



## Concepts of politics in securitization studies

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## **CONCEPTS OF POLITICS IN SECURITIZATION STUDIES**

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### **Abstract:**

The article argues that there are a number of concepts of politics in play in the current debates on securitization theory and that greater awareness regarding these conceptual differences helps clarify not only theoretical differences but also the possibilities for new theoretical development and reflection. The article identifies three conversations on politics: first, a conversation on how politics concerns action and intentionality; second, a conversation on the modern organization of politics, spheres and sectors; and third, a conversation on the relationship between politics, ethics and science. Where the first and third conversations refer to politics as an act, in the second conversation, politics is inherently tied to the institutional or spatial structures of government—the state, the public, the political field, spheres, sectors or function.

### **Keywords:**

Copenhagen School, critical theory, securitization theory, conceptual history, concept of politics

## Introduction

Two decades after Ole Wæver first formulated the theory of securitization (Wæver, 1989, 1995) and roughly a decade since the most well-known application in *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Buzan, et al., 1998), securitization theory (ST) has become an important part of what we now refer to as Security Studies (Mauer & Cavelti, 2009; Wæver, 2004a). This special issue sets out to provide an overview of the debates on ST with a view to both bringing the existing debates further and to invite new, more inclusive debates. This introduction contributes by redefining the terms of the debates at a more principled level by focusing on the concepts of politics involved in the interventions.

ST initially aimed to open up the possibility of conceptualizing security beyond military affairs while still providing a criterion for distinguishing security from other types of politics (Wæver, 2003a). It is the framing of a political problem in terms of extraordinary measures, survival and urgency that renders the politics of security unique and constitutes it as something beyond normal politics. In this form, securitization is a specific modern speech act; an utterance by which we construct an issue as a matter of security (Wæver, 2003b; Buzan et al., 1998).

During the 1990s, when debated in IR, 'securitization' was considered as just one among three terms designating what has become known as the Copenhagen School (CS), the other two being 'regional security complexes' and 'sectors'.<sup>1</sup> Yet as can be seen in Figure 1, it was not until the beginning of the 2000s that the concept of securitization became widely used to describe the articles published in international relations journals. This development does not necessarily say anything

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<sup>1</sup> For early critiques of the CS framework, see Eriksson, 1999; Hansen, 2000; McSweeney, 1996; Neumann, 1998; Williams, 1998; Huysmans, 1995 and responses in Buzan & Wæver, 1997; Wæver, 1999, 2003a.

about how the concept has been used but reflects the increasing popularity of the term and an increasing theoretical significance from 2000 onwards.

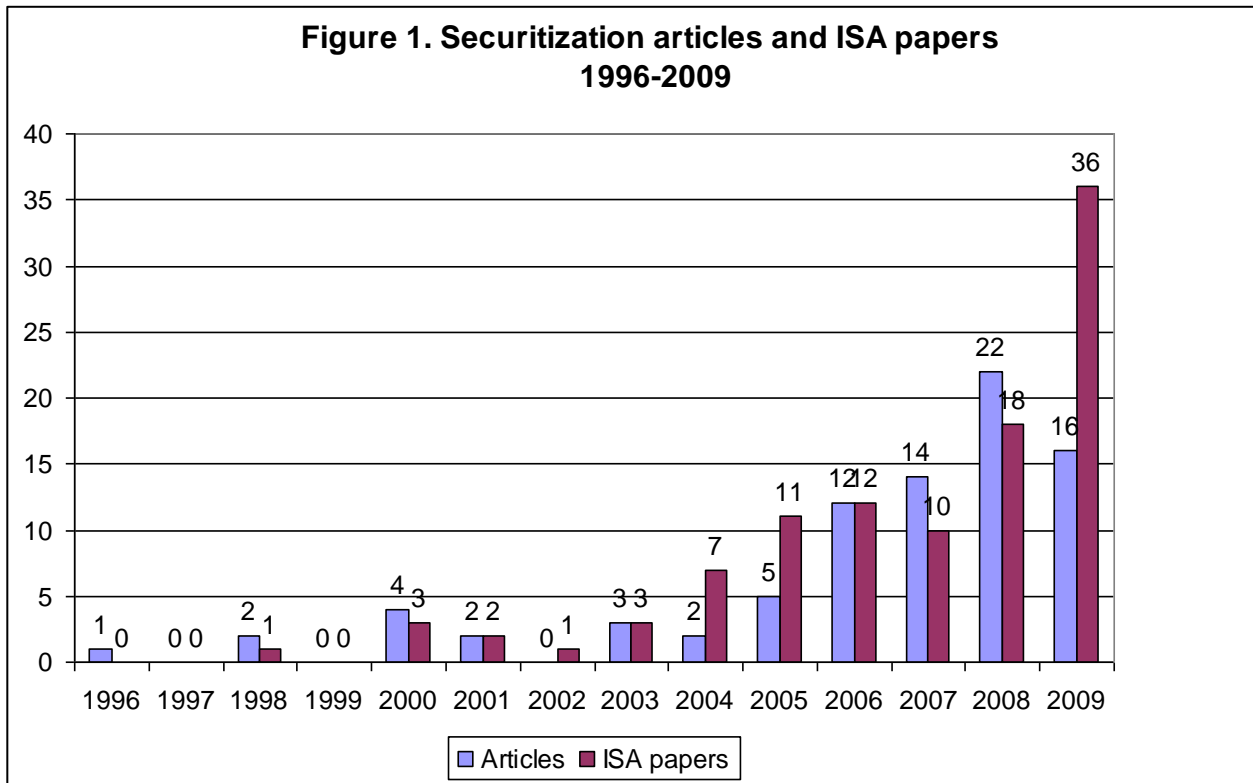


Figure 1: 'Web of Science' reports 83 International Relations journal articles from the years 1996–2009 with 'securitiz/sation' or 'desecuritiz/sation' in 'topic' (including title, abstract, author keywords, and 'significant, frequently occurring words in the titles of an article's cited references'). ISA reports 142 papers from 1996–2009 with 'securitiz/sation' or 'desecuritiz/sation' in the title (Search conducted February 1, 2010).

A systematic reading of the articles on securitization in IR journals<sup>2</sup> demonstrates how at least three veins of criticism have dominated the debate since the early 2000s—all attempts at developing, refining and/or critically engaging securitization theory. A first type of intervention concerns the explanatory power of the theory. Here, one strand of scholars aims to revise the theory in order to

<sup>2</sup> Here we refer to the articles included in Figure 1.

produce more analytically operational criteria for successful securitization (Balzacq, 2005; Roe, 2008; Stritzel, 2007), where another focuses on the explanatory power of the theory beyond the West (Sheikh, 2005; Vuori, 2008; Wilkinson, 2007; Yilmaz & Bilgin, 2005).

Secondly, the normative political implications of ST have been targeted in a debate on the meaning of and preference for desecuritization. Inspired by Critical Security Studies, some scholars have expressed concerns with the theory's alleged tendency to reproduce the existing liberal order in its articulation of the concept of desecuritization (cf. Aradau, 2004), while others—departing from peace studies—have debated whether the concepts of de-/securitization may inform or describe a viable and morally defensible strategy in relation to e.g. minority rights and AIDS (Elbe, 2006; Roe, 2004; Roe, 2006). A third group of scholars focuses on how the security speech and practices of state elites combine to erase the distinction between 'the exception' and 'the normal' (Huysmans, 2006: 124–126; Williams, 2003). The main argument is that ST is unable to grasp the everyday formation and development of new security issues and politics expressed in the practices of bureaucracies (Aradau, 2006; Aradau & Münster, 2008; Bigo, 2000; Kaliber, 2005; McDonald, 2008; Neal, 2006). Related to this is the wider critique of how the theory remains blind to developments beyond a particular modern form of governance which is functionally linked to the nation state (Huysmans, 2006; Petersen, 2008; Rasmussen, 2006),

While each of the contributions in this special issue relate to these debates, this introductory article is not going to settle the new dividing lines nor assess their empirical contributions. Instead, it will focus on the concepts of politics involved in the various positions in the ST debates. As such, it presents a conceptual analysis of politics in securitization studies. Following Reinhart Koselleck's approach to conceptual history, it is the practice of definition which is of interest to us: how the

concept of politics (or the adjective ‘political’) organizes meaning and thereby also how present and future possibilities for academic practice and understanding are prescribed in this process of definition (cf. Koselleck, 1985).<sup>3</sup>

Many studies have been carried out on the history of ‘politics’ and political science.<sup>4</sup> This article makes no attempt at retelling their stories or engaging critically with their findings. However, our reading of the concept of politics in securitization studies is not delinked from these established attempts to understand the use of the concept, as we are specifically inspired by Kari Palonen’s reading of how temporal and spatial dimensions of the concept of politics have been settled throughout history.

Palonen’s work, best presented in his book *The Struggle with Time: A Conceptual History of ‘Politics’ as an Activity* and in the article “Two Concepts of Politics: Conceptual History and Present Controversies”, represents one of the most systematic attempts at writing a conceptual history of the modern concept of politics (Palonen, 2006). Palonen argues that all modern concepts of ‘politics’ are variations of two basic concepts: politics as a spatially demarcated sphere and politics as an activity that organizes contingency in terms of time. Palonen’s approach to the concept of politics is openly inspired by Koselleck, who holds that social and political concepts always articulate a ‘space of experience’ and a ‘horizon of expectation’. (Koselleck 1985: 267ff) Like Koselleck, Palonen argues that a concept of politics which emphasizes progress and movement (e.g. ‘politics as activity’) tends to curb the idea of politics as a spatially delimited sphere.

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<sup>3</sup> By taking this perspective on concepts, our own practice of definition and distinction thus becomes itself political and we do hereby engage actively in the creation of future academic practice .

<sup>4</sup> For a treatment of the history of the concept of politics in the discipline of political science, see Gunnell (1993) and Sartori 1973; for philosophy, see Meier et al. (1965). For a mapping of the diachronic development of the ‘polis-family of words’ in the English language, see Heidenheimer (1986).

Our study focuses likewise on the timely (change and movement towards new futures) and the spatial logic of the concept (stability and segmentation of certain spatial structures). Yet where Palonen includes a wide range of documents extending from work on political theory to practical politics, we exclusively include the 83 academic articles on securitization studies mentioned in Figure 1.

Although this article focuses on securitization studies, most interventions also represent interventions in other debates; broader debates on security, risk, war, climate change, migration etc, or debates on meta-theory and methodology (speech acts, discourse, communicative systems etc). While this article attends to the diverse and specific meanings of ‘politics’ in Securitization Studies—Security Studies and the neighbouring disciplines such as philosophy and sociology will be seen as contexts that necessarily distract attention from where it is centred.

In the following analysis, we identify three *conversations* on ‘politics’—two pertaining to politics as an activity (with an emphasis on time) and one pertaining to politics as a sphere (emphasis on space). At a general level, this mapping exercise not only contributes to an understanding of the different concepts of politics in ST but will also function as an invitation to new conversations with more traditional approaches to security and international relations. Each in their own way, the articles included in the special issue form part of such invitation.

### **Conversations on politics**

The three conversations on politics identified in this section are organized to reflect, first, a conversation on politics as the production of meaning; second, a conversation on politics as a modern institutional organization; and third, a conversation on politics as ethical science. Where the first and third conversations refer to politics as an activity involving different actors, in the second conversation, politics is inherently tied to the institutional/spatial structures of government—the state, the public, the political field, spheres, sectors or function.<sup>5</sup> Each of these three conversations is presented in the following.

***First conversation on politics: Production of meaning—wilful acts<sup>6</sup>, interaction or structural processes***

In the first conversation, politics is understood as the ongoing activity of establishing meaning and identity. Meaning—and thereby politics—is constantly written and rewritten, challenged and therefore inherently instable. Contrary to an institutional understanding of politics (cf. the second conversation presented below), the focus of attention in this conversation is temporality: Politics is an *activity* that somehow refigures the relationship between past and future.

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<sup>5</sup> Most scholars participate in more than one of these conversations, therefore relying either on more than one concept of politics. The three conversations obviously relate to one another, as they are all articulated in relation to the formulations of ST in Wæver (1989, 1995) and/or Buzan et al. (1998). As the aim of this introductory article is exactly to re-configure the debate on ST as it has mutated from these texts, we do not attempt to re-construct possible coherence in the positions of individual authors or articles across conversations.

<sup>6</sup> We use the term 'wilful' and not 'intentional' because it seems to postulate a kind of stubborn intent defined independently of the intentions of others. Within the literature on speech act and conceptual history, Skinner (2002) has advocated a similar distinction between motivation and intention; motivation describing the inner self and intention always depending on the intersubjectively meaning ascribed.



Within securitization studies, this understanding of ‘politics as an activity’ has opened up for a conversation on the intentionality of the speech act vis-à-vis its processual and structural character. Three positions can be highlighted as distinct in this conversation: one which observes politics as interventions by the wilful subject, a second stressing the intersubjective production of meaning and politics, and a third emphasizing processes rather than intentional acts.

The first position in this conversation reads the speech act of securitization as a decisionist imposition of a will: In a caricature of Carl Schmitt, the sovereign voice seems to self-referentially declare a state of exception.<sup>7</sup> In this reading, the securitizing speech act is a willful act; the state of exception is produced *in* the utterance, and this illocutionary act<sup>8</sup> is produced unilaterally by the securitizing agent. Security politics is—in this caricature of Wæver's ST—reduced to the imposition of will, and politics therefore resides in the motivation of the actor (the original author/speaker). In this interpretation, securitization is an act that is received by an audience outside of the speech act; an audience which is not part of the production of meaning. Successfulness is understood as an *effect* of the speech act, something separable from the *intention* of the speaker and therefore can be evaluated.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This first position primarily exists in the debates as a straw man: Most pertinently, it is how Balzacq (2005: 177) reads the CS as a springboard for presenting his alternative theory of securitization. For readings of the relations between Schmitt and the CS which are more nuanced but which nevertheless stress the affinities, cf. Huysmans (2006) and Williams (2003). A special version of this first position is found with Behnke (2006), whose embrace of Schmitt seems to include the normative implication that conflicts should allow the strong to execute their will.

<sup>8</sup> An illocutionary act is defined as ‘what is done *in* saying something’, e.g. a warning. Such an act is contrasted to a perlocutionary act, which is defined by ‘what may happen *by* saying something’ (Austin, 1962; Skinner, 2002: 104).

<sup>9</sup> See Franke and Jasper (2008) for an example of an article which develops and defends this understanding of speech act and securitization.

Posed in opposition to this understanding of wilful acts, we find a position which objects to the relevance and possibility of recovering meaning as intentions of individuals or institutions. Although politics is considered an activity, its forces and performative effects are intersubjectively defined. The intentions worth analyzing are to be found inside *texts* rather than inside *authors* (Skinner, 2002: 97). Intentions and acts are only meaningful in an intersubjectively defined context: in relation to other texts. In similar terms, Wæver seeks to provide for a performative concept of securitization by defining securitization as an act that has intersubjectively negotiated force and effect to produce meaning. According to Wæver, who insists that his theory is designed to facilitate an Arendtian view on this, politics is a *collective* production of meanings: The illocutionary act of securitization is not ‘completed’ by the securitizing actor alone but can only be understood in relation to its intersubjectively defined context (Wæver, 2009a, this issue).<sup>10</sup>

Although change is inherent in such a conception of politics (as *interaction*), its analytical attention to a specific speech act—namely securitization—necessarily prioritizes the stability of meaning over conflict in its focus on the performativity of ‘securitization’ rather than on conflicts over meaning between different concepts of security. The fact that the analytical focus is on the specific *form* of the act (and the distinctions it produces) means that how this form may be conflicting with other forms comes in as a secondary focus.

The third position in this conversation emphasizes structural processes rather than wilful acts in the conceptualization of politics. One example of such a position is Thierry Balzacq’s (2005) alternative theory of securitization which departs from a critique of the CS for being excessively relativist and having too weak an understanding of non-discursive power structures. In his

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<sup>10</sup> An extreme version of this intersubjective perspective on the production of meaning would be a Habermasian image of a dialogue devoid of coercion (cf. Williams, 2003: 522f).

Bordieusian interpretation, politics depends on habitus related to the specific structures of security environments. By focusing on the detailed processes reproducing these structures rather than on discursive battles, performativity and acts, the object of enquiry becomes the inherently difficult conditions of politics; the stability of meaning.<sup>11</sup>

*Second conversation on politics: Modern organization of societal space—functionalism, differentiation or passé*

In the second conversation, politics refers to the societal organization of space—a sector, the public sphere—in a certain historical setting. This conversation basically consists of three main positions distinguished by the degree to which the meaning of politics and security is understood as contextually tied to modernity and to a specifically modern form of social organization: the nation state.<sup>12</sup>

The former is mainly associated with Durkheim, Easton and Weber, who described and differentiated the political as collectively binding decisions allocating values in society (Easton, 1960: 125ff). These scholars were concerned with how order is produced in order to keep society integrated, even as it differentiates its functions internally. Within IR, this understanding of politics

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<sup>11</sup> The Huysman, Stritzel and Guzzini articles in this issue can all be read as interventions in this conversation: Huysmans seeks to identify just *some* acts in what is basically an image of security as unfolding processes. Stritzel suggests a conceptual framework specifying the distribution of politics between elements of structure and elements of action. Guzzini argues how processes may be traced without buying into positivist conceptualizations of causes and effects.

<sup>12</sup> While this conversation is defined by its focus on spatiality, obviously there is also a temporal dimension to this understanding of politics. By stressing the socially segmented structures of experience, however, it marks stability over change, thereby expressing an alternative form of temporality.

is e.g. represented by Kenneth Waltz's 'neo-realist' theory, which represents a structural and systemic interpretation of functional differentiation (Waltz, 1979).<sup>13</sup> As has been argued, however, Waltz's theory operates entirely within the function of politics and, in its attempt to set up 'the international' as a system in its own right, it tends to ignore the 'differential aspect' of functional theory (Albert & Buzan, 2010).

The second interpretation of politics, as a spatially demarcated sphere, finds the demarcations on the level of discourse or communication rather than in some pre-discursive 'reality' of society. The understanding expressed in the works of Niklas Luhmann exemplifies this. Departing from Parsons, Luhmann developed a post-modern reading of functional differentiation by insisting on the self-referential identity of each function system and focused on the paradoxes of meaning arising from such self-referential systems interfering with each other. This focus on *distinction* is in sharp contrast to Durkheim, Easton and Weber, whose main explanatory concern was unity and systemic order rather than the inescapable paradoxes (Luhmann, 2002, 1990). However, Luhmann shares the view that functional differentiation is historically bounded—associated exclusively with modern communication and opposed to earlier systems of stratification and segmented classification.

A lot of work within IR implicitly operates within a logic of functional differentiation on a more general level.<sup>14</sup> Such an understanding is present when sectors, spheres and issue areas are identified as social categories and differentiated by different logics. When securitization scholars talk about a shift from 'normal' politics to 'security' politics or when scholars differentiate between the political and societal sectors, these spheres are marked as qualitatively different and functionally

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<sup>13</sup> Waltz acknowledges the inspiration from functionalist thinkers, Durkheim in particular, in his formulation of the international system (1979).

<sup>14</sup> For a systematic treatment, see Albert & Buzan (2010, this issue).

differentiated (cf. Wæver et al., 1993). Despite the obvious traces, however, the theoretical grounds for functional differentiation have rarely been explained; nor have the analytical implications (for an exception, see Albert & Buzan, this issue).

In ST, a differentiation between normal politics and security politics is fundamental. In his history of the concept of security, Wæver (2003b) ties the speech act of securitization to modernity and the rise of the nation state: Securitization is a practice of governmentality or a form of speech act that characterizes a specifically modern kind of political communication.<sup>15</sup> More specifically, we contend, ST can be read as engaged with pinpointing what a Luhmannian would refer to as the main *codes of security communication*: the distinctions between normal politics and security politics; between the exceptional and the non-exceptional. By adopting this terminology, ST resembles Carl Schmitt in the sense that it points to exceptionality as being important for delimiting politics. Notably, however, the exception is—so to speak—placed on the other side of politics in ST compared to Schmitt: In ST, exceptionalism is seen as a way to end normal politics; in Schmitt, politics is only realized in the exception. Hence, there is little resemblance between Schmitt's concept of politics and the concept of politics in ST. Rather, it is the CS's concept of *security* which resembles Schmitt's concept of *politics* in terms of how it relates to exceptionality.<sup>16</sup>

In this Luhmannian reading of the CS, security constitutes a function system in and of itself; defined by its differentiation from normal politics. Security is observed as a communicative

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<sup>15</sup> Albert has convincingly pointed out how it is possible to reconstruct the works of Buzan & Wæver in the vocabulary provided by Luhmann (Albert, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Hansen's contribution to this issue avails itself in its empirical and normative analysis of the conceptual space provided by ST for politics beyond the exception. It does so by identifying possible strategies for de-securitization by re-politicization. In his contribution, Huysmans has more trouble finding a form of politics possible beyond securitization.

practice/function that reads differently within each of the other function systems (economics, environment, military etc). In these terms, sectors are no more than ‘second-order observations’ of how ‘others advocate’ (Wæver, 1999; see also Eriksson, 1999).<sup>17</sup>

The third position in this conversation engages critically with the very idea of politics as tied to a modern organization of space. This position addresses what can be termed ‘the logical extensiveness’ of the theory of securitization: How wide can this understanding of politics be extended in terms of time (history) and space (territory, culture) yet still produce meaningful analysis?

As Huysmans argues, the conceptual nexus between the concept of securitization and a certain emergency thinking renders the theory unable to grasp political change beyond its modern ‘form’ (Huysmans, 2006: 22–29). He and others point out the ever-changing logics of security and political practice—and thereby to the lack of relevance or productiveness of the distinction between exceptional and non-exceptional measures in today’s management of unease (Aradau, 2004; Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006; Williams, 2003; Stritzel, this issue).<sup>18</sup>

Michael C. Williams is taking up this debate as a question of contextualization and points out the inherent normative dilemma involved in employing such a wide concept of security, thus

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<sup>17</sup> Albert & Buzan (this issue) present an alternative interpretation of how to conceptualize sectors in the CS framework with Luhmann. On the meaning of sectors in the CS, cf. (Buzan, 1991; Buzan et al., 1998). For a definition of sectors as generated by ‘dialects’ of securitization, see Wæver (1997: 356).

<sup>18</sup> This critique has been elaborated by scholars focusing on the concept of risk who tend to argue that risk management practices have become important to the understanding of the field of security and that this development challenges and changes how we conceive of international threats and security (Aradau & van Munster, 2007; Aradau and van Munster, 2008; Petersen, 2008; Rasmussen, 2006).

reactivating the original argument of the CS for taking up the middle position between wideners and traditionalists in the formulation of ST.

Other scholars have pursued the logical extensiveness of ST and the functionalist understanding of politics by pointing out the spatial and cultural limits of the concept of securitization; first, how ST is best suited to capture politics based on Western understandings of legitimacy and power; and second, how securitization may or may not be made sensitive to other kinds of politics based on other codes (Vuori, 2003; Wilkinson, 2007; cf. Sheikh, 2005; Stritzel, this issue).<sup>19</sup>

### *Third conversation on politics: Ethical Science - deconstruction, emancipation or pragmatism*

As the first conversation, the third conversation on politics conceptualizes politics as an activity - but the specific activity with which the third conversation is concerned is the articulation of ethics and science. Where the first conversation discussed the temporality/change inscribed in the subject under investigation, this conversation is characterized by self-reflection on the scientific vision for change and progress. Most of the writers engaged in this conversation would insist that normative claims, and thereby ideas about what constitute positive political change, are always involved in any study of politics. Yet these approaches differ with regard to how research should and possibly can affect future political life.

In one corner of the conversation, we have a number of post-structuralist studies, usually inspired by Derrida and Foucault, mainly focusing on the construction of security identities and the

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<sup>19</sup> The relationship between post-colonialism and ST still remains to be forged (but see Barkawi & Laffey, 2006; Bilgin, 2008; Bilgin, this issue; Darby, 2009; Salter, 2007). Kinnwall & Nesbitt-Larkin (2010) present a recent attempt— but they focus their study distinctively on the post-colonial negotiations as they unfold on European turf.

established hierarchies of meaning: Anti-foundational philosophical starting points can be found in the works of Hansen (2000, 2006), Huysmans (2006), Campbell (1992) and many others. These scholars aim to reveal the infirmity of universal claims by exploring the paradoxes of modernity (cf. Wæver, 1995: fn. 19). This contributes to defining a politics of resistance.

Yet this kind of post-structuralist analytical strategy does not do away with universalism altogether. It replaces modern ethics with an ontology which finds a freedom in privileging marginalized practises (Cochran, 1999) – but ‘privileging the margin’ is as universal a rule as any. The trouble is that any such privileging necessarily produces its own marginalizations for which the analyst must assume responsibility (Frello, 2005; Gad, 2009). In this issue, Lene Hansen’s article can be read as an attempt to formulate such a position in relation to macrodesecuritization.

A second position in this conversation consists of scholars associated with and inspired by Critical Security Studies (Aradau & van Munster, 2008; Booth, 1991; Wyn Jones, 1999). Similar to the post-structuralists, these scholars are concerned with marginalized subjects. These studies do not advance the same anti-foundational stance, however, as they tend to define à priori either the main political stakes in today’s work (Aradau, 2006: 82) or who the marginalized groups/subjects are (Booth, 1991: 319–321; Wyn Jones, 1999: 166).<sup>20</sup> They explicitly relate to the political strategy implied in any critical approach to security, point out the political performativity and responsibility of the security analyst, and often suggest alternative political strategies. One objection to such evaluations is, however, that they reduce scientific arguments to derivatives of normative positioning.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For an excellent critique of this position, see Huysmans (2006: Chapter 3).

<sup>21</sup> Floyd (2007: and this volume) takes this to the extreme when she establishes a framework for objectively determining whether a specific securitization (e.g. ‘human security’, climate security) is good or bad.



A third normative position is expressed by Williams, Tjalve, Lebow, Scheuerman and others in their re-reading of classical realism and the political theory of Hobbes, Rousseau, Morgenthau, Niebuhr and Schmitt (Scheuerman, 1999, 2009; Tjalve, 2008; Williams, 1996, 2001, 2005). On the one hand, this approach to security is openly normative, as it sets out to evaluate the usefulness of influential bodies of political theory. On the other hand, it maintains an anti-foundational understanding of language and politics as it denies that these implications pertain to the theories in isolation from the circumstances into which they were implanted. These works emphasize the need for a constant re-description and re-interpretation of historical text in order to show us its new political character and potential: The task is not to reach an understanding more true to the original intentions of their author; rather, it is to endow these texts with new truths which possibly open up for new political practices.<sup>22</sup> In that sense, their view of the relationship between science and politics approaches the philosophical task laid out by Rorty (1989) to experiment with and show the potentials of texts.<sup>23</sup> Vibeke Tjalve's contribution to this issue represents a good example of this approach. Through a reading of realism and republicanism, she develops alternative political strategies for engaging the public in security politics.

This pragmatist normative position appears to be translated into Wæver's ST in very abstract terms: On the one hand, when security is seen as a means of establishing the normality of normal politics, limiting the speech act of securitization becomes a main normative concern (cf. Wæver, 2000: 285). On the other hand, this preference for desecuritization and asecuritization is merely the default position before venturing into an analysis of the specific strategic terrain: ST does not rule out that, in certain

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Williams' re-reading of e.g. Hobbes (Williams, 1996).

<sup>23</sup> Williams is generally more reluctant to judge upon the 'rightness' of these practices, but he and Tjalve do appear to share the ideal of liberal democratic institutions as an ethical basis (Williams, 2005).

instances, securitization may be normatively justified. Read in this manner as pragmatism, ST appears to have more at stake than the two competing calls for action: While Critical Security Studies may take comfort in occupying the pure oppositional position, and what may be identified as ‘the mainstream of poststructuralists’ in IR, may contend themselves with ‘writing in the margins of mainstream security studies’ (Ashley & Walker, 1990; Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989; Ashley, 1989; cf. Neumann, 1999: 31), ST seems to have been formulated in a manner allowing it to engage with the mainstream in a way that not merely constitute noise in the listener’s ears (Neumann, 1999: 31).

In terms of normativity, Wæver wants to join hands with Arendt in insisting that ‘even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination’ (Arendt, 1970: ix; Wæver, 2004b, 2010). In this perspective, the speech act of the securitization expert must engage an audience in order to be successful. The ‘right’ intervention therefore cannot be determined at the outset (Wæver, 1995: 76). The normative project instead seems to depend upon a strategic analysis of the terrain into which one is to intervene (cf. Taureck, 2006; Wæver, 2000). Here—and perhaps especially in Security Studies—the ironic approach prescribed by Rorty (1989) assumes the form of a serious engagement with the position of the analyst (Wæver, 1995: 75, cf. fn. 79). Not in the abstract, but in relation to the specific problematique at hand: an intervention in a lethal conflict should be timely and precise rather than principled (cf. Wæver, 2009b).<sup>24</sup>

## Conclusion

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<sup>24</sup> One example of the strategic and normative considerations spurred by the need for intervention is found in Bilgin (this issue) who evaluates how ST works in the politics of security studies in Turkey.

We have – based on a reading of the debates on securitization – identified three conversations on politics in securitization studies. Each conversation consist of three positions which ascribes meaning to 'politics' in a distinct way: One conversation is based upon politics as action: meaning produced through intention, interaction or process. Another is based on a view of politics and security as means of organizing social space: functional for the societal whole, differentiated self-referential systems or surpassed by new governmentalities. The third and final conversation pertains to the possible basis for science when reflecting and critically engaging in the definition of new futures; privileging the marginalized; privileging certain predefined identities; or pragmatically intervening.

Seen in a broader perspective, these distinct understandings of politics – represented in these conversations – invite yet another conversation: A conversation with the more distant relatives in IR; i.e. the so-called traditionalists. At the outset, ST was formulated to engage in such a conversation by widening the concept of security—but widening the concept without diluting it. The debates charted here, however, primarily engage scholars and positions whose differences are obscured to the outsider by their similarities; as their 'reflectivism' leaves their landscape well beyond any horizon worth engaging with for those insisting on a concept of security closely connected to state and military power. Each of these conversations involves conceptualizations of politics familiar not only to the participants in the conversations but also to more traditional approaches to security. Thus, the very dissolution of a seemingly unified position into a series of conversations and conceptualizations of politics may open up a new space for dialogue. First, a focus on the open-ended nature of securitizing moves allows attention to return to where it should be, according to classical realism; i.e. to the responsibility of the statesman acting under uncertainty concerning the consequences of his acts. Secondly, the discussion on functional differentiation

stresses the difference *but also* the similarity between the realist and certain reflectivist understandings of politics and security; a similarity which opens up for a conversation between those finding that differentiation serves the function of a total system and those finding differentiation to produce self-referential systems. Thirdly, a political strategy which is pragmatic and proceeds by immanent critiques might have a better chance of accomplishing change than fundamental, philosophical or political onslaught.

Finally, *ST as a theory* might in yet another relation prove a nice ‘conversation piece’. Wæver (2009b) recently suggested that the nestor of neorealism, Kenneth Waltz, presents a theory of what constitutes a theory in *Theory of International Politics* (1979). In his article on Waltz’s theory, Wæver argues along with Waltz that “theories are ‘also artistic creations...’”, and that a theory therefore “has an inescapable perspectivism” (Wæver, 2009b: 206). Theories are “not reality; they construct a reality” (ibid.), Wæver contends and proceeds to invoke Waltz to pragmatically ascertain “the *political* necessity of theory” (ibid.: 202; italics in original). If this invitation to *do* theory is taken up by realists and ‘reflectivists’, a new conversation may begin. (cf. Wæver in this issue).

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