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Special issue

Constructing Crises in Europe: Multifaceted Securitisation in Times
of Exception

Introduction: Political Logics and Academic Rationalities of Securitisation and International Crises

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Abstract

This introductory note discusses how the concept of securitisation might be used as a tool for understanding the different logics driving and standing behind foreign policies of major international stakeholders in situations of crises, emergencies and exceptions. The editors look at how securitisation functions as a discursive instrument for reshaping actors' subjectivities, and how it might be adjusted to the rapid changes in global politics triggered by Russia's war against Ukraine. They argue that the discursive construction of insecurities is not politically neutral and is driven by certain logics, presumptions and imaginaries. Russia's war against Ukraine is a particularly important focal point in this regard since it elucidates another crucial question: how do the parties involved in the war securitise and de-securitise – as well as exceptionalise and normalise – specific risks, dangers and threats, and what are the implications of these discursive strategies for international security?

Keywords: *international crises, securitization, insecurity, war in Ukraine*

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Introduction

The concepts of securitisation and crisis are closely linked. Crises are moments in which existential threats are seen as dominating the political and societal agenda and in which fundamental decisions therefore must be taken. Securitisations serve as invocations and constructions of these threats, and legitimise policies that would not be considered legitimate in non-crisis situations. In doing so, they follow different political logics and may be analysed from different academic positions. How do securitisations construct crises as political events, justify specific policies, alter political identities and shift power? How do multiple crises and securitisations intertwine, reinforce or undermine each other? How has the Russian attack on Ukraine changed the perception of the link between different crises and the characteristics of securitisation in crisis narratives?

This special issue takes up these questions. In this introductory note, we discuss how the concept of securitisation might be used as a tool for understanding the different logics driving and standing behind foreign policies of major international stakeholders in situations of crises, emergencies and exceptions. We look at how securitisation functions as a discursive instrument for reshaping actors' subjectivities, and how it might be adjusted to the rapid changes in global politics triggered by Russia's war against Ukraine.

We argue that the discursive construction of insecurities is not politically neutral and is driven by certain logics, presumptions and imaginaries. Russia's war against Ukraine is a particularly important focal point in this regard since it elucidates another crucial question: how do the parties involved in the war securitise and de-securitise – as well as exceptionalise and normalise – specific risks, dangers and threats, and what are the implications of these discursive strategies for international security?

New insecurities: Academic conceptualisations

As Ned Lebow, among many others, has noted, there is no generally accepted consensus definition of crisis. Yet many works that deal with crises refer to a 'perception of threat, heightened anxieties on the part of decision-makers, the expectation of possible violence, [and] the belief that important or far-reaching decisions are required and must be made on the basis of incomplete information in a stressful environment' (Lebow 2020: 8). A core ingredient of crises is that they challenge previously dominant beliefs and policies. They are thus a threat

not only to the physical existence of political subjects, but also to their ontological security (Kinnvall & Mitzen 2018). Yet this threat is not an objective fact. Crises, and with them the threats that constitute them, must be constructed. Most often, such constructions take the form of securitisations as invocations of existential threats that legitimise extraordinary actions to restore or produce a new stable order (Buzan et al. 1998). Alternatively, securitisations may also emerge through the assemblage of governmental practices that forge a sense of crisis through spreading 'unease' and a feeling of heightened risk (Bigo 2002).

Crises thus need narratives of securitisation and governmental techniques to both exist and be overcome. They challenge the present as much as they are part of productive processes through which political actors and their policies get reconstituted (Hay 1999). As Thomas Diez reflects in his contribution to this special issue, the production of political identities and legitimisation of governmental techniques can provide openings to new policies and transnational spaces or lead to exclusions and the reification of inward-looking nation-states. This necessitates a renewed debate on the ethical implications of securitisation and invocations of crises as a political logic and academic rationality.

Traditionally, crises refer to specific moments of existential challenges or 'turning points' (Brecher & Ben Yehuda 1985: 21). This is in line with the notion of securitisations as exceptional situations of particular urgency (Buzan et al. 1998). Yet both the literatures on securitisation and crises have discussed the extent to which these moments may be intertwined with routines or even themselves become 'routinised' or 'chronic' (Adamides 2020; Jeandesboz & Pallister-Wilkins 2016; Vigh 2008). In these cases, the exception becomes part of the daily life of societies, and the fighting of insecurities, both physical and ontological, part of a new *raison d'être*. Governmental conceptions of crises and securitisation have always been closer to such an understanding of their everyday nature (Bourbeau 2014), although this does not mean that governmental practices may not also forge a particular crisis moment.

Over the past three decades, conceptions of crises have also changed in two other respects. One is the frequency of crises. With financial crises, health pandemics and war happening back-to-back and even overlapping, analysts and political commentators increasingly speak of a 'polycrisis' (e.g. Zeitlin et al. 2019; Tooze 2002; Lawrence, Janzwood & Homer-Dixon 2022) in which the securities and governmentalities of different policy fields overlap, reinforce or undermine each other. Crisis therefore has become a 'chronic condition' of 'cascading risks, challenges, uncertainties and transformations' (Henig & Knight 2023: 3). The second development concerns a shift in the focus of crises in international relations away from immediate military crises since the 1980s and especially in Western debates in the more than two decades following the end of the Cold

War. Yet with Russia's war on Ukraine, the military crisis has become a potentially overriding part of the polycrisis.

Security scholarship has reflected and indeed reinforced these developments in our conceptions of crisis through its own rationalities. Thus, Russia's attack on Ukraine has not only been linked to a variety of securitisations in political discourse and the media – as demonstrated in Alona Shestopalova's article – but also presents a challenge to critical security scholarship in particular. Since the 1980s, much of this scholarship (as well as activism in a variety of forums including the United Nations) has been focused on re-orienting the concept of security away from its statist and military definitions towards an understanding that takes individuals as its main point of reference, and thus moves security concerns from military issues towards everyday problems, including energy, environment, food or health security. This has been a necessary move in order to break through the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Wendt 1992) of realist conceptions of security which serve to reinforce armament spirals, and to emphasise that the purpose of the state is to secure the well-being of its citizens, and not vice versa. Some scholars, thus, have even linked security to emancipation (Booth 1991). And while there are many debates and tensions between human security as a political concept leaning towards liberalism and critical security studies, they share their concern with discourses that tie security too much to the territorial state and its military defense (Newman 2010).

Since crises are constructed in the interplay of different speech acts and types of governmentality, it is important to analyse how they relate to and reinforce each other. Within this broad transformational framework, specific modes of governing might be identified – e.g. less liberal rights, less accountability, more direct and top-down crisis management, prioritisation of the 'collective' over the individual as the benefactor of governance, etc. Of particular salience is how different forms of governance (multilevel, liberal, authoritarian or other regimes) may deal with various forms of exceptionalism, and which agents are empowered and disempowered in the process of implementation of multiple exceptions from the extant rules on different levels. In this regard, Alina Jašina-Schäfer's article in this special issue approaches cultural institutions as spaces of governmentality that produce discourses and practices of de-securitisation and de-exceptionalisation of minorities hosted by European countries. Her two particular case studies deal with the Russian diaspora in Estonia and Finland, but the findings can be transferred to other cultural experiences of symbolic de-securitisation of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups all across Europe.

A particular form of governmentality is the new experience of Ukraine's resilience as a 'productive power' described by Yulia Kurnyshova in this special issue. She argues that resilience as a type of security governance is a major force

that makes possible and shapes Ukraine's normative agency as an ability to raise its voice and be accepted as a country capable of protecting itself and in the meantime to play by the rules constitutive for the Euro-Atlantic international society. Agency in this context is not only an attribute to a victimised identity, but also a driver for the future integration of Ukraine with the West. Her analysis confirms that 'sovereign and governmental security understandings might simultaneously coincide, work in parallel and in a dialectical relation, and thus are not necessarily mutually implicated or merged, but might correlate in different forms' (Vasilache 2014: 585).

In another conceptually rich academic debate, security was approached through the prism of emergencies and extraordinary situations, but not necessarily as normative deviations from democratic politics. Within this field of research, and in line with the argument that crises have become elongated, routinised and normalised features of our lives, the state of exception was discussed as a technique of governance (McLoughlin 2012: 697). As Michael Williams put it, 'extraordinary politics could function positively within democratic politics without falling into violent exceptionalism' (Williams 2015: 119). This conclusion might be corroborated by Māris Andžāns who in his article shows how Latvian Russophones are deployed in a hyper-securitised framework determined by the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the subsequent security challenges faced by the Baltic states. The case of Latvia might be juxtaposed with a similar experience of Estonia where the securitisation of local Russian speaking minority in the mainstream national discourse was facilitated by a lack of discursive resources for repositioning itself beyond the Russian world ideology of the Kremlin.

At the same time, there are at least four major challenges faced by critical security studies and emerging from the contributions to this special issue. First, the idea of regional security communities remains more like a desired security ideal than an established policy model or project (Kelly 2007: 223). Regions located at the cross-roads of different civilisational and institutional spaces – such as, for example, the Mediterranean – largely failed to become platforms where new practices of security are unfolding. On the contrary, most of the crucial regions, instead of becoming pioneers of 'asecurity' and de-securitisation (Wæver 1998), transformed into spaces reproducing and amplifying the logic of confrontation and conflictuality. We should take into serious account such research-based findings as a very limited replicability/spillover of regional security practices from one region to another, and regions' lack of both political will and resources to engage with security issues (Kirchner & Dominguez 2014: 175-176; Diez & Tocci 2017). The cases of the Baltic and Black Sea regions made clear that normative inclusiveness does not necessarily prevail over fragmentation and disintegration

along national lines; equally dysfunctional were the expectations of regions to be solidified by common technical, financial or economic projects, be it in the Nord Stream or the idea of a Black Sea transportation ring.

Second, the re-orientation of security discourses has often led to a bifurcation of the debate between traditional and critical security, failing to appreciate that both may be interrelated. Thus, while it is important to interrogate exclusively military conceptions of security, individuals can only be secure if their societal contexts are protected against military aggression. Or, in the terms of human security, the 'freedom from want' and the 'freedom from fear' are two sides of the same coin. Thus a focus on hard security is only as problematic as turning a blind eye to the persisting threat of aggression.

The shift of attention from hard to soft security had created a basis for a relative marginalisation of military components of security, from the rise of pacifism to defense budget cuts. In response to the armament spiral of the Cold War and in the context of its aftermath, these were important moves towards more open and just societies. Overcoming this legacy of softening the security language in confrontation with direct military aggression is a lengthy and painfully introspective process in all European countries. Yet in two, Finland and Sweden, it has led to a drastic revision of the previous neutrality policy and application for NATO membership. The same goes for a substantial rethinking of the German *Ostpolitik* and the revision of its key pillars after the restart of Russian intervention in Ukraine in February 2022.

Third, after 9/11 the bulk of the critical studies literature was aimed at blaming the neoliberal order for deviation from normative instruments of security governance. Some Western governments were accused of extra-judicial practices of confinement and incarceration, for turning a blind eye to hundreds of thousands of refugees trying to physically reach Europe, as well as for establishing ubiquitous systems of surveillance and control, particularly enhanced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nowadays, after the restart of Russian aggression in Ukraine, it has turned out that the same countries that for decades were accused of transgressions against democracy are the frontrunners of defending and protecting democracy against the dictatorial regime of the Kremlin. In other words, the major problems lie not within the Euro-Atlantic West, but outside of it, necessary criticism of problematic policies, for instance in relation to migration, notwithstanding. The acceptance of this fact requires serious readjustments in critical security studies, including a greater attention to the ability of illiberal regimes to challenge the foundations of the liberal international society.

Fourth, what critical security studies need to cope with is the growing extension of old concepts onto new security domains, along with interconnections between modalities of the extant concepts (terrorism, fascism, Nazism, geno-

cide, war crimes, etc.). In other words, concepts through which specific crises are constructed might be projected onto other security emergencies. The linkage between genocide and ecocide is illuminating at this juncture. For instance, the pandemic crisis is discussed within other yet related discursive frames. It is often narrated in a constitutive conjunction with the broadly understood ecological crisis triggered by the intrusive encroachment of humans into nature, with the ensuing consequences for human beings. This logic might be extended to the increasingly meaningful and intense debates of the Anthropocene and a variety of post-humanist and post-anthropocentric perspectives of the future of the globe.

This trend is paralleled by the augmenting variability of key security concepts: there are different states of exception/exceptionalities that unleash different effects, as well as different sovereignties: as Cynthia Weber (1998: 90) put it, the meaning of sovereignty can't be established definitionally and is always framed and reframed 'by the same expressions that are said to be its results'. These different constructions of crises through different securitisations and constructing different sovereignties may run in parallel or be closely intertwined. They may be reinforcing or contradicting each other. Either way, they call for an investigation of how they produce new social and political realities, a call that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reinforced.

Securitisation after 24 February 2022

Various scholars have analysed the interactions between different securitisations in the past. In Buzan and Wæver's analysis of regional security complexes, for instance, securitising moves between actors overlap and reinforce or undermine each other to form geographical spaces of security regions (Buzan & Wæver 2003). Others have analysed the assemblages of security technologies drawing on diverse security rationalities and interrelating different actors and normativities (Abrahamsen & Williams 2009). The literature has also pointed to the ways in which wars have generally relied on the coalescence of various securitisations in the presentation of the other as evil and the re-inscription of a self that needs to be defended (Wilhelmsen 2017). Rather than focusing on the effects of the polycrisis on the strategic options of actors such as the EU or the changing cleavages within European electorates (e.g. Zeitlin et al. 2019), we thus suggest focusing on the ways crises are discursively constructed through securitising moves in multiple societal domains, and how these constructions serve to legitimise specific policies and power relations. The question of how Russia, Ukraine and the EU securitise and de-securitise the previous crises is of high relevance in this regard.

Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine is an example of military securitisation as a case in which a range of securitisations are linked in an attempt to

reinforce each other. While states normally try to legitimate wars by reference to codified international law in addition to specific securitisations (Rapp 2022), Putin's justifications included a series of moral claims relying on the articulation of existential threats to a variety of referent objects, including Russia, the Russian-speaking people in Ukraine and world peace. He has thus invoked NATO or US expansionism, atrocities in Donbas, Nazism in the Ukrainian government as well as the deteriorating values of Western liberalism against which one must fight. Ukraine, along with the Baltic states and Poland, counter-securitised Russia as a terrorist state and as a source of troubles in European energy markets, as well as of the food crisis of a global scale.

Thus, while the linkages between securitisations and their instrumentalisation to back up power structures and reconstruct identities are not new, these processes come to the fore in relation to the Russian invasion in Ukraine in the context of the multiple crises that we have identified above. The ways in which the securitisation of threats has reinforced some yet de-securitised others is therefore of particular interest. At the same time, one would expect the inter-linking of securitisations to lead to a central overall war aim. Yet, this is a war without clearly defined goals, a sequence of different securitisations with different threats and referent objects, which do not clearly build on each other. As a Russian author claimed, Russian foreign policy is a chain of wars, crimes and impunity (Cherkasov 2023).

Russia has tried to capitalise on the legacies of the war on terror, claiming that the Ukrainian government committed terrorist acts against Russian forces. Likewise, we have seen Putin indirectly invoking arguments resembling the Responsibility to Protect and thus the human security discourse it builds on in his legitimisation of the invasion by reference to supposed atrocities on Russian speakers in Ukraine. The Kremlin was also portraying the mass scale migration from Ukraine to EU member states as a continuation of the 2015 migration crisis that became a heavy burden to host economies. When it comes to the energy crisis, Moscow de-securitised its role in its emergence by claiming that the deficit and high prices of energy resources are outcomes of the EU's Green Deal policy and sanctions against Russia. At the same time, by restarting the war in Ukraine, Russia de-securitised the Covid-19 pandemic by discarding its malign effects on Russian society, from demography to finances and economy.

In this context the concept of securitisation in its multiple variations allows us to capture these processes of constructing crises, as their articulation invokes existential threats in different domains and to different degrees. We generally agree that the centre of gravity in crisis management policies is gradually shifting from the state as a singular centre of authority and sovereign power, to more dispersed 'techniques of government' (and therefore also a dispersed exercise of power/au-

thority). While Russia's war in Ukraine may have reinforced the importance of state actors and the military sector, it is as yet too early to assess whether this alters the long-standing trend towards dispersion of functions and competences – it may be the desperate last-ditch attempt of a fading imperial state to stop the tide or the re-assertion of traditional geopolitics, a move from progressive to regressive securitisation, in the terms developed by Thomas Diez in his contribution.

Proliferation of insecurities: Political narratives

As argued above, the notion of polycrisis implies that we live in times of multiple crises: a recent health crisis provoked by Covid-19, an environmental crisis as a consequence of climate change, a succession of financial crises, a crisis of democracy in the light of strengthened authoritarianism and populism, a migration crisis and a new version of the East–West geopolitical divide exemplified by the drastic deterioration of the EU's and NATO's relations with an increasingly self-assertive and aggressive Russia supported by China. Some contributors to this special issue discuss how critical security studies adjust to the proliferation of multiple crises that often intersect and mix up with one another. The juxtaposition of different security threats allows us to find policy areas where they overlap and intermingle. For example, the disastrous economic effects of Russia's war against Ukraine are juxtaposed with the ruinous consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Makarychev and Romashko's article in this issue discusses how three recent crises in Russia's relations with the EU – the harsh reaction from Brussels and many European national capitals to the imprisonment of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, the border lockdown during the pandemic and the war in Ukraine – might be analysed from the viewpoint of normativity, geopolitics and governmentality. They show how these logics relate to each other and produce both securitising and desecuritising effects.

Therefore, crises are increasingly discussed as multifaceted and hybrid emergencies, sometimes lacking a dominant logic. A good illustration is Alexander Etkind's (2023) approach to Russia's war in Ukraine: 'The age of climate change and digital work—the Anthropocene—has put Russia's oil and gas trading in mortal danger. . . . The Russian invasion of Ukraine is an imperialist war, but the purpose is not to conquer new colonies in search of new commodities. It is to force the old colonial trade on its customers'. Likewise, Russia's invasion, just as other wars, e.g. in Yemen, are directly related to energy and climate security. Three different migration crises – the mass-scale influx of Syrian refugees in 2015, the weaponisation of migrants by the Lukashenka regime on the borders with EU member states in 2020 and the inflow of millions of Ukrainians into Europe in 2022 – are often compared with each other, thus spurring discussions of a nexus between people's mobility and security.

The phenomenal multiplication of crises, one after another, makes us think of them not as separate events, but as different insecurities whose elements are explicitly or implicitly interconnected. Thus, 9/11 and the ensuing war on terror ended up with the military intervention in Iraq that the Kremlin used as a pretext for legitimising Russia's interferences in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine since 2014. In its turn, the escalation of Russia's offensive against Ukraine in 2022 provoked a bunch of related emergencies. One is the grain supply crisis that severely affected global food markets (Behnassi & El Haiba 2022); another is the mass-scale influx of Ukrainian war refugees in Europe; yet another is the challenge of rising energy prices. Potentially disastrous environmental consequences of a probable – intentional or unintended – incident in the Russia-occupied nuclear station in Zaporizhzhia makes this list even more eerie.

The fact that Russia started preparing to attack Ukraine against the background of the continuing pandemic makes connections between crises even more entangled, and opens an ample space for a range of interpretations. May we assume that Putin's aggressive inclinations were to some extent fostered by his lengthy isolation from the public starting from spring 2020? Or, perhaps, another factor to be taken into account was Putin's fear of losing power as an effect of a relative decentralisation within the governmental apparatus he unleashed during the anti-pandemic crisis management? Was the military interference proof of his prioritisation of militaristic geopolitics over the domestic biopolitics of fighting Covid-19? Or – alternatively – was the decision to intervene in the neighbouring country boosted by Putin's misperception of the inherently declining West that refuses to accept Russia 'rising from its knees' as an equal and indispensable partner? All these questions point to the importance of understanding hierarchies of different securities and insecurities, discursively constructed and politically instrumentalised, as well as the ways in which they build upon, reinforce or undermine each other.

Another two crises interlink with Russia's war on Ukraine. One is the crisis of democratic governance in many Western countries exemplified by the rise of anti-establishment parties. The Kremlin has supported such parties both through direct financial aid as well as personal support and trolling in social media (Butt & Byman 2020; Futàk-Campbell 2020; Weiss 2020). It is likely that Putin's expectation was that their influence on public debates in reaction to the attack on Ukraine would have been much stronger than it turned out to be. Even if this was a miscalculation, countries such as Germany have seen a collusion of the far left and right in joint demonstrations articulating securitising moves against Western escalations of the war rather than Russia as the aggressor (Assheuer 2023).

Secondly, the domestic crisis in Belarus in the aftermath of the rigged presidential election on 9 August 2020, which demonstrated the internal weakness

of his personalistic regime, spurred Aliaksandr Lukashenka's gradual submission to Moscow. This became an additional factor for Ukraine's military insecurity, since Ukrainian territory was directly attacked by Russian military units located in Belarus (Edelman, Kobets & Kramer 2023). In a broader sense, confrontational references to the Euro-Atlantic international order are constitutive for the narrative of Lukashenka's subaltern dictatorship. Thus, harsh European reaction to the escalation of political repressions in Belarus was one of the triggers that inspired Lukashenka to 'weaponize' migrants in summer 2021 (Kliem 2021).

The crisis directly affected Belarus' relations with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia and by default with the EU and NATO. In constructing the linkages between his anti-EU stand and weaponisation of migration, the Belarusian dictator was maneuvering between two logics. One was an attempt to connect the war in Donbas – provoked, in Lukashenka's mind, by Ukraine acting on behalf of the West – with the flow of displaced persons from eastern Ukraine who in 2014 found a safe haven in Belarus instead of moving further to Europe. Another logic was bent on linking the artificially staged migration crisis with the EU's sanction policy due to which the EU failed to finalise the construction of facilities for migrants on the Belarusian side of the border, as stipulated by the readmission agreement between Minsk and Brussels of June 2020. Both roads lead in the same direction: Lukashenka explicitly securitised Europe (both the EU and the UK), legitimising a possible asymmetric reciprocation from his side.

Despite the apparent interconnections between these crises, their juxtaposition and linkages in various narratives and images are far from mechanical and self-evident. Each connection is discursively constructed and meant to corroborate a certain argument or political position. For example, as seen from a leftist perspective – largely supported by mainstream discourses in the global South – the alignment of several insecurities, from the financial crisis to Russia's military revolt against the dominance of the Euro-Atlantic West, attests to the gradual collapse of the liberal international order in general and neoliberalism as its conceptual underpinning in particular: 'the financial crisis of 2008, Brexit, and Trump are said to mark a new chapter of global history in which illiberalism and nationalism are in the ascendant' (Specter 2022: 1). Meanwhile, right-wing parties have often tried to divert attention from Russian aggression and instead emphasised the challenge to energy security and the social implications of an energy crisis, legitimising their own calls for strengthening national autonomy or arguing against sanctions (Ivaldi & Zankina 2023).

It is due to this variety of logics behind the multiple linkages and interconnections between securitisations and crises that the contributions to this special issue analyse how the discursive constructions and perceptions of different

crises differ or are related to each other, and what their political significance is. For example, the discursive frames of the war on terror, with its focus on exceptionality and different categorisations of human lives, might be projected onto narratives about refugees and Covid-19. Equally important is to look at how the coronavirus pandemic, with its border lockdowns and restrictions of people's mobility, affected the extant geopolitical frames of foreign policy, or how the climate change debate is correlated with the new biopolitical conceptualisations of global health and resilience.

A Multi-disciplinary approach to the securitisation of crises

Against this background, a number of more specific questions pop up: Who are the driving agents of constructing crises, the securitising actors? To what extent do they differ between crises and different spaces of securitisation? How is the construction of different crises interrelated, or are there marked differences between these processes depending on national identities or other differentiating factors? Which actors and governmental practices are legitimised by the different constructions of crises? In particular, given that the crises mentioned may all be described as transnational, what is the role ascribed to inter- and transnational actors such as regional organisations? How do institutions function during crises, and why do some of them lose their 'voice', or agency in the time of exception (International Organization of Migration in the course of the refugee crisis, most regional organisations – such as the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Barents-Euro Arctic Council, etc. – during the pandemic)? How do material factors and cultural processes interact in the construction of crises? To what extent does the materiality of crises have an impact on its societal construction? Of particular importance at this juncture is the role of minorities in shaping crisis-ridden perceptions and narratives. What is the role of images, memories and historical narratives in crises narratives? How do securitising actors draw on such discursive elements, and to what extent are they transformed in the process?

As we have indicated in our references throughout this brief introduction, the contributions to this special issue engage with these questions from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and mutually reinforcing perspectives – from semiotics and critical discourse analysis, from political science and media studies. In our view, it is only through mutual engagement with a variety of research vistas that we can come to capture the multi-faceted ways in which securitisation processes construct crises. Most of the papers collected for this special issue are case-specific, but are juxtaposed with other global and regional crises that challenge the structural foundations of the liberal international order and trigger meaningful transformation within it. Although most of the articles focus

on a specific crisis the EU has to face, each of the authors deploys their analysis in a broader context encompassing different dimensions of securitisation and desecuritisation, while all of the contributions include the Corona crisis or the war in Ukraine in their analyses.

This collection of articles demonstrates different figurations of crises, emergencies and states of exception as discursive phenomena. With all the undeniable materiality and physicality of crises, their meanings are constructed and framed through narratives, speech acts and other forms of public debate. For example, the mass influx of refugees might be qualified as a security threat, a risk factor or as a humanitarian issue. Disruptions in energy markets might be discussed as pertaining to the domain of energy security or as an economic problem. Maritime security might be approached as a geopolitical issue or as a matter of transportation safety, and so on.

This variety of perspectives leaves ample room for governmentalisation of crises, either within security paradigm (as demonstrated by Yulia Kurnyshova's analysis of the idea of resilience in the war-torn Ukraine), or as a part of desecuritized policy moves and initiatives (see Alina Jašina-Schäfer's article). The former case implies that the governmentality of resilience is more a strategy of physical survival than of victory over the aggressor, and includes a strong component of othering, exclusion and distinction between the security perpetrator and its victims. The latter case operates within a paradigm of societal inclusion that is decoupled from divisive geopolitical conflicts.

The various forms of securitisation and de-securitisation matter, since it is discourses that define whether the multiplication of threats and risks results in a sense of despair and fatigue, or on the contrary consolidates societies and produce robust anti-crisis policies. Within the panoply of crises and insecurities, a major distinction should be drawn between those with blurred threat-producing agency (such as COVID-19), and those clearly masterminded by a well identifiable international actor (Russia's invasion in Ukraine). In the latter case the concept of crisis needs a linguistic reformulation since in the Ukrainian context it resonates as implicitly denying or discarding Russia's full responsibility for the war and its atrocities.

Some articles of this special issue might be instrumental in further discussing interconnections between different crises. One of the most relevant questions in this regard is whether these connections are established analytically (as Thomas Diez does in the case of the pandemic and Russia's military intervention in Ukraine), or articulated as key elements of strategic narratives (as exemplified by multiple Volodymyr Zelensky speeches). From these different angles one may see how multiple securitisations of different crises interlink, differ, reinforce or undermine each other.



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