LANGUAGE AND THE MOBILISATION OF SECURITY EXPECTATIONS. THE NORMATIVE DILEMMA OF SPEAKING AND WRITING SECURITY."

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ABSTRACT.

This essay defines social constructivist approaches in security studies with special reference to societal and internal affairs. In the area of migration, national identity, drugs etc., particular security analysts and criminologists feel a certain discomfort about interpreting these issues in terms of crime or security. They assume that security and criminological discourse is not a neutral language representing an extra-discursive world but that the way they represent migration, for example, contributes to constructing the policy area into a security area. This results in a normative dilemma taking these authors in a catch-22: how to enunciate ‘security’ in these areas if one wants to avoid that these areas are contested in security terms and if one knows that uttering ‘security’ always risks to introduce or strengthen a security problematic in an area? The essay argues that the dilemma is a key aspect of social constructivist approaches of security. It functions as both an entrance point for defining a social constructivist research programme in security studies and a defining element of this programme.
In Western Europe, but, also elsewhere, we have witnessed an offensive of security language in the societal and internal affairs sector in recent years. The multiple references, in political and academic debates, to a new security construction which relates terrorism, drugs, immigration and asylum, has generated a new agenda in security studies.\(^1\) It focuses on how questions of cultural and ethnic identity and public order which are traditionally perceived as domestic issues have entered an international or transnational security agenda. How has this security continuum\(^2\) interrelating drugs, terrorism, migration and the Internal Market been constructed in contemporary Western Europe? What are the consequences of approaching identity questions from a security perspective for the definition of the state and the rearticulation of a European order after the Cold War? Although this debate is very stimulating from a conceptual or scholarly point of view, some of the key authors researching this phenomenon express a certain uneasiness about the subject. For example, Wæver et all write in the conclusion of the book which develops the concept of societal security:

Societal security cannot avoid the risk of legitimising non-state security policy. Accepting other voices speaking for society will always involve a de-legitimisation of the state that ‘should’ be the protector of society. It then becomes a problem that anyone can try to speak on behalf of society.

The closeness to fascist ideology is troubling: is it therefore inadvisable to raise this agenda of societal security? Isn’t there a risk that the result is to legitimise xenophobic and nationalist reactions against foreigners or against integration - ‘We are just defending our societal security!’? This could be a risk, but it seems to us a risk we have to take. This danger has to be offset against the necessity to use the concept of societal security to try to understand what is actually happening ...\(^3\)

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Slightly different but expressing a similar displeasure with writing about internal security is Monica den Boer’s reflection on the ‘internal security gap’ ideology:

The question is whether Europe’s internal security is at stake as a result of immigrants taking advantage of Europe’s exposure. The ‘internal security-gap’ ideology ignores the lack of substantial evidence about the effectiveness of border controls against crime and illegal immigration, and injects a belief into the public that international crime and illegal immigration are new phenomena reinforced by the abolition of internal border controls.4

In this field, authors seem to have a certain degree of discomfort about their own and other people’s writings on societal issues from a security perspective. The question does not rise for all authors in the same way though. Some will for example argue that there is no objective evidence for regulating migration from a security perspective. And this settles their problem. Their contribution consists of arguing that a misperception is at work and that this should be remedied.5 But, another group of authors, which I want to call social constructivists, cannot escape the nuisance that simply. They share with the former group that transforming migration into a security problem is (partly) the result of a practice of definition. Security is what agents make of it. But, instead of making this act of definition dependent on cognitive processes of an agent resulting in a correct or incorrect perception of a threat, they understand the creation of a security problem as a social phenomenon. Security questions such as the internal security continuum result from a work of mobilisation in which practices work upon each other and thus create an effect which we call a security problem. This effect is a structural effect which is beyond the intentions and control of the individual’s practices of definition. Immigration as a security problem is thus not a natural given. It does not just pop up as a new threat manifesting itself and triggering a security policy trying to curtail the danger. Turning immigration issues into a security question for a society involves a mobilisation of particular institutions such as the police, a particular kind of knowledge - security knowledge - and specific expectations

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5 For example, Johan Wets, [??? Jaarboek voor Veiligheid en Vrede]
concerning the social exchanges between various groups in society. It is an intersubjective rather than subjective understanding of security. The central level is not the individual’s mind or history but the interaction between different actions articulating a security knowledge and mobilising security expectations in a already institutionalised context.6

In this interpretation, speaking and writing about security is never innocent. It always risks to contribute to opening a window of opportunity for a fascist mobilisation or an ‘internal security-gap’ ideology. Moreover, this ‘danger’ is always very pertinent in security studies since security analysis is mostly performed in already heavily politicised contexts. In other words, in general, security writings participates in a political field where social questions are already contested in terms of crisis, threats and dangers. Furthermore, as many social scientists, ‘all security studies scholars are engaged in intensely practical and political projects, whether these are defined as “policy relevant knowledge” or “Praxis”’.7

Social constructivist authors face a normative dilemma which is central to their research project. They are sensitive to how security ‘talk’ about migration can contribute to its securitisation8, that is rendering migration problematic from a security perspective. For example, they may point out how criminological research establishes a relationship between crime and immigration. By looking for a correlation between e.g. Turkish immigrants and heroin trade they establish a discursive link irrespective of whether the correlation is confirmed or not. The discursive link is thus embedded in the very set up of the research. In other words, from the very beginning the research embodies an assumption, often already politicised, that a particular group of aliens may have a special relationship to crime.9 This observation is of course not a dilemma

9 See e.g. Monica den Boer, Police Knowledge and Ethnicity. Paper for Round Table on Police Knowledge in Europe, 18 May 1996, University of Florence.
as such. It only becomes a dilemma for social constructivist authors when they realise that this interpretation feeds back into their own research. They also produce security knowledge which therefore could as such be securitising. If an author values a securitisation of migration negatively, she faces the question of how to talk or write about the securitisation of migration without contributing to a further securitisation by the very production of this knowledge. The normative dilemma thus consists of how to write or speak about security, when the security knowledge risks to produce what one tries to avoid, what one criticises: the securitisation of migration, drugs, etc.¹⁰

In this essay, I use the normative dilemma as an entrance point for defining social constructivist research projects in security studies. Recently Peter Katzenstein edited a volume *The Culture of National Security* which formulates a social constructivist research agenda by emphasising the causal work of norms and the importance of identity questions in security policies.¹¹ Surprisingly it did not reflect on the significance of language in social relations. As a result its theoretical framework reads somewhat like a traditional institutional sociology ignoring the significance of the so-called linguistic turn for social theory. The social constructivism this essay formulates differs from the Katzenstein volume by putting the social significance of language in the heart of the research project. It argues that the dilemma and the social constructivist research programme rely on a performative and generic understanding of language. Focusing on the social significance of language moves the theoretical basis of social constructivism away from a positivist sociology of norms and roles. It also brings social constructivism in International Relations more in line with major developments in social theory in the last couple of decades. In the next section, I will briefly explain how the dilemma and social constructivism are based upon a particular understanding of language. The other sections identify different constructivist research projects on the basis of their distinct ways of approaching the normative dilemma.


Also differences in the way they introduce a generic and performative interpretation of language define key characteristics of the divergent research projects.

The constructive quality of security utterances.

The normative dilemma does not fall out of the blue. It is a direct result of the interpretation of security as a social construction. I assume that the specific meaning of the normative dilemma is undeniably related to a specific conceptualisation of security as an effect of mobilisation. Language plays a crucial role in this mobilisation. Although the process can not be reduced to a linguistic one, the social mobilisation of security expectations relies heavily on the use of security language: police agencies and the military producing security knowledge, the media articulating dangers, social movements arguing over the reality of a threat and different forms of counteracting it, etc. Speaking or writing about an issue in a security language has an integrative capacity. It allows to connect isolated features, such as migration, terrorism, islamic fundamentalism, drugs, the European internal market into a meaningful whole, which I will refer to as a security field below. Thus, language operates as a mediating instrument relating social practices into a particular communicative, institutionalised framework. Language is not just a communicative instrument used to talk about a real world outside of language but a defining force integrating social relations.

The constructive quality of security utterances relies on a shift from the representational view of language to a performative interpretation of utterances, and on a generic understanding of language. First, social constructivism moves away from the idea that utterances are primarily a representation of an extra-discursive reality. ‘Drugs is a major security problem in our cities’ is not just the wording of an observation like in the utterance ‘an apple falls from a tree’. It also has a performative force: ‘security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance itself is the act. By saying it, something is done (as in betting, giving a
promise, naming a ship’). 12 Like a promise is an effect of language, that is, of successfully making the promise, a security problem results from successfully speaking or writing security. It is the utterance of ‘security’ which politically introduces security questions in a publicly contested policy area. Thus, if successfully performed the speech act makes a security problem.13

If security utterances make a difference, then the question raises what is this difference. In other words, what is the security quality that a successful securitisation invests in a particular context? What changes when migration is contested by means of a security approach? Here we enter the second key element in the social constructivist understanding of language: the generic interpretation of language.

A generic interpretation of language looks at utterances from the perspective of their production.14 It answers the question of the meaning of security not by looking for a definition which formulates the ‘essence’ of what security is such as the freedom from threat. Rather, the meaning of security is interpreted as a constellation of rules which define enunciations as security enunciations. As Foucault states it:

... on découvre ainsi non pas une configuration ou une forme, mais un ensemble de règles qui sont immanentes à une pratique et la définissent dans sa spécificité.15

In other words, a specific organisation of enunciations makes them security enunciations. From a generic perspective securitisation involves three elements. First, it requires practices of enunciating security, of mobilising security knowledge in a particular political context. If successfully performed these practices articulates a configuration which integrates problem definitions, institutional processes and expectations under a security umbrella. This is the security field, that is, a field of security practices which is conceptualised as somewhat separated from other fields of practice. For example, in previous research I have argued how developments in the

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12 Ibid., p. 55
CSCE (Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe) after 1989 articulate a shift in the security fields in Europe. After the breakdown of the Iron Curtain an ethnic security field appeared which successfully challenged the quasi monopoly and the dominance of a military security field.16 Finally, securitisation requires a constellation of rules or a logic which organises practices as security practices. This constellation or logic integrates heterogeneous practices into a security field. It rules the coexistence of dispersed and heterogeneous enunciations. Some would call this the security grammar, but I will use the Foucaultian concept ‘formation’. The difference between a security field and a security formation is that the former is a specific concrete manifestation of the rules defining security practices.17

For understanding the meaning of security, the discursive formation is crucial because it defines the specificity of security practices. The rules of the security formation link different themes, theories, practices together as security themes, security theories, security practices. The formation is not a security utterance itself but it makes it possible for security practices to appear. Here the full implications of this understanding of language becomes visible. The formation is not a transparent instrument which is manipulated to represent security questions which already exist ‘out there somewhere’. It works on another register: the constitutive or generic register where security questions are brought into existence.

Wæver has briefly defined some major aspects of the dominant Western security formation. He defines the rules or logic constituting the meaning of security through the logic of war which he reads through the lens of national security. National security is ‘the name of an ongoing debate, a tradition, an established set of practices and, as


such, the concept has a rather formalized referent’. Looked at through this lens, a security problem is something that challenges the survival of the political order. As a result it alters the premises for all other questions. They are subjugated to the security question because if the political unit does not succeed in successfully dealing with the security problem it will cease to exist as a self-determined political unit. The other questions will have become irrelevant at that stage since the unit does not exist anymore as a political unit. Security, thus, concentrates everything at this one point where the political units confront a test of will ‘in which the ability to fend off a challenge is the criterion for forcing the others to acknowledge its sovereignty and identity as a state’. This logic of security can be replayed metaphorically and extended to other sectors. If this happens the other sectors are structured according to a security logic.

The normative dilemma receives its full weight from the combination of the performative logic and a generic understanding of language. Security language becomes normative by definition. Here it differs from the normative dimensions of security policies classical realists sometimes discussed. For example, Arnold Wolfers’ classical piece on national security argues that security is a value among other social values such as wealth. This implies that a security policy implicitly or explicitly defines how important security is compared to other values (to put the question crudely: how much do we spend on nuclear weapons that we cannot spend on health care?). The policy also has to decide the level of security that is aspired (for example, minimum or maximum security). But, this normative ‘awareness’ does not capture the fundamental normativity of security enunciations that social constructivists face. Social constructivist authors do not only face the two questions formulated by Wolfers; they also have to answer a question which in sense precedes Wolfers’

remarks. They have to decide whether they want to ‘write’ security in a particular area. In other words, security enunciations do not only implicitly or explicitly assume the level of priority they give to security and the level of security they aspire; they first of all determine if one should approach an issue from a security perspective at all. Normative questions are thus inescapably present in the very heart of security analysis.

To summarise, the normative dilemma of social constructivism rests on the understanding that the effect of the communication depends on a socially constructed formation of rules which constrains the author in what (s)he can say and how it will be received while (s)he depends on a security language if she wants to transform a securitisation of a particular area from within security studies. In other words, the desire to transform always risks to further securitise an area because the security formation simultaneously constrains and empowers the authors to make serious security statements. Social constructivist authors who are critical of a particular securitisation such as migration are thus caught by the question: ‘How can I interpret security problems in the societal area in such a fashion that I reduce the risk of repeating the very securitisation of the area?’.

**Escaping the normative dilemma?**

A particular way of escaping the dilemma is a split research strategy oscillating between a representational and performative understanding of language. The analysis concentrates first on the social effects of particular discourses, such as criminological discourses on migration. The thrust of the argument is that the discourses contribute to a criminalisation of migration. But, the criticism does not exhaust itself in unravelling these effects of criminology. At some point, the research jumps back into a representational logic by arguing that the overall effect, that is the criminalisation of migration, rests on a distorted representation of reality. In other words, the critical research argues that the representation of migrants as criminals does not fully fit the real world of migration. It argues, for example, that in the political debate the facts are
taken out of context - they are blown up to generalising statements about migrants. The distorted representation thus creates a false knowledge which operates as a subjective or collective belief or as an ideology.\textsuperscript{22} Although one should not rule out the critical value of this kind of research, there is something problematic or rather schizophrenic about it. The analytical moment of the research dwells within a performative understanding of language while the critical moment resides in a representational interpretation of language. The main force of its criticism relies on the distortion in the representation it ‘discovers’ in the discourses it researches. In other words, this strategy assumes at some point that the unwanted effects of the criminological or security discourses can be remedied by a correct representation of the world of migration. It thus seems to call for a non-distorted representation of the problematics of migration.

A new label for old phenomena may assist policy-makers in finding approval for new proposals. The question should therefore be whether, if objectively assessed, international crime establishes a greater threat to the internal security of EC member states than a decade ago, or whether mass attention for phenomena related to international crime acts as an instrument in the justification of new investment.\textsuperscript{23}

Such an oscillating strategy is problematic from the social constructivist perspective outlined in the previous sections. It assumes that a true, undistorted history of the object of research (for example, the relationship between migration and crime) is possible. In the social constructivist understanding of language this is not the case. The object only \textit{appears} within a discursive formation, in other words, a discursive formation is constitutive for the social emergence of an object. Therefore, an object of research can not be separated from discursive formations within which it becomes visible. Consequently, an undistorted history of the relationship between migration and crime is no longer possible. It will always articulate a criminological discourse of


itself because that discourse makes it possible for the question to appear. Therefore, the social constructivist perspective has to go the performative way a bit further than the oscillating strategy. It has to engage more directly and exclusively with the discursive formation in its performative and generic dimensions. Jumping back in a representational argument at the crucial point is not a viable move. Rather than a history or semiology of the referent object, a social constructivist analysis stresses the interpretation of the governing work of discursive formations.

Putting the stress on the work of the discursive formation implies that the generic understanding of language is at the centre of the research project. In this respect, the constructivist research project I will sketch below, slightly differs from a growing body of research in Security Studies and International Relations which analyses the discursive construction of threats and its effect on the identity of political units and the wider order within which these units operate. For example, the US foreign policy during the Second Gulf War has been interpreted as a strategy to determine a new enemy which could heal a damaged identity after the Soviet Union collapsed. Threat definition and identity construction are considered to be mutually constitutive. The definition of the enemy was fully implicated in mobilising support for the New World Order of peace, democracy and multilateralism. The evil that was invested in Saddam Hussein threatened the New World Order which was ‘founded’ at the very moment the evil ‘was discovered’. This research studies shifts in hegemonic political discourses assuming a Foucaultian power-knowledge nexus, that is, assuming discourses govern social relations. But, they do not concentrate on the level of the security formation, that is, on how a formation of rules structures what can be said meaningfully and legitimately in security language. They concentrate on shifts in

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24 David Campbell’s work is generally considered as a very good example of the new works which interpret the social construction of security threats from a post-structural perspective. David Campbell, Writing Security. United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

security fields and how these shifts may have implications on the mobilisation of social dispositions. In other words, the research brackets the level of the mediating structure. It stresses how shifts in the categories and agents ‘filling’ the enemy and friend position effect changes in international practices and the identity of the units. It does not primarily question the logic as such which defines the positions and their interrelations but describes how a different dressing of the logic changes the relationship between the agents enacting the logic. It thus researches how differences in the representation of the world have effects on the politicisation or identification of issue areas and the political units contesting it. Within this research project one can for example look at how the politicisation of migration has changed in Western Europe in the last decade. How an intensification of the Europeanisation of migration policies goes hand in hand with a strong linkage of the migration question with the crisis of the welfare state and with a fast spreading interpretation of migration as a security problem.26 Another example is Lene Hansen’s research on how a securitisation of national identities entered the Slovenian political scene?27

The critical position this literature articulates consists of ‘denaturalising’ the taken-for-granted discourses structuring international or domestic conditions. For example, they show how Slovenian nationalist discourses developed and mobilised social dispositions in the lead-up to the Yugoslavian crisis. The crucial point is that the analysis shows how the others are not natural enemies but become enemies because of the way the nationalist discourses construct history, social deprivation, etc..

Crucial for the author’s distancing from the dominant discourse is that (s)he can articulate how a discursive construction which retrospectively looks as if it was the natural or necessary way for things to develop is actually contingent.

Thus, the critical quality rests on the assumption that representations of the world make a difference (performative force of language) and that there is no natural or

27 Lene Hansen, [??? Alternatives, ????]
neutral arbiter of a true representation. Consequently, any representation to become true has to establish itself as a hegemonic (often by claiming it is a true representation while the others are false) at the cost of silencing alternative representations. This is done by showing how alternative options ‘circulated’ - and still are around - in the political struggle for founding a hegemonic discourse and how they were silenced by the now dominant discourse.

Although the critical edge of this literature cannot be ignored, denaturalising security fields is not necessarily successful in moderating the normative dilemma. The research still maps the security discourses, therefore repeating in an often highly systematic way a security approach to migration or drugs, for example. Putting down the contingent character of the politicisation questions the foundational character but does not necessarily undermine the real effects of this contingent construction. It only does this when these discourses rely for their effects heavily on keeping the natural character of its foundations unquestioned. Moreover, this points to a more general issue concerning this kind of analysis. Although it stresses that language makes a difference and that social relations are constructed it leaves underdeveloped the concept of security formation which heavily pre-structures the possibilities to successfully ‘speak’ differently. In other words, the governing structure which regulates the representations of threats and political units is not an explicit object of research. In that sense, we can repeat Wæver’s comment on Ashley’s post-structural project as a post-structuralism which forgot its structuralism - hence, the possibility to label them non-structuralist constructivists.28

Another related problem is that the approach assumes that indicating the mere existence of alternative practices challenges the dominance of the dominant discourse. This is problematic since the alternative constructions do not exist in a vacuum or in a sheltered space. ‘To be part of the game’ they must ‘participate’ in contesting political constructions of migration, for example. Alternative practices are thus not isolated but

engage with other, possibly dominant constructions. This raises the question of how the ‘engagement’ actually works. It involves relations of power, structuring and restructuring the social exchanges. Staging alternative practices does not necessarily challenge a dominant construction. The political game is more complex as Foucault’s interpretation of the ‘sexual revolution’ - the liberation from sexual repression - of the second half of this century showed.\textsuperscript{29} In a comment on human rights approaches of migration, also Didier Bigo raises the point that opposing strategies do not necessarily radically challenge established politicisations:

\textit{... il est délicat d’opposer idéologie sécuritaire et droits de l’homme car parfois ces énoncés ont plus en commun que leurs auteurs voudraient l’admettre. Ils partagent souvent la même vision de ce qui est ‘insécuré’ et ne divergent que sur les ‘solutions’}.\textsuperscript{30}

The main point is that alternative discourses should not be left in a vacuum. The way they function in the political struggle should be looked at. How are the alternative discourses entrenched in a specific political game? Are they possibly a constitutive part of the mastery of the dominant construction?

The critical remarks on the oscillating research strategy and the non-structuralist constructivism are not meant to devalue the contributions of these research agendas, but are used as stepping stones to help introduce another agenda which approaches the dilemma via a theorisation of the structuring work of the discursive formation. Theorisation means that the performative work of language and its generic dimension is embedded in ‘underlying’ social processes that could explain the specific ways in which security language arranges social relations in contemporary societies. Basically, there are two ways of doing this: (a) a sociological approach explaining how the work of mobilisation is bound to an institutional context, and (b) a cultural one concentrating on the wider symbolic order within which security language is entrenched. The cultural approach explores very explicitly the symbolic contours of the security formation, that is, how it represents security problems. It also

\textsuperscript{29} Michel Foucault, \textit{Histoire de la sexualité 1. La volonté de savoir}. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.

contextualises the formation in a wider cultural context which shows how a society symbolically organises its relation to nature, itself and other societies. Part of my own work has tried to do this by interpreting the established security formation in the academic discipline of International Relations as a specific modern answer to the problem of death. Security becomes a life strategy - a concept coined by Bauman\textsuperscript{31} - which orders social relations by means of distributions of threat and trust relations and by the formulation of mechanisms to regulate these relations. The life strategy is ruled by a fear of death, that is, the undetermined. In a security strategy, this fear is objectified and thus made manageable by means of constructing enemies, ultimately threatening the survival of a collective self (for example, a state, the West, a diplomatic order, ...).\textsuperscript{32} Also Michael Dillon’s recent book on politics and security can be placed here. It questions meanings of security by looking at how they are entrenched in different understandings of the political.\textsuperscript{33} In this paper I do not intend to develop the symbolic aspects of the security formation. Rather, I want to introduce is a sociological understanding of the governing work of the security formation which focuses explicitly on the institutional dimensions of the security formation. This research agenda will be developed in the next section with the help of Wæver’s and Bigo’s interpretations of security. But first, I want to explain how theorisation can be a specific way of dealing with the normative dilemma.

As already said, theorisation means that authors explain the structuring work of the discursive formation. They interpret the power-knowledge nexus by locating it in symbolic and institutional contexts. The first question is therefore a heuristic one of how to understand what is happening rather than a critical question of how to intervene in the securitisation of societal areas. To a certain extent, this theoretical agenda engages with the dilemma in a rather traditional way. At some point it separates the research question from the question ‘what is to be done?’. This does not

mean that the agenda ignores the latter question. Rather, the interpretation of why and how an issue is structured into a security question is a precondition for answering the practical question. Here, it differs from non-structuralist discourse analysis and, for example, from Derridean deconstruction. For the latter the interpretation itself is the intervention in the social. So, for them the separation between research and practical intervention does not exist.34

But, this more traditional way of dealing with the normative dilemma is only one side of the theoretical game. The theoretical approach also engages with social relations in a more direct way, that is, without separating the research question from the practical one. A theorisation of power relations and the symbolic dimensions of the security formation can be critical in itself. By explicitly ‘uncovering’ dimensions of the security formation which are commonly left implicit, it performs a critical practice. Moreover, explaining the work of power relations involved in the securitisation of societal questions is a politicising act in itself. As Stefano Guzzini remarks: integrating social relations in a power analysis politicises the issue in question for ‘power is a concept that is generally used to define what counts as a political issue, what it is “possible” to change’.35 This does not imply that this form of social constructivism claims that it escapes the normative dilemma. Due to its interpretation of language it cannot but accept that security enunciations risk to open space for successful securitising practices. The bottom line is then that the agenda has to accept the normative dilemma as a dilemma. It cannot escape that its own security writing risks to contribute to the securitisation of an area. As a general statement, it shares this position with the other research projects I have sketched. It differs from the others in the specific way in which it hopes to moderate the risk of reifying security threats, that is by theorising the power-knowledge nexus and interpreting securitisation as a specific political strategy.

34 Ibid., pp. 96-103.
Mobilising security, or, institutional dimensions of a security formation.

In the last section of this essay, I want to introduce the agenda which theorises the mobilisation of the security formation from a sociological angle. Its main object of research is the institutionalisation of threat environments.36 A modern society organises risks by providing an institutional environment which plays a central role in the production and regulation of particular risks. The military and rules of military engagement, including threat definitions, are an obvious example. This concept opens a window of opportunity to theorise the production of securitisation in modern, Western societies. To explain this I will heavily rely on two of the most fruitful works in this regard: Ole Wæver’s interpretation of securitisation within a classical realist framework and Didier Bigo’s understanding of the articulation of an internal security field in Western Europe.

Let’s return to Wæver and his interpretation of security as a speech act. The concept speech act strongly introduces an agent uttering security. Someone has to perform the act. Since not every speech act is by definition successful in establishing the illocutionary effect (for example, getting the promise across or turning an issue in a security question), the question raises how to interpret the capacity to successfully securitise. In the sociological research project, this directs attention primarily to a differentiation of the capacity of the actors to mobilise security expectations. The capacity depends considerably on the positions from which security is spoken. In other words, a main question becomes ‘who can utter “security” successfully or legitimately?’, with the ‘who’ strongly referring to societal positions rather than individual subjects. Thus, not everybody is in the same position to utter security powerfully, or, in other words, it is assumed that it makes a difference where the agent uttering ‘security’ is socially positioned. To discriminate between the positions in terms of a capacity to transform requires an interpretation of how the political

community is institutionally organised and what defines the transformative capacity of particular positions.

Wæver theorises this question first of all from a classical realist IR perspective. The modern state represented by statesmen embodies the main capacity to securitise questions. In other words, statesmen representing the state and uttering security in name of the state are the privileged agents in the securitising process. Practices of the statesmen are explained in instrumentalist terms. The state elite manipulate the security utterances to realise their objectives. ‘By uttering “security,” a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it.’37 The speech act of security thus becomes a means to an end. This does of course not imply that successful securitisation and the specific way in which a problem may become securitised is a direct result of the intentionational practice of a statesman. In a social constructivist perspective the effects are always intersubjectively constructed and therefore not controlled by the individual agents themselves (cf. above).

The concept of speech act makes it possible for Wæver to introduce his performative and generic interpretation of language in a classical realist understanding of international politics. He theorises international relations mainly from a classical realist perspective which he amended by introducing a performative and generic understanding of language - hence, a neo-classical realism? The speech act concept allows this specific amendment because it introduces the constitutive nature of language while one can hold on to (rational) individual agents performing the speech act. What the theorisation then does is to discriminate between the individual agents and determine who is in a ‘powerful’ position to speak security. This connection between social constructivism and classical realism makes Wæver’s work very significant for IR.

So far so good. But, by differentiating the positions from which one can speak security with a certain authority, one has not yet touched upon the key ‘level’ where

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the failure or success of the speech act is established, that is, in the interaction of the
different practices (for example, the bargaining and negotiations between the political
elite). Thus, what remains to be explained, is how the successful or unsuccessful
process of securitisation itself works. Also here the sociological perspective will focus
on the specific institutionalisations of the interaction between the elite. This is a key
dimension of the institutionalisation of threat environments.

I do not mean here that Wæver’s neo-classical realism should theorise the state in
terms of its domestic institutional structure and political culture. The neo-classical
realist research agenda does not really have to theorise the state because it starts from
what can be seen as a fairly institutionalised space from which security can be
legitimately spoken: the state embodied by state representatives speaking in name of
the state. It assumes that political leaders can legitimately speak for the state in
international society. Where they get their ‘voice’ from is a question one can bracket if
one assumes a relatively well institutionalised process of policy formulation within the
state. What I mean by suggesting that Wæver leaves the political process of
securitisation relatively undertheorised is that he does not theorise the political culture
and institutionalisation of security practices at the level of the international society.
Within the realist project this would imply an interpretation of diplomatic culture and
the role and institutionalisation of diplomacy. In other words, a sociology of
diplomatic practices with special reference to security practices and the
institutionalisation of threat environments would be the logical way forward for
theorising the speech act of security within the neo-classical realist perspective Wæver
develops. In that sense, it could be argued that Wæver does not follow classical realist
research projects far enough.

Let us now return to the societal sector and repeat the crucial question, which is
the one of the voices ‘powerfully’ speaking security. It is obvious that the neo-
classical realist project developed above runs into problems once the positions from
which to utter security become somewhat undetermined, that is when it is not that
clear anymore if ‘statesmen’ perform the key role in the securitisation process. Wæver
et all. introduce this complex problematics into security studies via the concept of societal security. Societal security concerns threats to cultural identity rather than state sovereignty. Those who speak for or in name of society are not necessarily only those who also speak in name of the state. That means that the question of the institutionalisation of societal threat environments cannot be read straightforwardly in the neo-classical realist framework developed above. The mobilisation of security dispositions in the societal sector may well depend upon other agents than statesmen who utter security in a diplomatic context. Wæver et all. leave the question unanswered. They mention though that speaking in name of society seems to be more open to a wide diversity of agents than speaking in name of the state. But, raising the issue does not answer the question of how the institutionalisation of societal threat environments works in the present West European context. Didier Bigo has developed a most interesting agenda dealing with this question. His research looks at the construction of an internal security field in which terrorism, drugs, international crime, migration and the internal market of the EU are woven into a security continuum. His interpretation of the mobilisation and transfer of security in the area of internal affairs starts from a bureaucratic understanding of politics, strongly based on Bourdieu’s sociology. He theorises the mobilisation of security via self-interested bureaucratic actors who develop transnational linkages. Security professionals such as police officers gradually cooperated to deal with questions of crossborder movement of criminals, terrorism and drugs in Europe. The collaboration developed to a considerable extent at the bureaucratic level where individual sections acted in their own corporate self-interest. The actions of the security professionals resulted in a transnational institutional network which is an unintended effect of their self-interested, instrumental action. It is an intersubjective structure which is neither a mere aggregation of individual self-interests nor the result of a pre-existing common interest. In so far that the individual agents are driven by self-interest these networks

are unintended effects of different individual actions. It is constructed through the work of practices upon practices rather then the work of an individual practice as such.

The construction of the transnational, bureaucratic network went hand in hand with the production of a new security configuration. The bureaucratic field ‘relies’ on a process of securitisation which is theorised as follows. Security professionals such as the police have a strong capacity to produce enunciations about the figure of the enemy and the relationship between us and them. The security knowledge they utter gradually defines a security continuum in which arbitrarily defined threats are connected in a global discourse that produces artificial homogeneity. As a result, the illegitimacy of terrorism and international crime can be transferred to questions of immigration and asylum, for example. The production of professional security knowledge is a key component constituting and regulating the transnational bureaucratic, that is professional(ised), security field within which the different bureaucratic agents struggle for resources, reputation, recognition etc. The transformative capacity of security professionals is a direct result of their institutional position which empowers them to produce credible technical knowledge. This is the case because modern societies are characterised by an increasing process of professionalisation and technical rationalisation, with the bureaucracy being the most explicit institutionalisation of this process. In other words, the process of professionalisation characteristic of modern societies gives security professionals in the bureaucracy a pivotal role in the construction of security fields. Consequently, they deserve the primary focus; statesmen enter the picture to a certain extent only in a secondary way. Weber is never far away in Bigo’s work.

Thus, contrary to what Wæver et all. suggest, for Bigo the question of the voice is not that open in the societal or internal affairs sector. Rather than assuming that in principle everyone can speak for society, he points out that there are specific positions which have a privileged capacity to transform non-security issues into security questions. Along Weberian lines he stresses that these positions are located in
particular sections of the bureaucracy which have that specific capacity to securitise issues because they are producers of professional security knowledge. Thus, Bigo emphasises the capacity of professional bureaucrats for securitisation within a general assumption of a society subjected to an intense process of professionalisation and rationalisation.

Both the theorisations above focus on the institutionalisation of threat environments. The question of the voice uttering security and the mobilisation of security expectations by positioned agents is central. They stress how an institutional structures - in the above cases diplomacy and transnational police networks - and social processes - such as rationalisation - rarefy security enunciations by empowering particular agents to speak security in a specific way. In other words, some agents have a strong capacity to construct security questions because of their position in an institutional structure. Security fields are thus entrenched in institutionalised patterns of practice simultaneously empowering and constraining agents in terms of how and how powerful they can utter security.

Rather than assuming a power-knowledge nexus which frames an analysis of shifts in security discourses, the interpretation of institutionalised threat environments theorises the power-knowledge nexus itself. It shares with the non-structuralist discourse analysis the assumption that enunciations have a transformative capacity. But, it also moves beyond this by looking at how this transformative capacity is determined in a particular societal context. By interpreting the institutional structures and processes which define the mobilisation of security dispositions they frame the general pre-supposition that enunciations have a capacity to structure social relations in a concrete picture of how this capacity itself is socially constituted.

It has already been suggested above that this sociological approach brackets an interpretation of the symbolic logic, or what some would call the grammar, of the security formation. That is what Wæver briefly touches when he discusses the logic of

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security by means of the logic of war read through the lens of national security.\textsuperscript{41} Both Wæver’s and Bigo’s work seem to presuppose that securitisation implies that a particular logic is invested in issue areas when they are successfully securitised. They have to because that explains the peculiar effects securitisation has on social relations. But rather than developing what this logic precisely is in a particular context and how it is entrenched in a symbolic, cultural order, they bracket this question to concentrate on the institutional rarefaction of security utterances and the institutional basis of the mobilisation of security dispositions. They thus focus on a particular aspect of the discursive formation while leaving another dimension underexplored. This is not without consequences. For example, it makes the research relatively insensitive to changes in/of the security logic itself resulting from security utterances being employed in non-traditional security contexts, such as the environment or migration, or in other cultural contexts. The view of the logic is a rather static one of a particular organisation of social relations which is reproduced in the areas that are securitised.

To conclude the section, I briefly return to the normative dilemma. The research project focusing on the institutionalisation of threat environments does not escape the normative dilemma of social constructivist security studies. Just like any security analysis, it remains subjected to the risk that it contributes to a securitisation of an area which it would prefer not to be securitised by the very fact that it utters a security language. But, because it cuts into the dilemma from the question of the rarefaction of security utterances, it differentiates the normative dilemma somewhat. As stated up till now the dilemma rests on the general assumption that utterances have a performative force and that agents uttering security do not fully control the way they utter and the effects of the utterance. Sociological inquiries into the conditions of the mobilisation of security dispositions can show that not all utterances have an equal capacity to ‘securitise’. It depends on the position from which it is spoken and on how the utterance is constructed. In other words, some security utterances have higher capacity to mobilise security dispositions than others. This also counts for the way security

studies reproduces security language. For example, Bigo’s research implies that his own statements have not the same capacity to securitise internal affairs as a more technical research which tries to correctly define threats etc. Why? In his interpretation of the process the professional knowledge produced by security professionals, which can include academics, should be formulated in a technical, rational language to increase its capacity for securitisation. It could be argued that Bigo’s own research does not formulate that technical knowledge and therefore it undermines its own capacity to securitise which is probably exactly what it intends to do. I do not want to argue that as a result Bigo has overcome the dilemma. When his utterances enter the political contested area of migration, for example, they will become subjected to an intersubjective game which interprets and reinterprets texts and manipulates its effects. But, the research project of Bigo and my overinterpreted Wæver have the advantage of differentiating how one is caught by the normative dilemma by means of differentiating between the transformative capacity of utterances. This is made possible because of a theorisation of the crucial ‘element’ upon which the dilemma depends: the power-knowledge nexus.

Conclusion

There is no solution for the normative dilemma in the social constructivist security analyses defined above. The particular understanding of language makes any security utterance potentially securitising. Consequently, enunciating security is never innocent or neutral. Of course, this does not have to result in a normative dilemma. It only does if one wants or has to utter security in a political context while wanting to avoid a securitisation of a particular area. Someone may also employ security language with the intention of securitising an area. This does not necessarily require a conservative interest in keeping the status quo or in establishing law and order. Securitisation can also be performed with an emancipatory interest. Given the capacity of security language to prioritise questions and to mobilise people, one may employ it
as a tactical device to give human rights questions a higher visibility, for example. It is also possible to mobilise security questions in non-security areas with the intention to change the conservative bias of the security language. This would require a positive concept of security which defines liberation from oppression as a good that should be secured.42

The tactic does not necessarily work the way one wants since security language is not a transparent instrument one can manipulate simply by wanting it strong enough to change. It is an opaque and structured given which considerably governs both what can be uttered and how security language integrates or disintegrates social relations. In that sense, I would argue that it is difficult to employ security in an emancipatory way in the context of internal and societal questions in contemporary Western Europe. The way in which asylum and immigration questions are presently structured in the political debate in Western Europe and the way security enunciations have penetrated it, suggest that the security logic that governs the field is a conservative one with strong roots in a ‘vulgarised’ Hobbesian understanding of the human condition. It tends to intensify the conflictual relationship between an indigenous and so-called alien population. If one accepts this interpretation within a social constructivist framework, the mobilisation of security institutions and expectations is problematic from a critical perspective.

In the more scholarly debate within security studies, this raises the question of how to do security studies in the societal sector from a critical perspective. This essay stated a slight preference for emphasising a theorisation of the power-knowledge nexus. It has the advantage that the research slides directly in the key area of the governing work of security utterances. If the main purpose is to be critical while improving our understanding of securitisation, I think there is much to say for focusing on how the governing work of security utterances is entrenched in an

institutional and symbolic history and environment. It is a very scholarly, and in a
sense, traditional critical project, but, if the main purpose is a critical understanding of
how securitisation works, we should move somewhat away from describing shifts
in/of security fields and tackle the question of power or governance more directly. It
would bring the social constructivist research agenda in security studies to more
detailed interpretation of the security formation and how it mediates social practices,
which is the key element for understanding what security means and does in
contemporary social relations.