Beyond Floyd's Just Securitization Theory – The Role of Morality in Processes of Securitization

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Abstract

With her 'Just Securitization Theory' (JST), Rita Floyd attempts to provide a framework to evaluate whether specific cases of securitization are morally just. The distinction between 'just' and 'unjust' securitization fundamentally depends on the determination of 'real existential threats'.[1] By providing an internal critique, I argue that, even if we accept Floyd's positivist approach, JST does not account for the complexities of evaluating threats. In referring to literature around the security dilemma, I show how the determination of capabilities and intentions is connected to high levels of uncertainty. Going beyond JST, I argue that a constructivist approach, which re-engages with the original theory as formulated by the Copenhagen School, is necessary to better capture issues of morality. Specifically, securitization should be understood and researched as an *intersubjective process* in which morality plays out in speech acts, power relations, and different audiences.

[1] Rita Floyd, *The Morality of Security: A Theory of Just Securitization* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

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Introduction

Securitization theory is an important and established approach of Critical Security Studies. First conceptualized by the Copenhagen School around Ole Waever, the theory does not aim to determine objective threats, but is interested in how an issue is socially constructed as a threat.[2] In the process of securitization, a securitizing actor makes use of speech acts, in which they argue that something threatens a so-called referent object.[3] The threat is claimed to be so existential and the danger so urgent that there is no time to follow ordinary democratic processes, and decisions need to be made by the elite. Consequently, 'threats' present an opportunity for powerful actors to circumvent the usual mechanisms of democratic control.[4]

According to Claudia Aradau, the "logic of security" is based on exclusion, extraordinary measures, and anti-democratic processes, and is therefore automatically negative.[5] In order to recover democracy,[6] desecuritization, understood as the unmaking of securitization,[7] can and should be employed. This way, Aradau contrasts the mode of decision making due to securitization, which is necessarily negative and anti-democratic, with desirable democratic processes achieved by desecuritization.

[2] Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Pub, 1998), 26.
[3] Ibid., 23-24
[4] Ibid., 29
[5] Claudia Aradau, 'Security and the Democratic Scene: Desecuritization and Emancipation', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 7, no. 4 (December 2004): 406, https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jird.1800030.
[6] Ibid., 393
[7] Jef Huysmans, 'The Question of the Limit: Desecuritisation and the Aesthetics of Horror in Political Realism', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 1998): 569–89, https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298980270031301., quoted in Aradau, 'Security and the Democratic Scene', 389.

As Rita Floyd argues, an exclusive focus on the construction of threats is problematic, as it fails to take the existence of real threats into account.[8] As a result, securitization theory cannot provide strategic advice to decision-makers.[9] In order to fill this gap and to create a tool to judge the morality of specific cases of securitization,[10] Floyd develops her just securitization theory (JST).[11] Fundamentally, as she argues in a recent interview, if threats would not exist, securitization would indeed be objectionable and desecuritization should be preferred – however, there are real threats.[12] In this line of thought, the existence of real threats indicates that securitization could potentially be the right choice. To determine the 'justness' of securitization in the case of threats by another actor, her theory therefore aims to distinguish between 'objective existential threats' and 'perceived threats', by analyzing the intentions as well as the capabilities of an adversary and "comparing what they say with what they do".[13]

Floyd's just securitization theory marks a clear departure from previous writings on securitization, which have exclusively discussed the construction of threats instead of debating whether specific cases of securitization are 'just'. By claiming that 'real existential threats' do exist and arguing that securitization may be justified in limited cases, Floyd (2019) poses important questions and sheds light on a gap in the literature. However, in analyzing the foundations of JST more closely, it becomes clear that the theory runs into various problems.

To reach a better understanding of JST and moral considerations of securitization in general, I develop a multi-layered critique of Floyd's framework[14] and her criteria for the determination

[8] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 10.
[9] Ibid., 11
[10] Ibid., 48
[11] 'JST' is the acronym Floyd uses for her theory, and I will use it in this work.
[12] Mitja Sardoc, 'The Ethics of Securitisation: An Interview with Rita Floyd', *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 14, no. 1 (2 January 2021): 142, https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2021.1886506.
[13] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 82–83.
[14] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*.

of ‘real existential threats’. By providing an internal critique, I argue that, even if we accept a positivist perspective on morality and security, Floyd’s criteria for the determination of ‘objective existential threats’ are problematic for various reasons. In going beyond this framework, I then explore how a re-engagement with the original theory as formulated by the Copenhagen School can open up potential alternative ways of thinking about moral issues in securitization.

As literature around the security dilemma has shown,[15] the evaluation of intentionality and capability is complicated and far from clear. In the center of the issue is the difficulty to distinguish between misperceptions of intentions that can lead to a security dilemma as described by scholars like Robert Jervis,[16] and real existential threats that might qualify for a just securitization. For example, the behavior of an actor does not necessarily reflect their intentions, and aggression and fear can both result in the accumulation of weapons.[17] Moreover, capabilities in the form of weapons or people available for warfare are difficult or impossible to estimate or measure. By contrasting JST with the security dilemma discourse, I show that Floyd’s framework fails to adequately capture the complexities of intentionality and capability.

In what other ways, then, can we think about morality and securitization? In going beyond just securitization theory, I argue that issues of morality can be better understood by taking a constructivist approach and re-engaging with the original theory as formulated by the

[15] See, for example: Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1976); Robert Jervis, ‘Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?’, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 2001): 36–60, https://doi.org/10.1162/15203970151032146; Ali Bilgic, ‘Towards a New Societal Security Dilemma: Comprehensive Analysis of Actor Responsibility in Intersocietal Conflicts’, *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 1 (January 2013): 185–208, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210512000095; Esther Visser and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, ‘The Irrelevance of the Security Dilemma for Civil Wars’, *Civil Wars* 16, no. 1 (2 January 2014): 65–85, https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2014.904986.

[16] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*.

[17] Jervis, ‘Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?’, 38–39.

Copenhagen School. Instead of evolving around the determination of intentionality and capability, a discussion of morality should see securitization as an intersubjective *process*, which includes speech acts, power relations, and audiences.

As Paul Roe has pointed out in a recent Symposium, Floyd diverges from the Copenhagen School by locating the exceptionalism of securitization in the outcome, instead of the process itself.[18] Reducing securitization to outcomes is problematic, since it blurs the distinction between politicization and securitization,[19] and severely limits an exploration of moral issues in securitization theory. According to Waever, normative analysis can either be viewed as a method that should develop an optimal policy, or as a something that should "cultivate a better political process".[20] While Floyd's approach falls into the former category, I build on Waever[21] and Roe[22] to argue that, instead of developing policies, normative analysis should see securitization as a *process*. This way, it becomes possible to discuss, question, and critique moral issues bound up in securitization with the hope of contributing to an improvement.

As will be shown, one of the central components of securitization, which can potentially be criticized and subjected to moral scrutiny, is the speech act. This "*moment of securitization*" (emphasis in original),[23] is closely connected to issues of accountability and legitimacy,[24] and can be used to discuss the power of securitizing actors. Moreover, it is vital to return to an understanding of securitization in which intersubjectivity and the audience plays a decisive role,

[18] Rita Floyd et al., 'The Morality of Security: A Theory of Just Securitisation Symposium', *European Journal of International Security* 7, no. 2 (May 2022): 272, https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2022.3.
[19] Ibid., 275
[20] Ole Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 4–5 (August 2011): 473, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611418718.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Floyd et al., 'The Morality of Security', 272.
[23] Ibid., 476
[24] Jef Huysmans, 'What's in an Act? On Security Speech Acts and Little Security Nothings', *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 4–5 (August 2011): 378, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611418713.

as originally laid out by the Copenhagen School.[25] This leads to important moral questions regarding interactions and power relations between securitizing actors and different types of audiences.

Before engaging in the discussion of morality in securitization as a *process*, I introduce Floyd's just securitization theory[26] and carve out her emphasis on 'real existential threats'. As a next step, I criticize JST's determination of intentionality from a positivist perspective, by contrasting the approach with literature around the security dilemma. In problematizing her focus on outcomes (as observed by Roe[27]), I show why a re-engagement with the original conceptualization of securitization theory is necessary. Finally, I discuss possible alternative ways to think about morality in connection to securitization.

[25] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*, 31.
[26] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*.
[27] Floyd et al., 'The Morality of Security', 272.

1. Security, threats and (just) securitization – Scholarly debates

Most scholars agree that 'security' is a label of high political significance. However, the meaning, implications and effects of security are highly debated in the literature. While the original conceptualization of securitization by the Copenhagen School lays the sole focus on the construction of threats,[28] later scholars discuss whether such processes can be categorized as 'good' or 'bad'. For some, like Claudia Aradau,[29] Jef Huysmans,[30] and Mark Neocleous,[31] securitization is always bad, while others, including Ken Booth,[32] and Bill McSweeney,[33] see security as something necessarily good and desirable. In the context of this debate, Rita Floyd formulates her just securitization theory, which aims to enable analysts to evaluate the morality of individual cases of securitization.[34]

In the following chapter, I will provide an overview of the relevant debates and the context in which Floyd's Just Securitization Theory and her view on morality are situated. After briefly introducing the Copenhagen School's securitization theory, I will turn to the wider literature and debates around the connections between emergency measures and morality, different meanings of security and the (non)existence of objective threats.

[28] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*.
[29] Aradau, 'Security and the Democratic Scene'.
[30] Jef Huysmans, 'Defining Social Constructivism in Security Studies: The Normative Dilemma of Writing Security', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 27, no. 1 (February 2002): 41–62, https://doi.org/10.1177/03043754020270S104.
[31] Mark Neocleous, 'The Problem with Normality: Taking Exception to "Permanent Emergency"', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 31, no. 2 (April 2006): 191–213, https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540603100204.
[32] Ken Booth, 'Security and Emancipation', *Review of International Studies* 17, no. 4 (October 1991): 313–26, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210500112033., Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&AN=220350.
[33] Bill McSweeney, *Security, Identity, and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 69 (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[34] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 48.

1.1 The Copenhagen School's securitization theory

Originating from the Copenhagen School around Ole Waever,[35] securitization theory has become a prominent and important approach of Critical Security Studies. Instead of being interested in whether there is a real threat, scholars of the Copenhagen School look at how something is produced and "collectively responded to as a threat" in the process of securitization (26). Securitization is a discursive act of representing an issue as a threat to a referent object, like the state or society. In such speech acts, a securitizing actor claims that the very survival of the referent object is threatened, and emergency measures are required to rescue it. This means that the issue is urgent and has to be shifted beyond regular politics (23-24).

The representation of something as an 'existential threat' to a referent object is called a 'securitization move'. Securitization itself is only achieved if the audience accepts these claims: as soon as this is the case, the issue is moved outside everyday politics and the "breaking of rules" is legitimized (25). In general: "A successful securitization thus has three components (or steps): existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules" (26). In the political realm, existential threats are usually understood as challenging the sovereignty or ideology of the state ('referent object') (24).

The emergency situation claimed in securitization requires decision making by the elite: the threat is portrayed as so existential, the danger so urgent that there is no time to follow the usual processes of democratic politics. For this reason, proponents of the Copenhagen School are highly critical of 'national security' and warn that 'threats' can be abused by the powerful to avoid democratic control mechanisms.[36]

[35] Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New. Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Pub, 1998).
[36] Ibid., 29.

1.2 Extraordinary measures and the meaning of security

Scholars like Aradau see the 'logic of security' as necessarily negative, as it is based on exclusion, extraordinary measures, and anti-democratic processes.[37] The emergency measures activated through successful securitization, she claims, not only lead to speedy decision-making, but also initiate 'Schmittian politics' which pose a danger to democracy.[38] In this line of thought, desecuritization, understood as the unmaking of securitization,[39] can and should be employed as a "political choice restoring democracy".[40] Clearly, Aradau presents the issue as a dichotomy between objectionable anti-democratic decision making caused by securitization and the desired democracy achieved through desecuritization.

Similarly, Neocleous views the use of emergency powers as a highly problematic part of everyday politics. According to him, emergency powers are legally legitimized and have been developed to enable oppression. In fact, every constitution allows for emergency powers, since the "ruling class was never going to be so stupid as to produce a constitution that does not allow it to suspend fundamental liberties and rights in the name of emergency".[41] Clearly, Neocleous draws a grim image of emergency powers and sees their existence closely tied to oppression. While extraordinary measures can truly lead to speedy decision-making outside the transparent settings required for democracy, Aradau's and Neocleous' arguments raise many questions. Are extraordinary measures always objectionable and never appropriate? Should all issues be dealt with in the realm of everyday politics or is it possible to imagine situations in which securitization is morally permissible? Is desecuritization always desirable?

[37] Aradau, 'Security and the Democratic Scene', 406.
[38] Ibid., 392-393.
[39] Huysmans, 'The Question of the Limit'., quoted in Aradau, 'Security and the Democratic Scene', 389.
[40] Aradau, 'Security and the Democratic Scene', 393.
[41] Ibid., 206.

According to Booth, a general preference for desecuritization is highly problematic, since it lowers the importance of what he calls 'real insecurities', like human rights abuses.[42] For him, security is necessarily a good thing, as it constitutes "the condition of being and feeling safe" (110), while insecurity "involves living in fear, with dangers arising from one or more types of threat" (101). Defining security is not difficult once we "ask those who have had it taken away from them". Consequently, the experiences of individuals who are not secure should be central in any definition (98). Security is not synonymous to survival: the latter means only existing, not necessarily living without threat (106). For Booth, research should be linked to policy recommendations, and security should be understood as a 'philosophy-in-action' (97).

Aradau criticises Booth's argumentation: by promoting security, she claims, such approaches strengthen the "exclusionary logic of security".[43] In this logic, the 'Schmittian politics' on which security is based make reciprocal processes impossible. Since security always entails the logic of exclusion, security politics contradict democracy (399). According to Aradau, promoting individual security can never lead to desecuritization. Instead, it is necessary to step out of the "exclusionary logic of security" entirely (400). This can be achieved, she argues, by her own understanding of emancipation, where minorities claim rights that others already have (404). Through this kind of emancipation, the logic of security could be fought and a real desecuritization could take place (405).

However, Booth understands real security as the opposite of exclusion. For him, security and emancipation involve the "reciprocity of rights".[44] Being in a stable state of security means creating security for everyone, instead of increasing the insecurity of others. In Booth's approach, emancipation is the same as security. In the pursuit of security, it is essential to focus

[42] Booth, *Theory of World Security*, 168.
[43] Aradau, 'Security and the Democratic Scene', 398.
[44] Booth, 'Security and Emancipation', 322.

on emancipation, that "is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do". [45] In this normative and policy-oriented position, politics seeking emancipation should primarily fight against the "life-determining condition" created by insecurity.[46]

While this approach is well argued and logically coherent, Booth does not provide any account for what happens if actors appeal to individual security and emancipation with the goal of justifying their own actions – in the process of securitization discussed above. In other words, what if 'threats' are only produced in order to circumvent democratic decision making and concentrate power for a small elite?

1.3 The (non)existence of real existential threats

As mentioned above, scholars of the Copenhagen School do not question whether threats are 'objectively' real, but merely research the construction of threats and the resulting responses.[47] While the Copenhagen School does not engage in the matter, Huysmans rejects the existence of real threats altogether. For social constructivists, objects are produced through a discursive formation, making it impossible to distinguish between an object and the formation surrounding it.[48] Consequently, a phenomenon can never be represented in a 'natural' or 'neutral' way. Instead, representations only become true if they suppress other representations.[49]

Floyd criticizes such approaches: she points out that by merely paying attention to the construction of threats, the existence of real threats is neglected.[50] This is problematic, as she argues in a recent interview: "There is obviously a difference between securitisations that

[45] Ibid., 319.
[46] Booth, *Theory of World Security*, 104.
[47] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*, 26.
[48] Huysmans, 'Defining Social Constructivism in Security Studies', 48.
[49] Ibid., 50.
[50] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 10.

address real threats and those that don't".[51] She goes on to argue that "if there are no real threats, securitisation can never be justified. And if the latter is true, desecuritization is *de facto* the ethically right choice. But of course, some threats are real".[52] Ignoring this difference leads to the inability of securitization theory to inform decision-makers about whether a threat is real or not, and which strategy they should follow.[53]

Therefore, Floyd shares Booth's aversion to a general endorsement of desecuritization[54] and argues that exceptional measures could be necessary in particular cases.[55] For example, real threats like climate change could require securitization.[56] In general, then, the existence of and possibility to determine real threats indicates that securitization could potentially be the right choice, while the mere constructiveness of threats means that securitization can only be objectionable. Floyd's argumentation is logically coherent and seems to satisfactorily settle the debate. However, as I will show in chapter 2, the determination of real threats itself is connected to high levels of uncertainty, which casts doubt on the feasibility of judging the morality of securitization.

The idea that the morality of securitization can be evaluated is central in Floyd's writings. Based on this assumption and inspired by just war theory, Floyd formulates just securitization theory (JST), which consists of several criteria that have to be met in order for a securitization process to be morally right and justifiable.[57] She claims that the initiation of securitization is justifiable if: (1) an "objective existential threat" exists which (2) poses a danger to a "morally justifiable" referent object, (3) there is a "just cause", (4) the "expected good gained from securitization" is "greater than the expected harm from securitization" and (5) there is a "reasonable chance of

[51] Sardoc, 'The Ethics of Securitisation', 142.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 11.
[54] Booth, *Theory of World Security*, 168.
[55] Sardoc, 'The Ethics of Securitisation', 142.
[56] Ibid., 141.
[57] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 19–21.

success". Only if the initiation of securitization meets all these criteria, is it morally right.[58] Apart from the 'Just Initiation of Securitization', JST consists of criteria for the 'Just Conduct in Securitization' and the "Just Termination of Securitization". In line with the just in bello principle of just war theory, the category of just conduct entails criteria like proportionality and reduction of harm. Formulations of both jus post bellum and jus terminatio inspired Floyd's 'Just Termination of Securitization', which deals with the desecuritization and the end of security language.

Floyd sees the advantage of JST in the potential to limit securitization and "to democratize the process of securitization itself".[59] As she argues, her framework enables civil society to hold actors accountable to how they treat matters of security.[60] The respective limits of securitization theory and the human security approach, namely "the idea that the individual is at the receiving end of all security concerns",[61] have occupied Floyd for a long time. More than a decade before she formulated her JST, she pointed out that securitization theory, although analytically valuable, lacks normative utility since it does not enable analysts to consciously affect securitization processes.[62] On the other hand, the human approach is not analytically useful, but has great strengths in normative utility.[63] Floyd therefore takes pride in incorporating both securitization theory and an understanding of security as put forth by Booth[64] into her just securitization theory, and points out that

> JST is the only normative security theory in existence that simultaneously combines the idea that security is a social and political construction, with objective criteria (including the requirement of an objective existential threat as the just cause for securitization).[65]

[58] Ibid., 19-20
[59] Rita Floyd, 'Can Securitization Theory Be Used in Normative Analysis? Towards a Just Securitization Theory', *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 4–5 (August 2011): 430, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611418712.
[60] Sardoc, 'The Ethics of Securitisation', 147.
[61] Rita Floyd, 'Human Security and the Copenhagen School's Securitization Approach', *Human Security Journal* 5, no. 37 (2007): 40.
[62] Ibid., 44.
[63] Ibid., 45.
[64] Booth, 'Security and Emancipation'; Booth, *Theory of World Security*.
[65] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 48.

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Indeed, Floyd's contribution sheds light on a significant gap in the literature and constitutes an ambitious attempt to solve an important debate. As has been shown, this debate centers around the very meaning of security and the consequences of emergency measures. Just securitization theory tries to combine many arguments made by different sides with the aim to provide a guideline for moral questions of securitization. Not only does it assume the existence of real threats, but it also suggests ways to distinguish between real and perceived threats.[66] Yet, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter, when looking closely at how threats and the 'justness' of securitization are determined, JST runs into considerable problems.

[66] Floyd, 82.

2. The determination of real agent-induced threats – An internal critique

Having laid out the background debate and origins of Rita Floyd's just securitization theory, I will now turn to one of the cornerstones of the framework: the determination of real agent-induced threats through measuring intentionality and capabilities.[67] By following Floyd's positivist approach and contrasting her argumentation with literature on the security dilemma, I will provide an internal critique of the JST framework. After introducing the criterion of real agent-induced threats and locating it in the broader JST framework, I will shed light on debates and issues connected to the security dilemma. Through discussing uncertainties, (mis)perceptions, contexts, timing, and ambiguities of analysis, I argue that JST does not adequately account for the complexities of determining intentions and capabilities.

2.1 The determination of threats in Floyd's just securitization theory

Floyd's just securitization theory (JST) is inspired by just war theory and based on the assumption that the morality of securitization can be evaluated. The underlying premise of just war theory is that wars can be either just or unjust, and the goal is to establish specific criteria that allow to make this distinction.[68] The main principle of just war theory is 'just' cause: a war can only count as just if it is employed as self-defense against a threat.[69] This is echoed in the first criterion of Floyd`s just securitization theory:

> Criterion 1: There must be an objective existential threat to a referent object, that is to say a danger that – with a sufficiently high probability – threatens the survival or the essential

[67] J. David Singer, 'Threat-Perception and the Armament-Tension Dilemma', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2, no. 1 (March 1958): 94, https://doi.org/10.1177/002200275800200110. and Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, vol. 67 (Cambridge University Press, 1999)., quoted in Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 83.
[68] Yitzhak Mark, 'Just War', in *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, ed. Michael T. Gibbons (John Wiley & Sons, Ldt., 2015), 1.
[69] Ibid, 2.

> character/properties of either a political or social order, an ecosystem, a non-human species, or individuals.[70]

In other words, not only does the threat need to be objectively real, but it also has to be posed against a legitimate reference object – either human beings or something that is crucial for 'basic human needs', such as a societal order or other species. For Floyd, this is what makes up the 'just cause' of securitization, and the fulfilment of these criteria is absolutely necessary. However, this is not sufficient for a securitization to be morally justified. In addition, she lays out several criteria that all have to be met to initiate a morally just securitization[71]: Securitizing actors need to aim to "protect the referent object they themselves identified", the "expected good gained from securitization must be greater than the expected harm from securitization" and there needs to be a "reasonable chance of success".[72]

Since the existence of an 'objective existential threat' is a prerequisite before thinking through the other criteria, it plays a crucial role in the framework. Floyd distinguishes between three types: "agent-intended threats, agent-lacking threats and agent-caused threats" (82). In contrast to the first type, the latter two describe threats that do not originate from the intention to harm: Agent-lacking threats, like tsunamis, are not caused by humans (86), and agent-caused threats, such as climate change, originate from human behavior, but are not intended to be harmful (90). Agent-intended threats, however, are created by an actor who aims to harm someone or something (83). How can we know whether agent-indented threats are real or perceived? Referring to Singer and Wendt,[73] Floyd argues two aspects have to be assessed: the intentions

[70] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 75.
[71] Ibid., 19-20.
[72] In addition to the initiation of securitization, and in line with just war theory, Floyd sets up criteria subsumed under "Just Conduct in Securitization", and the "Just Termination of Securitization" (p.19-21). However, a detailed discussion of these criteria would exceed the scope of this work. The reason I focus on the "Just Initiation of Securitization", and, in particular, agent-induced threats, is based on the fact that without these criteria, the others would be obsolete.
[73] Singer, 'Threat-Perception and the Armament-Tension Dilemma', 94. and Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*., quoted in Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 83.

of and the capabilities of the adversary. Only if an aggressor has both the intention and the capability (ability) to attack, is there an agent-intended threat.

In my critique, I will focus on the evaluation of Floyd's category of agent-induced threats. While this is only one of the many criteria set up in JST, it builds the basis for the determination of the reality of existential threats and therefore constitutes a crucial part of the theory. In other words: Without the category of agent-induced threats, it would not be possible to say if threats are real or not, and without that, securitization could not be evaluated as just or unjust (at least using JST).

I will show that the way agent-induced threats, and, more generally, 'real existential threats' are evaluated in JST is problematic – even if we follow Floyd's positivist assumptions. As I demonstrated above, she argues that there are 'real existential threats', no matter whether we acknowledge them.[74] Distinguishing between real and perceived threats is crucial in the determination of the morality of securitization, and in order to make this distinction, it is necessary to look at both capabilities and intentions.[75] In what follows, I will provide an internal critique about these criteria to show that these methods to assess and judge someone else's intentions and capabilities is highly questionable.

2.2 Intentionality and the security dilemma

The idea that understanding the other's intentions should and does play a crucial role in decision-making is not new. Writing in the nineteenth century, General Clausewitz argued that, during war, every party tries to evaluate the intentions of the other "From the enemy's character, from his institutions, the state of his affairs and his general situation". Based on this evaluation, states decide on what to do.[76] However, categorizing intentions and capabilities is a complex

[74] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 79.
[75] Ibid., 83–84.
[76] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Reissued, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 20.

and often problematic endeavor, and connected to much higher levels of uncertainty than Floyd realizes. Scholars writing about the security dilemma have been struggling with this issue for a long time.

The security dilemma describes how two states that do not have the intention to wage war can end up in a conflict situation.[77] Driven by the insecurity caused by international anarchy,[78] states will increase their capabilities as much as possible.[79] These actions can threaten others, which are similarly insecure and fearful.[80] Since, as Jervis argues, "... arms procured to defend can usually be used to attack", attempts to stay secure can be seen as aggressive from the outside.[81] This way, the security dilemma can lead to tensions, arm races and even war.[82]

Consequently, the indistinguishability of malign and benign intentions is at the core of the security dilemma. Actors who do not wish to attack others are usually categorized as having 'benign' intentions, whereas those with 'malign' intentions aim to attack someone.[83] Importantly, the security dilemma only exists if both sides have benign intentions – as soon as one state has any malign intentions, the issue is an actual security threat, and the fear that the other side feels is justified.[84] Therefore, as Esther Visser and Isabelle Duyvesteyn point out, evaluating the intentions of actors is crucial for identifying a security dilemma.[85] To be sure, as they argue:

> [a]ny methodology aimed at discovering intentions leaves room for error, because intentions can never, with 100 per cent certainty, be known because they exist in an individual's head and are therefore not directly accessible.[86]

[77] Visser and Duyvesteyn, 'The Irrelevance of the Security Dilemma for Civil Wars', 65.
[78] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 62.
[79] Ibid., 68.
[80] John Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 241., quoted in Visser and Duyvesteyn, 67.
[81] Jervis, 64.
[82] Ibid., 66–67.
[83] Bilgic, 'Towards a New Societal Security Dilemma', 199.
[84] Visser and Duyvesteyn, 67.
[85] Ibid., 73.
[86] Ibid.,76.

Nevertheless, intentions play such a crucial role in the security dilemma that many scholars have attempted to identify them in different ways. Similarly, within just securitization theory, the location of the morality of securitization in the distinction between real and perceived threats naturally leads to an attempt to evaluate intentions.

2.3 What we can (not) know

Floyd is aware that threats cannot be known to exist with absolute certainty, and she acknowledges that there is room for error in any attempt at evaluation. She tries to solve this problem by using Parfit's[87] distinction of different types of facts. 'Fact-relativity' is something we cannot reach - it means knowing everything and understanding the real situation with absolute certainty.[88] Floyd goes on to argue that "the best we got is objective knowledge in the evidence relative sense …[which] runs the risk of being wrong" (80-81). We can therefore only expect securitizing actors to follow what they believe is true based on the facts they have. If a securitizing actor believes that something is a threat according to the valid evidence they have, while, in reality, there is no threat (fact-relativity), the securitization can be excused (82). What matters for the analysis of threats within JST, and, consequently, for the (im)morality of securitization, is therefore the evidence we have – even if we can never know the facts.

While this argument is logically sound, it leaves crucial questions unanswered: When is there enough certainty? Who can and should judge if the evidence is enough? How do we know what securitizing actors believe? For Floyd, the best we can do is to determine the intentions of actors by "comparing what they say with what they do".[89] However, this method (at least when used in isolation) seems highly inaccurate and falls short of the intricacies of relations and actions.

[87] Derek Parfit, 'Reasons and Persons' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), in *On What Matters*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 162–63, 150–51., quoted in Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 80.
[88] Ibid., 80.
[89] Ibid., 83.

As will be shown, Floyd underestimates the complexity of determining both intentions and capabilities.

As Jervis points out, the behavior of an actor does not necessarily tell us something about their intentions: "The same hostile actions can flow from the hope for gain or the fear of loss, from offensive drives or defensive responses".[90] In a security dilemma dynamic, actors who make statements that sound aggressive, accumulate weapons, and even pursue expansionist goals, are not necessarily aggressive.[91] This points to a central problem of just securitization theory – since it is difficult (or impossible) to know whether a specific situation constitutes a security dilemma, the intentions of states cannot be evaluated by simply looking at the statements and actions of the other.

How then, can we distinguish fearful actors from those that intend to threaten us? To solve this issue and be able to make some distinction, Jervis argues that aggressive actors not only try to expand, but show "a willingness to undertake strenuous and dangerous efforts to do so". However, as he points out, actors are not always aware of the costs and dangers of their policies,[92] and can make ambivalent decisions. For example, Soviet officials during the Cold War wanted to avoid increasing tensions with the US, while, at the same time, wishing for a decrease of US influence.[93]

This poses essential questions regarding the lengths states go to in their aggression and the ambivalence inherent in decision-making. These considerations are, unfortunately, absent in JST. When evaluating whether something is an agent-intended threat and might qualify for a just securitization, it could be useful to think through the position of the other state. Do the

[90] Jervis, 'Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?', 38.
[91] Ibid., 39.
[92] Ibid., 39.
[93] Ibid., 50.

actions of the other state/actor make it more secure? Which other options (apart from those we perceive as threats) would be available to the adversary? Which opportunities would the state/actor have that they do not take?

While Floyd briefly mentions the security dilemma as a case in which actors misjudge the situation (and she gives passing reference to Jervis and Booth and Wheeler at this point),[94] a thorough engagement with this literature is missing in her book. However, it would be wrong to argue that Floyd is completely unaware of the difficulties in evaluating intentions. In fact, she points out that "in world politics, actors say all sorts of things they don't mean, notably bluffing and hypocrisy are standard practices most states employ at one point or another". Clearly, the statements of governments cannot simply be equated with their true intentions, and in JST, the solution lies in looking at the second factor: (military) capability.[95] To measure whether an actor has the capability to attack, Floyd suggests taking factors like "manpower availability for military service, weapons capability, military budget, population size and the political capacity to mobilize for national security" into account.[96] However, all these factors are difficult or impossible to estimate, let alone to measure.

The problem with measuring capability

Usually, the military power of a state in the form of weapons, military budget, and people available for warfare, cannot easily be determined and counted from the outside – especially in the lead-up to a conflict. For example, such information might not be accessible without a great level of transparency,[97] it is challenging to estimate which capabilities can and would be used

[94] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 58–113., and Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (Basingstoke [England] ; New York, N.Y: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 4., quoted in Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 81.
[95] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 83.
[96] Zeev Moaz, 'Threat Perception and Threat Manipulation: The Uses and Misuses of Threats in Israel's National Security, 1949–2008', in *Existential Threats and Civil-Security Relations*, ed. Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer (Lanham, 2009), 179–217., quoted in Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 83–84.
[97] For example, Michael Mazarr argues that the implementation of virtual nuclear arsenals would require a highly invasive "inspection regime" for states to feel secure. It is questionable if states would agree on such a

to follow-through with a threat,[98] and "less tangible factors such as morale, motivation, loyalty, and leadership" are even harder to evaluate.[99] In her book, Floyd gives the example of assessing whether Al-Qaeda threatened the population of 'Western' countries existentially.[100] For this type of terrorism, the kind of capability that matters and should be evaluated is manifested in the form of suicide bombers.[101] Accordingly, Floyd concludes that "provided Al-Qaeda is able to recruit jihadists, they continue to pose an existential threat to individuals in the West".[102]

While this argument seems to be logically coherent, it poses many questions that serve to show how difficult and inherently problematic it is to determine capabilities. For example, it is unclear how information should be processed. As Janice Stein asks, "what [...] constitutes a rational or optimal search for information? How much information is enough?"[103] In the case of Al-Qaeda, it is uncertain how 'manpower' could be measured in a reliable way. Even if we could evaluate a number, how many members or recruits are enough to constitute an existential threat? Which threshold should we employ? Taken to the extreme, every single recruit poses an existential threat to civilians. Do all these cases constitute an objective existential threat and qualify for the just reason for securitization? In other words: what are the limits of the criterion of just reason?

These difficulties might be unique to non-state actors, and, according to Floyd, "[c]apability assessment is easier in the context of states where data is more freely available".[104] However, even in the unlikely case that there is free access to information, interpreting the capabilities of

degree of control. Michael J. Mazarr, 'Virtual Nuclear Arsenals', *Survival* 37, no. 3 (September 1995): 17–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396339508442800.

[98] I am grateful to Mary Cox for pointing this out to me.

[99] Janice Gross Stein, 'Threat Perception in International Relations', *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, 4 September 2013, 371, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199760107.013.0012.

[100] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 84.

[101] Ibid., 85.

[102] Ibid., 86.

[103] Stein, 370.

[104] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 84.

states is far from easy. As mentioned above, in a security dilemma dynamic, capabilities increase, and arm races can ensue.[105] If a state ramps up its military capabilities, others can feel threatened, regardless of whether this is intended.[106]

Essentially, not only is it challenging to reliably count weapons and (potential) soldiers, it is also impossible to know *if* and *how* an adversary would use their capabilities. One approach that aims to break out of the security dilemma and the 'arms dynamic',[107] while maintaining military capabilities at the same time,[108] is the concept of non-offensive defense (NOD). In order to achieve this, it is argued, the fear of attacks should be decreased by abstaining from offensive capabilities on the one hand and showing commitment in making the effort of crafting a defensive system on the other hand.[109] However, it is questionable in how far and in what way defense and offense can be distinguished. While some try to categorize weapons according to their 'offensive' or 'defensive' characteristics, Buzan and Herring point out that such a distinction is not possible: Any type of weapon, like tanks, mines, and fighter aircrafts, can be used for both offensive and defensive purposes.[110] This view is shared by many scholars writing about NOD.[111]

To complicate matters further, the perception from the outside remains an integral part of threats. As Stein points out, "Threats do not unambiguously speak for themselves.

[105] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 66–67.
[106] As Stein points out, this is further complicated if leaders have reason to purposefully misrepresent their own intentions or capabilities (p.366), for example, if they are fear that looking weak makes them vulnerable (p.371). Moreover, if leaders try to attract several constituencies at the same time, they can benefit from this misrepresentation (p.371). It is difficult to establish credibility, and this makes the situation complicated for both sender and receiver (p.367).
[107] Barry Buzan and Eric Herring, *The Arms Dynamic in World Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 234.
[108] Ibid., 243.
[109] Ibid., 237.
[110] Ibid., 233.
[111] See, for example, Wilhelm Agrell, 'Offensive versus Defensive: Military Strategy and Alternative Defence', Journal of Peace Research 24, no. 1 (1987): 76, https://doi.org/10.1177/002234338702400107., and Johan Galtung, 'Transarmament: From Offensive to Defensive Defense', *Journal of Peace Research* 21, no. 2 (1984): 130, https://doi.org/10.1177/002234338402100204.

Understanding the meaning of threats is mediated by the perception of the target".[112] This poses many problems in its own right. Jervis has convincingly argued that "people are strongly influenced by their expectations: people tend to see what they expect to see".[113] If different people obtain new information, their interpretations will therefore vary depending on their previous beliefs, and, problematically, no one will objectively know the facts.[114]

In the background of discussions of misperception is the assumption that an actual, correct perception of the situation exists, but even years after an occurrence, there is uncertainty and debate about intentions.[115] The evaluation of threats is a "forecasting activity", as the task is to make judgements about future events that might take place.[116] In the process, leaders try to simplify complex matters and neglect the context, which can result in "very oversimplified judgments" about a situation.[117]

In this light, determining objective threats by looking at the capabilities of an adversary is not as straightforward as Floyd seems to think. Difficulties in accessing information, lack of reliable methods and thresholds, arms races due to the security dilemma, failure to distinguish between offensive and defensive weapons and flaws in human perception accumulate to great levels of uncertainty. Clearly, Floyd underestimates the degree of uncertainty and ambiguity connected to determining capabilities.

The issue with context and timing

In analyzing intentionality, taking the overall context and history of different actors and their relations into account seems at least equally crucial. For example, regarding the Yugoslav war,

[112] Stein, 366.
[113] Robert Jervis, 'Understanding Beliefs', *Political Psychology* 27, no. 5 (October 2006): 650, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2006.00527.x.
[114] Ibid., 651-652.
[115] Stein, 'Threat Perception in International Relations', 370.
[116] Ibid., 373
[117] Ibid., 372

Visser and Duyvesteyn conclude that although "some elements of the security dilemma were present, especially fear, suspicions, and a downward spiral", it was not a security dilemma. This is because in interstate conflicts, there has often been preceding violence over a long period, and possible misperceptions can quickly turn to real threats.[118] Importantly, the same conflict and the intentions of the actors involved can look different depending on the point of time we examine them and on the actions that pre-dated certain decisions.[119] This clearly shows that an understanding of history and context is needed when determining the intentions of actors.

The methods that Visser and Duyvesteyn follow are very similar to those laid out by Floyd: To determine whether the Yugoslav wars were a security dilemma, the authors look at both the statements and actions of actors.[120] However, in contrast to JST, their analysis relies on information that became available only *after* the conflict, and at the time of the wars they would not have been able to gather or access the necessary material.

While intentionality is debated after a conflict took place, Floyd's just securitization theory claims to provide a framework that is policy-informing. Since the value lies in being able to advise decision makers and judge their securitizing moves in the "past and present",[121] it is necessary to determine the intentions of others quickly and in current situations, instead of merely conducting a retrospective analysis. This means that it is unlikely, or rather impossible, to fully appreciate the overall context of conflicts within JST. Once again, Floyd underestimates the uncertainty of determining intentions and does not account for the complexities of such an analysis.

Ambiguity and security logics

[118] Visser and Duyvesteyn, 81.
[119] Jervis, 'Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?', 41.
[120] Visser and Duyvesteyn, 76.
[121] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 48.

Even after conflicts, the events and intentions of actors are often far from clear. For example, as Jervis points out, it is difficult to determine in how far and in what ways the Soviet Union feared the West during the Cold War, since official documents often do not provide details or are ambiguous.[122] Moreover, even if we could access enough material to conduct a well-founded analysis, our conclusions will likely never be uncontested. As Ali Bilgic convincingly argues, there is rarely any agreement on the intentions of a particular actor, and the difficulty lies in "the fact that what can be considered as 'benign' for one analyst can easily be identified as 'malign' by another".[123]

While intentions are an absolutely necessary part of the analysis for authors like Visser and Duyvesteyn,[124] according to Bilgic, "'[m]align' and 'benign' are misleading labels that analysts use to identify intentions *after* the conflict".[125] As Bilgic argues, it is nonsensical to try to evaluate intentions, since they are merely the result of a particular understanding of security (200). Instead, what really matters is how security is understood by actors (192), and how they try to become secure (186). As he persuasively points out, actors most likely never see their own actions as 'malign'. In fact, even going to war can be understood as a tool to increase one's own security (199). With the help of this social constructivist approach, it becomes possible to think about the ideas that actors have. For example, Bilgic asks: "What kinds of solution do they envisage to the security problem they face?" (195).

This approach seems useful since it is relevant how actors view themselves and others and how they react to what they see as threatening. For example, it might be important to understand how and why a securitizing actor perceives something as a threat. This also has important

[122] Jervis, 'Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?', 58.
[123] Bilgic, 'Towards a New Societal Security Dilemma', 191.
[124] Visser and Duyvesteyn, 73.
[125] Bilgic, 199.

implications for the responsibility of actors: how accountable are those who were convinced that their policies would lead to a positive outcome?[126] However, the corollary of this way of thinking moves us closer to the original conceptualization of securitization theory, which does not discuss the existence of objective threats, but the representation and response to perceived threats in the process of securitization.[127] Consequently, such a perspective tells us little about the existence of a real threat in a particular situation, and it is questionable how helpful this view is for determining issues of morality in connection to securitization, in the way done by just securitization theory.

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As has been shown, when conceptualizing the morality of securitization with the perspective of just securitization theory, it is crucial to aim to distinguish real threats from perceived threats that can cause a security dilemma. In this line of thought, it is logically sound to evaluate intentions and capabilities, as suggested by Floyd.[128] Although the determination of agent-induced threats is such a central pillar of JST, this analytical discussion takes up surprisingly little space in the book.[129] By following Floyd's positivist assumptions, I could show that her approach underestimates the uncertainty and fails to adequately account for the complexity of determining capabilities and intentions.

As scholars writing about the security dilemma have demonstrated,[130] statements and actions cannot necessarily be equated with intentions. If states are caught up in a security dilemma dynamic, they might look aggressive and build up their capabilities without any intention to

[126] Ibid., 199-200.
[127] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*, 26.
[128] Singer, 'Threat-Perception and the Armament-Tension Dilemma', 94. and Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*., quoted in Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 83.
[129] See Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 83–86.
[130] See, for example, Visser and Duyvesteyn; Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Jervis, 'Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?'

attack. A broader understanding of the situation that includes factors like possible options of the adversary, the overall context and the progression of a conflict would be crucial but is incompatible with JST's goal of advising decision makers.[131] Even if the analytical tools would be improved, it is unsure and contested in how far it is possible and useful to determine intentions and capabilities.[132] In the following section, I will explore possible alternative ways to think of morality in the context of securitization.

[131] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 48.
[132] See, for example, Bilgic.

3. Securitization and moral issues – Re-engaging constructivist theory

As shown in the last chapter, the determination of real existential threats in Rita Floyd's just securitization theory is problematic, even if we accept her positivist perspective. In what other ways, then, can we think of morality in securitization? I argue that a constructivist approach, which re-engages with the original theory as formulated by the Copenhagen School, is necessary to better capture issues of morality. In particular, returning to an understanding of securitization as an intersubjective *process* that includes speech acts, power relations, and (a more or less broad and active) audience is vital.

3.1 Stages and actors in the securitization

The Copenhagen School formulated securitization theory as a complex process, involving multiple steps and actors. In politics, an issue can be treated in different ways. It can be non-politicized, that is ignored by the state, politicized, or securitized.[133] As I laid out in chapter 1, in the process of securitization, something is claimed to be threatening on an existential level. In order to fend off this threat, a move away from ordinary politics, as well as emergency measures, is legitimized.[134]

As Ole Waever points out, the middle stage, which is titled "Speech Act" in Figure 1 of his article, constitutes the "*moment of securitization*" (emphasis in original).[135] Those who claim that a referent object faces an existential threat are called securitizing actors.[136] The audience, in turn, describes "those the securitizing act attempts to convince to accept exceptional

[133] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*, 23–24.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', 476.
[136] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*, 36.

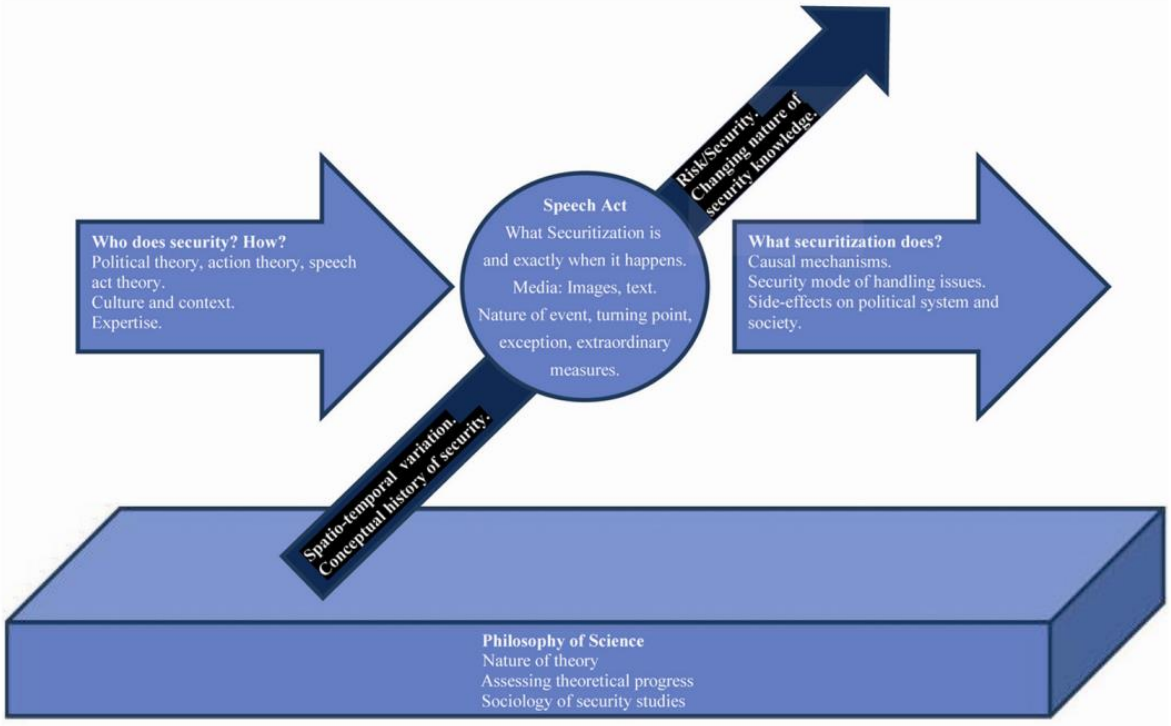

Figure 1. Action, event and effects in securitization theory

Source: Waever, 'Politics, security, theory', p. 477

procedures because of the specific security nature of some issue".[137] Crucially, securitizing moves have to be distinguished from securitization. While the former describes speech acts in which something is claimed to be an existential threat, securitization takes place only if it is accepted by the respective audience.[138] What the researcher should look at, is the "the processes of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat".[139] Floyd's framework[140] does not allow for such an investigation, and I argue that a shift towards the constructivist approach of the original theory is necessary to discuss morality in the processes of securitization.

[137] Ibid., 41.
[138] Ibid., 25
[139] Ibid., 26
[140] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*.

3.2 Returning to securitization as process

To understand my suggestion to shift the analysis towards constructivism, it is helpful to look at Waever's critique of Floyd's early work on just securitization theory. In referring to Floyd's article (as formulated in 2011),[141] Waever argues that:

> [t]o specify a proper procedure for analysis of threat (by abstract observers?) cannot determine the appropriateness of a particular security handling. Yet, a discussion of security *is* a discussion of a threat, so it makes sense to develop 'discourse ethics' criteria of justification for securitization.[142]

According to Waever, criteria concerning both just war and securitization should be used for continuous (societal) discussions. However, it ultimately comes down to what we see as the task of normative analysis. On the one hand, normative analysis can be conceived of as something that should (and can!) come up with the optimal policy, on the other hand, it can be used "to cultivate a better political process".[143] Clearly, Floyd's approach falls in the former category, and as Waever points out, he disagrees with her.[144]

My proposed re-engagement with constructivism can be seen as a shift towards the second type of normative analysis. Instead of assuming that there is some 'neutral' position from which we can set fixed standards or criteria for a just or unjust securitization, normative analysis should focus on the different components that make up the securitization process. In doing so, we can then discuss, question, and critique the political process with the hope of contributing to an improvement. Once again, Waever is helpful here. Building on Arendt, he argues that "a policy is not good *per se* and for all times; the quality of a policy depends on who else is involved, doing what".[145] Moreover, the idea that "a particular theory should *take a stance* on various

[141] Floyd, 'Can Securitization Theory Be Used in Normative Analysis?'
[142] Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', August 2011, 472–73.
[143] Ibid., 473
[144] Ibid.
[145] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, 1968), 11–38., quoted in Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', August 2011, 467.

issues or provide *standards of judgement* for specific cases" (original emphasis) is problematic, since it leads to an exclusive focus on outcomes.[146]

Indeed, Floyd's theory runs into this problem. As Roe has recently noted in a Symposium on just securitization theory, Floyd locates the exceptionalism of securitization in the outcome: the specific emergency measures resulting from securitization. Importantly, this is a significant departure from the Copenhagen School, which looks at the exceptionality of the process itself, instead of discussing particular outcomes of securitization.[147] As Roe convincingly points out:

> in understanding exception in relation to outcome, not process, Floyd's work fails to properly differentiate politicisation from securitisation: legislatures can indeed operate in accordance with debate and deliberation; doing 'normal' politics, but still end up formulating policies that require the prosecution of violence.[148]

In other words, what is 'special' about securitization if we take away the exceptionality of the process? Securitization, and related discussions of morality, cannot be reduced to outcomes. However, this does not mean that causal statements about the securitization processes become impossible. While, as Waever has argued, it is essential to understand action in securitization as "non-deterministic" in order to maintain the focus on "moral responsibility", including causality in the framework is crucial. This is because "it is the effects that securitization has that make it attractive (or not) for various actors to pursue".[149]

Here, Waever[150] points to Stefano Guzzini, who argues that securitization theory entails an implicit non-positivist causality.[151] Far from being confined to naturalist approaches alone, causal mechanisms can be included in constructivist approaches.[152] In the case of securitization theory, this enables us to ask, for example, about the origins of securitizing moves and the

[146] Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', August 2011, 467.
[147] Floyd et al., 'The Morality of Security', 272.
[148] Ibid., 275
[149] Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', August 2011, 476.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Stefano Guzzini, 'Securitization as a Causal Mechanism', *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 4–5 (2011): 329, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611419000.
[152] Ibid., 338.

reasons for audience acceptance or rejection. Importantly: "such 'why' is always a 'how causality'. It does (also) explain, just not in a positivistic manner". Seeing causality this way, such an analysis "breaks out of the positivistic blackmail that asserts that explanation is either positivistic or no explanation at all".[153] When discussing moral issues in processes of securitization, such an understanding causality is vital.

3.3 What and who really matters – locating morality

By returning to a constructivist approach that focuses on "how causality" as proposed by Guzzini,[154] and moving away from a normative analysis that privileges outcomes as criticized by Waever,[155] we can now discuss moral issues bound up in the different components of the securitization *process*. As will be shown, speech acts and exceptionalism, as well as the interactions between securitizing actors and audiences, are crucial elements of the securitization process and constitute fruitful sites for moral inquiry.

Exceptional measures and speech acts – assigning accountability

One element within the securitization process that can potentially be criticized and subjected to moral scrutiny is the speech act. As Huysmans points out, the act constitutes the move away from normality and, therefore, this is the point at which "the legitimacy of exceptional politics" can be discussed.[156] Moreover, this act is based on a conscious decision, and it is in this moment that responsibility is created: "Speaking security is a decision to rupture a situation with certain calculable consequences for others. 'Power-holders' can then be made responsible and procedures of accountability can be applied".[157]

[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', August 2011, 473.
[156] Huysmans, 'What's in an Act?', 373.
[157] Ibid.

However, according to Huysmans, securitization processes often occur in the form of banal, ongoing, everyday practices, such as algorithms, CCTV or data collecting. As he points out, these "*little security nothings* are highly significant, since it is they rather than exceptional speech acts that create the securitizing process" (377). Consequently, instead of having a clear and spectacular turning point, as suggested by the idea of speech acts, securitization can consist of many small and dispersed decisions. In these contexts, analysts will be unable to identify a specific instance that constitutes a shift to security logic. As Huysmans argues, this idea of securitization calls into question the conceptualization of speech acts and the exceptionalism connected to these events (376-77).

Moreover, if we cannot point to specific situations in which securitizing moves were made, what happens to our ability to connect decisions to specific actors? What does this mean for accountability and morality in securitization processes? Huysmans notices this problem and points out that by challenging the notion of speech acts, the potential for criticizing securitization processes is seemingly eroded as well, since "questions of accountability, legitimacy and public judgement" are bound up in speech acts (378). To be able to discuss issues of accountability connected to the move away from democratic practices, Huysmans suggests disentangling a dispersed and ongoing process into smaller acts which can be attributed to specific individuals (379).

While Huysmans points to important societal phenomena, his attempt to understand the process of securitization without the criterion of speech act runs into several problems. To begin with, as Waever has asked regarding Huysman's article: "If the securitization form is the definition that allows us to 'observe' security, how does he then see these new forms of security and know that they are security?"[158] Moreover, as Waever convincingly argues, by way of searching for

[158] Ole Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 4–5 (2011): 473, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611418718.

justifications, Huysmans resorts to "a logic of acts" himself. While it should be evaluated in empirical studies if and how 'extreme policies' (original emphasis) remain connected to securitization or are dispersed,[159] Huysman's approach seems far removed from securitization theory. After all, what is left of securitization theory if we exclude speech acts, exceptionality, and a clear audience/speaker divide?

In so far as securitization theory is about positionality, power and intersubjectivity, it depends on these components. Being the central turning point, the "*moment of securitization*" (to use Waever's words),[160] the speech act is crucial to identify securitization[161] and to discuss connected moral issues. Huysman's argument to include "little security nothings"[162] showcases both the conceptual limits of securitization theory and the boundaries of assigning accountability and responsibility to individual actors. In other words, in order to be able to analyze securitization and to discuss its moral implications, we need to be able to refer to the elements of speech acts and exceptional measures. Once again, this shows how essential it is to highlight the procedural character of securitization, instead of reducing it to potential outcomes.

Intersubjectivity and (un)successful securitizing moves

To understand the speech act as a site for moral inquiry and to discuss the responsibility of individual securitizing actors is to see the speech act as something highly influential. How much power do securitizing actors and their speech acts really have? Some scholars criticize the Copenhagen School for overestimating the power of speech acts and neglecting the agency of audiences. For example, Thierry Balzacq has argued that the Copenhagen School tends to see the speech act as illocutionary, as a 'self-referential practice'. This stands in contradiction to understanding securitization as something intersubjective with a perlocutionary effect, that

[159] Ibid., 473-74
[160] Ibid., 476
[161] Ibid., 473
[162] Huysmans, 'What's in an Act?'

requires audience acceptance.[163] Similarly, Adam Côté has claimed that describing securitization as an 'illocutionary speech act' means seeing it as a one-time event, in which language itself is so powerful that it can produce reality, irrespective of acceptance of the audience. In contrast to that, securitization as an 'intersubjective process' shows a "longer and more indefinite security construction procedure" between different actors.[164]

However, the Copenhagen School acknowledges the importance of the audience, and securitization is clearly an intersubjective process. As Waever explains, securitization "entails this Arendtian concept of politics, because the theory places power in-between humans".[165] Even back in 1998, the Copenhagen School pointed out that it is the audience which, through its acceptance or rejection, ultimately decides whether a securitizing move is successful or not.[166] For Floyd, however, the audience is not relevant, and the speech act has an illocutionary character.[167] According to her, the audience can be excluded from securitization theory completely, since its impact on securitization varies and it does not influence the outcome of a securitizing move.[168] In making the decision to ignore the audience, Floyd, once again, misses out on an important aspect of the *process* of securitization and possible moral discussions.

What do we gain by considering the audience? In what ways does the audience matter, and how can a discussion of moral issues take place? In general, the 'collective mood' can play an important role in the decisions leaders make.[169] In order to understand who the audience is and in how far they can take part in securitization, Côté compares different empirical research that

[163] Thierry Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context', *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 2 (2005): 177–78, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066105052960.
[164] Adam Côté, 'Agents without Agency: Assessing the Role of the Audience in Securitization Theory', *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 6 (2016): 542, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010616672150.
[165] Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', August 2011, 468.
[166] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*, 31.
[167] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 54.
[168] Ibid., 58
[169] Stein, 387.

focuses on audiences in securitization.[170] Across various empirical studies, the audience is found to be very involved in securitization and to "actively participate in the intersubjective construction of security meaning".[171] Clearly, audiences can impact the success or failure of securitizing moves, and the intersubjective aspect and context are central to securitization processes.[172] While language is important in securitization processes, it is used by securitizing actors as well as by the audience to make claims. It is in this interaction that securitizing moves can turn out to be successful securitizations.[173]

Conversely, some securitizing moves can be met with great contestation. According to Guzzini, attempts to securitize or desecuritize can be triggered by specific issues. For example, securitizing moves may be initiated if a society is reminded of a threat from the past.[174] However, this is not necessarily blindly accepted, and there can be a consciousness about the implications of securitization:

> knowing about the propensity to move into a security logic when threats of the specified kind appear, most foreign policy discourses are heterogeneous enough to include a tradition that tries to pre-empt such 'securitization'.[175]

For example, the idea of 'clash of civilizations' by Huntington was fought and critiqued right away. Still, unsuccessful attempts to securitize can influence society and create 'shared beliefs'.[176] Guzzini sees securitization as a process and as "part of an ongoing social construction of (social) reality". Since such a process heavily depends on the specific context, it is not possible to develop universal criteria for the success of securitization or desecuritization.[177]

[170] Côté, 544.
[171] Ibid., 546.
[172] Ibid., 547.
[173] Ibid., 552.
[174] Guzzini, 336.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid., 335

Power contexts and the role of the audience

Context and power relation are, for Balzacq, central in the formulation of security. He argues that securitization should be seen as a 'strategic (pragmatic) practice' instead of a 'speech act', since it is a process of 'persuasion' by making use of different methods like metaphors or lies to achieve a particular goal.[178] As he points out, "the strategic act of security raises the question of inequality of access to discursive resources in security interactions (the question of power)".[179] Indeed, research on securitization should take into account that actors do not have the same opportunities to perform speech acts, and should critically examine moral issues connect to inequalities.

Some of these inequalities might be rooted in science. Following Bourdieu's work, Trine Villumsen Berling argues that science plays an important role in securitization in multiple ways. For instance, the (power) position of securitizing actors is partly connected to science, and they can use science and "objective" facts to buttress their arguments.[180] According to Berling, it is therefore important to look at the "the status of the *context* in within which agents strive for success in securitizing moves, as well as the *means* by which they do so".[181] If we understand science's influence on securitization in this way, we include an "external, contextual dimension". Following this approach, we cannot argue that the speech act produces security independently of the social (power) context.[182]

Clearly, taking the context in which actors are situated and the power relations between them into account is crucial for understanding how morality plays out in specific circumstances. The

[178] Balzacq, 172.
[179] Ibid., 174
[180] Trine Villumsen Berling, 'Science and Securitization: Objectivation, the Authority of the Speaker and Mobilization of Scientific Facts', *Security Dialogue* 42, no. 4–5 (2011): 386, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611418714.
[181] Ibid., 387
[182] Ibid.

ways in which an audience behaves and how much it can impact securitization depends on the particular case of securitization.[183] However, according to Côté, putting a strong focus on how securitization actors are limited by the context leads to a wrong understanding of the role that audiences can play (550). In other words, if intersubjectivity in securitization is understood merely through the constraints that actors face in their securitizing moves, there is not much possibility to act for audiences. In fact, the whole scope of action of audiences is reduced to accepting and rejecting a particular securitizing move, depending on how much this move aligns with the context (550). This is problematic since empirical studies show that "securitization audiences do not necessarily adhere to strict, predetermined contextual rules to determine securitization success or failure". While the context is important, audiences can and do play an active part in social construction, instead of being passive recipients of speech acts (551).

An audience can act deliberatively and produce meaning on its own, so that securitizing actors face a counterpart that can not only contest their securitizing moves, but even change ideas of security.[184] Therefore, according to Côté, 'audience responses' should be seen "as *reactions* to securitizing moves, consisting of agreements, disagreements, questions, and/or counterpoints that emerge out of the audience's interpretations".[185] Even more: like securitizing actors, audiences can use the context to impact the securitization process, and to improve their position in order to gain more influence. As Côté claims, the agency of audience therefore does not stop at the co-creation of security, it also has the potential to play a part in reproducing and changing its own influence for future securitizations (552).

Arguing that the audience inhibits a central role in securitization processes to a point at which it cannot only challenge but even transform ideas of security has important implications for

[183] Côté, 547.
[184] Since these reactions are not homogenous, they can be distinguished from securitizing moves (ibid 552).
[185] Ibid., 551-52

morality. This leaves important questions unanswered: If securitization ultimately depends on the audience, how much potential is left to critically engage with issues of accountability and legitimacy of speech acts, as discussed above? In other words, how much of the responsibility lies with the securitizing actor, and how much is shifted towards the audience? Even more fundamentally: leaving aside potential outcomes, if securitizing moves can be debated in such a manner, can we still see moral issues with the process?

Types of audiences and decision-making

Even if we include the audience, securitization cannot be seen as an unproblematic process filled with public contestation and deliberation. While securitizing actors are always confronted with an audience that ultimately determines the success of a securitizing move,[186] the audiences which actors face differs depending on the specific case.[187] The power to speak, reject or accept is not distributed equally across a population and in some cases the audience whose support is crucial can be a small, elitist minority. This is demonstrated well by Roe's analysis of the securitization process in the UK's lead-up to invading Iraq.[188]

In line with Balzacq,[189] Roe argues that securitizing moves can be addressed at multiple audiences, with the aim of receiving both moral and formal support.[190] Additionally, he distinguishes different stages of securitization: While the label of security is attached to a particular issue in the first stage, the degree of the employed measures is decided on at the second stage.[191] Importantly, the question is therefore if the audience has to accept the first stage

[186] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*, 31.
[187] Côté, 547.
[188] Paul Roe, 'Actor, Audience(s) and Emergency Measures: Securitization and the UK's Decision to Invade Iraq', *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 6 (2008): 615–35, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010608098212.
[189] Balzacq, 185.
[190] Roe, 620.
[191] Ibid., 616.

of constructing something as a threat, or if needs to agree with the emergency measures suggested by the securitizing actor (622).

According to Roe, in the case of the UK's decision to invade Iraq, the central audiences can be categorized as the general public in Britain on the one hand, and the Labour Party and Cabinet, as well as the parliament on the other hand. Tony Blair and his government claimed that Iraq constituted a threat due to the WMD (weapons of mass destruction) capability of Saddam Hussain, which required military intervention. Throughout the period of March to September 2002, they tried to gain the support of both audiences (624). Blair was successful in convincing most of the general public that Saddam Hussain, provided he possessed WMD, would constitute a threat. However, opinions on how this threat should be tackled were divided. While the general public as well as the UN Security Council remained opposed to the war, Blair could eventually gain the support of the British Parliament. Consequently, "the prime minister went to war without the moral support of the masses" (631). As Roe points out, while the approval of securitization by the general public can deliver moral support, only the support of parliament led to the practical consequence to invade Iraq (632).

This hints at important moral questions regarding the kind of audience that is required for a successful securitization, and the power distribution in decision making processes concerning specific emergency measures. When analyzing cases of securitization, it is therefore important to ask: Which audience has to be convinced for a securitizing move to be successful? Whose view really matters for the success of a securitization process, and in what ways does it matter? Importantly, though, even if the general public was engaged in both the creation of a threat and the decision making of emergency measures, this still does not make the outcome of securitization morally 'good'. Again, as Roe points out, "legislatures can indeed operate in accordance with debate and deliberation; doing 'normal' politics, but still end up formulating

policies that require the prosecution of violence".[192] That being said, the interactions and power distribution between securitizing actors and different audiences remains one important area for discussing moral issues in connection to securitization.

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As I have shown, by focusing on outcomes of securitization,[193] Floyd's framework falls short of the conceptualization of securitization theory and severely limits an exploration of moral issues. In order to better understand morality in the context of securitization, it is vital to return to a constructivist approach and a re-engagement with the original theory as formulated by the Copenhagen School. This can be done by using normative analysis to grasp and improve political processes as explained by Waever.[194] To enable such an analysis, it is necessary to break with Floyd's way of locating the exceptionalism of securitization in the outcome as observed by Roe,[195] and to follow a "how causality" as promoted by Guzzini.[196] This way, it becomes possible to research how intersubjective construction of security plays out in specific securitization *processes*. On this basis, a debate about accountability and responsibility connected to the utterance of speech acts, as well as the power context between securitizing actors and audiences can take place.

[192] Floyd et al., 'The Morality of Security', 275.
[193] Floyd et al., 272.
[194] Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', August 2011, 473.
[195] Floyd et al., 'The Morality of Security', 272.
[196] Guzzini, 338.

Conclusion

With her Just Securitization Theory, Rita Floyd aims to create a tool with which the morality of specific cases of securitization can be judged. In order to achieve that, Floyd combines the construction of threats as laid out in securitization theory with just war theory and the determination of real, existential threats.[197] This is, without question, an ambitious goal – and while JST remains impressive in its attempt to bring together various approaches, it runs into different problems.

As I have shown, Floyd's theory is based on the idea that real existential threats can be distinguished from those that are merely perceived or claimed (without being based on reality). The 'justness' of securitization hinges on this distinction – securitization can only be 'just' if it refers to a real threat (in addition to other criteria). To determine whether an agent induced threat is real, Floyd suggests evaluating the adversary's intentions and capabilities. Providing an internal critique, I have argued that, even if we accept this positivist and logically coherent perspective, the determination of threats is connected to a great level of uncertainties.

As scholars writing about the security dilemma have shown, statements and actions do not necessarily correspond with actors' intentions, and misperceptions regarding others' intentions can lead to arms races and war. Similarly, capability assessment comes with great challenges, as information is often difficult to obtain, weapons cannot be classified as offensive or defensive, there are no established methods and thresholds, and human perception is fundamentally flawed. A retrospective analysis that takes the broader context and the development of conflicts into account might have a better chance to determine intentions - this, however, is not compatible with JST's goal of providing real-time advice to decision makers.[198]

[197] Floyd, *The Morality of Security*, 48.
[198] Ibid., 48.

I have argued Floyd underestimates the degree of uncertainty and ambiguity connected to determining intentions and capabilities. This critique is more general than it may seem. If we cannot evaluate intentions and capabilities, we cannot determine threats, and if we cannot determine threats, we cannot make a moral judgment regarding the 'justness' of securitization - at least within the logic of JST.

By moving away from the underlying logic of JST and re-engaging with constructivist approaches that see securitization as a *process*, it becomes possible to shift and broaden our view on morality. To realize this shift, it is necessary to break with Floyd's approach that locates the exceptionalism of securitization in the outcome (as observed by Roe),[199] and to understand normative analysis not as a tool to create the best policy, but as a method to improve political procedures (as described by Waever).[200] Moral issues of the *process* of securitization can then be discussed with the help of a constructivist "how causality".[201]

This way, the components of securitization, as laid out by the Copenhagen School, become visible again. Speech acts and exceptionalism, as well as the interactions between securitizing actors and audiences, are vital in securitization processes and constitute fruitful sites for moral inquiry. Signifying the attempt to move normal politics towards exceptionalism, speech acts enable us to spot securitizing moves,[202] and to discuss the accountability and responsibility of securitizing actors. Crucially, however, power does not lie with the speaker alone – it is the audience who ultimately decides upon the success or failure of securitization[203] and may even be able to transform ideas of security.[204]

[199] Floyd et al., 'The Morality of Security', 272.
[200] Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', 473.
[201] Guzzini, 338.
[202] Wæver, 'Politics, Security, Theory', 473.
[203] Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*, 31.
[204] Côté, 551–52.

This points to the fundamentally intersubjective character of securitization processes, and moral issues bound up in the construction of security. By analyzing speech acts and securitizing moves, evaluating the respective identity of the audience, and understanding the interactions between audience and securitizing actors, it becomes possible to move beyond JST and to discuss moral issues in specific cases of securitization.

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