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## Towards a Marxist critique of Securitization Theory

State, capital and the meaning of *normal politics*



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## **Abstract**

Securitization Theory disputes the existence of objective threats and analyzes the making of security by means of a speech act. By presenting a certain referent object as existentially threatened an issue is constructed as a security concern. A successful securitizing move then legitimizes the use of extraordinary measures in order to deal with the threat. In face of such extraordinary measures, the theorists demand a return to “normal politics”. This article aims to uncover the meaning of normal politics to critically assess Securitization Theory. The 2005 riots in the French *banlieues* (suburbs) serve as an empirical example. Qualitative content analysis examines how the French government transforms the political protest of the marginalized and unemployed youth into a matter of state security. Yet, the analysis also shows that normal politics keeps happening despite the construction of exceptionalism. The theory's failure to account for the simultaneity of the processes is caused by its liberal understanding of normal politics. A Marxist approach to the topic reveals that normal politics means the citizen's compulsion to productivity and state loyalty. Extraordinary measures highlight an intensification and exacerbation of normality, because they *violently* subjugate the individual under the imperatives of state and capital. The difference between exception and normality is thus gradual in character, not substantial. The theory's disassociation of normal politics from extraordinary measures and the defense of the former against the latter renders it essentially uncritical, as its research interest serves to improve relations of domination instead of fundamentally questioning the established social structures in which power relations are ingrained in.

## **Introduction**

Securitization Theory has established itself as an influential theoretical framework in the field of Critical Security Studies. By not taking threats as objective facts, its contribution lies in showing how social actors name, construct and authorize exceptional measures with political violent effects. (C.A.S.E. 2006: 466) The theory explains how a speech act transfers issues from the realm of normal politics to the realm of exceptionality, which in return creates legitimacy for extraordinary means. Hence, it is not merely a theory but also a critique of liberal democracies that resort to extreme measures such as “detention without trial, derogation from human rights law, complicity in torture, ‘extraordinary rendition’, the curtailment of civil liberties and the securitization of migration.” (Ibid: 465) These measures are commonly seen as to be beyond the state's legitimate use of coercion and violence. By deconstructing these processes, the architects of the theory demand a return to the *status quo ante* of normal, everyday politics in liberal democracies. Yet, they remain short on a cohesive explanation of what *normal politics* entails in current society and assessing whether it is, generally speaking, the preferred state of affairs. In this respect, we must ask if Securitization Theory is indeed a critical theory, and whether the affirmative reference to the *status quo* does not rather contribute to its reinforcement.

The following contribution allows us to assess the critical value of Securitization Theory by examining the question: *What does the concept of normal politics mean in Securitization Theory?* The empirical case of the 2005 riots in the Parisian suburbs (*banlieues*) will be examined to get a better idea of its meaning. The three weeks of violent unrest in these deprived areas led to the declaration of the state of emergency, making this case a theoretically clear-cut example for securitization. The *banlieues* riots enable us to demonstrate Securitization Theory's *modus operandi*, both its analytical and explanatory power, while simultaneously reifying its shortcomings. I argue that the theory's focus on the way of conduct of normal politics and its liberal-democratic understanding obscures the relations of domination and exploitation normality contains, namely the individual's compulsion to productivity and loyalty as organized by the state. This understanding reveals another pitfall of the theory: it mistakenly assumes a substantial difference between the normality and exceptionality of politics instead of grasping exceptionalism as an intensification of what normality already contains. Hence, the goal of this paper is to provide a critique of Securitization Theory's notion of normal politics by representing it in the case study of the *banlieues*.

The architects of Securitization Theory explain in their main work that the studying of discourse is “[t]he way to study securitization.” (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 25) Qualitative content analysis, as a form of discourse analysis, is employed to examine how the issue of the *banlieues* riots turned

into a security issue, how the events are framed as an existential threat, defines the referent object, countermeasures to deal with the issue, and if and how these are justified. Hence, data- as well as concept-driven categories of a coding frame were developed to capture the essence of the material in accordance with the research question. (Schreier 2014) Primary sources entail transcripts of speeches by the French president Jacques Chirac (two speeches), Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin (one speech), Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy (three speeches) and Minister of Justice Pascal Clément (one speech). The speeches are chosen because they have the advantage of addressing different audiences as well as being pronounced by state leaders and government representatives who are “voices of security, by having the power to define security.” (Buzan et al. 1998: 31) The material entails press conferences and addresses to the nation targeting French society as a whole, as well as speeches to the congress and the procurators, who themselves dispose of the power to implement securitized politics. These empirics provide us with a stringent, uninterrupted argumentation and are considered to be the most cohesive and reliable representation of the government's position towards the riots. The timeframe includes the outbreak of violence and its aftermath, involving speeches from October 27, 2005 until November 28, 2005.

Secondary sources entail scientific articles and books on urban marginalization and the *banlieues* riots in France. Information is extracted from a variety of literature proving fertile for understanding France's normal politics towards the Parisian *banlieues*. Sources consist of literature by academic experts on the topic of the *banlieues* such as Loïc Wacquant, Mustafa Dikeç, Paul Silverstein, and Matthew Moran. These authors cover different perspectives on the topic, ranging from sociology and political sciences to anthropology.

To begin, I present Securitization Theory as well as the theory's concept of normal and extraordinary politics. The theoretical framework outlines a Marxist critique of the capitalist state and the rule of law which approaches the case study and Securitization Theory's concept of normal politics. The main body of this paper provides an exploration of Securitization Theory's analytical strength by examining the case of the *banlieues*. Its shortcomings are discussed thereafter, namely, the empirical simultaneity of normal and extraordinary politics. I will then examine normal politics by identifying its substance in the empirical case and abstracting from the socio-historical instance to make more generalized statements on the meaning of the concept. The subjugation under capital and state are constitutive for normal politics, and are exacerbated when violent measures are implemented as to reaffirm the state's power and the individual's compulsion to productivity. Finally, I conclude on the discussion of the empirics and the points made on normal politics, and assess the legitimacy of Securitization Theory as a critical theory.

## *Literature review*

Securitization Theory aims to provide a critical alternative to liberal and realist understandings of security; an alternative that does not claim “Security” to be objectively observable, but instead sees it as a construct, a “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.” (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 23) The move of presenting a referent object (for example the state, identity, nation, religion etc.) as being existentially threatened is called securitization. It is accomplished by means of a speech act, and legitimizes exceptional measures as to grant the referent object's survival. Buzan *et al.* incorporate John L. Austin's Speech Act Theory at the heart of their theory. Austin proposes that “to say something is to do something” (Austin 1962: 12), hence, when we utter security we also perform security. (Ibid) Since practically anything can become the referent object of a securitizing speech act, Buzan *et al.* are able to widen the field of security studies – here, security is no longer restricted to the field of military or political threats, but can be found in different sectors such as economic, societal, and environmental. The success of the speech act depends on two conditions: First, the actor carrying out the speech act, hence uttering the issue as a security problem, has to be in a position of authority. Secondly, “a relevant audience” (C.A.S.E. 2006: 453) has to accept the securitizing move and the measures employed to counter the problem. Securitization, then, is an intersubjective process. (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 29-31) If an issue is successfully securitized, extraordinary measures to deal with it are legitimized. Hence, Securitization Theory “offers resources for understanding how policymakers declare a condition of exceptional threat in order to legitimize practices of exceptionalism.” (C.A.S.E. 2006: 466)

Securitization Theory premises a distinction between normal and extraordinary politics. The former, although not more narrowly defined by the Copenhagen School, refers to “how things are ordinarily done in liberal democracies.” (Roe 2012: 251) Normal politics entails procedures of law-and decision-making, mechanisms of deliberation and debate, and a separation of powers. (Ibid) The latter is the legitimized outcome of a successful securitizing move, and describes means that liberal democracies usually abstain from deploying. Extraordinary politics are characterized by silence and speed: Since the survival of the referent object is at stake, a decision needs to be made quickly. Scrutiny, public debate and contestation are circumvented by acceleration. (Ibid: 251-253) Issues are herein deprived of “the normal haggling of politics” (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 29), which the securitization theorists explain to be the norm and optimum: “Ideally, politics should be able to unfold according to routine procedures without this extraordinary elevation of specific “threats” to a prepolitical immediacy.” (Ibid: 29) The essence of Securitization Theory's critique is thus the processes that construct, authorize and make exceptionalism to justify violent and illiberal practices.

Aradau and Huysmans have prominently raised the issue of normal and exceptional politics. Huysmans criticizes that exceptional politics undermine what they claim to protect: Constitutive elements of liberal democracies are skewed in order to fight what is perceived as a threat. Constitutive democratic elements and political constraints such as the rule of law and the separation of powers are abandoned in the name of a government-centered politics of insecurity. Displacing “law with norms that have the force of law but not its form”, (Huysmans 2004: 328) gradually undermines the separation of the legislative, executive and judicial powers. Exceptional politics thus invert what they aim to achieve. (Ibid) Aradau argues similarly when stating that securitization forms a danger to democratic politics, even more so since exceptional measures get steadily internalized into our understanding of normal politics. (Aradau 2004: 393) Furthermore, “[d]emocratic politics is incompatible with the politics of security as we cannot all be equal sharers of security.” (Aradau 2004: 399) This means that security for some can only come at the expense of insecurity for others, making politics of securitization non-democratic. (Ibid)

The distinction of extraordinary and normal politics is accepted as well as the inevitable preference of the latter over the former. For example, debates about the advantages and disadvantages of the (de-)securitization accepts a fundamental differentiation between normal and extraordinary politics as a given and argues for the treatment of a topic at hand with the one or the other. Still, the meaning of liberal-democratic politics as an “open discussion between ordinary citizens (together with, or through, their elected representatives) in a bid to solve collective problems” (Roe 2012: 251) is fixated as a preferable and feasible ideal, without elucidating on *why* it should be a desirable condition and whether democracy is indeed suitable to *resolve* “collective problems.” The dichotomy of normality and exceptionality is not only analytical in character, but presents a legitimization and defense of normality. In order to disentangle the pitfall of this dichotomy, a Marxist approach that entails a materialist critique of democracy, as well as its inextricably connected forms of state and law, is required. Such an approach enables us to substitute Securitization Theory's liberal understanding of normal politics, and lets us assess its meaning and value, whether it differs in nature from exceptionality, and what it means for Securitization Theory's self-assessment of being a critical theory.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

Securitization Theory endorses democratic politics as normal politics, because democratic procedures ensure problem-solving by peaceful means. Normal politics is formally defined by the slowness and contestation of decision-making processes, the theorists embrace its routine procedures of law-making as a form of social regulation and defend the constitutional binding of the

state to its own laws against their suspension in times of exceptionality. The theorists lament that the democratic state does not keep its promise of equality when it comes to matters of security. They demand an open and transparent debate in order to deal with problems. Yet, democracy is not only a particular way of conducting politics and making decisions, it is a form of government. Therefore, when embracing democratic procedures as normality, the architects of Securitization Theory positively refer to the capitalist state under the rule of law. Capital and law are constitutive for democratic politics, since they form the framework in which individuals as well as political and securitizing agents live, act and reproduce. Considering the capitalist state and the rule of law is therefore the first step in uncovering what normal politics entails.

A materialist critique of the state understands the state not simply as a *political* entity, but emphasizes the need to comprehend state and law against the backdrop of economic, e.g. capitalist relations. Capital is a social relation of production, one of universalized commodity production, where raw materials, instruments of labor, labor-power etc. all assume the form of values, commensurable things which are equally exchanged according to a certain magnitude. (Marx 1847: 19-20) The goal of this production is to accumulate capital, to make more money out of a particular sum of money, to yield profit. The satisfaction of human needs is not its purpose. A commodity's property of being a use-value is merely an inevitable precondition for it to be sold in the first place. (Marx 1887: 128-136) The state organizes and ensures the reproduction of capitalist society and facilitates the unimpeded operation of the production and circulation of commodities by constituting, maintaining and granting for the social relations of capital in virtue of its monopoly on force. (Agnoli 1989: 17; Bonefeld 1992) It removes violent coercion from the economic relations between individuals, monopolizes and regulates its application through the establishment of legal binding norms. If the principles of equal exchange, the adherence to a contract or the respect for private property are violated, the state intervenes to sanction the trespasser. The capitalist relations are mediated through law, which is equally binding for all citizens, independent from their social position and esteem. Contrasting the immediate personal and violent relations between serf and lord in feudal societies, social relations under capital and state are impersonal and objective. The law applies to everybody and is not exerted by a certain class that holds the political, judicial and economic power at once. (Grigat 2007: 243-245) The state protects the private property of all of its citizens, whether the legal subject owns means of production or, because he is separated from those means, is merely left with the commodity labor-power at his disposal. It is then in virtue of freedom, equality and property, the very neutrality of the modern state towards its citizens, that relations of dominance and exploitation are constituted. Exploitation takes place not despite, but *because* the private property of the capitalist is protected just as the worker's non-ownership on any



other commodities than his labor-power. It is *because* both are free to enter a legal contract that secures the former's accumulation of capital and the latter's survival by selling the only commodity that is endowed with the special quality of producing more value than it possesses. (Heinrich 2005: 202-212) In this respect, democracy is a form of government very much corresponds to the capitalist state since it is based on the citizen's consent and therefore widely eschews violent interruptions. Instead, democratic politics establish and grant a state of 'social peace'. Conflicting interests of the governing and the governed are usually solved in a way that does not disrupt the "normal cycle of collective life."<sup>1</sup> (Agnoli 1974: 20) Democracy plays a decisive role in weakening and pacifying class antagonisms and therefore guaranteeing the unhampered movement of capital. Through pluralism, the parliamentary and party system, social contradictions are not reproduced and exponentiated, but represented and defused. (Ibid: 20-28)

When Aradau decries securitization as the production of inequality, it seemingly disappears from her view that the democratic state, which legally grants equality as well as the right to property and to dispose of this property freely (selling and buying commodities, including labor-power), consolidates the material inequality in virtue of its liberal principles. Democratic about all this is more the popular legitimization and consent to relations of domination and exploitation by means of elections. The critique of the suspension of laws that protect liberal rights (such as privacy rights, or civil liberties) from an affirmative viewpoint of legal relations willingly accepts relations of exploitation and material inequality as they are only reinforced by law and the threat of violence.

### ***Securitizing the banlieues***

On October 27, 2005, two young boys from the eastern suburb *Clichy-sous-Bois* died after an encounter with the police. Their death, rumored as a deliberate killing by the French police forces, triggered three weeks of violence. Although far from being the first of their kind, the uprisings in the outskirts are remarkable in terms of duration (27 October to 17 November 2005) and geographical scale: from the original site of altercation, the rioting spreads into the suburbs and towns of about 40 *départements*. The use of firearms by the rioters is rather limited, yet the material damage turns out to be considerably high. It entails the burning of about 10.000 cars and 30.000 rubbish containers, the destruction of 250 public buildings (schools, sports facilities, town halls, police stations), fighting between youths and the police and a property damage of 200 million Euros. Two persons die during the weeks of violence and about 226 police officers and firefighters are injured. (Jobard 2009: 235-236; Mucchielli 2009: 736-737) The security forces of France, the 11.500 police and *gendarmes* who are on the streets during the riots, react with flash-balls and tear-

1 All quotes from originally French and German sources are translated by the author.



gas grenades. About 4.800 individuals are placed in police custody, 800 are committed to prison. On November 8, the Prime Minister resorts to a curfew and announces the state of emergency, which is prolonged until January 3, 2006. (Mucchielli 2009: 733-734)

Originally passed as a law to curb the Algerian war in 1955, the state of emergency presents an extraordinary measure as it gives extensive powers to security forces and state representatives. The law allows prefects to set up curfews to prohibit the circulation of vehicles and people, enables the police and the Minister of Interior to place suspects under house arrest and to close public spaces. In case of non-compliance with the measures imposed, punishments of imprisonment up to two months or the payment of fines up to 3750 Euros can be inflicted. (Ibid: 734; Pascal 2005) By definition, the state of emergency can be imposed only “in cases of imminent danger resulting from serious threats to public order,” (Assemblée nationale 2016) therefore theoretically presupposes the transformation of the issue at hand into a security issue and the suspension of normal politics in favor of extraordinary measures. Since the state of emergency was invoked in the case of the *banlieues*, this should be a clear-cut example of securitization, but it proves this is not the case.

Indeed, we can speak of a transformation of the *banlieues* riots into a security issue and a legitimization of extraordinary means. The government presents France as being threatened by the riots. The violent unrest is perceived and communicated as both endangering to the sovereignty and authority of the French state as well as the identity of the French nation. This underlying logic forms a common thread throughout the speeches of the government, as the following quote exemplifies:

“The reality about our banlieues is that we have accepted that the *gangs impose their laws at the expense of the laws of the Republic*, that people live in fear inflicted by traffickers and who are the beneficiaries of traffic. The reality is, that we have allowed the development of genuine urban ghettos in which French people are often grouped on the basis of their ethnic origin. In these, they feel like they have little prospects and no confidence in the France state. They live with cultural identities that are on the edge of our national values, they have constituted islands of communitarianism that *threaten the national unity*.” (Sarkozy 2005c, emphasis added)

The nation's values, principles and unity is declared to be jeopardized by the simple existence of the suburbs, exacerbated and transformed into a manifest threat by the violence taking place:

“This situation is not in accordance any more with the idea that I have – the idea we all have - of the Republic. It is a brotherly and ambitious Republic, it is a protective Republic, in which the reality of rights is in balance with the conscientious respect for the duties.” (Sarkozy 2005a)

President Jacques Chirac consequently speaks of an identity crisis. (Chirac 2005b) The rioters equally attacked the authority of the state as the government suggests the *banlieues* are ruled by laws of gangs and clandestine networks at the expense of the Republic. The struggle between the

law of the Republic and the law of the *banlieues* then escalates into an existential fight. Particularly the Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy adapts an apocalyptic rhetoric of “us versus them”. “We”, that is the Republic and its legitimate use of force, have to fight against “them”, the rioters, the delinquents and clandestine networks. The unrest in the *banlieues* amounts to a battle “between the world of violence and the one of public peace, between the codes that govern the universe of some neighborhoods and the rules that govern the Republic.” (Sarkozy 2005b) A point of no return has been reached. In order to retain the authority of the state and not to drift into conditions of chaos and anarchy, the state of emergency, both its implementation on November 8 and its prolongation on November 15, declared “appropriate measures in the face of this emergency” (Ibid):

“France is injured. It doesn't recognize itself in these streets and these devastated neighborhoods, in this outburst of hatred and violence that rampages and kills [...] Certainly, returning to order is the absolute priority. The government has recognized this, it will take all *necessary measures* to assure the protection of our citizens and the re-establishment of the order. *Security* is the precondition to everything.” (De Villepin 2005, emphasis added)

The government representatives transfer the issue of the *banlieues* into the realm of security by uttering security and defining the referent object, the French Republic, as threatened by the “troublemakers”, “the children of the difficult neighborhoods”, “the rioters”, “gangs”, “delinquents”, and “organized crime”. The measures employed to counter the threat are explained to be necessary. The Prime Minister Dominique De Villepin argues for the necessity of a considerable police force in order to assure the “security of the French” (Ibid). Since the security of the nation and the authority of the state is at stake, the situation is an emergency and its graveness demands acceleration. Therefore, Minister of Justice Clément Pascal wishes “not to hesitate and open and exchange information that facilitate provisional detention.” (Pascal 2005) The violence has spread “disorder and insecurity” (De Villepin 2005), states Prime Minister Dominique De Villepin; “[t]hose inadmissible acts”, says Minister of Justice Pascal, demand a “quick response.” (Pascal 2005) Hence, the special urgency of the situation legitimizes their call for extraordinary means, an acceleration of politics. The securitizing move was accepted by the most relevant audience – those endowed with the authority to declare the employment of extraordinary measures, the state of emergency. This was in the first instance the *conseil des ministres* (council of ministers), which consists of the French government. The Green and Communist party contested the decision to implement the state of emergency, arguing that it “treats these children and grandchildren of immigrants as the indigents of the republic.” (Rotella 2005) Nonetheless, the decision to *extend* the state of emergency passed the lower house as well as the Senate seven days later. Both houses approved of the prolongation. Additionally, almost three quarter of the French population were in

favor of an imposition of a curfew. (Landler 2005)

However, what *should* be a clear exemplary case of a securitization empirically entails social processes the theory logically excludes. In the case of *the banlieues*, the successful legitimization of extraordinary means did not lead to a suspension of normal politics as both proceed to take place simultaneously. The state of emergency has proven to be a necessary short-term solution. The re-establishment of public order is defined as a “prerequisite” and “precondition,” (Chirac 2005a, De Villepin 2005) since “without security, there is no liberty, and liberty is a precondition to individual dignity and to collective progress.” (Sarkozy 2005b) The government frequently emphasizes that the exceptional powers are employed only insofar as to retain public peace. The state of emergency is declared to deal with the immediate violence in the *banlieues*, the government is aware that deeper-lying causes need responses of “a long-term effort.” (Chirac 2005b) Consequently, it outlines a range of social, economic and political measures in order to fight what they consider as underlying causes for the resentment and alienation of the *banlieues'* residents. As for the causes, the representatives have no unanimous explanation. Generally, two lines of arguments can be identified: On the one hand, an individual based explanation, defended particularly by Minister of Interior Sarkozy, which finds the inhabitants unwillingness to subject themselves to work and instead “making delinquency their main activity” (Sarkozy 2005b) to be the reason for marginalization and deprivation. On the other hand, the predominant line of argument is structural based, emphasizing social conditions such as unemployment, racial discrimination, deficiencies in the educational system, and inequality in opportunities as potential explanatory factors for the uprisings. Accordingly, social measures such as an extension of competences for anti-discrimination institutions, the creation of new institutions concerned with social cohesion and equal opportunities, and an increase in social workers in attendance are implemented to foster the prioritized “fight against discrimination.” (De Villepin 2005) Additionally, companies are convinced to sign the *Charte de la diversité en entreprise* in order to accept “the diversity of French society” and assure “equal chances to employment.” (Chirac 2005b) Educational programs, civil services to support and train young people, the augmentation of apprenticeships as well as a multiplication in offered scholarships ought to encourage young people to choose a career and facilitate the entrance into the regular labor market. (De Villepin 2005) More targeted efforts to ensure employment are made by means of individual job counseling for the youth of the *zones urbaines sensibles*, expanded financial support through the accompanying work contracts (*Contrat d'accompagnement dans l'emploi*) and the integration into new public functions. The same day the government decided upon the state of emergency, a law was adopted that provides financial incentives, a bonus of 1000 Euros, for individuals returning to employment. (De Villepin 2005)

In conclusion, although we could trace a process of securitization in the empirical material, the legitimization and application of exceptionality happened alongside normal politics. We need to ask why the theory cannot account accurately for the social processes in place. In the following section, I argue that its inaccuracy is due to a lack of a critical understanding of normal politics, and exceptionality as its intensified continuation.

### ***Theorizing normal politics***

One reason for Securitization Theory's inability to account for the simultaneity of normal and extraordinary politics lies in their under-theorized understanding of normal politics itself. Politics is understood as an activity that can be functionally differentiated in exception and non-exception. Security then is delimited and a way to end normal politics. (Gad and Petersen 2011: 319-320) Ole Wæver rejects charges that accuse Securitization Theory of celebrating "some kind of 'normal politics' as an idylized contrast to emergency measures." (Wæver 2011: 466-467) Rather, normal politics means scrutiny, debate, transparency, contestation in the public sphere, openness, "democratic control and constraint" (Buzan et al 1998: 29), and routine procedures. (Ibid; Wæver 2011; Aradau 2004: 391-393, Roe 2012) Normal politics is thus defined as a liberal-democratic way of conducting and performing politics and political decision-making, and presents therefore a *formal determination* of politics, contrasting the accelerated, silent and secret politics of exceptionality. However, to establish how politics should proceed and process in order to resolve an issue at hand says nothing about what these politics entail regarding content and objectives. In the theoretical framework, it was argued that democratic politics disperses and defuses social contradictions by the very mechanisms Securitization Theory praises. The Marxist approach to democracy appears as an indicator for the theory's blind spot: its liberal understanding of normal politics renders it unreceptive to the imperatives of state and capital. The case of the *banlieues* shows that both are at play.

### ***"Labor is the solution!": normal politics as the compulsion to productivity***

Throughout the government's speeches, employment is considered to be the solution for the deprivation of the *banlieues*. This comes as no surprise, since the *banlieues* suffer from poverty and high rates of unemployment reaching up to 40% in 2005. (Mucchielli 2009: 746) These conditions are generally viewed as the source for impoverishment of the living environment and despair, which results in violence. (Wacquant 2008: 141-145; Moran 2012: 52) The politicians suggest a number of social, educational and anti-discriminatory measures as to ensure equal opportunities for everyone to enter the labor market. De Villepin promises more scholarships, and pedagogues to support

disadvantaged families. (De Villepin 2005) To bolster the fight against unemployment, the government provides civil services to support and train young people looking for work as well as additional financial incentives for people returning to the labor market; the National Employment Agency consults under-25-year olds and provides them with opportunities for internships, trainings or jobs. (De Villepin 2005) An expansion of the *zones franches urbaines*, designated areas which provide tax concessions to businesses in order to encourage commercial ventures to settle, is expected to lead to modernization and employment. (Silverstein 2006: 288; Dikeç 2007: 99-100) More social workers, the creation of new institutions concerned with social cohesion and equal opportunities, and the extension of competences for anti-discrimination institutions invoke social measures for the prioritized “fight against discrimination.” (De Villepin 2005) Additionally, companies are convinced to sign the *Charte de la diversité en entreprise* in order to accept “the diversity of French society” and assure “equal chances to employment.” (Chirac 2005b) The goal is to “transform the sensible quarters into territories just like the rest of the Republic” (De Villepin 2005) As a measure of normal politics, the politicians emphasize the slowness of the process, attaining its end “will take time”, and calls for “thorough work.” (Ibid) Hence, normal politics serves the purpose of incorporating the population of the *banlieues* into the labor market: “The key, as for all the French citizens, is labor.” (Ibid) Undertaking particular political measures to render the *banlieues* inhabitants productive has been a goal pursued since the suburbs were increasingly understood as critical socioeconomic locations in the 1980s. An example of such measures is Prime Minister Alain Juppé’s 1995–1996 “Marshall Plan” (*Pacte de Relance pour la Ville*). It established 546 *zones urbaines sensibles* (ZUS; sensitive urban zones), “in which local associations would receive state subsidies to hire young residents to work in paid internships.” (Silverstein 2006: 286) A mapped plan of 'territorial positive discrimination' entailing subsidies and tax concessions was set in place to facilitate the establishment of businesses through the *Zones de Redynamisation Urbaine* (Urban Revitalization Zones) and the aforementioned *Zones Franches Urbaines*, and thereby foster the employment of locals. (Dikeç 2007: 100)

The integration of the *banlieues*' residents into the labor market as an antidote against their spatial and social marginalization is interwoven with a particular notion of labor, one where labor is a necessary means for survival, a source for the improvement of life conditions as well as a value in itself. This notion is illustrated when Prime Minister Dominique De Villepin, in looking for particular ways for achieving this integration, asks: “How can we provide them [the inhabitants of the *banlieues*] with the delight of working, of making an effort, of experiencing success?” (De Villepin 2005) In this respect, it is necessary to give salience to the historically specific form that labor assumes under capital to elucidate what normal politics entails and how it proceeds. Although

it appears as an ever-necessary condition to human reproduction, labor has functions irreducible to its reproductive effect, and establishes a particular set of social dominations when subsumed under capital. Labor-power is a commodity sold on the market like any other commodity. The capitalist, who owns the means of production and consciously performs the movement of making more money out of money, buys the labor-power for a particular period of time and productively applies it. In the production process, raw materials and means of production transfer value on the new product. Labor-power has the peculiar property of not merely transferring its value but creating new value, and more value than itself contains. The capitalist gains surplus value, an additional increment of value, by exploiting the labor-power: the laborer works longer than he needs to in order to reproduce himself. (Marx 1887: 102-108) Labor then serves *the capitalist* as a means to accumulate capital, because it is the only source of surplus value. Labor also serves the *individual* as a means to purchase use-values from others, and constitutes a particular form of social mediation and dependence. (Postone 1993: 149) Most human beings are forced to sell their labor power, because they are “free in the double sense” (Marx 1887: 118): free from having any other commodity to sell than their labor-power, and free from direct violent relations that force them to dispose their labor-power to a particular person. Marx' sarcastic terming of the double free laborer in capitalism illustrates the fact that, because separated from the means of production, human beings are *compelled* to sell their labor-power, but are not violently coerced to do so and are *free* to choose to whom to sell it. (Ibid) Labor is only indirectly social because it is expended privately, its social character only is revealed in the exchange of the commodities. Hence, there is no inner connection between the specific labor expended and the product acquired by means of that labor, therefore the content of the labor is objectively irrelevant. (Postone 1993: 149) Working is what keeps the laborer alive, but “the product of his activity [...] is not the aim of his activity.” (Marx 1847: 12) For human beings, labor “primarily means a fundamental extraction of vital energy [...]. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that the identification of labor with suffering makes sense, as the original meaning of the word *laborare* suggests.” (Trenkle 2014: 4; original emphasis) Striving for a complete incorporation of the marginalized suburban citizens into the state's labor force does not aim at making their life more delightful or qualitatively better, although it may lead to material improvement. The purpose of labor is extrinsic to the activity itself, and is only of utility to the laborer insofar as it grants him an income. Much rather is the publicly organized compulsion to productivity an enforced obligation in order to ensure the accumulation of capital, and a means of disciplining and pacifying the rebellious citizens. From the viewpoint of the state, it is appropriate, even necessary to demand from its citizens productivity, since human labor-power is the only source of surplus value and the profitable accumulation of capital is the state's own means of existence.

Without accumulation, the government is confronted with decreasing taxes and increasing expenses for the unemployed, and will lose strength in the international competition. (Heinrich 2009)

All civic, normal political means suggested to resolving the “problem of the *banlieues*” aim on rendering their residents productive. Educative measures, direct consulting and training of the youth, the expansion of the *zones franches urbaines* – all of these political means seek to reassure productive integration. The same goes for anti-discriminatory measures. Racism has been problematized not because of its often violent consequences or ramifications for the victims, but because it hinders the labor market to become wholly inclusive towards the citizens of the Republic: “Today, if two identical CVs are dispatched, one carrying a French name, the other a foreign name, the results are not the same.” (De Villepin 2005) As the topic of employment runs like a golden thread through the speeches of the government, we can inductively conclude that the individual's obligation to labor as enforced by the state is a substantial objective of normal politics.

*“All are children of the Republic!”: normal politics as the compulsion to state loyalty*

The French government, in the moment of crisis, acknowledges deeper lying problems in regard of the *banlieues* and poses labor as the solution, but also urges the rebelling citizens to act and behave according to the rules and laws of the Republic:

“Yes, there are lots of problems and difficulties in France. But violence does not resolve anything, ever. If one belongs to this national community, he has to respect its rules.” (Chirac 2005b)

The speakers repeatedly call for “respect for the law, all of the law” (Chirac 2005a), as well as respect for fellow citizens and their individual liberties (Sarkozy 2005b), such as the free disposal of their property without external interference, as it was continuously trespassed by the rioters in the *banlieues*. It is the absence of direct violence in the relations between the individual private property owners, the prevention of physical violence to acquire goods through the monopolization of force that grants the reproduction of class relations and capital accumulation by free exchange of commodities. Chirac argues coherently and in line with this position when he concludes “nothing of duration is built without respect.” (Chirac 2005b) Capitalist societies have replaced exploitation by violent means to relations mediated through law, the guarantee of private property, legal equality and the freedom of choice. It is therefore necessary to abstain from individually employed violent measures and for the individuals to subjugate themselves under the authority of the law. The affirmation of state and law and the citizen's loyalty is assured by identification with the same in the form of nationalism. Consequently, President Jacques Chirac tries to demand state loyalty by means of a republican, more positive and soft-nationalistic phrasing. He reminds the citizens in general and the *banlieues'* residents in particular that



“obedience to the law and respect for the values of the Republic necessarily involves justice, brotherhood, generosity. This is what makes one belong to a national community. It is in the words and looks, with the heart and through the act that the respect everyone deserves is ensured. And I want to tell the children of the difficult neighborhoods, whatever their origins, that they are all daughters and sons of the Republic.” (Chirac 2005b)

Whoever lives in France and wants to belong to the French nation must obey the laws the French state imposes. Chirac emphasizes, in return, it is the duty of the Republic to “offer everywhere and to everyone equal opportunities.” (Ibid) The lack of equality needs to be rectified and the state aims to do so by implementing the policies discussed above. Yet, respect and fraternity are a precondition to civil peace and obeying the laws is presented as a necessity for collective progression. The state not only compels its citizens to productivity, but also demands and enforces loyalty to ensure that the economic relations are devoid of violent interruption and that the exertion of violence remains the state's prerogative. Another substantial element of normal politics is the notion of the compulsion to state loyalty.

We have seen that normal politics happen simultaneously with the extraordinary measure of the state of emergency. A Marxist approach and an examination of the empirical material enabled us to conceptualize normal politics as the compulsion to obey state and capital: normal political measures such as educational programs and anti-discrimination politics are set in place as to provide equal chances in order to render the citizens productive for the accumulation process. The same is necessary for the mutual respect of private property owners and therefore the respect of the law. State loyalty and productivity go hand in hand. The latter is the source of the subsistence for the state, while equally presupposing conditions of social relations generally free of immediate violence. Securitization Theory's liberal-democratic understanding of how to perform normal politics obscures the exploitative and dominating nature of the same. This has consequences for the concept of extraordinary measures, since an alteration in the understanding of normality affects what is defined as its opposite.

### ***Extraordinary measures at the behest of normality***

A second reason for Securitization Theory's inability to account for the simultaneity of normal and extraordinary politics is that the use of extraordinary measures is *caused* by normal politics. Securitization Theory disassociates extraordinary measures from normal politics. The theory's focus on the normal performance of politics neglects the individual's subjugation under state and capital and the corresponding exploitative and oppressive relations these entail, even if implemented by civic measures. We have established in the previous section that normal politics is the compulsion to productivity and state loyalty. The violent enforcement in the form of

extraordinary measures serves this very goal. It is thus normal politics that dictates the objective extraordinary means are used for.

### *Reaffirming authority*

In order to ensure state loyalty, politicians do not halt at calls for the respect of the law or the cherishing of nationalistic feelings. These exhortations are complemented by the implementation of violent means to subjugate the citizens to the state's authority and lift a supposedly prevailing "feeling of impunity." (Sarkozy 2005a) The increase in incarceration during the weeks of unrest are presented as not only a necessity to crumble the violence, but a means of making an example:

"Those attacking property and people should know that in this Republic no-one violates the law without being arrested, prosecuted and punished." (Chirac 2005b)

Throughout the riots, "the police rounded up some 5,200 individuals, 4,800 of whom were placed in police custody and 800 committed to prison." (Mucchielli 2009: 734) By the end of November, the Ministry of Justice announced that 600 persons, from which 489 were adults and 108 were juveniles, had been given unsuspended prison sentences. These numbers most likely increased "as the investigations begun during the events progressed to completion." (Mucchielli 2009: 734) The high judicial toll is regarded and communicated as *necessary* grave forms of punishment:

"Everybody understands that we are now in a situation that requires severe punishment as to make an example, yet only insofar as justice has been rendered in accordance with its founding principles." (Pascal 2005)

Facilitated by the state of emergency, such high punishment is supposed to deter others from copying the acts of violence and, by the same token, reaffirm the prerogative and power of the state. Minister of Justice Pascal emphasizes that the possibility to enhanced punishment and limitations on the freedom of movement correspond to the judicial principles of the Republic. The violent measures are an extension of normal politics. The facilitated imprisonment against those who refuse to obey the law presents the application of the state's prerogative to legally exert violence. If normal politics entails the compulsion to state loyalty, mediated by nationalism, law and the threat of violence and imprisonment in case of disobedience, the implementation of such measures to ensure the citizen's subjugation merely represents the execution of the very idea that is present under conditions free of exceptionality. The framing of the issue as a fight between the rightful law and the delinquent rule, the talk about necessity of extraordinary measures in face of the urgency of the situation are indeed *legitimizing* these means, but gives no explanation for their application. These reasons are only to be found in normal politics.

### *Penalizing the unproductive*

The violent measures used to subjugate the citizens under the state's authority enhance the compulsion to productivity. To ensure the productiveness of the working class at large, the state violently intervenes as to “bend the reticent fractions of the post-industrial working class to precarious wage-work; to warehouse their most disruptive or superfluous elements; and to patrol the boundaries of the deserving citizenry while reasserting the authority of the state.” (Wacquant 2012: 38) The violent and penal treatment of the *banlieues*' residents during and after the riots punishes a very particular socio-economic group, namely what Marx called the *industrial reserve army*. Since the commodity producers in capitalist relations are private and their commodities only acquire social character by the act of exchange, capitalist production and distribution is not consciously coordinated, which affects the need for and size of disposable labor power. Consequently, capitalist accumulation necessarily produces a “redundant population of laborers, i.e., a population of greater extent than suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital, and therefore a surplus population.” (Marx 1887: 443) This industrial reserve army pressures the employed portion of the working class into accepting concessions such as “lower wages, limited benefits, intensified production processes, dangerous and stressful working conditions, limits to the length of the work day, and so on,” (Merrill 2011: 1548) and thereby reduces the price of commodity production. In 2005, the youth unemployment rate in the *banlieues* reaches up to 40%, even higher rates for youths of immigrant descendant. The unemployment rate is twice, in some areas such as *Clichy-sous-bois* three times as high as for the rest of the country. (Mucchielli 2009: 745-746) The *banlieues*' population experiences long-term joblessness, (Wacquant 2008: 163) “higher rates of precarious and of undesired part-time employment, and a proportion of low wages much higher than the national average, resulting in insecure economic conditions.” (Ibid: 745) This industrial reserve army is also more likely to be targeted by violent and penal policies of the state. The prison population largely originates from the poorest social classes, Aubusson de Cavarlay prominently captured this tendency when he wrote: “if fines are bourgeois and petit-bourgeois, imprisonment is sub-proletarian.” (as cited in Marchietti 2002: 417) Carceral institutionalization further exacerbates and perpetuates poverty. (Ibid: 430) Furthermore, ethnic minorities of the industrial reserve army are victims of penal politics in particular. People without French citizenship, in particular such of North-African descent, are overrepresented in pretrial detention and the prison system at large. (Pager 2008) Hence, when the French state is punishing the rioters as to reaffirm its power, it is punishing a very particular group of society – the superfluous un(der)employed lower segments of the working class and descendants of African immigrants.

Minister of Interior Nicolas Sarkozy succinctly captures their redundancy for the

valorization of capital when he repeatedly describes the rioting, unemployed youth as “scum” or “rubble”, and, shortly before the riots broke out, promises to “clean the 4000 [a popular social housing estate in *Seine-Sant-Denis*] with a Kärcher<sup>2</sup>.” (Dikeç: 165) Sarkozy also decides to deport people without French citizenship (*étrangers*) found to be guilty of rioting. After threatening to expel 120 foreigners from French soil, the real number of people who legally could be deported shrivels to 10, since by and large the inhabitants of the *banlieues* own the French citizenship. (Arsenault 2005) Still, the symbolism of the act was clear: Those who are unproductive, “choose” to become criminal, and are “alien” tend to be excluded from French society either spatially, penally or territorially. Sarkozy, who considers delinquent behavior to be a matter of choice, urges the French citizens to make this choice in favor of labor and productivity. The neutralization and warehousing of the superfluous and disruptive elements “discipline[s] the fractions of the working class that buck at the new, precarious service jobs [...], and reaffirms the authority of the state.” (Wacquant 2001: 405) Their special treatment is justified with their unwillingness to “get up early to work and get out” (Sarkozy 2005a), with their decision to waste their “fantastic human potential” (Sarkozy 2005b) as opposed to the “honest citizens, who never have committed any crime other than going about their businesses.” (Sarkozy 2003b) Hence, the penalization of the rebellious and unproductive is not only a way of keeping other fractions of the working class at bay and expanding competition, but also a means to show the population at large quite plainly what the “refusal” to labor results in.

In conclusion, the extraordinary measures of violent oppression, curfews and facilitated penalization are no violation of 'normal politics' but their extension. The compulsion to state obedience, entailed in normal politics, is asserted by force. The particular socio-economic group targeted by the violent subjugation proves to be functional in disciplining and pressuring society at large into productivity and loyalty. Extraordinary measures differ gradually, but not in nature from normal politics. Securitization Theory's conviction to not only analytically differentiate extraordinary from normal politics, but also substantially detach and disassociate them in order to embrace the latter and reject the former, is an expression of their liberal-democratic assessment of normal politics. This proves that the architects of the theory rightfully criticize the violent assertion of the capitalist state, but do not object to the capitalist state as such.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I set out to answer the question what the concept of normal politics means in Securitization Theory. Seven speeches by the French government over a period of six weeks were

<sup>2</sup> Kärcher is a well-known brand of high-pressure cleaning equipment.

analyzed. The empirical analysis enabled us to trace the process of securitization. The French republic was identified as the referent object of the threat posed by the *banlieues* riots and was dealt with by the government's declaration and implementation of the state of emergency. The material examined demonstrates also that the securitization did not lead to a suspension of normal politics. Although analytically distinguishable, the concepts coincide. The theory's failure in accounting for the processes was caused by its under-theorized understanding of normal politics, and the relation thereof to extraordinary measures. A Marxist approach revealed that normal politics consist of the compulsion to productivity as organized by the state, equally entailing the subjugation to the sovereign. In times of violent unrest, the obligation to productivity and loyalty turns into violent coercion. Those who cannot be rendered applicable to capital due to economic crisis, a stagnation in available workplaces etc. are penalized and excluded in order to discipline and control the working class as well as reaffirm the state's powers and prerogatives. Extraordinary measures find their purpose in the substance of normal politics and do not fundamentally differ from such.

What do these findings mean for an assessment of Securitization Theory? Securitization Theory declares a particular form of politics defined by openness, debate, scrutiny and slowness as the democratic norm. Extraordinary measure in this logic present a violation of the norm, since it suspends the formal elements constituting it. In this respect, Securitization Theory criticizes the democratic state for not owning up to its norms and suspending these norms whenever it considers them necessary. More humane, violent-free social and political relations are demanded. The theory refrains from fundamentally questioning the existing social relations and structures. It can be considered to be an *uncritical* theory, since its research interest and questions remain in the framework of the established social structures and thereby serve merely the improvement of power relations, not their abolishment. (Heinrich 2008: 72-74) A critical theory, on the other hand, does question the social structures that give rise to both 'normal' and 'extraordinary' political measures. Extraordinary measures are but an exacerbation of what the state has at its disposal in any case. Means of violence and oppression as an expression of power relations, the compulsion to productivity and state loyalty are part of reality and impose themselves through the rules and regulations that have Securitization Theory's norm at their basis. In times of crisis, this normal political content is forced upon the state's citizens by extraordinary means.

However, we need also to address the constraints of this assessment of Securitization Theory and normal politics. The case that was chosen to exemplify the theory has particular premises and conditions: the securitized crisis is a domestic one, and the referent object is the state. Securitization Theory explicitly set out to broaden the objects of analysis in security studies and exceed a state-centered theory. The meaning of normal politics might shift when a different referent object

becomes the analytical unit and threats are considered to be foreign, inter- or transnational. Further research on this topic from a particular Marxist approach could contribute to and modify these results.

As for the case of France, the current protest movement *Nuit debout*, which manifested itself at the end of March 2016 in opposition to changes in the labor laws the government proposed, will further show how the capitalist state in times of neoliberalism deals with uprisings. The current events will display whether and when extraordinary measures are put in place to discipline the working class and those who consolidate themselves with its demands, or whether civic means and democratic politics will pacify the protesters and disperse their concerns in order to maintain the status quo.

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