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Wilfrid Greaves

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CHAPTER 7

Damaging Environments

Land, Settler Colonialism, and Security for Indigenous Peoples

Wilfrid Greaves

Global Indigenous politics are increasingly defined around struggles against natural resource extraction occurring on Indigenous peoples' territories without their consent, and resistance to other forms of environmental harm against Indigenous communities, including anthropogenic climate change.[1] The stakes of these struggles are extremely high: in addition to the prospect of irreparable damage to the natural systems on which people depend, the human cost of resisting state-sanctioned and corporate-led extractive activities has been increasing. At least 185 people globally, many of them Indigenous leaders and activists, were murdered in 2017 for defending their local environments, slightly fewer than the 201 killed in 2016 but a substantial increase compared to 117 in 2014 and only 51 in 2002 (Global Witness 2014, 2018). In total, at least 1,500 killings of environmental activists and land defenders were documented from 2002 to 2017, with the actual number certainly being higher. While most of these deaths occurred in the Global South, particularly Latin America, Central Africa, South Asia, and Asia Pacific, Indigenous resistance to extractive activities is a global phenomenon. Recent examples from the Global North that illustrate Indigenous struggles to preserve their territories and protect the natural environment include protests and blockades by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe against construction of a crude oil pipeline across their North Dakota reservation (Whyte 2017); Indigenous-led protests and blockades across Canada against bitumen sands, pipelines, and hydraulically fractured natural gas (Bowles and Veltmeyer 2014; Greaves 2013; Howe 2015; Le Billon and Carter 2012; Preston 2013); Sámi-led protests against mining in northern Scandinavia (Abram 2016; Lawrence 2014;

Lawrence and Åhrén 2016); and Indigenous environmental activism and diplomacy in multilateral venues such as the Arctic Council (English 2013; Koivurova and Heinämaki 2006) and the annual Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (Doolittle 2010; Ford et al. 2016; Powless 2012). Indigenous peoples are heterogeneous and varied in their views toward extractive industrial projects, but resistance to environmental harm is a central theme of Indigenous political discourses and action.

Some Indigenous political actors, as well as scholars and journalists, have explicitly adopted the language of "security" to characterize the existential nature of threats represented by contemporary conditions of environmental crisis known as the Anthropocene (Harrington and Shearing 2017). In effect, environmental degradation and the meaning of security are, for Indigenous peoples, inextricably linked. For instance, Inuit, Sámi, and other Indigenous peoples across the circumpolar Arctic have primarily operationalized security in terms of the direct and indirect effects of climate change on Arctic ecosystems, Indigenous identities, and Indigenous political and social autonomy (Greaves 2016a, 2016b; Hossain 2016). Indigenous communities in the Canadian jurisdictions of Alberta and the Northwest Territories whose health, air, water, lands, hunting game, and country foods are degraded by pollution from bitumen mining, leaks from pipelines or tailing ponds, and the contributing effects of the bitumen sands to global climate change likewise employ environmental security discourse to frame their concerns (Indigenous Environmental Network n.d.; Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion, n.d.). Food and water security, respectively, are significant aspects of Indigenous security discourse, with threats to communities' abilities to reliably access clean, healthy, and sustainable water and traditional food resources identified as critically undermining the individual and collective well-being of Indigenous people (Hanrahan 2017; Power 2008; Whyte 2015), with particularly dilatory impacts for Indigenous women (Whyte 2014). In fact, Indigenous women experience gendered forms of insecurity that result in significantly higher rates of direct and structural violence compared with Indigenous men or non-Indigenous women (Deiter and Rude 2005; Dhillon 2015; IACHR 2015). The particular insecurities faced by Indigenous peoples have been reported in the findings of high-level international officials such as the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Access to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation, and Right to Food, respectively. Overall, it has become increasingly commonplace in the post–Cold War period for "non-state units [to] claim security interests of their own," including Indigenous peoples who "definitely have their own specific security problems" (Eriksson 1995: 278, 271–272). Notwithstanding Indigenous critiques of Western academic discourses of the Anthropocene (Sundberg 2014; Todd 2015), many threats confronting Indigenous peoples today clearly emerge from the fact of widespread human interference in complex human-animal-ecological-cultural systems on which Indigenous identities and well-being are based.

However, while many Indigenous organizations and individuals have depicted threats to their health, well-being, and continued survival as Indigenous peoples as *security* issues within public discourses, such depictions have failed to mobilize commensurate responses by the governments of their respective states. In fact, states have consistently declined to adopt exceptional policy measures in response to environmental security claims that identify damage inflicted to Indigenous lands and lives by natural resource extraction, Indigenous peoples' lack of authority over their traditional territories, or global warming that is primarily caused by fossil fuel consumption and land use changes (often changes to Indigenous lands by non-Indigenous peoples). As I have demonstrated elsewhere (Greaves 2016a, 2016b), Indigenous peoples' security claims are either silenced through the marginalization of their voices and the exclusion of their core issues of concern from security discourse, or subsumed through formulations of national security that incorporate nondominant groups into the political community represented by and through the sovereign state. This occurs

even though Indigenous peoples are represented by organized and legitimate political actors with high degrees of social capital who employ security language to identify specific threats to human and nonhuman survival and well-being.

Indigenous peoples have also been largely absent from the academic fields of international relations (IR) and security studies (Epp 2000; King 2017; Shaw 2002). IR scholarship rarely mentions Indigenous peoples in relation to security, with limited exceptions. Neta Crawford's (1994) study of the Iroquois Great Law of Peace as an example of a security regime is widely cited and has generated important discussions about indigeneity and IR (Bedford and Workman 1997; Crawford 2017). Indigenous peoples in the Southwestern United States are discussed in the context of harms associated with the development of the atomic bomb and subsequent nuclear testing (Laffey and Nadarajah 2016), and some postcolonial approaches to security examine Indigenous peoples as sovereign nations with distinct cosmologies, political systems, and diplomatic practices (Beier 2005, 2010, 2016). Indigenous peoples receive greater attention in some regional area studies, such as in the Arctic, though the unique salience of Indigenous peoples to circumpolar politics makes this an outlier (Abele and Rodon 2007; Greaves 2016a, 2016b; Nickels 2013; Shadian 2010; H. Smith 2010; Wilson 2007). Most recent scholarship linking security and Indigenous peoples focuses on Indigenous peoples as threats to the interests of settler colonial states (Bland 2014), or on the governmental tactics of criminalization, surveillance, and police and paramilitary violence that have been employed against them (Bell and Schreiner 2018; Crosby and Monaghan 2012, 2016; Pasternak et al. 2013). Some critical perspectives on IR explore the security interests and ontologies of subaltern groups in the Global South with little examination of Indigenous peoples within the Global North (Barkawi and Laffey 2006), or alternatively study the problematic implications of Indigenous politics for the foreign policies of settler states (Lackenbauer and Cooper 2007). But there is minimal inquiry into what security means to Indigenous peoples or why security claims made by Indigenous peoples have been ineffective at generating policy change. Given the ongoing, and in some instances worsening, nature of the threats facing Indigenous peoples as a result of state action and inaction, investigating the politics that underpin Indigenous peoples' security claims is important for assessing the current and future prospects of contested environmental politics globally.

This article theorizes why security claims articulated by Indigenous peoples fail to be accepted by government authorities or become incorporated into the security policies and practices of the states in which they reside. By engaging the concepts of securitization and ontological security, I account for how Indigenous peoples are prevented from being able to successfully "speak" security to the state. I argue that nondominant social groups that articulate threats originating from the dominant society or state institutions are unable to gain acceptance for security issues that challenge the dominant societal identity. In effect, Indigenous peoples' security claims challenge the ontological security, or national sense of self, of settler societies by identifying the state and dominant society as the source of their insecurity. Indigenous identity thus acts as an inhibiting condition for the acceptance of their security claims. Given the ontological relationship to land that underpins Indigenous identities and worldviews, and the incommensurability between Indigenous and settler claims to authority over land that is central to settler colonialism, this inhibiting condition is especially relevant with respect to security claims in relation to the natural environment. In addition to contributing to the inclusion of Indigenous peoples within IR and security studies, this article intervenes in debates around "securitizing" high stakes political issues, like environmental damage, through the use of security language and discourse. The argument has implications for the advocacy strategies of nondominant groups engaged in struggles for environmental and social justice, and suggests that alternative discourses centered on justice or sustainability may provide better avenues for political and policy change.

Constructing Security Threats

Securitization, Identity, and Power

The meaning of security is always contextual, ambiguous, and inherently political. Security is a "contested concept" for which "no neutral definition is possible . . . [because] any meaning depends upon and in turn supports a specific view of politics. . . . All definitions are theory-dependent, and all definitions reflect normative commitments" (S. Smith 2005: 27–28). Security is contested precisely because it is a powerful social and political signifier; how it is defined and enacted reflects who enjoys the protection offered by the sovereign power and who does not. "The very act of defining security and making a claim for that definition is an act of power, supporting the politics that depend on that definition, or making a normative claim for why security ought to be defined in a particular way" (Hoogensen Gjørv et al. 2014: 2). Therefore, critical approaches to security must reckon with security claims that have not succeeded, namely security issues that are denied or ignored by the power holders who ultimately determine which issues institutions and public policy prioritize their resources to address.

Securitization theory is a prominent and compelling framework for explaining the process through which security threats are socially constructed (Balzacq 2011; Wæver et al. 1998). Securitization explains how issues become designated as *security* issues through the intersubjective (re)production of certain phenomena as threatening (Wæver et al. 1998: 35). This occurs when an actor employs security language—security, insecurity, threat, danger, existence, survival—to claim that something threatens the existence or well-being of a specific referent object. This security claim, called a securitizing move, transforms into a successful securitization when it is accepted by an authoritative audience with the power to respond to the threat, usually though not necessarily the sovereign state. Once accepted, a securitizing move shifts the issue from the realm of "normal politics" in which actors are bound by rules of appropriate political conduct into the realm of security politics, whereby the sovereign is authorized to use exceptional measures to defend the object that is threatened. The shift from politicized to securitized elevates the specified issue to the apex of political priority, and denotes an official recognition of its perceived importance. By making a securitizing move, an actor seeks to mobilize the political and material resources necessary to defend a referent object, and elevate the threat-referent relationship to the highest level of priority within a particular political context.

Successful securitization is structured by three "facilitating conditions": use of security language, the authority and social capital of the securitizing actor, and the features of the alleged threat (Wæver et al. 1998: 33). These factors shape whether an existential threat is invoked, whether an actor is heard, and whether a phenomenon can be credibly depicted as security relevant. Facilitating conditions are the subject of important debates within securitization theory because they imply that the "social magic" of securitization results from the interaction between conditions that are both internal and external to the speech act itself (Balzacq 2011; Stritzel 2007). True to the Austinian language theory on which it is based, securitization considers language to have social power only when spoken by an appropriate speaker under the right conditions. Understandings of security—as reflected in those security claims that are acknowledged and enacted into public policy—are thus determined through the confluence of facilitating conditions that support a particular meaning within a given political context.

Consequently, identity is a crucial variable for securitization, which as a "structured field" is characterized by unequal "social power" that shapes actors' capacities to successfully securitize issues (Balzacq 2005: 190–191; Wæver et al. 1998: 3). The identity of a secu-

ritizing actor operates "as a catalyst or gate-keeper in accepting a particular idea as a threat" (Sjöstedt 2013: 153), but identity is also key for securitization because it affects how certain identity groups experience security threats (Hoogensen and Rottem 2004) and whose securitizing moves can succeed (Hayes 2012). In short, identity matters for securitization because it mediates power, defined as "the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate . . . the capacities of actors to determine the conditions of their existence" (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 42). In the remainder of this article, I argue that groups with oppositional, antagonistic, or threatening identities to the authoritative audience will have their security claims precluded from securitization success. I call this securitization nondominance: social groups who are structurally inhibited in their ability to successfully speak, write, or perform securitizing moves. Dominant groups will not always have their security claims accepted, but securitizing moves made by or on behalf of nondominant groups will systematically fail because of the social relations between the dominant society, state institutions, and the group the speaker represents. Securitization nondominance thus reflects broader forms of societal nondominance as they pertain to the ability to construct security issues within public policy and generate an adequate government response. Since "to 'securitize' an issue . . . [is] to challenge society to promote it higher in its scales of values and to commit greater resources to solving the related problems" (Sheehan 2005: 52), the question is why security issues articulated by Indigenous peoples are consistently unable to attain the highest level of political priority. In the next section, I outline this argument with reference to Indigenous peoples, though securitization nondominance may also apply to gendered, racialized, or classed social actors depending on how the dominant societal identity is constructed within their specific political contexts.

Nondominance and Ontological Security

What is nondominance, and how does it result in the exclusion of certain groups' security claims? Nondominance results from the limitation or absence of power and is a social phenomenon reflected in every society. Since power produces "effects [that] work to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others" (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 42), groups experience poverty, prejudice, injustice, disenfranchisement, and violence by virtue of their structurally determined subordinate, marginal, or liminal societal positions.[2] Nondominance is constituted in various ways, and not all forms of nondominance are relevant to securitization, nor do all nondominant groups make security claims. However, the relationship between power and nondominance is important for the construction of security issues because it influences who is able to contribute, and in what ways, to public discourse: "Relations of dominance and nondominance determine who defines norms and practices and who must follow them; who is important and who is not; who defines the parameters of the debate and who does not; who is valuable and who is not" (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006: 219).

Depending on the kinds and specificity of social relations through which it operates, power can directly (compulsory power) or indirectly (institutional power) force actors to behave a particular way, and it can directly (structural power) or indirectly (productive power) shape the constitutive relationships and subject positions of social actors in ways that influence their political behavior (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 43). Any form of power can translate into systematic restrictions on a group's ability to influence government policy, and all four types structure relations between nondominant groups and state institutions. However, in contemporary democratic societies—which includes settler colonial states such as Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Israel, and the United States—securitization

nondominance is most commonly (re)produced through structural and institutional forms of power, since structural power constitutes particular groups in unequal relations to each other—for instance, capital-labor, master-slave, and Indigenous-settler dichotomies—and institutional power accounts for how interactions between social actors are mediated through "long-standing institutions [that] represent frozen configurations of privilege and bias that can continue to shape the future choices of actors" (52).

Understanding that power generates unequal, and often unjust, relations between dominant and nondominant groups does not, in itself, explain why those groups would be unable to advance security claims against the state. For instance, however contested and incomplete, since the mid-twentieth century, Indigenous peoples in North America and Australasia have challenged their states by demanding recognition of their inherent, constitutional, and treaty-based rights. The official acknowledgments and concessions they have received, while often incomplete and reluctantly granted, signify a positive expansion of democratic inclusion for these historically oppressed and marginalized groups. The promulgation of constitutional and statutory changes have inaugurated a new era in which Indigenous peoples are often seen as "citizens plus": entitled to civil, political, and cultural rights as citizens and additionally through constitutional documents and treaties with the Crown or federal government (Cairns 2001; Maaka and Fleras 2005). Thus, the argument presented here that Indigenous peoples are structurally unable to successfully advance their security claims is not self-evident and must be effectively theorized.

Therefore, a final conceptual building block of the theory developed here is ontological security, which I use to refer to a stable sense of self-identity. Jennifer Mitzen (2006: 342) explains that "ontological security refers to the need to experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time—as being rather than constantly changing—in order to realize a sense of agency. Individuals need to feel secure in who they are, as identities or selves. Some deep forms of uncertainty threaten this identity security." Actors maintain the integrity of how they view themselves and their place in the world as a means of providing cognitive stability in an unpredictable environment, even if doing so means adhering to pathological aspects of individual or collective identity. Mitzen employs the concept to provide a constructivist account of the role of state identity in the production and maintenance of security dilemmas, but her insights offer three useful applications for the argument made here: (1) states, as the political reflection of their dominant societal groups, possess identities which they can perceive as threatened; (2) these identities are established through routinized relations of amity and enmity between different societal groups; (3) and "assuming that states seek ontological security provides a sociological basis for understanding why we might see different decision-makers acting similarly over time" (353). In other words, ontological security seeking provides an explanation for continuities in state behavior even as individual leaders and other circumstances change. The assumption that states seek ontological security even when doing so perpetuates harmful consequences provides a lynchpin for explaining why security claims made by certain nondominant groups are precluded from securitization success.

Efforts to secure collective identities against various forms of social change are a prominent theme in securitization studies (Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2000; Ibrahim 2005; Roe 2004; Wæver et al. 1993). Identifying threats to an essentialized communal identity is an effective tool for promoting that very identity: "Threats to identity are thus always a question of the *construction* of something as threatening some 'we'—and often thereby actually contributing to the construction or reproduction of 'us'" (Wæver et al. 1998*:* 120). Labeling outsiders is an essential component of delineating membership in social groups because humans understand who they are by rejecting what they are not; as David Campbell (1998: 9) notes, "identity is constituted in relation to difference." While the parameters of social groups are mutable, they are still policed as part of maintaining large-scale collective identities that

are only ever, after all, "imagined communities" based on the shared belief in common membership (Anderson 2006). Mitzen outlines how the need for collective identity drives cognitive efforts to maintain ontological security based, in large part, on distinguishing one's own group from others:

> One important way that groups maintain distinctiveness is by routinizing their relationships to other groups. Such inter-societal routines help maintain identity coherence for each group, which in turn provides individuals with a measure of ontological security. From here it is only a short step to argue that the states themselves act at least "as if" they are ontological security-seekers. Because losing a sense of state distinctiveness would threaten the ontological security of its members, states can be seen as motivated to preserve the national group identity and not simply the national "body" [territory]. (2006: 352)

In sum, the pursuit of ontological security is a powerful force in the construction and preservation of collective identities, and states are one of the principal vehicles through which such identities are expressed. No state has a single, monolithic collective identity, but most states do possess a group that is demographically, culturally, or politically dominant within its territory and institutions and which can thus mobilize these in its own defense. Threats to the dominant identity may originate from outside the state's territory—whether from outsiders or amorphous forces such as economic or cultural globalization—or from within. The need to maintain the dominant group's ontological security explains the systematic failure of nondominant groups' security claims. Below, I apply this theoretical approach to explain the inability of Indigenous political actors to successfully securitize threats to their collective survival and well-being.

Indigenous Threats to Settler Ontological Security

Settler Societies and Indigenous Nondominance

Settler colonial states are complex and diverse polities with many differences between them, and in many respects they resist easy categorization. However, a state's "type" can be identified based on the features that underpin its national identity, and the consequent "role identity" the state's dominant society has of itself that must be preserved for ontological security to be maintained. These categorizations are not immutable, since "state identities or types are constituted and sustained by social relationships rather than being intrinsic properties of the states themselves" (Mitzen 2006: 354; Campbell 1998: 9–10). But the identifying features of states do not solely exist within the minds of their citizens, nor can they be separated from how those states behave. In this respect, a defining characteristic of contemporary settler colonial societies is that they were founded by European colonizers on Indigenous territories acquired through processes of settlement, dispossession of land, treaty violations, disenfranchisement, forcible relocation, segregation, coercive assimilation, and other forms of direct and structural violence resulting in the physical and cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; Maaka and Fleras 2005; TRC 2015). This resulted in the establishment of polities in which European settlers and their descendants, supplemented by enslaved and/or immigrant labor from elsewhere in the world, built social, political, and economic systems premised on their superiority over the peoples who had originally resided there. These settler states are constituted in contrast to preexisting Indigenous societies on the same territories: "Indigenous peoples are outside the 'we-ness' that allows others—settlers—to belong" (Hanrahan 2017: 72). In this context, "applying the settler label does not imply a moral or ethical judgement; rather, it is a descriptive term that

recognizes the historical and contemporary realities of imperialism that very clearly separate the lives of Indigenous peoples from the lives of later-comers" (Barker 2009: 329). In the most foundational sense, settler colonial societies reflect the dominance of white settlers over Indigenous peoples.

The basic difference still afforded the interests, rights, and worldviews of settlers and Indigenous peoples demonstrates that settler colonialism is not a historical phenomenon but an ongoing reality; as Patrick Wolfe (2006: 388) famously observed, "settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure, not an event." To be sure, there have been substantial achievements for Indigenous peoples in pursuing their legal and political rights both globally and domestically. In the past two decades, the creation of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, adoption of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, judicial rulings favoring Indigenous rights to title over land, and assorted moves toward recognition and reparations for colonial wrongs all signify the reassertion of Indigenous political agency. But the terms of this inclusion remain constrained by the interests and actions of settler states. As a result, while "the most egregious expressions of colonialism have been discredited . . . what remained untouched are those 'colonial agendas' that have had a controlling (systemic) effect in privileging national (white) interests at the expense of indigenous rights" (Maaka and Fleras 2005: 12). Despite some progress toward acknowledging and respecting Indigenous rights, the relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler states remain structured by the dominance of settler colonial values, institutions, and interests.

Indigeneity is constitutive of material and ideational forms of nondominance for Indigenous peoples within white-majority settler societies. The material reflections of political nondominance include lower qualities of life, forms of governmental control, and restrictions on Indigenous peoples' rights and autonomy resulting from "the demoralising effects of dispossession, forced removals, open racism and discrimination, and destruction of language, identity, and culture" (Maaka and Fleras 2005: 26). Less overt but more pernicious is the ideational nondominance that discredits Indigenous forms of knowledge production, privileges settler colonial legal and political systems, and marginalizes Indigenous values and worldviews. Indigenous knowledges have long been subjected to concerted efforts at destruction, erasure, and forgetting because they were seen as threatening colonial order. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999: 29) has observed, "the negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly 'primitive' and 'incorrect' and mostly because they challenged and resisted the vision of colonization." This included depriving Indigenous systems of knowledge and social organization of the legitimacy to challenge settler institutions by subjecting them to alien standards of colonial law and morality, preventing their transmission to younger generations, and co-opting them into settler colonial decision-making processes and academic research. The result has been the discrediting of the scientific validity, legal weight, and moral worth of Indigenous knowledge precisely on the basis of its difference from settler colonial/scientific rationalist modes of thought and action.

The form of nondominance relevant here pertains to the systemic restrictions on Indigenous peoples' ability to have their security claims accepted by the state. The reason for this is straightforward: the authoritative audiences that must accept these security claims are not neutral actors but rather settler colonial institutions that principally represent the dominant settler population. When nondominant actors articulate their concerns as security issues, the relationship between securitizing actor and audience is not impartial, but between colonized and colonizer, racialized Indigenous speaker and white settler audience. The process of securitization is occurring in a context of unequal power and social capital, violent historical legacies, and ongoing discrimination that structure relations between Indigenous

people and settlers. This is compounded by the fact that Indigenous security claims position the settler state itself as a principal or contributing source of the threats they face. For a settler audience to accept those securitizing moves would require acknowledging their role in the constitution of insecurity for Indigenous peoples.

For democratic settler societies, this directly challenges their national sense of self, since "where there is significant disenfranchisement it can be said that there is also a challenge to the authority and sovereign legitimacy of the state. This is especially so when the state itself is in some essence understandable as a threat to the security and well being of those who are disenfranchised" (Beier 2010: 179). Values such as juridical equality, pluralism, social inclusion, and minority rights are central to the "type" of state that identifies as a "democracy," so acknowledging claims that the state itself—in pursuing or protecting the rights, interests, and property of the dominant societal group—produces threats to the security of its Indigenous citizens would compromise core features of a democratic society's self-understanding. "Society solves its members' ontological security problem for them, since society is a shared cognitive ordering of the environment. . . . But society is no more than the social practices its members engage in" (Mitzen 2006: 349). This means that so long as relations between settlers and Indigenous people remain structured by racial inequality, institutional and individual discrimination, and the fundamental privileging of Eurocentric identities and interests, ontological security requires rejecting claims made against society that identify such structures, practices, and attitudes as producing insecurity for nondominant groups.

Nondominance is integral to the collective historical and contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples: it constitutes them as social actors, and widely informs definitions of indigeneity (Martínez Cobo 1986: para 379). However, some scholars also identify resistance to settler domination as a component of indigeneity. To Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005: 597), "it is this oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples, that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world." Roger Maaka and Augie Fleras (2005: 9) claim that "[Indigenous] peoples share a common desire to transcend colonial mentalities, contest existing constitutional principles, challenge the normalisation of injustices within systems of power, and transform the structures of dominance that distort and disrupt."

For Indigenous peoples who "derive much of their identity from histories of state-sponsored genocide, forced settlement, relocation, political marginalization, and various formal attempts at cultural destruction" (Niezen 2003: 5), resistance to nondominance is a defining feature of their identity. This suggests that to *be* Indigenous is to resist forms of settler political authority that have been imposed over Indigenous peoples in their own territories: indigeneity is premised on an oppositional relationship to the settler state. Since the domination of Indigenous peoples by settler colonial institutions constitutes the political salience of their indigeneity, the priority issues of Indigenous peoples, including those they designate as threats to their security, begin with resisting the assertion of the settler state's authority over Indigenous lands. As Jaskiran Dhillon (2015: 25) explains in relation toward state-directed harms against Indigenous women and girls, if "the state is the chief perpetrator of violence in Indigenous nations, its institutions, agencies, and programs cannot be the place where justice is found, nor can strategies for eradicating colonial gender violence be rooted in these power structures."

Incommensurability and the Question of Land

The material and ideational forms of nondominance experienced by Indigenous peoples converge with respect to their relationships to land. Indeed, no question is more central

to Indigenous peoples and settler colonialism than who is authorized to decide how land is used: "land is life—or, at least, land is necessary for life. Thus, contests for land can be—indeed, often are—contests for life" (Wolfe 2006: 387). Indigenous scholars observe that settler colonialism rests on Eurocentric conceptions of land as sovereign territory and private property being imposed over Indigenous understandings of land "*as system of reciprocal relations and obligations* [that] can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in non-dominating and non-exploitive terms" (Coulthard 2014: 13). Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015: 19–20) notes how possession of land was necessary to constitute colonial sovereignty: "The British imperial project was predicated on taking possession of other peoples' lands and resources for the benefit of Empire. . . . Property rights were derived from the Crown, which in the form of the nation-state holds possession. Possession and nationhood are thus constituted symbiotically." Settler possession of land was integral to the colonial project of "eliminating the native" (Wolfe 2006) because indigeneity is based on an "ontological relationship to land . . . that the nation-state has sought to diminish through its social, legal, and cultural practices" (Moreton-Robinson 2015: 15). Thus, even when settler states have extended particular rights for Indigenous peoples to use (their own) land, it has been premised on the view that the land belongs to the state. Moreover, there are deeply held colonial assumptions about the validity of certain types of land use—such as construction of permanent settlements, natural resource extraction, and settler recreation—over others. Settler colonialism also remains uncomfortable with nonuse of land; under extractive capitalism, land that is not "in use" is economically unproductive and represents an asset capable of further exploitation.

The incommensurability of settler and Indigenous claims to land underpins securitization nondominance for Indigenous peoples within contemporary settler societies. The ontological security of settler populations depends on settler possession of, and state authority over, the territories that comprise these polities. Likewise, it relies on the use of land as the basis for industrial activities and natural resource extraction, as well as for establishing settler towns and cities that rely for their survival and economic prosperity on local ecological systems and globalized commercial flows of commodities, goods, and services. Settler modes of social, political, and economic organization are built on the presumption that the land is and should be subject to the imperatives of capitalist extraction mediated through Eurocentric modes of political sovereignty. Settler institutions and the dominant white society they represent thus require that decision-making power over Indigenous peoples' traditional territories remain under settler political authority that considers its legitimacy to supersede Indigenous forms of governance and political organization. Furthermore, the fact that settler states such as Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Israel, and the United States also possess national identities as democracies is also inconsistent with a self-perception as being responsible for producing the insecurity of their respective Indigenous peoples. Thus, as Maura Hanrahan (2017: 73) observes, "Indigenous people present an existential threat to [settler] identity, this identity having been created around liberal democratic principles, possession of [land], and . . . resource extraction. To maintain . . . national identity and the activities that support it, Indigenous people have to be pushed to the figurative and literal fringes and rendered invisible."

By contrast, Indigenous scholars emphasize how the survival of Indigenous lives and nations through individual and collective decolonization requires challenging these very structures of settler society. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012: 7) argue that "decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land. . . . That is, *all* the land, and not just symbolically. . . . Decolonization eliminates settler property rights and settler sovereignty. It requires the abolition of land as property and upholds the sover-

eignty of Native land and people . . . All land is repatriated and all settlers become landless" (2012: 26–27). Glen Coulthard (2014) and Maura Hanrahan (2017) also view the current structures of settler society as antithetical to the survival of Indigenous peoples. Settler capitalist economies have been built on the coercive dispossession of Indigenous territories in order to facilitate the ecologically unsustainable extraction of natural resources, and both practices are incompatible with Indigenous survival precisely because of their "ontological relationship to land" (Moreton-Robinson 2015: 15). Since Indigenous peoples only exist *as Indigenous* through systems of reciprocal relations with the land and all its human and nonhuman inhabitants, Coulthard (2014: 171–173) argues that "without such a massive change in the political economy of contemporary settler-colonialism, any efforts to rebuild our nations will remain parasitic on capitalism, and thus on the perpetual exploitation of our lands and labour . . . For Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die." More than the presence of settlers on Indigenous territories, what is incommensurable with the survival and well-being of Indigenous peoples are the economic structures that settlers have established as the basis for their societies. But these structures now underpin the settler state's national interests and settlers' collective sense of self, meaning that the challenges leveled by Indigenous theoretical critiques and practical resistance are inherently threatening to the ontological security of contemporary settler colonial societies.

Furthermore, because Indigenous identities are ontologically connected to specific territories, changes to the land itself—particularly environmental damage that negatively impacts the health or viability of existing ecosystems—also affect Indigenous peoples' collective identities. Changes to natural systems have profound impacts on the ability of Indigenous people to practice their cultures and interact in familiar ways with the landscape: "Cultural survival, identity and the very existence of Indigenous societies depend to a considerable degree on the maintenance of environmental quality. The degradation of the environment is therefore inseparable from a loss of culture and hence identity" (Cocklin 2002: 159). In this sense, threats to the environment also threaten Indigenous identities, which is precisely why Indigenous peoples have situated themselves, often disruptively, within political debates over the impacts of global climate change (Bravo 2009; Martello 2008; H. Smith 2007). Indigenous peoples recognize that changes to the environment stem in considerable part from their lack of political authority over land use in their ancestral territories. Human-caused environmental changes illustrate Indigenous nondominance in both its material and nonmaterial forms while simultaneously posing deep threats to the continued existence of Indigenous worldviews and ways of life.

In this respect, what is revealed is a profound gap between the conditions of existence that settlers and Indigenous peoples seek to secure. Ontological security for Indigenous and settler communities, respectively, is derived from fundamentally distinct ontologies, as most evident with respect to the treatment and use of land. Notwithstanding the growth of Western or settler discourses of environmental sustainability, or critiques of modern capitalism and the global ecological crisis it has produced (i.e., the Anthropocene), conceptions of land as kin and land as commodity are, indeed, incommensurable. Even if convergence or fruitful engagement between Indigenous and settler modes of thought with respect to the natural environment is possible (Todd 2016), the political and social realities of settler states remain built on structures of white racial superiority and extractive capitalism that are fundamentally challenged by the assertion of Indigenous understandings of, and authority over, land. Security discourses and specific securitizing moves that frame the damage to Indigenous lands and lives in terms of threats originating with settler society and the actions of the settler state thus run aground on the unequal power relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples. Security is a structured field, and the need for settlers to

defend their self-understanding as democratic and as *not* responsible for the conditions of global and local environmental harm effectively foreclose the capacity for Indigenous security claims to be accepted on their own terms.

Conclusion: Whose Security?

In this article, I have theorized why security claims made by Indigenous peoples are excluded from the policies and practices of the settler colonial states in which they reside. I argue that Indigenous peoples, like other societally nondominant groups, are structurally constrained in their ability to successfully "speak" security, especially when they identify threats to their survival or well-being that originate from state institutions or the dominant society. The need to maintain the ontological security of the dominant (i.e., settler) society intervenes to impede acceptance of nondominant groups' security claims, rendering nondominant identities an inhibiting condition for successful securitization. Given that settler colonialism is, at its root, a struggle for control over land, I suggest that the securitization inhibiting nature of indigeneity is particularly acute with respect to threats of environmental damage to the land itself. That is, Indigenous identities and practices based on relationships to particular territories are threatened by processes of settlement, resource extraction, and ecological disruption that are normalized under settler colonialism, such that it is impossible for Indigenous peoples to articulate these issues as security issues without implicating the dominant settler population and settler colonial institutions as the source of their insecurity. Rather than accept such claims, and thus both undermine their own professed economic interests and legitimize Indigenous critiques of the settler colonial project, the authoritative institutions of the settler state instead foreclose the possibility of securitization success through the systematic rejection of Indigenous securitizing moves.

The purpose of this article is neither to generalize across all Indigenous peoples nor to assert the existence of monolithic or essentialist Indigenous or settler identities. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate that security discourse may be unavailable as a means of catalyzing state action or producing positive change in the lives of certain communities, even within democratic societies. Examining unsuccessful efforts to construct issues as security relevant helps to demonstrate the limits of what state institutions will countenance as security issues. Analytically, it reiterates the importance of examining the security concerns of substate groups that identify the state itself as their principal source of insecurity, especially within prosperous societies that are presumed to provide a general degree of security to their citizens as a public good. Security is an essential component of communal life, and the ability to securitize—not always to have one's claims accepted, but at least to receive a fair hearing and have the opportunity for one's claims to be accepted—denotes membership in a political community. The process of defining security "is so pivotal to the very purpose of community that at the level of self-identification it helps to construct and sustain our 'we-feeling'—our very felt sense of 'common publicness'" (Loader and Walker 2007: 164). It is the responsibility of governing authorities to provide security to their citizens, and if some groups are precluded from having their most serious concerns addressed, then they are excluded from that community in a vital way. By examining the inability of nondominant groups to successfully securitize issues of greatest importance to them, this analysis calls into question whether securitization is available as a process to advance political action on urgent challenges faced by all groups in a society.

While beyond the scope of this article to examine, this argument suggests that nondominant societal groups seeking to advance policy change on serious challenges facing them should consider carefully the utility of strategies that primarily appeal to elected policy

makers or state institutions that are electorally accountable to the dominant societal group. Successful mobilization of security discourse may be unavailable, such that attempting to securitize even those issues relevant to their very survival will offer little prospect of political success. While this argument may be generalized to other nondominant groups, it appears particularly salient for Indigenous peoples. Indeed, if Indigenous and decolonial scholars are correct that "eliminating the native" (Wolfe 2006) is the ultimate goal of the settler state, then there is actually a specifically perverse incentive for state authorities *not* to act on Indigenous peoples' security claims. Threats to Indigenous peoples may weaken their capacity to claim or assert self-determination in ways that challenge the assertion of settler sovereignty. Likewise, environmental threats due to natural resource extraction simultaneously undermine Indigenous peoples' connections to the land by degrading the natural environment while promoting the settler state's dual purposes of assimilating Indigenous peoples by making them reliant on the state for subsistence and providing the natural resources sought by the settler capitalist economy.

By contrast, security discourse and securitization are not the only ways for nondominant groups to frame their concerns. Other discourses, institutions, and mechanisms exist for Indigenous peoples and other nondominant groups to pursue redress or effective policy responses. Rather than "security," discourses of sustainability, resilience, morality, or justice that possess different logics and means of appealing to an audience offer alternate possibilities for catalyzing a response to environmental and other harms facing Indigenous peoples. Practically, pursuing legal action has produced significant gains for Indigenous peoples, including with specific respect to the question of Indigenous title over land and consultation and consent over land use in traditional territories. Jurisprudence—such as *New Zealand Māori Council v. Attorney-General* in Aotearoa New Zealand, and *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* and *Clyde River (Hamlet) v. Petroleum Geo-Services Inc.* in Canada—has been far more significant in terms of defending the interests of Indigenous peoples against state power than attempted securitization.

If Indigenous peoples choose to work with and through settler institutions, it would seem that the legal system offers more welcoming terrain than the structurally inhibited pursuit of securitization. This implication is particularly relevant given the considerable effort expended by Indigenous peoples and their institutions in articulating their priorities as security concerns in order to mobilize an adequate state response. But insofar as claims made to or through settler legal systems are subject to similar structural problems such as the presumption of settler sovereignty to determine legal disputes, the possibilities for radical emancipation or Indigenous self-determination is unlikely to be realized through the courts either. In the end, the survival and well-being of Indigenous peoples—whether framed in terms of security, rights, resilience, or some other central concept—will continue to rest primarily on Indigenous communities asserting their interests through a variety of means, including direct action and civil disobedience, rather than seeking state recognition (Coulthard 2014). Indeed, some of the most important breakthroughs for Indigenous negotiations with the state have occurred after direct action by Indigenous peoples in defense of their territory (Belanger and Lackenbauer 2015).

Overall, despite some areas of progress toward Indigenous rights and self-determination within settler societies, I argue that there remain fundamental ways in which Indigenous peoples are unable to successfully advance security claims against the state. The incommensurability of settler and Indigenous peoples' security interests as they are currently constituted, rooted in contested authority over physical territories claimed by both groups, means that claims based on non-security discourses may ultimately be more effective at generating political changes favorable to the continued survival of Indigenous peoples. Regrettably, the use of security discourse has failed to make Indigenous peoples more secure in the face of

settler imposition and ongoing degradation of the natural environment on which they rely. Environmental change on Indigenous territories as a result of both industrial activities and climate change will continue to worsen; the question, therefore, is how will Indigenous peoples (and others) respond and which strategies will prove most effective at securing a sustainable future. Invoking security, it appears, is not the answer.

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WILFRID GREAVES is Assistant Professor of International Relations at the University of Victoria. His research examines the intersections between security theory and environmental politics with focuses on climate change, energy extraction, Indigenous peoples, and the circumpolar Arctic. He has published more than a dozen peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and his monograph, *Arctic In/Security: Polar Politics, Indigenous Peoples, and Environmental Change in Canada and Norway,* is forthcoming from University of Toronto Press. He holds a PhD in political science from the University of Toronto and was previously Lecturer at the Trudeau Centre for Peace, Conflict and Justice. Email: wgreaves@uvic.ca

NOTES

1. I use the term "Indigenous peoples" as defined by the Martínez Cobo study (1986: para. 379): "Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with preinvasion and precolonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present nondominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems." "Indigenous" is thus a broad category incorporating a diverse, heterogeneous array of peoples around the world who share experiences of dispossession and colonial violence.
2. This article positions Indigenous people as nondominant based on their relative power and agency within the settler state. This argument provokes the question of whether indigeneity and subalternity are similar subject positions relative to colonial power (see Byrd and Rothberg 2011). As I understand it, subalternity positions the subject on the terrain of the powerful and within the context of colonial structures (Spivak 1988), whereas indigeneity defines itself as incommensurable with, not subordinate to, settler colonial power. But notwithstanding the specificity and nuance of Indigenous experiences vis-à-vis those of subaltern groups (for instance, Spivak focuses on Indians under British colonialism), Indigenous peoples by definition occupy structural and institutional positions that have been disempowered by the settler state (Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 25–35). As described in the remainder of this article, this relative lack of power is constitutive of indigeneity under settler colonialism.

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