

# A Critical Application of Securitization Theory: Overcoming the Normative Dilemma of Writing Security

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## ABSTRACT (ENG)

This article addresses the normative dilemma located within the application of 'securitization,' as a method of understanding the social construction of threats and security policies. Securitization as a theoretical and practical undertaking is being increasingly used by scholars and practitioners. This scholarly endeavour wishes to provide those wishing to engage with securitization with an alternative application of this theory; one which is sensitive to and self-reflective of the possible normative consequences of its employment. This article argues that discussing and analyzing securitization processes have normative implications, which is understood here to be the negative securitization of a referent. The negative securitization of a referent is asserted to be carried out through the unchallenged analysis of securitization processes which have emerged through relations of exclusion and power. It then offers a *critical* understanding and application of securitization studies as a way of overcoming the identified normative dilemma. First, it examines how the Copenhagen School's formation of securitization theory gives rise to a normative dilemma, which is situated in the performative and symbolic power of security as a political invocation and theoretical concept. Second, it evaluates previous attempts to overcome the normative dilemma of securitization studies, outlining the obstacles that each individual proposal faces. Third, this article argues that the normative dilemma of applying securitization can be avoided by firstly, deconstructing the institutional power of security actors and dominant security subjectivities and secondly, by addressing countering or alternative approaches to security and incorporating different security subjectivities. Examples of the securitization of international terrorism and immigration are prominent throughout.

**Keywords:** The Copenhagen School, security, securitization studies, normative dilemma, critical approach, terrorism, immigration.

## ABSTRACT (CAT)

L'article tracta el dilema normatiu que implica l'aplicació de la 'securitització', com mètode per a comprendre la construcció social de les amenaces i les polítiques de seguretat. La securitització com empresa teòrica i pràctica es utilitzada de manera creixent per part d'acadèmics i executors. El present treball acadèmic pretén proporcionar, a aquells que estan interessats en la teoria de la securitització, una aplicació alternativa de la mateixa que és sensible i auto-reflexiva respecte de les possibles conseqüències normatives que comporta la seva utilització. L'article sosté que l'anàlisi i el debat sobre processos de securitització té implicacions normatives que, en aquest estudi, s'entenen com la securitització negativa d'un referent. En el mateix s'afirma que la securitització negativa d'un referent es duu a terme per mitjà de l'anàlisi acrítica dels processos de securitització que han sorgit a través de relacions d'exclusió i de poder. S'ofereix, doncs, una comprensió *crítica* i una aplicació dels estudis en securitització com una via per a superar el dilema normatiu anteriorment identificat. Així, en primer lloc, s'examina com la creació de la teoria de securitització per part de l'Escola de Copenhague (Copenhagen School) dóna lloc a un dilema normatiu que se situa en el poder performatiu i simbòlic de la seguretat vista com invocació política i concepte teòric. En segon lloc, s'avaluen els intents previs de superació del dilema normatiu dels estudis de securitització perfilant els obstacles als que cadascuna de les propostes s'enfronta. Finalment, aquest article argumenta que el dilema normatiu de l'aplicació de la securitització es pot evitar; en primer lloc, deconstruint el poder institucional dels actors de la seguretat i les subjectivitats predominants respecte de la mateixa i, en segon lloc, oferint enfocaments crítics o alternatius a la seguretat i incorporant diferents subjectivitats en relació a ella. Els exemples rellevants que es donen a l'article són el de la securitització del terrorisme internacional i la immigració.

**Paraules clau:** Escola de Copenhague (Copenhagen School), seguretat, estudis sobre securitització, dilema normatiu, enfocament crític, terrorisme, immigració.

## ABSTRACT (CAS)

El artículo trata el dilema normativo que implica la aplicación de la ‘securitización’, como método para comprender la construcción social de las amenazas y las políticas de seguridad. La securitización como empresa teórica y práctica es utilizada de forma creciente por parte de académicos y ejecutores. El presente trabajo académico pretende proporcionar, a aquellos que están interesados en la teoría de la securitización, una aplicación alternativa de la misma que es sensible y auto-reflexiva respecto de las posibles consecuencias normativas que conlleva su empleo. El artículo sostiene que el análisis y debate sobre procesos de securitización tiene implicaciones normativas que, en este estudio, se entienden como la securitización negativa de un referente. En el mismo se afirma que la securitización negativa de un referente se lleva a cabo mediante el análisis acrítico de los procesos de securitización que han surgido a través de relaciones de exclusión y poder. Se ofrece, pues, una comprensión *crítica* y una aplicación de los estudios en securitización como vía para superar el dilema normativo anteriormente identificado. Así, en primer lugar, se examina cómo la creación de la teoría de securitización por parte de la Escuela de Copenhague (Copenhagen School) da lugar a un dilema normativo, que se sitúa en el poder performativo y simbólico de la seguridad vista como invocación política y concepto teórico. En segundo lugar, se evalúan los intentos previos de superación del dilema normativo de los estudios de securitización perfilando los obstáculos a los que cada propuesta individual se enfrenta. Finalmente, este artículo argumenta que el dilema normativo de la aplicación de la securitización se puede evitar; en primer lugar, deconstruyendo el poder institucional de los actores de la seguridad y las subjetividades dominantes con respecto a la misma y, en segundo lugar, ofreciendo enfoques críticos o alternativos a la seguridad e incorporando diferentes subjetividades en relación a ella. Los ejemplos relevantes que se dan en el artículo son el del la securitización del terrorismo internacional y la inmigración.

**Palabras clave:** Escuela de Copenhague (Copenhagen School), seguridad, estudios sobre securitización, dilema normativo, enfoque crítico, terrorismo, inmigración.



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of security studies as an academic and professional undertaking came largely into being post-World War II. It was generally regarded as a sub-discipline of International Relations and until the latter years of the Cold War it was a field of study and practice dominated by Anglo-American thinking. During this time security studies became synonymous with 'strategic studies' and maintained an inherent military focus. This academic and practical following was engaged with the protection of the state and with developing a scientific agenda which would work to secure the nation-state from definable threats and to preserve the status-quo. This positivist approach, which assumed the ontological underpinnings of rationalism and realism, came under challenge as the Cold War was singing its encore and new voices within the discipline were beginning to emerge (Williams, P 2008: 2-4).

The Copenhagen School (CS) presents one of these alternative methods of analyzing security, which was erected out of the narrow versus broad debate during the 1970s and 1980s<sup>2</sup>. The CS managed to capture a middle space in this debate by responding to the traditionalist concern of 'everything becoming security' through their formation of a clear sense of 'what security is' (Wæver 2004: 9). The CS' approach to security is defined by three principle elements: first, by its development of a sectors approach to security, whereby security threats are observed in one of five distinct yet interconnected sectors. This analysis included the military sector, but it importantly expands the study of security to the environment, economic, social and political sectors as well. Second, the School developed a regional focus to security studies, whereby the interlinking security dynamics of regions were observed, challenging the prior, state focus of the field. Third, the CS critically engendered a social constructivist theoretical understanding of security through their formulation of 'securitization studies', which will be the element in focus during this

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2. Other challengers to mainstream security thinking included those engaged in Peace Research and Critical Security Studies (Booth, 1991; Krause and Williams, 1998; Jones, 1999); post-modernist and sociological/ Bourdieu inspired approaches (Walker, 1986, Der Derian, 1995 and Bigo, 1997:); and Feminism (Cohn, 1987 and Tickner, 1992). Although a comparative analysis is not the aim of this paper many of the alternative methods to approaching security listed here are incorporated into the following analysis.

article. This discursive conceptualization of security politics significantly confronted the traditional objectivist view of threats that underpinned the realist version of security (Wæver 2004: 8-9).

This social constructivist method of conceptualizing security known as 'securitization' was first presented in a 1989 Working Paper "Security the Speech Act: Analysing the Politics of a Word" by Ole Wæver. Based in the Copenhagen: Centre for Peace and Conflict Research, Wæver and other members of the institute further developed this constructivist approach to security, publishing a series of works including a book on societal security in Europe, *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda* (1993) and *Security: A New Framework of Analysis* (1998), which extensively expands upon the conceptual understanding of securitization as well as its practical application.

The Copenhagen School has offered an innovative and fascinating approach to the study of security; Steve Smith states that "The Copenhagen School is one of the most interesting developments in the contemporary study of security" (Smith 2005: 37). However, despite the great value the CS study of securitization has added to the analysis and conceptualization of security, the School has faced widespread criticism for a failure to address the normative implications located within their theory of securitization. Michael Williams, for example, attacks the CS for being "politically irresponsible and lacking any basis from which to critically evaluate claims of threat, enmity and emergency" (Williams 2003: 11-31, 521). While some of the critiques are ill-founded others raise important issues regarding the normative dilemmas of speaking and writing about security.

The normative debate in International Relations (IR) grew out of the post-positivist turn in the discipline, through the acknowledgment that social structures were not static, but rather they were constantly shifting. Consequently, normative questions began to emerge regarding the moral rightness of practices in IR, as well as of the social responsibility of IR theorists. These ethical questions of how the 'world ought to be' also infiltrated the study of security as it rejected its own positivist roots. Normative debates thus emerged not only concerning what *should* be the referent subjects of

security policies, but also, what be the role of security theorists and analysts in their study of security.

The particular normative dilemma discussed here is how to write and analyze securitization processes without replicating dominant and exclusionary modes of approaching security resulting in negative securitization processes. Negative securitization processes are identified here as those that are the product of unchallenged structural and symbolic power relations as well as social or political processes of exclusion. The normative here is *not* a subjective claim of what should or should not be securitized; rather it is a concern with *how* the securitization process takes place and how a particular writing of securitization reproduces exclusionary or harmful acts of securitization. This article argues that a critical application of Securitization Theory (ST) can best overcome the normative dilemma of analyzing and discussing securitization processes, by firstly, critically assessing the power of the securitizing actor and secondly, by reconceptualizing the meaning of security.

Securitization as a mode of analyzing security processes has gained much importance in recent years and it is being employed by many authors in their examination of security politics in all sectors. These interdisciplinary works include the study of the securitization of varying issues such as terrorism (Buzan 2006), transnational crime (Williams, P: 2008), immigration (Dover, 2008), women rights (Hudson, 2009; Hansen, 1997), disease (Abrahamsen, 2005; Youde, 2008), natural disasters (Hyndman, 2007) and identity (Muller, 2004). It is unclear whether we have entered an era of 'security obsessionism' but what is clear is that securitization, as a theoretical undertaking and practical application, should not be left unpoliticized, particularly as its usage increases. The critical application of securitization theory being offered here allows the analyst to directly engage with new, as well as old security discourses. It does not call for further securitization, nor for the necessary desecuritization of specific threats or sectors. Rather, it endows the security analyst with the means to be critical of processes of securitization without being forced to make any prior subjective claims regarding the moral rightness of an act of securitization. It furthermore, grants the capacity to assist in the engenderment of more constructive or positive security movements.

The first part of the paper will outline the CS' theory of securitization, and present some of the criticisms posited against it regarding its failure to properly account for the normative implications of its approach to security. Secondly, it will examine attempts that have been made to overcome the normative dilemma of 'securitization studies', by addressing, first, the CS' own response to the normative question, second, a discursive ethical approach, and last, a consequentialist approach. It will address the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches, concluding that they do not fully address the normative dilemma of applying ST. The third section will outline an alternative solution to the normative dilemma of writing security which rests in the analyst's critical application of ST.

The critical application of ST proposed here consists of two parallel arguments. Firstly, it calls for the critical evaluation of the structural power inherent within the securitizing process and demands that the security analyst deconstruct the institutional power of the securitizing actor and seek out alternative 'utterances' of security. Secondly, it requires that the security analyst critically engage with the symbolic power of security by critiquing dominant security subjectivities and necessitates the incorporation of alternative approaches to securitization. The forthcoming article argues that by applying these critical tools to the analysis of securitization processes the securitization analyst can overcome the normative dilemma of writing security. In the concluding portion of the paper two weaknesses of this proposal will be addressed.

## 2. SECURITIZATION THEORY AND THE NORMATIVE DILEMMA

### 2.1 WHAT IS SECURITIZATION THEORY?

The CS describes securitization as the intersubjective and socially constructed process by which a threat to a particular referent object is acknowledged and deemed worth protecting. In “Securitization and Desecuritization” Wæver presents the logic that informs the theoretical development of ‘securitization. Based on a particular understanding of security, that which is national security, Wæver formulates a threat-defense modality extracted from observations of certain operations in the field of security. Wæver argues that the same logic which conceptualizes the construction of the threat-defense sequence in the military sector can be used to understand ‘securitization’ processes in other sectors (Wæver 1995: 51). Securitization is the intersubjective establishment of an existential *threat*, which demands *urgent* and *immediate* attention, as well as the use of *extraordinary measures* to counter this threat (Buzan et al 1998: 24-25; Wæver 1995: 51).

The CS defines this social interaction as a rhetorical one: a discursive exchange between a securitizing actor and an audience in relation to an object, the referent, and that which threatens it. Using an Austinian understanding of speech acts, the CS explains that a successful securitization process is facilitated by internal or linguistic factors and by external or contextual factors, the social capital of the speaker and the nature of the threat (Buzan et al 1998: 32-33). The goal of the Copenhagen School is defined as the following:

“Based on a clear idea of the nature of security, securitization studies aims to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results and, not least, under what conditions (what explains when securitization is successful).” (Buzan et al 1998: 32).

The security analyzer's role is therefore one of observation and interpretation. Using the logic of securitization the analyst acknowledges whether certain actions "fulfill the security criteria." Namely, has the securitizing actor managed to mobilize support? Who is the audience and what are the facilitating conditions? Have extraordinary actions been taking? And what might be the impact of such securitizing acts on other units? The CS asserts that the role of the securitization analyst should not be confused with that of the securitization actor; the analyst does not decide what constitutes a justifiable threat or what should or should not be securitized. The objective of the CS is to understand the *modus operandi* of existing security actors, and not to normatively judge their actions (Buzan et al 1998: 33-34, 35). The CS' approach to securitization intentionally avoids the formulation of a normative criterion with which to subjectively judge (il)-legitimate claims to security. However, despite the proclaimed affirmation to abstain from subjective analysis the CS has faced criticisms for not addressing the normative implications located within their project and the social or political responsibility that unavoidably materializes with studying security, and it is that which constitutes the normative dilemma of writing security.

## 2.2 WHAT IS "SECURITY'S" NORMATIVE DILEMMA?

In his 2002 article, 'Defining Social Constructivism in Security Studies', Huysmans discusses the normative dilemma of speaking or writing security, which he argues is grounded in an understanding of the performative role of language. Huysmans explains that "language is not just a communicative instrument used to talk about a real world outside of language. [Rather it] operates as a mediating instrument that brings social practices into a particular communicative, institutionalized framework" (Huysmans 2002: 44). Here Huysmans is referring to the symbolic power of 'security,' as a word and a concept, and how its invocation articulates a specific rationality. Security is thus understood as a political technology, which "interlocks system of knowledge, representations, practices, and institutional forms that

imagine, direct and act upon bodies, spaces, and flows in certain ways” (Burke 2002: 2). Post-structural scholarship argues that the political technology of security links sovereignty, discipline and government under the bio-power of *governmentality* which seeks to (re)-order society, preserve power relations, and oppress or exclude opposition (Burke 2002: 1-27; Neocleous 2008; Bigo 2002: 63-92). Others in this camp have argued that dominant modes of security work to define ‘the other’ as inferior and threatening and instill images of fear within a population. A feminist perspective acknowledges that the state then seeks to fill its role as the patriarchal protector, “provoking feelings of allegiance, safety, and submission” (Burke 2002: 20-21). Consequently, security, as a concept and a political tool, is able to promote subjectivities of fear and it often materializes as the product of oppressive or undemocratic acts as well as processes of social and political exclusion.

### 2.3 WHAT IS SECURITIZATION'S NORMATIVE DILEMMA?

Huysmans argues that anyone who engages with security studies is at risk of replicating and reinforcing particular subjectivities of fear and order. Whoever speaks or writes ‘security,’ be it actor or analyst, is involved in the production of knowledge regarding a security issue and becomes part of the political technology used to manage it. The normative dilemma is thus, how one might engage with security without replicating dominant subjectivities; how might an analyst apply ST without reproducing or legitimizing the potentially harmful, neglectful or exclusionary securitization of a referent object: *the negative securitization of a referent*. To exemplify, how might a securitization analyst examine current securitization processes taking place in the economic sector as a result of the economic crisis without being hostage to or replicating dominant liberal or capitalist subjectivities or potentially legitimizing governmental monetary handouts to prominent banks and selected industries, notably the automobile industry, or justifying the targeting of migrant communities, for example (*The Economist*, February 21-27, 2009, 57-60).

Concurring with Huysmans' statement, that "speaking and writing about security is never innocent" (Huysmans 2002: 47; 43) it is accepted here that normative questions are inescapably present in the very heart of security analysis. Thus despite the CS' attempt to avoid an evaluation of the normative, securitization as a theory carries with it its own performative power, which manifestly generates a normative dilemma. Theorizers and critics of the CS discuss how its particular understanding of securitization is involved in the reproduction of dominant subjectivities of security and the validation of oppressive or exclusionary securitization processes. The argument posited in this article, therefore, is that ST, uncritically applied, contributes to the negative securitization of a referent.

Williams explains how the logic of securitization employed by the CS in order to broaden the security agenda without losing conceptual specificity, that which characterizes a security problem as demanding urgent action by the state, mirrors "the intense condition of existential division, of friendship and enmity that constitutes Schmitt's concept of the political" (Williams 2003: 516). Williams analyzes the CS' conceptualization of securitization through a Schmittian lens to identify how their theoretical approach to security works to reproduce the same 'friend-enemy' logic as Schmitt's understanding of the political. He explains how Schmitt's "decisionist theory of sovereignty" can be located in the CS understanding of securitization as the suspension of normal politics (Williams 2003: 516). Bigo shares a similar concern with the CS' particular conceptualization of security, which he argues validates the view of security professionals who purport that "exceptionalization," or a "beyond the law" politics is required of securitization (Bigo 2002: 72-73).

The critique formulated against the CS is, therefore, that its conceptualization of securitization reinforces traditionalist or realist views of how securitization processes take place. Hence, the uncritical application of ST reproduces the subjectivities of fear and othering generated from such an understanding of security, and replicates the notion that state power and ordering are required to manage threats. Despite their social constructivist approach to defining security threats, the CS utilizes a particular understanding of security which does not challenge the dominant or militarized view of security; rather it



accepts it as the “truth” about what security is (Bigo 2002: 73). ST thus feeds into the logic that immediate and undemocratic state action is the only method to manage security concerns, which often result in the negative securitization of a sector.

Moreover, the lack of any normative criteria with which to critically evaluate ‘securitization’ processes prevents the security analyst from challenging negative securitization discourses from being carried out; essentially anything and everything can be securitized via any means necessary. Williams exclaims that “ST is implicitly committed to a methodological objectivism whereby “any form of violent, exclusionary, or irrationalist politics must be viewed simply as another form of speech act and treated objectively[.]” (Williams 2003: 521). ST is incapable of countering fascist, totalitarian or racist acts and “must remain at best agnostic in the face of *any* securitization.” (Williams 2003: 522). In fact ST might inadvertently legitimize the handling of such a “threat” in an urgent and extreme fashion, as a result of their specific understanding of how threats are managed. ST, uncritically applied, is directly implicated in the normative dilemma of writing security; a securitization analyst cannot discuss security without contributing to negative securitization practices. In response to the normative gap of ST several attempts have been made to overcome the normative dilemma; such endeavors will now be addressed beginning with the CS’ own response.

### 3. RESPONSES TO THE NORMATIVE DILEMMA OF SECURITIZATION STUDIES

#### a) The Copenhagen School’s Response

The CS’ social constructivist understanding of threats diverges enormously from a traditionalist perspective, that which objectively declares what ‘real’ threats are. This constructivist approach has initiated groundbreaking work in the field of security studies and has allowed for a broadening agenda away

from the realist concern with the military sector. However, the particular logic the CS employs to generate ST remains embedded in a realist framework, thus inhibiting its capacity to challenge the normative dilemma of reproducing negative securitization processes. This is not to insinuate that the CS is neglectful of the implications of engaging with security studies, and they argue that ST can seek “to underline the responsibility of talking security, the responsibility of actors as well as analysts who choose to frame an issue as a security issue” (Buzan et al 1998: 34). Buzan et al. argue that a securitization perspective opens up space for problematizing both securitization and the absence of securitization. They suggest that the security analyst can try to mediate the consequences of securitization by discussing the likely effects of excessive securitization or of not securitizing, which may result in a security dilemma or the inability to successfully handle an issue, (Buzan et al 1998: 40).

The CS puts forward a valid argument, and their constructivist approach to securitization has paved the way for problematizing an objectivist understanding of threats, such as the argument that immigrants necessarily threaten national identities or that modern international terrorism automatically requires dramatic shifts in national security policies. Threats and securitizations are intersubjectively constructed and can therefore be challenged, however, it remains unclear how an analyst applying ST might be able to counter such arguments without some form of subjective criteria or critical approach. It remains unclear how the analyst might be able to discuss the securitization of migration, for example, without contributing to its potentially negative securitization, that which results from excluding migrant communities from discussions involving their securitization or from portraying them as a dangerous other from which certain societies require protection, for example. Wyn Jones supports this reading of the CS in his attempt to tease out the CS’ hidden emancipatory goals. He argues that the CS demonstrates interest in “progressive alternatives to the status quo although they “fail to seriously engage with the question *why* some “outcomes” are to be preferred to others” (Wyn Jones 2005: 218).

Moreover, the CS understanding of securitization implies that anything labeled as a security issue must be dealt with in an exceptional and urgent

manner (this is what securitization *is* according to the CS). This logic feeds into dominant or realist discourses of how security issues are to be managed. Their logic does not allow for threats to security to be dealt with in any other fashion. A security analyst applying the CS understanding of securitization would thus not be able to overcome the normative implications of discussing securitization without regenerating dominant images of security and leading to potentially negative securitization processes.

The CS however, invites others to do what they abstain from; they encourage those who may be more normatively charged with emancipatory goals to critically engage with ST (Buzan et al 1998: 35).

### **b) The Discursive Ethical Response**

Critical security theorists Williams and Wyn Jones present such an endeavor to save ST from a normative black hole, whereby everything and anything can be securitized, in any which manner, resulting in unchallenged, harmful securitization processes.

By applying a Habermasian logic of “communicative action,” these authors attempt to locate a potentially validating normative aspect within the speech act of securitization. This approach links securitization to a discursive ethics, by which the speech act is understood not simply as a discursive exchange between the audience and the securitizing actor, rather it becomes implicated in a process of justification (Williams 2003: 522). Using Risse’s notion of argumentative rationality, Williams argues that the speech act becomes open to a discussion in which the “validity claims” implicit in the utterance of security and the process of securitization can be challenged (Williams 2003: 522). These validity claims include those of truth, normative rightness and expressive truthfulness or sincerity of the securitizing actor. The speech act thus becomes open to refutation based on these inner ethical elements inherent in any truth-claim (Wyn Jones 1999: 111). Wyn Jones and Williams argue that conceptualizing the securitizing speech act through a discursive ethical lens allows for a more fluid image of security than that offered by the CS. It redeems it from the “take-it-or-leave-it package of militarized assumptions” (Wyn Jones 1999: 111) and avoids the “risk of replicating

some of the worst excesses made possibly by a Schmittian understanding of politics” (Williams 2003: 522). For example, anti-immigration securitizing moves put forward by nationalist parties in democratic countries would undergo a process of legitimization, whereby the ethical and validity claims of the speech act are weighed by the audience, thus opening space for the securitization’s refutation.

The discursive ethical approach offers a very valid attempt to invoke a normative element within the CS. It opens up space for the possibility of avoiding potentially negative securitization practices by arguing that the speech act must undergo a process of legitimization. However, it is argued here that this approach does not offer the securitization analyst the proper tools to avoid replicating dominant security discourses generated through their own writing of security, which, consequently, may result in the negative securitization of a referent object.

The security analyst does not have a way of ensuring that the speech act will undergo the refutation process which is necessary to challenge the ‘validity claims’ of its composition. Williams and Wyn Jones recognize this danger, that discursive ethics is not guaranteed to prevail over the power saturated field of security; they state that appealing to discursive ethics “does not mean that securitization will *always* be forced to enter the realm of legitimization” (Williams 2003: 524).<sup>3</sup>

The CS and other security scholars rightly argue that “security is very much a structured field in which some actors are placed in positions of power to define security” (Buzan et al 1998: 31). Therefore, as a result of the current power structures of the field of security it is likely that many voices will be excluded from the speech act process, thus limiting the opportunity for dissent from perhaps those who may be most affected by the security policy. Migrants, for example, who are deemed threatening, are not invited to discuss the process of their own securitization. This exclusionary aspect becomes particularly true if we accept that, as it currently stands, once ‘security’ is uttered it limits the space for democratic contestation and shifts it into a different

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3. My italics added.

field, whereby state-representatives reserve the right to use whatever means necessary to assuage the threat (Wæver 1995: 55).

Resistance to such power structures remains a possibility; Williams argues that “[a]s resistant as they may be, these security policies and relationships are susceptible to being pulled back into the public realm and capable of transformation” (Williams 2003: 524; Wyn Jones 1999: 112). However, a securitization analyst appealing to the discursive ethical approach remains hopeful, at best, that the securitizing speech act will be open to contestation and validation, but they themselves remain an observer incapable of interrupting negative securitizing processes. Furthermore, this approach does not critically respond to the securitization logic of urgency and exceptionalism proposed by the CS, it merely suggests that this logic may be open to refutation when enacted through speech. As it stands, securitization processes cannot be carried out in an alternative manner. The discursive ethical response does not address ST’s traditional response to security issues. Thus, the securitization analyst, appealing to discursive ethics, remains unable to address security issues without potentially contributing to negative securitization instances.

### **c) The Consequentialist Response**

In ‘Towards a consequentialist evaluation of security’ Floyd discusses a manner in which the security analyst can become more critically engaged with the securitization process by combining the CS normatively objective approach to security studies with that of the Welsh School, which is a Critical approach with clear emancipatory goals (Floyd 2007). These two schools propose very different perspectives on security; the former portrays a very negative image of security, where in fact securitization should be avoided and “desecuritization should be the optimal long-range option” (Buzan et al 1998: 29). The latter, conversely, depicts a very positive view of security, where security (understood as security of the individual) should be the objective, security then becomes equated with emancipation (Booth 2005). Floyd, on the other hand, argues that “security is neither always positive nor negative, but rather is issue dependent”, and the role of the security analyst

is to measure the consequences of, and benefits from each approach (Floyd 2007: 338).

Floyd endows the security analyst with a more engaging and critical position within the securitization process, whereby “it is the task of the analyst to fight ignorance (or, put differently, false consciousness) on part of the existing and/or potential securitizing actor, and inform (or better enlighten) them of the best possible action” (Floyd 2007: 338). Floyd speaks directly to the implications of writing security with her approach, which she argues overcomes the normative dilemma by allowing the security analyst to “*critically evaluate*” his or her own speaking/ writing of security (Floyd 2007: 339).

This is a very honest and reflective attempt to overcome the normative dilemma of how to discuss the social reality of securitization by remaining conscious about how one is contributing to the co-constitution of the ‘security reality’. Floyd rightly claims that it is essential that the security analyst remains critical of his/her own writing of security and how it may inadvertently lead to the further securitization of an issue or result in negative security measures. However, it is contended here that her proposition to critically engage with the CS approach to securitization by comparing it to alternative or human security approaches remains incapable of offering the security analyst with the adequate means to overcome the normative dilemma. This article assents with Bigo and Huysmans, that “speaking truth” or offering alternatives to securitization cannot prevent negative securitization processes if it does not first deconstruct the structural power relations inherent within the dominant discourses of security.

It was noted above, and it will be further addressed in the second portion of this paper, that security, as an academic and professional field, remains a largely closed and elitist domain, directed by powerful interests and controlled by disciplinary mechanisms, such as control over information and the media, as well as through the ability to coerce or co-opt dissenting voices and subjectivities (Bigo 2002). As a consequence of this regulated sphere alternative voices are often marginalized; Bigo contends that “the discourses of securitization continue to be so powerful [that] even when alternative discourses are well known [...they] have little effect in either the political

arena or in daily life” (Bigo 2002: 65). Hoogensen and Rottem also note the challenge that the marginalized face in attempting to challenge mainstream views with the observation that “positive connotations of security have not really penetrated the dominant discourses” (Hoogensen and Rottem 2005: 158). Therefore, Floyd’s attempt to overcome the normative dilemma by suggesting that the security analyst should actively engage with these dissenting or marginalized perspectives, by bringing the notion of positive or human security into their critical analysis, remains at the mercy of dominant discourses. For example, feminist security author Lee-Koo argues that the occupations of both Iraq and Afghanistan disproportionately affect the lives of women, however she correctly asserts that this challenge, presented from a human security perspective, has had little success in directing the course of military action (Lee-Koo 2008).

Without a critical understanding of the power relations which inform security policy the consequentialist approach does not grant the security analyzer the means to discuss and engage with securitization without encouraging the negative securitization processes. The security analyst may be able to address how the current economic failures are affecting factory workers around the world, but the discussion of security in the economic sector remains subjugated by dominant liberal actors and subjectivities.

It will be argued that a critical procedural method is better suited to overcome the normative dilemma of speaking and writing security without replicating dominant modes of addressing security issues resulting in negative securitization instances. This response intends to offer the security analyst with the tools to critically apply ST by, firstly, opening up the structural power relations within the securitizing process and critically evaluating the social and political power of the securitizing actor. This critical evaluation intends to create space for alternative or marginalized approaches to securitization. Secondly, it suggests that applying securitization with a reconceptualized understanding of security, which aims to tackle the symbolic power inherent within the securitization process allows for alternative approaches to security to be observed and analyzed. Endowing the security analyst with these critical tools allows for the normative dilemma of writing security to be challenged.

## 4. THE CRITICAL APPLICATION OF SECURITIZATION THEORY

### 4.1 THE SECURITIZING ACTOR:

Beginning with a critical analysis of the securitizing actor, the power saturated field of security will be discussed first, depicting why a need to deconstruct the control security elites maintain over securitization is necessary. This critical evaluation of the power of the security actor will be carried out second, paving the way to bring in excluded approaches to security, which will be examined third.

#### a) The power structures surrounding securitizations

The securitizing actor is that who puts forward a claim to securitize an issue. The CS explains that the successful securitization of a referent object will depend on the intersubjective agreement *among* the subjects as to whether the claim made by the actor is legitimate or not. They argue that “no one is excluded from attempts to articulate alternative interpretations of security,” but as a result of the power structures within the field of security, certain actors, typically state elites, hold an advantaged position over defining security threats (Buzan et al 1998: 31-32). Wæver in fact states that “by definition something is a security problem when the elites declare it so” (Wæver 1995: 54). Although, the CS has attempted to move away from this explicitly state elite orientation, their focus remains on *successful instances of securitization*, which due to the biased nature of security such instances are generally dominated by statist elites (Buzan et al 1998: 37-39).

Critical analysts of security argue that the statist field of security has led to securitization processes that exclude certain groups and ideas resulting in negative consequences for the individual or the global community (Wyn Jones 1999: 99; Bellamy, Bleiker and Devetak (eds.) 2008; Hansen 1999; Hoogensen and Rottem 2005; Krause and Williams 1997). A commonly



cited example of this potentially harmful approach to security is the arms race of the Cold War, whereby the procurement of weapons and their dispersion to client states in the name of 'national security' contributed to political repression, armed rebellions and civil war, and a shift of resources away from other security issues, such as food or environmental (Cheesman 2005: 63; Wyn Jones 1999: 99). A more contemporary case in point is the 'Global War on Terror.' (GWOt), which Bellamy et al (eds.) critically explore in their 2008 book, *Security and the War on Terror*. Williams, one of the contributors, argues that the US government dominated approach to terrorism resulted in a revitalization of political realism and a militaristic security policy. He argues that the securitization of international terrorism, led by the elite directed security policies of the US, pushed the promotion of human rights, environmental sustainability and humane governance to the sidelines of the international security agenda (P. Williams 2008: 10).

Security politics remains a largely closed domain governed largely by state elites. This institutional dominance translates into securitization processes which are the product of politics of exclusion and control that often generate adverse impacts on individual and global security. The CS approach to securitization does not problematize the power that elites maintain over defining security policy, their approach is one of observing *existing actors* who currently hold the power to securitize and trying to understand the particular *modus operandi* of urgency and exceptionalism (Buzan et al 1998: 35). Consequently, their own writing of security helps to reinforce traditional conceptions of security, whereby state elites retain the power to securitize, which is argued here to result in negative securitization processes. A security analyst applying securitization *uncritically* buttresses the notion that security should be defined by elites and their concerns should be prioritized over those that do not hold the same advantaged position over speaking security. Thus, the normative dilemma of writing security remains prevalent for a security analyst applying the CS approach to securitization.

A *critical* application of ST will attempt to challenge the normative dilemma by firstly, disclosing the power that elites maintain over security policy, and secondly, by presenting the security analyzer with the tools to counter elite

utterances of security by seeking out dissenting or marginalized securitizing moves or counter-securitization claims.

Scholars who promote critical readings and writings of security assert that ST is particularly capable of opening up new channels for expressing alternative security concerns. Alker asserts that ST “responds constructively, discursively, to the transnationalizing of concerns and the broadening of possibilities for reconceptualizing threats” (Alker: 2005: 198). Once ST is dislodged from its narrow focus on state elites it can actively fulfill its potential to locate securitizing actors at the sub- and supra- state level, as well as other alternative approaches to security such as those expressed by minorities, women and civil society more generally (Wyn Jones 1999: 109; Hoogensen and Rottem 2005). However, as was noted above, these dissenting discourses will have little effect over securitization processes if one does not critically engage and deneutralize the power that state elites have over the ‘regime of truth’ of security first (Bigo 2002: 65).

#### **b) Deconstructing the institutional power of the securitizing actor**

Many scholars have critically evaluated state or international elite’s utilization of security policy as a instrument to maintain order, preserve current power structures, or to pursue personal or political interests. The state is able to play off the symbolism of its own authority, as the protector of the polity and provider of security, and use its institutional position in order to advance policies that regenerate and secure this imagery (Neocleus 2008; Bigo 2002; Risley 2006; Aradau 2004). Feminist security scholars for example, explain how security policy can be understood through the “logic of masculinist protection,” which significantly contributes “to the constructions of undemocratic subjectivities, dramatically transforming the state-citizen relationship” (Young quoted in Risley 2006: 7). Risely therefore argues, that as a security analyst, one must take a critical look therefore, at *who* is promoting security measures, and how these policies “form part of broader political projects and visions, and how they contribute to the construction of political authority as well as of political identities and subjectivities” (Risley: 2006: 30).

Bigo offers a very thorough account of the state's capacity to manipulate securitization processes through his investigation into the securitization of immigration, which he argues is perpetuated by the 'governmentality of unease.' Bigo asserts that elites are able to utilize their bureaucratic position to 'create truth' regarding 'threats' to the state and fabricate or exacerbate fears, such as links between migration and crime or unemployment, in order to legitimize securitizing moves. With regards to migration Bigo claims that "politicians see themselves as insulted by the incapacity to enforce the integrity of the national body they represent," and thus the negative securitization of migration is an attempt to reassert their control and political integrity (Bigo 2002: 70). A similar observation can be made of international terrorism, which politicians portray as the disorderliness of the international system. Counter-terrorist policies can thus be understood as an attempt to engender a new disciplinary order and be recognized as a reassertion of state power intended to provide this order (Der Derian 1992: 81; Jervis 2002: 37).

This article takes the position that terrorism, as other socially constructed threats, tends to reinforce state power more than undermine it. The state or global elites can therefore, use securitization processes to further their own political agendas or increase their own structural power, such as using the securitization of migration as an electoral promise, or using the securitization of terrorism to expand surveillance technologies, border controls, and detention times.

The CS argues that it is fallacious to place too much emphasis on the securitizing actor in one's analysis of securitization (Buzan et al 1998: 31-32). However, Buzan acknowledges in his own analysis of the securitization of terrorism state elites' ability to disclose, withhold or even fabricate evidence enabling the actor to inflate the threat of terrorism in order to maintain its securitization (Buzan 2006: 1107). Buzan identifies those who have a strong vested interest in sustaining a security threat, as an *agent provocateur*, who might seek to exacerbate the terrorist threat, for example, if itself has become "too weak to serve the political purpose of maintaining the GWoT securitization" (Buzan 2006: 1107). As a result of their institutional positions the securitizing actors, typically state elites, have the ability to manipulate

and monopolize security discourses, subsequently allowing them to engender threats, reinforce negative images, manufacture particular subjectivities, and re-establish their position as the security provider. Bigo asserts that the securitization of migration, for example, is:

A transversal political technology used as a mode of governmentality by diverse institutions to play with the unease, or to encourage it if it does not yet exist, so as to affirm their role as providers of protection and security and to mask some of their failure (Bigo 2002: 65).

The capacity to create 'truth' regarding threats and the ability depict what are deemed the necessary means to manage such threats awards the securitizing actor, the state elite, an advantaged and position over the securitization of an object. Krebs and Lobasz offer a thorough examination of the securitization of terrorism, post-9/11 in the United States, which they affirm demonstrates the capacity of state elites to fix meanings and dominate policy. They argue that by virtue of his institutional position as president, Bush enjoyed an advantaged place in the rhetorical competition over the 'meaning of 9/11'. His bureaucratic power allowed for the 'rhetorical coercion' of the dissenting voices of the Democrats, thus allowing for the particular securitization of terrorism that later paved the way for the invasion of Iraq (Krebs and Lobasz 2007).

The critical application of securitization discussed here, therefore, is one in which the power over the production of meaning is dismantled and assessed. The security analyst does not merely observe existing security actors, rather they critically evaluate the advantaged position of the actor and critically engage with the securitization processes that may result from this monopoly over the definition and construction of threats and security discourses. Without this critical application of securitization the security analyst is at risk of reproducing negative forms of securitization. Endowed with this critical approach to securitization, the analyst can question security policy based on it being a production of institutional power and can then proceed with searching for and evaluating alternative approaches to securitization.

### **c) Addressing the dissenting marginalized voices of securitization**

Apart from deconstructing the power relations inherent in the securitizing speech act, it is argued that the security analyst must actively seek out those

who may be uttering alternative modes of securitization or those who may be attempting to counter-securitize existing moves or measures. This critical approach assists the securitization analyzer in overcoming the normative dilemma of writing security by opening up the rhetorical control over security. This not only helps to prevent negative securitization processes but it also assists in fostering more productive and positive securitization acts. Foucault vitally reminds us that “in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibilities of resistance [...] there would be no power relations at all” (Campbell 1998: 511). Many who have engaged with the CS theory of securitization have said that more attention needs to be paid to the dissenting voices within securitizing process, as well as to acts that counter securitization attempts occurring in everyday politics and social interactions. (Aradau 2004; Abrahamsen 2005; Risley 2006; Bigo 2002). In his discussion of the securitization of immigration, Bigo points out such spaces for resistance, whereby the securitization of migration finds itself at a point of tension between globalization and territorialized devices of control. This space makes way for local as well as transnational resistant movements in response to transnational security technologies; he identifies the struggle against deportation in international zones of airports as such a point of tension (Bigo 2002: 82). The role of the critical security analyzer would thus be to actively seek out such points of resistance and examine how they may be used to counter the securitizing moves of state elites.

In order to assuage the normative dilemma of writing security the critical security analyzer would thus disclose the power relations within the securitizing process and recognize resistant movements, thus endowing the marginalized with a voice that may go unnoticed with an uncritical application of ST. This critical approach would therefore, help prevent negative securitization processes by allowing the security analyst to counter traditional exclusionary and power saturated securitization moves with those providing alternative or dissenting approaches. For example, Bellamy et al. stress the importance of addressing moderate Muslim leadership’s proposed modes to countering violent extremism. It is asserted here that by sincerely considering alternative manners to tackling violent religious

extremism, as well as by addressing the arguments of those who have strongly disagreed with the GWoT as a specific mode of securitizing terrorism, a less negative form of securitization than the one currently being carried out can be developed. Bellamy et al. argue that the GWoT as a specific mode of securitization served to explicitly exclude dissenting approaches (Bellamy et al 2008: 23). Now that now that the rhetorical control of the securitizing actor, in this case the elite security class of the US, has been deconstructed, a critical securitization analyst can engage with alterative utterances of security in order to construct a more holistic and inclusionary approach to securitizing violent, religious extremism.

Critics of the CS' conceptualization of securitization have noted that its focus on *successful* securitization instances, usually voiced by state elites, causes the CS to miss out on failed or partially successful speech acts (Risley 2006) as well as situations in which an actor finds him or herself incapable of voicing security needs (Hansen 1999). A critical application of securitization allows the analyst to observe instances where securitization may be located at a different level, such as at the individual, community, or global level. The security analyst seeks out instances that may be voiced by environmental groups requesting greater awareness regarding ecological issues or minorities concerned with racial profiling at border controls, for example.

The security analyst will also look for instances where security measures may be required but are not voiced. Hansen discusses such situations in her investigation into the social position of women in Pakistan, who, she argues, are generally incapable of voicing the threat that honor killings pose to their individual security due to the fear of exacerbating the situation. Hansen states that in such instances the securitization move is witnessed through body, but the "silenced utterances" of security should not go unnoticed (Hansen 1999). The critical securitization analyst is able to locate oppressed or "imagined referents" and discuss how they might be securitized.

This critical approach to securitization opens up space for greater discussion on securitizing processes by shifting the focus to securitization moves found at sub- and supra-state levels and security needs being demonstrated in typically marginalized areas. This broadened perspective assists the security

analyst in overcoming the normative dilemma of analyzing securitization processes by introducing approaches to security expressed by alternative actors, which may have more constructive or positive outcomes.

The critical security analyst takes into account securitizing moves made by a widened scope of actors and bring competing or conflicting securitization processes into discussion with one another. This allows the security analyst to apply ST without further contributing to negative securitization processes by firstly, addressing the structural power inherent in the securitization process, which breaks down dominant and traditional approaches to security, and secondly, by adopting a more inclusive perspective in the application of ST. For example, the critical examination of the current securitization of immigration in Spain firstly, entails disclosing political elites' hidden agendas surrounding securitizing moves, such as exploring Zapatero government's use of Spain's migrant communities as scapegoats for the country's economic difficulties. Secondly, the security analyzer awards authority to countering claims made by migrant communities concerned with minority rights, and assesses alternative approaches to the security issue of immigration. Such as addressing the economic strength immigrants have recently offered Spain and focusing on the security of migrant communities themselves as equal members of the community, then correctly shifting the focus into the economic sector (*The Economist*, November 11, 2008, 16-17).

In order for securitization to be understood and enacted positively it is crucial that the concept of security also be rethought. Dalby points out the dangers of expanding the security field without reconceptualizing security, which he argues can lead to the further militarization of social, political or environmental sectors. In order to avoid the normative dilemma of writing security which may occur by introducing new actors into the scene the securitization analyst must also accept a reconceptualized understanding of security.

## 4.2 RECONCEPTUALIZING SECURITY

The CS puts forward a particular reading of security through its conceptualization of securitization, which is one that understands security through a militarized lens of state-oriented national security. This specific understanding of security is caught up in a traditionalist or realist subjectivity, which remains static and unchallenged through the development of ST (Huysmans 2002: 58). In order to begin thinking about how securitization processes might take on a more positive or constructive form, so that the normative dilemma of writing security may be averted, it is essential to comprehend the symbolic power of security as a concept and how it shapes subjectivities. This awareness and further deconstruction of the subjective power of 'security' is only one part of the task; secondly, this article will address how the securitization analyst might be able to apply ST with a reconceptualized understanding of security in order to prevent or alleviate negative securitization processes.

### **a) Deconstructing the symbolic power of security**

Critics of the CS have challenged its fixed conceptualization of security and its "apparent unwillingness to question the content or meaning of security" (Wyn Jones 1999: 109). The role of the critical securitization analyst therefore, is to do exactly what the CS has not, and that is to deconstruct and politicize security as a concept. In order to develop 'new thinking' about security it is essential to understand how dominant modes of approaching security have previously ordered subjectivities and how these subjectivities continue to regenerate certain emotions or actions such as political 'othering' or social exclusion, or how they reinforce particular forms of governing. Walker argues that "security cannot be understood, or reconceptualized or reconstructed without paying attention to the constitutive account of the political that has made the prevailing accounts of security seem so plausible" (Walker 1997: 69). Here Walker asserts that it is necessary to understand how notions of sovereignty and statism have delimited conceptualizations of security and how modern accounts of security "engage in a discourse of repetitions, to affirm



over and over again the dangers that legitimize the sovereign authority that is constituted precisely as a solution to dangers” (Walker 1997: 73). Modern accounts of security therefore remain firmly embedded in a typically realist understanding of international relations which has structured approaches to securitization and security policy.

In order to demonstrate the restrictive approaches to security during the Cold War, for example, Klein explores the clutch of ‘containment’ thinking through an examination of Robert McNamara’s discussion of the shortcomings of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations’ approach to the Vietnam War. The argument posited here is that the “prevailing mind-set of decision makers working within the operational code of the Containment allowed no room for critical inquiry” into the failings of the Vietnam War. Klein argues that there was a complete “lack of imagination” of how to respond to security threats and an incapacity to critique or learn from policy decisions embraced during this period (Klein 1997: 361). We should therefore, not be surprised when we see similar security approaches repeated decades later, argued here to be the result of restraining realist subjectivities and the reinforcement and repetition of hegemonic modes of approaching security. Bellamy et al. argue that America’s response to 9/11 for instance, can be characterized “by a return to dualistic and militaristic thinking patterns that dominated foreign policy during the Cold War” (Bellamy et al 2008: 3).

As was noted above realist orientated approaches to security embedded in a subjectivity of statism often have negative implications for individual or global security, therefore an application of securitization which does not challenge dominant modes of statist thinking will only serve to reinforce negative securitization practices. In order to overcome the normative dilemma of writing security the securitization analyst must gain a nuanced understanding of the symbolic power of security, how it shapes subjectivities and how they may be reoriented to promote alternative approaches to securitization.

Post-structural scholarship offers an excellent starting point as to how one might go about reconceptualizing security by examining how current processes of securitization generate restrictive subjectivities, which in turn

has shaped how actors approach security issues. In his analysis of American foreign policy, Campbell explains how national security policy is involved in a process of identity formation centered around notions of patriotism and perpetuated through the production of danger, often resulting in a reinforcement of political order rather than policies that seeks to initiate social change (Campbell 1998). A second case in point is the security policy imposed via the 'War on Drugs'. Dalby asserts the securitization of drugs in this militaristic fashion understands the problem as "analogous to traditional national-security preoccupations," which works to secure the power of the state to intervene in social arenas, but does very little to prevent or aid the health or social situation of drug users " (Dalby 1997: 10, 15).

The US approach to the War on Terror can be understood in the same fashion whereby counter-terrorism policies were constructed in defense of a constructed national identity perpetuated by discourses of 'Good vs Evil' and the professed notion that the US was attacked because of "who they were as opposed to what they had done" (Krebs and Lobasz 2007: 423). The ability to successfully project the 'blame' externally, as in the 'War on Drugs,' and the capacity of post 9/11 security narratives to demarcate particular identities as inherently dangerous generated the idea that declaring and waging a war on terror was the "sole, inevitable, logical consequences of the attacks" (Krebs and Lobasz 2007: 423). The post-structural readings of these securitization instances demonstrates how traditional approaches to security are carried out in a particular realist fashion due to the symbolic power of the concept of 'security,' which reinforce existing subjectivities of social and political othering and ordering.

The role of the critical securitization analyst is to engage with the symbolic power of 'security' by recognizing how it has shaped particular conceptions of what security means and how constrained subjectivities have resulted in the repetition of specific types of securitization processes. This critical approach would allow the analyst to challenge dominant modes of approaching security issues, which result in the negative securitization of certain sectors. It also encourages an engagement with alternative modes of securitization that do not replicate realist approaches of defending a sovereign order.

## **b) Addressing alternative security subjectivities**

The critical securitization analyst, reflective of how dominant subjectivities have traditionally directed security policy, can begin to envision and seek out alternative approaches to security directed by alternative subjectivities. Feminist security scholars, for example, argue that approaching security issues through a gendered lens allows for the rejection of the assumption that power, control, and violence are necessary to ensure safety. Security can then be rearticulated in a demilitarized fashion allowing for “compassion and caring” to enter the realm of security politics (Dalby 1997: 21; Hoogensen and Rottem 2005). Post-structural security scholars discuss the expectation that security may be reformulated in a fashion that celebrates difference rather than fears it. Securitization processes can thus be enacted through more constructive social, cultural, economic and ecological processes, rather than through the realpolitik mode of exclusion and dominance (Dalby 1997: 21; Walker 1997: 65).

The critical securitization analyst does not narrow their focus to instances of securitization defined by the CS. Rather, they seek out alternative manners in which local, global, or civil groups may be attempting to securitize an issue in more unconventional manners, defending alternative subjectivities. For example, Green Theorists or political ecologists such as Eckersley and Dobson promote the securitization of the environment through expanded notions of ‘deliberative democracy’ and ‘green educatio’ (Dobson 2006; Eckersley 2004). The critical securitization analyst views these as legitimate claims to security, and locates the primary actors, environmentalists, and the audience, government, school board officials or political activists, and identifies the speech act processes and the facilitating conditions. The analyst addresses the success of the securitizing move and the likely effects of deciding to securitize the environment through democratic and educational channels.

Consequently, securitization takes on a different shape than that proposed by modern security analysts; it abandons the notion that security, as a concept, necessarily implies a reinforcement of the status quo by the state. Alternatively, securitization is viewed as a potential positive process. Security moves do not have to be rejected as something negative, rather groups can

continue to utilize the mobilization power that uttering ‘security’ offers in a less exclusionary and positive framework (Wyn Jones 1999: 109). Analyzing securitization moves can therefore, be regarded as a constructive, empathetic, and holistic endeavor yielding positive outcomes, rather than something to be avoided in fear of exacerbating the ill-founded or radical securitization of a referent.

The critical securitization analyst becomes involved in the “coproduction” of security subjectivities whereby the meaning of security is one independent from the interests of politicians and “professionals of unease” (Bigo 2002: 84). Marginalized subjectivities are not discounted as non-legitimate claims to security, but rather they are viewed and analyzed as alternative approaches to security. This broadened perspective allows the analyst to engage with securitization studies without promoting or regenerating negative processes of securitization, conversely it allows for the examination and promotion of potentially positive securitizing moves.

In summary, a securitization analyst applying ST from a critical perspective would be able to overcome the normative dilemma of writing security by firstly, deconstructing the structural power of security elites and the symbolic power of dominant security subjectivities. Secondly, the analyst observes securitization moves that are located in marginalized spaces and those advocating alternative or countering approaches to security. It is thus concluded that adopting a critical application of ST is the best method to overcome the normative challenge of attempting to discuss securitization processes without encouraging or reproducing power laden or exclusionary securitization processes.

## 5. CONCLUSION: ADDRESSING WEAKNESSES

The critical application of securitization outlined and summarized above carries its own challenges, both in its function as a theory for analyzing

security processes and in overcoming the normative dilemma of writing security. The first obstacle a critical application of securitization faces lies in its conceptual coherency, which may have an impact on its applicability as a tool for analyzing securitization processes.

In order to retain theoretical precision and utility, whereby not everything can be defined as a security issue, as well as to remain engaged with the existing scholarship of security and strategic studies the CS understands security as “self-referential practice,” referring to its traditional conceptualization of national security. Wæver discusses the apprehension towards redefining security until the concept becomes meaningless and the analyst is no longer able to discuss operations of security working within a specific field (Wæver 1995: 48-49, 56; Buzan et al 1998: 24). The concern with allowing for a critical reconceptualization of security is that securitization studies loses its utility because there exist no theoretical limitations as to what can be defined as a ‘threat’ and what can essentially count as an act of securitization. This is a legitimate trepidation which the CS has evaded by remaining firmly imbedded in a traditional understanding security.

Allowing the concept of security to be reconceptualized may pose certain challenges in the application of ST whereby it becomes more difficult to identify concrete actors or securitizing moves. However, it is argued here that the security analyst would be able to retain the main strengths of securitization studies, understanding the *modus operandi* of securitizing acts while expanding the scope of the security analyst: a diverse range of securitization actors and moves would be analyzed as well as countering securitization moves. By incorporating a widened perspective of what security entails we may attain a more nuanced understanding of what security means for a diversified audience with alternative understandings of security, as opposed to applying a concept of security demarcated by existing, state orientated elites with particularized subjectivities.

The second challenge a critical application of securitization faces is the concern that the field of security may be expanded without a reconceptualization of security taking place, which could result in the militarization of certain sectors of society and of politics. Attempting to denaturalize and transform

predominant understandings of security is not an easy task. There exists the apprehension that because security traditionally empowers the state and reinforces control mechanisms, and because of the sedimentation of certain social constructs, such as the ‘meaning of security,’ the endeavor of reconceptualizing security may be too arduous. Aradau expresses doubt in the post-structuralist project of developing an understanding of security which does not entail a politics of ‘othering’. She asserts that such an attempt to ‘re-think’ security “cannot be translated politically to counter questions of racism *vs* claims for minority rights.” (Aradau 2004: 401). Expanding the scope of securitization studies without a reconceptualization of security would have an adverse impact in overcoming the normative dilemma of writing security, and the analysis of securitization processes, critical or not, would exacerbate negative securitization processes.

The only manner to overcome the normative dilemma of writing security, therefore, would be to not utter it at all. Neocleous argues along these lines in his own critique of security, whereby security is something to be avoided and security fetishism and intents to remold or broaden the security agenda should be abandoned altogether (Neocleous 2008). He discusses a very viable approach to critiquing security, which may also be able to overcome the normative dilemma of security studies. However, it is argued here that the concept of security is not something that can “be wished away” (Walker 1997: 76) and as long as it is being employed as a political tool it is required that we critique it and its usage.

The theoretical tools outlined above: a) deconstructing the institutional power of the securitizing actor; b) addressing alternative/ dissenting security voices; c) deconstructing dominant security subjectivities and d) incorporating different approaches to security allow for securitization processes to be critiqued and reconstructed in a way which is sensitive to the normative implications of the theory. It is concluded that employing such a critical application of ST is the best method to overcome the normative dilemma of writing and theorizing securitization practices. This critical approach ultimately avoids the negative securitization of a referent, which would have otherwise come about through the uncritical observance of securitization processes governed by dominance and exclusion. The

securitization of referents can now be discussed without necessarily leading to a protection of the status quo or militaristic responses. Thus, theorists and practitioners, both within the field of security and without, who wish to observe security through the lens of securitization or who wish to employ the language used by the CS now have the tools to do so in manner which is self-reflective and cautious of not replicating the ordering and alienating often implicated with security. Rather, the securitization analyst can assist in fostering constructive and holistic responses to security threats, which encompass diverse approaches and alternative outlooks.

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