

Securitization of Climate Change and Covid-19:
A Comparative Analysis of Discourse and Action vis-à-vis Disease and Environment

By

Devashri Awasthi,
Faculty of Arts, Department of Political Science
McGill University, Montreal



McGill

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Abstract: The thesis delves into the curious phenomena of institutional inertia concerning action on climate change. An acknowledged fact and issue of devastating proportions, the swift, coordinated global response to Covid-19 stands in stark contrast to the comparatively sluggish action on Climate Change. It explores the underlying mechanisms behind this disparity via human psychology, behavioural economics and the framework of securitization. By analyzing the discursive and institutional securitization of both crises, the thesis aims to provide valuable insights to lawmakers, activists, and stakeholders in addressing the global challenge of climate change more effectively.

Abstract: La thèse se penche sur le curieux phénomène de l'inertie institutionnelle en matière d'action sur le changement climatique. La réponse mondiale rapide et coordonnée à Covid-19, un fait reconnu et un problème aux proportions dévastatrices, contraste fortement avec la lenteur relative de l'action sur le changement climatique. L'étude explore les mécanismes sous-jacents à cette disparité par le biais de la psychologie humaine, de l'économie comportementale et du cadre de la sécurisation. En analysant la sécurisation discursive et institutionnelle des deux crises, la thèse vise à fournir des informations précieuses aux législateurs, aux activistes et aux parties prenantes pour relever plus efficacement le défi mondial du changement climatique.

1. Introduction

In an era of unprecedented global challenges, two cataclysmic forces, the Coronavirus pandemic (henceforth Covid-19) and Climate Change, have emerged from the natural world, each wielding the power to disrupt the humdrum of human existence. What makes the two the subject of significant discussions is their possession of a ‘compounding effect’ wherein hazards and/or disasters interact and aggravate one another, precipitating a continuously amplifying chain reaction or domino effect (Alexander 2000, 174 -76; Bhavani 2006). The reaction ultimately generates a chimerical crisis that requires a multi-faceted strategy for redressal and recovery from its pervasive impact. Such disasters, in this case Covid-19 and Climate Change, herald multiple hazards and emergencies, including deaths, economic shutdowns, mass displacements, consequent migrations, and overburdening of social systems, among others. The logical implication of these observations underscores the urgency of swift action to address both, safeguarding established life as we know it.

The world was seen taking swift response in the case of the coronavirus pandemic. Covid-19 in its rapid but short run (beginning at the tail end of 2019), claimed 6.9 million lives¹, rattled economies, uprooted livelihoods, precipitated business closures, and caused mass layoffs. Despite the bleak situation, cascading deaths, and the lack of data on the novel virus wreaking havoc, innovation boomed globally in the area of vaccine development, and an upswing in global cooperation further bolstered efforts to minimize the damage being caused by the virus across different sectors of life and society. These actions were followed by national vaccination campaigns across the globe that were successful in flattening the curve of virus transmission and its physical impact on people. In the span of two and a half years, close to 70 percent of the world's population has been inoculated (accounting for nearly 13 billion doses²) at least once against Covid-19. The magnitude of this endeavour, coupled with stringent measures such as border closures, extensive testing, and technology-driven live monitoring of symptoms, movement, disease, and people, enabled the world to recover from its impact. As I write this paper, the world has resumed the status quo prior to the outbreak of the virus. Thus, the actions taken to deal with Covid-19 underscore the capacity for swift and concerted global collaboration in the face of existential threats.

¹ For the most recent fatality count, please refer to the World Health Organization (WHO) Coronavirus Dashboard <https://Covid19.who.int/>

² *ibid*

Paradoxically, Climate Change's comparable impact on human well-being at large has not elicited a commensurate response. The lack of response is both a conundrum and an irony, as the scholarship and debate around Climate Change began decades earlier. The former began as early as 1896 with Swedish scientist and Nobel Prize winner Svante Arrhenius postulating that just as the reduction of CO₂ would reduce the earth's surface temperature, an increase in the concentration of CO₂ would increase the earth's surface temperature; he became the first to put hard numbers and statistics to the greenhouse effect.

With growing scholarly pursuits proving over the course of decades the existence and deleterious impact of the greenhouse effect, the international and political debate broke ground with the Stockholm Conference in 1972³, followed by a cascade of initiatives that have brought all countries and a multitude of organizations – civil, corporate, social, and otherwise– into their fold. These include the World Climate Conference (WCC) in 1979; the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)⁴; the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992); the Conference of Parties (COPs); the Kyoto Protocol in 1997; and its successor, the Paris Agreement in 2015. It is important to note that there are numerous more conferences, gatherings, and forums where climate change and action is discussed, planned, and organized. However, for all the remarkable work and early onset of scholarship, dialogue, and agreements, the climate clock continues its countdown: currently, humanity has 5 years to affect some or any form of change to keep global temperature change within the stipulated 1.5C.⁵

The observed lack of an urgent response is not a unique insight but something akin to “secret de polichinelle” of climate action. The issue was, as a matter of fact, highlighted as the core focus of the

³ The Stockholm Declaration is credited with framing environmental issues as global issues, and for providing the principles associated with climate action and diplomacy, and lastly, institutions such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

⁴ While the IPCC functions as a scholarly research body on climate change, many of its reports and findings are used in tandem with conferences and as a touchstone for climate action. The IPCC (and former US Vice-President Albert Arnold Gore Jr.) were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 for their efforts in building knowledge on anthropogenic (man-made) climate change and disseminating such knowledge to stimulate actions against the turbulence caused by man-made climate change. Hence, with cognizance of its impact and reach, I have included it as a significant institution associated with climate diplomacy and politics.

⁵ To check the status of the countdown of the climate clock, refer to <https://climateclock.world/>

IPCC's 15th special report, '*Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5C*' (2018)⁶, wherein the authors earnestly reiterated the need for urgent coordinated climate action on all possible fronts as the time for effecting sustainable change continues to run like quicksand. The urgency was further highlighted when a year later, in 2019, the report was discussed during a General Assembly high-level meeting which stressed that mankind only has a mere 11 years left⁷ to prevent irreversible damage and therefore, must adhere to some strict goals to ensure a reduction in carbon emissions and their sources to mitigate the effects of anthropogenic climate change⁸.

That is not to say that explanations are not plentiful: there are ample of them. If the reasons were to be categorized, they could be grouped into the following typologies: behavioural, economic, political; and these provide distinct insights into the checkered progress in climate action. It would be inaccurate to claim, however, that these typologies are absolute, as political interactions are dynamic with a tendency to interact with and have an impact on processes and outcomes. Thus, the typologies can vary depending on the perspective(s) employed. Be that as it may, for the purposes of this discussion in the introductory section, I will focus on the conventional ones.

Behavioural factors encompass the range of human behaviour and psychological tendencies that come about as a consequence of the nature of a problem and impede action. These behaviours can come about as a consequence of protracted timelines, doomsaying inspired fatalism, lack of first hand experience etc. *Economic factors* stem from the carbon lock-in that underscores the self-sustaining supply chain of consumerism, capitalism and pollution of the modern economy. Coupled with want for swift profit and consumption, the mere fact of relinquishing the liberal 'regimentation' of the capitalistic way of being compels apprehension. *Political challenges* encompass a broad array of issues that include the infamous North-South debate of historical responsibility and relative capacity for fulfilling commitments, and differing priorities for national development, especially pronounced

⁶ IPCC Special Report 15 'Global Warming of 1.5C' <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

⁷ United Nations Press Releases. 73rd Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly high level meeting on the issue of climate and sustainable development. Opening statement of General Assembly President, María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés (Ecuador) <https://press.un.org/en/2019/ga12131.doc.htm>

⁸ Article 1 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines it as an artificial and disruptive change in long term climate variability, weather and temperature caused by human activities such as indiscriminate consumption of fossil fuels, deforestation etc. <https://unfccc.int/resource/ccsites/zimbab/conven/text/art01.htm#:~:text=2.,observed%20over%20comparable%20time%20periods.>

in the aftermath of the Paris Convention (2015).⁹ Moreover, the absence of a centralized enforcing authority creates a governance vacuum, while frequent clashes between national expediency and diplomatic commitments add to the dilemma.

Each of these categories of reasons warrants a dedicated space for in-depth exploration which while not the focus of the paper, will be raised in tandem to explain, bolster, prove and/or disprove arguments that will be in subsequent sections of this paper. However, it's worth taking note that the persistence of these challenges exists alongside the remarkable level of activity and engagement by local, national, and global climate campaigns and environmental movements. Initiatives like climate marches, youth-led movements (such as Fridays for Future), growing public awareness, inclusion in national curriculums, specific ministries and departments for climate change and environmental protection demonstrate a stark contrast to the broader challenges in advancing climate action in the political domain.

2. Securitization Theory

Before delving into the nitty-gritty of the discursive and institutionalization of Climate Change and Covid-19, their comparison and its methodology, it is imperative to be aware of what securitization as a concept in politics entails. In this section, I thus make my way through the scholarship on securitization, examining its core tenets, historical evolution and relevance to understanding (and answering) my research question.

To note, while the primary focus of the literature review (and the overall paper) will be on Climate Change and Covid-19, I acknowledge the broader application of securitization to different issues. To this end, I explore some issues that run gamut in variety and action of securitization: sexual violence, LGBTQI rights, and immigration. The literature review will act as a primer for those new to the subject of securitization, and to the informed, will be an adequate refresher of the central concepts. Furthermore, the exploration will enable the reader to establish a solid foundation vis-a-vis the concept of securitization but also discern variations and patterns in the securitization of other issues and the dynamics of framing security threats in an interconnected world.

⁹ Differing national priorities regarding climate action further complicate the global response, especially in the aftermath of the 2015 Paris Convention wherein the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities was exchanged in favour of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

2.1. Background

Securitization is best understood as the process of intersubjective meaning-making seeking to amass approval for a desired course of extraordinary action among those to whom an issue is being conveyed as an existential threat to security (Wæver 1995, 53; McDonald 2008, 566). Once considered the ambit of military power marshalled to safeguard the territorial unity of a state, the paradigm underwent academic and intellectual expansion following the end of the Cold War.

It was in the era of the cold war that securitization and security theory in general, took on the major tenets that we identify with them: physical vulnerabilities, territorial dangers, military threats etc. that could emerge or be compelled by either of the blocs of power. The most common threats under study at that point of time included: nuclear war, outbreak of the third world war, usage of deadly biological and chemical weapons, inordinate escalation of hostilities between allies of two blocs, espionage, state intelligence and more (Dannreuther 2007, 02). The purpose of security studies thus, was crystal clear, military strategy, statecraft, tactical warfare, and manoeuvres for deterrence.

However, the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 and the consequent emergence of the United States of America (USA) as the hegemon imperilled the traditional themes of research in security studies into obsolescence. The field needed to reinvent itself to remain relevant as bloc politics no longer defined the order, process or constituents of security threats and other similar concerns. Thus, the challenge now was to adapt to the changing international landscape and threats that would come with or would need more focus on as the world transitioned to a new era.

Accordingly, an academic scuffle broke out between the ‘traditionalists’ and ‘wideners’ (or ‘expansionists’) over what should and should not be included within the “*borders of security studies*” (Kraus and Williams 1996). The traditionalists spoke to defend the edifice of security studies built during the Cold War and pushed back against its reckless expansion to preserve its intellectual coherency and relevancy as they reiterated the perennially unstable nature of peace, that its flux need not be mistaken for stability that is invulnerable to disruption by war or conflict (Walt 1991, 213-215). The wideners, on the other hand, objected to the rigidity of the traditionalists and highlighted the benefits of including non-military threats to the security studies. Richard H. Ulman, a noted widener, argued with the what can be tabled as the core belief of the expansionists, “*defining security in military terms conveys a profoundly false sense of reality that causes states to ignore other, more harmful*

covert dangers...and escalate international securitization to an extent that invariably increases global insecurity, suspicion and hostility in the long run” (1983, 219-220). Simply, that the end of the status quo of bloc politics and the fear of the nuclear cloud required for new concerns and deemphasized threats need to be put at the forefront for the discipline to keep itself abreast of the changes taking place.

The shift from the state as the primary referent to the focus on humans as the referent for security gave rise to the human security paradigm. However, this shift was not sufficient on its own as it was accompanied by the struggle of determining how and why certain issues should be classified as security concerns. The threats faced by humans are in multitudes, even present in ambiguities and are regularly cross-sectional medleys of matters that are hard to grasp and sometimes even more difficult to convey. This complexity raised critical questions: what constitutes a security threat, and who or what decides this?

Securitization theory emerged address these questions, providing a framework for identifying and articulating security threats.

2.2. The Copenhagen School

The Copenhagen School (CS), which emerged from the Peace Studies community in Denmark, started to form towards the last few decades of the 20th century, as intellectual staleness and the impending degradation of the USSR awaited the proverbial ball (wall) to drop.

Beginning with Barry Buzan’s *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (1983) wherein he contended for the sense of national security to be extended to individuals and the international community, not just the state. Re-published in 1991 as *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post Cold War Era*, the title encapsulated with precision what the Copenhagen School was attempting at– offering the most feasible mechanism through which actors other than the state could claim credible threats. With the added possibility to extend it to include variables beyond strictly military concerns (Dannreuther 2007; Hansen 1996, 288).

Ole Waever expanded upon Buzan’s work and thus was too at the forefront of forming the CS’s primary theoretical contribution of ‘securitization’ in his piece “Securitization and Desecuritization”

in Ronald D. Lipschutz's book *On Security* (1995). Weaver posited that the successful construction of a security threat or dilemma or any of its analogues would depend on the manner and intensity of its construction, thereby enabling the expansion of the concept (albeit with some conditions) and possibly preventing the willy-nilly widening that traditionalists had greatly feared. Securitization of the CS, according to Roland Dannreuther, was characterized by a marked shift towards constructivism and cosmopolitanism; the former highlights the instrumental subjective and intersubjective dimensions of security while simultaneously rejecting an unquestioned objective reality constructed by the state, while the latter emphasizes the multiple ways in which state behaviour has been the source of human suffering within borders and beyond them (2008, 36-40; Sahle 2010).

The CS was further fleshed out by the combined scholarly work of Buzan, Waever and Jaap de Wilde through their seminal book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (1998) where they laid out the modalities of the fundamental components of securitization theory and practice, and currently serves as the essential primer for all scientists and scholars in the field. Stressing upon the influence that the interaction between the different sectors of human, institutional, social and state action can have on the sense of security that individuals and populations can come to hold or lose, they scale up the possible sectors from where an existential threat can originate. These include: Military, Political, Economic, Environmental and Societal (Buzan et al 1998, vii-8).

The CS functions as the baseline for the theoretical exploration and utilization of securitization in my research, but it will be supplemented by observations and inferences derived from other scholars working within the field and those affiliated with it to better keep the framework abreast of contemporary developments.

2.3. Components of Securitization

There are five components crucial to the process of securitization according to the CS:

1. Referent Object(s)
2. (De) Securitizing Actors
3. (De) Securitizing Moves
4. Audience
5. Extraordinary Action

The ‘referent object’ is something— ranging from an abstraction (eg. societal morals) to a material, tangible object (eg. land or people) – which is construed to be under threat or in imminent danger. ‘Securitization actors’ are the face of the process and are responsible for framing an issue or occurrence or phenomenon as an existential threat to a referent object. These actors can be political leaders, bureaucrats, international organizations, lobbyists etc. A ‘securitizing move’ is the explicit, purposeful articulation of a discourse of threat surrounding a referent object, and the commensurate extraordinary measures required to defend, correct or eliminate the source of threat. The securitization actor(s) securitizing moves are directed towards the ‘audience’, which as the validating authority, plays a critical role in legitimizing emergency/extraordinary action. With regards to the audience, a number of scholars have remarked that despite the centrality of the audience to securitization, it is the least defined element in both composition and character. Nevertheless, it is understood to be a mostly discrete entity, which can also include the securitization actors as members, as seen, for instance in the UN Security Council (Buzan et al 1998, 35-36; Balzacq et al 2016, 495; Nunez-Mietz 2019, 547). An additional factor to acknowledge is the impact of the context in which an existential threat is articulated. The authority of the speaker and the power of the speech act are influenced by this context; such declarations cannot occur in a vacuum or in a setting indifferent to the nature of the threat being expressed (Hirschauer 2014, 190).

Given the nebulous nature of the concepts introduced in the CS, scholars have inferred and extrapolated upon the components for the purpose of articulating the function and manner in which they fulfill the conditions required for securitization. Scholars such as Balzacq contend that the performative function of the speech act as proposed (originally by Waever) by the CS is not sufficient to facilitate securitization; he instead borrows from JL Austin (1955) to explain that simple ‘illocution’ is not enough to encapsulate the process of communication that takes place during securitization. He thus explained it as a process with several considerations which I will be dividing into two for ease of comprehension: Communication and Validation.

- *Communication*

Borrowing from Linguist JL Austin (1955) and Searle, he remarks that the speech act is not a one-way conveyance of subject matter, but each sentence conveys, according to linguistic philosophy three types of acts:

- Locutionary: Utterance of an expression that contains sense and/or reference to something
- Illocutionary: The act performed in articulating the locution .i.e. the performance of the utterance.
- Perlocutionary: Consequential effects that are aimed to evoke feelings, beliefs, thoughts and actions of the targeted audience. Huysmans states that this aspect heavily favours the elite securitizing actor's narrative as the scales of power benefit the one with the resources and ability to be on the stage.

These acts are significant to consider because securitization is not a top-down process of imposition but an intersubjective process of meaning-making. Restricting it to simply locution and illocution undermines not just the complexity of and the ingenuity required in communication but also the other components involved in the overall process of securitization.

- *Validation*

This is mostly expressed through the sustenance of a regime of practices diffused by (albeit commensurate to) the ability of the securitizing actor's ability to convince the audience that the said regime of practices contributes to societal well-being and security in a credible way. Accordingly, this justification and acceptance of the regime institutes its collective nature in the conscience of the people, which by virtue of its high-pervasive character grants leaders a legal-political carte blanche in order to curb the threat. Moreover, the consent that flows from a stolid justification by the securitizing actor imbues the regime with a moral and political authority with the potential to transform the regime of deliberate security practices into a self-sustaining one (Balzacq 2019, 345-347). My goal with having focused on these factors is to segregate the process of securitization into a two step process characterized by the elements of communication— discourse and validation— extraordinary action. This division is instrumental to the methodology via which I explore, compare and contrast climate change and Covid-19 narrative and action and will be highlighted a little later in the section.

The last element to address is 'extraordinary action', which, owing to variance and circumstance, has no predetermined definition beyond "acts that defy convention or status-quo." Thus, to refine the analysis of actions taken as extraordinary measures, and to be able to gauge what extraordinary action may entail in contextually, politically and economically diverse settings, I have taken the to develop

my own definition with the insights of various scholars across the disciplines of natural sciences, social sciences and arts:

Normatively infrequent actions which are coercive, and intrusive on most, if not all fronts of life, taken in response to adverse, serious and untoward circumstances/situations. Such actions typically go beyond the norm to involve forcefulness but are primarily characterized by their uncommonness and the need for unusual interventions. These actions are different from coercive actions which focus more on exerting force or control to achieve specific outcomes, without necessarily being rare or exceptional. Extraordinary actions entail as a means to address adversity, some form of static/standalone interventions, usually lasting as long as it takes for the fault to be righted, but tend to leave behind a residual legacy that encourages a near-permanent change in everyday behaviour, whether it be out of caution or habit (Eisenberg and Yeazell 1980; Rhoads et al. 2023; Duerden et al. 2019; Fan 2015; Sujana, Pozzi and Valbonesi 2016).

This might appear excessive, but I felt it necessary to ensure a certain degree of circumspection to prevent what might be considered extraordinary action from descending down the slippery slope of extremism.

2.3.1. Key Insights and Working Definition

Therefore, to summarize and elucidate the points above, securitization is the act through which an issue, event, or occurrence is deliberately constructed as a security threat– an existential crisis capable of compromising life as one knows it– to use extraordinary measures to deal with it- measures beyond the norm or reasonable expectation– are employed. The sequence of the process can be summarized as the following:

- An effective and impactful narrative of threat is deliberately created, henceforth called *discursive construction* or *securitization*.
- How and what type of extraordinary action is taken for redressal, henceforth called *institutional response* or *securitization*.

However, there may come situations or instances where the actions of securitization actor(s) can often be frustrated by desecuritization actors. Desecuritization actors carry out acts oriented towards undermining, underplaying or dismissing the narrative/discourse of threat to the referent object put

forward by the securitization actor(s). Desecuritization actors exist simultaneously with the securitization actors with both often trying to forward their narratives unless a consensus has been negotiated. It is the interplay between securitization and desecuritization actors that highlights the struggle to shape the perception and narrative of the threat surrounding the referent object.

2.4. Applicability

The flexibility inherent within the framework made it a popular choice for issues not necessarily contained within the more traditional security concerns of state and borders from upfront threats such as wars. Human security, thus becomes an important point of note as much of the threats and referent objects come from within the framework of human security; combining the two enables an actor to structure, convey and potentially institutionalize ways and means to tackle said threat. Success of this manner has been seen in the issues of health, sexual violence, and migration etc.

2.4.1. Public Health

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, collectively called HIV/AIDS was the first disease to be discussed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a pressing security concern during the first session of the new millennium, despite there being some reluctance among the members to acknowledge as a cross-cutting security issue (McInnes 2008). The adversarial nature of the disease was first raised by the USA in April 2000, following which it progressed into a social issue, to a transcontinental one and finally snowballed into a security issue (Sjostedt 2010, 150). Domestically, the knowledge of HIV had been around since the 1980s (but the first case was discovered to have occurred in the 1950s). Still, this knowledge was dotted by the prejudiced perception of it being a disease exclusive to the gay community and (shared) injection drug use community of the country. Believed to have been brought to the USA by South African immigrants and Haitians (the latter remains a sensitive controversial issue), the scourge of the disease was spreading vigorously in the USA threatening the overall health and well-being of its populace, spreading beyond the confines of the gay community to women, children of all ages and individuals belonging to any and all orientations (the heterosexual transmission of the disease was grasped by the scientific community before the political and social one, the language of dealing with HIV was changed from a health emergency to a “war on disease” by President Clinton in 1993.

Internationally, the turning point was marked by the replacement of the Global Program on AIDS in 1987 by the now-acclaimed UNAIDS (ibid 155). UNAIDS is the United Nation's only Joint Programme, a model that brings together UNICEF, UNESCO, UN Women, UNHCR, World Food Programme, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, the World Bank and the World Health Organization, combining a large range of expertise, cross-sectoral and trans-national work, and social and political reach needed to end the AIDS pandemic by the determined goal of 2030¹⁰. To this day it maintains an active work portfolio, a healthy corpus of funds, and worldwide attention and general awareness among the masses, and an affliction no longer implies a life of suffering or a painful death. However, it still remains prevalent as a definite cause of death (the fourth one to be precise) in Africa¹¹

Positive results aside, Clare Wenham contends that there are multiple 'grammars' and intonations for addressing health 'security' concerns— she believes that the power of the securitizing actor plays a significant role in pushing the discourse through for exceptional action, as was the case for HIV/AIDS. It received international attention at par with likes of the Covid 19 pandemic but the Ebola Outbreak in South Africa (2014-2018) and Zika Virus in Brazil (2015-2016), she adduces, were not treated with similar degrees of intensity, in fact, concerns for the Brazilian Olympics were far greater than that for the virus at that time (2019, 1094-1097).

2.4.2. Wartime Sexual Violence and Rape

Purposeful and strategic sexual violence has been a staple of warfare for a considerable period of human history; it is neither a recent innovation nor a unique strategy but a subject on which scholarship began in earnest in the 20th century, particularly in the 1960s when Feminist movements insisted that attention be paid to women's role and place in society. Worldwide attention truly came to martial rape and other forms of sexual violence owing to mass media coverage of the conflict precipitated by the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and Rwanda in 1994 (retroactively awareness regarding the mass rapes prior to 1994, such as those that took place in Bangladesh (1971) and Guatemala (1960s) also began to see an uptick). In 1992, the United Nations Security Council, via resolution 798

¹⁰ Information sourced from the official website of UNAIDS. For more information, refer to the following link https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2022/june/20220622_financial_support_AIDS

¹¹ 78th Plenary Meeting of the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly on 12th June 2023. Statement made by Representative of Somalia (speaking on behalf of the African Bloc), Mr. Abukar Dahir Osman <https://press.un.org/en/2023/ga12509.doc.htm>

(December 1992) acknowledged that mass detention and rape of women and through resolution 808 set the foundation that established the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY or the Yugoslav Tribunal) that would among other crimes of humanitarian significance would also prosecute crimes of sexual violence, which were also reflected in its founding statute which explicitly mentioned them to be crimes against humanity (add a footnote on Tribunal). Similarly, the ICTR or the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was established for similar purposes, a major one of which was looking into war crimes of rape and the first institution to formally recognize purposeful sexual violence as a means of perpetrating cultural and social genocide¹². A number of resolutions have been formally declared since the 1990s, such as 1820 (2008), 1888 (2008), 2106 (2013), and 2150 (2014) focusing on the fair adjudication of cases pertaining to sexual violence and rape during wartime and institution obligation upon participants to ensure stringent measures to appropriately stem the occurrence or perpetration of rape as a weapon of war (add a footnote on the resolutions).

With the degree of attention and different humanitarian and women's organizations and common people clamouring for greater attention to the issue, sexual violence during wartime did get securitized, this securitization however, was framed with security objectives of ethnic social and political continuity of a group and, safeguarding identity— markers which are frequently targeted at the expense of the female body which is patriarchally assumed to be the repository of group honour, virtue and morality (Hirschauer 2014, 187-188). Be that as it may, the attention and formal recognition afforded by premier institutions and actors of the world has kept the issue just as salient as it had been when it first came to light, which in Hansen's opinion sparked the permanency of security practices against rape and sexual violence (2012, 532).

2.4.3. Migration

Migration has been a securitized subject since the 1980s, with the movement of people across borders being framed as a threat to the nation-state, unity of the nation, and/or collective way of a people (von Rosen 2019, 36 (quoting Huysman); Ullah et al. 2020, 137). The incidence of the 9/11 attacks in the USA explicitly and formally added the tactical connection between immigration to terrorism, which in and of itself is a case of highly successful permanently securitized discourse (Bourbeau 2011, 37).

¹² Legacy website of the ICTR (Background) <https://unictr.irmct.org/en/tribunal>

By establishing a link between the two, terrorism's meaning of absolute threat and destruction colours the idea of other thereby increasing the intensity and suspicion towards immigration and the people who undertake it. The 'othering' of the migrant, that is, popularizing the perception of them being a threat, is essential to the process and has been observed a considerable number of times in the recent past: Americans towards Arabs and Muslims following 9/11, EU's wariness towards people from Nigeria, Kosovo, Turkey etc. during the 2015 EU Migrant Crisis (add a footnote of the PEW Survey).

Agamben (2005) refers to immigrants living in a state of exception facilitated by numerous restrictions and conditions imposed upon them for living or even stepping foot in another country, these include: regulating immigrants' access to the labour market and welfare, and the frequent acquisition and renewal of travel documents issued by the country of temporary residence etc. Furthermore, this state of exception implies that the rule of law can be swiftly replaced by a rule of force which enables the state to act in the interest of its own territorial sovereignty (Agamben 2005, 38). The source of this willingness to securitize migration and readiness to exercise sovereignty, according to von Rosen stems from the expansion of the human rights regime –which obligates states party to it to ensure fairness to all humans – that has restricted the full execution of its authority at the and within the confines of the border of their state (2019, 38).

2.4.4. LGBTQI+ Rights

The rights of the LGBTQI+ community are better understood as a more nascent development at the international level, however, an apt case to study to understand the local negative securitization of an otherwise progressive international development. The identity of this community is politicized by actors as being an artificial and disingenuous Western construct threatening the moral identity and character of these states (Ridley 2017; Nunez-Mietz 2019). In Sub-Saharan Africa or SSA, it is constructed with the help of religion, namely Christianity or Islam, and in Russia, a high degree of homophobia and anti-LGBTQ stances are cultivated by the ideological conservatism and widespread influence of the Russian Orthodox Church (ibid). Social construction of aversion notwithstanding, this is also carried out legally and politically by the enactment of laws that prohibit same-sex marriages or refuse to acknowledge them outright, those prohibiting adoption, title succession etc. In this case, the 'alien' persuasion and habits of those belonging to this community are painted as a threat to the collective virtuous identity of what is supposed to constitute the state which does not include illiberal

or unnatural sexualities, and thus any recognition of their rights and privileges is actively securitized, regardless of international conventions and proclamations stating otherwise.

2.5. Criticisms

The flexibility, malleability and a more interpretive construction of security matters and issues was enabled by the process of securitization which consequently opened new frontiers of threats but also avenues that facilitate potent international cooperation and cross-sectoral action to deal with them. However, scholars have rightly highlighted some glaring deficiencies inherent in the concept and practice of securitization.

The quagmire within the CS begins with the categorization of its elements, particularly the audience and extraordinary action. CS is equivocal in its characterization of the audience as it places them on a pedestal while simultaneously stressing that the speech act's performance is the cardinal node of securitization. For the latter, the lack of a clear description in the connotation of extraordinary action that leads to the assumption that sweeping and otherwise authoritative tyrannical can be justified in the name of security.

Some scholars have noted that the potential object of security (i.e. a possible referent object) has little to no ability to personally voice its insecurity lest it/they risk harm or social ostracization to themselves or no longer be in a position to do so (Hansen 2000, 294). Take, for instance, victims of strategic rape and sexual war crimes, whose stories while acknowledged in the 1990s went unheard when they took place in Guatemala and Bangladesh in the 1960s and 1970s respectively. Another example could be those belonging to the LGBTQI+ communities who in some cases risk social isolation, ostracization, prosecution and even death. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran, Brunei, Nigeria and Mauritania criminalize homosexuality with the death penalty, whereas countries such as Bangladesh, Jamaica, Ghana, Tunisia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Lebanon etc. punish any identification with the community with incarceration or some other form of punishment.¹³

Similarly, another concern raised by Hirschauer (2014), Meger (2016), and Hansen (2000), points to a lack of gender diversity in representation in securitization. That is, securitization actors are typically not very representative of the diverse social relationships, communities, orientations or even

¹³ Human Rights Watch (HRW) #OUTLAWED “The love that dare not speak its name”, 26th June 2019 (Maps of Anti-LGBT Laws by Country) https://features.hrw.org/features/features/lgbt_laws/

economies that dot the international landscape (Wilkinson 2007). According to Dannreuther (2007) and Baele and Jalea (2021), securitization has shown itself to have a racial, western-centric bias that, in the opinion of Hansen (2000), favours dominant voices and their ability and capacity to be in a position to commit to an articulate speech act. Additionally, the speech act rides on the assumed universal significance or fetish or obsession towards the security threat brought to the fore by the (dominant) securitizing actor (Meger 2016). Most security threats raised must be solidly correlated to the security of the nation-state to make any lasting impact vis-a-vis narrative and action among the audience. Despite securitization's inclination towards human security, an assessment of the state's vulnerability to the security threat determines the degree of acknowledgement and action taken against the threat. What complicates securitization further is the question of what issue constitutes needs-based (value for human living) security against Moral securitization (cross-border terrorism)? Must the securitized issue be a danger or a need ?

Another major criticism often levied upon the performative speech act, one which has since been accepted by the creator of the theory, Ole Wæver, is that the reliance of the speech act on a set of social conditions and fixed logical imperatives invariably makes the process inflexible— it is unable to keep abreast of conceptual changes and new developments in security considerations (Philipsen 2020; Jones 1999; Williams 2003; Huysmans 1998; McDonald 2008; Balzacq 2019; Wæver 2011). This has been acknowledged as the most salient critique of securitization. Moreover, securitization's tendency to prize theory over empirical observations instead of balancing them out makes their practical execution another herculean intellectual and political undertaking that often leads to more time lost than what was originally gained (Baele and Jalea 2021, 379). Another question that has been raised pertains to the consequences that may arise due to isolating one issue and elevating it to the security level at the expense of others.

Lastly, a key contention raised by scholars highlights that securitization does not provide a coherent model of failure, which means that any securitizing moves that do not get validated by the audience are not probed suffusing it with a misleading confirmation bias (Salter 2016, 116).

This critical section serves as a reminder that, although the securitization framework is not without its flaws, it has been instrumental in addressing numerous emergencies and issues not typically included in the lexicon of 'urgency' that demand swift action to mitigate long-term repercussions. Nonetheless, it is imperative that readers do not misconstrue this framework as perfect or universally applicable to

all agendas. Therefore, I encourage readers to consider these critiques carefully as they engage with the forthcoming comparison of the securitization of climate change and Covid-19.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Question and Hypothesis

To restate briefly, the choice of climate change and Covid-19 as case studies is rooted in their shared global scale and the unique ways in which they have been addressed on the international stage. Both crises represent significant global challenges that require multilateral cooperation, but they differ substantially in terms of the speed and nature of institutional policy responses. This divergence makes them particularly valuable for examining how different types of global threats are securitized and responded to by various actors.

Thus, to maintain analytic relevance and coherency with the stated premise, the study operates with the assumption that securitization processes took place for Covid-19 and climate change, but the securitization of a public issue operates on a spectrum, with issues being more or less securitized. The hunch behind this investigation is that the response differential to these two securitized issues can be explained with theory of securitization, with particular focus on discursive securitization.

Building on this hunch the central research question guiding my investigation is:

Does securitization offer an additional lens to explain the contrasting urgency to combat Covid-19 and the slower pace of climate action? Specifically, can the response differential between the two be further understood through the framework of securitization theory.

In line with the research question, my hypothesis is:

Covid-19 was successfully securitized at the discursive level, but climate change was not.

Discursive securitization shapes how crises are framed, but the actions taken to address these crises provide critical insights into the operationalization of such narratives. This study examines whether the discursive securitization of Covid-19 and climate change influenced the corresponding policy responses, highlighting how securitization theory explains (or fails to explain) the relationship between language and action. Using Discursive Securitization Scores (DSS) alongside a comparative analysis of policy measures.

3.2. Discursive Securitization (Intensity) Score (DSS)

The texts extracted for the analysis for the theme of discourse that surround climate change and covid-19 have been subjected to a textual analysis. The results from said analysis have been divided into three typologies with the aim to discern the “securityness” of discourses— Highly Securitizing, Moderately Securitizing and Lightly Securitizing— on a scale of 0 through 10 (Check Appendix B for the calculations).

To measure the intensity of securitization in each text, I used a weighted formula that accounts for the frequency and intensity of securitizing terms. The approach is as follows:

1. Initial Scoring:

Each identified securitizing term—whether highly or moderately securitizing—is assigned an initial score of 1. This ensures that all contributions to the security narrative are captured.

2. Weighted Contributions:

To reflect their differing impacts:

- Highly securitizing terms are retained at full weight.
- Moderately securitizing terms are weighted at 0.5, acknowledging their lesser intensity.

3. Calculation and Normalization:

Securitization Intensity Formula (%) =

$$100 \times (\text{Highly Securitizing Terms} + 0.5 \times \text{Moderately Securitizing Terms}) \div \text{Total Word Count}$$

The weighted contribution is then divided by the total word count of the text under analysis to normalize for document length, ensuring comparability across texts of varying sizes. Finally, the result is multiplied by 100 to express the securitization intensity as a percentage.

Lastly, for calculating the securitization level/intensity of all the texts (with relation to a single phenomenon), their averages are calculated for the final score (Check Appendix B for the details).

4. The Intensity Scale:

1-4.9: Light Securitization

5-9.9: Moderate Securitization

Upwards of 10: High Securitization

The chosen scale for securitization intensity categorizes texts as *light* (1-4.9), *moderate* (5-9.9), and *high* (10 and above). These thresholds were developed to ensure clarity and interpretability when analyzing securitization narratives with relative ease and simplicity. The classification aligns with the simplicity afforded by the weighted formula, enabling consistent evaluation across texts. The scale was approved as appropriate for the dataset and methodology, supporting cross-comparison of securitization patterns.

3.3: Selection of Discourse and Analysis

(Check Appendix A for both the Codebooks)

3.3.1 Climate Change

For the discourse analysis of Climate Change, I have focused on four major conferences:

1. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (UNFCCC Convention 1992)
2. Conference of Parties 3 (Kyoto Protocol 1997)
3. Conference of Parties 18 (Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol, 2012)
4. Conference of Parties 21 (Paris Agreement 2015)

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 1992 which led to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), the Third Conference of Parties (COP 3) in 1997 which established the Kyoto Protocol, the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol (2012), and the Paris Agreement (2015) represent a foundational framework and

successive milestones in global climate governance, making them critical subjects of study. The UNFCCC, adopted in 1992, established the groundwork for international cooperation on climate action, recognizing the shared but differentiated responsibilities of nations. The Kyoto Protocol (1997) advanced this by creating binding emission reduction targets for developed countries, introducing market-based mechanisms like carbon trading. The Doha Amendment (2012) extended Kyoto's mandate while addressing gaps in ambition and equity by setting new reduction targets and plans for a better plan of action to address climate change. Finally, the Paris Agreement (2015) marked a paradigm shift, involving all nations—both developed and developing (unlike the Kyoto Protocol)—in a legally binding, nationally determined framework for emissions reduction, adaptation, and finance. Together, these conventions encapsulate the evolution of global climate negotiations, from foundational principles to a universal and inclusive approach, and their study is vital for understanding the strengths, weaknesses, and future of climate policy.

Other conventions certainly focus on specific environmental challenges, but these four collectively define the trajectory of international climate cooperation and its policy implications and are highly featured on the UNFCCC database for anyone seeking information on the progress of global climate action.

High-level segment statements at climate conferences represent authoritative and strategic narratives from national leaders, key stakeholders and the collective stance of negotiating groups¹⁴ which can often comprise of numbers as high as 135 (Group of 77) and low as 5 (BASIC comprising of Brazil, South Africa, China and India). These statements are crafted to communicate priorities, concerns, and commitments to a global audience, often addressing existential risks like climate change in securitized terms following the caucus. Delivered by heads of state and senior officials, are crafted to project national priorities, articulate global concerns, and emphasize the urgency of international action. Given their prominence, the cluster statements of negotiating groups are ideal indicators of the securitization narrative.

However, I must note here that despite extensive efforts to locate the high-level segment speeches from the Kyoto COP (1997), these documents were absent in the official UNFCCC archives. While the compiled reports referenced the speeches and statements made by the officials, they were not

¹⁴ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/parties-non-party-stakeholders/parties/party-groupings>

accessible as standalone records. This gap might be attributed to the conference's timing in the late 1990s, a period when digital record-keeping was less standardized. To address this challenge, I relied on alternative sources at my disposal, including the Kyoto Protocol's executive summary, the adopted text, and translated versions of speeches available on the Japanese government's website bridge the gaps to keep the analysis consistent.

3.3.2. Covid-19

I have consulted national statements, speeches, and announcements made between January 2020 and January 2021. I selected this period to capture the securitization discourse during the initial outbreak, concluding when the first Covid-19 vaccine was administered in December 2020 in the UK. This endpoint marks a critical juncture in pandemic management, as the emergence of the vaccine implies a shift toward recovery and the subsequent containment of the virus.

The national statements, essentially an address to the nation made vis the head of the state or another high official of the government with regards to Covid-19, largely fall under headings such as “Prime Minister’s Statement on Coronavirus”, “Eine Ansprache an die Nation”, “閣総理大臣記者会見 or Prime Minister’s Press Conference on the Novel Coronavirus”, or “Adresse aux Français (Address to ‘name of country’)”. These documents were selected as they reflect official government positions and strategy during the most intense period of uncertainty when securitizing language would have been most prominent. The need for timely crisis management, public reassurance, and policy updates drove a surge in these national addresses, aimed at unifying citizens, enforcing behavioural changes, and managing public perception. In this sense, they serve as both a reflection of institutional perception of Covid-19 and response necessitated by the leadership.

To maintain consistency, two countries with the highest per capita excess deaths from each of the six WHO regions were chosen. In cases where data was inaccessible, incomplete or in a language not amenable to accurate translations, I moved down the list to the next country with the highest available data. This was done to ensure the selection was based on objective public health metrics while maintaining a globally representative sample for analysis.

The countries thus selected for analysing discourse securitization, were the ones with the highest per capita excess deaths¹⁵ in each WHO¹⁶ region. This criterion allowed for a regionally diverse, yet focused, examination of securitization language used for and in response to Covid-19. The countries I selected are the USA, India, Singapore, Peru, Italy, Colombia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, China, UAE, Indonesia, Pakistan, the UK, and Iran. These countries serve as the foundation for constructing the security terminology codebook.

These speeches and national statements were collected from official government websites, national archives, and reputable media outlets to ensure accuracy and authenticity. Each document was verified against multiple sources where available to prevent misrepresentation. This process ensures that the dataset is reliable, representative, and grounded in original statements made by high-ranking officials directly involved in pandemic management and institutional responses. For speeches delivered in non-English languages, official translations were used where available.

While I have made an effort to ensure a comprehensive dataset, I must concede to some limitations. Variations in the availability of documents across countries or differences in the communication styles and languages of national leaders did limit the documents that could be scoured. Additionally, not all announcements were translated in English which led to the loss of some nuance and culturally charged terms that imply threats or dangers. To account for these limitations, I have attempted to provide additional context in the theoretical section where possible to ensure maximum sensitivity to potential biases.

¹⁵ The statistics of deaths derived from the Coronavirus Dashboard of the WHO and statistics of case counts from December 2019 to May 2023 available on Our World in Data maintained by the Global Change Data Lab and the University of Oxford <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-deaths>.

¹⁶ The World Health Organization defines six world regions:

<https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/regional-offices>

Americas: Uruguay, USA, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Canada, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Costa Rica, Bolivia etc

Africa: South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Congo, Gabon, Ethiopia, Chad, Niger, Mali, Algeria, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, South Sudan, Cameroon, Congo etc.

Eastern Mediterranean: Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Cyprus, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Oman, Pakistan etc.

Europe: Uzbekistan, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Finland, Sweden, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, United Kingdom, Ireland, Portugal, Switzerland, Austria, Romania, Belarus, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria etc.

South-East Asia: India, Sri-Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Timor Leste, and North Korea.

Western Pacific: Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Philippines, Japan, Mongolia, Vietnam, South Korea, Singapore, Laos, Cambodia, Fiji, Solomon Islands etc.

4. Discursive Securitization of Climate Change and Covid-19

Discursive securitization refers to the process by which narratives surrounding purposefully constructed issues of concern gain traction in the debates on security issues. This facet of securitization focuses on assessing whether a specific narrative manages to assert itself as dominant among the multitude of narratives existing within said security circles (Stengel 2019, 300-304). Contrary to the binary of an isolated speech act suggested by the CS, it emphasizes that merely framing something as a threat or existential dilemma does not guarantee its prioritization or actionability.

Rather, the broader context, established structures, and prevailing discourses within the security domain also play crucial roles. The matter is especially relevant when discussing issues such as Climate Change and Covid-19 which, in and of themselves do not meet the criteria of traditional security threats such as wars or insurgency, where the source of threat is a visible, deliberately belligerent entity. Falling within the ambit of human security, a relatively newer addition to the otherwise conventional methodologies of security, the challenge is to be able to first, co-exist with said traditional methodologies and extant threats that require said methodologies, second, be acted upon in a manner that suits global threats via cooperation, collaboration, debate, and mutual accountability rather than defaulting to guns and brawns to get the job done.

The resonance of a securitizing narrative with its intended audience thus hinges on the pervasiveness, relatability, coherence, and precision of its framing. Additionally, the authority, influence, and power wielded by the actors promoting the securitizing narrative significantly impact its reception and adoption. A degree of credibility associated with the securitizing actor is proportional to the exposure and the legitimacy of their narrative.

Conversely, the strength of a securitizing discourse weakens when competing narratives emerge that are equally pervasive, relatable, coherent, and precise. If proponents of alternative narratives hold comparable levels of authority, influence and, power of the securitizing actors of the original discourse, the dominance of the securitizing discourse, and potentially, the action taken to address the threat diminish further.

4.1. Climate Change: The Development of the Narrative

Scholarship on climate change is assumed to have begun with the work of Nobel Laureate Svante Arrhenius, who, in 1896 published two papers that made observations familiar to those who study global warming and climate change today: changes in the level of carbon dioxide could significantly alter earth's surface temperature through the greenhouse effect. His work went through cycles of acceptance and censure. However, in 1938 engineer Guy Callendar, and later in 1956 physicist Gilbert Plass, provided further validation of the greenhouse effect theory. Subsequent research throughout the 1900s reinforced this theory, and by the 1950s, the scientific community had begun issuing warnings to political leaders of the significant threat posed by greenhouse effect-induced global warming.

The discourse expanded significantly with the initiation of numerous conferences that have to come to be foundational to climate diplomacy and politics. The conferences include: the United Nations Conference on Human Environment (1972) which put environmental issues at the forefront of global concern and action, mark the founding of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)¹⁷ and served as the foundation for most of the body and processes that would come to define the global climate and environment regime. Stockholm 1972 was followed by the establishment of the World Commission on Environment and Development¹⁸ (or the Brundtland Commission) through a General Assembly resolution on 19th December 1983 which published a report based on its four-year-long study titled "*Our Common Future*." This report, among other things, observed, first, the immutable interconnection of the world economy and environment and the imperative of development being carried out in a manner that will meet the needs of the present while securing those of the future.¹⁹ All these efforts, interspersed by others such as the Montreal Protocol (1987), culminated with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the official starting point of my thesis.

Numerous congregations have followed Rio, some successful and some disappointing, and a multitude of moments in the extensive history of climate/environmental politics, activism and scholarship lend themselves to discussions of defining moments' and 'showstopping decisions', which, robustness and instrumentality notwithstanding, may not be discussed extensively, as they might detract from the central focus on the variance of securitization of Climate Change and Covid-19. Be that as it may, I

¹⁷ Established through UN General Assembly Resolution 2997 on 15th December, in Stockholm (1972) [https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/2997\(XXVII\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/2997(XXVII))

¹⁸ The World Commission on Environment and Development, popularly called the Brundtland Commission was established via resolution 38/161 <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/38/161>

¹⁹ The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development was issued in 1987 which was followed by the Commission's dissolution <https://undocs.org/en/A/42/427>

acknowledge that while not all important events are extensively discussed, it has not happened as a consequence of oversight or neglect; their significance is duly acknowledged but if not mentioned, is not indispensable to the argument.

4.1.1 Securitizing Discourse

I will evaluate the securitizing discourse towards climate change through the following elements:

Referent Object and Existential Threat

The referent object is something, whether it be abstract or tangible, that is construed to be under an existential threat or danger. The existential threat is defined as the action, phenomena, situation, practice or whatever manifestation of something that seeks to or is inferred to endanger the referent object. When speaking of Climate Change, it is imperative to deconstruct the terms so as to understand exactly what it is that governments, leaders and organizations attempt to address in the multiple Conference of Parties (COPs), conventions, discussions and ultimately, policy.

Climate change can be attributed to either natural processes or human activities. Natural climate change, as explained by the Milankovitch (Orbital) Cycles, underpins long-term shifts that influence the occurrence of ice ages and interglacial periods, which in turn impact the planet's habitability. The Milankovitch cycles provide a scientifically credible framework for establishing a stable timeline for the natural occurrence of these ice ages and interglacial periods.

It is anthropogenic or human-induced climate change that emerged as the glaring red flag due to its rapid pace and relentless nature. This recognition followed Dr. James E. Hansen and colleagues' seminal confirmation during a notable congressional hearing in 1988. Their findings established that current climate change is predominantly driven by the accumulation of carbon dioxide and other human-generated greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere. This heightened greenhouse effect stems largely from extensive fossil fuel combustion—used widely in energy production, transportation, industrial manufacturing, and other products and services that drive high-consumption lifestyles, now exacerbated by a global population approaching eight billion. Consequently, mitigation efforts have centered on limiting carbon emissions to safeguard Earth's climatic stability, aiming to keep global warming within two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (1850-1900).

The existential threat posed by climate change has been articulated on numerous occasions—sometimes through metaphors, and at other times, with stark factual evidence of its catastrophic consequences. The manner of expression has varied, as Evan Gach (2019), in his exploration of the narrative on climate justice observed. He noted a significant uptick in references to climate action, justice, and urgency among UNFCCC member states)from 2009 to 2015 (COP 15 to COP 23)). Despite fluctuations in language and framing, there has been a consistent upward trend in discursively framing climate change as an international emergency demanding cooperative and compromise-driven solutions.

For instance, in a humorously witty but sombre portrayal of the gravity of Climate Change, Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson employed references to James Bond in his opening speech at COP 26 (2021) to draw analogies between the fictional spy’s encounters with ‘bombs’, ‘doomsday devices’, ‘detonations’ and ‘fights’ that he had to either rectify or fix, conveyed the message of the hope and means through which humankind would finally after decades of discussion and negotiation address Climate Change. His exact words were, “...*we may not feel much like James Bond, not all of us necessarily look like James Bond but we have the opportunity, the duty to make this summit the moment when humanity finally began – and I stress began – to defuse that bomb and make this the moment when we began irrefutably to turn the tide and to begin the fightback against climate change.*”²⁰

This example from COP 26 mirrors a broader trend observed in various statements, whether in opening speeches or Subsidiary Body of Implementation (SBI) reports, characterizing climate change as a matter of ‘life and death,’ ‘trouble,’ and ‘catastrophe’ and other terms of its ilk. A sentiment of a ‘conflict’ or ‘fight’ against an intangible enemy is contained in these statements, as was in Turkey’s High-level Segment Statement for COP 24 which stressed that “the success in the fight against Climate Change relies on the inclusion of all segments of society...”²¹ Similarly, Argentina, in its statement asserted, “*The fight against climate change is a State policy and highlights its agenda, as part of Argentina's strategy to achieve an intelligent insertion in the world.*” During COP 15 (2009), former

²⁰ The transcript of Boris Johnson’s speech for the COP26 World Leaders Summit Opening Ceremony on 1st November, 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-at-cop26-world-leaders-summit-opening-ceremony>

²¹ Turkey - High-level Segment Statement COP 24, published 12th December 2018 https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/TURKEY_cop24cmp14cma1-3.pdf

Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon, in his opening address to the gathered delegates, stated that it is dangerous for leaders and people alike to shirk the evidence that “*assaults us in the face*,” that “*business as usual*” is not the effective way out.

Organizations, countries and their representatives have made statements, either during opening speeches or Subsidiary Body of Implementation (SBI) reports across the many years these forums have been active, where climate change has been referred to as, for instance, a matter of ‘life and death’, ‘trouble’ and ‘catastrophe’; high-level statements by countries such as Denmark, Norway, Germany, Italy, Mongolia, among plenty others, have labelled Climate Change as ‘alarming’, ‘vulnerability’, ‘grim’, ‘threat’, or a ‘threat multiplier’ and other similar adjectives.

At first glance, they may look to be standalone statements, but diplomats and officials worldwide have carefully tailored them to align with the tone, tenor, ambiance, and dominant rhetoric and goals of climate conferences. This nuanced use of language reflects a conscious effort to securitize Climate Change and underscore its urgency on the global agenda.

Thus, Climate Change as the all-encompassing weather-changing, insidiously apocalyptic habitat razer is well-known in lay circles as well as those of policy, politics and activism. But the matter of what it threatens becomes a point for debate. Depending on the status of the speaker, context, age, geography, purpose, politics and a range of other factors, the referent object changes. Therefore the opinion of the specific referent object under existential threat by climate change varies significantly among impacted parties.

The variation in referent objects in simple terms is vast. To begin with, the referent object heard most commonly are the world, humanity at large and the world—sweeping in nature and character. For example, during the opening statement at COP 27 (2022), UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Steil²² referred to Climate Change as “*humanity’s greatest challenge*” and then further extended the vulnerability posed by the challenge to those who have been specifically impacted by climatic disaster. Climate Activist Leah Namugerwa during her keynote address at COP 27 stated that the

²² COP27 Opening Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, 7th November 2022
<https://unfccc.int/news/cop27-opening-remarks-by-the-un-climate-change-executive-secretary>

“world is in a state of emergency” and “future is at stake.”²³ US President J. Biden labelled Climate Change as the catalyst of innumerable insecurities, “the climate crisis is about human security, economic security, environmental security, national security, and the very life of the planet.”²⁴ At COP 23 (2017), Japan’s minister for environment, Masaharu Nakagawa, issued a high-level segment statement wherein he regarded Climate Change as a “threat to all of us and all of our future generations.”²⁵ In his opening speech for the high-level segment of COP 15 (2009), the Prime Minister of Denmark Lars Løkke Rasmussen, framed global warming as something that “does not discriminate. It affects us all. No one in the world can duck and cover.”²⁶ These statements, while incisive, are extremely sweeping in nature and character.

At the same forum, that is COP 23, another variant of the referent object was put forward by Mr. Mapa Pathirana, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment, Sri Lanka, in his high-level segment statement wherein he stated Climate Change to be a burgeoning threat-multiplying disaster for vulnerable developing countries.²⁷ On the other hand, OPEC Secretary General, HE Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo, did not use adjectives to signify Climate Change as a threat but expressed legitimate concern over it all the while stressing that no energy source (including oil) cannot be left in the lurch if the world wants to move out of energy poverty and power green technology.²⁸

On the other hand, coastal nations and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) with extensive coastlines view climate change through the lens of rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and increased frequency of extreme weather events. On the other hand, agricultural nations, particularly those in arid

²³ For the full speech, please follow the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNZSpjmLcuM>

²⁴ The transcript of the speech is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/11/11/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-27th-conference-of-the-parties-to-the-framework-convention-on-climate-change-cop27-sharm-el-sheikh-egypt/>.

²⁵ High Level Segment Statements of COP23/CMP13/CMA1.2 by Japan, Minister Nakagawa http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/bonn_nov_2017/statements/application/pdf/japan_cop23cmp13cma1-2_hls.pdf

²⁶ Statements at the opening of the high-level segment of COP 15 and CMP 5 in order of delivery https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/statements/application/pdf/cop15_hls_091215_speech_rasmussen.pdf

²⁷ High Level Segment Statements of COP23/CMP13/CMA1.2 by Mr. Mapa Pathirana, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/bonn_nov_2017/statements/application/pdf/sri_lanka_cop23cmp13cma1-2_hls.pdf

²⁸ Transcript of the speech https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/press_room/4638.htm

and semi-arid zones, prioritize concerns related to water scarcity, crop failure, and food insecurity driven by erratic precipitation patterns and prolonged droughts. Vulnerable regions in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America confront the stark reality of diminished agricultural yields, rural livelihoods under threat, and heightened risks of hunger and malnutrition, amplifying demands for climate-resilient farming practices and equitable adaptation support.

Similarly, those in the Middle East face increased threats of desertification, droughts and a 50 percent reduction in water availability (Dargin 2023). In mountainous and polar nations grapple with the accelerating impacts of glacial retreat, permafrost degradation, and biodiversity loss, which reverberate across ecosystems and human communities. Indigenous peoples in the Arctic, such as the Gwich'in and Inupiat, or the Inuits in North America articulate deep-seated concerns about cultural disruption, loss of traditional knowledge, and environmental degradation, underscoring the intimate connection between land, identity, and climate resilience (Smith 2007; Butler 2021).

In a similar vein, different organizations articulate varied concerns based on their goals and missions—for e.g. the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) perceives climate change as a hazard to wildlife habitats and the variety of animal species that populate the planet or the World Health Organization (WHO) that emphasizes the increasing vulnerability of people to disease and the general decline of good health that will come about due to climate change influenced disasters (with increasing flooding, for instance, malaria will run rampant or heatwaves will lead to more cases of heat stress-related deaths).²⁹

In essence, the diversity of viewpoints among different countries, groups, and organizations leads to the presentation of distinct referent objects in their statements. They differ in goals, aims, geography, and vulnerabilities, thus one cannot ascribe any accusations of misdirection to any of the parties involved. But all these stem from a single overarching factuality: climate change imperils the very essence of life as we know it, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural differences— an understanding that has been embodied in the Paris Agreement (2015).³⁰

Securitizing and Desecuritizing Actors

²⁹ For more details, refer to WHO Fact Sheet on Climate Change (12th October 2023)

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health#:~:text=The%20WHO%20conservatively%20projects%2050,like%20drought%20and%20migration%20pressures.>

³⁰ Preface of the Paris Agreement https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/parisagreement_publication.pdf

Securitizing Actors

- The Scientific Community

It would be remiss to assign credit to nation-states as the sole securitizing actors of the discourse of climate change because of their signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992. In actuality, the real securitizing actors of climate change have been the members of the scientific community and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that have shouldered the responsibility of providing empirical evidence of the existence and impact of climate change and for consolidating proof, spreading awareness and galvanizing debates among the masses respectively (Giorgetti 1998; Willetts 1996, 68-69; Hoggan 2009).

It was in the 1800s that scientists gradually began to prove the underlying components of climate change. Here, it is important to note that none of the scientists here were either climatologists or climate scientists; these professionals hailed from all possible genres of science— from mathematics to chemistry to physicists— who gradually emerged with empirical results that proved global warming and the dangers of the same.

The initial inklings of global warming can be traced back to the work of Nobel laureate Svante Arrhenius in 1896, who theorized that excessive fossil fuel consumption by humans could raise Earth's surface temperature to unsustainable levels. Thomas Chamberlin supplemented Arrhenius' theory with his research, identifying carbon dioxide as a major regulator of Earth's temperature. However, such research largely fell to the wayside until the early 1900s. The agenda was revived by steam engineer Guy S. Callendar, who, in his 1938 study, linked the increasing concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to global warming (Callendar 1938). Later, the findings of Guy S. Callendar and Svante Arrhenius on anthropogenic global warming and its correlation to the 'greenhouse effect' were validated by oceanographer Charles D. Keeling, who documented the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from 1957 to 1960. Keeling systematized his observations into what is now known as the

‘Keeling Curve.’³¹ Concurrently, in 1957, Roger Revelle and Hans Suess similarly asserted that increasing carbon emissions would ultimately raise Earth's surface temperature through the greenhouse effect.

The scientific community's concerns began to influence the political sphere in the latter half of the 1900s, leading President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 to call on Congress to pass a series of legislations to ensure clean air and water quality. However, up until the early 1970s, the scientific community remained divided over the veracity of climate change induced by global warming. This division was not alleviated by the more regional focus of the 1972 Stockholm Conference, which concentrated on issues such as soil depletion, land use, and water pollution. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1970s, scientific opinion coalesced around the certainty of warming and its anticipated effects in the 2000s. The closure of the argument compelled scientists to approach the public to raise awareness and lobby politicians to adopt the issue in their campaigns. Scientists were leading from the front to push the climate narrative into the public, legislative and political space.

Internationally, however, according to Howe (2010), it took another decade for the realization to set in that the global rhetoric of Stockholm was insufficient to address the abstract yet globally pervasive nature of global warming. A turning point in the political relevance of global warming occurred during a Senate hearing, where scientists James Hansen, Syukuro Manabe, George Woodwell, and Michael Oppenheimer incontrovertibly established the correlation between synthetic (man-made) carbon emissions and global warming in 1988. To explain why USA's congressional hearings on climate change held sway in the 1980s, despite being one country out of the many that existed, was driven by its hegemonic position in world politics. This dominance in global environmental governance exerted a significant influence, potentially shaping the effectiveness of international regimes of various forms which also extended to the burgeoning environmental regime spurred by the research and proof tabled by scientists of the country. Thus, the economic hegemony of USA made it instrumental in discussions of global

³¹ The Keeling Curve measures the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere, with this measurement providing a metric of comparison for any changes in the pattern of concentration.

environmental governance and a critical factor in shaping its political landscape (Clark, 2011).

Currently, the scientific community consistently presents evidence of the progression of global warming and climate change, emphasizing their potential impacts on lifestyles, ecology, economies, natural phenomena, and societies. Scientists also provide insights into methods to mitigate or slow these changes. Central to these efforts is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC³²), established in 1988, which symbolizes the scientific community's pivotal role in climate action (Paglia and Parker, 2021).

The two major global developments following the senate hearing that were instrumental in placing global warming on the political policy map were:

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- Rio Conference

- *Environment and Climate Activists, NGOs and Civil Society*

As scientists provided empirical proof of global warming, public awareness of both natural and manmade disasters also increased. A series of high-profile environmental disasters and tragedies further highlighted the connection between environmental quality and human well-being and anthropogenic causation of the same. These events included the Great London Smog (1952), the Dust Bowl in the USA (1930s), smog in Los Angeles and New York (1960s), the Cuyahoga River Fire (1969), the Aberfan disaster (1966), the Torrey Canyon oil spill (1967), the Sahel drought (1968-1973), the Silent Valley Movement in India (1973), the Chipko Movement (1974), the Seveso disaster in Italy (1976), the Sandoz chemical spill (1986), and the mercury poisoning from the Chisso Company's industrial wastewater discharge (1932-1968), as well as the Niger Delta oil spill (1958).

³² The IPCC is globally recognized as the authoritative body on climate science, producing assessment reports that serve as crucial benchmarks in shaping international climate policies. Its mandate to generate consensus knowledge on climate change has conferred upon it significant credibility and policy influence. <https://www.ipcc.ch/reports/>

The severity and frequency of these incidents spurred significant public outcry, led primarily by civil society, and NGOs. These groups played a crucial role in advocating for environmental justice, mobilizing communities, and pressuring governments to implement more stringent environmental practices. The first wave of outcry against the environmental crises of the decade were led by civil society, raising awareness about the environmental wrongs committed and their impact on human lifestyle and well-being. As concerns and awareness of the proverbial cavalcade of environmental disasters mounted, Sweden, then a middling power, sought to elevate environmental issues to the international stage for arguably two purposes (Chasek 2020, 2-4)- first, to provide countries with a means to cooperate globally at a time of the cold war, and second, to balance priorities with a vision to focus beyond weaponry and ideology. Both the Soviet Union and the United States responded positively, leading to the pivotal 1972 Stockholm Conference.

The role of NGOs', civil society and other bodies in compelling the debate on environmental problems and subsequently, global warming and climate change were cemented with the efforts of the Stockholm Conference Secretary-General, Maurice Strong. He focused on mobilization, specifically those that specialized in scientific and technical endeavours vis-a-vis the environment and natural world (e.g. the International Council of Scientific Unions/ICSU, International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources/IUCN etc.). He did so for primarily two purposes: first, to generate information on environmental problems worldwide and second, to prompt debates on the nature of said problems. Moreover, Strong persuaded governments to open participation to NGOs and other social and grassroots organizations in national commissions for dealing with environmental problems. Despite the encouragement, there was opposition to their participation in climate deliberations and conferences by developing countries under the assumption that this was a ploy by developed countries to undermine their developmental goals; by focusing attention on the environment, their need for economic growth would be compromised. This strident opposition during the preparatory meetings or PrepCom meetings preceding the Rio Conference in 1992 led to a decision 1/1 of the preparatory committee which ironically, while cementing a place for their participation in future conferences and forums, officially constricted any possible role or power they could have in negotiations (Willetts 1996, 67-77). Notwithstanding the prohibitory missive, there was an explosion of numbers and interest in

the 1972 Stockholm Conference among NGOs and similar groups, with their numbers ranging somewhere around 250– a number that was due to increase to 650 (and beyond) at the Rio Conference in 1992. The first Conference of Parties (COP 1) had 162 admitted NGOs, whereas COP 28 had 3,631.

Moreover, their power comes by way of their capacity for mobilization, influencing the discourse that circulates to the general population and defending environmental and climate causes (Dalmedico and Buffet 2010). Having ears and players close to the ground, away from government sway, they act independently and indirectly position their messages through their grassroots initiatives, social media, TV, print etc. Rietig (2011) argues that with NGOs concerted and successfully framing climate change as a dangerous turn of events in public opinion, policymakers are less likely to ignore global warming and climate change when they realize that their citizenry is extremely concerned about it. Additionally, they are able to fill in the vacuums of lesser technocratic or developing political orders where the deficits in the inner mechanism make officials look outwards for expert policy opinion and counsel (Luhtakallio, Ylä-Anttila and Lounela, 2023). Lastly, widespread or global environmental movements, such as Fridays for Future, or localized ones are more effective in raising the issue of the urgency for climate action, they are often transient or are prone to periods of inactivity and inaction. NGOs and civic organizations, on the other hand, are sources of consistency and accountability; engage civil society, people and policy even when the ‘fire’ of the original movement may have quelled. Thus, their role in narrative creation and dissemination is perennial.

Desecuritization Actors

Desecuritization actors are known to operate in a handful of ways when facing a securitized discourse. The first would be to establish an equally strong (if not stronger) counter-narrative among the mainstream and second, would entail the articulation of faults within the securitized discourse through mobilization, media, lobbying etc. The common goal often involves the promotion of alternative viewpoints, selective use of data, and arguments aimed at raising doubts about the reality, causes, or proposed severity of the issue being securitized, in this case, global warming, climate change, and its

long-term consequences by the scientific community and NGOs and other such bodies. Proponents of such counter-discourses/narratives often present their claims as based on empirical investigation, though their motivations may be driven by political, ideological, and economic considerations (Oreskes and Conway 2010).

At the same time, it is important to recognize that securitization and desecuritization actors represent two sides of the same coin. Both operate with similar methodologies, but the tendency to attribute higher moral standing and significance (social, political or otherwise) to the securitizing discourse and its proponents often stems from the status and persuasive power wielded by the securitizing actors. Therefore, when studying the actors of (de)securitization and their actions, it is crucial to approach the analysis without judgment or bias: consider the perspectives of those who oppose the mainstream security discourse fairly and objectively.

There have been several companies, countries and organizations that have contributed to the efforts to counter the discourse of severity and threat posed by climate change. Of the most infamous are Koch Industries and ExxonMobil. The former, Koch Industries, is the second largest privately owned company in the USA; one which has been plagued by controversy over its generous funding of climate change misinformation groups and think tanks. In his article, Elliot Negin showed that the Koch family-controlled foundations donated more than 165 million USD to a network of 90 or so think tanks and advocacy groups between 1997 and 2020 to undermine climate science and attempts to address climate change. ExxonMobil comes a close second with having invested nearly 40 million USD through 1998 and 2020 to some 70 odd climate denier groups and organizations, and already possessing a degree of notoriety for having buried an internal report that acknowledged global warming and climate change in 1977, a full decade before it became a global public issue. Koch, Exxon and another oil company, Chevron form the core of the oil lobby in Washington, having invested nearly 120 million USD for favourable policy measures that came to include the 'No Climate Tax Pledge' and the rollback of 260 environment regulations and close to 100 rules about the same during Donald Trump's presidential term.

As for nations at global platforms such as the COPs, there has not been an attempt to outright deny or reject the very existence of climate change and global warming, however, there have been and still are

some nations, whether it be by the personality of their leaders or national interest, that have maintained a favourable stance towards the use of fossil fuels. Therefore, those engaged in this sort of undercutting cannot be called out for desecuritizing climate change but can be said to, instead, be propagating a parallel discourse, often subversive, for the continued consumption of fossil fuels. For instance, during COP 23 in Bonn, Germany (2017), energy advisors from the Trump administration, along with the coal, natural gas and nuclear industries held an hour-long panel promoting fossil fuels and nuclear power. Another recorded instance was of Saudi Arabia at COP 16 in Cancun, Mexico (2010) objecting to measures, protectionist or otherwise, that would introduce any bias against fossil fuels or petroleum products notwithstanding its commitments to reduce emissions and diversify alternatives. Recently, the President of COP 28 (2023), Sultan al-Jaber, claimed “I respect the science, and there is no science out there, or no scenario out there, that says that the phase-out of fossil fuel is what's going to achieve 1.5 (Celsius).” Further adding that divesting the world of a significant fuel source would facilitate more difficulties than benefits. Additionally, OPEC+ countries vied to focus less on phasing out and more on carbon capture technology. Additionally, countries like India and China did not openly endorse the fossil fuel phase-out and instead focused more on renewables. This is despite IPCC’s sixth working group’s third assessment report of 2023 (AR6 Synthesis Report) asserting that fossil-fuel phase-out is imperative to curb climate change at this point.

The implicit but strident reasons assumed to underpin the lack of fossil fuel phaseout plans are its ease and history of use, fossil fuels continue to supply two-thirds of global energy demand and bringing in a substantial profit for those in the trade. According to the IEA³³, the oil and gas industry’s profit increased to 4 trillion USD from its typical average of 1.5 trillion USD (Pitt, Rutkowski and Larsen, 2024). The extant energy interdependence along with increasing energy requirements and stability of income that the fossil fuel industry provides, conferences have been hard-pressed to pass decisions that seek to get consensus on phasing out fossil fuels.

Furthermore, in the absence of explicit denial or negation, the significance of countries' withdrawal from prominent climate agreements remains profound and warrants careful consideration. A notable instance is the United States' initial withdrawal, and subsequent re-entry, from the Paris Agreement,

³³ Executive Summary <https://www.iea.org/reports/the-oil-and-gas-industry-in-net-zero-transitions/executive-summary>

along with Brazilian Prime Minister Jair Bolsonaro's indications of Brazil's potential departure, despite Brazil's commendable track record in climate action and the adoption of clean energy initiatives. Similarly, decisions by Russia, Canada, and the USA to withdraw from the second round of Kyoto Protocol commitments, citing national interest and protocol inefficiency, further underscore the complexities surrounding global climate governance. Moreover, Australia's refusal to align with over 40 countries in committing to phase out coal power during COP 26 in Glasgow (2021), with the energy minister emphasizing a focus on technology development over “industry destruction,” adds to the narrative of skepticism surrounding concerted climate action efforts. While these countries may not necessarily seek to desecuritize climate change, their overt and publicized policy choices inject doubt into the legitimacy of global climate initiatives, diluting the urgency of collective cooperation on the international stage.

Such conspicuous withdrawals and divergent policy stances cast shadows on the seriousness with which climate change is perceived and addressed at the global level. They challenge the narrative of climate action as a universally acknowledged priority, and instead, introduce complexities and uncertainties that undermine the cohesion and effectiveness of multilateral efforts to combat climate change. In essence, these actions erode the momentum of global climate action, hindering progress toward meaningful and sustainable solutions.

Audience

Based upon the account of the securitizing actors in the previous portion, I find it appropriate to assume that despite the society of states being the present-day actors influencing climate policy, they were (also) originally the audience that needed to be convinced of the legitimate threat posed by global warming and climate change by the scientific community and NGOs and other social organizations and bodies. The audience here has not been subject to any significant rotations or changes in characters as the appeal for climate action is the same (the hosts and speakers do vary) and is communicated to not specific leaders but to country governments.

The most numerically potent embodiment of the consensus of the audience of the securitizing discourse and actors can be argued to be the Rio Conference held in 1992. During the preparatory or PrepCom meetings preceding the conference, the primary objective of the Rio Summit was determined

to establish a comprehensive agenda and an actionable blueprint to tackle anthropocentric environmental change and related development issues that would guide global cooperation in the coming century, that is, the 21st century.³⁴ The conference resulted in a slew of initiatives and achievements that would serve as the cornerstones for the international climate cooperation regime, the most important of these were: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Conference of Parties, Agenda 21, the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the due acknowledgement of the political, social, economic and existential vulnerability of SIDS (small island developing states) due to climate change.

The UNFCCC is the most notable treaty to have emerged from the Rio Conference. Remarkably, this single treaty boasts an impressive 198 parties.³⁵ In addition, albeit a touch dated, according to a 2018 document released by the UN Nations Treaties Collections Office, the UNFCCC, along with the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985), Montreal Protocol (1987), and the Convention to combat desertification or the UNCCD (1994), is the treaty closest to attaining universal participation.³⁶

On an optimistic note, the annual Conference of Parties held from 1995 (COP 1) to 2022 (COP 27) has experienced an 800 percent increase in engagement and participation across diverse stakeholders, including states, non-state observers, private and public corporations and the media.³⁷ The surge in engagement reflects a growing commitment from a broad spectrum of entities, not just governments, towards addressing the challenges associated with climate change.

4.2. Covid-19

³⁴ More information and documents can be found on the official United Nations page for the Rio Conference (1992) <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/rio1992>

³⁵ The apparent discrepancy in the number of treaty parties exceeding sovereign countries is explained by the fact that the UNFCCC was ratified not only by every UN member state but also by observers to the General Assembly and non-member states, such as the state of Palestine and the Holy See (Vatican) <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/non-member-states>

³⁶ United Nations Treaty Collection Office, 13th April 2018 (Note: The number of parties to the first three treaties has increased by 1 since the document was published. Ergo, the Vienna Convention, Montreal Protocol, UNCCD, and the UNFCCC have 198 parties instead of 197 as mentioned in the list) https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/events/2018/Treaties/list_global_english.pdf

³⁷ Statistics on Participation and in-session engagement, COP 1 (1995) to COP 27 (2022) <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/parties-non-party-stakeholders/non-party-stakeholders/statistics-on-non-party-stakeholders/statistics-on-participation-and-in-session-engagement>

The Covid-19 pandemic was caused by the SARS-CoV-2 strain of the zoonotic virus family that caused the SARS outbreak between 2002 and 2004. Symptoms of Covid-19 span a spectrum of symptoms a ‘pneumonia-like’ illness that did not, at the outset, respond to traditional lines of medical treatment. These symptoms include fever, sore throat, nocturnal cough, and fatigue. The transmission of the virus primarily occurs through airborne particles. Through mutations, various strains (variants) have emerged, each exhibiting distinct levels of infectivity and virulence, though in some cases it can be asymptomatic, and detectable via testing.

Initially identified in Wuhan, China, the acknowledged ground zero (as a consequence of which in its early months of identification was called either the Wuhan virus or the China Virus, names which have since been acknowledged to be discriminatory and unscientific), in December 2019, the then novel virus rapidly spread across Asia before spreading worldwide in early 2020. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC), a designation lifted on May 5, 2023. As of February 27, 2024³⁸, the pandemic has resulted in 7,031,216 confirmed deaths.

Upon bursting into common knowledge, and its quick inclusion in public and government policy, Covid-19 spanned a variation of offensive moves that would either ‘contain’ or ‘restrict’ its transmission or ‘prevent’ it in its entirety on the “war-footing”— a common metaphor in the set of responses, remarks, and policies released by world leaders, countries, INGOs, and other bodies that were poised to address Covid-19.

4.2.1. Securitizing Discourse

Referent Object and Existential Threat

On the occasion of securitizing abstract events, eventualities or unperceived vectors, the role of the actor becomes essential in pinpointing the specific source of the threat, and the danger it poses should it spread. In the case of diseases, the task is a touch more streamlined due to the existence of a tangible, scientifically proven cause-effect relationship (and documented history³⁹) between a vector,

³⁸ <https://data.who.int/dashboards/Covid19/deaths?n=c> Data updated on 27th February 2024

³⁹ In a considerable portion of history, diseases have been taken note of having played a major role in either weakening or debilitating countries, particularly, the army and those that constitute its membership. The prolonged incidence of a disease weakens a state relative to its sovereign neighbour or rival. For instance, the Aztecs entire civilization weakened considerably when nearly a third of their

and its impact on human mortality. Diseases have been known to doom life and limb by the dozen since time immemorial. Thucydides, in his account of the plague of Athens, lamented the degradation of law and order, disorder and the absolute losses to the army, having lost nearly 30 percent of its infantry to the pestilence. Accordingly, the instability and wretchedness in life and society wrought by the plague resulted in Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian war, and its gradual downfall (Price-Smith 2020). The Black Death in 14th-century Europe devastated an estimated 75- 200 million people. A smallpox outbreak in America's Continental Army in 1775 forced it to retreat from Quebec when the losses dealt by smallpox kept mounting, invariably protracting the operations, expenses, and losses—political and material (Prinzing 2019, 176-183). The losses wrought by smallpox kept mounting as it caused an estimated 300 million in the 20th century alone, averaging at around 5 million annual deaths, according to Donald Henderson, former WHO program director of the worldwide smallpox eradication campaign. Last but not least, Covid-19, in its first year, officially claimed 1,813,188 lives though the actual death toll was assumed to be 3 million.

More recently, pandemics and epidemics, have been known to pose a threat to economic stability – from the black death's decimation of the labour force, the Spanish flu reducing per capita GDP by an approximate 6 percent and private consumption by 8 percent, decline that Steven Mass (2020) deems comparable to those seen in the Great Recession of 2008 to Covid-19's induced disorder in the lean 'just-in-time' supply chains and global economic contraction worth 8.5 trillion USD, the sharpest since the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Thus, in its immediacy Covid-19 endangered human life and the economy – both of which are driving forces of a country. Despite Covid-19 being an nigh intangible virus, its impact mirrored that of physical threats historically associated with warfare. The impact included significant loss of life, identifiable causes of mortality, mobilization of essential services such as healthcare and emergency response teams, and a collective mobilization against a known shared adversary, and the possibility of a solution to get rid of the said adversary by science. The endangerment thus drove the usage of war metaphors aplenty.

This reminiscence to a conventional security threat, compelled a semantic inclination among governments, media outlets, and institutions to frame the pandemic using war metaphors. The gravity,

populations and defenders were decimated by the small pox, which enabled many of the early successes of Spanish Conquistadors in the 16th century.

urgency, and mobilization required to address the crisis resonated with familiar frameworks of response commonly associated with firmly established security threats. This possibility of and being able to make use of established systems of response and mobilization contributed to the widespread adoption of war metaphors in describing the Covid-19 pandemic.

In an echo of this understanding, former President of the United States, Donald Trump, in an address to the nation on the coronavirus in March 2020, called Covid-19 an “invisible enemy” and “I (Donald Trump) see myself as a wartime president”⁴⁰ in light of which he invoked the Defense Production Act, 1950 to secure supplies. Prior to that, close to the known ground zero of Covid-19, President Xi Jinping spoke of declaring a “people’s war” on the virus in February 2020. Notably, the media within China was using the metaphor of war to portray Xi Jinping as a valorous leader visible in this excerpt of a news report– *“What you should do now is stay confident. We all should be confident that we will win this war,” the man said in a video link at Huoshenshan Hospital in Wuhan, the epicentre of the Covid-19 outbreak, in central China’s Hubei Province. Victory for Wuhan, victory for Hubei, and victory for China!” He declared with a clenched fist. The man of the hour was President Xi Jinping, commander-in-chief of China’s war against Covid-19...*” The media was supporting Mr. Jinping’s role as their leader in this war (against Covid-19, a virus).

In a similar vein, the prime minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong, during a speech at parliament in 2023, while recalling the era of the pandemic, began by saying *“The last time Parliament opened in 2020, we were in the heat of battle against Covid-19.”*⁴¹ Korean President Moon Jae-In alluded to an ‘endless war against the virus’, with various other leaders iterating as a threat transcending borders, classes and other forms of social and political differentiation. Occasionally, even if terms such as “battles” or “war” were not explicitly used, analogies were made aplenty to evoke the imagery. An example would be German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, in her address to the nation, who spoke of healthcare workers as the prime fighters or more specifically said *“You (those in healthcare) are on the front lines of this fight (against Covid-19) for us.”*⁴² The media world over began adopting similar imagery during their

⁴⁰ Link to the news clip of the address wherein he declared himself as a wartime president (posted on 18th March, 2020) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ecF1bEb-08>

⁴¹ PM Lee Hsien Loong’s speech at the Debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President in Parliament on 19 April 2023, Singapore– Transcript: <https://www.forwardsingapore.gov.sg/news/transcript-of-speech-by-pm-lee-hsien-loong-at-the-debate-on-the-motion-of-thanks-to-the-president>

⁴² An address to the nation by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel, 18th March 2020 <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/coronavirus/statement-chancellor-1732296>

reportage of the plights brought by pandemic— of the frontline workers, on fighting the virus, on learning from the fight against Covid-19, on suppressing or conquering it etc.

Be that as it may, the key to understanding the securitization of health and/or disease hinges on the efficacy of a persuasive speech act or narrative capable of justifying extraordinary measures. As articulated by Wenham (2019, 1094–1095), the global health security narrative posits that pathogens are deemed threats when exhibiting characteristics such as rapid transmission, limited scientific understanding, absence of known treatments or cures, elevated mortality or morbidity rates espoused as such by a leading authority, powerful country and its leaders or a premier institution that commands any degree of saying power on the international front. For instance, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held a debate on the impact of HIV/AIDS on peace and security in January 2000 (resolution 1308). On a similar note, however, rapidly emerging health problems such as Myopia (Dolgin 2015) or cardiovascular diseases⁴³, despite being addressed on regional levels, have not been spoken of in the same dystopian tone and language as Covid-19.

Securitizing Actors

- States and World Health Organization:

Information about the then-unknown virus was relayed to WHO's China office by the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission on 31st December 2019, nearly two weeks after the incidence of the first cluster of cases. On 1st January, the WHO set up IMST (Incident Management Support Team) across three levels of the organization: headquarters, regional, and country, putting the organization on a form of crisis alertness for dealing with the possibility of an outbreak. The IMST organized itself around the response pillars of surveillance, public health and social measures, clinical health interventions, health and laboratory services, vaccines, risk communication and community engagement, and lastly, operations support.⁴⁴ Come January 30, 2020, the IHR (International Health Regulations) Emergency Committee declared the novel coronavirus a PHEIC (Public Health Emergency of International Concern). Since the declaration of the PHEIC, the WHO has been playing an instrumental, albeit not authoritative role, in keeping scientific data up to date, coordinating the research for vaccines and treatments,

⁴³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death>

⁴⁴ News Release on two years of Covid-19, 21st January 2022. <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/21-01-2022-two-years-of-Covid-19-what-it-takes-to-run-an-emergency-response-across-53-countries>
<https://www.who.int/news/item/27-04-2020-who-timeline---Covid-19>

raising funds, and sourcing essential supplies such as personal protective equipment (PPEs) and diagnostic test kits.

Be that as it may, the declaration of a PHEIC or instituting IMSTs does not endow the WHO with any legal authority to dismiss or override national sovereignty to achieve health security. Compliance with the IHR (2005) is voluntary to the extent countries wish to adhere to them, which is often limited or unwilling as such information may invite sanctions or trade embargos as was the case when Saudi Arabia refused to trade South Indian mangoes during the Nipah Virus outbreak in 2018. What this means is that while the WHO serves as a key securitization actor in framing global health issues, including the Covid-19 pandemic, its capacity to unilaterally drive securitization processes is limited. Its mandate directs it to provide leadership on global health matters, but authority is contingent upon the cooperation, support and willing compliance of its member states, that is, its moral and scientific wherewithal to bring the facts of an outbreak to the fore is inversely proportional to its capacity to compel states to action, especially due to a strong extant stake of national security embedded within the considerations of health –bioterrorism, incapacitation of defense institutions and labour force, and immediate disruption of capitalist supply chains (Davies 2008, 298-300; Maclean 2008). This limitation underscores the significance of national sovereignty in health security matters, where states prioritize their interests and may not adhere to international guidelines that could impact trade relations or some other aspect that the country's policy deems more important. The discursive securitization of an issue thus becomes a matter of complex interplay of national discretion, community response, and safety and reputation. Thus, with the WHO's constrained legal authority, and the continued strength of territorial sovereignty and national interests in world politics, the process of discursive securitization necessitates that states take a leading role in addressing global health threats.

While the WHO offers guidelines, expertise and a coordinating framework for action through the IHR (2005), states must actively engage with the IHR and its affiliate mechanisms and processes to securitize the issue, persuading their counterparts to collectively address pandemics. To achieve universal acknowledgement of a 'threat,' states must, therefore, engage in a continuous process of securitization where they must convince and be convinced at every juncture. Thus, the effectiveness of securitization efforts relies on the collective engagement

of states in fostering a shared understanding and commitment to coordinated action against health threats like Covid-19, whether it be through the narrative of human security or warfare. The metaphorical framing of the pandemic as a war solidified the securitization discourse, emphasizing the need for decisive and sometimes draconian/severe/ extraordinary or ‘emergency’ measures to combat the virus.

Desecuritizing Actors

While Covid-19 has not faced outright denial comparable to climate change on the global stage or by political leaders, it has been subject to a spectrum of unique assumptions and responses. These range from its comparison to seasonal influenza, downplaying its severity, inconsistent enforcement of containment measures, and even unconventional recommendations. Notably, in Zimbabwe and India, political rallies were held during election seasons, defying official government policies and advocating caution. Leaders like Narendra Modi of India and Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe presided over large-scale gatherings, including religious events like the Kumbh Mela, which later proved to be significant Covid19 superspreaders in 2021. Similarly, figures like Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, Donald Trump of the USA, Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus, and Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico dismissed Covid-19 as a mild flu, advocating unorthodox measures and exhibiting lax adherence to preventive protocols.

In some instances, state policies led to gender-based quarantines, impacting marginalized communities like the transgender population in Peru and Panama. Meanwhile, in Cambodia, health officials confidently proclaimed the country's immunity to the virus due to prevailing temperatures. Moreover, concerted groups such as anti-vaxxers and anti-maskers, driven by concerns of bodily autonomy, hesitancy, ideological beliefs, and personal liberty, resisted mask mandates and vaccination efforts (Chaney and Lee 2021; Velasquez-Manoff 2022).

These instances represent a desecuritizing discourse, particularly when political leaders in countries like Belarus downplayed the threat, leaving their populations vulnerable to denialism and reliant on foreign aid during the peak of the crisis in 2022. John Hopkins reported that in 2021 only 3.9 percent of the population in Belarus was inoculated against the vaccine— but the implications varied that either the narrative worked, or people didn’t have the means to procure a vaccination, or the numbers

were reported incorrectly. The latter two were legitimate concerns as the state-run media channel frequently echoed the claims of Lukashenka at the expense of factual reportage. Nonetheless, vaccination campaigns persisted, alongside temperature checks and other preventive measures, indicating that while leaders exerted influence, in Belarus, and by extension other countries desecuritization did not occur; rather, the threat was consistently undercut and underestimated, with occasional lapses in response, but with no consistent and overpowering desecuritizing persistent enough to bring impact or awareness of Covid-19 to 0.

Audience

In the discourse of securitization, the delineation between securitization actors and the audience may initially appear distinct, with both having been ascribed different roles—the actors charged with articulating an existential crisis, and the audience as those subject to accepting the legitimacy of the actors' articulation and authorizing forms of action(s) meant to contain or eliminate the threat. Yet, this distinction dissolves within the complex dynamics of security framing and response.

As argued by Balzacq (2010), the process of securitization involves a performative aspect where actors actively construct and negotiate security narratives, engaging both in the role of securitizers and the audience. Furthermore, the concept of ‘audience reception’ highlighted by Salter (2008) underscores how the audience, while traditionally perceived as passive recipients of security narratives, can actively contest, reinterpret, or internalize the securitizing discourse. This becomes especially true when the pool of participants in the securitization of one hypothetical issue is an incestuous one. Incestuous is not meant to attribute a negative connotation to any of the actors, but to allude to the fact that in a limited social-political forum, say that of an international conference, where the number of formal participants is limited to a few hundred, having a different set of securitization actors, audience, desecuritizing actors etc. that focus on performing a specific role in the process becomes a complex endeavour also because it does not accept the fact that even those that are supposed to occupy the monolithic roles in the traditional theory are actors/beings that are products of their times, politics, society, geography etc. This blurring of boundaries is exemplified in practice, where states, international organizations, and civil society actors interact in shaping security agendas while simultaneously being influenced by them. Thus, while distinct roles exist within the traditional conceptualization of the securitization process, the actual porous nature of boundaries allows for

intricate interactions and mutual influence among securitization actors and the audience, ultimately shaping collective understandings and responses to security challenges.

When considering the case of the audience that needed to be convinced of the threat that Covid-19 posed, the porosity of securitizing actors and audience constitutes an important reading note. Especially because a central treaty or resolution boasting universal adoption is absent on the international front. Even if one were to look at the IHR, countries compliance to them fell to the wayside when measures such as border closures or travel bans were announced all over the world.⁴⁵ A more reliable source of gauging global acknowledgement of Covid-19 would be the World Health Assembly (WHA), the governing body of the WHO, whose meetings are attended by all 194 representatives, all of them ministers of Health and those holding similar positions. These members of the WHO to decide upon the policies of the organization, oversee financial policies, appoint the director-general etc.⁴⁶ During the 73rd Assembly in 2020, it acknowledged Covid-19 as a global priority and the need to mitigate its widespread impact.⁴⁷ An acknowledgement by proxy if one may, since no central policy framework was adopted to specifically address Covid-19; the policy instrument being utilized was the IHR, however, it seems that a pandemic treaty is in the process of being negotiated and drafted.⁴⁸

Despite this, countries did express likeness in their timeline of response to Covid-19, which by 30th December 2020 comprised of the following⁴⁹:

⁴⁵ Article 2 of the IHR- Purpose and Scope- states the scope of the resolutions are to *prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade*. The matter of interference and rupturing of supply chains and human mobility will be touched upon later in the paper.

https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/43883/9789241580410_eng.pdf?sequence=1

⁴⁶ The WHA is the governance and accountability mechanism of the WHO instituted in 1948 to ensure that its goal of ensure a holistic and high standard of health worldwide is kept in cognizance in policy and action of the WHO and its members countries <https://www.who.int/about/accountability/governance/world-health-assembly>

⁴⁷ WHA73/2020/REC/1 Pages 3 to 8 https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73-REC1/A73_REC1-en.pdf

⁴⁸ Raised in March 2021 by 25 heads of government to established a mechanism that enables preparedness for and prevention of any future outbreaks that may share likeness with the Covid-19 pandemic <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/pandemic-prevention--preparedness-and-response-accord>

⁴⁹ Our World in Data collated information on 17 indicators of government responses, spanning containment and closure policies subject to regular updates via the Oxford Coronavirus Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT). <https://ourworldindata.org/policy-responses-Covid>

- Required cancellation of public events and gatherings
- Face covering policies in public spaces, ranging from mandatory to advised.
- Testing policies in place for frontline workers, contact tracing, those returning from overseas, and those with symptoms
- School closures
- Stay-at-home measures unless required or subject to an exception (e.g. frontline workers, government employees etc.)
- 112 countries came out with emergency declarations that called for restrictions on assembly (Australia, Belgium, Benin, Denmark and most other countries) and information (Bangladesh, Bolivia, India, Ghana, Columbia, Singapore, Thailand etc.) to the mobilization of the military to enforce pandemic measures (Chad, Egypt, Fiji, Pakistan, Poland, Zimbabwe etc.)⁵⁰

The enforcement of measures within a limited time frame implies an urgency to contain the transmission of the virus. The urgency for these measures was bolstered by statements from regional organizations and groups such as the G20, ASEAN, SAARC, BRICS, UNASUR, EU, NATO among others acknowledged Covid-19, through statements released between 2020 and 2021, as an urgency, threat multiplier, vulnerability, a fight to be won, hardship among a range of descriptors.

The porosity in the securitization process is particularly pronounced in the case of Covid-19, given the lack of a central/universal pandemic treaty and the incestuous nature of the international setting where securitization actors, audience members, and desecuritizing actors interact within limited social-political boundaries, forums and structures of power. These structures go on further to complicate the assignment of clear roles of actor and audience (and audience agreement or dissent). Instead, the response to Covid-19 is characterized by a shared sense of urgency and a near-uniform timeline of enforcement measures across countries, influenced by information disseminated (in addition to actions discouraged) by organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO). Therefore, the most reliable measure of commitment to addressing the Covid-19 threat lies in observable actions rather than rhetoric.

4.3. *Discussion on Discursive Securitization: Climate Change and Covid-19*

⁵⁰ <https://www.icnl.org/Covid19tracker/?location=&issue=&date=&type=>

The analysis reveals that both Covid-19 and climate change are moderately securitized at the discursive level, with Discursive Securitization Scores (DSS) of **5.60** and **7.05**, respectively (Check Appendix B). This outcome confirms that both issues have been framed as existential threats, aligning with the fundamental premise of Securitization Theory (ST): crises can be socially constructed as security threats through discourse.

However, while both crises were moderately securitized, the results raise important questions about the boundaries of ST's applicability. ST was developed primarily to analyze focused, immediate threats with clear referent objects and temporal boundaries. Covid-19's well-defined nature and short-term impacts align closely with this theoretical framework. In contrast, climate change's vast, systemic, and temporally diffuse nature stretches the conventional boundaries of securitization, challenging the theory's ability to fully capture its scope. For instance:

1. **Referent Objects:**

Covid-19's referent object is clear and immediate—human health. Climate change's expansive referent objects, ranging from habitats to global ecosystems, test the flexibility of ST.

2. **Urgency and Temporality:**

Covid-19's securitization discourse was amplified by its observable immediacy (e.g., infections, mortality rates), which fits ST's emphasis on threats requiring urgent measures. Climate change, while framed as an existential crisis, suffers from its temporal distance and incremental effects, complicating its securitization.

3. **Counter-Narratives:**

Both crises faced skepticism, but Covid-19's short duration and verifiable cause-and-effect relationships limited the traction of counter-discourses. Climate change's slow onset, contested knowledge, and the fact that it is ongoing, fostered stronger counter-narratives, posing an additional challenge for ST's explanatory power.

Thus, the nuances in their framing—particularly the clarity of Covid-19's referent object versus the systemic complexity of climate change—highlight areas where ST can be further expanded or adapted. Simply, Covid-19 aligns well with ST's emphasis on clear, immediate threats, while climate change's systemic and long-term nature stretches the traditional boundaries of the theory.

At this stage, an important question arises: *Does the level of discursive securitization align with the actions taken to address these crises?* While Securitization Theory focuses on discourse as the basis for legitimizing extraordinary measures, examining the subsequent policy responses offers insights into how securitized narratives are operationalized—or fail to be—in institutional settings. The following section explores the alignment (or disconnect) between discursive securitization and policy actions, evaluating whether the moderate securitization scores for Covid-19 and climate change correlate with the tangible measures undertaken to address them. This analysis remains grounded in the applicability of ST, testing its capacity to connect discourse with institutional outcomes.

5. Institutional Securitization of Climate Change and Covid-19

The impact and efficacy of a securitization discourse lies not merely in its articulation but in the subsequent institutional actions it catalyzes. As actors construct narratives and employ speech acts to enable the securitization of an issue, the ultimate measure of success rests on the extraordinary nature of the actions undertaken in response. Evaluating efficacy demands a lens focused on the extraordinary actions which transcend procedural intricacies to gauge substantive impact of the discourse.

Herein lies the pivotal question: what constitutes extraordinary action in the context of securitization and institutional response? The meaning of extraordinary action often shifts, adapting to the perspectives of actors, institutions and specific contexts in which it is evoked. The inherent malleability underscores the need to establish a criterion to delve beyond rhetoric into the realm of tangible outcomes. For this purpose, I have developed a definition of extraordinary action informed by scholarly observations from disciplines that explore securitization:

Normatively infrequent actions which are coercive, and intrusive on most, if not all fronts of life, taken in response to adverse, serious and untoward circumstances/situations. Such actions typically go beyond the norm to involve forcefulness but are primarily characterized by their uncommonness and the need for unusual interventions. These actions are different from coercive actions which focus more on exerting force or control to achieve specific outcomes, without necessarily being

rare or exceptional. Extraordinary actions entail as a means to address adversity, some form of static/standalone interventions, usually lasting as long as it takes for the fault to be righted, but tend to leave behind a residual legacy that encourages a near-permanent change in everyday behaviour, whether it be out of caution or habit (Eisenberg and Yeazell 1980; Rhoads et al. 2023; Duerden et al. 2019; Fan 2015; Sujan, Pozzi and Valbonesi 2016).

Based on this definition, I believe that the following categories must be satisfied, or actions must possess these traits for them to be deemed as ‘extraordinary’:

1. Severe Measures: Imposition of restrictions and execution of policies that belie the standard of normally strict or legally tolerable degrees of coercion, backed by regulatory or legal enforcement, to compel compliance/obedience for the suppression of the targeted problem or situation.
2. Static Disruptive Interventions: Self-contained interventions that are implemented as single distinct actions that are assumed to be capable of achieving an objective on its own. Eg. Snap-lockdowns.
3. Long-term Behavioural Change: Sustained shifts in individual or collective behaviour, leading to lasting changes in attitudes, habits, or societal norms. These can run the gamut from passports (initially introduced to identify immigrants from countries of concern on American soil) to painstaking airport security checks (a result of the global war on terror).

If the measures match either one, two or all of then an action can be labelled extraordinary. However, in the case of my paper, I will be unable to include long-term behavioural change in my assessment given its limited applicability for Covid-19 and Climate Change. Covid-19 was only recently downgraded as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) in 2023, and the struggle with Climate Change is ongoing. Consequently, it would be premature to enunciate the long-term consequences of the two at such nascent stages, and as such, this criterion will not be explored here.

5.1. Climate Change:

5.1.1 Background

Net-zero carbon emissions have become the focal point for tackling Climate Change with the groundwork for action having been laid by two major climate treaties —the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreement (2015). The inaugural treaty, the Kyoto Protocol declared its action goal to reduce the emission of the six main greenhouse gases, namely:

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂);
- Methane (CH₄);
- Nitrous oxide (N₂O);
- Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs);
- Perfluorocarbons (PFCs); and
- Sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆)

The Kyoto Protocol operationalized the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to (differentially) limit and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by an average of 5 percent below 1990 levels during its first enforcement period through 2008-2012, and established a system to monitor, track and enforce countries' progress on the said goals. However, developing countries were asked to comply voluntarily, and more than 100 developing countries, including China and India, were exempted from the Kyoto agreement altogether; it instead mandated that only the 37 industrialized nations and the EU are legally obligated to cut their GHG emissions.

In contrast, ratified in 2015, the Paris Agreement mandates all countries to set emission reduction and policies that bring about social and economic transformation in pursuance of carbon neutrality and GHG emission reduction through targets or 'Nationally Determined Contributions' (NDCs). The overarching goal is to prevent global temperatures from rising 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (measured average temperature through the years 1850 to 1900) and to achieve global net-zero emissions or climate or carbon neutrality, by the second half of the century. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Convention lacks enforcement mechanisms and imposes no obligation on countries to meet their NDCs, instead, countries are expected to act upon them at

their discretion the only caveat being that the goals must grow in ambition per the “best available science” at every 5-year cycle mark when countries are required to submit, renew, update or modify their NDCs.

The goal of reducing GHG emissions and bringing the world economies to a state of carbon neutrality is as astronomical as it is extraordinary considering that GHG emissions, primarily driven by fossil fuels, have historically been fundamental to economic development and growth. Fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas have powered rapid advancements across industrial processes, agriculture, transportation, production, consumption patterns, lifestyle norms, and societal standards, shaping virtually every facet of modern life: fossil fuel systems are the lifeblood of the modern capitalist economy.

5.1.2 Emissions, Development and Dissent

Given the context, it is imperative to acknowledge the foundational debates that shape the majority of dialogues on Climate Change, resilience, and adaptation. In conjunction with the principles established by ongoing empirical research and conferences, the negotiations and politics of it all continue to be shaped by those historical considerations and disputes.

Thus, the narrative of the disputes begins with the aftermath of mass decolonization, spanning from 1945 to 1960 and beyond, witnessed newly independent countries striving for development using the same fossil fuel-based energy systems prevalent in the West. As a result, when developed world economies began stabilizing their emissions (with the USA notably being the highest CO₂ emitter until 2005) and developing countries' share began rising, a contentious debate emerged known as the North-South Argument, revolving around countries' obligations and liabilities regarding climate action (Klirs and Friedrich, 2019). This argument delves into two key facets: equity and historicity.

Equity concerns stem from the glaring asymmetry between countries' emissions and their respective burdens regarding climate change impacts. While anthropogenic GHG emissions have allegedly sprung from economic activities in affluent countries, the brunt of climate-induced

environmental shocks disproportionately affects poorer nations, as the process of development continues within and among them. This disparity underscores the ethical imperative for equitable climate action that addresses the disparate impacts of climate change. In addition, placing equal obligations upon all countries to reduce GHG emissions was essentially tasking the developing countries to leap-frog many stages of growth that developed countries underwent in the past for their GHG emissions to stabilize (McCormick 2002; Dietz and Rosa 1997).

Secondly, historicity complicates this argument as industrialized and developed nations in the Global North bear the historical responsibility for the majority of past emissions. Conversely, emissions from most developing nations, particularly China, continue upward, with peak emissions not projected for another decade or so (Ulgen 2021).

Ergo, there is a close correlation between GHG emissions and economic growth and lifestyle maintenance, and the enforceable obligation to willingly and purposefully diminish, modify and/or replace the very system that had fed the economic growth and development for close to a century and many more was seismic. The implication carried with itself the likelihood of stalling the economic development and growth fears of which festered the doubts and later dissent between the global north and south that would characterize climate conferences and environmental forums.

5.1.3 Securitization: Does it meet the criteria ?

In the measures taken for Climate Change, specifically in the Kyoto Protocol, the onus of responsibility fell upon the 37 (of the 191 members of the protocol) industrialized countries to meet the reduced GHG emissions through one or more of the three given means:

- The International Emissions Trading Mechanism,
- The Clean Development Mechanism, and
- the Joint Implementation Mechanism.

On the other hand, the protocol specified that developing nations were to comply voluntarily, but otherwise under no liability to commit to the standards. The Kyoto Protocol did have an

enforcement mechanism to enforce compliance,⁵¹ but its effectiveness remains questionable as there are multiple loopholes that parties can leverage to their benefit (Finus 2008; Wilcoxon and McKibbin 2002):

- The penalty (30 percent addition to emissions target and prohibition of emissions trading) is not immediate, thus parties can skirt obligations and in turn, can save money.
- The variability in technology and market forces could substantially minimize the costs associated with climate adaptation technology and buyable credits thus encouraging short-term free-riding.
- The enforcement of compliance relies on parties self-reporting through national systems at regular intervals
- Given that countries can withdraw by giving a three-year notice, the punishment cannot be too severe or long
- There are no incentives to facilitate compliance among countries

Furthermore, Kyoto's successor protocol, the Paris Agreement (194 states and the EU) lacks any measure of compliance or enforcement and instead leaves it to the countries' discretion and domestic policy-making to fulfil the commitments and escalate ambitions in their submitted NDCs

In conclusion, while the measures outlined in the Kyoto Protocol were designed to be coercive on paper, the presence of significant loopholes undermined their overall effectiveness, with this showing in greater clarity with the inception of the Paris Agreement. As a result, while the goal of reducing GHG emissions and carbon neutrality is indeed extraordinary, the actions taken fell short of achieving the required degree of extraordinariness due to these inherent weaknesses in enforcement and compliance mechanisms.

The presence of the international framework served as an impetus for the many existing decarbonization policies and measures we live with today such as carbon taxes and cap and trade

⁵¹Introduction to the Kyoto Protocol Compliance Mechanism <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-kyoto-protocol/compliance-under-the-kyoto-protocol/introduction#:~:text=The%20enforcement%20branch%20is%20responsible,eligibility%20requirements%20under%20the%20mechanisms.>

mechanisms. Both these means are premised upon extracting costs for emissions let out by those engaged in activities that release carbon emissions.

- *Carbon taxes*

They are a means of levying direct charges on GHG emissions by industries to compel them to reduce their share of the same. As of 2023, 26 countries in the world have carbon taxes in place, these include Portugal (26.01 USD per ton of CO₂ emissions), Chile (5 USD), France (48.5 USD), Uruguay (156 USD) etc. Similarly, the cap and trade system, first enforced in the US state of California, is one where carbon emissions are regulated by establishing a maximum limit on the emissions a specific business or organization can produce. Emissions beyond this limit need to be purchased from other organizations that have not fully utilized their full emission allowance. Cap and trading systems are present in China (2021), EU (2005), New Zealand (2008), South Korea (2015) etc.

While heralded as an effective way of reducing carbon emissions, they are plagued by a handful of problems, the most striking of which is the difficulty in establishing causality between these measures and reduced emissions. Most literature lauds the possible benefits that it prompts— reduced emissions by polluters, increased funds for possible climate action and general welfare, and encouraging R&D to increase productivity without harming the bottom line of profit. However, that very literature is mostly silent on how its benefits have panned out for emissions, the environment and the climate in general (Prasad 2022; Timilsina 2018). According to Timilsina (2018), the literature does not consider environmental benefits because it is extremely difficult to approximate something that complex in impact and temporality and contextual specificities change the accounting of estimates at every possible step— a country is going to differ from a state/ province, which is going to be distinct from the city, the town as well, and right down to a humble village or hamlet. Additionally, the cost of the tax often gets transmitted to the consumer which invariably amps up the tension with rising energy prices. In France and Australia, attempts to officially increase the carbon tax were thwarted by voters angry over the increasing price of energy (Plumer and Popvich 2019). Moreover, there is no guarantee that it is either going

to reduce emissions or that the revenue generated from it will be utilized for climate adaptation.

- *Cap and Trade System*, while

Practiced in several countries but not in wide usage for controlling GHG emissions. Countries lacking a cap and trade system include⁵² the US (which has it only at the subnational level), Canada (present at the subnational level), India, Russia, Argentina, Iran among others. Furthermore, much like the carbon tax, it is extremely difficult to attribute whether the trading system is alleviating emissions when what it does create is a market for buying allowance to emit more carbon. In fact, according to a report by the WWF tracking ETS expenditure from 2013-2021 member states in the EU were found to violate the ETS Directive⁵³ which provides that Member States should use at least 50% of auctioning revenues or the equivalent for climate and energy-related purposes. Nearly 14 EU countries were not spending their 50 percent on climate action and were instead leaving the money for free allocation, non-climate action programmes, or those counterproductive to the cause of tackling climate change. Some of the countries with fault utilization of revenue comprise of Latvia (9 percent), Netherlands (0 percent), Slovakia (18 percent), Belgium (33 percent), Italy (19 percent), and Austria (0 percent). Glaringly, despite the presence of a flourishing cap and trade emissions system in California, the birthplace of said system, has seen a 3.5 percent increase in carbon emissions from its oil and gas industry since its inception (Song 2019).

Worse still, in a blow to the endeavour to reduce dependency on fossil fuels, the source of carbon emissions, the 2023 production gap report revealed that countries such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the

⁵² A geographical representation of countries with established emissions trading systems (ETS) available on <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/carbon-emissions-trading-system>

⁵³ Auctioning Revenue and its use https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-emissions-trading-system-eu-ets/auctioning_en#:~:text=The%20ETS%20Directive%20provides%20that,climate%20and%20energy%20Drelated%20purposes.

United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America continue to provide significant policy and fiscal support to facilitate fossil fuel production. In terms of absolute numbers though, the largest subsidizer was China, followed by the US, Russia, EU and India (Black et al. 2023). Earlier, in 2021, the IMF reported that the fossil fuel industry receives benefits which approximately 11 million USD a minute.

There are no disruptive measures in place to nip the supply of fossil fuels that drive anthropogenic climate change, nor any plans for the closure of industries that produce emissions—electricity and heat, transport, manufacturing, building etc. Neither is the transition to cleaner forms of energy happening efficiently. Industries still rely heavily on fossil fuels for a couple of reasons. First, today's carbon-neutral technologies face challenges in matching the performance of fossil fuels, particularly in sectors like transportation and electricity generation. Dr. Desiree Plata (2020) highlights that carbon-neutral energy currently cannot deliver the same power output for large vessels or meet escalating energy demands compared to fossil fuels.

For instance, in 2023, 61 percent of global energy demands were met through fossil fuels⁵⁴. Second, powerful political lobbies and regional organizations are at the helm of limiting or blocking proposals for the complete removal of fossil fuels from the modern capitalist economy. Case in point, days before COP 26, it was discovered that oil producers like Saudia Arabia, Australia and OPEC countries were rallying together to lobby the IPCC to remove or weaken a key component that stressed the necessity for rapidly phasing out fossil fuels.⁵⁵ Furthermore, during COP 28, Haitham Al-Ghais, secretary general of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) urged all member countries (including those in the extended circle of OPEC Plus) to scuttle any action, policy or programme that would impact the extraction, production and trade of oil and gas. Calling them politically motivated campaigns to jeopardize the livelihood and lifestyle of their citizens, he warned of unintended consequences of brash action, especially given the lack of technology to completely transfer systems to green/carbon neutral

⁵⁴ Global Electricity Trends, Ember Climate (2023) <https://ember-climate.org/countries-and-regions/world/>

⁵⁵ Leaked documents collated and disseminated by Greenpeace's Investigation Team, 2021 <https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2021/10/21/leaked-climate-lobbying-ipcc-glasgow/>

technology (Tso, Krol and Plata, 2020). Second, the cost of new greener and carbon-neutral technologies is prohibitively high and is not yet at a scale or capacity for mass production of the desired degree of energy or product. Third, the high costs of laying down the infrastructure, transitioning to it and maintenance of the same have not been empirically tested. In fact, a study, *Geophysical constraints on the reliability of solar and wind power worldwide* (2021) analyzed by Dr. Kooten from the Fraser Institute stated that it did not account for real-world constraints. Lastly, the expedited timeline demanded of such measures often lacks cognizance of the various socio-economic differences and political realities that make it difficult for, say electric vehicles to become mostly common in Norway or be extremely uncommon in South Africa or Croatia.

4.1.4. The Results: Was Climate Change Nipped ?

Aggregate emissions reductions over the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol are generally said to hover between 7 percent and 12.5 percent, therefore comfortably exceeding the 5.2 percent pledge, but this reduction only entailed CO₂, rather than all greenhouse gases). The decarbonization of the power sector is underway, as record growth in wind, solar, nuclear and hydro energy, up by nearly 14 percent, drove the emissions intensity of the world's electricity to its lowest-ever level in 2022. Within this, wind and solar reached a record high of 12 percent share of power generation in 2022 with solar recording 25 percent growth and wind power 13.5 percent.⁵⁶ The figures increasingly point to the probability of economies being able to triple renewable energy by 2030. Encouragingly, the global market for green technology and sustainability is projected to increase from approximately USD 29 billion in 2024 to USD 135 billion by 2030. The prospects look to be brighter, better and more hopeful.

However, these positive figures are juxtaposed by contradictions which come in the form of the continued prevalence of fossil fuels. The Annual Greenhouse Gas Index (AGGI) by NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) indicates that between 1990 and 2022, the warming impact on our climate, or radiative forcing, surged by 49 percent. Among these gases, CO₂ contributed approximately 78 percent to this rise. As of 2022, global average concentrations

⁵⁶ Energy Institute Insights by Source, Statistical Review (2023) <https://www.energyinst.org/statistical-review/insights-by-source>

of carbon dioxide (CO₂), considered the most significant greenhouse gas, exceeded pre-industrial levels by 50 percent for the first time, and these concentrations were projected to continue rising in 2023. Worryingly, the annual Global Carbon Budget estimates that total global CO₂ emissions are projected to be 40.9 billion tonnes in 2023, similar to 2022 levels, reflecting a decade-long plateau rather than the necessary sharp decline to meet climate goals. Additionally, atmospheric CO₂ levels are forecasted to average 419.3 parts per million in 2023, representing a 51 percent increase from pre-industrial levels.⁵⁷

The Production Gap Report 2023 reveals alarming projections: a sampling of government plans worldwide indicate a 110 percent increase in fossil fuel production by 2030, exceeding what's possibly compatible with the 1.5°C target set in the Paris Agreement, and a 69 percent increase beyond what's sustainable for the 2°C warming benchmark. Specifically, these plans entail a 460 percent rise in coal production, 83 percent in gas, and 29 percent in oil, far surpassing the allowable carbon budget for limiting warming to 1.5°C (Carrington 2023).

The findings underscore the yawning gap between national climate pledges and fossil fuel production, a trend that has remained largely unchanged since the UN voiced it in the first Production Gap Report in 2019. The focus on fossil fuel consumption and utilization as the backbone of the modern capitalist economy has not ceased or diminished despite the numerous warnings that have been made by scientists since the very beginning of academic and scholastic work on global warming and climate change.

Thus, the measures undertaken for climate change cannot be considered extraordinary.

5.2. Covid-19

As the world grappled with the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, cutting across societal boundaries of class, economic status, gender, and belief systems, a unified response

⁵⁷ For all relevant insights, please refer to <https://globalcarbonbudget.org/fossil-co2-emissions-at-record-high-in-2023/>

emerged, marked by a set of universally embraced measures. These actions, though nuanced regionally, shared a common purpose: to prevent the propagation of the virus.

- International and regional travel restrictions unless deemed essential
- Border closures
- Compulsory masking in all public areas and social distancing norms.
- Public gatherings curtailed
- Educational institutions, offices and other non-essential establishments shuttered
- Vaccination advisories and issuance of vaccine passes for access and services
- Basic hygiene practices like handwashing and sanitization, coupled with protocols for sneezing and coughing, became fundamental tenets of public health consciousness.
- Isolation and quarantine upon infection or coming in contact with infected individual
- Contact tracing via apps, neighborhood committees, and regional health ministries to isolate infections and hotspots.

The deluge of information from an assortment of sources, which ranged from international organizations such as the WHO to national organizations of international acclaim such as the CDC (Center for Disease Control) to health departments of individual countries that were at the forefront of public safety, made it so no one could impugn the legitimacy of the advice and information, but it made it difficult to discern from whom came what information or advice. The assumption was that these were common, ubiquitous, necessary, and that they worked.

Thus, it is interesting to note the divergence from soft guidelines to concrete enforcement, where countries autonomously implemented measures like border closures, travel bans, nationwide lockdowns, and industry shutdowns. This proactive stance, while effective, deviated from the World Health Organization's (WHO) initial recommendations, highlighting a departure from conventional public health strategies. The WHO, governed by the International Health Regulations (IHR), maintains a core mandate to safeguard global operations and supply chains, thereby refraining from endorsing drastic measures that impede international traffic and trade⁵⁸. However,

⁵⁸ Article 2 of the IHR states the scope of the resolutions are to *prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade*. The matter of interference and rupturing of supply chains and human mobility will be

the pandemic's severity compelled nations to escalate responses, signifying both a collective vigilance against the virus and a departure from established protocols.

This escalation showcased two critical facets: first, states independently fortified defences against the virus, and second, despite lacking a unified global framework akin to climate change conventions or the COPs to discuss a unified plan of action against a security threat, a remarkable convergence emerged in the actions taken. This convergence invites scrutiny through three lenses: the coercive measures deployed, the effectiveness of standalone measures, and the lasting impact of these responses.

4.2.1. Institutional Securitization of Covid-19: Does it meet the standards ?

The initial response to a crisis such as a pandemic often leans towards governmental intervention due to the perception that the failure of institutions and mechanisms are largely (not completely) to blame for damage caused by the externality, in this case, the Covid-19 pandemic (Marciano and Ramello 2022, 2⁵⁹). Thus, the response, which entailed coercive policies, was certainly extraordinary but was expected and accepted as a matter of course to deal with the acute problem. As such, redistributing rights-based liberty to favour health-based ones without voluntary consent reflected the urgency of time-sensitive situations and the priority of addressing immediate concerns, such as protecting vulnerable populations, even when it comes at the expense of individual freedoms (Garzarelli, Keeton, and Siteo 2022). Consequently, governments worldwide imposed coercive measures, beginning with lockdowns, which, by May 2022, had been declared in 99 states, mostly to ensure the containment of the virus. However, other measures followed upon the realization that lockdowns are unable to eradicate the virus as much as they are capable of diminishing transmission or holding the transmission in abeyance at the cost of prohibiting (arbitrarily) the movement of people. This was ultimately the first of many coercive measures implemented throughout the pandemic.

touched upon later in the paper.

https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/43883/9789241580410_eng.pdf?sequence=1

⁵⁹ The authors have quoted this observation from Darcy Allen, Chris Berg, Sinclair Davidson and Jason Potts paper, “*On Coase and Covid-19*”, 2022

Governments thus tapped into their executive power, either by declaring a state of emergency or doing so as a matter of fact. To put it in numbers, 112 countries had declared a state of emergency or disaster or calamity either by amending their criminal code (Albania), enacting a law (Bulgaria, France, Cambodia etc.), or issuing presidential orders or decrees (Canada, Brazil, Botswana, Belgium, Australia etc.). Of these 112 countries, 67 carried out enforcement via cyber/physical surveillance (Vietnam, Venezuela, Peru etc.) and militarization (Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Romania, the Philippines, Bangladesh etc.) to ensure compliance or incarceration in the event rules were flouted. The emergency powers were further exercised to completely ban the right to assembly or specifically, non-essential gatherings (Angola, Australia, Belgium etc.), and the right to movement— within the borders of a country and outside (Argentina, Belarus, Chile, China, the Czech Republic etc.). The trend observed during the implementation of severe measures was of governments bolstering their authoritative power. Another right under put under scrutiny by political establishments was that of press freedom and the general freedom of expression to curtail ‘misinformation’ regarding government response to the pandemic. This violation is reported to have occurred in 62 countries, including, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Jordan, Turkey etc.

Furthermore, once Covid-19 vaccines had been introduced to the market, governments organized vaccination campaigns to inoculate their population en-masse, incentivized via fines or vaccination passports, which, if not acquired would preclude said individuals’ access from several places, recreational or otherwise. The latter came under many names: Green Pass/Certificate (Israel, Bulgaria), Digital Covid Certificate (EU, Taiwan), Mobility Pass (Chile), and in some countries, mobile apps were used to hold the passports while simultaneously serving as monitoring hubs for contact tracing: Arogya Setu (India), Coronapas (Denmark), VaccineGuard (Estonia), CareFIJI (Fiji), Koronavilkku (Finland) etc.

It was apparent that governments walked a fine line between implementing extraordinary measures to protect public health and potentially encroaching on individual rights or adopting authoritarian practices. This raises questions about the balance between ensuring public safety and respecting civil liberties, as well as the long-term implications for governance, democracy, economic growth

and societal trust in times of crisis (Allen et al. 2022; Garzarelli, Keeton and Siteo 2022; Geloso, Hyde and Murtazashvili 2021).

Static disruptive interventions during the Covid-19 pandemic refer to measures that significantly disrupted daily life and normal operations to halt the spread of the virus. Some examples include:

- Lockdowns: Governments imposed lockdowns at various levels, ranging from partial restrictions to complete stay-at-home orders and occasionally snap-lockdowns as were imposed in New Zealand, China and Australia. These measures restricted movement, closed non-essential businesses, and educational institutions and encouraged people to work from home. Sweden, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong were the handful of countries that were able to successfully flatten the curve without any lockdowns.
- Travel Restrictions: Countries shut down their international borders fearing the transmission of Covid through unwitting passengers from Covid hotspots, which at that point included China, Italy, India, and Brazil. Once travel was permitted beginning in October 2020, most countries required a checklist of items and actions to be fulfilled on behalf of the traveller. This checklist included: a rapid antigen (negative) test done a week or 2 weeks before travel, a vaccine passport, and one to 2 weeks of quarantine arrangements at the destination of arrival, though even these would not permit travel to high-risk regions.
- Social Distancing: Public health authorities and international health organizations issued similar guidelines on social distancing, such as maintaining a safe distance from others (2 metres to 6 metres), and avoiding large gatherings which governments began to prohibit with the codification of emergency powers, and wearing masks in public spaces and transport disobedience of which may result in a fine, punishment or incarceration (Lebanon, Indonesia, Chile, Qatar, Thailand etc.).⁶⁰
- Closure of Public Spaces and Facilities: In the same vein, public spaces like parks, recreational facilities, restaurants, schools, other educational institutions and entertainment venues were closed to minimize social interactions and potential virus transmission. Education was moved online but was marked by inequality in access and quality, especially

⁶⁰ The President of Chile and the Prime Minister of Thailand were fined USD 3,500 and USD 183 respectively for not adhering to the mask mandate.

in countries like the USA, Kenya, Brazil, Britain, and India, (Kennedy, Mejía-Rodríguez and Strello 2022; Singer 2023). Additionally, small businesses bore the brunt of the economic downturn due to the forced closures. For instance, in the USA, more than 100,000 small businesses were forced to shutter due to the losses incurred during the pandemic (Long, 2020). Many bigger businesses also began to downsize during the pandemic (except for the technology sector which inflated its numbers but currently is culling employees en-masse) putting the global unemployment rate at 6.5 percent in 2020.

In summary, the static disruptive interventions implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic were indeed extraordinary measures that disrupted daily life and status-quo. While they resulted in significant losses and hardships, including economic downturns, and social inequalities, they were deemed necessary for containing the spread of the virus. These measures, despite their coercive and isolating nature, were aimed at safeguarding public health and minimizing the impact of the pandemic. Although there was no central authority mandating these actions, least of all the WHO which was not in favour of border closures or institutional spaces being shuttered, many countries took proactive steps based on their assessments and guidelines. This demonstrates that, in the absence of a unified global framework, governments were willing to take drastic measures to address decisively a common threat, showcasing a level of successful institutional securitization in response to the crisis.

5.3. Discussion: The Challenge of Action

The examination of institutional securitization builds on the findings of discursive securitization, which revealed that both Covid-19 and climate change are moderately securitized. Rationally, both of them, once sufficiently framed justify extraordinary measures and institutional responses. However, despite comparable levels of discursive securitization, the institutional responses to Covid-19 and climate change diverged markedly.

Both phenomena were sufficiently discursively securitized due to their perceived threats, yet their trajectories diverged significantly in terms of institutional response and their tangible impact. At this point, the reader may doubt the validity of discursive securitization with the question, “Could a phenomenon be securitized at any level if the actions do not match the intensity of the narrative?”

I would like to assert that the answer to such a question is a “Yes,” for the reasons elaborated below:

- Temporal ‘Policy’ Myopia
- Lopsided Experience of Existential Threat
- Public vs Private Goods
- Fallacy of Unilateral Action

Temporal Myopia

Defined as a focus on proximal rather than distal matters, when extrapolated to policies vis-à-vis sustainability and climate action, the similarities present themselves as a human’s predisposition to prioritize short-term concerns over long-term ones (Lazarus 2009, 1174; Van der wal et al. 2018). Temporal ‘policy’ myopia often manifests itself in matters or situations where the cause and effect have a significant chasm—of time, appearance, impact— between them.

Climate Change is inherently gradual and incremental, a build-up of which (beyond a specified threshold, in this case 1.5°C and 2°C) will cause irreversible changes, mostly harmful, to the environment. Despite the obvious danger and scientific proof of the same, the staggering gap between cause and effect ensures that future utility, welfare and long-term investments are deprioritized in favour of short term economic gains, rapid growth, and expedient politics of power. Incumbent governments rely on their successors to pursue sustainable policy as they focus on short-term development and welfare policies, which, while not necessarily incorrect, is a slippery slope of buck-passing and the complete inverse of the positives associated with delayed gratification.

The experience of Covid-19 as a disaster, on the other hand, was immediate and swift given the multitude of unknowns, little to no adjustment period, and the barrage of report— of deaths, of virus mutation, of isolation, and of emergency migrations. A cloistered existence with a barrage of information with consistently evolving facts and just as many deaths and economic losses made the pandemic more immediate in memory and experience. The capacity to yield political or

constitutional either to compel new decrees or laws rendered Covid-19 more ‘approachable’ (not genial) than the pervasive phantom force of Climate Change.

Lopsided Experience of Existential Threat

As mentioned above, Covid-19’s discovery and transmission was accompanied by a bombardment of information and changes to what had been normal life: panic migrations, border closures, deaths, isolation, and overburdened hospitals among a deluge of others. Caged between four walls, at the beck and call of a virus with a transmission spanning a few days, invulnerable to physical barriers or biological ones, and information of proverbial doom and gloom in one’s country and the world made the experience intimate and frightful.

Climate Change, on the contrary, manifests its devastation through the gradual buildup of GHGs. The keyword is ‘gradual’ as it is this very gradualness on a comparative timescale with Covid-19, that gave people, companies, communities, and other bodies plenty of time to adjust and adapt to the instabilities (caused by climate change) as the new normal. Another reason that concerns the experience of the existential threat of Climate Change is the manner in which the causal relationship between natural and social disasters and climate change is articulated. It is a fact that Climate Change is a threat multiplier; however, it would be fallacious to attribute any and all natural disasters or social upheavals to it (Otto et al., 2022). There is always the possibility the losses (deaths, property etc.) or intense disasters, or the experience of such, were a consequence of existing vulnerabilities or institutional failure worsened by corruption, bureaucratic inertia, or other variables not related to climate change. Thus, the lack of a concrete attribution, regardless of scientific assertion, lends the experience of Climate Change an air of slight ambiguity, of it being a consequence of the ever-changing cycle of nature and the losses a result of governmental failure. Whereas Covid-19, which had a clearly defined vector and dangers highlighted in certainty, did not, in most cases, have a concomitant air of doubt or uncertainty (Shewly et al. 2022).

Even if all countries in the world succeeded in stopping the emission of GHGs, global warming would continue for a considerable period (Hausfather 2021). Even the best of measures that could ensure that the world does not emit more than it could absorb by 2030 would only stave off the worst of the impacts wrought by Climate Change (IPCC special report 2018). And when one talks of the adverse impacts, the extent of the damage and cost are assumed, along with a future expense on top of that. The combined factors of distance and assumption lend a sense of safety in the present, which is then afforded precedence over the promised devastation of the future (Kamarck 2019).

Public vs Private Goods

Another variable that added to the chasm between the Covid-19 and Climate Change is the assumption their classification. Climate action, given the nature of the problem that climate change poses is a public good with the (usual) accompanying 'Free-rider Problem' (Roy 2021; Leo and Singh 2022). The benefits of climate action are both 'non-excludable' and 'non-rival': once implemented, it will spillover to other countries regardless of whether the countries enjoying the benefits started anything of their own, and the enjoyment of benefits will not detract from the enjoyment of another country. This is where the free-rider problem rears its head, and for its explanation, I will use a play on the well-known statement "Privatizing gains and socializing losses" and render it as "privatizing costs and socializing gains."

The country implementing green policies bears 100 percent of the costs while realizing only a fraction of the benefits, which often spill-over national borders due to the global nature of climate challenges and solutions. This spillover effect not only fails to incentivize green actions but instead encourages free-riding behaviors, undermining national climate objectives. Moreover, when viewed through the lens of behavioral psychology, a community of states is susceptible to 'Bystander Apathy.' This phenomenon results in a diminished sense of collective responsibility, exacerbated by attribution errors where members defer responsibility to others, leading to reduced accountability and action.

In contrast, public health measures during the Covid-19 pandemic straddled the line between a public good and private good. Publicly accessible to all without exclusion, the benefits of

immunity against the virus did not naturally extend across borders. Effective containment policies and vaccination efforts primarily benefited the populations of countries implementing them rigorously. Unlike climate challenges, public health crises benefited from a fusion of public good attributes with private gains, incentivizing action. Good health and immunity is a function of human biology, which, unlike the environment or climate, is not malleable to spill-overs. Climate change, lacking a similar intersection of private gain and public good, remains highly vulnerable to collective action dilemmas, particularly when juxtaposed with national priorities and diverse policy imperatives.

Fallacy of Unilateral Action

Health and immunity are functions of a human's immediate environment and the strength of their biology, and thus the impact of health related initiatives, policies, and actions remain restricted to a geographical territory where authorities and organizations can effectively facilitate the conditions of the citizens health or the public's health. Given that the health of the population of a country is closely associated with the functioning of its economy, its institutions— big and small— and everything that one associates with the 'everyday' in the modern state, the imperative to act to address an 'in your face, in your home' problem is far greater than the will to take action for one that is distant, incomprehensible, and mostly immune to control or suppression (i.e. the environment and climate). Individual action therefore produces a noticeable impact to a tangible problem, and it obviates the local apparatus kicking into gear when an epidemic, pandemic, or unknown infection strikes (King and Koski, 2020).

Climate action, in the words of Article 7 of the Paris Agreement, is the “global goal of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability....” to a global challenge like Climate Change. The consequences wrought by are not confined to geographical borders or specific ecosystems; its impact is instead— cross-border and nigh-universal, ranging from rampant migration, raging storms, and heatwaves of epic proportions to desertification and island submersions (Groundstroem 2023). One country's positive actions, no matter how well-meaning, will not put a dent in the ground that needs to be covered if the rest of the world is coveting affluence and consumption that taxes more and more of the environment. Therefore, climate action

necessitates international cooperation, uniformity of commitments and goals, and proper enforcement.

The comparison of institutional securitization highlights key limitations in the applicability of Securitization Theory (ST). Covid-19's immediate, tangible nature aligns well with ST's emphasis on framing urgent threats to justify extraordinary measures. In contrast, climate change's systemic complexity, temporal delay, and collective action challenges stretch the conventional boundaries of ST. While both crises were moderately securitized at the discursive level, their institutional trajectories diverged due to differences in urgency, experience, and the structural nature of the threats. For instance, when the goal in question was to mitigate the spread of a virus, countries were able to take independent initiative, without any limitations imposed by a pact or treaty. Since most of the extraordinary acts were localized, the benefits, that is, the reopening of public spaces and other establishments, were enjoyed more locally than globally. This meant that countries had to act on their own to ensure that their economies could resume functioning optimally. Thus, Covid-19 required a global commitment to action, which was more or less independent, but not global cooperative action to address said problem.

6. Conclusion

In addressing the research question, *“To what extent can securitization help one understand differential responses in the cases of the Covid-19 pandemic and Climate Change?”* this thesis has explored the applicability of Securitization Theory (ST) to emerging human security concerns—health and environmental crises. The analysis demonstrates that both Covid-19 and climate change have been discursively securitized to a moderate degree, with Discursive Securitization Scores (DSS) of 5.60 and 7.05, respectively (*See Appendix B*). This finding confirms that both crises have been framed as existential threats, fulfilling ST's key premise that threats can be socially constructed and legitimized through discourse.

However, the study reveals important limitations in the theory's ability to fully account for the institutional trajectories of these crises. While both Covid-19's and climate change achieved moderate securitization at the discursive level, their institutional responses diverged significantly.

Covid-19 triggered immediate, extraordinary measures such as lockdowns, emergency laws, and mass vaccination drives. Climate change, in contrast, remains characterized by incremental and often delayed action due to consensus building processes (this is not to malign them, but a matter of an observation).

This contrast does not invalidate the securitization of climate change discourse; rather, it underscores the complexity of translating securitized narratives into institutional outcomes. Discursive securitization is necessary, but not sufficient, for extraordinary action. Factors beyond the discourse influence the “loop” between framing and action, including:

1. Temporal Policy Myopia: Covid-19, as an immediate and tangible crisis, elicited rapid responses. Climate change’s gradual and long-term impacts introduce temporal distance, causing short-term priorities to supersede long-term threats.
2. Experience of Existential Threat: Covid-19’s immediacy—visible infections, fatalities, and economic disruption—created a palpable sense of crisis. Climate change, despite its existential framing, manifests diffusely across time and space, allowing societies to adapt or normalize its impacts.
3. Public vs Private Goods: Covid-19’s health interventions offered localized and immediate benefits, incentivizing swift action. Climate change, as a global public good, suffers from free-rider problems, where individual actors bear the costs of action while benefits are distributed globally.
4. The Nature of Action: Covid-19 required unilateral, geographically focused actions (e.g., lockdowns, vaccinations) that aligned with national priorities. Climate change necessitates collective, coordinated efforts across borders, making it more challenging to operationalize securitized discourse into action.

The findings suggest that climate change’s securitization can be conceptualized as an open circuit—one where discursive framing has succeeded in articulating the threat but struggles to overcome the structural and temporal barriers that impede extraordinary institutional action. Covid-19’s “closed circuit,” by comparison, demonstrates how immediacy, visibility and clarity

of causality of threat can lead to decisive institutional responses, aligning closely with ST's assumptions.

This distinction does not imply that climate change action is ineffective or misplaced. Rather, it highlights the need for context-specific responses that align with the nature and scope of the threat. Unlike Covid-19, which could be addressed with targeted interventions like vaccines, climate change requires systemic, long-term strategies involving mitigation, adaptation, and equitable cooperation.

Drawing from historical successes like the Montreal Protocol (1985), which effectively reduced CFC emissions, or localized interventions like China's Great Green Wall and Yacouba Sawadogo's "zai" method in Burkina Faso, it is evident that existential threats require tailored approaches. Uniform, universal, and overly securitized interventions run the risk of immobility, bombastic rhetoric, and symbolic gestures that undermine effective action.

The findings of this thesis highlight both the strengths and limitations of Securitization Theory (ST). ST remains a valuable framework for understanding how crises are framed as existential threats, but its applicability weakens when confronted with slow-onset, systemic challenges like climate change. The theory's emphasis on urgency and extraordinary measures aligns well with crises that have clear referent objects, temporal immediacy, and observable impacts, as seen with Covid-19. However, climate change stretches these boundaries, revealing the need to adapt ST to account for:

- Temporal Dynamics: The interplay between short-term framing and long-term policy action.
- Global Collective Action: How structural barriers influence the translation of discourse into institutional outcomes.
- Systemic Threats: The challenges of applying securitization frameworks to hyperobjects (Morton, 2013) with diffuse and multifaceted impacts.

While discursive securitization establishes the urgency of action, it is not the sole determinant of institutional responses. Climate change and Covid-19 serve as comparative sites to evaluate the

applicability of ST, revealing that different existential threats require differentiated approaches. Over-securitizing issues risks reducing them to immobility or symbolism, while under-securitizing them may delay necessary action.

The findings of this thesis pave the way for a more nuanced understanding of securitization theory and its application to modern human security challenges. By recognizing the limits of discourse alone and emphasizing adaptive, context-specific solutions, we can ensure that responses to global crises are commensurate with their scale, complexity, and urgency. Not every problem requires a wrecking ball—sometimes, a well-placed stitch or incremental effort can yield transformative results.

7. APPENDIX

APPENDIX A DISCOURSE TABLES

1. Excerpts by Security Level: Common Narratives between Climate Change and Covid-19:

Securitization Level	Narrative Element	Covid-19 Excerpts	Climate Change Excerpts
High	Hyperboles and Literary Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Life-destroying pandemic” - “Shield of restrictions, with the sword of our vaccination” - “Biggest threat after World War II” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Historical turning point” - “Race against time” - “Landmark in the history of mankind”
	Fight/Confrontation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Invisible killer” - “Defeat the virus” - “Unprecedented emergency” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Fight against climate change” - “Pressing problem of mankind” - “Global catastrophe”
	Security Framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “War against” - “State of emergency” - “Winning the war” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Securing the future” - “Critical to survival and growth” - “Degradation of habitability”

This table presents highly securitizing narratives, as these emphasize urgency, existential threats, and the use of dramatic or militarized language. By focusing on shared elements, it reveals how the security discourse frames crises differently but shares common rhetorical tools.

There is absence of commonalities with moderately securitizing narratives as mid-level ones are often nuanced and context specific, thus I focused on highly securitizing language to emphasize the comparative analysis of extreme framing.

The excerpts used in the table were chosen for their illustrative value, highlighting key aspects of securitization:

- Hyperboles and Literary Devices: Showcase the dramatization of threats.
- Fight/Confrontation: Reflect the militarization of language in addressing crises.
- Security Framing: Tie both crises to human and territorial survival.

2. Covid-19 Narratives and Discourses Compilation (High and Moderate Securitization)

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
Highly Securitized	Typically involves framing an issue as an existential threat that requires extraordinary measures, often invoking urgency, fear, a metaphorical call to arms. The terms associated with such a discourse encapsulate a sense of danger, a call to sacrifice, and that of crisis. For example, in the context of Covid-19, phrases like "national emergency ", "fighting the virus", etc.		44	651
Focus on Coronavirus Transmission Containment	Parts conveying the imperative to prevent coronavirus from spreading due to its quick transmission, lack of immunity and the dearth of information as to its long-terms effects on the human immune system.	Containing the virus, reduce potential exposure, reduce risk of spreading the	23	43

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
		coronavirus, etc.		
Hard or Extraordinary Containment Measures	Measures or policy moves by the government that invert the status-quo of everyday life or disrupt the exercise of fundamental rights of citizens and individuals from different countries. Such measures can include prohibition on movement in and outside the country, monitoring the exercise of free speech, or actively invading the domestic space of the individual via constant surveillance, among others.	Nationwide Lockdown, Cancelling visas, non-essential travel prohibited, restrict gatherings, freedom of assembly and movement are restricted, etc.	28	114
Border Closures			9	12
Lockdowns			9	17
Right to Association and Assembly			13	15
Right to Movement			16	39
Restricting People from Specific Countries			7	9
Right to Work and Labour	Establishments ranging from schools, colleges, parlours, restaurants, offices, gyms, among others being shuttered for whatever duration		8	8

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
	prescribed to contain transmission.			
Suspending the right to vote			2	2
Hyperboles Highlighting Covid-19's Gravity as a Contemporary Event	The dramatization of the threat of the virus elevated by the use of literary devices, and comparison to historical events.	Greatest challenge in history, setting up “shields”, virus has destroyed the world, monumental struggle, etc.	17	34
National Security	National security encompasses a nation’s defence against war, management of crises, preparedness for disasters, and mitigation of existential threats when they directly impact national interests.	Armed forces, State of Emergency, national crisis, public health emergency, all out war, people’s war for epidemic control, etc.	28	125
Existential Threat	A danger that poses a fundamental risk to the survival or irreversible harm of a system, species, or entity. Unlike crises or conflicts, it endangers existence itself, requiring urgent and global		8	8

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
	action to prevent catastrophic outcomes.			
Military and Armed Forces Action			6	15
Military Called in			10	22
Police force			4	4
Public (Health) Emergency Declaration			16	37
War Metaphors	The categorical reference to the effort against the Covid-19 being a war. It is a term that carries with itself the implication of a large scale existential struggle with profound stakes, prolonged consequences, and the historical weight of culture, ideology and nationhood.		12	35
Wartime Laws and Acts			1	4
Sacrifice and Martyrdom		Your shared sacrifice, serve on the frontlines, great heroes, move forward as a united people, medical	25	82

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
		workers fought with courage, died in the line of duty, etc.		
Civic Duty to and for the Nation	This type of sacrifice involves contributions from ordinary people who step up during times of national crisis or war, without prior obligation, at the urge of leaders or both. It is a voluntary or morally compelled action rather than a contractual duty, as say, soldiers or medical practitioners bound by contract may be obligated towards. These actions come with significant personal costs, such as rationing resources, volunteering, or even risking their lives.		17	40
Heroism of the Frontline Workers			16	30
Medical Practitioners as Warriors	Portrayal of medical practitioners as warriors in the proverbial war against Covid-19. This can extend to them being referred to as martyrs who "passed away in the line of duty", and other phrases or terms that frame their duties as contributions to the cause of national security.		6	14

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
State of Disaster	Sudden, severe events caused by natural phenomena, necessitating immediate emergency response lest their impact exacerbates the damage to tangible and intangible (economic stability, mental health, social cohesion, etc.) institutions and structures.	Alert Level 3, declaration of a national state of disaster, Stafford Act invoked, etc.	11	22
Disaster Laws and Special Regulations			5	8
Terms Implying Battles and Conflict (Against the Coronavirus)	The struggle against Covid-19 as a fight, highlighting the confrontation between humanity and a pervasive, adaptive threat (the virus in this case). It underscores the resilience, determination, and collective efforts required to combat a crisis that endangers lives, disrupts systems, and tests the limits of national and global preparedness.	Fight, defeat the virus, confront the virus, win the war, deadly Covid-19 Pandemic, combating corona, etc.	40	231
Metaphorical or Comparative References to Highlight Severity of the Covid 19 Pandemic	The utilization of metaphors or other great events of the past, such as wars, epidemics, to portray the virus as a challenge on par with those or something even greater or dangerous.		10	19
The Enemy Virus	Terms and phrases that implicate the Coronavirus as an foreign adversary or antagonist to the state interest, security, its people,		10	16

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
	government and/or humanity writ large that requires to be subject to a resounding defeat to stop being a detriment. These terms include "unseen enemy", "invisible enemy" or simply the enemy."			
The Fight Against the Virus	Terms and phrases included refer to the active confrontation being led by governments to address, contain, limit and possibly exterminate the Covid-19 virus. The terms are varied but include those like, "combat", "defeating the virus", "battle", amongst others.		34	150
Widespread Crisis	A large-scale disruption that destabilizes systems, endangers lives, and impacts multiple domains, arising from systemic failures, natural events, or global challenges. It demands collective action to address its far-reaching consequences.		23	46
Moderately Securitized	Frame the pandemic as an issue alarm and/or a serious problem but not inclined to elevate it as an immediate or calamitous threat than an assertive security threat		24	48
Committees and Campaigns for	Groups or official committees, whether they be composed of government officials from varying	Operation Warp Speed, Task force, Africa	19	34

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
Focused Goals to Handle Covid 19	ministries or specialists from the field of health, finance, etc. to fend off, offset and address the Covid-19 pandemic in their country	Medical Supplies Portal, Covid-19 Response Fund, National Ventilator Project, Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan” (Self Reliant India Campaign, etc.		
Special Task Force			10	10
Other Concerns to Public Health		Governance, wild-game industry, public health apparatus, etc.	2	2
Vulnerability of a Specific Demographic	References to the increased vulnerability of a specific segment of a population to the virus, such as the elderly, children, etc.	The elderly, those with pre-existing medical conditions, vulnerability of populations (mentioned in text: Peruvians, Americans,	7	12

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
		Indians, Italians among others), etc.		

3. Climate Change Narratives and Discourses Compilation (High and Moderate Securitization)

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
Highly Securitized	Typically involves framing an issue as an existential threat that requires extraordinary measures, often invoking urgency, fear, a metaphorical call to arms or community action to address a phenomenon that will render humankind and security moot. The terms associated with such a discourse encapsulate a sense of danger, a call to sacrifice, and that of crisis. For example, in the context of Climate Change, phrases like "environmental emergency ", "combat", " existential threat." etc.		25	305
Increasing Harm due to Climate Change	Alluding to the growing acuity of dangers and threats precipitated by the persistence (and lack of action to handle) the problem of climate change.	Causing 909,000 deaths, environmental destruction and habitat loss, increasing dangers,	7	14

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
		persistent crises, etc.		
Human Security	The protection of individuals against dangers such as poverty, pollution, hunger, etc. that are detrimental to the long-term well-being of people. Unlike conventional security that often relies on the vagaries of foreign policy, human security is focused on ensuring a sense of safety and confidence within individuals towards the quality of their lives.	Increasing pollution of water bodies, dead zones, rapid desertification of habitable land, coastal submersion, survival at stake, existential challenge, dislocation, climate migration, etc.	17	101
Definite Climactic and Environmental Vulnerabilities	The explicit naming and explanation of vulnerabilities induced by climate change related weather phenomenon by state leaders and other significant representatives. For instance, coastal submersion for AOSIS states or the dangers of desertification for those belonging to the African Group of countries.		11	52
Environmental Security			1	2
Existential Concern	Statements, phrases, problems or other expressions that call into question the continued survival of a state or a		11	46

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
	group of countries in the face of climate induced changes in weather phenomena, temperature patterns and ecology.			
Hyperboles with Reference to Climate Change	Utilization of Hyperboles, and other literary devices such as allusion, paradoxes, anaphoras, irony, imageries, among other to highlight the threat climate change and its induced disasters can cause and will most certainly cause.	landmark in the history of mankind, harbinger of a new era, thirteenth labour of Hercules, Great Wall against sandstorms, man is a disease of the planet, etc.	13	38
Serious Consequences	Statements to express the need to limit the damage from human actions to outright safeguarding the environment from further degradation to ensure human survival.	Desertification, deforestation, alkalization of waters, bleached coral reefs, air pollution, etc.	8	35
Terms Framing Climate Change as a Confrontation	The struggle against Climate Change as a persistent fight, highlighting the confrontation between humanity and the community of states against mother nature and a continuously expanding repertoire of cascading effects of global warming and climate change.	Global catastrophe, grave problem, challenge, threatening complex of problems, acute ecological crises, Combat climate change, etc.	13	117

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
Crisis	The realization and active acknowledgement of the known risks and dangers of disasters caused by climate change.		11	39
Danger			7	24
Fight	The implication of an ongoing confrontation against climate change to ensure a degree of protection from its consequences.		4	16
Frontlines			2	2
Threat of the Problem of Climate Change	Used as catch-all term signifying the lack of knowledge of the far-reaching consequences of the same.		9	38
Moderately Securitized	Frames climate change (or global warming) as an issue alarm and/or a serious problem that requires to be addressed but not asserting on it in a manner that elevates it to an immediate calamitous threat. Rather, it frames it one that requires handling, albeit in a given time frame (which is subject to change with research, and such, can be low or high).		16	80
Environmental Destruction		Destroying the environment, rapid degradation, environmental	11	16

Name	Description	Excerpts	Files	References
		problems, ecological decline, risks of decline, etc.		
Global Cooperation and Common Responsibility	The expression of the necessity of global cooperation and responsibility towards addressing climate change and global warming. Collective Action is the focus of statements and terms that allude to the above.	Mitigating effects of global warming, necessity of mitigation, international cooperation, common responsibility, humankind must preserve, etc.	16	59
Mitigation and Adaptation	Strategies to offset or adjust to, rather than push back or disregard, the effects of climate change and global warming		9	11
Urgent Action Needed	Statements alluding to the necessity of immediate or urgent action to address global warming and climate change.		7	18

APPENDIX B

DSS Tables attached with the thesis. Format of excel table not compatible with the current version of word.

8. References

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