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Citation: Innes, A. (2024). Un-Siloing Securitization: an intersectional intervention. International Politics, doi: 10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7

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Link to published version: https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7

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International Politics
https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-024-00584-7

REVIEW

Un-siloing securitization: an intersectional intervention

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Accepted: 30 May 2024
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Abstract

This research reflects on how securitization works as a structure of power, or as a vehicle through which extant power structures (nationalism, race, gender, class, (dis)ability) are operationalised. I attend to the relationships between three thematic areas of securitization: immigration, health, and violence against women. I examine where securitization theory secures the state while calcifying the boundaries of who belongs to the state, ignoring or actively banishing marginalised and contested identities that do not form part of the audience that co-constitutes security and are obscured within the society for which security is made. The power structures guiding securitization narratives produce a racist, gendered, and classed interpretation of society in which violence against 'outsiders' or those who are only partially inside is endemic. This research remodels securitization theory as a tool through which researchers can expose the continuum of lived realities of violence and insecurity that are exacerbated by securitizing processes.

Keywords Securitization · Immigration · Health · Violence against women · Intersectionality · Insecurity

Introduction

The theorization of power embedded in securitization theory has often lacked a critical engagement with the power structures of patriarchy, racism, colonialism, and economics (Gomes and Marques 2021). State power is saturated with these other power structures; consequently, when an issue is securitized by the state the process of securitization has unequal effects and exacerbates existing inequalities. This is visible through the ways in which the lived experiences of patriarchy, colonialism, racism, and economic inequalities intersect, overlap, and merge with threat and insecurity. The discursive, iterative and (arguably) intersubjective

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Published online: 18 June 2024

process that securitization theory identified as making an existential threat, and as setting the boundaries on whose existence is threatened, marks a disjuncture between top-down and bottom-up identification of threat, particularly for minoritized groups whose primary identity does not align with state-based and national identity narratives. The constitution of a threat, even if it is intersubjective, is not constituted among equal agents. For example, the threatened referent object (society) is often identified in a way that replicates the dominant narrative of the nation, the us-and-them brokering that is subject to both contemporary political identity-making *and* centuries of national identity making imbued with colonialism, racism, ethnocentrism, and patriarchy. The audiences that accept or co-constitute the threats might be the broad public, but also are comprised of small specialist groups invested in fields related to securitization (Salter 2008; Côté, 2016).

In this research I suggest remodelling securitization theory to shift the emphasis to violence that is made or exposed in the process of securitization. I make a case for analysing securitization processes or discourses in tandem across intersecting forms of violence. Adopting intersectionality as analytical strategy (Hill Collins 2015) will offer a better grasp of how securitization works as a structure of power, or as a vehicle through which extant power structures (nationalism, race, gender, class, (dis)ability) are operationalised. I articulate this specifically by attending to the relationships between three thematic areas of securitization that have been identified and explored in the literature: immigration, health, and violence against women. I suggest that studying securitization as standalone thematic areas does not lend itself well to understanding how the effects of securitization reproduce dominant power narratives. Rather, I aim to first un-silo thematic areas of securitization to understand how they act in tandem, and second to centre the experience of *being securitized* to better understand where dominant power narratives of the state are reproduced and in turn reproduce intersectional inequalities.

I begin by giving critical attention to existing literature in three thematic foci: securitization of immigration, securitization of health and securitization of violence against women. These have been developed along different trajectories in the literature, but each has been framed as a securitized issue. I consider the key insights but also what might be missed when focusing on these issue areas in a way that isolates threats to be securitized. I then build an analytical argument by combining these three securitized issues, centring on how they work together to produce experiences of insecurity even under the guise of offering security. I argue that any concept of security that privileges state-based identity risks conflating the state and the populous, tending to secure the state and calcifying the boundaries of who *belongs* to the state while either ignoring or actively banishing marginalised and contested identities because they do not form part of the audience that co-constitutes security, and are obscured within the society for which security is made. The power structures that guide securitization narratives are producing a racist, gendered, and classed interpretation of society in which violence against 'outsiders' or those who are only partially inside is endemic. In this way, an *inclusive* society is always made more insecure because violence is internalised and accepted or is silenced and ignored.

Securitization, race and the language of the state

As is well known, securitization theory is the main theoretical contribution of the Copenhagen School of security studies. It is a critical discursive approach that deconstructs how a speech act can performatively render a problem as an existential threat. Securitization involves four parts: a speaker of security, an existential threat, a referent object (that which is threatened), and an audience who may accept or reject the securitizing action (Buzan 1998). The constitutive part of the existential threat is usually what we refer to as'securitization,' and this lends itself to an analytical process of separating a securitised issue for analytical clarity on the ways in which the performative speech act renders a problem as a threat, constructs the referent object, and considers the audience's (or several audiences') ultimate acceptance of the threat, or rejection of the threat in cases of unsuccessful securitization. Areas where processes of securitization have been identified include health (Baekkeskov et al. 2021; Wishnick 2010; McInnes and Rushton 2013; Emmers 2003; Sjöstedt 2010), transnational crime (Emmers 2003), climate change and the environment (Bo 2016; Oels 2012; Tombetta 2010; Zadnik et al. 2016)), development (Fisher and Anderson 2015), humanitarianism (Watson 2011), immigration (Arifianto 2009; Karyotis and Patrikios 2010; McDonald 2011; Ilgit and Klotz 2014; Hammerstadt 2014), terrorism (Karyotis 2007; Dixit 2016), so-called 'rogue' states (Stritzel and Schmittchen, 2010), particular ethnic identities (Van Baar et al. 2019; Baker-Beall and Clark 2021), and religion(s) (Vuori 2010), certainly among other things, and with varying degrees of specificity produced by the empirical approach or case study discussed.

Until recently, securitization theory had not dealt candidly with race and racism, and with the problematic racist and colonial roots of IR theory. Machanda (2021) argues that the way security studies organises its subject matter is whitewashing. She draws on the narrative of the great debates to demonstrate where international relations has introduced race or grappled with it, while security studies has retained a degree of removal, arguing that '[T]he emphasis on the 'international' (colour-blind) state of these events normalises an inattention to the pedestrian (racialized) destruction of lives, lifeways and livelihoods'(Manchanda 2021). The examples are compelling: security studies structured the Cold War in such a way that it has been adopted into popular discourse as a synonym for hostility without violence. The 'proxy wars' fought across Africa, East Asia, and in decolonising states are dismissed as insignificant to international security. The conceptual structuring of security studies denies lived experiences and organises events into sanitised conceptual categories as if only this elevated, scientific gaze can properly allow a rational analysis of forces that are supposedly bigger than human pain, death and destruction. Meanwhile, the discipline of security studies relies upon the analytical unit of the state. State identities, including the relevant formation of 'society' that resides within a bounded state, rely on emotional attachment and an always already racializing mentality.

As nation state citizenship is an exclusionary form of birth-right identity in and of itself (whether this birth-right is based on place or blood), it makes and

reproduces racism. The European-centrism and white supremacy at the heart of the state unit reproduce colonial power structures in a world that claims inclusivity by calcifying citizenship as the only acceptable form of international identity even while failing to guarantee that every human holds a state citizenship. Racialisation is then embedded in the structure of the state system, as it was used to mark bodily categories of differentiation during colonialism, decolonisation, and within the economic infrastructure of globalised capital (Urciuoli 2020; Mullings 2005; Omi and Winant 1993). Stanfield (2016) describes 'race-making as a mode of institution and nation-state building … race-making and its generator, racism, are part and parcel of the manner by which major industrial European-descent nation-states … have originated and developed. …[this has] been normative, not accidental, coincidental, or a contradiction between democratic ideas and human interests' (Stanfield Ii 2011): 113–114). To ontologically underpin an academic discipline with the analytical unit of the state means internalising the racism that such a unit relies upon. While there is a pragmatist argument to make, that the state *is* in practice the unit of international relations and we cannot deny its existence, this does not mean that we should be uncritically reproducing the power of the state. Rather we must attend to the violence inherent in that power, how it is used, and who it is used against. National identity and state-based exclusions require a logic of racism to function. Racialised identities transcend state borders and exist across them *and also* produce inequality and violence within a state identity. This is associated with mythical ideas of who does or does not properly belong to the imagined in-group. Urciuoli suggests that 'race is about having no legitimate place as a citizen in a larger order while ethnicity and diversity are about citizens and workers having provisional places' (Urciuoli 2020: 108). Processes of racialization and ethnicization produce inequality in the very ordering structure of the nation state and the nation state relies on these categories to function as an identity unit. Accepting the unit of the state as a birth-right identity legitimises this way of thinking in the world and is particularly problematic in international security studies, that directs analytical attention to the state-as-actor even while being well-able to identify the problems it causes.

Security studies, and even critical security studies, can be charged with lacking critical attention to race, but what of securitization more specifically? Howell and Richter-Montpetit argued that securitization theory is unambiguous in its racism, that 'its conceptualization of 'politics' and 'security' is founded in civilizationist thought' and 'antiblackness is a crucial building-block in securitization theory's conceptual division between security and politics.' (Howell and Richter-Montpetit 2020: 5). The argument is structured around that which securitization theory overlooks, and the way it characterises forms of violence. For example, social security is overlooked as being marginal to the politics of international security, and police violence is accepted as part of 'normal' politics. The authors point to case studies and empirical subject matter as reproducing extant anti-black and anti-Muslim biases within the body of securitization literature. These omissions on the part of securitization theory and theorists certainly indicate a lack of critical reflection with regard to race, although it should also be noted that there are indeed also some (acknowledged) omissions in Howell and Richter-Montpetit's characterisation of the field:

they speak directly to 'classic securitization theory' and take on the canonical works of the field. The authors acknowledge work that has incorporated a critical analysis of race in securitization, although they argue these critiques are thin as they still rely on the speech act methodology. For example, Moffette and Vadasaira (2016) reframe the state of exception that is produced by securitization as a lift on the prohibition of violence, which allows uninhibited violence towards racialised others that liberal states conventionally keep hidden to be practiced openly. Yet, other texts identify the racialised outputs of securitization, such as D'Argangelis (2017) who identified the racialised 'bio-terror' narratives that emerge from the securitization of public health, focusing more on narrativizing racialized concepts that produce racialised practices. And in an exemplary piece, Ybarra (2018) recentres the discussion to examine how the experience of racialised violence feeds back into geopolitical divisions that emerge and are sustained by racialised securitization practices. Ybarra does not centre on the speech act but focuses her analytical attention on the experience of racialized violence.

Of course, the debate on race in securitization theory has developed: Waever and Buzan (2020) and Hansen (2020) both responded to the critiques, Hansen marking the self-reflection it inspired. Here I seek to acknowledge the debate on race and argue that best practice is always for theory, not least securitization theory, to be reflective. We are not always capable of recognising and accounting for normative biases, yet we should always be held to a process of reflection towards this and held responsible if we do not do this well. Being cognizant of the racialised composition of the power structures that comprise our analyses (and govern our lives) is important. I suggest here two methods for improving the capacity of securitization theory to account for race, coloniality, and racialized structures, the systemic oppression of other forms of minoritization, and the consequent sustaining inequality. The first is to un-silo securitization and recognise that discrete examples of securitizing practices occur under the same racialised, ethnicized, gendered structures of power. This means that the implications of securitization are often layered, and manifest intersectional oppression and inequality. By advancing an understanding of intersecting securitizations and intersectional insecurities we can begin to address this more fully than has been achieved to date. Secondly, I argue that securitization ought to be decentred away from elites, to focus on the violence of securitization in the communities and among the identities where that violence manifests. Following the methodological model of Ybarra (2019), I argue for a theoretical decentring of securitization theory, where the violence of securitization leads the analysis.

Intersectionality and social inequalities

An intersectional approach can help access and acknowledge some of the obscurities and omissions in IR, allowing critical attention to the power structures that produce and reproduce hierarchies. Intersectionality is relatively well known in IR, particularly in feminist approaches. Intersectionality is used both as an activist platform and as a social theory, referring broadly to the understanding that various vectors of inequality are interconnected and reciprocal (Hill Collins 2015). As a theoretical

framing and a heuristic device, intersectionality in social theory draws from and builds upon Crenshaw's (1989) generative work, which identified the way power structures built on patriarchy and white supremacism concealed the experiences of black women in the workforce, even (or perhaps particularly) amongst efforts to secure gender or racial justice. The experiences of black women were made illegible precisely because of the intersectional operating of both power structures in tandem: struggles against patriarchy and white supremacism were isolated from each other and therefore people to whom both applied were discarded—not necessarily by intention or design, but because even within a move to contest a given power structure, normative or unconscious bias still holds sway. In this way, an additive intersectional approach that seeks categorical inclusivity will fail: instead, the attention must be redirected towards the operation of power. Indeed, Nira Yuval-Davis introduced an intersectional approach to the power relations specific to nation states as a framing to understand social stratification, which undergirds the approach adopted here (Yuval-Davis 2016; Hill Collins 2019).

Of course, in critical IR theory we tend to be cognizant of power structures, and this attention needs to be reflectively applied in a way that acknowledges the core disciplinary ontological assumptions: the nation state, citizenship, the Westphalian system, and Euro-centrism. Historical and transnational patriarchal structures are not limited to the internal operation of domestic politics, but constructed 'racialized, sexualised imperial and colonial hierarchies outside the borders of those polities' (Patil 2013). Patil argues for a transnational feminism that can access the transterritorial dynamics of patriarchy. Unless we consider what is happening between, among, across and around states, we reify the state and therefore the patriarchal power structures in which the state is built and from which the state retains its authority.

Consequently, attending to patriarchal white supremacist power structures first moves us away from the state. If we do not assume the state is justified in privileging its security above all else, then the inequality at the heart of citizenship is thrown into view. IR has not dealt closely with social inequality, yet inequality arises both from the imperial history of IR and from the contemporary liberal (economic) order. Directing attention to the patriarchal structures of IR and how they produce intersectional inequalities means attending to the structure of the state itself, but also the dominance of rationality over emotion and the dominance of public over private space as the place of (international) politics (Tickner 1992; Hooper 2001; Sjoberg 2009). Turning critical attention to the power structures that inform the concepts and analytical trends in security studies opens inequality as an analytical category for IR that does not have to be bounded by the unit of the state to be legible. In the following sections I look at the securitization literature in three distinct areas: immigration, health, and violence against women and girls. Taken separately these areas identify securitization processes and the impact of these processes. If they are considered together, it becomes clear that the embedded power structures reproduce normative whiteness, patriarchy, and the value of the state in a way that might produce security where (and for communities for whom) these phenomena are invisible, but also produces insecurity and violence for populations and people who are subject to these forces as disciplinary power. We can better access intersectional inequality

by looking at the way these securitizations relate to each other and reproduce the same power structures. In the next section I introduce three thematic areas of securitization as separate studies. I follow this by offering an intersectional analytical approach that un-silos these three thematic areas to better understand how they each reproduce the same patriarchal power structure that is embedded in the nation state.

Securitization of immigration

There is a relatively well-established literature on the securitization of immigration. Immigration lends itself to securitization as a relatively unique policy area in democratic societies: the people primarily affected by immigration policy have no institutionalised recourse to hold policy-makers accountable (of course this is speaking generally: there are citizens with a personal investment in immigration policy). For Copenhagen school critical security, the foundation of the securitization of immigration is in terms of its threat to society. Waever argued that if societal security is conceptualised in an unsophisticated way, migrants—including refugees—will be identified as the 'other' and constructed as a threat to the cohesion of society (Wæver 1993). As Huysmans argues, to securitize migration is to solidify society (Huysmans 2006). The securitization of migration has a dual function, both constituting a subject to share political trust, loyalty and identity, and identifying that subject by drawing attention to what it is not: the threatening out-group of migrants and asylum seekers.

Cehan and Tsoukala date the phenomenon of the securitization of immigration to the 1990s, which is when the most dramatic increase in legal immigration restrictions can be located at least in Western societies (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002). In the public discourse, migration became and is a ''hot button' issue …[and] is thus transformed into a threat not only to the state but also to the security and the identity of the host society' (Ibid: 22). These authors identify four dynamics in the rhetoric of securitization that establishes immigration as a security threat: socioeconomic, securitarian (linked to a loss of control of borders), identity-based, and political. The consequences of the practices of securitization permit a semantic shift, changing the language of immigration regulation to immigration control, in itself reflecting what the authors term the securitarian discourse (Ibid).

Work on the securitization of immigration has been adopted as a means of conceptually advancing securitization theory because it offers a clear example of the suspension of normal politics on multiple levels, including far reaching techniques of surveillance that permeate physical borders. For example, Bigo and Guild evidence the way immigration law applies restrictions on personal liberties, thus stigmatizing the 'other' and blocking full societal participation (Bigo and Guild 2005; Guild 2017). Bigo (2002) examines the internal dynamics of security governance, demonstrating both how borders are characterised by practices of surveillance rather than being physical entities, but also how risk and unease is managed rhetorically as a means of garnering political favour: border controls offer evidence of measures taken to provide safety (Bigo 2002). The media's adoption of the rhetoric of security in relation to immigration and its role in

constituting society has also been established (Buonfino 2004; Innes 2010, Gray and Franck 2019). Gray and Franck consider the gendered and racialised tropes that characterise media representations that permit the constitution of refugees as simultaneously vulnerable and requiring sympathy, and a threat to state and society (Gray and Franck 2019). Ibrahim (2005) traces the discursive transformation of migrants into agents as a process of racialisation, and argues that academics along with media and public discourse have contributed through repetition and reframing to the calcification of security discourse attached to immigration. Laziridis and Skleparis consider securitization manifesting as routine practices of security professionals who are both embedded in and reproduce the politics of unease (Lazaridis and Skleparis 2016). Robinson (2017) offers an empirical account of securitization discourse shifting the response to incoming migrants in Canada, adopting a process tracing methodology to argue that the security response to migrants arriving by boat in 2010, and subsequent changes to detention policy, can be causally explained via securitization discourse. Leonard and Kaunert recently argued that securitization is imbricated in the discursive diplomatic practices of external actors, examining the role of Turkey in exploiting security narratives of immigration towards Europe for political advantage (Léonard and Kaunert 2022). Conversely, Neal (2009) argued that securitization theory did not offer a level of complexity that could effectively reflect that of immigration governance in the EU and argues that.

> practices of government have become too complex, too plural and too diverse to maintain the plausibility of a sovereign-centred, nominalist understanding of security … although the spectacle of discursive securitization can be identified fairly easily in the institutions of the EU, any causal relationship with policy changes or outcomes is much harder to discern (Neal 2009).

It may be hard to identify the causal relationship between a speech act and the policy outcomes, but the collection of securitized policies and practices coupled with increasingly restrictive immigration rules are empirically evident.

Perhaps securitization is a useful tool for liberal states to explain the violence of immigration policies as exceptional politics, rather than to acknowledge that liberalism is constituted through exclusion such as Agamben explores in his state of exception (Agamben 2008) and Mbembe identified in his theorisation of 'necropolitics' (Mbembé and Meintjes 2003). These theoretical framings have proved useful to understand violence of contemporary migration politics and engage more closely with the inherent violence within them (Squire 2017; Davies et al. 2017; Mayblin et al. 2020). The work on the securitization of immigration has offered a significant and useful understanding of how security framings rely on the constitution of society and therefore an in-group and an out-group. Securitization constitutes threat, and in the context of immigration that threat is embodied; thus, it is worth recognising the impact of securitizing practices on those who constitute the threat, even while they are simultaneously identified as vulnerable. Weakness threatens social security of liberal states, and therefore vulnerability is in itself a potent threat. Vulnerabilities are exacerbated by extant (racialised, ethnicized, gendered, ableist) power structures. They are intersectional. Hostile immigration practices represent an additional power

structure that acts on these inequalities. The intersectional characteristics come into view more clearly when cross-cutted with other securitizations.

Securitization of health

Health as an issue of national security has been well-established over the last three decades. Jeremy Youde provides a useful discussion of both advantages and disadvantages of health securitization, identifying that while health securitization can garner attention for an issue (evidenced in the AIDS epidemic), and resources to address it that might be activated on a global scale, it simultaneously can feed into an us-versus-them mode of thinking (Youde 2022). Youde identifies the negative elements of increased surveillance, and the reproduction of paternalistic relationships between global North and South. Stefan Elbe (2006) looked closely at the global AIDS pandemic through the lens of securitization theory, as revelatory of the normative dilemma at the heart of securitization of health (Elbe 2006). This normative dilemma is characteristic of securitization in general: while securitizing something may raise awareness and, crucially, may direct state funds towards a targeted issue, it simultaneously invites military responses that often involve the suspension of civil rights and liberties, and it raises a threat-defence logic (2006).

The racialised dimensions of AIDS are well-established in health literature with racial and ethnic disparities evident in infection rates and outcomes (Stone 2012; Bhana 2006; Elbe 2006). While there are racialised tendencies to apportion 'blame' and to control movement, minoritized people are more likely to die from AIDS: this is not a discretionary behaviour of the virus, rather it reflects extant health inequalities that can be observed both globally and more locally in individual states. As Youde (2008) warns in his discussion of the potential securitization of Avian flu H5N1, securitization of health involved 'us-versus-them' thinking, and evoked efforts to guarantee flu vaccines (Youde 2008). The effort to prepare for a pandemic in case it happened *in America* before human-to-human transmission was known, was the priority and arguably displaced AIDS and other real-but-distant ongoing crises such as Malaria from the global health agenda. As Sophie Harman (Harman 2021) succinctly argues:

> The health issues that threaten millions of lives in low- and middle-income countries but pose very little risk to high-income countries are rarely considered to be matters of global health security and so are not prioritised, while simultaneously people living in low- and middle-income countries are then framed as the threat to the West, as vectors of disease, and are thus subject to discrimination which is often highly gendered and racialized. Global health security thus both exacerbates and reproduces inequality by creating a hierarchy of health issues (Harman 2021: 607).

Infectious disease lends itself to securitization, as Metelmann et al. argue (Metelmann et al. 2022). Of course, the securitization of Covid-19 is the quintessential example of securitization justifying the suspension of civil liberties on an extreme scale, albeit one that varied by country, in the context of a health

emergency. Metelmann et al. explore the implications for non-communicable disease, and specifically disease treated by surgery—but this could also be applied to other public health issues. These authors find that surgery specifically has low securitizing potential and this is in part due to its high infrastructural demands: surgery requires public investment. The authors note that there is a bias towards prioritising infectious diseases because the means of addressing them are relatively simple and do not always necessitate high-level medical expertise (such as containment, and vaccine programmes). Surgical disease on the other hand cannot be contained or addressed in the same way: for example, appendicitis is not infectious and cannot be prevented with a vaccine programme. The authors demonstrate this argument with the evidence that the 'Public Health Emergency of International Concern' (PHEIC) declarations of the last decade all referenced an infectious disease despite the fact that public health, and therefore public health security, is of course much broader. What is perhaps as—if not more—significant than resources, is that non-communicable disease such as appendicitis does not lend itself to an us-versus-them logic and therefore does not evoke the logic of security.

In terms of global health security, the WHO has taken an increasingly significant role on deciding the security exception (Hanrieder and Kreuder-Sonnen 2014). As Hanreider and Kreuder-Sonnen discuss, this top-down institution with no direct enforcement capability can usefully draw on security language to activate the capacity of states to enforce containment of infectious disease. While the WHO might be the securitising actor in this context, the audience that co-constitutes the threat is the state, and states retain the responsibility to make and implement security policies This can operate as a means of protecting the most vulnerable. Nevertheless, there are varied and intersectional forms of vulnerability, exacerbated by massive inequality in the world. Recent work on the Covid-19 pandemic has begun to draw attention to some of these significant vulnerabilities attached to inequality and power. Where the spread of the infectious virus was securitised, it raised significant insecurities for people at risk of suffering domestic abuse (Kourti et al. 2021). Risks linked to low socioeconomic status such as unstable income and financial uncertainty that are linked to mental health and heightened stress were exacerbated by lockdowns (Patel et al. 2020). A special issue of *American Behavioural Scientist* explored the cross-cutting and intersectional inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic, revealing the interplay of race and ethnicity and socio-spatial inequalities (Kuk et al. 2021), and the gendered disparities produced by home-schooling and gendered domestic structures (Bariola and Collins, 2021). Additionally digital inequalities, which might be socioeconomic but also intersect with other variables such as age, education, and disability, were linked to bodily stress and anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic (Robinson et al. 2020, 2021). The relevance here is not to make an argument about the efficacy of lockdown or to critically assess responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, but to demonstrate that there are particular public health-based insecurities and vulnerabilities that can be directly produced by an act of health securitization. Securitizing acts in one area produce insecurity and vulnerability in another.

Securitization of gender-based violence

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) and gender-based violence emerged on the security agenda in the late 90s. The turn to 'human security' in the latter half of the 90s as well as the work of feminist theorists turned attention to the nuances of how security is experienced outside of the immediate domains of war and conflict, linking the security of people internal to the state with state security. UNSC Resolution 1325 established the 'Women, Peace and Security Agenda' of the UN, which committed to recognising the impact of armed conflict on women and girls. As the focus shifted away from human security, which had gained popularity in the 1990s, to the impact of armed conflict, a securitising move is apparent that places gender issues in the context of conflict and forecloses the broader tenets of human security, or at least creates a division between militarised security and socio-economic security (True and Tanyag 2018). Human security considered things like economic, food, health, environmental, and personal security. Jansson and Eduards (2016) argue that the move of gender into the security realm adopts the threat-logic of security without engaging with feminist moves to conceptualise patriarchy as threat, or recognise the everyday violences associated with the unjust distribution of both voice/agency and resources (Jansson and Eduards 2016). Instead, securitizing gender reproduces female vulnerability. Jansson and Eduards underline the need to 'account for the special needs of women and girls' but the women, peace and security agenda also constitutes the needs as 'special' by sexing female bodies and establishing that the socio-cultural experiences and pathways of women are different to those of men. In this way, men form the normative base, and women are exceptional with exceptional needs. Making violence in war zones a unique problem disconnects conflict-related violence from violence against women in peace zones; in this sense, normative, everyday gender-based violence is not on the agenda at all.

The experiences of women and girls often do not sit in the conventional theoretical realm of war and conflict, and require a deeper engagement with lived experience, daily life, the social and the domestic. As True and Tanyag (2018) articulate, the women, peace and security agenda can be narrowly interpreted as making war safe for women, without addressing the deeper layers of violence that impact women's security in the work not just during conflict and in crisis situations but as a state of being. It also essentialises female identities, by establishing women as peacebuilders, and by bringing women in as advocates for other women, rather than as people with complex and multifaceted political identities.

Gender-based violence is less well-established in the securitization literature specifically, and less commonly evident in policy, although there are some key examples of work in this area. The most significant is of course Lene Hansen's famous critique of the 'Little Mermaid's Silent Security Dilemma', in which she considers how gendered insecurity is problematic for the Copenhagen School, because the signifier of society or political community tends not to be ascribed to a collective of women (Hansen 2000). In Hansen's case of Pakistani honour killings, she argues that female strategies to protect themselves—to *avoid*

speaking security—can be identified as performative moves that clarify the existential threat. This existential threat of gendered violence is aimed not at individuals despite occurring in individual cases and against individual bodies, but rather is aimed at the collective of women, marked by their enhanced vulnerability to fatal violence that is produced by their gender and by the subject position of their gender in normative social structures.

More specific securitizing moves in response to VAWG have happened at the international level. Mason (2013) argues that the US has adopted violence against women as central in foreign policy objectives, connected to gender inequalities abroad. Between 2008 and 2013 the UN Security Council adopted five resolutions on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence (SCR 1820, 1889, 1960, 2106). The UN *Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict* provides strategic support to UN in-country teams, and advocates for action through the *Stop Rape Now* campaign and the *UNiTE to End Violence Against Women* campaign. Nevertheless, while these campaigns both seek to address conflict-related violence and to raise awareness of this phenomenon, it is unclear whether they meet the criteria to be considered a successful securitization. The speaker who calls the existential threat would be in this case the UN, the threat that is named is sexual violence in conflict, the subject of the violence is women and girls, and states comprise the audience of the speech act who can accept or reject the need for exceptional measures and the suspension of normal politics. Meger (2016) argues that the securitising moves with regard to sexual violence in conflict have fetishized sexual violence in policy, advocacy and scholarship. She argues that the fetishization of sexual violence serves to decontextualise and objectify it. In this way, wartime sexual violence is divorced from the social relations that produce it, and becomes only a signifier for access to status and resources (Meger 2016). While women and girls are the subject of violence, states comprise the audience who co-constitute threat and can accept or reject the need for intervention. While violence may often be unequivocal, securitizing moves are not responsive to violence against women as it is defined by women but are responsive to violence as it is defined by international security: that is, war and conflict. Under these terms, the forms of structural violence that emerge in coping strategies in hostile circumstances become obscured, as Banwell (2018) theorises, referring as an example to women who resort to survival sex in broken post-conflict or conflict-affected economies. She examines the cultural context that the stigma of rape and sexual violence is such that early marriage or forced marriage—important forms of gender-based violence—may be used as a means of 'protecting' women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence or from the shame attached to having been a victim (Banwell 2018).

To summarise, sexual violence, and violence against women and girls is often part or an outcome of normal politics. By specifying and securitizing this violence as an exceptional conflict-related tactic or practice in the absence of control, the gender-based violence that happens routinely as part of normal politics is obscured.

Securitization upon securitization: revealing intersectional violence

As briefly introduced above, securitization requires a speech act designating a threat, a referent object of the threat, and an audience that can accept or reject the securitization (Buzan 1998). Because the audience sits within the normative structures of society, trends in what is likely to be securitized (or not) are subject to normative and structural biases. These normative biases form a basis for what may be accepted as an existential threat. For example, founding myths of the nation and the structural ideological assumptions of national identity and who constitutes the nation already position immigration as a potentially existential threat to national identity that is not difficult for a broad audience to accept. The audience though cannot be conflated with the public, or with the referent subject for whom security is made: as Salter (2008) demonstrates, there are layers of specificity to the audience(s) who co-constitute the securitization. The audience is not monolithic. Côté (2016) further specifies that the audience is limited to people who can shape policy: the general public is too broad. If a securitization is co-constituted by speaker and audience, the audience are the specific professional or social groups who engage in the iterative process of securitizing or desecuritizing. Yet, this process occurs in context, and in the context of the nation state, security is made for the social 'in-group' who belong to the state. This often means that security can be and is compromised for immigrants for whom belonging to the state in which they reside or are present can be questioned or contested.

On a global level, inequality in security potential is crystallised: where there is a lot of insecurity, there is often outward migration (for example, from conflict zones, environmental disaster, poverty and recession, and so on). Yet, in secure societies, the migration that is produced as a result of insecurity is cast as a threat to that security. Security then forms the rhetoric justifying actions that prevent potential incomers from entering despite the fact that the logic of their migration is security-seeking (although this does not explain and describe *all* migration and I do not intend to stereotype migration-sending states or migrants by articulating this as a generalised process).

The securitization of immigration makes clearly evident *some* of the consequent inequality. Security for someone (the state or the society belonging therein) defined against an existential threat (immigration) means that guaranteeing security for one actively denies security for the other. This is a conventional enemy-threat characteristic although rather than the threat being an attacker or adversary, the threat is immigration or a particular group of immigrants such as asylum seekers or 'economic migrants' re-constructed as a unitary actor. The threat is not territorial (although does evoke border security) but is cultural, threatening 'way of life' and language; social, threatening social services such as education and healthcare; and economic threatening jobs and 'taxpayers' money.' The inequality inherent in denying security for a specified group (migrants or immigrants) is then accepted under the hierarchical system of citizenship which is used to designate deservingness (whether inherited or 'earned' through naturalisation) to space, place and resources. This process flattens migrants into an all-encompassing

unitary actor that threatens the state, but the processes in place that respond to the security narrative are unequal in their effects. The size of the group is not commensurate with the level of constructed threat, and the experience of *being securitized* for some, more than others, is tangible: for example, asylum seekers subject to detention or removal experience being a securitized immigrant in a different way than a professional who has to pay an increased health change might. By turning attention to the experience of being securitized in this way, intersecting vulnerabilities become more visible. Moreover, when multiple securitizations act upon those intersecting vulnerabilities, the function of power in securitization and the need for an intersectional approach is clear. Thus, this intersectional analytical framing of securitization considers where multiple securitizing discourses impact unequally across various intersectional characteristics, reproducing the same patriarchal power narratives of the state.

Linked to insecure migration status, other more complex inequalities that overlap and intersect include in-state populations, such as minority ethnic populations, who are threatened as a consequence of racism. Structural racism propels anti-immigrant rhetoric, and as that rhetoric circulates, racism is reproduced (El-Enany 2020). Thus, people who are visibly othered (racially and ethnically minoritized groups) are targeted. Where 'belonging' to the state can be contested, it is often denied. For example, consider the case of Shamima Begum. This UK-born British citizen was stripped of her citizenship after being trafficked into a child marriage by a terrorist organisation and the act of removing citizenship was justified by the state with reference to her ethnic heritage. This may be an extreme case, yet it indicates a hierarchy of belonging based not on immigration or citizenship status, but on ethnic heritage (Masters and Regilme 2020). Further, the deepened processes of surveillance aimed at making life difficult for those who do not have immigration status and therefore don't belong (for instance, the collection of policies that form the 'hostile environment' in the UK), has an impact on other conventionally disenfranchised populations. For example, the homeless who may not easily be able to prove a home address, including housing-insecure people who reside with friends or family; or people who are in immigration status, but experience delays accessing needed services or experience a culture of disbelief (Burrell and Schweyher 2019) show where socio-economic intersects with migration as a point of vulnerability when immigration is securitized. Or, as Morey (2018) succinctly argues, 'immigration policy is also health policy. When immigration policy responds to the worst sentiments of anti-immigrant bias with punitive action, disparity-inducing health consequences follow (Morey 2018). In this way, the experience of being securitized might simultaneously apply to the effects of health securitization and the securitization of immigration. Thus, theorising them in conjunction with each other offers new capacity to understand the power discourse at the heart of securitization theory.

The securitization of health is by necessity inclusive when dealing with communicable disease, or at least it is acknowledged that an inclusive approach is necessary (while the objective is still the security of the in-group, the inclusion of outsiders is by necessity rather than true inclusivity). Yes, the inclusivity is simultaneously *exclusive*: while including those with the potential to spread communicable disease within the country in public health efforts such as vaccine programmes, where

spread can be controlled marginalised populations tend to be controlled. Health inequality tracks societal inequality: the worst outcomes of endemic disease can be seen in the poorest communities (Whitehead et al. 2021). Visibly oppressive mechanisms include the tendency to apportion blame. For example, Sjostedt (2010) marks that HIV/AIDS in the US structured the disease as affecting 'guilty victims,' drug addicts and homosexuals who could be dissociated from society, and 'innocent victims,' people who were susceptible to the disease through no fault of their own such as haemophiliacs and the spouses and children of carriers. It is only through publicity of the suffering and death of an 'innocent' victim that the disease captures the public imagination as a security threat. That threat concerns 'the military's ability to defend the homeland, or whether immigrants posed a threat to the American nation (Sjostedt 2010: 158). This reality was played out in the internment of Haitian refugees in 1993, who were not permitted to enter the USA because they were HIV positive (Ibid). Indeed, immigration controls are exercised on even—or especially—the most vulnerable populations as a means of making security for citizens.

The means of pursuing health security, such as closing borders and policing the body, clearly evidence the overlap between health securitization and immigration securitization: indeed, borders closed during the Covid 19 pandemic, and covid passports circumscribed entry to particular spaces—at national borders but also in local social environments. The securitization of health also targets resources: a means of directing needed resources to health services highlights simultaneously resource scarcity that feeds into the othering processes that might be applied in terms of deservingness attributed through the hierarchies of citizenship, but also in terms of resource extraction. This is simultaneously fed by the securitization of immigration, where economic security and the idea of protecting social services compose part of the identified threat. For example, pregnant migrants may be seen as a drain on resources and therefore face racism and discrimination in the community. Here, introducing gender as an intersecting vulnerability logically follows. In health care settings pregnant migrants are often charged for services. In the UK, the national healthcare system introduced charges for pregnant migrants in 2015, which amount to 150% the cost of care. Thus, migrants in need are overcharged, an act which reiterates the idea that they are a burden on healthcare services, not just in terms of expense but time and resources. The effect is a reduced uptake of antenatal care, which can lead to increased complications and vulnerabilities later on in pregnancy, birth and post-natal (Fair et al. 2020). Disability, and health conditions might be discriminated against and bodies devalued where health is securitized. Age offers another vector through which inequality in health securitization might be apparent. There are specific obscurities with regard to female and reproductive health that are significant points of inequality in the context of health securitization.

Violence against women and girls is not decisively securitised, but securitising moves are evident with regard to conflict-related violence as discussed above. These securitizing moves direct attention away, perhaps, from the normalised violence embedded within social frameworks and the practice of normal politics. By considering normalised violence and intersecting insecurity (particularly socio-economic but this also aligns closely to minoritized identities and some particular types of immigration), it is evident that the complexities deserve close attention. Violence

against women is endemic in society. This may be obscured when attention is redirected to violence against women that is happening in extreme circumstances such as conflict—the safety of 'home' is juxtaposed to the danger of conflict zones as a means of generating resources (Banwell 2018). Yet, home is not always safe, indeed the Crime Survey of England and Wales finds in the most recent year 1.6 million women experienced domestic violence (Stripe 2020). Innes et al (2024) estimate prevalence of intimate partner violence against women in insecure migration status at 29.1%. Moreover, there are high reported incidence rates of sexual violence along migration routes such as the Sinai desert route towards Israel, or the Central American route through Mexico (Gebreyesus et al. 2019; Infante et al. 2020). While many of the people subject to sexual violence along these routes are displaced due to conflict and violence, there are limited resources available to help them because they are moving without regular immigration status. Sexual violence is often constructed as transactional, associated with an assumed cost of migrating that migrants are willing to accept (Infante et al. 2020).

An intersectional analysis of *being securitized*

One of the few places that violence against women can be and is evidenced is through healthcare systems (Viero et al. 2021; Davis and Padilla-Medina 2021). Violence might not be disclosed, but if medical treatment is sought then violence is often detectable. Healthcare settings may be one of the few places a woman can safely disclose abuse—this is particularly true of populations that face barriers to disclosing violence or abuse to the police (Thiara and Roy, 2020). Healthcare settings tend to capture—by necessity—populations that are conventionally hard-to-reach. This information-capture is not perfect but is often better than that of other services. Yet, identifying violence against women is not always a priority in pressured healthcare systems, particularly during winter months when efforts to treat seasonal illness require resources, and resources are overstretched and underfunded. When health is securitized such as in the case of communicable disease or pandemic, this lack is exacerbated. The effect then, on immigrant women in insecure statuses and with no access to public resources or funds, is that they are made more vulnerable and more insecure. Further inequality can be linked to immigrants in insecure status with complex health needs or disability. The securitizing actions in the context of health and immigration do not create this vulnerability, which is already there as normalised everyday violence. They do, though, make this vulnerability more acute. Attending to these securitizing actions and their intersectional effects through considering the experience of *being securitized* can help make visible vulnerability, inequality and violence.

In a hostile immigration environment where the securitization of immigration has produced a culture of threat, and where racism is an established structure of oppression, the ability of minoritized women to access the health resources they need is compromised. Immigrant women in particular face healthcare paywalls, and policing and surveillance infiltrate all means with which they might access assistance. This is particularly evident in the UK, where—despite the claim of universal health

care – the threat of reporting unauthorised presence to the Home Office, or the threat that an immigration application might be rejected due to an unpaid bill, pushes immigrant women out of healthcare settings. This is not only relevant for cases of violence against women, but also for health concerns as immigrant women are less likely to access secondary and tertiary care or preventative care (Woodward et al. 2014). There are particularly significant implications in the context of antenatal and postnatal care (Shortall et al. 2015; Khanlou et al. 2017). This layering of issues (immigration, health, and violence against women), all of which have been or are securitized in different contexts, demonstrates real obscurities: If we only focus on isolated forms of securitization—for example, just the securitization of health, or the securitization of immigration—we cannot always effectively recognise the intersectional obscurities, and these gaps and deficiencies create and exacerbate everyday insecurity. These insecurities function as a normalised and banal effect of the securitization process and represent significant normalised violence that is an outcome of securitization while simultaneously functioning in the context of normal politics.

Securitization is a means of politics and the processes collectively described as securitization are empirically observable, hence the wealth of literature in the securitization sub-paradigm. The value of critical attention is situated in the capacity to offer insight into the implications of securitizing practices, and relatedly, insight into inequalities that produce violence in situations of normal politics that might be made more visible by securitizing acts. Our critical attention as theorists of international security could be best served by recognising the harms of securitization and exposing where these harms align with other societal disadvantages and systems of oppression.

Conclusion

There is an evident need to be cognizant of the problems securitization produces. If we consider security only at the level of the state, and do not think about experiential insecurities and securities attached to identities that do not reside in the state or that are not considered relevant to the state, or perhaps do not exist at the state level, then we are actively contributing to increasing insecurity in the world. In conclusion, and mobilising around the intersectional analysis, I suggest that securitization that is adopted as a political endeavour with political objectives (rather than as a theory of critical security) can be challenged as unfit for purpose due to the intersectional insecurities it produces. Nevertheless, securitization as a theory of critical security remains a useful tool through which researchers can use situations where resources are diverted to solve a securitized threat to instead expose the continuum of lived realities of violence and insecurity that are exacerbated by securitizing processes.

In this theoretical intervention I have proposed that the siloing of securitization processes into specified thematic areas can function to disguise the lived experience of insecurity and the types of everyday violence that are part of normal politics. This everyday violence is exacerbated by securitization: the contexts of violence are solidified, and the available means of violence prevention are reserved for the state and the normative, bounded, society. The racism and intersectional inequalities that

are internal to the state and that are inherent in the concept of citizenship are clearly evident in these processes. There is an opportunity for critical security studies to deconstruct processes of securitization, centring on violence and insecurity and adopting intersectional analysis, to better understand how processes reify threat and harden the boundaries of identity politics.

Funding UK Research and Innovation (MR/V049879/1).

Declarations

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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