



# 9

## Security in the Anthropocene

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### Introduction

Environmental issues, ranging from climate change to scarcity of resources and diminishing biodiversity, present a set of challenges that have suggested that we are now living in the Anthropocene, a new geological era in which the destiny of the planet depends on human actions. Many of these challenges are expressed in security terms, with a growing emphasis on energy, environmental and water security, highlighting the emergence of new, non-traditional security issues. Meanwhile, old ones, like conflicts, remain relevant, and security paradoxes become evident (Nyman 2018). Analytical frameworks and existing institutions become dysfunctional, and problems cannot be dealt with in the old ways (Adler 2005, 75). Security needs to be rethought. This chapter provides an overview of the attempts and the challenges to reconceptualize security in the Anthropocene. How does a growing awareness of complex relations of flux involving humans, non-humans and things question the very subject of security? Whose security is at stake, against what threats, by what means? It engages with the challenges that environmental problems pose to the discipline of international relations, its ontological and epistemological

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foundations and its categories of analysis (Luke 2003; Kavalski 2011; Corry and Stevenson 2017) and to security studies more specifically.

The chapter adopts a perspective inspired by critical security studies and securitization theory. Critical security studies (see Krause and Williams 1997; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2014) questions the objective nature of threats, the naturalization of national security discourses and the narrow scope of security studies. Securitization theory (Buzan et al. 1998) considers security as a specific form of social practice. Securitization is a process of discursive construction of threats that, by turning problems into security issues, lifts them above politics and transforms the way of handling them. It legitimizes actors and specific practices, characterized by exceptional measures. Moving beyond securitization theory, however, the chapter questions not only how threats emerge in the Anthropocene but also how the practices and logic of security are challenged and transformed by dealing with them (Trombetta 2010). At the same time, the analysis warns against considering the Anthropocene as a unified discourse or a given condition. Many of the threats the Anthropocene is supposed to pose are constructed, and its representation is mediated, often through security assumptions. The way we think about security in the Anthropocene is thereby based on the way we think and conceptualize the Anthropocene.

The chapter will begin by suggesting that the Anthropocene is not only a new geological era, which challenges modern assumptions about nature and humans, but also a security discourse. The chapter will proceed by exploring how different approaches to security engage with the challenges posed by the Anthropocene. It will show how Realist discourses are framing emerging challenges within traditional categories of analysis, often contributing to reinforcing them. Critical approaches, questioning how threats are constructed, provide relevant insights for interrogating security in the Anthropocene. Securitization, broadly understood as the discursive process that transforms a problem issue into a security issue, will be used as a heuristic to illustrate some of the challenges and to map alternatives.

## The Security Challenges of the Anthropocene

The Anthropocene, comparing human actions to a geological force, recognizes the impact of our species on the planet and emphasizes how the separation between human and nature is fading away as humans are transforming what was once natural (see Introduction). The environment is no longer a stable background against which human life and history unfold. The very

destiny of the planet, of life as we know it and the survival of humankind, is in human hands. This is both empowering and threatening. This consideration has implications for IR theory and knowledge production. Firstly, new categories of threats are emerging, like the possibility of catastrophic climate change or massive species extinction, while more traditional ones, like conflict, are still present. Traditional categories of analysis and security logics remain relevant and yet they are limited when it comes to addressing new challenges, characterized by complexity and interdependence. Paradoxes and tensions emerge. So, for instance, the quests for energy security or access to resources, which are part of national security strategies, contribute to global warming and biodiversity loss that threaten the very foundation of security. Similarly, reactive measures or compensation are futile in the face of extinction, despite attempts to create insurance mechanisms for catastrophic events. Secondly, questioning the existence of nature as a stable background jeopardizes the possibility of objective, cumulative knowledge about threats. Nature is not only the anthropomorphized “Gaia”, symbolizing biosphere system interactions—powerful and yet in need of protection—that mobilizes traditional security tropes. Nature is the ground of modern Western epistemology and positivist approaches to social science, international relations and security studies.

In order to understand the challenges that the Anthropocene presents to security studies, it is worth noticing that the Anthropocene is not only a condition but also a security discourse. Considering the Anthropocene as a condition reveals the necessity of reworking security categories, as new threats, with new characteristics call for new actors, institutions and practices. Considering it as a security discourse clarifies the challenges and the political dimensions that such a reworking involves, as that condition and the threats it poses are not given. Threats are constructed and reflect different priorities, identities and interests. Arguing that the survival of humankind is in human hands is inherently a security argument that mobilizes action by evoking an existential threat. It is an argument that reflects assumptions about security and existing ways of life. As critical scholars have pointed out, defining what counts as security—who deserves to be protected and how—reflects different political perspectives. Different formulations of threats legitimize the existence of different actors and their role in providing security. To paraphrase Cox: security “is always for someone and for some purpose” (1981, 129).

The challenges posed by the Anthropocene call for a deep transformation of the way of conceptualizing security and providing it, as the Anthropocene transforms “the conditions under which it is now possible to think, speak, and

make authoritative claims about what is referred to in the language of modern politics as ‘security’” (Walker 1997, 61). Expanding on arguments made in the environmental security literature (Dalby 2009; Litfin 1999), scholars embracing the Anthropocene discourse, question how attempts to take the environmental crisis seriously challenge what is understood as security. As Deudney (1990) warned, the environment may not be a national security issue, but environmentalism is a threat to a specific conceptualization of security; so is the Anthropocene. As positivist, rationalist assumptions are questioned, the objectivity of threats is challenged. As state centrism is questioned, the logic of national security is problematized and with it a specific geopolitical gaze and understanding of politics (see Chap. 2). As humans and nature became entangled, securing humans from nature and nature from humans becomes problematic. As complex flux and relations emerge, security may come from “being more connected, not less” (Burke et al. 2016, 4).

At the same time, the transformation is not easy, as security refers to a political tradition that is difficult to escape (Walker 1997). Security remains a powerful, evocative term and framing problems as security issues allow recalling old categories of analysis, re-legitimizing actors and approaches that work within existing assumptions about security. The environmental conflict debate illustrates this dynamic as it shows how the new threats posed by environmental degradation are framed in the familiar language of conflict and national security (see Box 9.1). Similarly, fixing “planetary boundaries” (see Chap. 3) may be a way to set limits within which traditional approaches and assumptions about security can be applied.

Normative arguments about the ways in which security needs to be reconceptualized are relevant. However, much of the work that transforms what is understood as security and the ways it is provided is done by actual, mundane processes through which issues are transformed into security issues and actors and practices are developed and legitimized. As Didier Bigo explains, security is not just an analytical tool; it is a category requiring a genealogical analysis (2002, 68; see also Chap. 7). Thus, security studies in the Anthropocene have to address a set of methodological, ontological, epistemological and normative questions. Below, I analyse how different theoretical perspectives are incorporating and questioning some of the issues raised by the Anthropocene, in order to understand better the challenges of moving out of the conceptual framework provided by IR.

### Box 9.1 Environmental Conflict

The literature and the debate on environmental conflicts exemplify several assumptions that traditional security studies as a discipline deploys when dealing with the environment and nature: the focus on nature as the provider of resources and services, the centrality of the state and of military conflicts and a specific way of naturalizing threats.

Concerns that environmental degradation, depletion of renewable resources and global environmental change may cause violent conflicts, gained relevance in the 1990s, both in academia and in political debates. In North America, Homer-Dixon coordinated an international research group aimed at studying the links between environmental degradation and violent conflict (Homer-Dixon 1991; 1994). His research was made popular by Kaplan's article "The Coming Anarchy", which presented an alarming image of chaos in the periphery, instability, violent conflicts and massive population displacement. He dubbed the environment the "national security issue of the early twenty-first century" (1994, 58). Even if the results of Homer-Dixon's research showed that the link between environmental degradation and violence is not straightforward—that conflicts were likely to be low-intensity and subnational, that institutions and ingenuity matter—his research was quite influential on the Clinton administration. In Europe, a similarly extensive project, undertaken by Spillman and Bachler, identified a set of syndromes pointing at problematic relationships between environmental and other political, social and demographic factors (Bächler 1998).

Research on environmental conflict has prompted an intense academic debate about the empirical validity of claims, the methodology adopted and the normative implications. The thesis that environmental scarcity causes conflict has been challenged by empirical research demonstrating that environmental degradation provides opportunities for cooperation and that it is the abundance of resources rather than their scarcity that causes conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). It has been argued that the environmental conflict thesis implies environmental determinism and the assumption that conflicts are likely to occur in the global South. However, the conflict argument remains relevant in more recent literature. Klare (2012) has argued that competition for resources, including freshwater, will be a determinant of future conflict. An environmental component was identified in the uprising in Syria in 2011 (Kelley et al. 2015).

Historically, the environment-conflict debate shows how early concerns for environmental degradation as a threat to global commons, calling for cooperation and common security, were translated in the more familiar language of threats to global order (Trombetta 2012, 153), reflecting traditional geopolitical imaginations (Dalby 2007). The way in which Realism theorized security and conventional ideas about what counts as a threat has shaped the way in which environmental conflict has become an object of knowledge (Trombetta 2012, 164).

Realism has been the dominant perspective in security and strategic studies. It is characterized by a focus on the state and an emphasis on war and conflicts. Within security studies, there has been a debate, since the 1980s to broaden and deepen the security agenda (see Buzan and Hansen 2009). Broadening refers to the extension of the security agenda to include new

threats, like those posed by environmental problems. Deepening suggests a vertical move from the state down to the individual and up to referents like the humankind or the biosphere (Rothschild 1995). Despite these challenges to expand the agenda, Realism relies on a positivist notion of security that takes threats as objectively given. Furthermore, it assumes a zero-sum, antagonist logic of security. In the Anthropocene, this approach creates security paradoxes in which attempts to secure existing ways of life increase insecurity. The example of energy security is emblematic (see Box 9.2). As states try to secure access to fossil fuels, they increase insecurity by creating competition and contributing to global warming (Nyman 2018). “Gone are the days of billiard ball states and national security based on keeping the Other out or deterred” (Burke et al. 2016, 4) critical scholars suggest. Nevertheless, the antagonistic zero-sum approach is still relevant and ready to be applied all the time a threat is evoked successfully. Framing climate change as a threat to national security is a way to reinforce that logic.

### Box 9.2 Energy Security

The debate about what counts as energy security and how to achieve it is emblematic of the condition of the Anthropocene as energy is essential for modern societies, from sustaining the economy to projecting power. Securing access to energy sources and providing energy services are priorities for states; they involve national security considerations and human security ones. They have local, national and global dimensions.

Contemporary energy systems rely on fossil fuels, often extracted from distant places. In 2015, more than 80% of global energy supply was based on fossil fuels. Energy systems are highly unequal and not sustainable. On the one hand, more than 1.2 billion people live without access to electricity. On the other, despite concerns for peaking oil, in order to limit the increase in global warming to 2 °C, one-third of existing reserves will need to be kept in the ground, and emissions are not the only environmental impact of energy systems, which spans from oil spills to local pollution (see Trombetta 2018 for an overview).

As Mayer and Schouten provocatively ask: “Why has energy security policy caused widespread insecurities?” (Mayer and Schouten 2012, 14). Nyman (2018) has pointed to the paradox in which states’ attempts to increase security of supply end up in increasing insecurity by creating competition and conflicts and by contributing to climate change in an energy security dilemma. Mayer and Schouten (2012) emphasize how processes of securitization and energy security discourses have been selective in identifying threats, silencing some and naturalizing others. Pointing to how, for instance, climate and energy security discourses are kept separate, despite their connections, they call for an approach that is more inclusive and considers material and discursive aspects (ibid.). The call is echoed by research focusing on critical energy systems that combine values, material and technical aspects (Cherp and Jewell 2014) and by attempts to broaden, deepen and transform the concept of energy security (Dyer and Trombetta 2013).

Critical approaches, questioning the objective nature of threats and the centrality of the state, opened up the space for a critical analysis of the concept of security and its transformation in the Anthropocene. The concept of securitization (see Box 9.3) questions the objective nature of threats and of the state as the referent for security, thereby opening up the space for challenging the necessity and naturalization of any security formations. In this way, securitization provides the opportunity to analyse some of the limitations of traditional security approaches; at the same time, it is embedded in a modern account of security that the Anthropocene challenges. For this reason, the discussion is divided into two sections: first, securitization is used to discuss the problems of security; second, the limitations of securitization are exposed through the lenses of the Anthropocene.

### Box 9.3 Securitization

Securitization, initially formulated by Ole Weaver and the so-called Copenhagen School (Wæver 1995; Buzan et al. 1998), considers security as a discursive process that raises an issue above normal politics, presents it as a priority and justifies extraordinary measures (Wæver 1995; Williams 2003). While the decision of transforming an issue into a security issue is open to negotiation and involves securitizing actors and an audience, the practices that a successful securitization brings about are not. They follow a specific logic that reflects a long-standing political tradition that legitimizes exceptional measures and the breaking of otherwise accepted norms and rules. It allows governing by decrees rather than democratic measures. In this way, securitization opens up the security agenda to a variety of threats but keeps its coherence by identifying security with a specific form of social practice. Securitization theory combines the construction of threats with a rather fixed logic of security.

Given the problematic character of the measures that a successful securitization can bring about, the normative suggestion offered by the Copenhagen School is to desecuritize issues, bringing problems back into an open political debate, as the logic of security cannot be changed, at least in a short time. Securitization has been used in the environmental and climate security debate (Trombetta 2008; Floyd 2010) and to analyse many security issues, like energy, health and food, which are relevant in the Anthropocene (see Balzacq et al. 2016).

## Subjects and Objects of Security

Securitization theory suggests that there are no objective threats waiting to be discovered and counteracted and highlights the political process of transforming an issue into a security issue. Securitization does not deny the materiality of threats, or their seriousness, but focuses on the process of selection and construction that makes them appear natural. The process legitimizes the

survival of valued referent objects and of the actors that can provide security. Threat-construction matters. Discourses about planetary boundaries (Rockström et al. 2009; Steffen et al. 2015) warn about the catastrophic consequences of bypassing them, but also about the multiplicity of threats implied in tampering with them. Climate change contributes to problems like migration, biodiversity loss and the spread of disease. They have different implications for different people. The term “threat multiplier”, an expression formulated initially to address the security challenges posed by climate change, considers this tension. It captures not only the multiple dimensions, interconnection and overlapping of different threats but also the problems and the very political nature of establishing security links, reflecting different priorities and interests.

Securitization theory is also important in arguing that security discourses are not necessarily about the state, as in national security discourses, or about the individual, as in the human security discourse or some critical approaches. The Copenhagen school—taking into account that different actors and political communities can make appeals for their survival—argues that it is possible to account for and “to study transformation in the units of security affairs” (Buzan et al. 1998, 207). Securitization opens up the possibility of transforming political communities through the social construction of common threats. As Beck argued: “threats create society and global threats create global society” (Beck 2000, 38). Moreover, it suggests the possibility of securing communities that can include human and other species or ecosystems. This possibility is considered by approaches that stress the limitations of both national and human security and call for ecological security, which considers the importance of preserving ecosystems (see Chap. 11) or argue for an ethos of care to include humans and non-humans (Chap. 12). Nevertheless, the Copenhagen School remains sceptical about the possibility of a security unit as large as the entirety of humankind, not only for the difficulties of identifying and acting on global threats but also for the antagonistic logic of security that the Copenhagen School assumes (Trombetta 2010).

The Anthropocene poses the challenge of reconceptualizing agency when human and nature become intertwined and nature is no longer a stable background on which humans can act. The literature provides several suggestions to move away from anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism. Audra Mitchell (2014), engaging with the problem of harm in the Anthropocene, introduces the concept of “mundicide” to describe the destruction of unique relations between humans, other species and their environment. She draws on green thought to show that weak ecocentrism provides a way to consider the importance of other species and relations, leaving responsibility to humans



but avoiding the commodification of nature and the environment (Mitchell 2014). Following Latour, scholars drawing on actor-network theory consider agency as the “capability of making a difference in the world” (Rothe 2017a, 91), which is not necessarily a human prerogative. Within security studies, Aradau highlights the role of infrastructure as actants in the process of securitization (2010). Cudworth and Hobden analyse the commodification and objectification of animals in International Relations (2014) and discuss the possibility of recovering their agency. Hamilton, drawing on the premises of quantum theory and the condition of entanglement, analyses how attempts to secure an entangled human self imply a “disentanglement” and the “agency to mediate and act” from which ethical and moral responsibility derives (2017, 579). These attempts emphasize the challenges of reconsidering agency and point at the limits of existing approaches, questioning, for instance, when, where and by whom security decisions are taken. On the one hand, an approach like securitization points to the possibility of securing a variety of entities and the role that material factors can have in the process. On the other, it remains deeply anthropocentric, with its emphasis on discursive aspects.

Securitization, focusing on securing objects or specific aspects of the human-nature relations, like existing ways of life, tends to black-box fixed, pre-existing entities and situations. The problem of black boxing characterizes many security approaches and International Relations more generally. Traditionally, states are represented as sovereign and separate from other entities. Similarly, people are treated as individuals. The division goes further in dividing human from nature as part of the methodological individualism that characterizes modernity. In this way, different entities are boxed off so that their relations can be analysed as part of International Relations. Objects take priority over relations, “the ontological primitives of analysis are ‘things’ or entities—entities exist before interaction, and all relations should be conceived as relations between entities” (Jackson and Nexon 1999, 291). To some extent, securitization perpetrates this logic. The Anthropocene, on the contrary, re-values relations. From a complexity perspective, as Cudworth and Hobden (2013) explain, the world is made up of systems; systems constitute the environment for other systems in an interconnected universe. Even if boundaries can be drawn, systems overlap and interact with other systems. They are open rather than closed; they are contingent rather than deterministic, and they are self-organizing and emergent. “[L]ogically undeducible and physically irreducible to the component parts”, systems are both more and less than the sum of their parts as they put limits on the actions of their components (Cudworth and Hobden 2013).

Similarly, actor-network theory adopts a relational ontology and analyses how entities or things gain identity and meaning through relations to other things in complex assemblages or actor-networks. Things in the world are real as far as they act on other things (Rothe 2017a, 91). In this perspective, the challenge becomes how to secure complex systems, assemblages and relations. The challenge has immediate implications as non-Western approaches have also been seen as an alternative to the reification and boxing of modernity, and a relational approach has recently gained relevance in non-Western IR (Qin 2016) and security studies (Huang and Shih 2016). From this perspective, the Western social world is compared to bundles of rice stalks which need norms to be bundled together. This is contrasted with the image of ripples in a lake that captures the perspective in which relations come before individuals (Qin 2016, 35–36). Alternative cosmologies and relational ontologies provide elements to address the challenges posed by the Anthropocene. However, a simplistic opposition between Eastern and Western approaches can be equally problematic, perpetuating the very dualism (and boxing) non-Western approaches claim to overcome. Moreover, for security studies, a relational approach can be a way to prioritize bilateral relations over multilateralism, downplaying the role of norms and institutions in bounding individuals and states together.

## Security and Securitization in the Anthropocene

This section seeks to consider how securitization approaches can be adapted for scholarship in the Anthropocene. As noted above, securitization tends to emphasize discursive aspects of environmental threats, downplaying the material ones. The focus on language and speech acts re-inscribes the nature/society distinction and emphasizes relativism, “delink[ing] ‘discursive’ security from the ‘objectively determined’ realm to which nature belongs” (Mayer and Schouten 2012, 16). As humanity is transforming ecological systems, with consequences that are often unpredictable and threatening, the modern, rationalist distinction between objective, fixed “dynamics of nature and the contingent processes of society” becomes problematic (ibid., 16). This calls for considering securitization, not just as a discursive construction but as a process that brings together discursive, social elements and material ones. It takes into account political and economic practices, narratives of security but also material flows, infrastructures, natural environments and weaves them together.

Resources for this reconceptualization can be drawn from work in actor-network theory (ANT), Science and Technology Studies, New Materialism and related approaches. Scholars working in the ANT tradition have explored the securitization of assemblages in ways that question the material/linguistic distinction and, at the same time, take into account the contribution of differences in professional expertise and knowledge in the process of threat construction (Mayer 2012; Rothe 2017b). As Mayer and Schouten explain, actors do not only constitute discourses about aspects of nature as part of a process of securitization but also bring these aspects in by actively transforming them, by blending social, biological and physical elements, working on nature to fit specific agendas (Mayer and Schouten 2012, 19–20). “Entities are continually reconstituted through material-discursive ‘intra-actions’, where neither the material nor the cultural aspect takes precedence” (Pellizzoni 2019, 38).

While the Copenhagen school accounts for the construction of threats and referent objects, the logic of security remains deterministic: security is about existential survival; it is a reactive, antagonistic logic; it assumes a defence against external threats; it operates in exceptional circumstances and legitimizes exceptional measures raising an issue above politics; it divides between friends and enemy. Commentators have challenged this security logic and its fixity, which is particularly problematic when dealing with environmental problems (Huysmans 1998, 232; Trombetta 2008, 2010; Oels 2012), and have shown that security practices developed within the environmental sector and to deal with environmental problems can be somewhat different. This has contributed to bringing into the debate risk, precautionary approaches and resilience, and discussions over the transformation of the logic of security.

The focus upon risk is key to concerns in the Anthropocene, in more and more sectors, the logic of risk is replacing the logic of emergency and exceptional measures. Corry has identified a process of “riskification” in which risks instead of threats are constructed, and different practices are brought about. He considered the two logics as complementary (Corry 2012). Even catastrophic events are believed to become insurable, as new technologies of risk calculation and compensation, like catastrophic bonds, emerge. In this perspective, security is not defined in terms of protection from threats, dangers or harms but as the possibility of being compensated (Stripple 2012). However, these framings have been questioned as instability, complexity and uncertainty problematize a security logic based on reactive measures and compensation. “The logic of compensation breaks down and is replaced by the principle of precaution through prevention” (Beck 2006, 334). Just as Beck’s analysis of risk society and its transformative potential have called for a

rethinking of modernity, the challenges posed by the Anthropocene are calling for a reflexive Anthropocene (Hamilton et al. 2015).

As uncertainty and complexity became apparent, resilience has increasingly become the dominant strategy to ensure security (see Chap. 10). Initially welcomed optimistically, resilience is now permeating security discourse and practices. A new “hero in town” (Dunn Cavelti et al. 2015), resilience emphasizes the capability of actors and systems to resist shocks and return to their original status. It is supposed to provide the stability questioned by growing complexity and threatened by catastrophic, non-linear changes. It is behind discourses seeking to maintain systems within stable parameters, like the ones set by planetary boundaries (see Chap. 3). It emphasizes the ingenuity and adaptive capabilities of individuals and systems. Resilience, however, has been criticized for the emphasis on preserving the status quo, contributing to maintaining the existing order, which has determined the emergence of the environmental crisis, and for being a strategy of neoliberal governmentality that puts the responsibility of adapting and being resilient on the individual. As a response to these critiques, resilience has been reworked as the possibility of not only bouncing back but also bouncing forwards, and the emphasis has shifted towards considering and promoting the resilience of societies rather than that of the individual (see Chap. 10).

Questioning the deterministic logic of security, originally assumed by securitization theory, allows attention to be paid to the fact that the logic of security is not given but reflects the problematization of an issue. Different discourses of danger will determine political rationalities and technologies of government (Foucault 2007). The subject of security, the logics of security and the means employed to provide it are deeply related. Foucault identified two main problematizations of security and related political rationalities. The first, geopolitics, has as its referent object the territorial state and the narrative of national security, with its inside-outside logic, binaries oppositions, reactive measures and the preservation of the status quo. To this narrative, Foucault adds biopolitics as exercised on life and on species, as an emerging rationality of government, which characterized the development of the modern state (and sciences). Species for Foucault include all kinds of complex systems; however, his analysis highlights the relevance of the human, national population with its dynamics. Phenomena that individually are aleatory and unpredictable, at collective level, display constraints that can be identified and acted upon (Foucault 2003, 246). Securing life and population is about governing the contingency of life, regulating fluxes and circulation. Yet, it depends upon modern sciences, like economics, statistics, ecology and assumes stable relations and dynamics. As Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero explain, the problematic

of security posed by life is not the same as the one posed by territoriality, and it will not be the same as the one posed by securing humans (Anthropos) in the Anthropocene, and the “security apparatuses developed around these different referent objects” will also be different (Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008, 274).

Thus, much of the debate on security in the Anthropocene is about determining new political rationalities and technologies of government that reflect the enduring relevance of geopolitics, the expanding logics of biopolitics and the emphasis on securing life but taking into account that the human control on life and nature has reached new levels, and that the very distinction between human and nature is questioned. Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero (2008) analysed how the molecular revolution has brought biology into politics, but the transformation involves other aspects like information technology and artificial intelligence. Foucauldian approaches or broad readings of securitization (Trombetta 2008; Harrington and Shearing 2017) imply that not only threats are constructed but also the very logic of security and the practices associated with it are subject to a constant process of redefinition and reworking, even if some can be more resilient than others. For the purpose of this chapter, the choice of focusing on securitization has allowed an emphasis on the persistence of some aspects and a more structured analysis of the challenges involved.

## Conclusion

Securitization has provided the lenses to consider some of the challenges in reconceptualizing security in the Anthropocene. Securitization theory has been focused upon because it emphasizes the political nature of doing security and has claimed to distil the meaning of security from current usage, allowing the identification of the assumptions behind specific articulations of security. In the process, it has been shown that redefining and questioning the subject of security in the Anthropocene does not involve only questioning how threats are constructed, and whose security is at stake, but also problematizing the logic of security and the measures it legitimizes. This calls for a genealogical account (see Chap. 7) of security, opening up the possibility of transformation but warning about the challenges it involves.

Yet, two caveats need to be considered in discussing how the Anthropocene is transforming security logics and practices. First, it is not only a transformation in material conditions that brings about new threats and new conceptualizations of security. Security discourses and practices need to be rearticulated. As Bigo (2002) has pointed out, a variety of experts’ practices are constantly

contributing to rearticulating security discourses. In this perspective, the Anthropocene is not a given condition, it is an evolving security discourse, and its multiple meanings materialize in very specific and different ways. Second, and related to that, the persistence of specific security practices and logics emphasizes the limitation of political imagination that makes it difficult to escape them (Walker 1997; Fagan 2017) and asks for critical engagement and alternatives.

### Key Points

1. In the Anthropocene, traditional approaches to security that characterize International Relations and security studies become problematic.
2. The recognition that humans are transforming the Earth to an extent that the separations of humans and nature are no longer tenable, that nature is no longer as stable background, and that humans, other species and material factors, are part of complex fluxes has deep implications for what it means to be secure, who can provide security and how.
3. An approach like securitization that questions the objective nature of threats, highlights the political nature of selecting threats and claims to distil the meaning of security from its usage, can provide relevant insights for engaging the problems of security in the Anthropocene.
4. Securitization can help open up the debate; however, it is necessary to move beyond securitization and consider the importance of new forms of agency, relational aspects, material factors and different logics of security.

### Key Questions

1. How does the Anthropocene challenge traditional assumptions about the study of security?
2. Is securitization a relevant framework to analyse security dynamics in the Anthropocene? Why? Why not?
3. Why are existing security logics problematic in the Anthropocene?
4. Why is it relevant to ask “Whose security?”, “Against what threats?” and “By what means?”, when analysing security discourses?
5. What are the implications of prioritizing relations over entities for security studies?

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