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Recursion or rejection? Securitisation theory faces Islamist violence and foreign religions

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I regard myself as a practitioner of securitisation theory. During the past 10 years, I have taken the theory to the case of the Pakistani Taliban in order to explain *their* securitisation processes: what they fear, what they claim to defend, and how they justify extraordinary measures such as violent attacks on civilians or suicide attacks (Sheikh, 2016). My analyses have shown structural similarities and a security dilemma in the way values of freedom and secularism are securitized in dominant western discourses in the confrontation with “the terrorist”, and the way “the terrorists” are reversely securitizing different dimensions of religion in the confrontation with the west.

With Ole Wæver, I have also taken the theory to study diverse manifestations of secularism in various western countries in order to show how the concept of secularism - one of the reference points in value-debates across the west - has a securitizing potential. And how the awareness of this can be an academic contribution to conflict-containment, when it comes to the conflict between secular and religious fundamentalists (Sheikh & Wæver 2012). Finally, I have, together with my colleague Manni Crone, applied the theory to study different cases where Muslims, in a Danish context, have been securitized, and thereby expelled from “normalcy” (Sheikh & Crone 2011).

All these appliances show the critical potential of securitisation theory and its special ability to expose problematic power-practices where western identity is constructed in particular ways to “talk something up” on the security agenda (intentionally or unintentionally, the theory does not care). However in spite of this critical potential of the theory, it has not been immune to criticism that questions its own “western-ness” and the implications its liberal assumptions have for studying the non-west.

In this article, I will particularly focus on questions relating to the application of the theory to new types of cases - non-western cases - where the securitisation mechanism of justification seems to have resonance. This is done by discussing the theory’s ability to capture the narrative structure behind Islamist violence. I will also focus on the pioneering opening of a “new sector” of security, namely the religion sector, in 2001, that illustrates some questionable implications of ontological west-centrism. The expanding empirical application of securitisation theory by scholars around the world, as well as the theoretical expansion (the opening of the religion sector) raise two important, but different questions, which are about potential **a**) limitations in the *applicability* of the theory on non-

western cases, and **b**) west-centric biases in the *design* of the theory. This article will shed light on both types of criticisms: One that asks whether securitisation theory is suitable to study the case of religious violence (the applicability question) as I have done in earlier studies of the Pakistani Taliban, and one that more conceptually pushes the theory to work with less west-centric notions religion (the design question).

The article is organised as follows. First, I ask the question of how far the theory can be stretched by relating it to the case of the Pakistani Taliban. This section shows that the meeting with the Islamist case challenge the theory's conceptualization of securitization as a defensive narrative only. The second section turns to the question of a potential bias in the design of the theory and its main concepts, and particularly reviews the way religion has been conceptualized by the theory's proponents. The third section takes the religion debate a bit further asking how securitization theory could relate to the question of differences in the interpretations of political realities, which is an element of the call to increased cultural sensitivity. I suggest that the securitisation framework would gain from considering elements of worldview-analysis (Juergensmeyer & Sheikh 2012; Sheikh 2018) in order to move beyond the idea of being neutral or "blind to culture" (Valbjørn, 2008) as well as being blinded by (one's own) culture.

How far can the theory be stretched?

It can never be a problem in itself, that human concepts, ideas and theories are embedded in some cultures more than other. Cultural contingency is a condition for science, also in cases where the study of "objective" factors is a normative ideal. The cultural embedded-ness of theories pose a potential problem, when they are taken to places or contexts where they might not be the best suited one due to an inappropriate conceptual apparatus. The challenge emerge if the application of securitisation framework in the non-west, risks ending up with west-centric interpretations of the security moves in the non-west, ultimately promoting a biased or 'selfish' policy interest of the west. Or as I will show in the next section, if it leads to wrongful diagnosis of what is at play (and what the formula for de-securitisation should be), and hence reinforce orientalist notions of what for instance the Middle East is all about.

The popularity and wide scholarly applicability of securitisation theory is partly based on the simplicity of the basic observations it is built on: When powerful actors are successful in their framing of something as an existential security concern, they can justify deviation from normalcy, and they can easier justify extraordinary measures. What they are doing "by saying", the theory claims, is to

lift something away from politics, where conversation and compromise is part of normalcy, to the realm of security, demanding some staunch measures addressing the existential threat (Wæver 1995).

With these basic observations, the founders of the securitisation theory started (at least) two important conversations in the literature: One that had to do with the empirical reality “out there”, such as, who are the powerful actors e.g. is it always state actors? What about strong civil society actors in the non-west? Is security always a language of emergency, and when are extraordinary measures extraordinary (according to whose criteria, which culture, place or context)?

Another conversation that moved on the conceptual level, spoke to the disciplinary overweight of scholars occupied with identifying objective threats against order, the west, freedom, power balances etc. With the speech-act conceptualization of security, securitisation theory developed a special ability to deconstruct threats that were represented as if their threatening nature was beyond question. While the first conversation pointed at some potential limitations of the theory, the last-mentioned conversation appealed to the non-west, perhaps due to the emancipatory potential (Tariq Amin Khan 2012; Bilgin 2011; Sheikh & Crone 2011). One could argue that securitisation theory is particularly inclined to fulfill a political function due to its ability to make statements such as ‘just because you say that Muslims are threatening liberal democracies, it is not objectively true, but if you convince your population of the existentiality of the threat, then you can take emergency measures that expand your jurisdiction as a policymaker’. As Bilgin (2011: 408) writes it makes sense to “taking into account the political role of theories, theorists, and theorizing”, which can explain why some theories travel easier than others.

The case of religious violence, however, is one that raises questions about the potential limitations of the theory. As I explain below it either calls for a revision of the securitisation theory *or* leads to a conclusion that goes more in the direction of finding a theory that can better explain what the securitisation theory can't. When I first started my study of the Pakistani Taliban movement, I wanted to know what happens when securitisation theory is taken to study the securitisation of violent religious actors in Pakistan. How does the empirical case reflect back on the theory and the concepts developed by the theory, and are the potential tensions or limitation an occasion for revising the securitisation theory or should it rather be an occasion of finding another theory that explains the case better?

My case showed that religious securitisations reflect a different narrative structure than the ‘structurally secular’ securitisation, which is embedded in a defensive discourse (Sheikh 2016).

Following the description of a securitizing move (defined by Wæver, 1995), the securitizing narrative that successfully establishes the need to take violent measures – in this case, militant jihad – consists of three main parts: designating an existential threat (X), a referent object (Y), and deriving appropriate action prescriptions (Z). Thus, in theory the archetypical securitisation narrative reflects a storyline, which is constituted defensively and follows the direction $X \rightarrow Y = Z$. The logic of the securitisation narrative, as it was originally formulated by the founders of the theory, is that the character of the threat and of the referent object established through a successful speech act generates the required justification for carrying through the extraordinary action directions.

It appears that religious claims of justification are in fact also embedded in a defensive narrative. But not solely. More often than not, a more offensive narrative accompany the defensive framing of why extraordinary action is required, in which religion plays a more aggressive role. In the offensive narrative the referent object (Y) gains a more agenda-setting role (Y1), while the threat or enemy (X) has a less triggering role than in the archetypical securitisation. Instead, the threat/enemy takes on the position of an obstacle that must be overcome in order for the Taliban to follow their agenda. In this storyline, the action prescriptions (Z) are not ‘just’ a function of X threatening Y, and the urgency of defending Y is not only dependent on X, but Z is also conditioned by the religious claims of justification (Z1). Thus, in the offensive discourse the main storyline goes from $Z1 \rightarrow Y1$ but its success is conditioned by the elimination of the obstacle, and a more complicated narrative structure then appears: $Z1 \rightarrow Y1 = Z1 \rightarrow X$. The logic of this offensive storyline is that the necessity to struggle for Y1 stems not from the threat against it, but from what is interpreted as religious imperatives (e.g. to establish the rule of God). Similarly, according to this logic, the way the threat should be encountered ought to follow religious imperatives, which oftentimes stand in contrast to the security logic of sufficiency and proportionality.

The parallel reference to militant jihad as a faith-imperative under the given extraordinary circumstances plays out for example through the Taliban’s frequent references to Quranic chapters [surat] and verses [ayat] in their communication and recruitment materials. These are interpreted a-historically and applied as religious claims of justification or ‘evidence’ when it comes to demarcating the enemies and legitimize uncompromising measures taken against them. Other ways the offensive discourse stands out is by representing jihad as a ‘pillar’ of Islam on par with the five orthodox pillars of Islam, providing religious jurisprudential arguments behind the necessity of undertaking jihad, or by representing the quest to implement sharia as a ‘religious’ duty for Muslims. One of the critical findings of this application of securitisation theory to the case of religious violence is that the analysis

rebut the oversimplifying claim that religious securitisation moves are easier to make than non-religious securitisation moves, and thus also the claim that religion has a special proclivity to violence. It appears instead that the religio-political actors related to the Pakistani Taliban have to strike a difficult balance between the religious claims of justification (which has an offensive narrative, but jurisprudence that puts restrictions on the exercise of violence), and the securitisation claims of exception (which has a defensive reasoning, but a proportionality logic). In some places these different discourses merge, but there are remarkable examples of tensions that make parts of the Taliban narratives appear self-contradicting and inconsistent, and thus ultimately less convincing for a religious audience. One of the clearest examples of the problem this creates for the consistency in the Taliban narratives is the representation of God as existentially threatened when following the logic of the ‘structurally secular’ security discourse, while in the ‘structurally religious’ security discourse God is unbeatable since he is represented as the Almighty and the ultimate Sovereign.

On the other hand, the possibility of drawing on both offensive and defensive discourses enhances the mobilization capability of religio-political actors like the Pakistani Taliban, because they can simultaneously make (defensive) appeals to an audience that is chagrined at the imperialist policies of the ‘West’ and (offensive) appeals to those who actually agree with the Taliban interpretation of religious imperatives.

While the securitisation theory has a formula for explaining the dynamics of the defensive reasoning, it has not theorized if/how offensive reasoning can be part of a securitisation process, in fact boosting mobilization to extraordinary measures. The critical question however remains whether this difference between the offensive/defensive narrative structure and the secular/religious securitisation is too radical to be contained within the securitisation theory – that is, whether the case of the Pakistani Taliban still qualify to be treated within the securitisation framework, which, both by its originators and by its users, has been defined as a framework illuminating the security dynamics of defensive framings. The answer will remain ambiguous and divide scholarship between those who accept the sociology of the theory i.e. that the application of it to new cases eventually reflects back on the theory, widening it. And those who take on a more essentialist/narrowing response that warns against the dangers of a laissez-faire application of a theory that in its original design might be best suited to explain defensive mobilization dynamics in liberal democracies.

Conceptual west-centrism

I now turn to the other question of a potential bias in the design of the theory and its main concepts. While finding an appropriate response to the applicability questions is a task that arguably lies mainly with the scholars who pick up securitisation theory (rather than another theory) to explain new cases, there are also more foundational questions that have to do with the basic concepts of the theory or the imagery on which the theory rests.

Some of the conceptual critique that the securitisation theory has already faced relates to the assumption of a harmonious relationship between state and civil society (within the political sector of security), and the implicit assumption of the state representatives being the “senders” of securitizing messages and the civil society as the receivers/audience.¹ In the 1998 elaboration of the theory, the state and state representatives are central (though not always or exclusively), as the authors write that “the invocation of security has been the key to legitimizing the use of force, but more generally, it has opened the way for the state to mobilize, or to take special powers, to handle existential threats. Traditionally, by saying ‘security’, a state representative declares an emergency condition, thus claiming a right to use whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development” (Buzan et al., 1998: 21).

Several appliers of the theory have shown, that when the theory travels to the non-west, the large gap between the politics of elites and the politics of the civil society emerge, questioning the role of the civil society as the audience of “the states” securitisation moves. Another, but related critique is aimed at the liberal assumptions (Holbraad & Pederson 2012) of securitisation theory. This particularly implies the dualisms of individual vs. the state, normal politics vs. emergency politics, assuming the existence of a normal rule based order.² Martin Holbraad and Morten Axel Pederson’s analysis of the Cuban revolution, for example, point out that revolutionary regimes are in permanent emergency, and suggests a new concept to capture what they call “revolutionary securitisation”, which pertains not to a passage from ordinary politics to the realm of emergency, but a fusion of the two (Holbraad & Pedersen 2012).³

They advocate a “recursive” anthropological strategy to the question I posed above (how far can the theory be stretched?), where (new) data is used to transform the conceptual assumptions of the

¹ One of the general critiques of securitization theory is its under-theorization of the concept of audience, see for instance Balzacq, T. (2005) The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience and context. *European Journal of International Relations* 11 (2): 171-201.

² I owe thanks to the summary provided by Saloni Kapur in her opening presentation at the workshop on securitization in the non-Western world, held at Lancaster University in March 2017.

³ See also Wæver and Greenwood (2013), who focus on the case of the Egyptian Revolution, asking what happens to the securitization theory if the whole situation is unstable?

theoretical model. The Cuban Revolution hence becomes a way to extend the applicability of securitisation theory, by suggesting a way to revise the basic concepts of the theory.

My critique (elaborated in Sheikh 2014) of the way religion was conceptualized in the article announcing the opening a new sector of security (the religion sector), also sets of a discussion, which has to do with west centrism in the concepts of securitisation theory.⁴ In my previous critique of the way religion was conceptualized when it was launched as a separate sector, I also elaborate on alternative ways to conceptualize religion, which makes it more widely applicable to both non-western cases, but also variations within the west. Here I will summarize only those points in my critique that can illustrate the practical/normative consequences of west-centric conceptualizations.

Integrating religion into the theoretical framework was a pioneering step, which has allowed securitisation theory to develop an ability to analyze new issues on the security agenda. However, the *Millennium* article (Laustsen & Wæver 2000) that launched the new sector of security adopted an ethno-centric concept of religion by relying too heavily on western theology/philosophy in its demarcation of religious discourse. This critique is important, I have argued, because of its repercussions for the thinking on de-securitisation, and because the applied definitions of religion and religious securitisation create a challengeable theoretical link between religion and violence.

Before the *Millennium* article published in 2000, religion was subordinated the societal sector as a source of communal identity. The same year, Laustsen and Wæver introduced religion as an independent sector, thus making faith its ultimate referent object by arguing that the treatment of religion within the societal sector was only able to cover the community aspect of religion and not religion as faith. This led them to define faith as the central element of religious discourse (drawing on Søren Kirkegaard) and faith as a distinctive quality of religion qua its distinction between transcendent and immanent, sacred and profane (drawing on Georges Bataille). The distinct trait of the religion sector of security is, they argued, that it defends not identity or community, but rather the true faith.

The defining distinction drawn between the sacred and the profane goes smoothly with respect to Protestant Christendom, but is very much a product of the way European religious thought has developed rather than a product of a universally applicable criterion for all religious traditions. Influential theoreticians like Emile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade, who are among the main proponents of the centrality of this dichotomy have been criticised by anthropologists who point out that the

⁴ Some of the points here are reiterated in that article.

languages of many societies and cultures do not even have words that mean sacred and profane, thus indicating one of the limitations of this division.

The central role Laustsen and Wæver give to the concept of the sinful man in their demarcation of religious discourse illustrates why their definition is problematic. This concept upholds the distance between heaven and earth in Christian discourses, but in many other faith traditions the notion of original sin does not exist and for other interpretative communities the dissolution of the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane is the religious norm, hence part of normalcy. Eastern religions such as Zen Buddhism disapprove of cultivating dualism and the ability of monks to let go of all conceptualizations of good and bad, the sacred and the profane is, for example, the ultimate measure of their religiosity/piousness.

For other religions like Confucianism the sacred/profane dichotomy is far from the defining principle of faith, while Taoism emphasizes the balance of opposites (yin/yang), where neither part of the duality is subordinate to the other or has divine characteristics. Furthermore the idea of immanence – that the divine is incarnate in the world and not separate from it – appears in many traditions, often in competition with other theological/interpretational positions that make a sharp sacred/worldly distinction.

A graver problem with Laustsen and Wæver's definition of religious discourse, however, is the implications it has for how the securitisation of religion is understood and that it leads them to conclude that those who securitize religion deny the gap between the transcendental and the immanent. Whether there is an unambiguous link between the dissolution of difference and securitisation is challengeable as the above examples concerning various religious traditions demonstrate. Adding to this the dissolution of difference is characteristic of puritan and spiritually oriented interpretations of religion. For instance, some mystical interpretations of Islamic rituals challenge the desirability of upholding the transcendental/immanent gap based on discourses of fear and reward (heaven and hell). Instead they represent an alternative to what they perceive to be an artificial distance between the sacred and profane, and separation from the Divine is seen as an unnatural state for the human soul. While acting on behalf of God is indeed a central characteristic of violent religious movements, the dissolution of difference does not always lead to securitisation.

The idea that the elimination of the gap conditions securitisation also leads Laustsen and Wæver to argue that the formula for desecuritisation of religion is 'acceptance of the fact that being in religious discourse is essentially being before a transcendental realm' since 'politics does something to

religion'. This argument implies that the overlap of religious and political discourse condition securitisation, ultimately violence, and if we follow this line of thinking it could accordingly be concluded that desecuritisating conflicts where religion plays a role would require an intervention to 'secularise' faith traditions that do not share a non-political concept of the religious or non-religious concept of the political. To take an example, orthodox religious discourse in relation to Islam concerns both *deen* (faith) and *dawla* (polity) and in this discourse the separation of politics from religion is often perceived as an artificial boundary. Policy analyses based on Protestant perceptions of religion would expectedly end up suggesting secularism or Protestant Islam as a solution to Islamist violence, as was the case when influential think tanks offered solutions to terrorism in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the US.

The idea that the Islamic blend of religion and politics is problematic appeared, for instance as the conclusion in two reports published by the influential American think tank RAND after 2001: 'The Muslim World after 9/11' (2004) prepared for the United States Air Force and 'Civil Democratic Islam' (2003), prepared for the RAND National Security Research Division. The tendency to frame the values of the Enlightenment, reason and secularism in opposition to religion and traditionalism is apparent in both reports. In their representations modernity is grounded in the ability to separate religion and politics, while traditionalism is made antithetical to the basic requirements of a modern democratic mind-set defined by critical thinking, individual liberty and secularism. The way to confront terrorism and Islamism is to promote secularised versions of Islam, and as one report states, Islam must be influenced to adopt the values of the West, Christianity and secularism as, 'it is no easy matter to transform a major world religion. If "nation-building" is a daunting task, "religion-building" is immeasurably more perilous and complex' (RAND, 2003: 3)

Making faith the sole referent object through a substantialist definition of religious discourse as advocated by Laustsen and Wæver also constitutes a problem for the applicability of the theory across different contexts. Anthropologist Benson Saler (1993) argues that there is not necessarily an analytical problem in applying prototype definitions of religion informed by western culture and that on occasion theoretical parochialism can prove to be an advantage in illuminating isolated elements of larger phenomena. In this case, though, the narrowness constitutes an analytical limitation that could be overcome by relying on a less substantialist definition of religion. The narrow and substantialist definition appears as a limitation since it does not enable the theory to capture the manifold dimensions of religion that religio-political activists claim in various parts of the world when they securitise religion. Empirical work on fundamentalism and radical religious movements shows that

religious discourses that are drawn upon by religio-political actors in conflict not only defend faith, but also holy places (lands, temples, mosques etc.) or holy law. Hence the suggested unity of the referent object does not correspond with the comparative literature on religious violence (e.g. Marty & Appleby 1994; Juergensmeyer 2003; Jerryson 2005; Sheikh 2016).

This suggests that the recursive strategy proposed by Holbraad & Pederson (2012) is also applicable here. Research on the empirical reality in the non-west can be used to develop, revise and rebut west-centric concepts of the theory, which in the end can prolong the lifecycle of the theory.

The cultural turn hits securitisation theory

The section above has shown that sensitivity to diversity (of state/politics/religion concepts) and “empirical realities” around the globe is a potential challenge for the reach of securitisation theory. State-centrism is a general critique of IR theories invented in the west,⁵ and scholars have called for the discipline to differentiate between more forms of states than the modern European; and to consider other forms of sub- and supranational polities, which produces “a diversity of forms of international behavior and rationalities” (Valbjørn, 2008, 61)

Culture is a label that in its wider sense embrace more than variations in organizational forms. In this section I will address the question of differences in the *interpretations of political realities* – whether the state is weak or strong – which is another, but less treated, element of the call to increased cultural sensitivity (Chatterjee 2004). The increasing awareness of west centric biases in theory-building and appliances, naturally calls for more sensitivity to non-western settings, and in this endeavour the securitisation framework would gain from worldview-analysis and insight into culturally specific interpretations of concepts.⁶

In the beginning of the 19th century, the Prussian philologist Wilhelm von Humboldt put forward the idea that there is a link between linguistic communities and their mode of apprehending reality. Humboldt is often described as the founder of the idea that language and worldview are inextricable, because he maintained that language gives us the concepts of history, destiny, nation, and morality. Anthropologists by disciplinary habit have been more disposed to take other people’s perspectives seriously, and thus have accommodated more easily religious points of view. This has been true of well-known anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz, Louis Dumont, Mary Douglas, Stanley

⁵ See the “Worlding Beyond the West” series, published by Routledge (2009-2013) and edited by Arlene B. Thickner and David L. Blaney.

⁶ See my forthcoming article on worldview analysis (2018). Some of the points below are reiterated in that article.

Tambiah, and Talal Asad. However, Anthropologists focus on worldviews to describe and compare certain ways of life (e.g. Hiebert, 2008). They use worldview analysis to examine how groups acquire their most fundamental values and ideas of the good life and how they develop different customs and institutions.

In political science the interest in worldviews primarily reflects an interest in how ideas and beliefs condition particular political outcomes and action, including the use of overt physical force, violence or annihilation (Blyth, 1997; Bottici and Challand, 2010; Goldstein and Keohane, 1993; Røislien, 2007; Rowland and Theye, 2008). Political Science has been very influenced by the Marxist way of approaching ideology and religion, and combined with the influence of the modernization narrative that created the dichotomy between religion and “real science”, it has only recently begun to take seriously the questions of how religion, as an interpretive frame, matters for the field.

For social sciences and global studies in general the relevance of studying worldviews is also its connection to action (Johnson et al., 2011; Koltko-Rivera, 2004, p. 23). Worldviews matters as they have an impact on human action, or because they can justify certain acts. In order for worldview analysis to be a useful tool in social sciences that can open up for insights relevant for questions of securitisation, it needs to abstain from the simple causality questions that create straight lines from A (worldviews) to B (emergency/violence). Instead the goal should be to understand the subject’s framework for thinking/speaking about reality and acting appropriately within it (Sheikh and Juergensmeyer, 2013).

There are obvious overlaps between worldview-analysis in this sense, and securitisation thinking. One of the basic claims of Worldview analysis is, that when actors have a combination of well-defined principled beliefs, in which notions of identity, justice and truth are very clear, and simple causal beliefs, in which the pathway to achieve their objectives is powerfully defined, they are in possession of a strong narrative. For example, narratives in which the world is seen through cosmic war images, and adversaries are identified as absolute enemies, while the subject is identified as part of a heroic vanguard, are more likely to have a stronger mobilizing capacity towards violent or confrontational action directions. Imagined singularities can be remarkably powerful and turn in to self-fulfilling prophecies, by imprinting images of a sharply divided world, where identities cannot be reconciled.

The narrative of a civilizational clash for example stages a dichotomous vision of the world- the cosmic war- with oppositions on an absolute scale (Juergensmeyer, 1993; 2003). This image has not only imprinted itself in academic fields, but has successfully been adapted by both religious and

secular zealots. Although Huntington's original idea of a civilizational clash has been strongly criticized for being too simplistic and scientifically inadequate (Bottici and Challand, 2010; Gates, 2006, p. 10), it can still be helpful if we apply it as cognitive lens that can display how some people perceive and organize the world and use it as a basis for action.

The literature that treats worldviews as a precondition for political outcomes, looks at worldviews as roadmaps for action. From this perspective it is interesting to study how the principled- and causal beliefs come to structure certain action preferences. In order to understand this approach, it is helpful to turn to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of classification struggles (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 479). With this concept he focuses on the classification processes that characterize the struggles to classify the social world. According to Bourdieu classification struggles are struggles over the dominant 'principles of vision and di-vision' and it is through these processes of classification that social collectivities are formed and the world is divided (Bourdieu, 2004, 1984, p. 483; Gorski, 2013).

An analysis of classification struggles would look at how ones study objects engage in a definitional struggle to assert its truth about the social world itself and its opponents, how identities are evoked and how they gain a mobilizing capacity. Bourdieu moves his analytic lens away from predicting war between cultures towards looking at how cultural conflict is played out in a social political battlefield. His framework analyzes the game of position takings, i.e. the ways in which vital players, representing opposed factions, project their own schemas, truths or dominance over others (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 174–175; Gorski, 2013, p. 243). These vital players or specialists as Bourdieu calls them, have the authority to speak for a social collectivity—to articulate its history, political opinions, needs, and demands and they therefore play a vital role in in the maintenance of group's boundaries and the mobilization of its members (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991, p. 173).

Such a position has a strategic lens on, but still represent an interesting aspect of worldview analysis. Like Bourdieu's approach, a worldview analysis can shed light on how worldviews become espoused, defended and disseminated in a relational context, and how they attain strong mobilizing effects, which has real political implications. Such an analysis does not reduce worldviews to be an instrument only, though it is interested in the effects they produce. The dynamic study of worldview entails that we study how vital players and members of the communities or groups we want to study, enter into conflict or competition with one another and simultaneously make both themselves and their opponents the object of classificatory practices.

Looking at interpretative frames is one way to embrace the turn towards a more culturally inclusive IR. Securitisation theory would gain from recasting central concepts of its own identity as objects of classificatory practices. The cultural turn is not only about capturing larger bits of the reality out there, but also demands that IR theories develop a capability to move beyond what Valbjørn (2008) describes as being “blind to culture” as well as being blinded by (one’s own) culture.

Culture can be defined narrowly as collective identity (religious, ethnic, class, gender etc.) or more broadly in terms of diversity in the meaning that different collective groups put into the collectivity, their context and their actions. As there is a general move among international relations scholars to increasingly draw on sociology, cultural and literary theory, media studies, postcolonial studies, gender studies, history and anthropology in order to understand the significance of culture (as identity, interpretative community and practice), securitisation theory ought to take a deliberate move beyond a culture-blind identity.

Concluding remarks

The cultural turn was very late in hitting IR including the securitisation theory, due to a variety of reasons. Some of these include the normative vision proposed by internationalist IR, stressing the need to focus on common human nature, more than differences, a main occupation with power as a champion concepts, a Marxist rejection of the “reality” of culture on par with religion, and the more epistemological rejection of the non-scientific or subjective nature of culture (Valbjørn, 2008, p. 58). Part of the critique that securitisation theory faces is not particular to the theory (such as the centrality of the state), but applies to IR in general. Part of the critique might be wrongfully placed, since one could question whether the west/non-west schism really is one about the west/non-west or whether the schisms that these labels represent can actually be found within the west and the non-west, i.e. can we find liberal and illiberal tendencies both places, isn’t there many western we’s?

Regardless of this, I have touched upon three debates that are relevant to the endeavor of widening the global applicability of securitisation theory. The first concerns the epistemological issue concerning the representation of otherness, which securitisation theory has proven a special ability champion. The second, is related to dealing with cultural diversity and different manifestations of the state/political power. I have discussed this aspect of the culture debate, by elaborating on the empirical case of religious violence and the theoretical case of the religion sector of the theory. A third, but still underdeveloped part of the debate, relates to the ability to deal with different *interpretations of political/religious reality* and potential differences in the logics behind emergency action. While

securitisation theory deals with these sort of differences *between* security sectors, it is increasingly clear that there can be variations *within* sectors that needs to be unfolded. Here I have proposed that worldview analysis and its focus on classificatory practices contain elements that could be applied to “outsource” the definitions of central concepts to the actors out there, instead of sticking to narrow concepts of religion or political authority.

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