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A Methodological Discussion on Evaluating the Success of Any Securitizing Move

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Abstract

The study objects to lay out a lucid perspective on “how any securitizing move occurs successfully” an issue that was non-rigidly theorized in the Copenhagen version of securitization, in line with current debates. To this end, the vague criteria as follows, set by the classical cadre of the Copenhagen School are problematized: actors have to couch the issue as an existential threat requiring exceptional executive powers, and, if the audience accepts the securitizing move, the case is established as a security issue beyond the routine procedure of politics. Considering this conservative cycle, the first claim of this paper is that the politics of “audience acceptance” is not adequately determined in theory. The second is that the classical variants’ persistence in the transition to “exceptional security policy” in the operation of securitization, ignoring its insecure nature, reduces the theory to a given and fixed understanding of security such as “security=exceptionalism.” Premised on these arguments, the paper proposes an overarching systematized thought that empowers the audience’s role; does not exclude “exceptional measures” but also inserts into “normalized exceptional” and even “routine responses” as actions.

Keywords: securitizing move, successful securitization, audience, extraordinary measures, intersubjectivity

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1. Introduction

According to Ole Wæver (2011), “the securitization theory (ST) is structured as a theory¹ with clearly has one distinct concept at its core—securitization—, and in which key concepts form a closely integrated constellation; only necessary relations (not contingent connections) are part of the theory itself” (p. 470). One of the most cited definitions of securitization, the central concept of the theory, is as follows: “When a securitizing actor uses a rhetoric of existential threat and thereby takes an issue out of what under those conditions is ‘normal politics,’ we have a case of securitization” (Buzan et al., 1998, pp. 24–25).

In the field of security studies, the classical Copenhagen version of ST has been hailed for its contribution to the ongoing debate on “how security is best understood” (Guzzini, 2011, p. 330). The theory addresses the following key questions of security as they relate to politics: “What makes something a security issue?” “What kind of responses does this call for?” “What are the specific consequences of recognizing something as a threat?” (Balzacq et al., 2016, p. 496).

ST, with its innovative answers to these questions, that make security contexts malleable, is considered one of the most productive and groundbreaking developments in the field in recent years. The theory has been applied in various contexts from climate change (Arias, 2022), refugees (Secen, 2021), and even epidemiological threats (Kاونert et al., 2022) as its practical grammar provides researchers with analytically powerful insights.

However, it is still one of the most controversial ways of analysis (Williams, 2003, p. 511). One of the reasons that makes the theory under dispute is that the Copenhagen version trapped the success of any securitizing move in a rut consisting of three unarticulated steps: (1) the actor dramatizes an issue as an existential threat, (2) the intended audience has to agree on the security discourse about the threat is adequately dangerous and requires the mobilization of all resources to beat off it, (3) adopting of emergency actions known as exceptional measures (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 6).

Analytically, this paper seeks lucid answers to the question “which criteria must be provided for any securitizing move as being successful” that is left undetermined in the original version of ST. In this context, the paper begins by arguing that the theory vacillates on two issues. The first concerns the claim that security issues are constructed through intersubjective processes between actors (socially empowered policymakers and intended audiences). This is because,

¹ Wæver states that he draws—to a certain extent—on Kenneth Waltz’s approach to the definition of theory: “I define theory as a picture, mentally formed, of a bounded realm or domain of activity. A theory depicts the organization of a realm and the connections among its parts.” Accordingly, a theory is not basically a proposition (true or false) about reality; it is a model from which empirical statements can be derived to assess structural similarities. However, a theory is formulated abstractly to be mobilized in a diversity of situations. He argues that “insights through bridge-building from this abstraction to specific analytical usages.” Wæver also points out that “a clear distinction needs to be made between the theory itself and its cumulated insights from empirical studies. For him, case studies teach something about both reality and the theory - but not about what is missing ‘in the theory.’ Theory-related insights should be accumulated, while the theory is kept intact as long as it is the best instrument for generating such insights. Theories are quite minimalistic and therefore any case study demands a specific set-up – possibly with several theories and constructs for the occasion. ‘Theories don’t predict, people do’” (Wæver, 2003, pp.1–2; Wæver, 2011, pp. 470–471).

while the theory bases the success of the whole process on audience acceptance, it does not provide enough detail on the identity and role of the audience.

The strong emphasis on extraordinary measures, which is regarded as contradictory even with the Western liberal order in which the framework has evolved, is the second issue under discussion. This comprehension confines security perception to a fixed understanding of "security = exceptionalism." Moreover, in the past decades illuminating explorations of securitizations in world politics have revealed how the agenda of security is spreading to new areas where there is no evidence of "undemocratic procedures" for its solution. Therefore, it is believed that a conflict has arisen between the different practices that emerged with the securitization of non-traditional issues and the classical position of the Copenhagen School (CS).

In this sense, the overarching objective of this article is to push the epistemological and methodological limits of the theory to provide a comprehensible perspective on the outputs of a certain securitization that was non-rigidly theorized in the original framework.

Aiming to systematize how to conduct such an analysis, this paper proceeds as follows: After an introduction that provides an overview of the paper, the second section outlines the ST and discusses the substantial conceptual and normative critiques of the theory. Section third gives a brief review of the literature. Part four, the uncertainties regarding the intended audience are laid out and proposals are made for this issue. Section five undertakes an analysis of the problematic aspects of extraordinary measures. The final part propounds a channel that may potentially facilitate the case studies.

2. Securitization Theory and Key Critiques

ST, rooted in the question of "what quality makes something a security issue in international relations" (Wæver, 1995, p. 55), concentrates on the processes of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26). This means that ST, which adopts an intersubjective understanding as opposed to the objectivist perspective of the traditional approach, contends that security is a generated reality rather than a pre-given state (Ari, 2023, p. 4).

The core posit of ST is that security is a speech act. In this sense, the securitizer dramatizes a particular issue as an existential threat as having top priority by uttering security (Wæver, 2003, p. 10) such as "if we do not tackle this problem, everything else will be irrelevant (because we will not be here or will not be free to deal with it in our own way, or we will not exist to remedy our failure)." In case the audience adopts the discourse about the perceived (real) or constructed (unreal) threat, it will also be possible for the generation of the capacity to break free of the rules of normal politics. So, any issue acquires a security status following an intersubjective process involving a securitizing actor and an audience. The labeling of something as a security by individuals or groups is no guarantee of success. Successful securitization is not decided by the actor but by the intended audience of the securitization (Wæver, 2003, pp. 24, 31). This is why audience approval is considered as the "sine qua non" of securitization (Ağır, 2023, p. 137).

As stated by Balzacq (2005), articulating security itself creates a new social order in which “normal politics” is bracketed in securitization (p. 171). The normal politics that is guided by “discussion, debate, and deliberation” is suspended through necessities of survival, and this emergency politics/order is dominated by “silence, secrecy, and suppression” (Roe, 2006, p. 426). Because, as stated by CS scholars, security is the movement that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special type of politics or as a supra-political one that legitimates the use of special procedures (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23).

Although ST has pioneered a significant conceptual transformation from the construction of the “security” to its impact, it is not immune to criticism. While the theory has inspired hundreds of studies with its methodological regularity and empirical applicability, it has also drawn the attention of critics due to some conceptual, normative, and epistemological confusions it contains (Bright, 2012; Philipsen, 2018).

Conceptual criticisms focus on the structure of the theory, in particular the use of the speech act on which it is grounded. As many authors have pointed out, CS’s prioritization of speech while neglecting visual depictions of threats and silences is problematic. As research carried out over time has revealed, complicated processes among actors and relevant audiences that consist of diverse communication techniques, including images and visual artifacts (Hansen, 2011; Williams, 2011), words spoken and written text (Aydın-Düzgit & Rumelili, 2009, p. 300; Hansen, 2006), or physical action (Wilkinson, 2007), generate how threats are constructed and perceived (Wæver, 2015, pp. 121–127).

Beyond the inner functioning of the theory, some scholars have criticized “the normative dilemma of speaking and writing security,” as Huysmans terms it (Aradau, 2004, pp. 388–413). The theory is seen to seek to constitute a sort of antagonistic politics which seems implicit in the CS’s claim that “de-securitization of issues represents the optimal long-range solution rather than securitizing them” (Bright, 2012, p. 869). However, in practice, it is seen that the issues are removed from the realm of normal politics where they are handled with collective governance and give a process in which governance is tolerated with exceptional decrees rather than democratic decisions prominence (Trombetta, 2008, p. 588). This serves to emerge inescapable negative consequences, such as the security-insecurity paradox.

The theory has also been criticized for not providing a convincing explanation of “how successful securitization emerges empirically.” ST makes the content of security malleable with the logic of “anything can potentially be viewed as a threat” but vacillates about its effects (the suspension of the normal rules and the adoption of emergency measures) (McDonald, 2008). Since this issue is also closely related to the main theme of the study, it will be analyzed in detail under the headings concerned with the audience and exceptional measures.

3. A Brief Literature Review and Contributions

Despite a growing number of theoretical and empirical case studies on the process of securitization, progressive contributions to the debate on its consequences have been rather limited. While seminal work has been done by leading scholars (Floyd, 2011; Patomäki, 2015; Philipsen, 2018; Wertman & Kaunert, 2022; Williams, 2015), there is still no unifying formula, as there is still no consensus on “what conditions determine the success or failure of any

securitizing move.” To evaluate some of these studies, for instance, Côté (2016) in his study titled “Agents without Agency: Assessing the role of the Audience in Securitization Theory,” draws attention to the ambiguity of the audience within the theory and argues that the audience needs to be reconstructed as an active agent with a meaningful impact on the intersubjective construction of security values. However, while this study provides a comprehensive perspective on the function of the audience of the securitization, it does not address the issue of extraordinary measures. In “Actor, Audience(s) and Emergency Measures: Securitization and the UK’s Decision to Invade Iraq” Roe (2008) analyzes the justification for the 2003 Iraq War by utilizing the ST. In this study, Roe’s striking argument is that the relevant audiences must accept the actor’s security discourse (the stage of identification/rhetorical securitization) as well as the measures proposed or taken to prevent the threat (the stage of mobilization/active securitization). However, with this assumption, the author overestimates the role of the audience within the intersubjective functioning of the theory and neglects the problematic aspects of exceptional measures. Neal (2012), on the other hand, in his article titled “Normalisation and Legislative Exceptionalism,” concentrates on the issue of extraordinary measures rather than audiences. Analyzing British counter-terrorism legislation in three different periods (2000, 2001, and 2008), Neal argues that thanks to the legislation enacted by governments, practices that were once seen as exceptional measures can become the new normal over time. However, rather than making ST applicable to current cases, Neal’s perspective serves to reproduce the conventional logic that can be summarized as securitization succeeds when exceptional measures or legislative exceptions are adopted. The most comprehensive step towards theorizing non-exceptional securitizations has been taken by Mark B. Salter (2010) with his remarkable work, “When Securitization Fails: The Hard Case of Counter-terrorism Programs.” The author lays out a model of securitization failure using the comparison of several abandoned American counter-terrorism programs. Salter, for successful securitization, stipulates the requirement that “new executive powers (even if it is the dispersion or deputization of previously-centralized powers of decision-making) be granted to the securitizing actor” in addition to audience acceptance. This study is noteworthy because of its assertion that by requiring new execution as his criteria for the success of securitization, he wants to be able to comprise non-exceptional practice. But the “new or emergency executive powers” that Salter posits can mean intensifying the institutionalization of exceptionalism, then security policy becomes a paradox, as it risks sabotaging the liberal order precisely by the very means it is intended to save it. Rita Floyd (2016), in her article “Extraordinary or Ordinary Emergency Measures: What, and Who, Defines the ‘Success’ of Securitization?” asserts that “a particular securitization is only successful when an action, either in normal or extraordinary ways, is taken by a relevant securitizing agent following the security discourse that identifies the threat, and when the action taken is justified by the agent concerning the threat.” (p. 679). Although this suggestion enables scholars to analyze cases of non-exceptional securitization as well as exceptional ones, it undermines the intersubjective character of ST as it overlooks or even ignores “audience acceptance.” However, the originality of the securitization approach, which sets security as an intersubjective socio-communicative process, is rooted in the notion of the audience.

Unlike studies focusing only on audiences or extraordinary measures, this study aims to contribute to researchers on both issues. First, this study reimagines the audience as a mechanism that can counterbalance the securitizing elites in their action. Thus, both the intersubjective foundations of the theory itself will be strengthened, bringing them a little closer to the desired democratic functioning. As Aradau (2004) underlines, “the role of the securitizing audience can retain the speech act in the framework of the democratic politics of contestation” (p. 392).

This analysis offers a solution to the paradox that legitimized universalist and exceptionalist understandings of security have become the source of insecurity. Contrary to the understandings that still emphasize exceptionalism for the success of securitization, it makes the language of ST more explanatory for the analysis of the possible future by including non-exceptional practices in the securitization process. Additionally, this perspective, which seeks to move away from exceptionalism and the strengthened securitizing actor-audience interaction, moves the theory one step closer to the liberal order.

4. Uncertain Place of the Audience in the Theory

CS highlights the crucial role of the audience in the securitization process with the following sentence: “...the security speech act is negotiated between securitizer and audience—that is, internally within the unit” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26).

However, as many authors have indicated, there is vagueness around the process by which the securitizer and audience interact to create securitization (Bright, 2012). Yet, scholars have not fully compromised on the questions of “Which audience needs to be convinced of the legitimacy of a securitizing move?” and “How or with what effects does the intended audience engage in the process of securitization?” In this sense, Williams (2011) portrays the audience as a “radically underdeveloped” concept (p. 212). In this context, it can be argued that the first problem is heavily rooted in the uncertainty about who the addressee (the audience) will be a certain securitizing move.

This paper assumes that there is little generalizability regarding the precise identity of the audience, bearing in mind that each state, society, or institution has a different form of government, culture, and norms. In addition, it also supports the notion that any security policy requires the approval of multiple audiences that may exist within a single securitization process and that audiences often possess differential powers, leading to effects on securitization outcomes.

Given this and drawing on Balzacq and Vuori’s definitions, the work posits that the portrait of the “engaged audience” can be designed in a “case-specific” manner. As claimed by Vuori (2008), “Audiences form based on the function the securitization act is intended to serve” (p. 72). Similarly, Balzacq’s reformulation of the concept of audience as an empowering audience, divided into moral and formal, which enables the securitizing actor to carry out the proposed action, is also valuable. Therefore, it can be asserted that a case-specific characterization of audiences based on the form of government and rules of the state in which they live and their direct connection to the problem (legitimization and authorization of security rhetoric) (Balzacq, 2005, pp. 8–9) or their potency to authorize security action against the threat (Collins,

2005, pp. 572–573) or, their position within different phases or settings of the securitization process rhetoric (Salter, 2008, pp. 321–349) would provide analysts with a more comprehensive analysis.

The precariousness of the audience's position within the theory persists despite a growing number of case studies, which is another significant issue closely related to the outcomes of securitization. This is because, while some scholars keep arguing that the audience is the enabler of the success of securitization, others, like Floyd, contend that there is no definitive correlation between audience approval and the existence or success of securitization. This ambivalence creates ambiguity about the audience's identity and purpose, thus making the mechanism of intersubjectivity problematic (Côté, 2016, pp. 2–3). In addition, some argue that for successful securitization, audience acceptance must encompass the securitization discourse of the agents as well as the policy responses to the threat proposed by them (Salter, 2010, pp. 116–132). For instance, Roe (2008) states that the relation between the securitizer and the audience is constituted not only in agreement with whether the support required is either formal or moral but also in agreement with what the audience is being asked to approve: "This is an existential threat and/or given this is an existential threat, these are the responses I proffer to block it (p. 622)." However, in this study, this assessment is regarded as highly exaggerated.

Another issue is that the classical version of the theory omits relevant details regarding how the audience(s)' effects on the outcomes of securitization would emerge in the empirical analysis. This ambiguity also causes many authors to negate the audience from the process. However, in democracies, audience consensus can be measured by formal methods such as voting on particular issues (e.g., in parliament or in the Senate) or in general elections. In situations like this, the approval/opposition of the audience can be understood from the side where the voting results are more skewed. The necessary data on whether there is audience support can be obtained from polls and surveys besides formal methods such as voting (Côté, 2015, pp. 125–126).

By way of example, whether the security discourse used by then U.S. President Donald Trump against North Korea resonated positively or negatively with the (moral) audience can be observed from polls conducted during the pre-securitization and securitization periods. In this respect, in a poll conducted by CNN in August 2017, 62% of the respondents to the question "Would you say the following pose 'a very serious threat' to the United States, 'a moderately serious threat,' 'a mild threat,' or 'no threat at all?'" stated that they believe that North Korea poses a "very serious threat" to the United States. According to CNN, this is the highest level in any poll since 2000. It is even higher than the 52% recorded in June 2009 after North Korea's second nuclear test (CNN, 2017).

However, given claims that a single survey can be misleading, a second survey in case studies would serve to represent a more comprehensive result. In this context, one can refer to the results of another poll, such as Gallup's annual World Affairs. In January 2018, Gallup has asked the American public: "What one country anywhere in the world do you consider to be the United States' greatest enemy today?" 51% of the volunteers answered North Korea, and concern about this East Asian country has overtaken Russia, China, and Iran as the most prominent competitors of the United States. At first glance, this data alone may seem

meaningless. However, given that this rate has tripled from the 16% who cited in 2016 (the year before Trump took office), it is possible to argue that there is a correlation between Trump's securitizing rhetoric or moves and Pyongyang's rise to the top of the list of U.S. enemies (Brenan, 2018).

Although this case is drawn from a democratic country, in almost every political community, democratic or not, securitizing agents need consent, to execute a certain securitization act. In this context, when trying to detect support or resistance in non-democratic or semi-democratic societies, the attitudes of the political elites or religious authority (e.g. Islamic Republic of Iran) gathered around policymakers (Vuori, 2008, p. 68) or behavior patterns of the substance of the general public's actions (protest, revolt) can be of assistance.

A further critique closely related to the audience issue is that the approach does not have the power to produce an analysis beyond Western Europe and North America due to its Eurocentric arrogance (Bilgin, 2011, p. 401). As McDonald (2008) points out, the politicization (open political deliberation) and securitization (secrecy) distinction based on ultimately suggestive of a Western liberal democratic state (p. 69) and is far from being equally applicable to any political setting outside this region. Wilkinson (2007) similarly argues that the logic of the ST remains constrained by the "Westphalian straitjacket," which manifests itself in the assumption that the Euro-American model of the state, identity, society, and concomitant political culture is valid universal, and timeless. This problematic perspective does not consider the local socio-political contexts and terms and limits the research agenda only to the liberal political context (pp. 11, 13, 22).

This criticism is believed to have its roots in the traditional securitization steps, which are purportedly constructed in a manner unique to liberal democracies: first, the audience must embrace the threat claims before security measures can be implemented. However, this processing can be incompatible with the functioning of non-democratic regimes because, in such countries, governments do not need audience approval for their securitizing moves (Bilgin 2011, p. 401).

But on a deeper level, in non-democratic or semi-democratic systems, it is seen that this is not always the case, counterintuitively. Legitimacy and consent are among the most important qualities that every government, whether liberal or not, must possess at the very least to survive, as Vuori emphasizes. Even the undemocratic regimes are governed by people who adhere to the favorable beliefs of some key figures (the so-called power elite) in the polity. That is, even tyrants need the consent of loyal actors and subjects, whether before or after the securitizing move or after taking security measures (Vuori, 2008).

It should be noted that while in democratic systems, speaking of security is used to justify breaking the law, authoritarian governments can also use it to restore political order, enforce discipline, and maintain social control (Vuori, 2008, p. 69). Though the main problem with the applicability of the theory to democratic and non-democratic societies is the ambiguity of the distinction between normal and extraordinary measures in terms of the inner operation of these regimes.

5. The Controversial Status of Exceptionalism

One of the main implications of this approach is that once securitization is in place, security elites can instantly employ any countermeasures they deem necessary to counter the threat. Therefore, Stritzel's (2007) construction of securitization as "a claim to modus of exceptionality" seems to be highly tenable (p. 360). However, because of the inherent risks, and uncertainties in its definition and in whether it is a necessary or optional success criterion, the "exceptional logic of securitization" makes it problematic to evaluate the outcomes of any securitizing move.

Additionally, Wæver (2003) describes extraordinary measures as coming "in the form of secrecy, levying taxes or conscription, placing limitations on otherwise inviolable rights, or focusing society's energy and resources on a specific task" (p. 9), in one of his early works, while in one his more recent works, he passes that the "extraordinary is a deviation from whatever is considered normal until an exception was installed" (Wæver & Buzan, 2020, p. 391). This conceptualizing, however, does not provide researchers with a well-defined, consistent, and sustainable benchmark to determine exceptions.

Given this, two questions primarily need to be answered regarding the "highly problematic strategy of securitization" (Behnke, 2000, p. 91). First, is securitization a state-centered theory? Second, if the theory is not state-centric and represents a multi-actor understanding of international relations, how will issues be taken beyond the realm of normal politics by other actors such as international organizations or NGOs (given how different the decision-making structure of each is)? As is well known, sophisticated issues such as "the securitization of pandemics or climate change" where the securitizer is either a state or a non-state actor, are currently dominating the world agenda. As a result, the initial version of the ST does not address, for instance, the issue of what "exceptional" or "beyond law" procedures a non-governmental organization (Corry, 2012) like Doctors Without Borders can adopt in the face of a global security crisis.

Problems with the necessity of its criteria are another cause of difficulty in addition to the definition's or content's vagueness. The genesis of this is the CS's characterization of securitization as a three-step component: "existential threats, emergency actions, and effects on inter-unit relations by breaking the rules." By doing so CS implies that "extraordinary measures are an essential part of securitization because following rules is equivalent to the normal way" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26).

Nevertheless, in separate chapters of "Security: A New Framework for Analysis," the success of securitization is not determined using exceptional measures or even formulated in terms of audience(s) without explicit reference to them.

We do not push the demand so high as to say that an emergency measure has to be adopted... In this conception, 'existential threats ... legitimize the breaking of rules' ...The security act is negotiated between the securitizer and the audience ... but the securitizing agent can obtain permission to override rules that would otherwise bind it. Typically, the agent will override such rules because, by depicting a threat the securitizing agent often says someone cannot be dealt with in the normal way (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26).

...the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such (1998, p. 25).

These statements depict a different portrait of the connection between exceptional means and securitization. For “legitimizing” in the above paragraph is not the same as “necessitating,” while “typically” differs from “categorically” (Floyd, 2016, p. 3). This indicates that there is an inherent tension in the theory regarding whether “extraordinary measures are a necessary condition for successful securitization, or whether securitization will only succeed with the audience(s) acceptance.”

According to Williams, such tension dominates the ST in practice due to the CS’s anxiety about drawing an obvious distinction between “security” and “normal” politics. Motivated by this concern, CS argues on the one hand that only specific types of security policies (i.e., those of an exceptional nature) constitute “a successful” securitization and, on the other hand, that the success of securitization depends solely on audience acceptance (Williams, 2011, p. 220).

5.1 Critiques on the Insecurity of Exceptionalist Logic

According to Aradau (2004) “ ‘extraordinary defensive moves’, the emergency actions undertaken by institutions and various security actors” are what characterize successful securitization. But the “exceptionalism of securitization” (p. 4) has at least two flaws.

The first is to fix “the meaning of security as exceptionality,” which drives the theory to a “Machiavellian position” (Behnke, 2000, p. 89) on securitization. Thus, Stritzel (2007) criticizes Wæver for the realist understanding of security not only for taking it as an intellectual starting point but also for continuing to use this exceptionalist terminology that was considered empirically inadequate and even ethically problematic in the later part of his theory (pp. 361, 366–367).

The emphasis on the role of exceptionalist security discourses and practices tends to create a rather strict politicization–securitization polarization, which prohibits making ST more widely applicable to real-world securitizations. But this dichotomy, based on Arendt’s security-purified design of politics, while intellectually stimulating, is of little use in practice.

In this regard, Balzacq et al. (2016) also challenges the distinction between “normal” and “exceptional” policies inherent in the original definition (p. 495). He contends that “Politics does not evaporate at the doorsteps of securitization. That is, security is neither above nor beneath or beyond politics” (Balzacq, 2015, p. 108). As argued by Bigo (2002), securitization is an integral component of political functioning (p. 64).

Furthermore, stabilizing the meaning of security as exceptionality contradicts Derrida’s well-known argument that “there is nothing outside the text” and the meaning is always deferred or postponed and can never be fixed (Ari, 2021, p. 399).

With its emphasis on emergency measures that deviate from normal rules, Williams (2014) asserts that ST exhibits Schmittian² characteristics in terms of “exceptionalism, decisionism, and

² Wæver responds to this criticism as follows, “...securitization theory involves a ‘Schmittian’ concept of ‘politics’– the theory has a Schmittian concept of ‘security’ and an Arendtian concept of politics, if one wishes to use such types of slogans – it can have Schmittian effects, nevertheless. As Huysmans pointed out... all security studies risks strengthening security, even when intentionally anti-security. Similarly, a theory of the exceptionalist dimension of politics – even a theory that challenges exceptionalism from another core meaning of politics – can fortify a conceptual universe where exceptionalism is central to the political field, and thereby limit our political imagination” (Wæver, 2011, p. 470).

the declaration of a divide between friend and enemy" (p. 115). This is directly related to Carl Schmitt's concept of the political (decisionist/exclusionary) and how he defines the sovereign. In modern political thought, Schmitt characterizes the "sovereign is he who decides on the exception." (as cited Akgul Acikmese, 2013, p. 307). Accordingly, the sovereign is seen as the one "who decides what constitutes a threat, whether the alleged threat to the existing order requires extreme urgency, and ultimately whether normal political processes should be suspended to deal with the problem." Even, the sovereign is portrayed as one who has absolute authority over the juridical order itself and has the power to judge who is included in and who is excluded from this order (Akgul Acikmese, 2013, p. 307). In sum, the sovereign is the one who decides what is exceptional and can abolish norms whenever he deems it necessary. Indeed, in a state of chaos, there are no norms that can be applied (Schmitt, 1986/2002, p. 20). A careful examination reveals that this way of thinking, which is based on executive unilateralism, is most clearly actualized in the trajectory of securitization. This is because the securitizing agents can operate "legitimately" beyond the rules of normal politics or law most easily in the securitization process (Floyd, 2016).

The second issue is that the "exceptionalist discourse of securitization" is inherently dangerous. This is because the politics of panic brought about by securitization, and the emphasis on secrecy, and urgency serve to enable extraordinary interventions. In other words, the state of constant alarm and paranoia catalyzed by the security utterance helps to suppress civil society and governments to pursue interventionist and repressive policies (Akgül Açıkmeşe, 2011, p. 58), in short, to suspend democratic procedures. Also, Aradau (2004) is uneasy with the possibility that the exceptional politics of securitization could become a dangerous venture for democracy, as it risks spreading states of extraordinariness into everyday life (p. 5).

From this perspective, a classic act of securitization reduces combating existential threats to a traditional zero-sum, a militarized way of thinking and acting, thereby undermining the legitimacy of long-term negotiated solutions by emphasizing quick and coercive measures such as military or police force options (Jones, 1999, p. 109). According to Patomäki (2015), securitization can even further create enemies and make war plausible. As will be recalled, the principle at the core of securitization is that no issue is ipso facto a security threat, but everything can be constructed as one. This means that the external threat may be real, ex nihilo, or distorted. It is therefore necessary to be aware of the risks of exceptional/emergency measures that evoke violence (p. 128).

Every practice of securitization leads to the paradox of empowering the military, or what Bigo (2000) calls security professionals (p. 326) in the civilian sphere or legitimizing their practices. It seems even more likely to encounter such experiences, especially in countries that have not yet experienced democracy and where there are no clear lines between military and civilian authority. Because very few countries have a check and balance system that can keep under control the possibility of abuse of power that may arise from exceptionalist discourse. Moreover, in the post-9/11 conjuncture, it is witnessed that securitization is frequently applied in democratic states as well as underdeveloped countries, restricting freedoms and interfering in the civilian sphere in the name of security. A precedent for this is ex-NSA contractor Edward Snowden's attempt to draw attention to how the logic of securitization can serve an

unintended purpose through the case of the NSA leaks in 2014. Snowden problematized exceptional measures, especially systematic “global surveillance.” Using counter-securitization, he demonstrated how these and similar extraordinary measures inherent in classical securitization can pose a threat to the freedom of the liberal individual (Philipsen, 2018).

Kyle Grayson (2003) uses the metaphor of “Frankenstein” to concretize the danger that can arise as a result of securitization. The Frankenstein analogy helps to illustrate that if the securitizing actor gets out of control through the extraordinary powers it can acquire, it can achieve power far beyond what is expected (p. 337).

Furthermore, Bigo (2002) argues that contrary to the claims of the CS, security is not a “field” that is the responsibility of any security forces, and therefore there is no distinction between the political sphere and the security sphere. Moreover, most of the current security practices are already extraordinary, and with each passing day the “extraordinariness” is brought into daily politics via the practices of power (pp. 64–65), or the de-formalized law and administration.

The emphasis on “emergency,” which refers to the suspension of responsibility, transparency, and accountability, is seen in the context of the study as a “purification ritual” (Bigo, 2000, p. 325) in which everything is justified in the face of a threat.

However, sophisticated analyses reveal that the response to a securitized threat following any securitizing move is not always exceptional, sometimes it is a routine practice, a normalized exception, and sometimes a combination of both exceptional and routine factors (Bigo, 2000; Bourbeau, 2014; Corry, 2012; Floyd, 2016; Floyd, 2023; Salter, 2010; Trombetta, 2008).

6. Concluding Remarks

ST focuses on the process by which any issue that constitutes the subject of the public sphere is declared an existential threat via the speech act, thus established as a security concern. The original posit of the theory is that a securitizing move transforms a succeeded security practice when the target audience accepts the arguments of the securitizing agent, and the agent is freed from constraints. Thus, an analyst who wants to evaluate the outcomes of any securitizing move has two key factors to consider: “audience approval and adopting extraordinary measures.” However, the classical version has been heavily criticized for failing to adequately determine the status of these constituents (audience and exceptionalism) and for promoting a securitizer-driven and non-usual process to address urgent threats.

This study seeks to provide analysts with an avenue, more specific than before, of “the conditions that need to be met for a certain securitizing move to occur successfully” which was theorized in a non-rigid way in the classical cast. In this sense, the paper begins by addressing “the politics of the audience.” In theory, the CS defines securitization as an intersubjective process and delineates the audience as one of the main actors of this process. However, it did not sufficiently answer some fundamental questions such as “who or whom this audience consists of” or “how to measure the reactions of the relevant audience,” thus dragging securitization “in practice” to a process that takes place only under the patronage of the securitizer.

Given this, the study proposes an “effective and visible audience portrait” to strengthen the intersubjective character that makes the theory unique and addresses these ambiguities. An empowered audience can be a counterbalance to the uncontrolled actions of securitizing actors. It also argues that the “engaged audience” would be specifically determined for each case study, as each society, state, or institution has a different form of government, norms, and culture. To measure the support or resistance of the engaged audience, the study suggests observation of social events such as protests or riots, as well as formal (voting on a particular issue or a general election) or informal (opinion polls or surveys) methods, again depending on the context in which securitization takes place (whether democratic or not).

The second issue problematized in the study is the logic that confines securitization to an exceptional security framework, reminiscent of fast-track procedures or coercive methods such as military and police forces. “The logic of exception” is both inherently risky and inappropriate for real-world securitizations. Indeed, in recent years, the security perception has transcended its conventional boundaries, and besides conventional concerns, sophisticated ones like epidemics or environmental degradation have been added to the security agenda. With this expansion, in many cases, the securitizing move has been followed by “unexceptional responses.” So, the paper argues that in addition to the “exceptional ways” of original ST to deal with an existential threat, “normalized exceptional” and, more importantly, “routine responses” should be inserted into the functioning of ST. “Normalized exceptional” is what Neal (2012) calls “legislative exceptionalism,” which are practices that were once seen as an exceptional response but which, over time, transform into the “new normal” thanks to legislation enacted by governments. The USA’s 2001 Patriot Act and the UK’s 2001 Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act (ATCSA) exemplify the institutionalization of exceptionalism through legislative measures against the relative slowness of normal politics. “Routine responses” refer to any “action/observable change in behaviour that takes place in the ordinary functioning of normal politics” (Floyd, 2016, p. 684) or established mechanisms in liberal democratic states and is associated with the securitizing movement. Contrary to the “exceptionalism of securitization,” the “decision-making is open in the sense that legislatures and other bodies are able to scrutinize the executive” (Roe, 2012, p. 251). In this sense, the process is accountable and transparent. For instance, a decision to impose a sanction that follows established norms in response to the presumed threat. Inspired by Foucault and Bourdieu, Bourbeau (2014, p. 190) calls them the “logic of routine” and describes them as a set of routinized and stereotyped practices carried out by bureaucrats and security experts, in which technology plays an important role.

However, considering that ST is also applied in non-democratic countries, it should be emphasized that “routine reactions,” while unethical, may not always be within “democratic boundaries.” For, as Wæver and Buzan (2020) point out, “‘normal politics’ is not always a politics with specific qualities (liberal, civilized, or rational).” Therefore, as suggested in the audience of securitization, the measures taken need to be evaluated “in terms of the specific circumstances of securitization (the country in which it takes place, the form of government, whether the securitizer is state or non-state).” In sum, the paper argues that an understanding in which all these logics can coexist or complement each other should dominate the theory of

securitization. In this sense, any reasoned measure taken by actors directly related to the threat should be considered as part of the securitization process.

A theory of securitization with an audience whose influence is felt in practice, and attempting to overcome the logic of exception, a little closer to the desired democratic understanding and provide a more universal framework for the outcomes of any real-world securitization.

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The author declares that this article complies with ethical standards and rules.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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