

## Postcolonialism, History, Security, Racism and South-Asian Experiences: Decolonizing Western-Centrism

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Article Info	Abstract
<p><b>Article History</b></p> <p>Received: June 12, 2021</p> <p>Accepted: January 17, 2022</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords :</b> Postcolonialism, Decolonization, Security, Speech Acts, South Asia</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> 10.5281/zenodo.5860687</p>	<p><i>This essay aims to establish a wider understanding of insecurity by decolonizing the field of security studies. It is argued that security should be viewed in a non-European manner, and for this to happen, arguments must be based on relational and post-colonial critique. The first section argues that the emancipatory concept of securitization is parochial due to its deliberate lack of focus on the transformation of Westernized global politics, causing it to mold itself as merely a 'diverse' post-cold war growth of traditional security theory. Secondly, a post-colonial account through Muppidi's historical amnesia is taken in support of the seminal work of Edward Said, to provide deeper theorizing to the insecurities of marginalized people, to analyze the exclusionary nature of the securitization theory. In the third section, the contribution of post-colonial enrichments of 'orientalism' are used in interpreting Eurocentric knowledge production of Indian experiences in World War Two. Finally, the study will recognize racism and racist logic of speech acts in securitization theory, through Howell and Mbembe to recognize how racism works post-colonially.</i></p>

### Introduction

This essay aims to establish a wider understanding of insecurity by “decolonizing” the field of security studies (Fiona B. Adamson, 2020). It is argued that security should be viewed in a non-European manner, and for this to happen, arguments must be based on relational and post-colonial critique. If this is not done, then any Western canonized theory would be applied as the only alternative for the marginalized objects of security, thus, completely expunging the historical relations between states, colonial/imperial legacies and North-South insecurities.

The first section argues that the emancipatory concept of securitization is parochial due to its deliberate lack of focus on the transformation of Westernized global politics, causing it to mold itself as merely a ‘diverse’ post-cold war growth of traditional security theory. Thus, not critical of classic security theory, but nuanced in nature. Secondly, I argue that the exclusionary nature of the securitization theory causes it to carry orientalist values created by Europeans (Allison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, 2020). A post-colonial account through Muppidi’s historical amnesia is taken in support of the seminal work of Edward Said, to provide deeper theorizing to the insecurities of marginalized people. In the third section, the contribution of post-colonial enrichments of ‘orientalism’ are used in interpreting Eurocentric knowledge production of Indian experiences in World War Two. Finally, I will recognize racism and racist logic of speech acts in securitization theory, through Howell and Mbembe to recognize how racism works post-colonially.

### Post-Colonial Enrichment of Emancipation

This section provides post-colonial critique to display that emancipatory concepts given by Booth, as a part of critical security studies, are not critical of the traditional security framework. It will be shown that this is because, Critical Security Studies (CSS) is designed in a ‘parochial manner’ (Pinar Bilgin, 2010) to maintain Western dominance within the agency of security which leads to a restricted ‘problem solving’ methodology in securitization theory.

After the Cold-War, emancipation was positioned at the center of the new security framework, thus shifting the focus from the state as the referent object to the individual (Ken Booth, 1991), Booth defined emancipation as the freedom of people from those physical and human restraints which stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do (Booth, 1991). Critical Security Studies therefore casts a new light over the constraints which people face, by redefining them as insecurities produced by the threat of ‘war, poverty, reduced education, and political oppression’ (Booth, 1991). However, what should be noted is that Booth is merely critical of traditional security studies: he simply recognizes these security-constraints. His analysis is not

deep enough to recognize the historical hegemony of the current structures which generate these constraints, and as such insecurities for people in the Global South.

Pertaining to the criticism above, the main contradiction within the emancipatory project is that security was to be institutionally steered by the major powers tasked with the maintenance and expansion of the liberal market's hegemony (Nik Hynek & David Chandler, 2013). As Hynek argues, there was little consideration of emancipatory agency by Booth within the theorizing of emancipatory practices (Hynek & Chandler, 2013). What this meant was that where emancipation was to start with the security of 'the poor, the disadvantaged, voiceless, unrepresented and powerless' (Alex Bellamy and Paul Williams, 2007), the fact that the agencies of emancipation were the same Western states and international institutions operating with the support of Western academic-advocates of emancipation, showed otherwise. This showed that Critical Security Studies had vowed to polish the post-Cold War 'world order' and not replace it. Consequently, concurring with Hynek it must be said that emancipatory 'study' of security must not be confused with its 'critique'.

Critiquing emancipation, is then, as Bilgin argues, about the ability to identify Critical Security Studies as narrow due to its Western-centrism which is based on a disregard for non-Western insecurities. Therefore, Booth's approach is constricted to the production of a 'problem-solving' behavior of security, because it only tends to solve crisis without accounting for the hegemonic structures and interests leading up to the insecurity of people in the Global South (Adamson, 2020). Many authors apply this limited methodology, Mateson, for example, observes the security concerns of excluding Islamist opposition groups, but does not wholly dichotomize the historical structures that have produced them (Ioana Emy Mateson, 2019). Thus, emancipation advocates a mere reform of the existent institutional structures, legitimizing the current global order's historical oppression while silencing the counter narratives of the non-Western experiences.

Robert Cox has explained the scope of critical studies by differentiating between two perspectives of theorizing (Robert Cox, 1981). The first type focuses on a direct response. This aims to resolve the problems posed within the expressions of a specific viewpoint which was the point of departure (Cox, 1981). Alternatively, the second one is more reflective upon the process of theorizing itself, and this supports the claims of post-colonial critique which asks securitization theory to strongly realize the standpoint that gives rise to its theoretical conceptualization and relationship with "other perspectives", i.e. non-Western insecurities. This means that Critical Security Studies use the direct purpose policy, where looking at historical relations of oppression, colonial and imperial structures are ignored.

Relating to the aforementioned analysis on the parochial aspects of Critical Security Studies, post-colonial approaches to security and emancipation would not just state the affairs as a specific problem, but enrich an understanding of their formation relationally to institutionally de-colonize security studies, and legitimize the insecurities of the Global South. Practically, then post-colonial critique manages to achieve a wider scope of forming a perspective on perspectives. This is why employing a postcolonial security critique would enrich security studies by preventing a knee-jerk reaction of "problem solving" through recognizing that 'emancipatory' institutions are in need of relational restructuring, not just reform (Adamson, 2020; Cox, 1981).

### **Eurocentrism in Traditional Security Studies: Decolonizing Absences & Colonial Amnesia**

This section argues that post-colonial critique prescribes a broader approach of "deep theorizing" (Felix Berenskoetter, 2018). Such an approach to security uncovers, per Bilgin, blind-spots which are used to create historical absences. These absences create colonial amnesia, the operations of which are discussed below. Consequently, employing Edward Said's Orientalism, it will be demonstrated that this process is cultivated and disseminated by Eurocentric means of knowledge-production to marginalize oriental insecurities experienced through the havoc of World War II.

Having shown that the current approach to securitization is guided by an exclusionary logic, it follows that its methodology is based on the creation of "blind spots" in security studies, which forces non-Western (oriental) insecurities to be forgotten in history and scholarship. In support of Alexander's view, Bilgin explains that, these blind-spots actually consist of 'historical absences' (Bilgin, 2010) that limit traditional and critical securitization theory to its Western-centric understandings (Ben Alexander, 2006). This Western-centrism confers the actions of colonial powers a 'normative' value and erases the orient's experiences in global politics by manipulating the facts of colonial-periods in history. It is argued that this process may be seen in light of Muppidi's conceptualization of 'colonial amnesia', which is based on historicizing violence and the anguish of the oppressed, in ways that are 'well-placed' and justified within the context framed by European colonial regimes (Himadeep Muppidi, 2012). As a result, the orient is not only physically and socio-economically colonized, but even their experiences as to colonial oppressions are obfuscated by imperious justifications. Consequently, post-colonial critique aims to enrich security studies to a deeper level where a forgotten colonial past or 'colonial memory' is inspected all inclusively.

Williams rightly recognized a need to decolonize various Eurocentric or Western-centric lessons theorized from the consequences of the Second World War (Columba Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams, 2014). It is due to Eurocentrism of historical knowledge that it is impossible to remember how the West was murderous for the East. As recognized by Barkawi and Laffey security studies rests on Eurocentric assumptions, for example the historicizing of World War II as the ‘good war’ (Tarak Barkawi & Mark Laffey, 2006). This war is narrated as a struggle between democracy and totalitarianism, freedom and tyranny, in which the ‘good guys’ won. However, in the following segment, it is contended that in the colonized or Orient’s world, the meaning of that conflict was of an inter-imperial war, (Ernest Mandel, 1986) with no place for the suffering of the colonized people in it.

European predominance has been based on colonial propriety to produce knowledge about the Orient – ironically – without accounting for any oriental resistance against it. Edward Said explains Eurocentrism or Orientalism as a European mechanism which grants the Western man “positional superiority” through an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, i.e. colonial and imperialist (Edward W. Said, 1979). These powers can be shaped by the exchange with political, intellectual and moral control. In essence, it is a disciplinary methodology of ideas about what ‘we’ (Colonial West) do and what ‘they’ (Orient) cannot do or understand as the European thinker or man does. Hobson explains that Orientalism has operated to give a powerful identity to the Western man - who was elevated to the permanent ‘proactive subject’ of global political economy – in past and present.

### ***World War Two: Justified Oppression(s)?***

Both sides of World War II revolved around imperialist interests of the acclaimed ‘advanced nations’. Accordingly, the Nazi plunder in German colonies and concentration camps was only recognized, because Allied colonies were insecure of the growing German influence. This, is a Eurocentric account of traditional security studies, and – as shown below - indeed Said stands corrected; the Western man’s insecurities overthrew all the experiences of the Orient Indian creating a different colonial memory, through the deliberate creation of blind-spots, which made the Bengal famine historically absent.

Massacre amongst the ‘natives’ or orients was characteristic of European expansion into their territories, which permitted the Western dominance over the non-European world. Although, the Atlantic Charter stressed the rights of all peoples to self-government, but Europeans construed this covenant through their insecurities, as relating only to populace subjected to Nazi oppression and occupation. As Lindqvist notes, the German Holocaust was unique, but only in ‘European’ terms (Sven Lindqvist, 1996). It is claimed that whilst the Europeans were fighting the “good war”, one against fascism and concentration camps, death was also being normalized by British imperialists in the former sub-continent.

During the Second World War, Churchill expropriated the Indian grain market, sending their rice to London in return for war-military equipment back to the colony (Paul Greenough, 1982). Despite a famine occurring, Westminster refused to alter shipping space away from military purposes. Consequently, approximately, 3.5–3.8 million Bengalis – more than ‘half a Holocaust’ – died in 1944 (Greenough, 1982), because of colonial prioritization of the European liberal war between Western-colonizers. Bhuyan rightly recognized that the orient was genuinely insecure about both Allied (Good Europeans) ambitions and Axis (Bad Europeans) brutality, as they were essentially imperialist and colonialist in character (Arun Chandra Bhuyan, 1975). They were afraid that, liberation through self-rule was intended only for Europeans, and not the equally dehumanized Indians.

Indeed, British colonial policies in the sub-continent were forgotten, almost erased in an amnesiac manner by using the hunger of Indian children as a price to pay, for a greater cause of saving people living under a fascist Hitler. All that remained in a Eurocentric reading was the preaching of liberal-democracy to fulfill the aims of liberal internationalism – a colonial project. Evidently as Said observed, this was only good for the West, because Europeans were waging it from a position of superior power in comparison to the weak Indian Orient who was colonized by the British imperialist (Said, 1979).

As shown above, the insecurities of the ‘Eastern’ man were relegated in global politics as the ‘passive object’ (John Hobson, 2007). These are the same disciplinary “silences” (Cynthia Enloe, 1996) of securitization theory which are made conscious by the post-colonial perspective of deep-theorizing, in a manner that sheds light on the insecurities of the marginalized. Concurring with Barkawi, the victorious Allied forces in the Second Great War meant liberation for some but not for others, and in line with Eurocentrism, knowledge was eventually produced by the victors (Barkawi & Laffey, 2006).

### Post-Colonial Enrichment of: Racism & Whiteness in Securitization Theory

This section focuses on a post-colonial identification of what Howell claims to be, the racist nature of securitization theory, caused by speech acts, which are used for defending Arendtian politics. Using Mbembe, it is argued below that securitization theory, through its association with Arendtian politics, ignores non-white insecurities, and subsumes it to a racist logic. This operational racism in securitization theory will further be evaluated through Bhambra's concept of 'methodological whiteness'.

Securitization theory conceives Western experiences for the conceptualization of what normal politics or insecurities are, as reasoned in the previous section. It is further claimed that, classic and critical securitization theories construct methodological whiteness by avoiding the mention of race as they aim to normalize the limitations of securitization. This operational whiteness produces, as per Howell, 'normative whiteness' which emphasizes that securitization or even de-securitization of insecurities can only be proper if achieved using European conceptualizations of policy methods (Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2020). Bhambra explains methodological whiteness as a way of silencing the role of race in the very structuring of life and people in the world, mostly done via knowledge constructed to legitimize whiteness within it (Gurminder K. Bhambra, 2017). It fails to analyze the dominance of 'whiteness' of security studies, and imposes this as a universal perspective, thus devaluing the insecurities of non-white people. To illustrate the aforementioned argument, the next segment evaluates securitization theory's incorporation of speech act theory, and scrutinizes how it elides non-White conceptualization of politics and security.

Waver openly accepts that, securitization theory was constructed on speech act theory, because it is an effective method that is designed to protect Arendt's version of politics as the norm (Ole Waver, 2015):

[Securitization theory was built from the start on speech act theory, because it is an operational method that can be designed to protect politics in Arendt's sense. Put in short form, the political conception of securitization theory is *inspired by Arendt, implemented through speech act theory...*] (Waver, 2015: 122, emphasis in original)

Speech acts involve illocution consisting of an element of force, which involves a promise or warning through dominant security actors (Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2020). James argues that, Arendt was in a state of idealism for her definition of the Athenian model, socio-politically. She inherently ignored the oppressed subjects within Athenian democracy – slave labor, persons of non-Athenian decent and women's unpaid reproductive labor (Joy James, 2003). With securitization theory being based on a politics which only securitizes or de-securitizes those issues which the powerful security actors deem fit, causes marginalization of all the objects existing under white security i.e. people of color or who are non-white.

Consequently, Arendt's theory of 'politics through communication' transforms into domination, based on the division of space into white and non-white political and security realms. Subsequently, this version of racism may be understood through Mbembe's explanation of it, as a form of control based upon the distribution of the human species into different groups and the "instituting of a biological segregation between the white-ones and the others (Achille Mbembe, 2003). Concurring with James, the current security framework is "color-blind" (James, 2003) thus making binaries of conflict within which superiority or inferiority and normalcy or deviancy is racially and biologically inscribed in a white democracy (James, 2003).

An example for this systematic absence of violence or silencing of minorities within Arendtian politics is what Buzan terms as "social objectivism" of securitization theory in the U.S. (Barry Buzan, 1998):

Our relative objectivism on social relations has the drawback of contributing to the reproduction of things as they are, of contributing to the taking for granted that [critical security studies] wants to upset. The advantage is – totally in line with classical security studies – to help in managing relations among units... (Buzan et al., 1998: 206)

According to him different racial groups must be entertained as mere "units", as securitizing the needs of multiculturalism for one black group comes at the cost of insecurities of white-extremist groups, who picture non-white minorities as a threat to them, and thereby to the whole (Buzan, 1998). What this means is that insecurities of various racial groups should be regulated by 'objectivism' to see racial violence as an exception to normal politics or security dilemmas, by excluding them in the security discourse. Concurring with Howell, once securitization theory claims to represent Arendtian 'normal politics', it covertly manages to defend the violent status quo of the international racial order, ignoring the insecurities of black or ethnic minorities to maintain what is actually 'normal' in 'white' and Eurocentric reality (Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2020).

With support from the debate above, it could be seen that these white policies of securitization theory regulate our understanding of whose security should triumph over which black/ethnic group's insecurities. Acknowledging Jabri's view, indeed a post-colonial critique enriches the experiences of marginalized sectors in society where, colonialism has transformed its technology of power from territorial conquest to "management and control of subjects" to safeguard the vested interests of powerful Western states and global hegemonic orders (Vivienne Jabri, 2012). Conclusively, agreeing with Membe, a racist logic is one that, segregates and distinguishes between people based upon genetic characteristics so that some insecurities may count as worthy of securitization and others may not (Mbembe, 2003).

### Conclusion

This essay aimed to enrich our understanding of insecurities by decolonizing the field of security studies. This was achieved by arguing that security should be viewed in a non-European manner through deeper post-colonial inquiry. Firstly, it was shown that emancipatory concepts in CSS were not critical of traditional security, because of their narrow understanding of securitization as a problem-solving practice and Booth's failure to transform emancipatory agency. Secondly, Eurocentrism of securitization theory was shown using Said's 'Orientalism', to understand that insecurities of marginalized non-Europeans are forgotten through historical blind-spots. The third section showed illustration of this Eurocentric colonial-amnesia through Muppidi and the empirical example of Indian insecurities in World War Two. Finally, supporting Howell and Mbembe, I recognized racist logics behind speech acts in securitization theory which in turn makes security methodologically white, enriching understanding of our racial-insecurities.

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