

## Notes

1. A possible third contender is the newly launched “critical security studies,” committed to seeking alternatives to realist, statist, and positivist orthodoxies. Some of what follows might be seen as fitting that description, but we have no prior commitment to antistate or antirealist positions, and we are driven more by methodological collectivism than by methodological individualism. More on critical security studies in Chapter 2.

2. We are aware that in some other literatures the term *region* has a different meaning from ours. The term was originally introduced at the subunit level. In nineteenth-century France, a political movement formulated regionalism as an ideal for political organization that was located in the middle of the continuum between centralized government and political autonomy. This politicized notion of the region lives on in separatist movements. Also, contemporary journals like *Regional Politics and Policy* (published since 1990), *International Regional Science Review* (since 1975), *Journal of Regional Science* (since 1958), and *Regional Studies* (since 1967) are devoted primarily to the situation of ethnic minorities in specific subunit regions and to issues of administration and planning at different political levels—that is, political centralization and decentralization. Additionally, there is a Europe of the regions: The contemporary map of the EU is subdivided not only into states but also into thousands of smaller units (a Swissification of Europe) and also increasingly into a variety of transnational “regions” (the Baltic Sea region, the Alpe-Adriatic, and the like), which in our terminology would appear as subregions and transregions, respectively. In this study, region refers to what that other literature sometimes calls macroregions (cf. Joenniemi 1993, 1997).

3. The security complex is not objective in the sense of “independent of actors.” In much traditional security analysis, region is defined “objectively” purely in terms of geography or history (cf. current debates about whether Russia is a part of Europe). In this sense, a region is simply an arena for security and one that is not influenced by security policies—the analyst observes “objective” reality and tells the actors to which region they belong. In contrast, security complexes are specifically defined by security interactions among units. Since we argue that security is not an objective issue but a product of the behavior of actors, security complexes are not objective in the traditional sense. Nor is the security complex to be seen as a discursive construction by the actors. We are not (in this context) interested in whether the actors define themselves as a region or whether they claim that their true region is something larger or smaller. Security complexes do not require that their members think in terms of the concept *security complex* (cf. note 6, Chapter 2). Analysts apply the term *security complex* (and therefore designate a region) based upon the contingent, historically specific, and possibly changing constellation generated by the interdependent security practices of the actors. On this basis, lines can be drawn on a map, and the theory can be put into operation.

## CHAPTER 2

# Security Analysis: Conceptual Apparatus

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## What Is Security?

What quality makes something a security issue in international relations? It is important to add the qualification “in international relations,” because the character of security in that context is not identical to the use of the term in everyday language. Although it shares some qualities with “social security,” or security as applied to various civilian guard or police functions, international security has its own distinctive, more extreme meaning. Unlike social security, which has strong links to matters of entitlement and social justice, international security is more firmly rooted in the traditions of power politics. We are not following a rigid domestic-international distinction, because many of our cases are not state defined. But we are claiming that international security has a distinctive agenda.<sup>1</sup>

The answer to what makes something an international security issue can be found in the traditional military-political understanding of security. In this context, security is about survival. It is when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object (traditionally, but not necessarily, the state, incorporating government, territory, and society). The special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them. 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 (Wæver 1988, 1995b).

When we consider the wider agenda, what do the terms *existential threat* and *emergency measures* mean? How, in practice, can the analyst draw the line between processes of politicization and processes of securitization on this basis? Existential threat can only be understood in relation to the particular character of the referent object in question. We are not dealing here with a universal standard based in some sense on what threatens individual human life. The essential quality of existence will vary greatly

across different sectors and levels of analysis; therefore, so will the nature of existential threats.

In the military sector, the referent object is usually the state, although it may also be other kinds of political entities. It is also possible to imagine circumstances in which threats to the survival of the armed forces would elevate those forces to referent object status in their own right, perhaps serving to justify a coup against the existing government and its policy (whether of disarmament or of hopeless conflict). Traditional security studies tends to see all military affairs as instances of security, but this may not be the case. For many of the advanced democracies, defense of the state is becoming only one, and perhaps not even the main *de facto*, function of the armed forces. Their militaries may be increasingly trained and called upon to support routine world order activities, such as peacekeeping or humanitarian intervention, that cannot be viewed as concerning existential threats to their states or even as emergency action in the sense of suspending normal rules.

In the political sector, existential threats are traditionally defined in terms of the constituting principle—sovereignty, but sometimes also ideology—of the state. Sovereignty can be existentially threatened by anything that questions recognition, legitimacy, or governing authority. Among the ever more interdependent and institutionalized relations characteristic of the West (and increasingly of the international system as a whole), a variety of supranational referent objects are also becoming important. The European Union (EU) can be existentially threatened by events that might undo its integration process. International regimes, and international society more broadly, can be existentially threatened by situations that undermine the rules, norms, and institutions that constitute those regimes.

In the economic sector, the referent objects and existential threats are more difficult to pin down. Firms are most commonly existentially threatened by bankruptcy and sometimes by changes to laws that make them illegal or unviable (as after communist revolutions). But in the market economy firms are, with few exceptions, expected to come and go, and only rarely do they try to securitize their own survival. National economies have a greater claim to the right of survival, but rarely will a threat to that survival (national bankruptcy or an inability to provide for the basic needs of the population) actually arise apart from wider security contexts, such as war. Unless the survival of the population is in question, the huge range of the national economy doing better or doing worse cannot be seen as existentially threatening. As in the political sector, supranational referent objects from specific regimes to the global market itself can be existentially threatened by factors that might undermine the rules, norms, and institutions that constitute them.

In the societal sector, as we have defined it, the referent object is large-scale collective identities that can function independent of the state, such as

nations and religions. Given the peculiar nature of this type of referent object, it is extremely difficult to establish hard boundaries that differentiate existential from lesser threats. Collective identities naturally evolve and change in response to internal and external developments. Such changes may be seen as invasive or heretical and their sources pointed to as existential threats, or they may be accepted as part of the evolution of identity. Given the conservative nature of “identity,” it is always possible to paint challenges and changes as threats to identity, because “we will no longer be us,” no longer the way we were or the way we ought to be to be true to our “identity.” Thus, whether migrants or rival identities are securitized depends upon whether the holders of the collective identity take a relatively closed-minded or a relatively open-minded view of how their identity is constituted and maintained. The abilities to maintain and reproduce a language, a set of behavioral customs, or a conception of ethnic purity can all be cast in terms of survival.

In the environmental sector, the range of possible referent objects is very large, ranging from relatively concrete things, such as the survival of individual species (tigers, whales, humankind) or types of habitat (rain forests, lakes), to much fuzzier, larger-scale issues, such as maintenance of the planetary climate and biosphere within the narrow band human beings have come to consider to be normal during their few thousand years of civilization. Underlying many of these referent objects are baseline concerns about the relationship between the human species and the rest of the biosphere and whether that relationship can be sustained without risking a collapse of the achieved levels of civilization, a wholesale disruption of the planet’s biological legacy, or both. The interplay among all of these factors is immensely complicated. At either the macro or the micro extreme are some clear cases of existential threat (the survival of species, the survival of human civilization) that can be securitized. In between, somewhat as in the economic sector, lies a huge mass of problems that are more difficult, although not impossible, to construct in existential terms.

### Securitization

“Security” is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics. Securitization can thus be seen as a more extreme version of politicization. In theory, any public issue can be located on the spectrum ranging from nonpoliticized (meaning the state does not deal with it and it is not in any other way made an issue of public debate and decision) through politicized (meaning the issue is part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations or, more rarely, some other form of communal governance) to securitized (meaning the issue is pre-

sented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure). In principle, the placement of issues on this spectrum is open: Depending upon circumstances, any issue can end up on any part of the spectrum.<sup>2</sup> In practice, placement varies substantially from state to state (and also across time). Some states will politicize religion (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Burma) and some will not (France, the United States). Some will securitize culture (the former USSR, Iran) and some will not (the UK, the Netherlands). In the case of issues (notably the environment) that have moved dramatically out of the nonpoliticized category, we face the double question of whether they have merely been politicized or have also been securitized. This link between politicization and securitization does not imply that securitization always goes through the state; politicization as well as securitization can be enacted in other fora as well. As will be seen later, it is possible for other social entities to raise an issue to the level of general consideration or even to the status of sanctioned urgency among themselves.

In this approach, the meaning of a concept lies in its usage and is not something we can define analytically or philosophically according to what would be "best." The meaning lies not in what people consciously think the concept means but in how they implicitly use it in some ways and not others. In the case of security, textual analysis (Wæver 1988, 1995b, 1995c) suggests that something is designated as an international security issue because it can be argued that this issue is more important than other issues and should take absolute priority. This is the reason we link the issue to what might seem a fairly demanding criterion: that the issue is presented as an existential threat. If one can argue that something overflows the normal political logic of weighing issues against each other, this must be the case because it can upset the entire process of weighing as such: "If we do not tackle this problem, everything else will be irrelevant (because we will not be here or will not be free to deal with it in our own way)." Thereby, the actor has claimed a right to handle the issue through extraordinary means, to break the normal political rules of the game (e.g., in the form of secrecy, levying taxes or conscription, placing limitations on otherwise inviolable rights, or focusing society's energy and resources on a specific task). "Security" is thus a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue—not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat.

Of course, places do exist where secrecy or violation of rights is the rule and where security arguments are not needed to legitimize such acts. The earlier illustrations were for a liberal-democratic society; in other societies there will also be "rules," as there are in any society, and when a securitizing actor uses a rhetoric of existential threat and thereby takes an issue out of what under those conditions is "normal politics," we have a case of

securitization. Thus, the exact *definition* and *criteria* of securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects. Securitization can be studied directly; it does not need indicators. The way to study securitization is to study discourse and political constellations: When does an argument with this particular rhetorical and semiotic structure achieve sufficient effect to make an audience tolerate violations of rules that would otherwise have to be obeyed? If by means of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat the securitizing actor has managed to break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by, we are witnessing a case of securitization.

Even if the general logic of securitization is clear, we have to be precise about its threshold. A discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitization—this is a *securitizing move*, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such. (Accept does not necessarily mean in civilized, dominance-free discussion; it only means that an order always rests on coercion as well as on consent. Since securitization can never only be imposed, there is some need to argue one's case.) We do not push the demand so high as to say that an emergency measure has to be adopted, only that the existential threat has to be argued and just gain enough resonance for a platform to be made from which it is possible to legitimize emergency measures or other steps that would not have been possible had the discourse not taken the form of existential threats, point of no return, and necessity. If no signs of such acceptance exist, we can talk only of a securitizing move, not of an object actually being securitized. The distinction between a securitizing move and successful securitization is important in the chapters that follow.

Securitization is not fulfilled only by breaking rules (which can take many forms) nor solely by existential threats (which can lead to nothing) but by cases of existential threats that legitimize the breaking of rules. Still, we have a problem of size or significance. Many actions can take this form on a small scale—for example, a family securitizing its lifestyle as dependent on keeping a specific job (and therefore using dirty tricks in competition at the firm) or the Pentagon designating hackers as "a catastrophic threat" and "a serious threat to national security" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 23, 1996: A11), which could possibly lead to actions within the computer field but with no cascading effects on other security issues. Our concept of international security has a clear definition of what we are interested in, but it does not tell us how we sort the important cases from the less important ones. We do not want to sort by arbitrarily assigning degrees of importance to referent objects and sectors, for instance, defining state as more important than environment or military as more securitylike

than identity. Doing so would undermine the logic of both widening the security agenda and taking a securitization approach to that agenda. It would constrain arbitrarily and a priori what we can see and thus make it impossible to capture the extent to which the security agenda has actually changed or been widened.

A better measure of importance is the scale of chain reactions on other securitizations: How big an impact does the securitizing move have on wider patterns of relations? A securitizing move can easily upset orders of mutual accommodation among units. The security act is negotiated between securitizer and audience—that is, internally within the unit—but thereby the securitizing agent can obtain permission to override rules that would otherwise bind it. Typically, the agent will override such rules, because by depicting a threat the securitizing agent often says someone cannot be dealt with in the normal way. In the extreme case—war—we do not have to discuss with the other party; we try to eliminate them. This self-based violation of rules is the security act, and the fear that the other party will not let us survive as a subject is the foundational motivation for that act. In a securitized situation, a unit does not rely on the social resources of rules shared intersubjectively among units but relies instead on its own resources, demanding the right to govern its actions by its own priorities (Wæver 1996b). A successful securitization thus has three components (or steps): existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules.

The distinguishing feature of securitization is a specific rhetorical structure (survival, priority of action “because if the problem is not handled now it will be too late, and we will not exist to remedy our failure”). This definition can function as a tool for finding security actors and phenomena in sectors other than the military-political one, where it is often hard to define when to include new issues on the security agenda. Must new issues affect the military sector or be as “dangerous” as war (Deudney 1990)? To circumvent these restrictive ties to traditional security, one needs a clear idea of the essential quality of security in general.

That quality is the staging of existential issues in politics to lift them above politics. In security discourse, an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority; thus, by labeling it as *security*, an agent claims a need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means. For the analyst to grasp this act, the task is not to assess some objective threats that “really” endanger some object to be defended or secured; rather, it is to understand the processes of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat. The process of securitization is what in language theory is called a speech act. It is not interesting as a sign referring to something more real; it is the utterance itself that is the act. By saying the words, something is done (like betting, giving a promise, naming a ship) (Wæver 1988; Austin 1975: 98ff.).

## Sectors and Institutionalization of Security

What we can study is this practice: Who can “do” or “speak” security successfully, on what issues, under what conditions, and with what effects? It is important to note that the security speech act is not defined by uttering the word *security*. What is essential is the designation of an existential threat requiring emergency action or special measures and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience. There will be instances in which the word *security* appears without this logic and other cases that operate according to that logic with only a metaphorical security reference. As spelled out later, in some cases securitization has become institutionalized. Constant drama does not have to be present, because it is implicitly assumed that when we talk of *this* (typically, but not necessarily, defense issues), we are by definition in the area of urgency: By saying “defense” (or, in Holland, “dikes”), one has also implicitly said security and priority. We use this logic as a definition of security because it has a consistency and precision the word as such lacks. There is a concept of international security with this specific meaning, which is implied in most usages of the word.

Our claim is that it is possible to dig into the practice connected to this concept of security in international relations (which is distinct from other concepts of security) and find a characteristic pattern with an inner logic. If we place the survival of collective units and principles—the politics of existential threat—as the defining core of security studies, we have the basis for applying security analysis to a variety of sectors without losing the essential quality of the concept. This is the answer to those who hold that security studies cannot expand its agenda beyond the traditional military-political one without debasing the concept of security itself.

Sectors are “views of the international system through a lens that highlights one particular aspect of the relationship and interaction among all of its constituent units” (Buzan, Jones, and Little 1993: 31). Given that the analytical purpose of sectors is to differentiate types of interaction (military, political, economic, societal, and environmental), it seems reasonable to expect (1) that one will find units and values that are characteristic of, and rooted in, particular sectors (although, like the state, they may also appear in other sectors); and (2) that the nature of survival and threat will differ across different sectors and types of unit. In other words, security is a generic term that has a distinct meaning but varies in form. Security means survival in the face of existential threats, but what constitutes an existential threat is not the same across different sectors. One purpose of the following chapters is to unfold this sectoral logic of security more fully.

Securitization can be either ad hoc or institutionalized. If a given type of threat is persistent or recurrent, it is no surprise to find that the response and sense of urgency become institutionalized. This situation is most visible in the military sector, where states have long endured threats of armed coercion or invasion and in response have built up standing bureaucracies,

procedures, and military establishments to deal with those threats. Although such a procedure may seem to reduce security to a species of normal politics, it does not do so. The need for drama in establishing securitization falls away, because it is implicitly assumed that when we talk of this issue we are by definition in the area of urgency. As is the case for defense issues in most countries and for the dikes in the Netherlands, urgency has been established by the previous use of the security move. There is no further need to spell out that this issue has to take precedence, that it is a security issue—by saying “defense” or “dikes,” one has also implicitly said “security” and “priority.” This can be shown by trying to inquire about the rationale for decisions in these areas. Behind the first layers of ordinary bureaucratic arguments, one will ultimately find a—probably irritated—repetition of a security argument so well established that it is taken for granted.

Some security practices are not legitimized in public by security discourse, because they are not out in the public at all (e.g., the “black programs” in the United States, which are not presented in the budget), but this is actually a very clear case of the security logic. In a democracy, at some point it must be argued in the public sphere why a situation constitutes security and therefore can legitimately be handled differently. One could not take something out of the budget without giving a reason for the use of such an extraordinary procedure. When this procedure has been legitimized through security rhetoric, it becomes institutionalized as a package legitimization, and it is thus possible to have black security boxes in the political process. The speech act reduces public influence on this issue, but in democracies one must legitimize in public why from now on the details will not be presented publicly (because of the danger of giving useful information to the enemy and the like). In all cases, the establishment of secret services has some element of this logical sequence. Not every act is presented with the drama of urgency and priority, because it has been established in a general sense that this is an entire field that has been moved to a form of treatment legitimate only because this area has been defined as security.

In well-developed states, armed forces and intelligence services are carefully separated from normal political life, and their use is subject to elaborate procedures of authorization. Where such separation is not in place, as in many weak states (Nigeria under Abacha, the USSR under Stalin) or in states mobilized for total war, much of normal politics is pushed into the security realm.<sup>3</sup> The prominence of institutionalized military security underpins not only the claim of those who want to confine security studies to the military sector but also the *de facto* primacy of the state in security affairs. But nothing is necessary about this particular construction; it comes out of a certain history and has formidable institutional momentum but is not fixed for all time. Where the threat profiles warrant them, one can see other types of institutionalized security structures, such as those concerned with flood control in the Netherlands. One of the diffi-

culties facing those attempting to securitize environmental issues is that the threats are both new (or newly discovered) and controversial regarding their existential urgency. Consequently, they do not (yet) have institutions, and they find themselves operating in a political context dominated by security institutions designed for other types of threat.

Although in one sense securitization is a further intensification of politicization (thus usually making an even stronger role for the state), in another sense it is opposed to politicization. Politicization means to make an issue appear to be open, a matter of choice, something that is decided upon and that therefore entails responsibility, in contrast to issues that either could not be different (laws of nature) or should not be put under political control (e.g., a free economy, the private sphere, and matters for expert decision). By contrast, securitization on the international level (although often not on the domestic one) means to present an issue as urgent and existential, as so important that it should not be exposed to the normal haggling of politics but should be dealt with decisively by top leaders prior to other issues.

National security should not be idealized. It works to silence opposition and has given power holders many opportunities to exploit “threats” for domestic purposes, to claim a right to handle something with less democratic control and constraint. Our belief, therefore, is not “the more security the better.” Basically, security should be seen as negative, as a failure to deal with issues as normal politics. Ideally, politics should be able to unfold according to routine procedures without this extraordinary elevation of specific “threats” to a prepolitical immediacy. In some cases securitization of issues is unavoidable, as when states are faced with an implacable or barbarian aggressor. Because of its prioritizing imperative, securitization also has tactical attractions—for example, as a way to obtain sufficient attention for environmental problems. But desecuritization is the optimal long-range option, since it means not to have issues phrased as “threats against which we have countermeasures” but to move them out of this threat-defense sequence and into the ordinary public sphere (Wæver 1995b).

When considering securitizing moves such as “environmental security” or a “war on crime,” one has to weigh the always problematic side effects of applying a mind-set of security against the possible advantages of focus, attention, and mobilization. Thus, although in the abstract desecuritization is the ideal, in specific situations one can choose securitization—only one should not believe this is an innocent reflection of the issue *being* a security threat; it is always a political choice to securitize or to accept a securitization.

### Subjective, Objective, and Intersubjective Security

Extracting the essential quality of international security takes one some way toward pinning down a general but nonetheless still fairly confined

meaning of the concept that can operate both within and beyond the traditional military-political understanding of that concept. But this does not solve all of the problems. Commentators on security at least as far back as Arnold Wolfers (1962: 151) have noted that security can be approached both objectively (there is a real threat) and subjectively (there is a perceived threat) and that nothing ensures that these two approaches will line up. This distinction turns out to be crucial in formulating an international security concept for a multisectoral agenda.

Our argument is that securitization, like politicization, has to be understood as an essentially intersubjective process. Even if one wanted to take a more objectivist approach, it is unclear how this could be done except in cases in which the threat is unambiguous and immediate. (An example would be hostile tanks crossing the border; even here, "hostile" is an attribute not of the vehicle but of the socially constituted relationship. A foreign tank could be part of a peacekeeping force.) It is not easy to judge the securitization of an issue against some measure of whether that issue is "really" a threat; doing so would demand an objective measure of security that no security theory has yet provided. Even if one could solve the measurement problem, it is not clear that the objectivist approach would be particularly helpful. Different states and nations have different thresholds for defining a threat: Finns are concerned about immigration at a level of 0.3 percent foreigners, whereas Switzerland functions with a level of 14.7 percent (Romero 1990).<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of whether an analyst finds that an actor's disposition toward high or low thresholds leads to correct assessments, this disposition has real effects. And other actors need to grasp the logic this unit follows. When states or nations securitize an issue—"correctly" or not—it is a political fact that has consequences, because this securitization will cause the actor to operate in a different mode than he or she would have otherwise. This is the classical diplomatic (and classical realist) lesson, which holds that good statesmanship has to understand the threshold at which other actors will feel threatened and therefore more generally to understand how the world looks to those actors, even if one disagrees (Carr 1939; Kissinger 1957; Wæver 1995d).

In some cases, however, it *does* matter how others judge the reasonableness of a securitization, because this influences how other actors in the system will respond to a security claim. What may seem a legitimate securitization within a given political community may appear paranoid to those outside it (e.g., Western perceptions of Soviet concerns about pop music and jeans). Conversely, outsiders may perceive that a political community undersecritizes a "real" threat and thus endangers itself or free rides (e.g., U.S. perceptions of Danish defense policy during the Cold War). The way the securitization processes of one actor fit with the perceptions of others about what constitutes a "real" threat matters in shaping the interplay of

securities within the international system. Both within and between actors, the extent of shared intersubjective understandings of security is one key to understanding behavior.

In any case, it is neither politically nor analytically helpful to try to define "real security" outside of the world of politics and to teach the actors to understand the term correctly. Such rationalist universalism will easily be "right" on its own terms, but it will be of very little help in political analysis. It is more relevant to grasp the processes and dynamics of securitization, because if one knows who can "do" security on what issue and under what conditions, it will sometimes be possible to maneuver the interaction among actors and thereby curb security dilemmas.

The distinction between subjective and objective is useful for highlighting the fact that we want to avoid a view of security that is given objectively and emphasize that security is determined by actors and in this respect is subjective. The label *subjective*, however, is not fully adequate. Whether an issue is a security issue is not something individuals decide alone. Securitization is intersubjective and socially constructed: Does a referent object hold general legitimacy as something that *should* survive, which entails that actors can make reference to it, point to something as a threat, *and* thereby get others to follow or at least tolerate actions not otherwise legitimate? This quality is not held in subjective and isolated minds; it is a social quality, a part of a discursive, socially constituted, intersubjective realm. For individuals or groups to speak security does not guarantee success (cf. Derrida 1977a; Wæver 1995b). Successful securitization is not decided by the securitizer but by the audience of the security speech act: Does the audience accept that something is an existential threat to a shared value? Thus, security (as with all politics) ultimately rests neither with the objects nor with the subjects but *among* the subjects (cf. Arendt 1958, 1959; Wæver 1990; Huysmans 1996).

### Social Power and Facilitating Conditions

This relationship among subjects is not equal or symmetrical, and the possibility for successful securitization will vary dramatically with the position held by the actor. Security is thus very much a structured field in which some actors are placed in positions of power by virtue of being generally accepted voices of security, by having the power to define security (Bigo 1994, 1996, forthcoming). This power, however, is never absolute: No one is guaranteed the ability to make people accept a claim for necessary security action (as even the Communist elites of Eastern Europe learned; see Wæver 1995b), nor is anyone excluded from attempts to articulate alternative interpretations of security. The field is structured or biased, but no one conclusively "holds" the power of securitization.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is our view

(contra Bigo) that one can not make the actors of securitization the fixed point of analysis—the practice of securitization is the center of analysis. In concrete analysis, however, it is important to be specific about who is more or less privileged in articulating security. To study securitization is to study the power politics of a concept.

Based on a clear idea of the nature of security, securitization studies aims to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results, and, not least, under what conditions (i.e., what explains when securitization is successful).

The impossibility of applying objective standards of securityness relates to a trivial but rarely noticed feature of security arguments: They are about the future, about alternative futures—always hypothetical—and about counterfactuals. A security argument always involves two predictions: What will happen if we do not take “security action” (the threat), and what will happen if we do (How is the submitted security policy supposed to work?). A security theory that could tell politicians and citizens what actually constitute security problems and what do not would demand that such predictions should be possible to make on a scientific basis, which means society would have to be a closed, mechanical, and deterministic system. Even this condition, however, would not be enough, because a second complication is that securityness is not only a matter of degree—“how threatening”—but is also a qualitative question: Do we choose to attach the security label with its ensuing effects? Actors can choose to handle a major challenge in other ways and thus not securitize it. The use of a specific conceptualization is always a choice—it is politics, it is not possible to decide by investigating the threat scientifically.

An objective measure for security can never replace the study of securitization, because the security quality is supplied by politics, but this does not mean a study of the features of the threat itself is irrelevant. On the contrary, these features rank high among the “facilitating conditions” of the security speech act. Facilitating conditions are the conditions under which the speech act works, in contrast to cases in which the act misfires or is abused (Austin 1975 [1962]). Conditions for a successful speech act fall into two categories: (1) the internal, linguistic-grammatical—to follow the rules of the act (or, as Austin argues, accepted conventional procedures must exist, and the act has to be executed according to these procedures), and (2) the external, contextual and social—to hold a position from which the act can be made (“The particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked” [Austin 1975 (1962): 34]).

A successful speech act is a combination of language and society, of both intrinsic features of speech and the group that authorizes and recognizes that speech (Bourdieu 1991 [1982]; Butler 1996a, b). Among the

internal conditions of a speech act, the most important is to follow the security form, the grammar of security, and construct a plot that includes existential threat, point of no return, and a possible way out—the general grammar of security as such plus the particular dialects of the different sectors, such as talk identity in the societal sector, recognition and sovereignty in the political sector, sustainability in the environmental sector, and so on (cf. Wæver 1996b). The external aspect of a speech act has two main conditions. One is the social capital of the enunciator, the securitizing actor, who must be in a position of authority, although this should not be defined as official authority. The other external condition has to do with threat. It is more likely that one can conjure a security threat if certain objects can be referred to that are generally held to be threatening—be they tanks, hostile sentiments, or polluted waters. In themselves, these objects never make for necessary securitization, but they are definitely facilitating conditions.

After thus subdividing the social, external speech-act conditions into actor authority and threat related, we can sum up the facilitating conditions as follows: (1) the demand internal to the speech act of following the grammar of security, (2) the social conditions regarding the position of authority for the securitizing actor—that is, the relationship between speaker and audience and thereby the likelihood of the audience accepting the claims made in a securitizing attempt, and (3) features of the alleged threats that either facilitate or impede securitization.

### Actor and Analyst in Securitization Studies

Approaching security from a speech-act perspective raises questions about the relationship between actors and analysts in defining and understanding the security agenda. As analysts, we define security as we have done here because it is the only way that makes coherent sense of what actors do. We have identified a particular sociopolitical logic that is characteristic of security, and that logic is what we study. Although analysts unavoidably play a role in the construction (or deconstruction) of security issues (viz., the long argument between peace research and strategic studies or the U.S. debate about the securityness of the Vietnam War), it is not their primary task to determine whether some threat represents a “real” security problem.

Objective security assessment is beyond our means of analysis; the main point is that actors and their audiences securitize certain issues as a specific form of political act. Actors who securitize do not necessarily say “security,” nor does their use of the term *security* necessarily always constitute a security act. We use our criteria to see if they take the form of “politics of existential threats,” with the argument that an issue takes priority over everything else and therefore allows for a breaking of the rules. As a first step, the designation of what constitutes a security issue comes from

political actors, not analysts, but analysts interpret political actors' actions and sort out when these actions fulfill the security criteria. It is, further, the analyst who judges whether the actor is effective in mobilizing support around this security reference (i.e., the attempted securitizers are "judged" first by other social actors and citizens, and the degree of their following is then interpreted and measured by us). Finally, to assess the significance of an instance of securitization, analysts study its effects on other units. The actor commands at only one very crucial step: the performance of a political act in a security mode.

Thus, it is the actor, not the analyst, who decides whether something is to be handled as an existential threat. This does not make analysts hostage to the self-understanding of actors for the duration of the analysis. In all subsequent questions of cause-effect relationships—what are the effects of these security acts, who influenced decisions, and so on—we do not intend to give actors any defining role. Thus, a concept such as *security complex* is defined not by whether actors label themselves a complex (they do not!) but by analysts' interpretation of who is actually interconnected in terms of security interaction.<sup>6</sup> (Security complex is basically an analytical term; security is a political practice that we have distilled into a specific, more precise category on the basis of the way the concept is used.) The speech-act approach says only that it is the actor who by securitizing an issue—and the audience by accepting the claim—makes it a security issue. At that level, the analyst cannot and should not replace the actor.

This point does not suggest that we feel obliged to agree with this securitizing act. One of the purposes of this approach should be that it becomes possible to evaluate whether one finds it good or bad to securitize a certain issue. One rarely manages to counter a securitizing attempt by saying as an analyst, "You are not really threatened, you only think so." But it is possible to ask with some force whether it is a good idea to make this issue a security issue—to transfer it to the agenda of panic politics—or whether it is better handled within normal politics. As witnessed in the discussion about environmental security, even environmentalists have had strong second thoughts about the effects of putting the environmental agenda in security terms. The securitization approach serves to underline the responsibility of talking security, the responsibility of actors as well as of analysts who choose to frame an issue as a security issue. They cannot hide behind the claim that anything in itself constitutes a security issue.

The relationship of analyst to actor is one area in which our approach differs from that taken by many scholars with whom we share some theoretical premises. An emerging school of "critical security studies" (CSS) wants to challenge conventional security studies by applying postpositivist perspectives, such as critical theory and poststructuralism (Krause and Williams 1996, 1997). Much of its work, like ours, deals with the social construction of security (cf. also Klein 1994; Campbell 1993), but CSS mostly has the intent (known from poststructuralism as well as from con-

structivism in international relations) of showing that change is possible because things are socially constituted.

We, in contrast, believe even the socially constituted is often sedimented as structure and becomes so relatively stable as practice that one must do analysis also on the basis that it continues, using one's understanding of the social construction of security not only to criticize this fact but also to understand the dynamics of security and thereby maneuver them. This leads us to a stronger emphasis on collectivities and on understanding thresholds that trigger securitization in order to avoid them. With our securitization perspective, we abstain from attempts to talk about what "real security" would be for people, what are "actual" security problems larger than those propagated by elites, and the like. To be able to talk about these issues, one has to make basically different ontological choices than ours and must define some emancipatory ideal. Such an approach is therefore complementary to ours; it can do what we voluntarily abstain from, and we can do what it is unable to: understand the mechanisms of securitization while keeping a distance from security—that is, not assuming that security is a good to be spread to ever more sectors.

There are other differences between the two approaches (much of CSS takes the individual as the true reference for security—human security—and thus in its individualism differs from our methodological collectivism and focus on collectivities; cf. Chapter 9), but the political attitude and its corresponding view of constructivism and structuralism is probably the most consistent one. The analyst in critical security studies takes on a larger burden than the analyst in our approach; he or she can brush away existing security construction disclosed as arbitrary and point to some other issues that are more important security problems. Our approach links itself more closely to existing actors, tries to understand their *modus operandi*, and assumes that future management of security will have to include handling these actors—as, for instance, in strategies aimed at mitigating security dilemmas and fostering mutual awareness in security complexes. Although our philosophical position is in some sense more radically constructivist in holding security to always be a political construction and not something the analyst can describe as it "really" is, in our purposes we are closer to traditional security studies, which at its best attempted to grasp security constellations and thereby steer them into benign interactions. This stands in contrast to the "critical" purposes of CSS, which point toward a more wholesale refutation of current power wielders.

### The Units of Security Analysis: Actors and Referent Objects

The speech-act approach to security requires a distinction among three types of units involved in security analysis.

1. *Referent objects*: things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival.
2. *Securitizing actors*: actors who securitize issues by declaring something—a referent object—existentially threatened.
3. *Functional actors*: actors who affect the dynamics of a sector. Without being the referent object or the actor calling for security on behalf of the referent object, this is an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security. A polluting company, for example, can be a central actor in the environmental sector—it is not a referent object and is not trying to securitize environmental issues (quite the contrary).

The most important and difficult distinction is that between referent objects and securitizing actors, and this distinction requires some discussion. We deal with functional actors in the sector chapters.

*The referent object* for security has traditionally been the state and, in a more hidden way, the nation. For a state, survival is about sovereignty, and for a nation it is about identity (Wæver et al. 1993, chapter 2). But if one follows the securitization approach outlined earlier, a much more open spectrum of possibilities has to be allowed. In principle, securitizing actors can attempt to construct anything as a referent object. In practice, however, the constraints of facilitating conditions mean actors are much more likely to be successful with some types of referent objects than with others. Security action is usually taken on behalf of, and with reference to, a collectivity. The referent object is that to which one can point and say, "It has to survive, therefore it is necessary to . . ."

Size or scale seems to be one crucial variable in determining what constitutes a successful referent object of security. At the micro end of the spectrum, individuals or small groups can seldom establish a wider security legitimacy in their own right. They may speak about security to and of themselves, but few will listen. At the system end of the scale, problems also exist in establishing security legitimacy. For example, attempts have been made to construct all of humankind as a security referent—most notably in terms of shared fears of nuclear annihilation during the Cold War but also in the context of environmental fears. Another system-scale attempt was the failed move by socialists in 1914 to mobilize in the name of the international working class. Thus far, however, the system level has rarely been able to compete with the middle scale, although this does not mean it will not become more attractive in the future as international circumstances change.

In practice, the middle scale of limited collectivities has proved the most amenable to securitization as durable referent objects. One explanation for this success is that such limited collectivities (states, nations, and, as anticipated by Huntington, civilizations) engage in self-reinforcing rival-

ries with other limited collectivities, and such interaction strengthens their "we" feeling. Because they involve a reference to a "we," they are social constructs operative in the interaction among people. A main criterion of this type of referent is that it forms an interpretative community—it is the context in which principles of legitimacy and valuation circulate and within which the individual constructs an interpretation of events. The referent is a social context with the dignity of a "site of judgment" (Foucault 1979). If rivalry is a facilitating condition for successful securitization, middle-level collectivities will always have an advantage over the system level in this respect. Somehow, the system-level candidates are still too subtle and indirect to trigger the levels of mass identity necessary for securitization. Lacking the dynamic underpinning of rivalry, their attempt at universalist political allegiance confronts the middle-level collectivities and loses.<sup>7</sup>

The apparent primacy of the middle-level, limited collectivities opens the way for an attack on our approach from traditional state-centric security analysts (and perhaps also from certain types of liberals). Their argument goes like this: Security, by definition, is and should be about the state, and the state is and should be about security, with the emphasis on military and political security. A hard-line liberal might say the state has no legitimate functions other than security. When security is expanded beyond the state, we have problematic securitizations such as environmental security; when the state expands beyond security, we have problems such as the conflation of economic security with protectionism. It is possible to take the state-security position and argue politically against all attempts to "do" security with reference to other referent objects on the ground that only through the state can the process of securitization be controlled democratically and kept in check.

We acknowledge that there is some analytical truth, as well as a legitimate political position, in this tight link between state and security. But the logic of our approach forces us to reject the use of such a narrow and self-closing definitional move. We have constructed a wider conceptual net within which the state-centric position is a possible but not a predetermined outcome. In using this scheme, one may still find that the state is the most important security referent; if so, this finding would carry much more force than if it were made true by definition and would also remain open to change. We do not say security is only about the state (although there is much truth to the argument that the state is the ideal security actor) nor that security is equally available to all—states and other social movements. Security is an area of competing actors, but it is a biased one in which the state is still generally privileged as the actor historically endowed with security tasks and most adequately structured for the purpose. This explanation acknowledges the difference between a state-centric approach and a state-dominated field.

But whereas the middle level in general, and the state in particular,

might enjoy primacy in the selection of referent objects, that is not the end of the story. Being a middle-level, limited collectivity is insufficient for achieving status as a referent object. This is probably best illustrated in the case of economic security, where one would think firms are the natural limited collectivity units. But by their very nature, firms rarely have a strong claim to a right of survival. If the survival of a firm is threatened, the firm will not be able to legitimize action beyond the normal, legal rules of the game. We rarely see middle-level security policy in this field except when economic arguments can be linked to what in economic terms is the secondary unit—the state—which *can* claim a natural right to survive, to defend its existence, and to take extraordinary measures (protectionism and the like) on a national issue (such as maintaining the capability for military mobilization) if deemed necessary.

Nor do system-level referent objects always lose out. Thus far they have done so in the military and political sectors, where the security of humankind has generally had less appeal than that of the state. But the story is different in other sectors. The environment is becoming an interesting case, because groups are using a securitizing logic that exactly follows the format prescribed in the previous section: The environment has to survive; therefore, this issue should take priority over all others, because if the environment is degraded to the point of no return all other issues will lose their meaning. If the normal system (politics according to the rules as they exist) is not able to handle this situation, we (Greenpeace and especially the more extremist ecoterrorists) will have to take extraordinary measures to save the environment. Sustainability might be the environmentalists' equivalent of the state's sovereignty and the nation's identity; it is the essential constitutive principle that has to be protected. If this idea catches on, the environment itself may be on the way to becoming a referent object—an object by reference to which security action can be taken in a socially significant way. We discuss this more fully in Chapter 4.

Once this door is opened, one can see other plausible candidates for security referent objects at the system level. Humankind as a whole achieved some status as a referent object in relation to nuclear weapons and could do so again—perhaps more successfully—in relation to environmental disasters, such as new ice ages or collisions between the earth and one or more of the many large rocks that occupy near-earth space. The level of human civilization could also become the referent object in relation to environmental threats. In the economic sector, system-level referents may be more effective vehicles for security discourse than limited collectivities, such as the firm and the state. Already, systems of rules or sets of principles, such as “the liberal world economy” and “free trade,” have some status as referent objects in the economic sector. A similar practice could grow in the political sector around international society or democracy (the latter as an extension of the democracy = peace hypothesis). Our position is that

no principled, logical exclusion of referent objects should take place at the system level; therefore, we investigate the issue in each of the sector chapters.

Also, the individual is again a factor in security debate. As argued by Ken Booth (1991, 1994, 1995), much of security analysis blanks out the effects on actual human beings of the issues discussed; thus, his argument is an attempt to securitize concrete individuals in their competition with aggregate categories. Emma Rothschild (1995) has argued that historically, a major part of liberal thought had the individual as the referent of security; thus, there is a respectable philosophical tradition to build on. In the 1980s, with projects like the Brandt and Palme Commissions, security thought drifted back toward the individual, and Rothschild argues convincingly that regardless of whether it is intellectually coherent or ethically ideal, securitization of the individual is a real political practice of our times. (In this book, the individual will reappear primarily in the political-sector chapter, because it is usually a question of establishing the *principle* of, for example, human rights rather than of specific individuals appearing one by one as securitized referent objects.<sup>8</sup>)

To conclude, one can study security discourse to learn what referent objects are appealed to and can study outcomes to see which hold security legitimacy so an appeal to their necessary survival is able to mobilize support. Traditionally, the middle level has been the most fruitful generator of referent objects, but lately more has been heard about system- and micro-level possibilities (Rothschild 1995). Referent objects must establish security legitimacy in terms of a claim to survival. Bureaucracies, political regimes, and firms seldom hold this sense of guaranteed survival and thus are not usually classed as referent objects. Logically, they could try to establish a claim to survival and thus to security legitimacy, but empirically this is not usually possible. In practice, security is not totally subjective. There are socially defined limits to what can and cannot be securitized, although those limits can be changed. This means security analysis is interested mainly in successful instances of securitization—the cases in which other people follow the securitizing lead, creating a social, intersubjective constitution of a referent object on a mass scale. Unsuccessful or partially successful attempts at securitization are interesting primarily for the insights they offer into the stability of social attitudes toward security legitimacy, the process by which those attitudes are maintained or changed, and the possible future direction of security politics. In these larger patterns, desecuritization is at least as interesting as securitization, but the successful acts of securitization take a central place because they constitute the currently valid specific meaning of security.

Critics will undoubtedly protest our abdication of the critical use of objective security measures as a way to question dominant definitions (cf. McSweeney 1996). When a threat is not securitized, should one not be able

to show that this *is* a threat? Yes, the securitization perspective, which basically removes the objective ground from the dominant discourse, opens the possibility of problematizing both actual securitization and the absence of securitization, but it cannot do so by proving that something “is” a security problem—at least not without shifting from the role of analyst to securitizing actor. Thus, it is not advisable to add to our basic securitization perspective that there are also objective security problems (to hold against false securitizations and the lack thereof). Doing so would introduce an incompatible ontology that would ultimately undermine the basic idea of security as a specific social category that arises out of, and is constituted in, political practice.

What one *can* add are arguments about the likely effects.<sup>9</sup> One can try to show the effects of either excessive securitization—security dilemmas—or of *not* securitizing—the inability to handle an issue effectively unless it is securitized. Only within society and by one’s own participation in political practice can one contribute to securitization or desecuritization, which is a different matter from the threat “being” a security problem. Things can be facilitators of securitization—it is made easier if one can point to matters associated with threats, but the ultimate locus of security is social rather than technical, and it is between a securitizing actor and its audience in reference to something they value.

A *securitizing actor* is someone, or a group, who performs the security speech act. Common players in this role are political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists, and pressure groups. These actors are not usually the referent objects for security, because only rarely can they speak security through reference to the need to defend their own survival. Their argument will normally be that it is necessary to defend the security of the state, nation, civilization, or some other larger community, principle, or system. Only occasionally will actors such as governments or firms be able to speak successfully of security on their own behalf.

The notion of an “actor” is in itself problematic. To say precisely who or what acts is always tricky, because one can disaggregate any collective into subunits and on down to individuals and say, “It is not really ‘the state’ that acts but some particular department—or in the last instance individuals.” But to disaggregate everything into individuals is not very helpful, because much of social life is understandable only when collectivities are seen as more than the sum of their “members” and are treated as social realities (methodological collectivism).

Identifying actors is thus more complicated than identifying referent objects. The former involves a level-of-analysis problem: The same event can be attributed to different levels (individual, bureaucracy, or state, for instance). Unlike the case with the referent object, a speech act is often not self-defining in terms of who or what speaks, and the designation “actor” is thus in some sense arbitrary. Ultimately, individuals can always be said to

be the actors, but if they are locked into strong roles it is usually more relevant to see as the “speaker” the collectivities for which individuals are designated authoritative representatives (e.g., parties, states, or pressure groups)—for example, France-materialized-as-de Gaulle rather than the person de Gaulle. If one wants to downgrade the role of the analyst in defining actors, one option is to let other actors settle the matter. Other states treated de Gaulle as acting on behalf of France and held France responsible for his acts; thus, in the world of “diplomats” France was constituted as the actor (Manning 1962; Wæver forthcoming-c). How to identify the securitizing actor is in the last instance less a question of who performs the speech than of what logic shapes the action. Is it an action according to individual logic or organizational logic, and is the individual or the organization generally held responsible by other actors? Focusing on the organizational logic of the speech act is probably the best way to identify who or what is the securitizing actor.

The difference between actor and referent object in any specific case will also usually mean there is a separate category of “audience,” those the securitizing act attempts to convince to accept exceptional procedures because of the specific security nature of some issue. One danger of the phrases *securitization* and *speech act* is that too much focus can be placed on the acting side, thus privileging the powerful while marginalizing those who are the audience and judge of the act (Huysmans 1996).

One use of the distinction between actors and referent objects is to avoid reifying some security units—for example, nations. When we say in the chapter on societal security (and in Wæver et al. 1993) that societal security is often about nations and their survival, we do not want to say that “a nation acts to defend itself,” which would represent reifying and anthropomorphic terminology. Someone—some group, movement, party, or elite—acts with reference to the nation and claims to speak or act on behalf of the nation.

The distinction between securitizing actor and referent object is less of a problem in the context of the state and therefore has not previously been clearly noted. The state (usually) has explicit rules regarding who can speak on its behalf, so when a government says “we have to defend our national security,” it has the right to act on behalf of the state. The government *is* the state in this respect. No such formal rules of representation exist for nations or the environment; consequently, the problem of legitimacy is larger in these areas than in the case of the state. When someone acts in the name of a nation, certain discursive rules are imposed on the actor, because he or she has to speak in terms of identity, in terms that follow the logic of “nation,” and these terms shape the discourse and action in a way that differs from that appropriate to other referent objects. But only in the weakest sense does this mean the nation is “acting.” The rules for what one can do in the name of a nation are less rigid than those for a state; therefore, it will

be easier to talk of the state acting than of the nation doing so. This is a matter of degree rather than necessarily a qualitative difference. Consequently, the analyst who writes about a fringe neo-Nazi group that tries to mobilize people to defend "our national survival" against the threat posed by immigrants will feel uncomfortable phrasing this as "the nation acting." It feels more correct to make the distinction between who actually does the acting and what those actors are referring to as that which should survive and then see how successful they are in asserting a claim to speak for that higher entity.

These arguments show why it is important to distinguish between securitizing actors and referent objects. But the distinctions are contextual rather than intrinsic to specific units: In many cases, the securitizing actors will be different from the referent object, but in others—most notably the state—the referent object will in a sense speak for itself through its authorized representatives. In all cases, however, the analyst is obliged to question the success or failure of the securitizing speech act. Even governments can fail at securitization, as happened to Britain over the Suez, the United States in Vietnam, and the European Communist regimes domestically in the late 1980s.

In applying the distinction among referent objects, securitizing actors, and functional actors to the five sector chapters that follow, it is important first to clarify the referent object(s) in each sector. In some cases, this will constitute most of the exercise. To map societal security around the world, it is probably more interesting—and at least logically primary—to know where people are mobilized in the name of nations, civilizations, religions, or tribes than to know where mobilization is effected by political parties, where by state elites, where by social movements, where by churches, and where by intellectuals. In the military sector, the referent object may almost always be the state, and the securitizing actor may in some sense also be "the state," but a number of functional actors may also influence decisions. If so, one would need to spend more space tracking down these functional actors. Thus, the sector chapters will vary in terms of the weight of analysis given to the three types of security unit. In an ideal situation—perhaps in more complete future case studies based on this approach—all three types will be covered fully, in particular the articulation of referent objects and securitizing actors.

### Regions and Other Constellations of Securitization

In the part of this work aimed at tracing security complexes, the approach is to look at the pattern of security connectedness. The investigation proceeds in three steps: (1) Is the issue securitized successfully by any actors?

(2) If yes, track the links and interactions from this instance—how does the security action in this case impinge on the security of others, and where does this then echo significantly? (3) These chains can then be collected as a cluster of interconnected security concerns. When this case along with the patterns from all of the other cases (of the sector in the case of homogeneous sector-specific analysis or across sectors in the case of heterogeneous security complex analysis; cf. Chapters 1 and 8) are aggregated, we can see the level on which the processes of securitization and the patterns of interaction are concentrated.

Our general assumption, and one of the key motivations for this project, is that the post-Cold War world will exhibit substantially higher levels of regionalization and lower levels of globalization than was the case during the Cold War. One of our purposes is to adapt security complex theory to deal with this more complicated world. In the sector chapters that follow, however, we keep this question open. It may be that the security logic of some sectors inherently inclines toward regionalization, whereas in other sectors it does not. This is what we need to investigate in these chapters. And we do so in basically the same way as is done in classical security complex theory: by combining the concerns of major actors into a constellation, a knot of mutual security relations.

One final problem in thinking about security regions is how to tie such thinking into the discussion of actors and referent objects in the previous section. Is a security complex defined by actors or referent objects? As just argued, the security complex is actually a constellation of security concerns; the different instances of securitization as such form the nodes among which the lines can be drawn and the complex mapped. Because referent objects are the more basic, enduring, and salient features on the security landscape, the answer to our earlier question is the referent objects. Some might object that according to our scheme referent objects do not act and therefore cannot be the units in subsystems that are defined by interactions. This is an illusion. Security actors speak and act in the name of referent objects, and they generally see threats as emanating from other referent objects. There is thus a real sense in which India and Pakistan, Turkey and the Kurds, or Chile and ITT interact.

Since referent objects are the socially constituted units, they are often actors for each other, even if some analytical theories point to other links in the chains as the actors. For instance, states are to some extent real as states and they act as states even if the literal acting is done by statesmen, because states ascribe intentions and responsibility to each other as states (Manning 1962; Wæver forthcoming-c). This reflection is structured by the motivation of security complex analysis, which is to reach a dynamic analysis of security situations. We want to be able to grasp the connections between the security of A and that of B, the security dilemmas as well as mutually rein-

forcing security loops. Therefore, it is essential that we organize the regional analysis around nodes that are simultaneously that which is (claimed to be) threatened and that which is (depicted as) the source of threat.

In classical security complex theory (CSCT), the definition was phrased in terms of primary security concerns; in the current framework, it must be instances of securitization that connect and form the complex. In both cases, the core is obviously the articulation of threats by the major actors. Unfortunately, there is little conceptual literature on threats. In discussions of the concept of security, some participants claim an actor-based threat is a precondition for something to be a security problem (Deudney 1990). It is difficult to see what justifies this as a logical step, although it could be an empirical connection, a structural proclivity making threats attributed to actors more easy to securitize. We do not, however, want to define security problems such that actors *have* to be the problem. Probably, they usually are.

It follows from our general securitization perspective that what interests us is the *attribution* of security problems to specific sources rather than the actual origins of what appear as security problems. As argued by attribution theory, there is a general psychological tendency to overestimate the degree of choice for *alter* while emphasizing necessity as to *ego* (Hart 1978; Jervis 1976). One will therefore generally tend to “actorize” the other side—that is, fashion the other as a willful chooser rather than a chain in a series of events. In most cases, the fact that the other is a strategic actor with several choices is an amplifying factor in any threat perception and therefore assists in pushing an issue across the security threshold. Because the other is an actor, not just a wheel in a machine, it has the potential of outwitting us, of having intentions, or of bending or suppressing our will to replace it with its own (cf. Clausewitz 1983 [1832]; Wæver 1995b).

This focus on actors could seem to point to securitizing actors rather than to referent objects. This deduction, however, is probably false. What the attribution argument implies is not that we should focus on those units we see as actors but rather that whatever is presented as the cause of security problems is most likely also actorized. If securitizing actor “a” on behalf of community “A” claims A is threatened by B, he or she will present B as an actor, as responsible for the threat, as an agent who had a choice. Therefore, we do not have to define security complexes in terms of what we have labeled *actors* in our analytical framework: The actors might operate with other actors and thereby point to the bigger, more abstract categories—the referent objects. On the other hand, threats do not need to be attributed to the same categories as those the other side acted with referent to. Actual events are likely to be varied and complex, requiring a pragmatic approach that allows us to find the specific units of the case.

For instance, Churchill as a securitizing actor could have securitized Nazism as a threat. This does not necessarily mean a countersecuritization

is performed either by Nazism as actor or with Nazism as referent object. Instead, Hitler could securitize England (the referent object of Churchill, so far so good) as the threat in the name of Germany, all Germans, and the Aryan race. What constitutes the threat for one is not necessarily the referent object for the other. This procedure was much easier in CSCT where security was conducted for and by India, which was also the (perceived) threat to Pakistan and vice versa. The argument from attribution theory gives us reason to believe that most threats will be linked to actors and that what we analyze as referent objects will often be constructed by other actors as actors. If, however, one draws the map too finely, a number of actors will be securitizing slightly different referent objects (the German race, the German people, Germany, Aryans)—differences that are important when one is trying to look into the politics of securitizing moves—whereas we in security complex analysis need to find the main patterns of interaction and therefore need to bundle together the various versions of securitizing “Germany” as one node.

When generating the security complex, the best way to define the points between which the security arrows go might be to point to conglomerates of a referent object and the corresponding securitizing actor. In the extreme case, this means we have referent objects with stable spokespersons. A stable combination of referent object and “voice” points to the classical concept of the state as a clear instance. But even the state and sovereignty as referent object is appealed to by other than the one official voice. There are several actual securitizing actors, and the state as well as the other actors occasionally securitize other referents, such as the nation, the European Union (EU), or some principles of international society. In the case of France, Japan, and Sudan, the name makes a relatively clear reference to a dense network of correlated referent objects and securitizing actors. The different securitizing actors are connected by competing for the representation of the same referent object; the different referent objects are unified by their mutual substitutability for each other. There is more a chain of family resemblances than a clear-cut criterion or one primary unit. In each case, a conglomerate of actors and referent objects is unified by the density of overlapping security discourse and usually also nominally by a name: the security of “France” (which can mean several different referent objects and a large number of possible actors), of Europe and the EU, and of “the environment.” (See the further discussion on pp. 171–175.)

The key question in security analysis is, who can “do” security in the name of what? For a time, experts could get away with analyzing only “states,” and the system was then the sum of the states. Regional security meant the sum of national securities or rather a particular constellation of security interdependence among a group of states. The approach developed here offers more types of units to choose from, but the basic idea of security complexes can be carried over into a world of multiple units.

## Notes

1. The history of the word *security* is complex (Kaufmann 1970; Der Derian 1993; Delumeau 1986; Corze 1984), but in the 1940s it was established in international affairs with a fairly distinct meaning (Rosenberg 1993). Much of this meaning was so easily installed because it rested on an old argument that had used the word *security* much less systematically—an argument about “necessity” previously contained primarily in the concept of *raison d'état* (Butterfield 1975). Especially from the mid-nineteenth century, when the state enters a juridical self-limitation and self-control, this “is balanced by the designation of a range of ‘governmental acts’ which are immune to legal challenge. This juridical reserve area of executive power is . . . the qualification which . . . calculations of security impose as a condition for the political feasibility of a liberal democracy” (Gordon 1991: 33; cf. Foucault 1991 [1978]). The classical argument, which holds that in extreme cases the government can use all means necessary, becomes concentrated as a specific, exceptional case (Wæver 1988, 1995b). This meaning of security evolved separately from the use of security in various domestic contexts (although connections definitely exist; see Kaufman 1970). This international type of security starts to spread to new referents and new actors; therefore, we want to retain a focus on international security because it has a distinct meaning, but we do not exclude the possibility that we will meet this kind of security increasingly in domestic contexts.

2. This argument does not imply that private issues could not in some sense be political, an argument made forcefully by feminists. To claim such is a politicizing move.

3. The concept of strong and weak states is elaborated and defined in Buzan (1991: 96–107) and rests on the degree of sociopolitical cohesion within the state, which is high for strong states and low for weak ones. The concept should not be confused with the distinction between strong and weak powers, which is about their capabilities vis-à-vis other powers.

4. Baldwin (1997) is the most sophisticated and consistent attempt to define security and to structure security studies according to the idea that the purpose and task is to assist decisionmakers in correctly assessing the relative attention to devote to different threats.

5. The importance of “cultural capital” to the ability to perform a speech act has been argued by Pierre Bourdieu (1991 [1982]). A speech act is not only linguistic; it is also social and is dependent on the social position of the enunciator and thus in a wider sense is inscribed in a social field. However, Bourdieu made this argument to counter a tendency of some poststructuralists and philosophers of everyday language to make the purely linguistic, internal features of a speech act completely determining (Bourdieu 1996). He has accepted the critique by Judith Butler (1996a, b) that since the speech act needs to include an idea of—with his own phrase—the “social magic” whereby some are accepted as holding authority and others are not, it has to be indeterminate, open for surprises. This is not purely a question of a formal *position* of authority (Austin's example in which “I declare you man and wife” is an effective speech act only when performed by a properly authorized authority; 1975 [1962]: 8–15). There is a performative force to the speech act; to use Bourdieu's own concepts, it has a magical efficiency, it makes what it says. A speech act is interesting exactly because it holds the insurrecting potential to break the ordinary, to establish meaning that is not already within the context—it reworks or produces a context by the performative success of the act. Although it is important to study the social conditions of successful speech acts, it is necessary always to keep open the possibility that an act that had previously succeeded and for which the formal resources and position are in place may fail and, conversely, that new

actors can perform a speech act they had previously not been expected to perform (Butler 1996a, b; Derrida 1977a [1972], 1977b, 1988). Therefore, the issues of “who can do security” and “was this a case of securitization” can ultimately be judged only in hindsight (Wæver et al. 1993: 188). They cannot be closed off by finite criteria for success.

6. This stands in contrast to some other studies of regions where one is interested in the *construction* of regions by actors (Neumann 1994; Joenniemi and Wæver 1992; Joenniemi 1997). Both approaches to regions are relevant, but for different purposes.

7. For those interested in pinpointing our position within the field of international relations theory, this is probably the passage to pick. We do not take the state or sovereignty as representing fixed limits, but we are skeptical of individualism as the traditional alternative to state centrism. We therefore form a picture of a world of multiple units, which might be called postsovereign realism. The units can be overlapping (in contrast to the exclusivity of sovereign territorial states), but this does not necessarily lead to any benign transnationalism in which the focus is on the multiple identities of individuals relativizing all units and collectivities. Although each individual in a world of overlapping units is a “member” of several units, instead of focusing on any such softening effects produced by overlap, we study how the units can continue to conduct power politics; think, for example, of the work of Susan Strange (state-firm diplomacy; 1994) and Robert Kaplan (a very anarchic anarchy after sovereignty; 1994). Each unit has a possibility of becoming the reference for security action, but since the different units overlap and are placed at different levels, there is no fixed line between domestic and international—what is internal to one unit can be interunit when one thinks of other units. More importantly a distinction exists between individual and collective security. This argument is important for the present project, because if domestic and international were fixed, there would be a risk of generating a cozy Western view of politics: Domestic politics is normal and without security, whereas the extreme is relegated to the international space. In other parts of the world, domestic is not cozy. This fact can be grasped by focusing on those units and collectivities that are mobilized in such contexts: These domestic security relations are interunit because in these places the most powerful referent objects are smaller than the state.

8. One can contemplate cases in which concern seems to focus on a particular individual: one girl in Sarajevo or Salman Rushdie. To a large extent, these individuals are given such prominence and more resources are spent on them than on most others because they are taken to represent principles. Action for some specific individual always depends on a construction of that person as representing some category, as deserving protection because he or she belongs to a particular social category—for example, leader, representative, free intellectual, or revealing test case.

9. The analyst can also intervene to countersay actors in relation to the use of the *word* security. Sloppy talk of “economic security” or “environmental security” can be questioned by arguing that the security act has not really been performed and that the securitizing actor has not managed to establish a case for treating the threat as existential. Whether the threat really is or is not existential in relation to the referent object is impossible to decide from the outside, but we can study the discourse and see if the issue has been securitized in this sense. This is primarily an intervention into the debate among observers over the appropriateness of the use of the security label. When intervening in direct policy debates over a securitization, the mode of argumentation will typically be in terms of comparing the likely effects of having the issue securitized or desecuritized.