Securitization as a nation-building instrument

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Abstract

Processes of national identity construction have often been neglected by the International Relations field, dwelling on an artificial dichotomization between majority and minority groups, which tend to mask other kinds of social polarization and fragmentation. Through the application of the concept of weak states, as proposed by Buzan and Holsti, and of the securitization theory, we aim to establish a link between two phenomena: the existence of spaces where the idea of the state (national consciousness) is persistently weak among the different collectivities inhabiting the same territory, and the transformation of minority groups into internal threats, in order to encourage a positive (albeit unstable) identification towards the state within the perceived majority. In other words, it will allow us to understand how collective identities, namely state identities, are forged and reinforced through securitization. By acknowledging this link and the lack of national cohesion as a source of insecurity, we allow for a desecuritization of minorities and their rights and we are able to focus on the marginalization and exclusion of other groups, often hidden behind an emergency discourse towards minorities.

Keywords

Weak states; nation-building; securitization; minorities

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Since its emergence, the theory of securitization has been presented as a rupture with the traditional understandings of security, and has been subjected to a series of critiques and developments, such as the growing concern with the dessecuritization of minority rights or the normative and political content of the process. The theoretical development of securitization has been focusing on *how* the process can be initiated (either through mere *speech acts*, as defended by the CS, or through images, symbols and other resources, as proposed by the School of Paris), on *which* actors are able to securitize, the role played by the audience and contexts, and on *how* to dessecuritize.

Compared to these matters, the question on *why* actors chose to securitize some issues remains underdeveloped, partly due to what has been denounced as a reluctance of the Copenhagen School to present securitization as an inherently political process.

This paper aims to expose one of the functions fulfilled by securitization, by proposing that there is a causal mechanism between fragile national identities and the transformation of national minorities into threats. In order to establish the link between the two phenomena – states where national consciousness is lacking or damaged and the continuous transformation of minority into internal threats – we will apply the concept of weak states, as introduced by Barry Buzan.

By establishing this link, and identifying the non-correspondence between state and nation as a source of insecurity, often neglected by international relations, we aim to question the artificial separation between majority and minority groups and identify the exclusion felt by other groups, often masked by an emergency discourse.

On the dangers of invoking 'national security'

The Copenhagen School represents the most intense attempt of building a constructivist approach applied to security (Cf. McDonald 2008: 59; Huysmans 1998a: 480), by suggesting that "the sense of threat, vulnerability and (in)security are socially constructed rather than objectively present or absent" (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 50-51). The approach starts with the idea that danger is not an objective condition, as it is subjected to process of interpretation, which helps explain why not all risks are taken as dangers (cf. Campbell, 1992).

The securitization theory produced by this group of authors aims to understand the way threats are discursively constructed, as well as to explore the intersubjective processes which underlie what is projected – and collectively responded – as a threat.

Contrary to what McSweeney (1996) argued, the CS does not support an expansion of the concept of security, but instead aims to offer a lens that allows to explain the already ongoing expansion of the concepte, initiated during the 1980s. As Waever (1995: 46-47) explained, the approach was driven by a discontentment with the traditional management of the concept and of the security agenda: that is, the idea that security is a reality that precedes language, that threats can be objectively measured, and that an increase of security is always desirable.

In this sense, the unrestrained development of *security*, as a way of providing a response to what was thought to be a restriction of the concept to the state level and to the political and military sectors, allowed that even more dynamics could be considered security objects.

The use of the term *national security* should not, therefore, be seen as inevitable or politically innocent: political leaderships often make use of an ambiguous concept, such as *nation*, to turn into threats matters close to people (e.g.: their physical integrity or the capacity of reproduction and expression of their identity) and, that way, to smooth the public acceptance of extreme measures. In other words, the conceptual ambiguity serves the purposes of those who practice state security policies and has become convenient to implement policies that, otherwise, would have to be profoundly debated, contested and justified (Buzan, 1983: 9).

Feeling the need to understand this unruly use of *security*, Buzan, Waver and Wilde, back in 1998, brought back the security sectors previously identified by Buzan (military, political, economic, societal and environmental), while setting themselves to identify other referent objects of security other than the state (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 8).

The authors identified a *continuum* in the way issues can be managed, from their non-politicization (when issues are not publically debated or solved), through politicization and ending with securitization, a situation during which issues are framed as a security problem, demanding emergency measures, justifying actions beyond the normal boundaries of political procedures, and often escaping the public debate (cf. Williams, 2003: 213). As Weaver recalls, to produce security is also a political process, and "politics is inherently about closing off options, about forcing the stream of history in particular directions" (Waever, 1995: 76).

The securitization process begins with a speech act, because to invoke security is the same as to *practice* security:

> "[…] we can regard 'security' as a *speech act*. In this usage, security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance *itself* is the act. By saying it, something is done (as in betting, giving a promise, naming a ship). By uttering 'security', a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it" (Waever 1995:55).

The use of the term 'security' may help the prioritization of some issues in relation to others, but the process is enhanced if these are presented as existential threats (even if what constitutes an existential threat can change according to the different sectors and their referent objects):

> "If one can argue that something overflows the normal political logic of weighing issues against each other, this must be the cases 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 of 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 issues – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat" (Buzan *et al.,* 1998: 24)

However, the securitization process will only be completed when or if the audience to whom the speech act is addressed accepts it as valid. The security act is then negotiated between the securitizing actor and the audience, in the course of three steps: the construction of an existential threat by the securitizing agent (securitizing move), its reception by the audience, and the effects produced in the relations among the units, in accordance to the suspension of the rules and the

adoption of an emergency action (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 25-26). Considering that the fulfillment of a few conditions, such as the authority of the securitizing actor or the record of relations with the threatening object, may facilitate the reception of the securitizing move, a successful speech act is, in fact, a combination of linguistic and social elements, of intrinsic features of the speech and of the group that recognizes it as valid.

The securitization theory was not uncritically accepted, and was particularly attacked by the introduction of a societal sector which, according to McSweeney (1996: 82), encourages the reification of collective identities, by focusing excessively in the speech act, and lacks normative concerns. In a way, the concepts introduced by Buzan, Waever and Wilde have been evolving inside the Copenhagen School. On the other hand, post-Copenhagen School authors have been successfully trying to overcome issues that, despite being present in the original proposal, were deeply neglected.

The societal sector was created following the frequent construction of collective identities as referent objects of security through, for example, the abusive use of the *national security* discourse, whilst providing no reflection on the *nation* as a security unit. Referent objects identified in the societal sector can be "whatever larger groups carry the loyalties and devotion of subjects in a form and to a degree that can create a socially powerful argument that this 'we' is threatened" (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 119). The CS recognizes the difficulty in establishing solid boundaries between existential threats and less urgent threats, because collective identities evolve according to internal and external developments, which may be seen as natural or invasive (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 22-23). Likewise, the CS recognizes that national identities, while deeply tied to the state, can be referenced by actors who occupy positions of power (Buzan *et al.,* 1998: 123).

Whilst trying to explain the separation between societal and political security, Waever (1995: 66-68) argues that, while in the former the referent objects are the ideas and practices that identify individuals as members of the same societal group, political security relates to the organizational stability of the states, the governance systems and their ideologies. However, he concedes that state-society dualism is not clear: later, the CS would argue that, even though the *nation* can be used as a referent object, it cannot be reified as a securitizing actor, for there are groups, movements, parties or state elites that act and speak on its behalf (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 41-42).

According to Huysmans (1998a: 489), matters of societal security take precedence over others because the CS has moved the relation between state and society to the center of its research agenda: therefore, the concept of societal security does not presuppose the identification of a sector according to certain threats or vulnerabilities, but instead the interpretation of the relation between the construction of these threats and the constitution of society and its identity as a threatened object.

In response to McSweeney's review of their work, Buzan and Waever rejected the idea that they were objectifying identity, and argued that their goal was to understand the way it was labeled and securitized:

> "Security discourse always uses a symbol or a concept –as all other discourse, it is unable to grasp the thing or people as such. A label surely can be securitized. (…)If we want to understand the peculiarities of the branch of security policy that is conducted on behalf of identity, it is indeed helpful to investigate the inherent paradoxes of acting in defence of an identity which is never simply constant in itself, but

> always contains a longing for a desired self. Collective identities of this sort can never be more than a series of partially or temporarily successful, but ultimately impossible, closures" (Buzan and Waever, 1997: 244).

Some actors have chosen to overcome the mere production of a speech act, focusing instead on the audience and on the social context, while others question the public capability to think over the credibility of the threats and the legitimacy underlying the use of exceptional measures, when faced with and emergency discourse.

For Balzacq (2005), for instance, the securitization process, as formulated by the CS suggests that this is a mechanical process, causing the speech act to be seen as an attempt to convince the audience to accept a discourse merely based on what it already knows about the world. Alternatively, the author proposes an analysis of securitization as a strategic practice, through the recognition of persuasion methods (metaphors, emotions, stereotypes, gestures, etc.) and by paying closer attention to the facilitating conditions (contexts, psychological and cultural disposition of the audience, power relations between securitizing actor and audience), which he argues have not been sufficiently problematised by the CS.

Balzacq (2005: 176) argues that with this shift it is possible to contemplate the inequalities that mark security interaction and to consider the influence of power relations in securitization dynamics. Methodologically, his proposal demands the establishment of a link between discourse and real world:

> "Since the audience is not fully informed, for instance, on the temporal proximity of threats, it usually relies on state officials' discourses because it thinks that the latter, who are the site of constitutional legitimacy, must have 'good reasons' to assert, in this case, that 'X' represents a threat to a state's survival. Of course, by virtue of 'good reasons' (i.e. the claim that they know more than they can say or the argument of secrecy) public officials would find it easier, compared to any other securitizing actor, to securitize an issue, primarily, because they hold influential positions in the security field based on their political capital, and have privileged access to mass media" (Balzacq, 2005: 190-191).

Despite the relevance of Balzacq's proposal, in the sense that there is an overwhelming focus on the speech act, the CS recognizes that the relation between actors is not symmetrical, and that some actors become security voices generally accepted, by virtue of the positions of power they occupy. Thus, "to study securitization is to study the power politics of a concept." (Buzan *et al.*, 1998:31-32).

According to Huysmans (1998a: 489), the greatest loophole on the original securitization theory is the fact that the Copenhagen School takes some identities and structures to be deeply sedimented, a problem also pointed out by McSweeney (1996: 85), and that is also ingrained in the debate over social constructivism's links either to traditional theories, either with critical theory. By doing it, the Copenhagen School depreciates the constitutive relation between securitization processes and the identity of referent objects.

However, the Copenhagen School's position has suffered some modifications, so that it is possible to identify a normative orientation in the securitization theory. First and foremost because its authors view securitization as usually a negative development which silences the public debate over the securitized issues, advocate the opposite process – dessecuritization -, and warn for the

dangers of invocation and idealization of national security that, according to them, is used to silence opposition and toserve internal political purposes (Buzan *et al*., 1998:29).

According to Waever (1995: 54-57), in practice, to securitize means that, by constructing an issue as a security problem, one claims a special right to act that, ultimately, is defined by the state and its elites. Thus, the goal must be a minimization of security. The same happens when trying to determine who speaks on behalf of the society:

> "In practical terms, it is not a society itself that speaks but, rather, institutions or actors in society. Normally and traditionally, according to liberal contract ideology, it is the state that has spoken about security in the name of a presumed homogeneous, amorphous society that it allegedly represents, with what is assumed to be a clear focus and voice. The notion of 'societal security' might strongly imply that this homogenous, amorphous society now speaks on its behalf. But societies are, of course, highly differentiated, full of hierarchies and institutions, with some better placed that others to speak on behalf of 'their' societies. But 'society' never speaks, it is only there to be spoken for" (Waever 1995:69-70).

Against this background, maybe the most pressing question towards the securitization theory is not the identification of its normative potential, which exists, albeit still underdeveloped, but its development as a political theory of security as proposed by Guzzini (2011: 331-332). In other words, what is needed is to stimulate the interest, not only in what security *does*, nor in the context in which security problems emerge, but also on the role security plays in the political order, a project previously advanced by Huysmans, when he called for a reflection over 'security' as a way to establish relations, as a 'thick signifier':

> "While conceptual analyses of security in IR assume and external reality to which security refers – an (in)security condition – in a thick signifier approach 'security' becomes self-referential. It does not refer to an external, objective reality but establishes a security situation by itself. It is the enunciation of the signifier which constitutes an (in)security condition. Thus, the signifier has a performative rather than a descriptive force. Rather than describing or picturing a condition, it organizes social relations into security relations" (Huysmans, 1998b: 231-232).

Although his proposal is by no means recent, the exploration of the motivations and functions of securitization have been forgotten, ignoring, for instance, the possibility that the political leaderships of a state chose to institutionalize exclusion, depriving certain groups from full political participation or equal access to resources, as a strategy of national consolidation. And yet, outside International Relations and Security Studies, diverse contributions suggest that this link exists.

What are strong states made of? A take on states legitimacy and accountability

In 1983, Barry Buzan introduced a new categorization of states, which included an evaluation of the levels of social and political cohesion. In his opinion, a state is composed by physical elements (population, territory, wealth and resources), institutional elements (government, regime, rules and norms), and by the idea of the state, particularly important for Buzan, as it grants popular legitimacy to the state.

The idea of the state can be translated as a feeling of belonging (or 'we-feeling', as proposed by Linz *et al*.), a notion of common purpose and a consensus on *what* the state should do and *how* it

should be doing it (cf. Buzan, 1983: 44; Neumann, 2006: 7). It is this notion of common purpose that distinguishes the social component of the state from its physical and institutional basis.

When the idea of the state is absent from its population, the state does not have a secure base and becomes weak, for "it is in the realm of ideas and sentiment that the fate of the states is primarily determined" (Holsti, 1996: 84). In other words, a weak state does not have political and social cohesion and has failed to create a common national identity, permanently weakened by the continuous encouragement of a group or identity and by the adoption of exclusionary policies and practices.

According to this formula, the strength of a state is more than the mere sum of its physical and institutional components, because although its population and territory offer a physical base, both would still survive if the state no longer existed. On the other hand "without a widespread and quite deeply-rooted idea of the state among the population, the state institutions by themselves would have great difficulty functioning and surviving" (Buzan, 1983: 38-39).

The strength of the state, as proposed by Buzan, does not depend nor is related to power, for states frequently pointed as world powers, can present internal weaknesses that turn them into weak states:

> "In a real sense it is about the degree of stateness that a state possesses. All states can be placed along this spectrum. Those towards the stronger end, being more internally cohesive, will tend to find most of their threats coming from outside their borders. Those towards the weaker end lack much in the way of empirical sovereignty, and so in one sense have less claim to stateness" (Buzan and Waever, 2004: 22).

In (potentially) weak states, the identification of threats in the national security discourse often reveals a greater concern with internal threats. In deeply divided countries, the state may treat large segments of its population as security problems, while establishing different patterns in resource allocation to different groups (Buzan, 1983: 32). In extreme cases, "weak states do not have, or have failed to create a domestic political and social consensus of sufficient strength to eliminate the large-scale use of force as a major and continuing element in the domestic political life of the nation" (Buzan, 1983: 67). The weaker a state is, the more dubious is the use of *national security*, and there might be an intentional confusion between the security of the state and the interests of specific groups, meaning that "we need to be much more suspicious of the assumption that national security is what the government deems it to be" (Buzan, 1983: 68)

Buzan's formula represents a three-way breakthrough to the institutionalist approaches to the state. First of all, by deconstructing the idea that all states are identical objects, to be distinguished only by power analysis. Although states share a certain number of physical, functional, institutional and legal attributes, the differences among them are significant (Buzan, 1983: 42, 68)

Secondly, because it focuses on the ideational component, breaking with the approaches inspired by Max Weber's (1994: 310-311) definition of a state, "a human community that (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical violence* within a given territory".

According to Weber's definition, the strength of a state can be determined by its capacity to ensure security and its institutions' capacity to impose authority over society. Therefore, a state is as strong as its institutional and coercive capacity to dominate over society, as only then the state can carry

out its main function: the maintenance of order and security. Thus, a fragile state is the political entity whiche does not have the capacity to implement or impose policies or to offer security, basic services and the protection of basic civil liberties.

Weberian approaches to the state have allowed the emergence of concepts such as *failed* or *collapsed* states which, in turn, have legitimized the use of international mechanisms of intervention, especially in post-colonial contexts.

According to Connor (1972: 353), these approaches show a depreciation of the power of attraction of ethnic identities, by ignoring that the main cause of political instability is not in the institutional collapse of these states, but the absence of a common identity and common purposes among their populations. To Lemay-Hébert, the restricted use of the concept of 'collapsed state' and others, to a matter of means instead of ends (cf. Jackson and Rosberg, 1982), has led to the idea that we are facing a new phenomenon in the process of state building. A new approach, focused on the legitimacy and sociopolitical cohesion, is needed because "as a state represents more than the mere expression of its institutions, state collapse encompasses more than the failure of governmental institutions" (Lemay-Hébert, 2009: 22).

And lastly, because it makes the state accountable for the way its weaknesses are managed: state weakness is not determined by the heterogeneity of society, but by the way the state manages those differences. By proposing state accountability in these matters, Buzan also rejects cultural determinism and breaks with the vast majority of literature on nationalism.

Neither Buzan nor Holsti admit the existence of a pure strong state, and argue that states tend to move, throughout time, along a continuum of strength, so that nation-building processes are neither unidirectional nor irreversible. According to Doty (1996) some old states, generally considered to be solid and stable, from time to time are still confronted with identity crisis. To Wimmer (2006: 341-342), states situate themselves along a continuum of inclusiveness as and all states present some level of exclusion.

Mandelbaum (2013: 521) argues that this separation between strong and weak states reinforces the production of a model-state and glorifies the non-existent convergence between nation and state. The same author insists that the measurement of a state's strength encourages its scientification of the states as well as the establishment of strong and weak regions, through a discourse that presents weak states as an abnormality to be corrected or assisted, especially in post-colonial spaces. However, what Buzan's proposes is precisely the opposite: if there are no absolute strong states, and if we recognize that all nation-building processes make use of exclusionary practices, weak states are no longer the exception, but the rule in the international system.

While not using Buzan's concepts, Michael Hechter (1975: 22) made an effort to describe how a perfectly integrated national society would work. In his opinion, this would be a society where, although political disputes among different ethnocultural groups still prevailed, there would be no permanent constellation of distinct cultural groups, no distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', and where all groups would recognize central power as legitimate, for all would have access to the definition of national symbols. As Buzan, Hechter suggests that this state does not exist; however, he sees this absence as an encouragement to our questioning, since case studies situated at the extremes of this continuum are not particularly insightful:

> "The critical case studies are those where an *intermediate* level of national development has occurred: either economically integrated societies composed of distinct cultural groups, or-if this is not a null set-culturally integrated societies composed of groups at different levels of economic and social development. By and large such examples may be found among contemporary industrial societies" (Hechter 1975:22).

Although Buzan's criteria are dimensional and contextual, for the state guarantee of equal rights and liberties to all individuals and groups may not cease non-official forms of exclusion and discrimination, the greatest responsibility for the management of internal divisions remains in the hands of the state (Holsti, 1996: 96; cf. Nieguth 1999: 156).

According to Brown, we need to explore not only the way political elites construct their nationalist goals, insecurities, threats or enemies, but also the population's receptivity of this discourse:

> "Political elites who wish to close off their society against external influences or employ scapegoat strategies against minorities might, as previously noted, find it useful to depict the threats in racial terms, and to popularise their own myths of common history in racial terms. The influence of such depictions upon national consciousness partly depends, no doubt, both on the culture of the society, and on the actual situational challenges, and thence the types of insecurities facing the society; but political elites do have flexibility in the portrayal of enemies, and this gives a fluidity to the character of nationalism, and in particular to the liberalism or illiberalism of nationalist politics" (Brown, 1999: 298-299).

If the term 'national security' suggests a strong relation between nation and state, maybe the purpose of the state is the protection and expression of an independent cultural identity. If, as theories on nationalism argue, the nation is an imagined community forged by the state elites, Buzan (1983: 45-46) recognizes that the attempt of converging nation with state, in terms of centralizing power, facilitated communication and definition of a common purpose, might seem a powerful, albeit unfeasible idea, in most situations.

Bringing it all together: securitization as nation-building strategy in the weak state

A strong state is built from the inside, but IR's predisposition to relate *strength* with *power*, as well as the habit to evaluate states from an external angle are so deeply ingrained that it is sometimes difficult to acknowledge that states, which are internationally recognized as legitimate, may not have internal legitimacy (Holsti, 1996: 107-108).

Therefore, what is needed is an analysis of the mutually constitutive relation between state and society, where societal cohesion is seen as an element of state strength, and not a mere byproduct of the institutional strength of the state (Lemay-Hébert, 2009: 28). But why would a state exclude or transform a group or minority into a threat?

There is some consensus about the relational nature of identities or, in other words, about the *we-them* nexus that underlies identity construction. Some of the works in the social psychology field show how the construction of the *other* encourages the construction of our own identity (Eriksen, 1995; Petersson and Tyler, 2008: 226), and some of this literature has been gradually incorporated into the IR field, especially in the works of Neumann (1995), Campbell (1992), and Rae (2002). In a sense, this introduction is also a recognition of Edward Said's work, where he shows how the

image of a mysterious, exotic and wild Orient "has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (Said, 1979: 2).

According to Madriaga (2010), this is one of the reasons why there are no post-national states, for national identity, as any other collective identity, is created and reproduced through a continuous process of differentiation. The same is argued by Campbell, to whom the idea of the state as a final product should be reconsidered:

> "[…] states are never finished as entities; the tension between the demands of identity and the practices that constitute it can never be fully resolved, because the performative nature of identity can never be fully revealed. This paradox inherent to their being renders states in permanent need of reproduction: with no ontological status apart from the many and varied practices that constitute their reality, states are (and have to be) always in a process of becoming. For a state to end its practices of representation would be to expose its lack of prediscursive foundations; stasis would be death" (Campbell, 1992: 11).

According to Petersson (2003) it is important to acknowledge that negative images about the *other* are not inevitabilities, but social constructions, and their rigidity and durability are a result of the nature and regularity of interactions and transmission mechanisms. For Neumann (2006; 8-10) cultural differences are only relevant if they are presented as such: the real danger is not on the existence of differences among groups, but in the discourses that present them as constitutive of what we are as well as instrumental to our social and political lives.

The construction of the *other* is therefore inevitable in our efforts to build our own identity, but that does not mean that those images are necessarily negative or hostile. To see the *other* as just different might be an extremely difficult task, for the processes of *othering* often include a hierarchical, derogatory and stigmatizing view of those who are considered different from *us*. These formal and informal processes can be found in all kinds of established relations, but also in international relations, when other states are constructed as enemies, pariahs, or as model-states, or when policies are developed according to visions of inferiority and superiority, claiming a different treatment for different individuals and groups.

The reasons underlying the exclusion of a community may vary, but are often related to the production of a discourse which turns them into a threat to the interests and/or the identity of the majority group. For Neumann (1995: 4), although the debate over the *other* suggests a flux of ideas, the state plays a decisive role, by establishing the limits within which that debate can occur. For that reason, it is crucial to think over situations where, despite recognizing the political costs, states chose to adopt exclusionary practices. It is also relevant to consider how the transformation of a minority group into a threat can enhance the identity of the dominant group.

As it has been previously argued, the weak state is not an inevitable, innocent or irreparable condition, and its symptoms can be addressed with inclusive politics and the creation of a complementary political identity. Otherwise "so long as such states fail to solve their nationality problem, they remain vulnerable to dismemberment, intervention, instability and internal conflict in ways not normally experienced by states in harmony with their nations" (Buzan, 1983: 47). Thus, it becomes crucial to question the political use of *national security*, in order to understand the transformation of national identity into a referent object of security.

The definition of our identity always demands a rejection of the *other*'s identity, for it is easier for a group to agree over those that *do not belong*, than over access criteria between its members. The securitization of identities, however, elevates this construction to a whole new level, turning the *other*, not only into a differential, but also into a security problem. This process is nourished by stereotypes, for the (perception of) the presence of an enemy becomes no longer compatible with the security of the majority (Petersson, 2008: 156).

Although social psychology has already shown that the loyalties of individuals towards a group can be reinforced with the creation of an enemy, which becomes a common focal point, the application of these theories to national identities is still far from achieving its potential.

According to Eriksen (1995: 427), despite its volatility, the construction of the *other* as a threat may serve temporary purposes of internal cohesion. For Marx (2003: 21-23) this strategy was used, for example, in the earlier stages of Spanish state-building, when over 80 000 Jews were expelled from the country. Petersson (2008: 160-161) offers the example of the "Chechen question", that framed and used during the Russian presidential campaign, ended up masking several popular concerns, such as the debate over secession, the economic crisis, organized crime, and the discontentment over Putin's political program. By the time the Chechen minority was turned into a source of insecurity, the debate over these issues was closed off. For Lipschutz (1995: 8), if it is true that the collapse of identities encourages the weakening of the state, then states often considered as solid and unproblematic are also prone to these problems: "For more than forty years, the United States knew it was *not* the Soviet Union, the FRG knew it was *not* the GDR, Israel knew it was *not* Palestine. Who or what, now, are these places? What defines then when the knowing enemy is gone?" (Lipschutz, 1995: 8).

The most complex work on the construction of internal enemies was done by Douglas (1995), who argues that scapegoats, those individuals or groups unfairly blamed for certain events, are needed to ensure that groups keeps functioning. In other cases, and especially during crisis, scapegoats play a role of a carefully planned distraction from reality.

The chosen victims are usually seen as weak and incapable of retaliation, and their vulnerability increases when there is a record of distrust and hostility:

> "[…] while people may be tolerated in a society even though their behaviour and personal characteristics are significantly different and thus somewhat threatening, they do not necessarily become scapegoats until and unless the society becomes frustrated by its inability to cope with some major crisis—that is, until the level of aggression becomes intolerable and has to be discharged. Then those who were disliked but tolerated become the victims of that aggression and are usually blamed for the crisis" (Douglas 1995:130).

According to Holsti, "the idea is to build a stronger foundation for the 'right to rule' by excluding some over whom that rule is to be exercised", and "any state/regime, and the community over which rule is exercised, that bases legitimacy on exclusionary principles contains an inherent weakness. 'Others' will always constitute an actual or potential threat (as perceived by the rulers) to the integrity of the state and/or to the solidarity of its underlying community" (Holsti, 1996: 89).

In these situations, where the states feel threatened from the insider, culture becomes a security policy, by which the most tempting response is to use cultural means "to reinforce social cohesion

and distinctiveness and to ensure that society reproduces itself effectively" (Waever *apud* Roe, 2004: 289).

Conclusion

Weak states formula provides for the accountability of the state in the management of cultural heterogeneity within its territory. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that hostility is a variable, not an objective condition, that multiple identities and loyalties can and do coexist in most societies, and that some states' vulnerabilities are linked to the mechanisms of social, economic and political domination and injustice that they themselves have established, reproduced and naturalized.

The greatest difficulty faced by weak states is that they often fall into a dilemma, by being incapable of breaking off with the processes of social fragmentation they created:

> "Everything it does to become a strong state actually perpetuates its weakness […] Their 'right to rule' is undermined by their actions, which are often discriminatory, short-range, and self-serving. The exclusion of important groups by denial of access to power or to resources helps destroy horizontal legitimacy and exacerbates social tensions" (Holsti, 1996: 117).

Moreover, scapegoating becomes a precondition for the solidarity within the majority group, but without offering neither a true foundation for unity, nor valid responses for future crisis: in the end, all it does is to mask other non-recognized (and, thus, non-managed) divisive lines. In these cases, the identification and sacrifice of the next victim becomes the priority, over the identification of the true roots of the problem:

> "If the time gained by the expedient is used to deal with the actual causes then it may well turn out to have been beneficial. If, on the other hand, it becomes a long-term effort and self-sustaining, then the original causes will tend to remain—apart, that is, from any large unforeseen consequences that may occur" (Douglas, 1995: 122-123).

On the other hand, a second side-effect of securitization in these contexts must be considered: the continuous demand for the prioritization of issues (Waever, 1995: 74). By demanding a concentration of efforts over the community constructed as a threat, the state loses the capability to deal with other issues or to address other problems: faced with permanent negligence, new hotbeds of tension might emerge in the national project, gradually eroding the state's legitimacy (Williams, 2011: 457; Douglas, 1995: 132).

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