Introduction to securitization theory

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This social constructivist method of conceptualizing security known as ‘securitization’ was first presented in a 1989 Working Paper “Security the Speech Act: Analysing the Politics of a Word” by Ole Wæver.

Based in the Copenhagen: Centre for Peace and Conflict Research, O Wæver and B Buzan

a series of works including a book on societal security in Europe, Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda (1993) and


which extensively expands upon the conceptual understanding of securitization as well as its practical application.

The Copenhagen School has offered an innovative and fascinating approach to security
What does securitization?

The Copenhagen School - a ‘next step’ in the ongoing discussion on how best to understand ‘security’.

- it alternatively implied
  -- a conceptual move,
  -- a framework of analysis, and
  -- an empirical and political theory of security.

• It is probably fair to say that ‘securitization’ was foremost a broad conceptual move.
• It went beyond conceptualizing security in objectivist terms – I.E a qualitative and quantitative tool of evaluating security.
• it also left a subjectivist security concept behind, where security is whatever significant actors may regard as such.
SECURITY IS WHAT WE MAKE OF IT!

- The securitization theory developed in the late '90's by the Copenhagen School (Security: A New Framework for Analysis, 1998)
  - it has widened the concept of security - military sector but also to the political, economical, societal and environmental spheres.
  - it has “developed a substantial body of concepts to rethink security, most notably through its notions of securitization and desecuritization […],”
  - do not pertain exclusively to the state, but can be enacted by other for as well providing a framework to analyze security, namely to understand how an issue becomes securitized or desecuritized.
  - it has introduced a subjective approach to security analysis, turning security into a self-referential practice on the claim that security is not an objective existing reality but an inter-subjective one, being the result of social, subjective, discursive processes and determined by actors with political potential, that benefit from privileged positions. (Emmers 2007:112)
- Sociology - proper toll to understand security
Chart 1: Securitization spectrum

Non-politicized
- The state does not cope with the issue
- The issue is not included in the public debate

Politicized
- The issue is managed within the standard political system
- It is ‘part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations or, more rarely, some form of communal governance’ (Buzan et al. 1998: 23)

Securitized
- The issue is framed as a security question through an act of securitization
- A securitizing actor articulates an already politicized issue as an existential threat to a referent object

Source: Emmers (2011: 138)
Non-politicized issues are those that the state does not deal with and that are not part of public debate.

Politicized issues are tackled within the political system and are part of public policy calling for government action.

Securitized matters, at the end of the spectrum, are those which ask for extraordinary means, beyond normal political procedures of the state (Emmers 2011: 138f).

According to the Copenhagen School, matters are moved from the politicized into the securitized area of the above shown spectrum via an ‘act of securitization’.

Buzan et al. (1998: 23) state that “security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics”,

securitization can therefore be considered a more extreme version of politicization.

desecuritization implies the reverse process of moving issues from the emergency level back into the normal political arena.
every securitization is composed of

- a security act (by speaking the language of security and asking for the adoption of extraordinary counter-measures) and
- a political act (a political decision to articulate the threat in such a way as to convince the target audience).
Normative dilemma

- Securitization processes have normative implications, which is understood here to be the negative securitization of a referent.
- The negative securitization of a referent is asserted to be carried out through the unchallenged analysis of securitization processes which have emerged through relations of exclusion and power.
- It then offers a critical understanding and application of securitization studies as a way of overcoming the identified normative dilemma.
Barry Buzan at the University of Bucharest (2007)