

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Duty to Secure: From Just to Mandatory

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The Duty to Secure: From Just to Mandatory Securitization (Cambridge, 2024) by Rita Floyd is an engaging book, providing a comprehensive theory of mandatory securitization aimed at preventing large-scale norm violations and atrocities. Along five substantive chapters, an introduction and a conclusion, *The Duty to Secure* offers illustrative examples that consider who has the duty to securitize, examining states, non-state actors, and international organizations such as NATO, the EU, or the UN, beckoning on the imminent idea of responsibility in international relations. *The Duty to Secure* immerses into the Copenhagen School of securitization theory and builds on the author's previous work on just securitization. One of the books' central insights is that "if just causes are addressed early through politicization and where necessary through mandatory securitization, humanitarian or environmental wars are less likely to be necessary" (203). Starting off from the postulate that states are "obligated" to deliver security for their population, it critically asks whether they are "morally obligated" (1) to address security threats through securitization. Building on her previous work on just securitization—defining securitization as being just in circumstances in which criteria of just cause, right intention, and proportionality are met—, and an innovative Rawlsian method of reflective equilibrium, Floyd proposes a paradigm of "mandatory securitization." Mandatory securitization premises that states have, by virtue of the social contract, the duty to protect their citizens. To this end, the book engages with a cluster of intriguing research questions regarding the circumstances in which securitization is morally compulsory, who or what kinds of actors are morally required to securitize, and on what ground are different types of actors required to undertake self- or other securitization. The book also investigates a series of critical interrelated matters, such as whether unjust actors can be morally required to securitize, who are the primary duty bearers in case of mandatory securitization and what if the primary duty bearers fail. Another important aspect of a theory of mandatory securitization is the engagement with the dimension of time, i.e. "when" must securitization be pursued to be morally mandatory (6). While acknowledging that not all types of insecurities are preventable, the book holds that applying mandatory securitization lenses can have a practical prevention function of pre-empting atrocities or illegal use of force. A unique feature of the proposed theory is that it targets three audiences, scholars,

practitioners of security, and the public (24). In practical terms, mandatory securitization could involve a reform of NATO Article 5 or the R2P norm.

The Duty to Secure builds on three conceptual pillars. First, it holds that "(j)ust states that have satisfied must cause have an overriding duty of self-securitization", while "unjust states have an overriding duty to secure morally valuable referent objects within their territory, but they are not permitted to defend—by means of securitization—their unjust regime" (25). "Must cause" is defined as a situation of just, right intention, proportionality and last resort (43). Second, "when just sub-systemic collective security actors have satisfied must cause, they are morally obligated to self-securitize", while "unjust collective security actors have a duty to secure morally valuable referent objects within their territory (...) with securitization" (25). Third, when "just referent objects have no other protector (...) then the UNSC is the designated primary duty bearer for mandatory politicization" (26). International organizations are seen as moral actors and bearers of responsibility due to their decision-making structure.

The Duty to Secure puts forward a compelling argument, which helps us make sense of situations in which an existential threat is imminent and how securitization can help prevent imminent threats and insecurities.

The Duty to Secure draws on the Copenhagen School, and the definition of securitization as the process when "an issue becomes a security threat when it is socially and politically constructed as such, notably in language" (10–11). Theoretically, the book addresses a series of interesting puzzles, such as whether successful securitization involves actual policy change or not and the role of the audience's acceptance of securitization. Seeking to advance the scholarship of Ole Wæver and other representatives of the Copenhagen School on securitization, and beyond, Floyd dedicates elevated attention to the securitization actors, the origins of the threat and the objects in need of being securitized (referent objects), bringing into focus the process of adoption of "exceptional, often issue-specific measures following rhetorical threat articulation" (18). The book would have benefited from a more accurate discussion on the entanglement between insecurities, securitization, and national security. How are insecurities defined, and how is the threat premised on national security and state survival? Moreover, while the author employs securitization theory, at times, conceptual overlaps with ontological security theory (OST) are palpable, given the Copenhagen School's and OST's shared foundation on agent's survival and endurance of Self; hence, future work could explore the entanglements with OST to understand the political creation of the threat and how this is ontologically relevant for state survival, and ponder whether OST application would have raised similar security dilemmas.

Second, Floyd develops, as a corollary to her argument of mandatory securitization the idea of ‘mandatory intervention’, invoking morality principles. This is an important point, which would benefit from greater conceptual differentiation between intervention with or without UN mandate. The use of force is prohibited in the international order, and theoretically only allowed in self-defence or with UN authorization. In the past, states have violated this cornerstone principle of the international order for various reasons, while principles like the responsibility to protect have come under heavy critique after their paramount failure in cases such as Libya or Syria, just to mention a few. The moral imperative is also applied to the mandatory securitization theory’s building blocks, just initiation of securitization, just conduct of securitization, and just termination of securitization. Therefore, while just securitization theory and mandatory securitization theory promises to be a framework to examine the justness of past or present securitization, the question arises, justness from which or whose perspective? As security politics have often demonstrated in the past and continue to demonstrate in the present, the concept of security can vary from audience to audience, and likewise the concept of just security and perceived just cause. The book would

have benefited from a discussion of how one can deal with divergent perspectives on politics and moral scopes, which can play out, especially in the field of high-security politics. Floyd’s theory of mandatory securitization shares common ground with the R2P norm (24), a norm which is in crisis and has been widely contested, yet it does not offer a way out of the dilemma of securitization or intervention. The theory put forward in the book excels in its innovation, and future work could delve more in-depth into the dichotomies of just/unjust perceptions. While Floyd seeks to address this problem by proposing the approach of objectivity of threats, meaning that “we must recalibrate our idea of what objectivity means” (34), this sounds more like a Kantian categorical imperative than something that can be implemented in times of contested politics. While the UN Security Council (UNSC) can be deemed as the just securitizing actor for just reference objects, the tension between potentially divergent perceptions of justness in the UNSC endures. Despite this shortcoming, *The Duty to Secure* puts forward a compelling argument, seeking to have a positive impact on global peace by determining us to critically reflect upon how to prevent atrocities, while also giving new impulses for emerging debates on UNSC reforms and global justice in a contested world.