

Securitization Theory Revisited

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The paper explored securitization theory by reviewing the perspectives of various scholars and proponents, drawing insights from secondary sources. The paper revealed that major weakness of securitization theory is its focus on dominant voices, neglecting marginalized or silenced groups. The paper concluded that, the Copenhagen School spearheaded by Wæver, Buzan, and de Wilde redefined security studies by introducing securitization theory, which highlights the socially constructed nature of threats. Scholars of the second generation, such as Balzacq and Lene Hansen, broadened the theory's empirical and practical dimensions. The paper recommends that, to stay relevant in the 21st century, the theory must confront its Eurocentric foundations, incorporate non-discursive elements, and advance strategies for desecuritization. The paper also recommends that, by integrating hybrid threats and elevating non-state actors and perspectives from the Global South, securitization theory can more effectively address modern security challenges like climate change and cyber threats, fostering more inclusive and equitable security policies.

Keywords: Securitization theory, desecuritization, Speech Act Theory, Copenhagen School, security studies

Introduction

Academic writing should integrate a theoretical framework from its discipline to ensure rigor in teaching and research, maintaining alignment with the methodological foundations of peace and conflict studies as an applied social science (Ndeche & Iroye, 2022). Post-World War II, security studies were largely equated with strategic studies, emphasizing military aspects. However, as international relations grew more complex with economic and environmental issues, new security challenges, risks, threats, and the emergence of new actors, the traditional, narrow concept of security became insufficient (Šulović, 2010). The Copenhagen School (CS) offers an alternative approach to security analysis, emerging from the 1970s and 1980s debate over narrow versus broad security perspectives (Charrett, 2009). It is crucial to revisit the concept of securitization theory. Drawing on Thomas Kuhn's (2017) seminal work, every theory possesses two key traits: first, its groundbreaking achievements are significant enough to garner a dedicated group of followers; second, it remains open-ended, enabling

practitioners to tackle diverse issues. Securitization theory clearly reflects these characteristics, prompting key questions about its origins, the influences shaping its main proponents' thinking, and the differences in their perspectives. The theory elucidates the process by which an issue ascends to a nation's security agenda, serving as a cornerstone in international security studies (Silva & Pereira, 2024). It offers a compelling framework for understanding how routine matters can be framed as pressing security threats, necessitating exceptional responses (Otukoya, 2024). Against this backdrop, this paper explored the historical context of securitization theory, contributions of key theorists to securitization theory and its application to international security.

Historical Context and Development of Securitization Theory

In Hirschauer's (2014) work, *Securitization Theory: A Matter of Words*, in *The Securitization of Rape*, he notes that Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver introduced Securitization Theory in the

late 1980s as “a tool for practical security analysis” (Taureck, 2006, p. 53) to a wider academic audience. The theory, in essence, describes securitization as the process of framing and moving an issue from routine politics into the domain of security. For Buzan and Waever, it fundamentally involves identifying an issue or entity as requiring extraordinary measures, beyond standard handling. Once an issue crosses this threshold into a “terrain beyond normalcy,” it is perceived as an existential threat, solidifying its status as a security concern.

According to Baele and Thomson (2017), securitization theory, initially formulated by Wæver (1995) and further developed by Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde (1998), focuses on how political actors transform issues into security threats and the implications of such transformations. Williams (2003, p. 513) describes the theory as focusing on how security issues are socially constructed, particularly by identifying who or what is considered in need of protection and the perceived threats, using what are known as “securitizing speech acts.” These acts do not merely describe a pre-existing security situation but actively create it by successfully framing an issue as a threat, thus “securitizing” it. Since its introduction, the theory has spurred a diverse range of empirical studies on topics like immigration, global health, and cyber-security, contributing to the refinement of its increasingly complex theoretical framework.

For Fiveable (2024, p. 23), noted that:

- Securitization theory, developed in the 1990s, is a constructivist framework that explores how security threats are socially constructed through discourse and political processes
- It challenges traditional realist perspectives in international relations by highlighting the significance of language, ideas, and identity in shaping security policies and practices
- The theory explains how specific issues are framed as existential threats, necessitating extraordinary measures beyond routine politics.

Influences from Constructivism

- Securitization theory is deeply rooted in constructivist approaches to international relations, which focus on the social construction of reality through shared meanings and practices.
- It aligns with constructivism’s emphasis on the role of language, norms, and identity in shaping global politics and security dynamics.
- By applying constructivist principles to the realm of security, the theory examines how political actors and audiences discursively construct and respond to threats.

Van Munster (2012) outlines the evolution of securitization theory, noting that the concept was first introduced by Wæver in 1995 and more comprehensively developed in Buzan *et al.* (1998). The latter remains the Copenhagen School’s most detailed exploration of securitization and is essential reading for understanding their perspective. In addition to the Copenhagen School’s works, several key reviews and overviews of securitization theory exist. Huysmans (1998) provides an early analysis, offering valuable insight into how securitization theory emerged within the broader research context of the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Williams (2003) critically evaluates the theory’s significance for international relations and security studies. Emmers (2007) offers an accessible introduction for undergraduates, highlighting the theory’s contributions and limitations. Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2010) provide a more advanced discussion, situating securitization within critical security studies and addressing key debates. McDonald (2008) delivers a current overview, systematically addressing analytical ambiguities in the framework. Balzacq (2010) focuses on varying interpretations of the speech act within securitization theory.

Aydoğan (2023) presents table summarizing securitization research from 1997 to 2023.

Table 1: Number of Published Works in the Literature on Securitization Internationally between 1997-2023

Subject	Article	Book Chapter	Review	Book	Editorial	Conference Paper	Other	Total
Securitization	2961	804	220	152	42	40	48	4267

Aydoğan explains that the table's data is sourced from the Scopus database, focusing on publications in the Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities. The search includes works in all languages, with criteria requiring the term "securitization" in the article title, abstract, or keywords. The "Other" category for document types encompasses notes, errata, letters, retracted papers, and short surveys.

Securitization Theory through Ole Wæver's Analysis

Developed in the 1990s, securitization theory offers a fresh perspective on security, introducing a novel approach to its study. It was first articulated by Ole Wæver in his 1995 book chapter, "Securitization and Desecuritization." In this work, Wæver not only establishes the framework for securitization theory but also expresses dissatisfaction with traditional security approaches, which treat security as having fixed, uncontested meanings centered on threat and fear. Wæver (1995) advocates for a new way to conceptualize and address security by deeply examining the concept of "security" itself. His critique of conventional security thinking rests on two key points. First, he views security as "a reality prior to language" (Wæver, 1995, p. 46), existing independently of discourse. Second, he calls for broadening the scope of security to include a wider range of issues, arguing that while the core meaning of security remains uncontested, the approach should involve "securitizing still larger areas of social life" (Wæver, 1995, p. 47). Expanding the concept of security across various dimensions carries distinct implications. While Wæver (1995) proposes a broader approach to studying security, he does not advocate for an expanded security agenda. Instead, he cautions that broadening the application of security can be problematic, as it risks including virtually any issue within the security framework (Wæver, 1995). Wæver argues that such an expansion could dilute the concept of security, stripping it of its substantive meaning. He explains that "widening along the referent object axis—claiming that 'security is not only military defense of the state, but also x, y, and z'—has the unfortunate effect of endlessly expanding the security realm until it encompasses the entire social and political agenda" (Wæver, 1995, p. 48). To illustrate this,

Wæver references Johan Galtung and Jan Øberg's alternative security concepts tied to human needs. Wæver (1995) critiques Øberg and Galtung's individual-focused security framework, which defines security through positive goals like survival, development, freedom, and identity. While acknowledging its legitimacy, Wæver argues it risks making everything a security issue, thus diluting the concept's meaning (p. 47). This broad approach, he contends, inadvertently fuels securitization by framing diverse issues as existential threats, granting states and elites extraordinary powers to address them (p. 48). By labeling something a security problem, the state can prioritize it over other political processes, claiming urgent action is needed to protect sovereignty (p. 51). Wæver warns that this allows power holders to control issues by invoking security (p. 54). Similarly, Buzan *et al.* (1998) noted that security rhetoric justifies force and enables states to mobilize special powers to counter existential threats (p. 21). Wæver (1995) redefines security as a "speech act," challenging the idea that security has a fixed, inherent meaning (p. 55). He argues that security does not exist independently but is created through its utterance. Declaring something a security issue, whether real or not, grants it priority and justifies the use of extraordinary measures to address it (p. 55). Wæver emphasises that the act of labelling something as a security concern is itself the significant act, not a reflection of a pre-existing reality (p. 55). He further clarifies that security and insecurity are not opposite: security involves a recognized security problem with a response, while insecurity indicates a problem without action (p. 57). This perspective, outlined in Wæver's (1995) chapter "Securitization and Desecuritization," forms the basis of securitization theory.

Barry Buzan Perspective on Securitization Theory

In "People, States and Fear", Buzan develops a comprehensive view of security, analyzing it across three levels: individuals, states, and international systems. He also examines security through five sectors—Political, Military, Economic, Societal, and Environmental—which he further discusses in his article "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century."

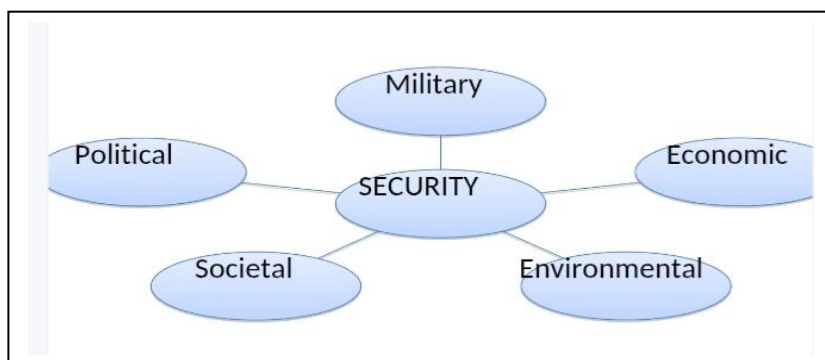


Figure 2: Showing the five sectors of security

The concepts of security across different levels and sectors are deeply interconnected, forming a complex web that security analysts and international relations scholars must carefully disentangle to understand each element individually and their collective impact. This micro/macro approach, though highly intricate, is crucial for addressing what Buzan terms the “‘National’ Security Problem.” In his work, Buzan employs an epistemological methodology, starting with the state as the primary referent of security. To analyse this, he first questions the nature of the state itself. At the individual level, security is not synonymous with life, health, status, wealth, or freedom themselves; rather, it refers to the protection and preservation of life, the advancement of health status, the safeguarding and growth of wealth, the maintenance of social status, and the protection of individual freedom elements that are complex and often irreplaceable if lost. At the individual level, security can be understood as encompassing factors like life, health, Threats to individuals are relatively straightforward to conceptualize. However, security at the individual level cannot be directly applied to national security, as the concept does not follow a uniform model across different scales. To understand the security of complex and abstract entities like states, Buzan examines the essence of the state itself. He demonstrates this using a triangular model, where the three interrelated elements are the concept of the state, its territorial foundation, and its institutional structure. This framework highlights that while each component can be analysed as a distinct security issue, their interlinkages are critical. Exploring these connections provides valuable insights into the

complexities of the national security problematique (Stone, 2009).

Jaap de Wilde on Securitization Theory

The pivotal moment in this process is the “securitizing move,” which refers to a speech act that uses the “rhetoric of existential threat” (Buzan, Waever, & De Wilde, 1998, p. 24–25). This move presents a particular issue—such as immigration or climate change as a serious threat to the survival and stability of a specific referent object, like the state, its citizens, or civilization, framing it as facing an existential danger (Buzan, Waever, & De Wilde, 1998, p. 36). The individuals or groups who carry out this framing are known as securitizing actors. (Buzan, Waever, & De Wilde, 1998, p. 36). Securitizing actors, defined as those who frame a referent object as existentially threatened (Buzan, Waever, & De Wilde, 1998, p. 36), may include political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists, or pressure groups (Buzan, Waever, & De Wilde, 1998, p. 40). A securitizing move is only successful if the audience accepts the threat narrative and agrees to the suggested exceptional measures. This outcome is not assured and depends on certain enabling factors such as a favorable context or the credibility of the actor—commonly known as “felicity conditions.” Consequently, securitizing moves may fail if these conditions are not met.

The Institute for European Studies (IES) in 2016 at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) organized a conference at the European Commission focused on examining how policymakers address societal security through the process of securitization.

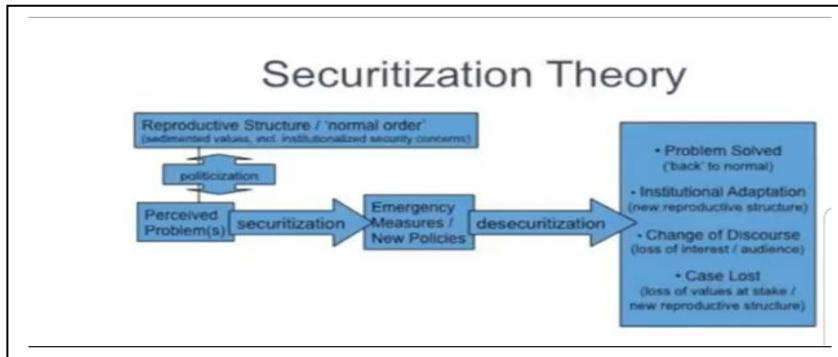


Figure 3: Diagrammatical representation of Jaap de Wilde Analysis on Securitization

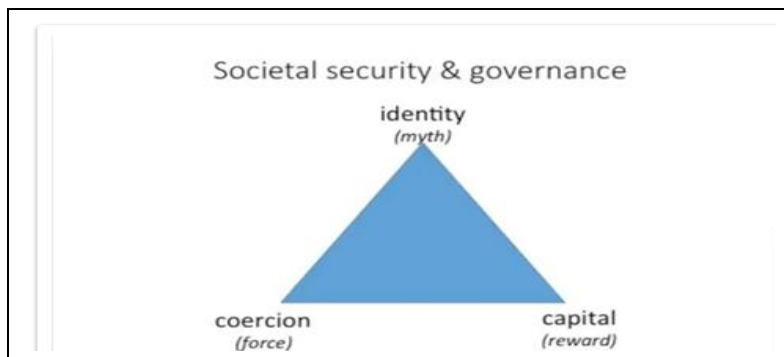


Figure 4: Jaap de Wilde (2016) on Securitization

Jaap de Wilde poses a fundamental question: how do 7.4 billion people interact in terms of cooperation and conflict? He suggests approaching security studies from a global perspective, considering how the world looks from the outside in, thereby encouraging scholars to examine patterns of interaction among states, societies, and individuals to better understand the dynamics of global security, interdependence, and the conditions that foster either peace or conflict from the outside in. De Wilde emphasizes that identity groups, such as family, ethnicity, nation, and religion, are central to societal concerns. These identities shape our sense of self and community and are often tied to security concerns institutionalized in structures like armies, police, and judiciary systems. Jaap de Wilde emphasizes the importance of understanding societal security through the lens of governance, focusing on three key pillars: coercion, capital, and identity, drawing on the works of Charles Tilly and Benedict Anderson. He highlights that certain issues are prioritized over others, often due to perceived urgency, and that this prioritization is subjective and political. De Wilde defines securitization as

the process of mobilizing fear and anger, often through "speech acts," which leads to extraordinary measures being taken to address a perceived threat, before returning to normalcy (Van Der Vet, 2018).

Thierry Balzacq in his book *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*

Balzack began his analysis by stressing that, according to securitization theory, no issue is naturally a threat; rather, it becomes a security concern through political discourse. The theory itself encompasses various interpretations. On one side, scholars influenced by post-structuralism argue that language itself has a kind of "social magic" "the ability to construct threats simply by labeling something as "security." As Wæver (1995, p. 55), a key figure in securitization studies, puts it, saying the word "security" performs an action; in other words, "security is a speech act." The core concept of speech act theory, originally proposed by Austin, is that some statements do more than describe reality—they perform actions. These kinds of statements, known as

"performatives," contrast with "constatives" which merely state facts and can be evaluated as true or false. This language-centered viewpoint underpins the Copenhagen School's theoretical approach to securitization, which is why I describe it as "philosophical." In contrast, other scholars—especially those drawing from social theory—emphasize securitization as a matter of practices, contextual situations, and power dynamics that influence how threats are represented and formed. The idea here is that while language and discourse play a role in how some security issues emerge, many such issues arise without much deliberate discourse. This different viewpoint is known as the "sociological" approach and informs much of the work featured in this collection. There are three key differences between the philosophical and sociological understandings of securitization. The first is that the philosophical perspective treats securitization as a structured process, comparable to formal social acts such as getting married or making a wager where certain conditions, known as "felicity conditions," must be perfectly met for the speech act to be successful. In contrast, the sociological perspective sees securitization as a more pragmatic, strategic process that unfolds within specific contexts. It depends on factors such as cultural attitudes, the audience's mindset, and the power dynamics between speaker and listener. While the speech act emphasizes universal principles that should apply regardless of context or power relations, the sociological model focuses on how discourse functions as a tool of persuasion, making use of things like metaphors, emotions, stereotypes, silence, and even deception to achieve its goals. Essentially, this distinction reflects the broader contrast between "pragmatics" and "universal pragmatics," as outlined by Balzacq (2011). While the first distinction centers on how language is used, including expressive and strategic uses to achieve specific outcome universal pragmatics is more focused on the core principles or rules that underpin communicative interaction. The second key difference is that, from the sociological perspective, performative acts are not just abstract speech, but context-dependent actions shaped by individuals' habitus—the ingrained dispositions that influence how they see and act in the world (as explained by Bourdieu, 1990, 1991). In this view, performatives

are understood as focal points of practice, shaped by struggles for power both within the broader social context and in the interaction between that context and the actor's habits. Here, securitization discourse represents a specific form of agency—one that is shaped over time as actors navigate different structural conditions. This involves a dynamic mix of habit, imagination, and judgment, through which actors both reinforce and reshape those structures in response to evolving historical challenges (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 970). The third difference lies in how each approach understands the role of the audience. Both the philosophical and sociological perspectives acknowledge the audience's importance, but they define it differently. In the philosophical approach, the audience is treated as a fixed, predefined group that primarily plays a passive or receptive role. In contrast, the sociological approach sees the relationship between the securitizing actor and the audience as mutually shaping. From this standpoint, the audience isn't assumed to exist as a fully formed group beforehand as the speech act model tends to suggest but is instead seen as something that emerges and must be identified through empirical analysis before being treated as an analytical category. However, this doesn't mean the sociological model believes the audience is simply "created" by the speech act itself, as that would reduce the audience to a mere product of the act, which it rejects (Balzacq, 2011).

Balzacq (2011) highlighted three fundamental assumptions at the heart of securitization theory. He argued that for empirical research in this field to be more effective, it must be grounded in theoretical assumptions that address inter-subjectivity, context, and practices. To support this approach, he outlined three key principles of securitization theory, each corresponding to these dimensions.

Assumption 1: The audience is essential in deciding whether an issue is successfully securitized. For securitization to be effective, the claims of the securitizing actor must be accepted by an 'empowered audience.' However, this concept is somewhat ambiguous, as it raises questions about whether the influence originates from the actor or the audience. Additionally, it introduces subjectivity and does not necessarily

account for marginalized or dissenting opinions. This audience is defined by two main characteristics: (a) it is directly impacted by the issue, and (b) it possesses the authority or influence to back the actor in acting against the perceived threat. In short, securitization happens when this influential audience validates the securitizing move.

Assumption 2: There is an emphasis on the interplay between agency and context, where the concept of security is influenced by both linguistic expression and cultural background. On one hand, it involves textual meaning understanding developed through written and spoken language; on the other, it draws from cultural meaning knowledge formed through past experiences and the present context. Therefore, the performative aspect of securitization depends on a balance between consistent linguistic patterns and the specific circumstances in which it occurs.

Assumption 3: Securitization happens through practices that shape and are shaped by social contexts. It is a dynamic process where different practices intersect, influenced by existing social

structures, tools, and habits. These practices reflect shared understandings and are connected by a dispositive (a framework or apparatus) that links them together.

Securitization and Sectorial Analysis

Security: A New Framework

- Security involves protecting something vital from existential threats. An issue becomes a security concern when it is framed as a threat to the survival of a specific entity, such as a state, its government, territory, or society (Buzan *et al.*, 1998).
- The Copenhagen School identifies five sectors of security.

Securitizing Actors and Referent Objects

Securitizing Actors: Securitizing actors are individuals or groups who frame an issue as an existential threat to a particular entity (referent object), thereby turning it into a security concern.

Referent Objects are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival.

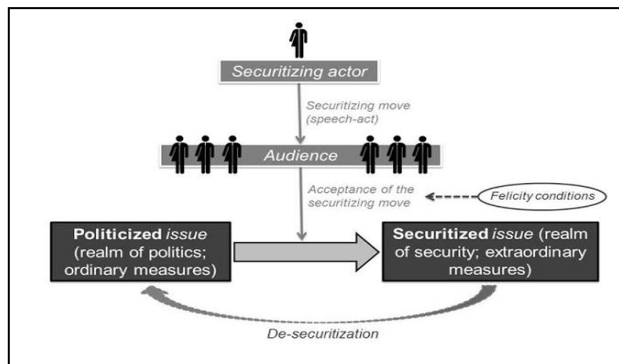


Figure Five: (Baele and Thomson, 2021)

Securitization Spectrum

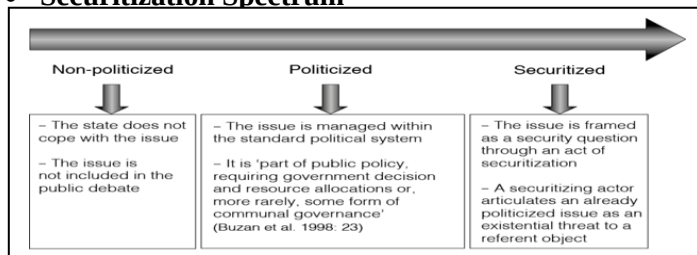


Figure Six: (Baele and Thomson, 2021)

- **A securitizing actor:** A securitizing actor takes a politicized issue and frames it as an existential threat to something or someone (referent object). They then claim that extraordinary measures, beyond normal rules and procedures, are necessary to address this threat.

• **Securitization:** Securitization is the process of elevating an issue beyond normal politics, framing it as an urgent threat that requires exceptional measures. It's a more intense form of politicization, where an issue is treated as a special case that transcends regular political rules and procedures (Buzan *et al.*, 1998).

Challenges and Critiques Facing Securitization Theory

- Baele and Thomson (2021) argue that Securitization theory has encountered and continues to face various challenges. The evolution of securitization theory has led to concerns about losing its theoretical coherence. As the framework has broadened beyond its initial focus on speech acts, different approaches have emerged, each with its own underlying assumptions and methods. This development can be seen as either a sign of the theory's usefulness and adaptability or a dilution of its original coherence.
- A criticism directed at Securitization Theory, rather than securitization research itself, is that theory does not always provide sufficiently clear methodological guidelines for empirical analysis, which has led some scholars to question how securitizing moves should be consistently identified and studied. While some scholars acknowledge the need for better methods, many empirical studies fail to specify their methods or justify their choices, such as how they select speeches or develop sampling strategies (Baele & Thomson, 2021).
- A third challenge in securitization studies comes from disagreements over its normative and ethical aspects, specifically its role as a critical theory. This means debating whether the field should not only analyse security issues but also aim to uncover the values and principles that can lead to greater freedom and

emancipation (Bohman, 2005). The Copenhagen School's securitization theory was initially positioned between traditional and critical approaches to security studies. However, recent critiques argue that the theory is Eurocentric, overlooking key systems of oppression, and even reinforcing Western superiority narratives. Researchers from postcolonial and area studies perspectives have challenged the theory's critical credentials (Baele & Thomson, 2021).

Another major weakness of securitization theory is its focus on dominant voices, neglecting marginalized or silenced groups. Lene Hansen (2000) critiques the Copenhagen School's approach for overlooking issues like gender, using this example to highlight the broader exclusion of oppressed or neglected voices. She advocates for a more constructivist approach, broadening the theory to include these perspectives.

Lene Hansen's Contribution to Securitization Theory

Scholars such as Lene Hansen have critically examined the ability of Securitization Theory developed by the Copenhagen School to account for gendered forms of insecurity. Using cases such as honour killings in Pakistan, Hansen identifies two analytical limitations often discussed in feminist security studies: “**security as silence**,” where individuals cannot articulate insecurity because speaking out may increase their vulnerability, and “**subsuming security**,” where specific gender concerns are absorbed into broader security narratives such as religion, nationalism, or ethnic conflict. Because securitization theory relies heavily on **speech acts**, situations in which victims cannot safely articulate their insecurity may remain underrepresented in securitization analysis.

Hansen suggests that incorporating Judith Butler's ideas on bodily performance and the role of the body in speech acts could help address the limitations of securitization theory. By focusing on the body and individual experiences, she argues, it's possible to better capture the security concerns of women and prevent their issues from being lost in collective narratives.

The Copenhagen School's emphasis on spoken language neglects the significance of

visual and physical forms of communication, which presents a notable limitation. According to Butler, speech and body are intertwined, and each influences the other. Incorporating the body into securitization analysis would have two key implications. First, even when verbal communication is absent, security can still be conveyed through body language. Second, by incorporating the physical element of a speech act, we can theorise scenarios where the actions of the securitizing actor do not align with their speech acts, emphasising the importance of shifting the

focus towards the distinction between the two (Hansen, 2000).

Like Serra Gun (2014), emphasised “**The Women in a Morgue in Baghdad**”, Rania Abuzeid, *The New Yorker*. The dilemma of women is analogous to the little Mermaid (pre-Disney version). Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)s attacking women and not much attention has been drawn to what is happening to these women. Abuzeid reports that the average women’s bodies brought to the morgue was about 120 to 140 bodies a day (Gun, 2014).

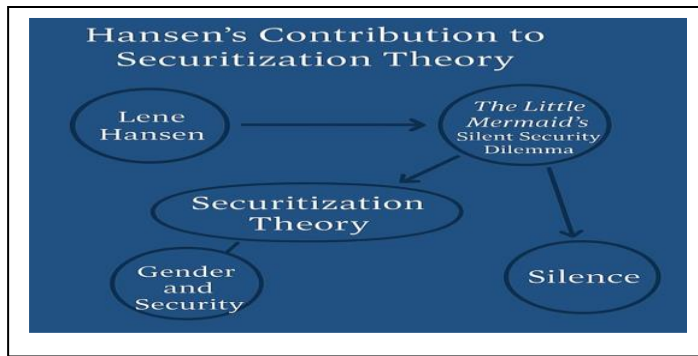


Figure Seven: Serra Gun, 2014. Diagram illustrating Hansen’s impact on securitization theory based on her article *The Little Mermaids Silent Security Dilemma and the absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School*

Application of Securitization theory to International Security Analysis

In their 2024 work, Hama, Mamshai and Mawlood discussed the securitization of the 2017 Kurdistan independence referendum. They argued that successive Iraqi governments have consistently framed the Kurdish right to self-determination within Iraq as a security issue. Following the referendum, which saw a strong pro-independence vote, Iraqi Arab political and military forces, along with Turkmen groups, viewed it as a significant threat to Iraq’s unity. In response, the Iraqi government opted for military action. On October 16, 2017, the Iraqi military, supported by Popular Mobilization Forces (PM), launched an assault on Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the disputed territories, gaining control over them.

Khan and Kaunert (2023) examine how U.S. drone strikes influenced the securitization efforts of successive Pakistani governments in addressing militancy after 9/11. The U.S. effectively framed the war on terror as a security imperative, enabling it to implement exceptional measures such as drone strikes to combat terrorism. However, these

U.S.-led securitization strategies hindered Pakistan’s own ability to effectively securitize internal militancy.

Conclusion

A Comparative Analysis of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, Theirry Balzacq and Lene Hansen

The Copenhagen School, spearheaded by scholars like Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, has significantly reshaped the field of international security studies. Their securitization theory moves away from viewing security solely as a response to concrete threats, instead framing it as a performative act—security is shaped by how issues are discussed rather than just by their objective existence. This perspective enables the analysis of a broad range of issues, including non-state actors like terrorist organizations, global challenges such as cyber threats, and even areas not traditionally seen as security concerns, like environmental crises or health emergencies (Otukoya, 2024). By exploring how these issues are framed as security threats, we can better

understand societal reactions to pressing problems. In contrast to Realist scholars who concentrate on war and survival, the Copenhagen School views security as a process driven by "securitizing moves," in which different actors, whether states or individuals, frame an issue as an urgent threat that requires exceptional responses. The effectiveness of this process depends on persuading an audience, making securitization a dynamic interaction between the actor and those they seek to convince (Wæver, 1995).

Buzan, Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde each made unique contributions to the development of securitization theory. Buzan played a key role in shaping the sectoral approach, Wæver focused on the conceptual foundation of securitization, and de Wilde, the most recent addition to the Copenhagen School, brought a critical perspective that prevented the group from fully adopting Realist assumptions without question (Buzan *et al.*, 1998). Notably, Wæver (1998) takes a critical stance on the use of security framing, arguing that labeling an issue as a security threat signals a failure to handle it through standard political processes. He advocates desecuritization removing issues from the security realm and reintroducing them into the normal democratic political sphere, where they can be addressed more appropriately (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 29). While Wæver's view is clearly normative, Taureck (2006) emphasizes that this perspective does not limit what securitization theory is capable of analytically.

Although securitization theory has shed light on how threats are constructed through performative acts, it has been criticized for overlooking gender biases—specifically, regarding who is portrayed as a threat, who is deemed worthy of protection, and what is considered a valid security issue. To address these shortcomings, Hansen proposes incorporating Judith Butler's insights on bodily performance within speech acts, emphasizing the body as a key epistemological element and drawing attention to how women are often individualized in ways that obscure their collective security needs (Taurek, 2006; Hansen, 2000). Balzacq identified three core assumptions of securitization theory and argued that enhancing empirical research requires developing theoretical frameworks that account

for inter-subjectivity, context, and practice (Balzacq, 2011).

In conclusion, the Copenhagen School spearheaded by Wæver, Buzan, and de Wilde defined security studies by introducing securitization theory, which highlights the socially constructed nature of threats. Scholars of the second generation, such as Balzacq and Lene Hansen, broadened the theory's empirical and practical dimensions. However, to stay relevant in the 21st century, the theory must confront its Eurocentric foundations, incorporate non-discursive elements, and advance strategies for desecuritization. By integrating hybrid threats and elevating non-state actors and perspectives from the Global South, securitization theory can more effectively address modern security challenges like climate change and cyber threats, fostering more inclusive and equitable security policies.

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