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Pathways to critical U.S. mining strategies

-- Analysis from the Perspective of Security Theory

Haoru Li

Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing 210000, China

Abstract: With the rise of new technology industry, the United States, in order to protect its industry development and national interests, pays special attention to the security threat caused by the supply of critical minerals, gradually promotes the issue of "security" and strengthens the construction and development of its critical mineral strategy. In this paper, the safe path of existential threat, verbal behavior and intersubjectivity in critical mining strategies in the United States is studied. The security of critical minerals in the United States should be a desirable balance. The security of critical minerals meets the security needs of the United States to prevent the threat of shortage of resources for emerging technologies, but it will cause the "audience" to overreact, resulting in security difficulties and mismatch of resources.

Keywords: Security theory; Critical minerals; Securing results.

1. Introduction

In the 1990' s, academics from the Copenhagen School, led by Barry Buzan, created the theory of securitization. As a paradigm or framework for the analysis of security issues, security provides an answer to the behavior patterns of security construction in various fields, such as military, political, environmental and water resources. It defines securitization as the acquisition of special powers beyond procedure through "security" to create a kind of elevation of political issues beyond political rules and structures. In this sense, the securitization of an issue means that it is presented as an "existential threat " that requires urgent measures that, while exceeding the normal limits of the political process, are nonetheless justified. [1]

Since the 21st century, with the upgrading of new and strategic technologies in various countries, the pattern of supply and demand of international resources has changed greatly, the upstream resources needed for manufacturing and production in various countries have gradually changed, and the minerals needed by various emerging industries have become strategic materials in international competition. At one time many countries put the resource security of new technology industry into strategic height and put forward strategies and lists for critical minerals. Critical minerals are those that are economical and supply risk in times of crisis. Some of the minerals that the United States relies on for imports from abroad could pose a significant threat to the United States military and economy as other national actors respond to some international environment, natural disasters, etc., and their supply is vulnerable. The United States has increasingly focused on addressing critical mineral security threats, elevating them to a federal strategic level. By promoting the process of "security" of critical minerals, the critical mineral security strategy of the United States is gradually constructed and perfected. How can critical mining strategies be implemented through "securitization " steps? How was the "safe" strategy constructed and does it fit in with reality? How will this "safe" strategy play out and what impact will it have? This is a question that needs to be explored in this paper. In this paper, the construction of the critical mine safety strategy in the United States is viewed from the perspective of the theory of securitization. According to a series of documents published by the white house, congress and other government departments, the author adopts the method of literature research to answer these questions.

2. Logic of operation of the theory of securitization

Copenhagen school goes beyond classical compound security theory and focuses on social construction rather than objective security. The Copenhagen school sees security as a concept that can be manipulated, somewhere between subjectivity and objectivity. Since the new century, as a concept of "security", from the beginning of high political issues to economic, cultural, food and other low political issues, security has been used as a domestic power struggle, foreign expansion of power as a strategic tool. In order to standardize the study of security, we should introduce and explain the theory of security.

2.1. Core concepts of securitization

The core concepts of security include existential threat, word-behavior and intersubjectivity.

"Existential threat" is an important prerequisite for security. In the process of security, an existential threat is made to the existence of a referential object, which is referred to as "existential threat". The construction of speech and behavior is done by the agent. In security discourse, a question is posed by a security agent who believes that the subject is threatened and is of the highest priority. Then the actor will demand powers outside the program to respond to the threat through extraordinary measures. From a philosophical perspective, "intersubjectivity" turns the original focus on subjects, objects, goals, and outcomes into a focus on processes and relationships, which forms a communicative rationality. In this case, it is constructed by interaction between security actors, the subjects involved and the audience (functional actors and the general public). Then there is a collective recognition of the threat to the object of reference constructed by the security agent, and the object to be protected is

constructed in the subject's interaction. Security ultimately maintains the quality of being neither subject nor object, but in the midst of the subject. [2]

2.2. The path of the theory of security

The path of security is to find the "target" and explain that it is threatened, and create a need for security. Setting the agenda in the language of security actors (voiceless agents of securitization) and integrating this security issue into national security strategies is a process related to "language-behavior "; Intersubjectivity, in which units interact with each other to construct a security agenda so that their words are accepted by a secure audience (the public) and the threat they describe is shared by the public.

According to the data, the operation logic of security is summarized:

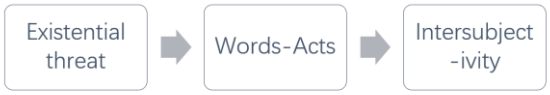


Figure 1. Safe Operation Logic

3. Pathways for the United States to secure critical mineral strategies

3.1. Identification of existential threats: background to the threat to mineral resources in the United States

Mineral resources have not only their own instrumental properties, but also their own economic properties in the course of socio-economic exchange, and these properties have political properties that affect the geopolitical pattern as interest considerations in the formation of human organizations and political blocs. [3] And in the context of profound change and complex adjustment, control of the earth's resources is at the heart of the great power game.

First, competition for geo-resources poses a continuing threat to US mineral security. Competition for mineral resources is a historic world topic. By observing the history of world war, it is not difficult to find out the importance countries attach to mineral resources. With the completion of the Second Industrial Revolution, the production of capitalist countries requires a great deal of mineral resources. From the perspective of realism, mineral resources are important determinants of comprehensive national strength. In 2010, the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) established the Crisis Minerals and Strategic Minerals Supply Chain Committee (CSMSC) to publish a study that identified critical minerals as essential raw materials upstream of the manufacturing industry chain, providing security of supply to the manufacturing industry chain. In today's international environment, the supply of critical minerals is fragile and disruption of supply poses a threat to some of the United States' critical industries, particularly national security.

Second, fragile supply chains under the new coronavirus pandemic pose an urgent threat to U.S. mineral resources. In the context of globalization, countries were integrated into production-consumption supply chain systems, and the vulnerability of supply chains threatened the national security of countries requiring significant imports of critical minerals. Global supply chains have been hit hard since the new coronavirus pandemic. There is a mismatch between supply and demand for commodities as countries recover from childbirth, with price volatility exceeding normal supply and demand judgements. The fragility of the supply chain has led to an increase in desirable inventory levels globally, which has further squeezed the availability and circulation of mineral resources across the supply chain, posing an imminent threat to U.S. mineral access.

3.2. Words -Behavior: The Construction of America's Critical Minerals Security Strategy

To find out the first step of "existential threat", it is necessary for the critical mineral resources to be put forward by the actors into concrete agenda. This is the process of "speech and behavior" in the process of security. The US government needs to put critical mineral threats on the security agenda and take a series of urgent actions to ensure that the "word-and-deed" process of securitization goes smoothly. It is argued that the United States security strategy for critical minerals was constructed in 1939 with the Strategic and Critical Raw Material Reserve Act. From that point on, the US government incorporated strategic and critical mineral resources into the federal code.

3.2.1. The Obama era: Preliminary construction

When Obama took office, he pursued a "clean energy strategy." The Obama administration aimed to capture the new energy revolution as a macro driver of U.S. economic growth. Rare earths are critical to producing clean energy in the United States, Obama said. Under Obama, several bills were introduced. Advancing the Critical Minerals Policy Act and the Rare Earth and Critical Materials Recovery Act in 2011, for example, was intended to provide security of supply of critical minerals in the United States, although the Obama administration took a more peaceful economic approach to domestic exploration, development, utilization and protection of critical minerals.

Thus, the Obama era is a more moderate internal construction, economic legislation, is a gradual moderate perspective to the initial construction of the critical mineral security issue.

3.2.2. The Trump era: Formal construction

When Trump took office, with his slogan of "Make America Great Again," his strategic consideration of the global situation was grounded in America's national interests in reality. The mantra of US autonomy and control is a concern about the existential threat to global supply chains, as well as about future international environmental uncertainty. Against this backdrop, the Trump administration has issued a series of executive orders and strategies to promote the construction of safe critical minerals.

On July 21, 2017, Trump signed Executive Order 13806, "Assessing and Strengthening the Manufacturing and Defense Industrial Base and Supply Chain Resilience." The order is aimed at assessing the resilience of the U.S. defense industry and supply chain, which underpins U.S. competitiveness and economic prosperity to foreign countries. [7] Following the order, the Department of Defense released its "Assessing and Strengthening the Baseline and Supply Chain Resilience of the U.S. Manufacturing and Defense Industries." A detailed investigation into the sustainability of manufacturing and defense industry supply chains and possible threats is a critical step in translating threat security into concrete belief in existence. On December 20, 2017,

Trump signed Executive Order 13817, the Federal Strategy to Ensure Safe and Secure Supply of Critical Minerals, which seeks to legitimize the threat of its critical minerals through strategic construction. In February 2018, the United States Department of the Interior released a summary version of the Draft Crisis Minerals List. The U.S. Geological Survey also released a detailed version of its Draft Crisis Minerals List. The executive order continues to build on the threat posed by critical minerals, describing mineral safety as an "urgent matter."

Securing critical mining strategies in the Trump era has been constructed with purpose and urgency. Unlike Obama, whose executive orders and edicts were aimed at the external environment, his concerns about critical minerals were more about national security and immediate interests.

3.2.3. The Biden era: improving

Under Biden, as the impact of the novel coronavirus grows, so does the vulnerability of global supply chains. The Biden administration's slogan is "Building a Better Future," with an eye toward a clean energy revolution and reshaping America's international influence. He took Trump's critical mineral plan a step further, with an eye toward the landing of a critical mineral security strategy and aiming to build a U.S.-led "critical mineral supply alliance." The Biden administration sees critical minerals as strategic goods for emerging manufacturing to grab a foothold in the future. The United States has a complete control system for traditional resources, and it thinks that it should also have deep control over the future resource pattern, and the future of emerging technologies and industrial upgrading cannot be separated from critical minerals, so we should promote the landing of critical mineral reserves. Under Biden, the administration has continued to refine its critical mineral supply security strategy. Biden signed Executive Order 14017, "American Supply Chains." Based on this, the White House released "Building Resilient Supply Chains to Revive American Manufacturing for Broad-based Growth: A 100-Day Review under Executive Order 14017." In June 2021, the United States Senate voted unanimously to pass the American Innovation and Competition Act 2021. The bill, which repeatedly mentions the important role of critical mineral supplies in international competition, designs a range of competing strategies to drive international cooperation in minerals, technological innovation, critical mineral exploration, and more.

Instead of negating critical mineral security as part of Trump's legacy, the Biden administration has continued it as part of the United States' efforts to secure critical minerals.

3.3. Intersubjectivity -a key step in advancing the construction of order and norms

Intersubjectivity is the focus of consciousness on the relationships and processes between subjects, the idea that meaning exists in the interaction of individuals, rather than the atomic-like "self." The intersubjectivity in the study of security of Copenhagen school is the process by which the agent pushes the security problem he has constructed to other agents and causes the "audience" to accept this "existence" in their interaction and establish relevant norms. In the international system, the objects of interaction are mainly divided into state actors, international organizations, etc.

First, interaction with State actors to promote the launch of their Initiative for Safeguarding Mineral Resources Security. Interaction between national actors is the dominant interaction in the international system, and mineral resources are products of political nature. The United States, through its interaction with national actors, has taken initiatives aimed at building dominance in its own Critical Minerals Alliance. The U.S. call for nine countries, including Congo, Argentina and Australia, to join the Strategic Minerals Initiative is essentially the first step in building a U.S.-led "critical minerals alliance." In subsequent interactions, the United States has established cooperation mechanisms for critical minerals with Australia and the United Kingdom, among others. Led by the United States, a number of national actors have joined the United States-led Critical Minerals Alliance as "listeners' 'to the United States' critical mineral security strategy.

Secondly, interact with international organizations to establish mechanisms for the protection of critical minerals. The United States cooperates with the European Union on critical materials for energy diversification at the international level through the United States-European Union Energy Council and the Transatlantic Economic Council; [10] On September 29, 2021, the United States and the European Union's US-European Union Trade and Technology Commission (TTC) held their first formal meeting to focus supply chain security on critical minerals. [11] By interacting with international organizations, the United States builds an international norm that increases the legitimacy of its own critical mineral security, and within a framework of rules and organizations, the "audience" is more receptive to cognitive constructs.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis framework of the Copenhagen School of Science, the paper studies the process of the strategic security of critical minerals in the United States. This paper discusses the beginning of the critical mining strategy, the development of the government strategy, and the process of constructing the strategy. To some extent, the security of critical minerals in the United States is in line with the United States' national interest in the supply of critical minerals caused by the supply chain disruption and energy crisis. But the actions of state actors, operating in the international community, themselves lead to responses from other "audiences, " with a range of consequences. The critical mineral security actions of the United States are motivated by concerns about critical mineral security, but their consequences can lead to security responses in other countries.

For the enlightening reflection on the result of American securitization, the author thinks that it should be a balance of interests and interests to be widely accepted by the "audience". In international relations, the State pursues national interests and security is the most important national interest. If a process of security does not guarantee national security, it is contrary to the State's point of departure for conduct and national interests. In some cases, the intensity of the securitization and the signals it sends need to be taken into account, as the securitization triggers the response of the "listener" State, making security objectives less secure and contributing to a spiral of conflict relations. From the perspective of defensive realism, states can achieve their goals and ease relations by sending signals of goodwill. Consent is divided into domestic consent and international consent, and in the intersubjective phase of securitization, the response of the "audience" itself takes on meaning in securitization. From the point of view of audience cost theory, if the compulsory security at the domestic level is not in line

with the people's opinion, it will lead to the excessive audience cost, which will lead to the lack of legitimacy of government actors at the domestic level. At the international level, if the security of the country is not accepted by the "audience" or signals are misinterpreted by others and are overblown, the security of the country becomes idle and does not serve national security purposes.

In the path of security, the actors should take fully into account the balance of security agreeableness and interest, so that they can be accepted by the "audience" in terms of morality and interest, and construct a reasonable security result. At present, the world is in the midst of the most dramatic change in a century. For China's critical mineral security, international cooperation and critical mineral alliances should be strengthened when constructing implementation strategies. Construct the strategic reserve system and improve the ability to resist risks. Take on international responsibility to build a consensual environment. Adhere to the concept of national security and ensure the security of national resources.

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