

Pandora's Box of Food Estate: An Examination of Food Securitization in Jokowi's Second Term Through Just Securitization Theory

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the securitization of food in Indonesia through the Food Estate program implemented during President Joko Widodo's second term (2019–2024), with a focus on pilot projects in Central Kalimantan and North Sumatra. Using Rita Floyd's Just Securitization Theory (JST) as the analytical framework, the study assesses the ethical legitimacy of the securitization process by examining its initiation, conduct, and termination. Employing a qualitative, case study-based approach and analyzing secondary data from government reports, NGO findings, and academic literature, the research reveals that the Food Estate program fails to meet all three JST criteria. Despite being justified by the COVID-19 crisis, data showed no actual rice shortages, undermining the claim of an existential threat. The conduct of the program marginalized indigenous communities, bypassed environmental regulations, and prioritized corporate interests over local needs, violating principles of proportionality and human rights. Furthermore, the program has continued to expand even after the pandemic's end, without plans for desecuritization or restoration, violating JST's just termination principle. The findings contribute to securitization scholarship by pioneering the application of JST to food policy and illustrating how securitization can entrench elite interests and bypass democratic governance. The study calls for institutional safeguards, indigenous inclusion, and environmental accountability in future food resilience strategies to prevent the misuse of emergency rhetoric for long-term political and economic gain.

Keywords: *Food Estate, Securitization, Food Resilience*

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus has exacerbated the already-intricate topic of food security. The Food and Agriculture Organization defined food security as the condition in which, "all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious foods that meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (Policy Brief - Food Security, 2005). The world has faced many obstacles to achieve such a definition, climate change, population boom, and geopolitical tensions continue to be a challenge for nations across the world.

FAO noted that the number of countries affected by climate change or extremes is climbing steadily from 76 percent to 98 percent in 2015-2020 ("The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021," 2021). Countries affected are defined to suffer from droughts, floods, heatwaves, and storms; and more often than not that these countries are exposed to not just one of the phenomena listed above. These phenomena usually resulted in infertile agriculture land, depleted water reserves, thus reducing crop yields and vulnerability to diseases (Guiné, 2024).

Secondly, another challenge that faces food security is the question of population. The United Nations World Population Prospects has estimated the world population will only grow to 10,5 billion by 2100 (World Population Prospects, 2023). This growth will only worsen the number of undernourished people which accounted for 8,9% percent of the population or almost 690 million people in the world in 2019 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021).

Finally, geopolitical affairs also played a role in the challenge towards achieving food security. Global conflicts, direct or indirect, would usually trigger blockades and sanctions that elicit trade disruptions. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has halted the latter's export of grain. The interconnectedness of global trade and food systems means that disruptions in one region can ripple around the world, leading to price hikes (Lin et al., 2022).

Among the countries affected, developing states such as Indonesia are hit worse due to their dependence on foodstuff imports. Despite being one of the largest agricultural producers in Southeast Asia, Indonesia struggles in achieving food security. Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia scored 60.4 in the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) (Statista, 2024). The GFSI assesses food security across countries based on affordability, availability, quality and safety, and sustainability and adaptation, in concert with the dimensions of food security outlined by the FAO (Policy Brief - Food Security, 2005). Indonesia continues to grapple with food security due to its growing population, limited agricultural land, and inadequate infrastructure, which worsen the country's ability to meet its food demands. This situation is further compounded by the ongoing dependency on imports for essential commodities like rice, soybeans, and beef (Rozaki, 2021; Danasari et al., 2023; Amalia et al., 2024). As the demand for food increases, the agricultural sector is strained by the dual challenges of land scarcity and infrastructure limitations. This makes it difficult for the country to ensure both the quantity and quality of food needed for its population.

In an effort to remedy these shortcomings, along with a warning from the FAO of an impending global food scarcity (Home | Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, n.d.) President Joko Widodo issued a presidential order to construct an integrated farmland of monumental size, *food estates*, located in Central Kalimantan and North Sumatra in its pilot program, followed by East Nusa Tenggara and Papua (Subintoro, 2024; McDonald & Meylinah, 2021). Indonesia is no stranger to these mega-projects. The first major food estate-type project emerged in the mid-1990s with the One Million Hectare Peatland Development Project (PLG) in Central Kalimantan. The PLG project aimed to convert vast tracts of peatland ecosystem which was previously viewed as "unproductive" lands into productive agricultural zones through canal construction and drainage systems. To populate these newly established agricultural zones, the government mobilized approximately 15,000 transmigrant families from Java and Sumatra in the initial two years. However, poor planning, inappropriate technology, and ecological unsuitability led to disastrous outcomes. The project failed to achieve its agricultural objectives while causing severe environmental damage, including devastating forest fires and peatland degradation. By 1999, the project was officially abandoned after consuming approximately 1.6 trillion rupiah in state funds, with only 110,000 hectares developed from the targeted 1.45 million hectares (Rasman et al., 2023).

Under Presidents Habibie, Wahid, Megawati, and Yudhoyono, food self-sufficiency remained a policy objective, though approaches evolved. The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) in Papua was launched during Yudhoyono's presidency in 2008, representing a significant revival of mega-scale agricultural projects. MIFEE was designed as a massive agricultural complex spanning over one million hectares to produce rice, corn, soy, sugarcane, and palm oil (Fahira et al., 2022). Despite ambitious projections, MIFEE faced substantial implementation challenges. The project encountered resistance from indigenous Papuan communities concerned about land rights, cultural preservation, and environmental impacts. Ecological concerns, including deforestation and biodiversity loss, further complicated its implementation. By the end of Yudhoyono's presidency, MIFEE had achieved limited progress, with only a fraction of the planned area developed (Ito et al., 2014).

These past endeavors, which bore suboptimal results, did not stop the Widodo administration from continuing with the construction of the food estate. Moreover, the creation

of food estates raises further questions regarding its inception. Debates arose as food estate was interpreted as a securitization of food by the Widodo administration. Evidence of this can be seen in the swift planning and execution of the program, which occurred in just two interministerial meetings within six months. Various legal frameworks were also altered to further expedite the execution of the program. The program was designated as a national strategic project or *Proyek Strategis Nasional* under *Peraturan Presiden (Perpres) No. 109/2020* effectively bypassing any due process that is usually mandatory such as spatial planning regulations and environmental impact assessments. But most stark of all was the assignment of the Defense Ministry or *Kementerian Pertahanan* to take point in the implementation of the program, further solidifying the securitization argument. President Widodo backed this decision by stating that, “National defense is not just about weapons systems, but also food resilience” (*Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2020*).

The term "food resilience," as employed by the president, reflects what is internationally recognized as "food security." The following section examines how this term is understood within the Indonesian policy context. As previously stated, definitions or dimensions surrounding food security internationally are based on the 1996 World Food Summit which revolve around availability, access, utilization, and stability (De Pee, 2013; Ashby et al., 2016; Pérez-Escamilla, 2024). Each dimension refers to physical supply of food through local production and imports, assurance that individuals can economically and physically obtain sufficient food, proper use of food for optimal nutrition and health, and consistent access to food over time, even during crises or disruptions, respectively (World Bank Group, 2024).

By contrast, the interpretation of food security in Indonesia is discernible through *Undang-Undang (UU) No. 18/2012*. The law, which governs food and food policy defines food security or *Keamanan Pangan* as, “The condition and effort required to prevent food from biological, chemical, or any foreign objects that could harm or endanger human lives. Food must also be in accordance with local religious beliefs, values, and cultural practices, making it safe to consume” (UU No. 18 Tahun 2012, n.d.). Meanwhile, the law defines food resilience or *Ketahanan Pangan* as, “The condition of assuring that food needs are met at the national and individual levels, which are reflected through the availability of sufficient food that are quantitatively and qualitatively nutritious, diverse, equitable, sustainable, and accessible. Food must also be in accordance with local religious beliefs, values, and cultural practices” (UU No. 18 Tahun 2012, n.d.). It is apparent that the term food security in Indonesia is rather about the protection of food itself or food safety. Conversely, the term food resilience is more in tune with the accepted international understanding of ensuring consistent access to adequate nutrition for all citizens. Hence, this article will now use the term "food resilience" to better align with the local context and enable a more precise comparative analysis with global food security literature.

The term difference also mirrors the attitude of the Indonesian government towards food and how it is viewed as an essential part of national defense and resilience—thus giving way to understand the strategic rationale behind state-led initiatives such as the food estate program. Ever since the Soekarno administration, the Indonesian government has acknowledged the importance of food resilience amongst the people, with Soekarno himself being quoted that food resilience and sufficiency is a “matter of life and death”. This paradigm has sparked a discourse on the state of food and food securitization in Indonesia. Previous research of securitization and food in Indonesia has only been focused on securitization of food under the food estate program through the Copenhagen School framework (Ramadhan, 2024). Meanwhile, previous food estate research has only focused on the challenges in its implementation (Mulyono, 2023), comparative analyses on previous attempts of the program (Fahira et al., 2022), and an optimistic outlook towards the program (Lasminingrat & Efriza,

2020; Basundoro & Sulaeman, 2022; Wiswayana & Pinatih, 2022). One research stood out among others, of which this writing uses as a foundation, Agastia's research (2023) argued that there is currently a latent form of food securitization in Indonesia. Their research, a longitudinal analysis spanning past Indonesian presidential administrations, examines the existence of food securitization in the food policies of each administration. However, while Agastia's research offers a preliminary analysis of the second term of President Joko Widodo, this writing complements it with a more detailed and in-depth exploration of the evolving securitization process and its moral and justice-related implications during the second period of Widodo.

This research, along with Agastia's, employs Just Securitization Theory (JST) as its analytical framework. Rita Floyd's Just Securitization Theory provides a normative framework for evaluating whether a securitizing move can be considered morally justified. Unlike the Copenhagen School's descriptive approach to securitization, which focuses on how issues become security concerns through speech acts, Floyd's offer a more holistic approach towards securitizing moves and what happens after securitization is enacted. In her seminal work "The Morality of Security: A Theory of Just Securitization" (2019), Floyd develops a comprehensive ethical framework drawing inspiration from just war theory. She argues that security is not inherently negative but can be morally permissible or even required under certain conditions. Floyd's theory expands beyond traditional securitization approaches by introducing three essential components: Just Initiation of Securitization, Just Conduct in Securitization, and Just Termination of Securitization. A just initiation assesses whether the decision to securitize is morally justified, ensuring that the response addresses genuine threats with just cause, right intention, and proportionality. Just conduct focuses on the ethical implementation of security measures, emphasizing respect for human rights, harm minimization, and proportionality, while just termination stresses that securitization should end once the threat has been resolved, preventing the indefinite continuation of exceptional measures.

While JST has yet to be applied in food securitization, it has however been used in the context of cybersecurity and migration. Thumfart's (2022) application of JST to cybersecurity develops an expanded framework based on the principle of subsidiarity, emphasizing the importance of involving stakeholders directly affected by security threats in decision-making processes. This approach extends Floyd's focus from basic human needs to the protection of individual rights, particularly in digital contexts. Similarly, Polko's (2025) examination of migration securitization in Poland demonstrates how JST can evaluate whether securitization measures meet ethical standards, revealing that factors such as migrants' country of origin and religion significantly influence whether securitization is justified or unjustified. These studies provide valuable methodological and analytical insights for applying JST to other security domains, such as food.

This study bridges a significant gap in securitization literature by applying Rita Floyd's Just Securitization Theory (JST) to evaluate the ethical legitimacy of Indonesia's Food Estate program, focusing on just cause, right intention, proportionality, implementation, and termination. Structured around JST's three key dimensions—just initiation, just conduct, and just termination—the research analyzes the program's implementation in Central Kalimantan (Pulang Pisau and Gunung Mas) and North Sumatra (Humbang Hasundutan), regions selected for their pilot roles and differing crop priorities. The study stands apart from prior works such as Ramadhan (2024) and Agastia (2023), which employed descriptive or historical frameworks, by offering a normative ethical critique. It reveals systematic violations of JST principles, particularly in the program's continuation post-COVID-19 despite surplus food data (Alika, 2020; Nasional, n.d.-b). Through qualitative case studies and integration of stakeholder perspectives (WALHI, 2022; Kaoem Telapak, 2022), the research exposes how securitization facilitated elite land control, ecological harm, and indigenous marginalization—areas underexplored in previous optimistic assessments (Lasminingrat & Efriza, 2020; Basundoro &

Sulaeman, 2022). By pioneering JST's application in food policy, previously used only in cybersecurity (Thumfart, 2022) and migration (Polko, 2025), the study significantly advances the theoretical and practical discourse on ethical securitization governance.

METHOD

This writing employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to examine the food estate strategy implemented in Indonesia during President Joko Widodo's second term (2019-2024), specifically in Central Kalimantan (Pulau Pisang and Gunung Mas) and North Sumatra (Humbang Hasundutan). The descriptive approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena, offering a detailed analysis of the implementation of the food estate policy in these regions. Qualitative methods focus on collecting descriptive data in the form of words and images, rather than numerical data. This allows for an in-depth exploration of the challenges and impacts resulting from the food estate implementation in both regions, as well as a better understanding of how the policy is enacted and received by local communities. A case study approach is used to delve deeply into the food estate policy's implementation, assessing whether it aligns with Just Securitization Theory by Rita Floyd which emphasizes justice and ethics in securitization. The writing aims to investigate the food securitization process within the food estate policy and its effects on food resilience in Indonesia. The research relies on secondary data obtained through literature reviews and official documents related to the research topic. Secondary sources include books, reports from both the government and NGOs, and academic journals discussing the food estate policy and or food resilience in Indonesia. Sources and data are then analyzed using Miles and Huberman data reduction, where relevant data is filtered from various sources, data presentation, where selected data is organized into narratives or tables to highlight patterns, relationships, and key findings, and finally conclusion drawing and verification, where the writing will draw conclusions based on the presented data and verify the consistency and validity of the data using the framework of just securitization theory.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

As mentioned above, the discussions of this writing are sectioned into the analytical dimensions of Rita Floyd's just securitization theory. The first part, a just initiation, requires securitization to have a clear and objective threat towards the referent object of said securitization. This objective threat is known as a just cause of a securitization; the one being protected from the threat—referent objects—must also be just, as in it must bring value to human lives (Floyd, 2019). In the context of food estate, food resilience therefore becomes the referent object of this writing. The food estate program was initiated with the argument that Indonesia's food resilience was under threat due to dependency on food imports and the need to improve national agricultural capacity. However, the objectivity of this threat requires further examination, specifically whether the threat to food resilience was real and urgent or whether it was blown out of proportion on political or economic grounds by the securitizing actors.

Other aspects to observe of the just initiation of securitization is the intent of the securitizing actors, the proportionality of the securitizing moves, and the securitizing moves probability of success. The intent of securitizing actors can be gauged from the acts of speech—rhetorics—of the actors and the policy practice (Floyd, 2019). If the distance between what is said and what is known to be true has become an abyss, then it can be said that the securitizing actors and the securitizing moves as a whole are insincere and is a form of agent-benefitting securitization. Proportionality refers to simple economic principles, in that the benefits of securitization must outweigh the harm done by it. Lastly, the enactment of securitization, the implementation of securitizing moves, must have a reasonable chance of success than other

alternatives at hand. In the case of food estates, securitizing actors' intentions can be scrutinized by comparing public statements, political discourse, and policy execution. The proportionality of food estates must consider whether the large-scale land use changes and environmental consequences are justified by the anticipated gains in national food production. Comparing past efforts of food estates and its alternative approaches like improving existing agricultural infrastructure or supporting smallholder farmers are the food estates contextualization of its chance of success.

In conducting securitization, precision and effectiveness are to be held paramount. Floyd (2019) explained that, securitizing moves must only be to address the objective existential threat without ever having overlapping goals or agenda; food estates must be focused solely on improving national food resilience and not serve other hidden purposes, such as promoting corporate agricultural interests or other political agendas. The implementation of securitization must also be effective and mindful towards basic human rights. Effectiveness, like proportionality, stresses securitizing moves to minimize harm or collateral damage. The measurement of success of food estates must not be seen only through its capabilities of increasing food production but also by how well it minimizes harm to local communities, the environment, and existing agricultural practices. Concurrently, securitizing actors must respect the relevant human rights in securitization, this includes land rights for indigenous populations and the right to livelihood for those who may be displaced or marginalized by the food estate program.

The final piece of the analytical dimension of just securitization theory is the just termination of securitization. In the classical Copenhagen term, desecuritization is seen as an end goal of any securitization (Buzan et al., 1998). Floyd (2019) then reframes this end goal as an ongoing process that requires careful timing. Desecuritization must be enacted as soon as the objective existential threat ceases to exist.. This process of desecuritization also includes the cessation of any security language, plans to rollback any securitizing moves, and restorative measures to prevent any future or renewed securitization. This writing then contextualizes this dimension by examining how the food estate program has made significant progress in addressing its objectives—thus mandating it to be desecuritized as per just securitization theory, and whether a clear plan for termination or scale-back exists.

Threat Framing and The Drive For Food Estate

The emergence of the COVID-19 virus gave away the immediate context for the inception and the revival of the food estate program. Compounded by the repeated warnings of an impending food crisis from the FAO, COVID-19 became the objective existential threat of Indonesian food resilience. However, the threat of insecurity to food resilience—the referent object of this writing—dissipated when examining the food situation at the time. Rice, which remains the core of Indonesian dietary needs as Wiswayana and Pinatih have noted (2022), were in surplus and were forecasted to be in stable supply until the end of the year, according to data from both the Logistical Affairs Agency or Badan Urusan Logistik (BULOG) and data from the Agricultural Ministry or Kementerian Pertanian (Kementan). Alika (2020) noted that BULOG predicted the rice supply at the end-of-year to be substantial, 4.7 million tons. Data from Kementan (Nasional, n.d.-b) showed an even more optimistic surplus, 6.11 million tons. These projections showed Indonesia's food resilience was not objectively threatened, at least regarding its staple food commodity. Instead of focusing on increasing production, the real challenge lies in improving the distribution of food, which is where the true vulnerability exists.

As data suggests that there might not be a just cause for securitization and thus the inception of food estate, the intention of the food estate program warrants closer scrutiny. President Jokowi flared optimism for the food estate program in the Dubai COP28, mentioning how the program could sustain Indonesia's and eventually global needs for energy and food

(Putri, 2023). However, this seemed to be a disconnection between the rhetoric and optimism surrounding food estates. The Humbang Hasundutan food estate in North Sumatra, which primarily focused on horticulture crops such as shallots and onions were revealed by Kaoem Telapak (2022) that the crops being cultivated are not the kind the local community used to consume. Instead, the cultivated crops are bought by off-taker companies to meet their production demands. This showed that the food estate in Humbang Hasundutan serves primarily corporate interests rather than addressing basic food needs of vulnerable populations. At the same time, reports from Central Kalimantan's Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia or The Indonesian Forum for Environment (WALHI) (2022) showed that the government's goal of extensification in the ex-PLG lands was not accompanied by an extensive support. Farmers had to endure crop failures due to lack of preparation by the government, which includes the late distribution of production tools and land transformation. In creating national food resilience, the administration of Widodo failed to involve local communities in which it was built on, which resulted in resistance from local communities and a dissociation from the local communities' concerns and needs (Masterplandes, 2020).

Food estate, with a flawed paradigm of production and poor planning, resulted in minimum benefits and numerous harms. The results of disproportionality can be seen in the harm caused to biodiversity and the indigenous local communities. Deforestation is most stark in North Sumatra where 11,474 hectares of land were proposed to be part of the project. This land includes areas classified as protected forests, with 2,520 hectares in hutan lindung or protected forest, 7,961 hectares in hutan produksi terbatas or limited production forest (Kaoem Telapak, 2022). The indigenous communities whose land has been appropriated for the food estate face displacement, loss of livelihood, and erosion of cultural heritage. Local farmers, once independent in cultivating crops suited to the land, are now pushed into contract farming or laborer roles under the control of corporate entities involved in the project. This displacement of local communities and the imposition of corporate farming models are disproportionate in the sense that the social costs are highly concentrated on vulnerable populations. In Pulang Pisau, Central Kalimantan, ex-PLG lands were to be reactivated for the new food estate. Peatlands which proved to be a challenge in the past continued to be one, peatlands have high acidity and are prone to forest fires and flooding, long term agriculture then become a questionable endeavor (Pantau Gambut, 2021).

In the securitizing actors perspective, the resources allocated are also subject to proportion probing. As per basic economic principles, it is essential to compare these considerable financial inputs against their measurable outputs and opportunity costs. Economic returns from this massive investment have fallen dramatically short of projections. While the government anticipated rice yields of 4-5 tons per hectare, actual documented yields in Central Kalimantan reached only 3.5 tons per hectare, below the 4-ton-per-hectare threshold necessary to meet national demand (Rumengan, 2025). The opportunity costs of the Food Estate program are particularly significant given Indonesia's alternative resource options. Agricultural experts have noted that Indonesia already possesses 30,107,242 hectares of unproductive and neglected land that could have been utilized without converting forests or peatlands (Fardah, 2021). Furthermore, food resilience analyses indicated that Indonesia's primary challenge was not production volume but distribution infrastructure. Investment in enhancing distribution networks and supporting existing small-scale farming systems adapted to local ecosystems would have likely yielded greater food resilience with fewer ecological and social costs than the industrial monoculture approach pursued through the food estate program.

This historical precedent thus makes it dubious for any reasonable chance of success. As the program is at risk of repeating past mistakes; PLG, are prime examples of how land unsuitable for agriculture, coupled with poor planning and lack of adequate infrastructure, led to disastrous results, by relying heavily on peatland, Widodo's food estate is repeating these

same missteps. Any chance of success is also diminished with the lack of participation from local communities. Indigenous groups and local farmers were excluded from the planning and decision-making processes, despite being the ones who would be most affected by the changes. Central Kalimantan's WALHI (2022) has repeatedly highlighted that these communities were not consulted and, as a result, have been left without the necessary support to adapt to the new agricultural model.

The food estate program, in its initiation, reveals significant ethical and practical concerns. Despite the food resilience being framed as an urgent threat, data shows that Indonesia's food resilience was not objectively at risk, especially in relation to rice production. The intent behind the program, while claiming to protect national food resilience, appears to prioritize corporate interests over local needs. The environmental harm caused by land conversion and deforestation, and the displacement of local communities makes the proportionality of the program to also be concerning. Lack of preparations, insufficient support for local communities, and the disregard for historical examples also harm its chance of any success.

The Plan in Motion and The Road Towards Food Resilience

While the initiation of the food estate program presents significant ethical and practical concerns, it is essential to now examine the conduct of its implementation. The actions taken by the Widodo administration and the involved actors during the execution of the program further reveal the extent to which these ethical and practical issues were addressed—or ignored.

Although the food estate program seemed like an appropriate response in preparing for a crisis, the path in implementing it revealed questionable measures. The food estate program, framed as a national security initiative, was placed under the Defense Ministry's coordination, another indicator that a securitizing move is underway. Various legal bypasses—under the fashion of securitization, were also made by the securitizing actor to expedite the creation of this mega-project. One such case is the drafting of Peraturan Menteri (Permen) Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan No. 7/2021 that allowed the conversion of forested land into agricultural zones without the usual comprehensive environmental evaluations. This change, while facilitating the rapid expansion of the program, highlights a lack of precision in the government's approach. Instead of targeting areas most in need of agricultural development or focusing on regions that are genuinely suitable for food estate, the policy facilitated the widespread conversion of vulnerable and unsuitable lands, such as peatlands and protected forests. Furthermore, the program's rapid expansion across multiple provinces without adequate pre-implementation assessment suggests prioritization of scale over precision (Kaoem Telapak, 2022). But the most striking part of the regulation transformation is the utilization of food estate as a mechanism for broader regulatory and land-use changes. The program explicitly leveraged the Omnibus Law on Job Creation (UUCK) as a "regulatory highway" to facilitate forest conversion and land acquisition processes that would have been more difficult under normal circumstances. This regulatory manipulation reveals how food resilience concerns were instrumentalized to achieve broader deregulation objectives (Kaoem Telapak, 2022). The productivity of food estate projects has also fallen dramatically short of expectations. In Humbang Hasundutan, poor harvest quality and quantity led off-taker companies to withdraw from purchasing commitments, leaving harvests to rot before they could be sold. With the involvement of corporations, such as PT Indofood and PT BISI, the program showed more interest in maximizing production for commercial purposes than addressing local food needs. Corporations were also being put at an advantage since the land in which the food estate stands also served as land banks, and that land value will multiply over time (*Website DJKN*, n.d.). At the same time, local communities, the original owners of the

land were stripped from their own land which brings us to the effectiveness dimension of the analysis.

Any hope of minimization of harm in the execution of food estates faded although landowners and their lands in Humbang Hasundutan were being promised deeds over their own land to participate in the food estate programs. The deed subjected the landowners to restrictive conditioning such as mandatory partnerships with the off-taker companies, and the prohibition to transfer the land to anyone but the next of kin. The so called 'partnerships' with off-taker companies also proved to be problematic, companies like PT. EWINDO and PT. Parnaraya paid landowners from the percentages of the harvest. The occurrence of crop failure thus harms these landowners the most, essentially transforming them into landless laborers on their own traditional territories while corporations could still bank on the value of the land (Hasyim & Sedayu, 2024).

Environmental degradations are also prominent as highlighted before in the food estate program. The Humbang Hasundutan program targeted 2,711 hectares of forest area for conversion, including protected forest areas containing traditional kemenyan or incense trees essential to local ecosystems and indigenous livelihoods. Ex-PLG lands proved even more environmentally destructive, as Pantau Gambut (2021) documents how usual forest fires occur in the ex-PLG lands. These fires not only destroyed vast areas of peatland but released massive carbon emissions. Peatlands which have low bearing-capacity could also not sustain the machinery used in land transformation, which could trigger flooding due to land subsidence. The failure to implement sustainable farming practices, coupled with the lack of environmental safeguards, demonstrates a lack of foresight in the food estate program. As Pantau Gambut (2021) documents, the long-term environmental risks, including peatland degradation and deforestation, have exacerbated the ecological damage, raising questions about the program's effectiveness in securing food resilience while also preserving natural resources and minimizing the harm done.

The advancement of corporations' interest thus annul the respect for human rights in the implementation of food estate. The violation of land rights for the indigenous communities are severe in both North Sumatra and Central Kalimantan. In Humbang Hasundutan, the program directly challenged customary land management systems of the Masyarakat Adat Tano Batak that upholds communal land distribution and management; food estate outright denied these customary rights citing, forests provided within Special Purpose Forest Area or Kawasan Hutan Dengan Tujuan Khusus (KHDTK) locations are state-owned forests and not customary forests (Digital, 2022). Indigenous communities in Central Kalimantan are still in the awareness-raising stage. As evidenced, food estate planning that does not involve local communities and farmers will result in the loss of land rights for food and living space for local communities. The top-down approach of food estate in both locations denied communities the right to participate in decisions fundamentally affecting their livelihoods and territories.

The right to information of human rights was also blurred by various claims from the administration. The Central Kalimantan food estate was noted to have differing figures from differing administration officials, Airlangga Hartarto, Menteri Koordinator Bidang Ekonomi or Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, claimed that 900,000 hectares of land were being prepared (Alinea, n.d.), while Syahrul Yasin Limpo, from Kementan, stated that approximately 600,000 hectares had already been designated, with 400,000 hectares being peatland and 200,000 hectares being dry land (Antara & Tri, 2020). Furthermore, President Jokowi later specified in September 2020 that the program would focus on 148,000 hectares with irrigation facilities for rice cultivation, alongside an additional 622,000 hectares of non-irrigated land for other crops and livestock. This disparity in figures and the lack of official publication regarding the land suitability studies and location maps contribute to confusion and hinder transparency.

The Just Conduct dimension of the food estate program reveals significant flaws in implementation. The program bypassed essential legal regulations and environmental protections, leading to imprecision that leads to land mismanagement and ecological damage. In unison with the proportionality dimension, the lack of proper planning, such as unsuitable land selection and the imposition of corporate interests, undermined its effectiveness in addressing local food resilience. The displacement of local farmers and indigenous communities, coupled with the failure to involve them in decision-making, highlights a failure to respect human rights and sustainable practices. Ultimately, the food estate program fails to have just conduct standards, as its actions prioritize political and economic motivations over genuine public welfare.

End of The Road: The Future for Food Estate

The food estate programs in both North Sumatra and Central Kalimantan were explicitly a form of securitization as responses to the existential threat of food crisis stemming from COVID-19 disruptions. According to Floyd's just termination framework, desecuritization must be enacted, "as soon as the objective existential threat ceases to exist" (Floyd, 2019). However, evidence clearly demonstrates that this threat condition no longer exists, yet the programs continue without any termination procedures. The COVID-19 pandemic that justified emergency food resiliency measures has ended, with Indonesia no longer under pandemic restrictions since 2022. More critically, the predicted food crisis never materialized. Furthermore, two governmental agencies confirmed in early 2020 that stockpiles of rice were stable and were even predicted to have a surplus, confirming that the existential threat had ceased to exist. Yet, despite this clear evidence that the original justification for securitization no longer applied, both programs continued expanding through the end of the Widodo administration.

Despite the absence of the original threat and overwhelming evidence of program failure, the food estate programs continue to operate under securitized conditions. Maulana (2024) also revealed that in the case of the Central Kalimantan food estate, "only 1% of the total area of the former PLG is suitable for agriculture", demonstrating the fundamental unsuitability of these areas for agricultural development. This finding directly contradicts the entire premise that justified securitization. The program's failure is further evidenced by massive land abandonment; from 30 monitoring points, 12 points visited by Pantau Gambut showed untouched land, while from 18 sample points that had been opened, 15 points were left open and abandoned until they were covered again by shrubs. This means that 83% of the opened land was subsequently abandoned, indicating complete program failure. In Humbang Hasundutan, similar patterns emerge, 50% of the project land is not being cultivated, while the remaining active land is mostly managed independently by farmers who grow non-project crops such as chili peppers and tomatoes. This demonstrates that even where land remains active, it has abandoned the original securitized objectives.

Floyd's just termination framework requires not only ending securitizing moves but also developing clear plans for rollback and restoration. However, no evidence exists of any systematic termination planning for either program. Maulana's research (2024) also highlighted the absence of any followup by the administration, while locals face the bleak reality of living in now-barren, now-government's land, which underlined the complete absence of post-securitization planning.

The lack of termination planning becomes particularly problematic given the programs' designation as National Strategic Projects, indicating that the securitized status continues to provide special legal privileges despite the absence of justification. Most concerning is the indication that rather than planning termination, the government appears committed to expansion; instead of desecuritizing, the programs are being expanded (Purnama, 2024).

The security framing persists to justify these corporate arrangements. Governmental documents and rhetoric continue to reference food resilience as justification, despite the programs' far-from-optimal results to achieve this objective and the absence of the original threat. Both programs also entrenched securitized policies like the Omnibus Law framework which created permanent regulatory changes that could facilitate the continuation of the program. Rather than rolling back these exceptional measures, they remain embedded in Indonesia's regulatory framework, showing how securitization created lasting institutional changes that persist despite the absence of justification.

The programs have also created lasting damage without any restoration efforts. Land clearing has deforested 2.945 hectares of forest in Central Kalimantan in an effort of extensification. The programs have also degraded peat ecosystems, triggering massive loss of critical peat carbon stores. No restoration efforts are evident for these damaged ecosystems. Socially, the programs have created lasting displacement and marginalization. No measures exist to restore communities' access to their traditional lands. Without any restorative measures, the risk remains that the program could be used again as a tool for future securitization, leading to recurring cycles of harmful, unsustainable policies without addressing the root causes of threat to food resiliency or environmental degradation.

The food estate programs in North Sumatra and Central Kalimantan represent a comprehensive failure of just termination principles. The threat that justified securitization ended by 2020, yet the programs continue operating under emergency frameworks in 2024. These programs have demonstrably failed to achieve food resiliency objectives, with vast areas abandoned and remaining operations captured by corporate interests. No termination planning exists, no rollback of securitizing measures has occurred, and no restorative actions have been implemented to repair the extensive environmental and social damage. Instead, the programs continue expanding under securitized frameworks that provide legal immunity from normal regulatory oversight.

This case demonstrates how securitization, once implemented, can become self-perpetuating even when all justification disappears. The failure of just termination in these cases reveals the dangerous potential for securitization to become a permanent governance mode that serves elite interests rather than genuine security needs. The continued use of security language to justify manifestly failed programs represents a fundamental corruption of the securitization framework, transforming it from a legitimate security tool into a mechanism for avoiding accountability and perpetuating harmful policies.

To give a more holistic interconnectedness of each dimension, this writing will now incorporate a causal chains of respective analytical dimensions to identify recurring patterns in every step and to anticipate future policies. First, the weak problem diagnosis led directly to flawed solution design. The government's mischaracterization of Indonesia's food resiliency challenges as primarily a production issue rather than a distribution problem led to inappropriate extensification strategies on ecologically unsuitable lands. This fundamental error manifested in the conduct phase through the selection of peatlands in Central Kalimantan and protected forests in North Sumatra. Second, the manufactured sense of urgency was used to justify regulatory shortcuts that facilitated environmental destruction. Third, the decision to frame food resilience as a national defense issue—a key element of the initial securitization move—directly led to the Defense Ministry's oversight role, which fundamentally shaped implementation through a security rather than agricultural development paradigm. Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto's appointment to oversee strategic food reserves represented a clear securitization move that transformed food policy from a developmental to a security issue (INADIS Team, 2023). This militarization of agricultural policy contributed directly to the documented exclusion of local communities and indigenous peoples from decision-making processes. The flawed implementation methods, in turn, created structural barriers to proper

termination, effectively locking in the program's continuation despite its evident failure. The implementation phase's focus on corporate partnerships created powerful vested interests that now resist termination.

The systematic marginalization of indigenous communities forms a consistent pattern across all dimensions. Indigenous food systems and knowledge were completely excluded from the initial framing of Indonesia's food resiliency challenges. The failure to recognize the food sovereignty of communities like the Marind people, who have sustainable sago-based food systems, reflects a fundamental disregard for indigenous perspectives (INADIS Team, 2023). During the conduct phase, indigenous communities faced direct dispossession, with the program in Humbang Hasundutan directly challenging customary land management systems of the Masyarakat Adat Tano Batak (Digital, 2022). Now, indigenous communities remain excluded from any discussions about termination or restoration, with no mechanisms for returning appropriated lands or restoring damaged ecosystems central to indigenous livelihoods (Mongabay, 2025). This consistent pattern reveals that indigenous rights violations are not incidental but structural to the Food Estate program's conceptualization and operation.

Environmental considerations were similarly sidelined across all three dimensions. The initial securitization process disregarded ecological knowledge about peatland unsuitability for agriculture despite clear historical precedent from the failed PLG. The conduct phase featured explicit regulatory maneuvers to circumvent environmental protections, including revisions to forest protection laws and exemptions from environmental impact assessments (ANTARA News, 2021). Current expansion plans rather than termination procedures demonstrate complete disregard for the ecological damage already caused, with no restoration efforts planned for degraded ecosystems. This pattern demonstrates that environmental degradation is not merely a side effect but a systematic feature of the Food Estate program's operation across all JST dimensions.

Future policy interventions must establish robust institutional safeguards that explicitly prevent limited interests from dominating securitization processes. This could include mandatory benefit-sharing mechanisms, transparent stakeholder mapping, and binding corporate accountability frameworks that prevent the transfer of public resources to private entities under security pretexts. To counter indigenous marginalization, future policies should legally mandate substantive indigenous participation through formalized Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes at each stage—from threat identification through implementation to termination and restoration. This would transform indigenous communities from objects of securitization to legitimate security stakeholders with recognized knowledge systems. Similarly, ecological considerations must be institutionalized through mandatory environmental impact assessments, ecological suitability studies before project initiation, and automatic restoration triggers when programs fail to meet predetermined benchmarks (Khairunisa, 2025). Most critically, future policies should establish independent monitoring bodies with clear desecuritization mandates and the authority to terminate programs when original threats dissipate or when implementation reveals disproportionate harms—without opening a can of worms, Pandora's worms. These reforms would address the fundamental weakness in current governance frameworks that allow securitization processes to become self-perpetuating mechanisms of resource appropriation rather than legitimate responses to genuine security threats.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes Indonesia's food estate programs through Floyd's Just Securitization Theory, revealing how securitization transforms into entrenched governance regimes, enabling resource appropriation with limited accountability. Emergency-phase legal

changes created enduring privileges for these projects, highlighting the need for ethical integration of initiation, conduct, and termination in securitization. Building on these findings, future research should assess the long-term socio-ecological impacts of securitized food estates across Southeast Asia, examining governance legacies, environmental costs, community resistance, and actual food security outcomes. A comparative, interdisciplinary approach—combining political ecology, policy analysis, and participatory methods—could advance securitization theory while informing more equitable and sustainable alternatives to militarized food governance.

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