

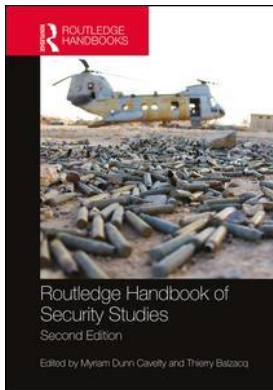
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6

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND SECURITIZATION STUDIES

Juha A. Vuori

Social constructivism is concerned with how our social realities come about: how is it that ontologically subjective and epistemologically objective mental representations like identities, states, or security turn into reciprocally institutionalized roles and come to be taken as real and as indisputable as the physical reality we can touch, smell, and see? Social constructivism is interested in how deontic powers such as ‘rights, duties, obligations, requirements, permissions, authorizations, entitlements, and so on’ (Searle 2011: 9) are brought about. From such a general viewpoint, ‘ideas matter’ when they are used to assign and eliminate deontological modalities, i.e., partake in ‘the creation of commitments, the assignment and elimination of rights and entitlements or obligations, the legitimation of expectations, and the like’ (Sbisà 1999: 11).

Social constructivism was a crucial position in debates about ontology and epistemology in the field of International Relations (IR) in the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, social constructivism can be considered a metatheory rather than a specific theory of international politics (although there are also operative constructivist theories in IR) and there are many shades of constructivism in terms of ontological, epistemological, and normative views and commitments (Hacking 1999). While there are ‘conventional constructivist’ approaches to security (e.g., Katzenstein 1996), the theory of *securitization* has taken the constructivist insights to their most elaborate form.

Accordingly, this chapter introduces the main elements and assumptions of the theory in three main parts. The first part looks at the notion of securitization and the core elements of the model at the heart of the theory. The second part looks at the aspect of ‘securitization’ more closely, considering meanings of security, the normative underpinnings of securitization theory, and what ‘successful’ securitization entails. The third part tackles the question of what kind of ‘theory’ securitization theory is, paying particular attention to the distinction between a theory and a theoretical framework, and how securitization theory can be applied to different empirical cases.

The theory of securitization: the basics

The notion of securitization captures the performative power politics of the concept ‘security’ and has shown how issues acquire the status of security through intersubjective socio-political processes. Although many things can threaten the existence of valued referent objects, such threats do not come with labels – they require political action to gain the deontic rights, duties, obligations, requirements, and authorizations that come about by ‘performing and getting others to

accept' (Searle 2011: 85) securitization speech acts. The aim of securitization studies is to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who (securitizing actors) can securitize (political moves via speech acts) which issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why (perlocutionary intentions/how-causality), with what kinds of effects (inter-unit relations), and under what conditions (facilitation/impediment factors) (Vuori 2011a: 7).¹

Securitization theory was an answer to the broadening and deepening debates about security in the late 1980s; it is possible to widen the study of security without rendering everything as security by fixing on the form of security speech and by viewing security as a status and modality. For Ole Wæver, the original developer of securitization theory (Wæver 1989a, 1995), 'one could "throw the net" across all sectors and all actors and still not drag in everything with the catch, only the security part' (Wæver 2011: 469). This was achievable through a focus on particular speech acts, where securitizing actors claimed existential threats to valued referent objects so that audiences would accept, or at least not oppose, extraordinary measures that would otherwise not be acquiesced.

Such social construction of threats, and remedies for them, was considered an effective means to gain legitimacy for unpalatable policies that broke the rules of everyday politics. In this sense, the approach combines the study of what securitization does (what it 'triggers') with political constellations, or who or what does securitization (what 'triggers' it) (Guzzini 2011: 336–7). The effects of securitization on society, process, and polity can be studied in three stages (Wæver 2014: 28), where

1. Aspirations of actors are related to societal conditions;
2. Political codifications that constitute particular relationships are analysed through speech act theory;
3. Effects on political, legal, and socio-psychological life are examined.

The theory of securitization models the way we have learned to understand what security is and what counts as security, as well as how something becomes security and what security does. The theory allows for different kinds of analysis of the distinct political move: the 'causal analysis' of its consequences, the 'sociological analysis of social patterns that condition political possibilities', and the political theorization of 'life under different arrangements' (Wæver 2014: 31). In this way, the notion of securitization denotes the process of creating social facts, statuses, and modalities of security. The model contains several important elements (Buzan et al. 1998): the general script or plot of security entails priority and utmost importance of the particular issue; the existence of a valued referent object is at stake and under threat. The model as such has seven variables:²

1. A securitizing actor (that which or who makes the move towards a new, or to alter an existing, issue of security in accordance with particular conventions and grammars);
2. A referent object (that which is to be secured);
3. A threat (that which threatens the referent object);
4. An audience (the necessary relation needed to produce the deontic modality of security or those who have to be 'convinced' for securitization to be satisfied);
5. Felicity conditions (rules and conventions of the speech act and its consequences);
6. Facilitation factors (factors that can facilitate or impede the acceptance of the securitization move; social conditions that relate to social positions of the actor and audience as well as the threat);
7. Functional actors (actors that are neither the securitizing actor, the threat, nor the referent object, but still have some bearing on the process).

The model has *speech act theory* at its core: the theory of securitization ‘was built from the start on speech act theory, because it is an operative method’ (Wæver 2014: 27). This is an opportune foundation for a theory of social construction, as speech acts are taken to be the basic form of human communicative interaction in speech act theory (Searle and Vanderveken 1985). The basic idea here is that people do things by talking, that they perform different kinds of acts by speaking (Austin 1975).³ Language is not used merely to convey information; it is for example used to explain (assertives), order (directives), threaten (commissives), thank (expressives), and declare things, e.g. war (declarations) (Searle and Vanderveken 1985). Such acts can be analysed through three types or aspects of speech acts (Austin 1975):

- Locutionary (an act *of* saying something with a sense and a reference);
- Illocutionary (an act *in* saying something);
- Perlocutionary (an act *by* saying something).

Speech act theory suggests that people interact with the language they use by infusing it with illocutionary forces, which are used to produce (perlocutionary) effects in other people that can affect the feelings, attitudes, and subsequent behaviour of the hearer(s). Such forces have broader universality across languages than certain verbs of a particular language. Yet illocutions, unlike perlocutions, are conventional: they are done conforming to conventions that are historicized and dependent on social and cultural factors (Austin 1975).⁴

What is securitization?

Securitization as a keyword or notion has become very enticing, even to the degree that it is used in articles to do things without any references to the securitization studies literature. There seems to be something self-explanatory in the term as such, which may partly explain some of the confusion in the critical literature on it. Other alternative terms that engage similar phenomena, such as security framing or threat politics, do not appear to have the same appeal as securitization. Intuitively, securitization is about how security comes about.

As such, security means different things to different societies, as the core fears of any group or nation are unique and relate to vulnerabilities and historical experiences (Wæver 1989b: 301). Yet, despite this historical contingency, security tends to be portrayed as something ‘good’, as being or feeling safe from harm or danger, which corresponds with its everyday (non-expert) meaning as something of positive value. Perhaps paradoxically, in the realm of international politics, security is often understood as a more negative concern, since it is about blocking unwanted developments. Concomitantly, security arguments in effect reproduce insecurities; security arguments tend to promise more than they can deliver.

Securitization and the ‘negative’ side of security

Securitization studies have highlighted this negative side of security and participated in elucidating how, rather than being positive or good for all, the increase of security for some means its sacrifice for others. Some have suggested that this kind of a critical view entails an ‘escape’ from security as such. Yet the approach does not aim at a ‘rejection’ of security altogether, but merely to make security speech unable ‘to function in the harmonious self-assured standard-discourse of realism’ (Wæver 1989a: 38). Rather than a total escape from security, the point is to alter ‘security’ from the inside by unmasking its operative logic and stripping away its innocent appeal. Such a ‘cynical’ (Wæver 1989a: 52) or ‘sceptical’ (Wæver 2012a: 53) view of security turns

security issues into political ones, and makes their theorization ‘critical’. The intention is to handle security problems by revealing their contingent nature and open them up for the evaluation of political responsibility.

The normative push and political recommendation of such an approach is ‘less security, more politics’ and the development of ‘possible modalities’ for the desecuritization⁵ of politics (Wæver 1989a: 52): it is generally (which can only be assessed in practice though) more conducive to treat identities as identities, religion as religion, the environment as the environment, and so on, and to engage their politics through the particular modalities and rationalities of those fields rather than those of security. This however does not entail a preference for insecurity: security is a situation where there is a threat with measures against it, whereas insecurity is a situation where there is a threat and no certain measures to counteract it (Wæver 1995: 56). What is desirable is desecuritization, which leads back to (or keeps an issue within; Bourbeau and Vuori 2015) a-security or non-security – a situation where there is no threat and thus no need for restrictive measures.

Such preferences link up with visions of the political and of politics (Huysmans 2014). In terms of how politics is understood and what kinds of political effects the theory of securitization has, there have been multiple positions: those that take politics as the production of meaning, those that treat it as a modern institutional organization, and those that view it as ethical science (Gad and Petersen 2011). For Wæver (2011: 470), the theory of securitization combines a Schmittian concept of security with an Arendtian concept of politics, as it is ‘strung between Schmittian (anti)political exceptions and an Arendtian co-creation’ (Greenwood and Wæver 2013: 501). In other words, ‘the political conception of securitization theory is *inspired by Arendt, implemented through speech act theory*’ (Wæver 2014: 27, emphasis in original). This means that while security tends to produce a depoliticizing effect, political and social contexts cannot close off securitization or desecuritization. While many security issues and policies are path-dependent (Bourbeau 2014), there is always a possibility that something unexpected will take place. This is why scholars and theories should not explain away the openness and ‘in-betweenness’ of politics (Wæver 2014).

The preference for less security and more politics stems from the particular security politics of the late 1980s in Europe: to speak about national security did particular things that were problematic in light of democracy (and has continued to do so, even as the claimed threats have changed). Accordingly, part and parcel of securitization studies has been the genealogical study of how security has come to have such performative power (Wæver 1989a: 14, 2012b, Stritzel and Vuori 2016). Indeed, security has not had a uniform meaning or power even in Europe.

The contemporary usage dates to the early-to-mid twentieth century when ‘national security’ combined two favourable notions, and became political vogue after the Second World War. In the US, ‘reasons of state’ combined with sovereign immunity had meant that any state documents could be deemed secret and there was no possibility to sue the state. By restricting state secrets to issues of national security, what the new illocutionary power of security did politically was to limit and specify state power. It is at this conjunction that ‘speaking security’ began to do things it had not done before (Wæver 2012b); the previous speech acts of ‘national interest’ and ‘necessity’ ceased to work as effectively while ‘security’ attained a new (illocutionary) force and entailed a new kind of status transformation with concomitant deontic rights, responsibilities, and political functions. It is because of such features that securitization (and not security as such) can be considered a ‘speech act’ (Wæver 1989a, 1995, Vuori 2011a). If securitization moves are successful, the speaker is able to ‘break the rules’ (i.e., the regular deontic rights and responsibilities of a particular field) that normally constrict behaviour and policies, and shift the issue into the depoliticized area of utmost priority and urgency – to the high politics of survival.⁶

Successful securitization and its consequences

What ‘success’ means has been one point of contestation within securitization studies. Views have differed between whether it is enough to garner potential support for security measures, or whether actual measures need to be implemented. An ‘if {a,b,c}, then securitization happens, and with it the defined effects {x, y, z}, typically involving some exceptional measures’ causal diagram of securitization (Patomäki 2014) is, however, problematic in Wæver’s (2014) view. This is because securitization is neither necessary, nor sufficient, to achieve ‘security’ understood as a policy or some means to repel an existential threat: threat perceptions, securitizations, and security actions are indeterminate (see Vuori 2011a: 136–40 for the full argument). Yet, various combinations of these three variables entail different costs for decision makers or securitizing actors.

For example, security action without legitimization in the form of securitization may be costly in terms of trust or popular support. Indeed, securitization is akin to raising a bet (Wæver 1995: 80), not in the sense of betting being a speech act, but in securitization raising the political stakes of an issue to a principled level of survival, or some other most vital interest (Wæver 1989a: 43). Even successful securitization has its costs: securitization is a ‘political move because it has a price’ (Wæver 1989a: 45). The difference between betting and securitization becomes apparent with the realization that it is impossible to make a bet without betting, but it is possible to do security without securitization speech acts. Thus, the core point of interest is the intersubjective establishment of a security status for an issue: threat perceptions, whether something is really a threat, or measures to bring about security are not the main concern, even though they may be of interest in the overall investigation that follows an examination of securitization.⁷

This is why it is necessary to separate ‘success’ as the ‘happiness’ or ‘satisfaction’ of securitization speech acts (i.e. securitization moves) and the concomitant status transformation of an issue (if the moves have such an effect) from the ‘success’ of the politics of securitizing something: happy securitization and the establishment of a security issue may yet lead to very unfortunate political outcomes. At the same time, securitization speech acts can always fail: securitization is ‘equally constituted by its possible success and its possible failure – one is not primary and the other derived’ (Wæver 1989a: 45).⁸ Success relates to how the audience is conceptualized (Balzacq 2005, Léonard and Kaunert 2011).

In theoretical terms, securitization reconfigures the (necessary) relationship of the speaker and audience (Wæver 2014: 29). Here, the audience has to be such that this reconfiguration can provide the speaker with what the particular strand of securitization (Vuori 2008, 2011a) seeks to gain in terms of deontological modalities and statuses: securitization can be about raising an issue onto the agenda, legitimating future or past acts, control, or deterrence. In practical terms, successes and failures of such acts are on a continuum (as in speech act theory): it is highly unlikely that entire audiences will ever be fully and uniformly convinced by any political speech acts, including securitization. Indeed, the questions of what suffices to bring about a security status transformation, and what counts as assuaging rhetoric that convinces people need to be distinguished. Someone (e.g., a leader of a social movement or opposition party) may convince thousands of the security status of an issue (with securitization moves to raise the issue onto the agenda, Vuori 2008, 2010) yet fail to gain a deontic status transformation for it. Indeed, audiences that grant moral support for security policies may differ from those that can grant deontic powers (Balzacq et al. 2015b).

What kind of theory is securitization theory?

As securitization is a theoretical notion, it becomes necessary to consider what kind of a theory the ‘theory’ of securitization is, or should be: a meta-theory, a philosophical theory, a constitutive

or ontological theory, or an empirical theory (Balzacq and Guzzini 2014: 2–3). Different views on this have produced positions that argue for varying emphases. Which kind of an understanding of theory and which version is selected to guide the framework of a securitization study has a major heuristic bearing on how a particular study is conducted (Vuori 2014).

In the debate between linguistic/discursive and practice-oriented approaches some positions emphasize the technocratic mundane practices and techniques of security professionals that enact and modulate limits of the secure and insecure (e.g. Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2014), rather than the speech act spectacles of high politics. The positional divides have also been phrased as those between philosophical and sociological views (Balzacq 2011), where the latter focus on different aspects of the context and structures of securitization processes in a sociological vein while the original formulations of the theory were closer to a post-structuralist position that highlighted the performativity and creativity of speech acts, and contained both ‘internal’ and ‘external’ aspects in the ‘event’ of securitization (Stritzel 2007: 366).

The constitutive (Buzan and Hansen 2009: 215) approach has organized the theory around the illocutionary aspect of securitization as a transformative event where the relationship of rights and duties is reconfigured (Wæver 2014), while the non-positivist causal mechanism approach of interpretivist process-tracing has investigated the how-causality of why certain moves can be expected, some gain receptive audiences, and why certain action-complexes may follow from securitization (Guzzini 2011; Patomäki 2014). Finally, securitization has also been viewed as a theory of politics that allows for the combination of philosophical and sociological investigation (Williams 2014) as well as an ethical theory of security that can deem when securitization is justified (Floyd 2011).

If and when security is considered to be a social construction, would it not suffice to study such processes like any other social construction of X? Or, as such processes resemble framing (Watson 2012), could securitization not be studied as the framing of X? Is securitization not just ‘an ideal-typical model of a particular and limited-scale social mechanism’ (Patomäki 2014: 38), or ‘a distinct theory of discourse’ (Stritzel 2014: 51)? Why is there a need for a specific theory of securitization?

The theory of securitization is more than the framing of threat politics. Securitization theory is a theory of the event when a security status comes about, i.e., a theory about when the deontic modality or status function of an issue is transformed (which can be a very prolonged and gradual process).⁹ Yet, the theory is about more than just the social mechanisms involved in such processes: Wæver’s (1989a, 1995) project has been to produce a theory of the politics of speaking security, about the ‘power politics of a concept’ (Buzan et al. 1998: 32), which takes the approach beyond discourses and rhetoric ‘to a theory of political co-production between multiple actors of social states’ (Wæver 2014: 28). Political status transformations should be studied ‘neither in or by single actors nor as socially determined and thereby unpolitical’ (Wæver 2014: 28): ‘politics is a sphere of re-presentation of the social – it is not the social, nor can it ever be’ (Wæver 1989a: 11). Securitization as just the social construction, frame, or discourse of X would lose sight of the political aspects of securitization theory, which must be avoided even when the theory is combined with approaches to framing (e.g., Paltemaa and Vuori 2006), social mechanisms (Guzzini 2011), or resonant values and threat images (Stritzel 2007, 2014).

Theory or theoretical framework?

It is important here to distinguish between a theory and a theoretical framework, as it seems that the two have at times been confused in the various debates around securitization studies. Individual theories are often formulated to explain, predict, understand, or to criticize certain phenomena or

social structures. But a ‘theory on its own never predicts or explains’ (Wæver 2014: 30); it is used as a basis for comparing empirical instances and to generate specific hypotheses; ‘when theories are applied to the world, their elements require specification’, and no conclusions of the social world can ‘be derived from a theory in the absence of such intermediate steps’ (Kaplan 2014: 52). Indeed, particular theories can be used to do many things in different situations. Theoretical frameworks on the other hand tend to be particular to individual studies or pieces of research. A framework can contain several theories and concepts, which together are used to deal with specific research aims, problems, and questions. Indeed, theoretical frameworks are generally not readily available in the literature, but need to be put together for particular studies.

That Buzan et al. (1998) precisely presented a ready-made framework for analysis rather than merely a singular theory may explain some of the success of the approach. Yet, it is not the only option for how to study securitization (e.g., Balzacq 2015b).¹⁰ What is problematic is that elements of this particular framework are often assumed to be elements of the theory, and the proposal of a different framework is claimed to develop the core theory. However, to argue for the insertion of framework-elements into the theory is to confuse how theory development works. Every application of a theory is different, whereby each unique setup and empirical finding cannot claim to alter the theory.

The theory of securitization is general in the sense that it does not define particular sectors or levels of security, types of political actor that could bring about securitization, nor criteria for when securitization would be achieved in a practical sense.¹¹ The theory names the relations of the qualities of its various elements, but does not mention what these particular elements are, as this would ‘reduce theory to an unlimited assembly of unrelated propositions’ (Kaplan 2014: 56). When a theory ‘is used to take real-world initial and boundary conditions into account, it directs attention to the most relevant factors’ (Kaplan 2014: 188). But, the identification of practically relevant conditions is the task of the applier of the theory. Initial conditions (like features of the political system where the study takes place) and boundary conditions (like domestic and international political situations and historical events) affect what is existentially valuable, the plausibility of linking threats and referent objects, and whether security issues can be dismantled.¹² Yet, we have to keep in mind that such conditions cannot close the success and failure of securitization off: securitization is a political process, and not purely a social mechanism.

Varied applications of securitization theory/frameworks

While securitization studies with its various frameworks and research designs allow for great variation in types of questions and inquiries, it is important to maintain the corporate identity of the core theory. This can be achieved by keeping the philosophical (Balzacq 2011) or illocutionary theory (Wæver 2014) of securitization as the core, and by adding other elements (e.g., sociological approaches) into a framework of research that is guided by this theory (e.g. Vuori 2011a, 2011b). In other words, once we have thrown in the net of securitization theory, we can trace processes and examine effects, but these are part of the framework of particular studies that are guided by specific research questions and problems.

Securitization studies contains a number of relevant questions that may not all be answerable in each and every situation with the same research design: for example, not all political systems operate in the same way, which makes different actors relevant, and may have implications for the kinds of research materials that are available or can be produced for investigation (Vuori 2014). The theory has to be translated for each particular study as part of its framework. To use a theoretical model in empirical research is to contextualize it: ‘all theories are analogues when applied to the world’ (Kaplan 2014: 48), and no process of securitization is identical to another. Indeed,

it does not make sense to include all the variety of political and social situations that exist in a theory of securitization. This is why it is necessary for an applier of a general theory to take the initial and boundary conditions into account when the theory is used to do research. For example, so-called external facilitation factors are boundary conditions that cannot be predefined in the theory; 'Boundary conditions that limit the scope of a theory are not part of the axiomatic account of a theory' (Kaplan 2014: 62).

Similarly important is not to stretch the concept of securitization. While the theory was developed for specific purposes (desecuritization) in a particular place (Europe) in a particular time (late Cold War), it was intended for application around the world (Wæver 1989a: 26).¹³ The problem is that one cannot move from a general definition of securitization to the criticism of securitization in a particular society by simply adjusting for context: 'the meanings of the concepts that are employed depend upon how they are incorporated in a system' (Kaplan 2014: 98). If this is ignored, the original concept will become 'stretched'. The introduction of 'strands of securitization' (Vuori 2008, 2011a) that are derived from illocutionary logic, i.e. the logic of the operative theory at the heart of securitization theory, actually develop the theory of securitization (rather than present another framework) in a way that allows for broader empirical investigation without stretching the concept.

Neither the contexts nor the purposes of theories remain static; rather, they change with each application. The question then is not only who initially developed a theory and for which purpose, but who uses it, where, and for what purpose. Theories have politics installed in their set-ups, but these become effectual in their application to particular instances (Wæver 2011: 469). This requires reflection and careful consideration on the part of the applier of a theory (Vuori 2014).

Conclusion

This handbook-entry has not done justice to all the numerous debates within securitization studies. These debates, in addition to both critics' and originators' statements, indicate the academic success of this critical approach to security. Securitization studies have been multifaceted in what, where, and how issues of security have been investigated and critiqued. Some see this as resulting in a too contradictory whole (Stritzel 2014). It is therefore important to distinguish the core theory from the numerous studies with varying frameworks: a theory needs to have internal consistency, but its applications will always be unique in some aspect.

How politics is approached can serve as an example here. As argued above, the theory of securitization is partly a political and critical theory. Yet, not every applier will subscribe to the same political agenda: securitization studies contain different points and gradients of the approach (Hacking 1999; Vuori 2014). Different scholars abide by different theories of politics; some view politics as an activity, while others see it as an arena. It is possible to limit the theory of securitization to one theory of politics, as Wæver (2014) does with Arendt. But securitization theory can also be used to elucidate phenomena and practices in accordance with a variety of approaches to politics. This is made possible by a minimal core theory and an adaptive combination of other features in a broader framework for each particular study.

For example, the speech act approach to securitization can be used to investigate how identities are produced in processes of securitization, yet it can also be used to investigate how securitization operates in bureaucratic battles of resource allocation. That there is variety in the elements and aims of theoretical frameworks within securitization studies means that all such elements need to be carefully reflected on when designing research. Indeed, such frameworks and studies need to display plurality, because a single theory cannot answer all the questions of interest critical scholars pose in regard to security.

Notes

- 1 For original questions, see Buzan et al. 1998: 32.
- 2 These formulations differ somewhat from the original ones (Buzan et al. 1998) and they represent a synthesis of various criticisms (e.g. Balzacq 2005; Stritzel 2007; Vuori 2011a; Wæver 2014).
- 3 Yet the theory is not limited to speech: for example non-verbal communication and visual images can also be used to commit speech acts. Accordingly, ‘visual securitization’ has become its own strand of investigation within securitization studies (for a review, see Andersen et al. 2015).
- 4 Different interpretations and versions of speech act theory have a bearing on securitization studies debates too. Most prominently, Thierry Balzacq (2005), by drawing on Bourdieu and Habermas, presents securitization as a ‘pragmatic’ or strategic act that aims to influence audiences in favour of the securitizing actor, whereas Wæver (2011, 2014), drawing on Sbisá, considers securitization an illocutionary act that has conventional effects. Vuori (2011a: 164) argues that some strands of securitization have conventional effects or consequences while others do not.
- 5 Space does not allow for a proper treatment of desecuritization, which has become a strand of its own within securitization studies (see e.g. Hansen 2012). This literature has mainly focused on three sets of questions: what counts as desecuritization (identification of the phenomenon), why should there be desecuritization (ethics and normativity), and how can desecuritization be achieved (transformative practice) (Balzacq et al. 2015a).
- 6 The more sociological approaches have emphasized the mundane everydayness of security practices and techniques (Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2014) as well as the possibility of security practice remaining below issues of survival (Balzacq 2011). Securitization may come about in the exceptional manner of high politics, but it can also be produced diffusely through techniques, technologies, and practices (Huysmans 2014).
- 7 E.g. was securitization justified (Floyd 2011), what were its inter-unit effects (Caballero-Anthony et al. 2006), how can the process be traced within a polity (Léonard and Kaunert 2011).
- 8 Although securitization studies have been interested in the failure of securitization, in, e.g., the GDR in 1989 (Wæver 1995), from the start there has been a selection bias towards successful securitization in empirical investigations (Salter 2011).
- 9 Securitizations that consist of singular speech act situations are quite specific and need to be strongly codified (Guzzini 2011: 335). Indeed, strands of securitization that have conventional effects or consequences tend to be codified into laws (Vuori 2011a: 164). The approach does not preclude the study of gradual processes (Vuori 2010).
- 10 Particularly if the research interest concerns expert routines (Bigo 2002) or everyday enactments (Huysmans 2014) of security rather than politics at a ‘principled’ international level (Wæver 1989a).
- 11 ‘Different initial conditions produce differences in types of systems’ (Kaplan 2014: 160), whereby the initial conditions of securitization in a democratic or a dictatorial political system are different (which is also pointed to by empirical appliers, e.g., Jackson 2006; Wilkinson 2007). If securitization theory was a systems theory, the result would be comparative theories of securitization in different political systems, rather than a general theory of securitization. We would for example have a democratic, a dictatorial, a revolutionary (yet, see Holbaard and Pedersen 2012), an authoritarian, and a totalitarian theory of securitization, or a theory of securitization for each sector and level of security (yet, see Buzan and Wæver 2009), or even for each particular state.
- 12 See Hayes (2013: 4–7) for a discussion of boundary conditions in relation to securitization studies.
- 13 The issue of ‘theory travel’ (Vuori 2014), and which kinds of problems the application of the approach to non-European socio-political contexts produces is another example of debates in securitization studies. Beyond the issue of theoretical application in different contexts, the varying distal and proximate contexts of securitization (Balzacq 2011) in terms of resonant values (Stritzel 2007), on- and back-stage discussions of experts (Salter 2008), and translation of threat images (Stritzel 2014) have also been discussed.

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