of militarization and authoritarianism.

Rather than reforming or expanding securitization, this resource aligns with calls to reject it as a world-making project altogether. We invite feminist and social justice movements to join us in collectively defining what we mean by safety and security for ourselves, our communities and our movements.

We amplify the call of caution from and for feminist and social justice movements against uncritical engagement with securitization frameworks, even when used for ostensibly progressive ends. As we have discussed, the securitization of structural issues such as gender-based violence, disinformation, and climate change, risk reinforcing carceral, paternalistic, and militarized responses that further marginalize those they claim to protect.

Securitization will not save us from harm. It will not lead to collective safety and liberation. Rather, it is a politics of death that normalizes violence, erodes solidarity, and diverts attention from transformative demands for justice, redistribution of resources, elimination of violence, inequality and discrimination. Naming securitization explicitly as a politics of death is crucial: it exposes the inherent violence of these power structures. Naming actors – especially fascist and fundamentalist actors and Big Tech – who deploy securitization to bolster their burgeoning bank accounts and solidify class, racial and colonial hegemony is a vital part of our collective efforts to

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oppose such narratives. Social justice and progressive movements under attack anywhere must be a cause of concern to all of us: the same logics and tactics used against one movement in a particular context will be adapted to undermine us elsewhere.

We must reclaim the narratives and public imagination that obscure or minimize the violence of securitization by engaging in critical conversations across social justice movements that may use such narratives or consider doing so. We encourage extensive, participatory research informed by the experiences and thought leadership of human rights defenders, social justice movements and political dissidents that documents and analyzes the violence of surveillance, predictive policing, misinformation and disinformation enabled by Big Tech actors and activism, advocacy and movement work that actively challenges such violence and seeks accountability.

Securitization is the existential manifestation of systemic attacks on social justice movements and betrays the anxieties of fundamentalist and fascist movements. It is our collective responsibility to critically unpack how securitization narratives underline our thought processes, goals and advocacy agendas. We must deeply introspect on how borders legitimize racial hierarchies; policing and surveillance amplify structural inequality; and artificial intelligence aims to exaggerate and weaponize our differences. Just as securitization is a political process, our endeavours to seek safety and security for the most marginalized groups are political. Personal safety is deeply linked to socio-economic inequality, political ideologies and cultural practices: our individual and collective well-being require confronting systems of patriarchy, capitalism, racism, ableism and other power structures.

We do not have to start from scratch, and we are certainly not alone. The beauty of feminist knowledge sharing is how we can learn from diverse organizing and resistance work against different iterations of securitization and build on the principles, blueprints and lessons of different social justice movements. For instance, the scholarly and practitioner work of feminist abolitionist groups<sup>144</sup> aiming to dismantle police states and violent racialized policing to create secure, safe

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<sup>144</sup> For instance, see the work of Interrupting Criminalization, <https://www.interruptingcriminalization.com/>.



and thriving communities based on the principles of transformative justice, accountability and repair is visionary and hopeful – both of which we need now, in abundance.

By engaging in transnational and cross-movement solidarity, we resist securitization narratives aimed at dividing us. Together we can not only resist the imposition of securitization in the name of patriarchal and colonial protection, but we can also strengthen our movements, defend our rights and freedoms and seek collective liberation.