

Reviews

The Morality of Security: A Theory of Just Securitization, Rita Floyd (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 258 pp., cloth \$99.99, eBook \$80.

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In *The Morality of Security*, Rita Floyd sets out to develop a normative theory of securitization: a “Just Securitization Theory.” Drawing directly on insights from the just war tradition, Floyd outlines a set of criteria for determining whether, and in what circumstances, viewing and approaching particular issues as security threats is morally defensible. Utilizing a wide range of empirical illustrations—climate change, terrorism, migration, disease, and insurgency, among others—Floyd ultimately suggests that there are indeed contexts in which the emergency measures triggered by securitization are defensible, even if they only serve as relatively short-term responses to an existential threat.

The book develops Floyd’s earlier work on the securitization framework, including a number of journal articles and her previous monograph, *Security and the Environment: Securitisation Theory and US Environmental Security Policy* (2010). This earlier book is an exploration of the securitization of environmental threats in the United States. While the contribution of *The Morality of Security* is a more theoretical one, Floyd also aims to develop a set of criteria that policymakers and practitioners might embrace in order to ensure their practices will be morally defensible.

The Morality of Security proceeds from Floyd’s recognition of the increasing engagement of international relations scholarship with the relationship between security and ethics, and the ever-increasing application of the securitization framework in academic work. Indeed, she refers to the “veritable cottage industry of securitization studies” (p. 49). In the book, she aims to address three core questions: when can an issue be securitized?; how should securitization be conducted?; and how and when must securitization be reversed?

Floyd first provides an impressive account of the existing work on the relationship between security and ethics, distinguishing between approaches that conceive of security as a state of being and those that approach it as a set of social and political practices. She then outlines her conception of securitization, emphasizing the importance of exceptional measures enabled by securitization, and downplaying the role of audiences in endorsing attempts to securitize issues, at least compared to other accounts of securitization. In the remainder of the book, Floyd systematically outlines eleven key criteria that constitute just securitization, categorized as “just reason,” “just referent objects,” “just initiation of securitization,” “just conduct in securitization,” and “just termination of

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securitization.” As applied to Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, for example, she sets out to determine whether the threat is a genuine one and to whom, before outlining what would constitute an appropriate response to that threat and when those measures should be curtailed.

The direct and explicit invocation of scholarship in, and even criteria taken from, the just war tradition provides Floyd with a ready-made framework for outlining her own principles of “just securitization.” But this also ensures that many of the criticisms often leveled at the just war tradition—from the danger that it normalizes or even encourages war/securitization, to the challenges of genuinely specifying actors’ motives and navigating fluid and complex dynamics in practice—apply to her own framework as well. Indeed, the challenge is arguably even more acute for Floyd given that the implications of securitization are contested and will necessarily depend on the nature of the issue area and referent object. How do we develop a systematic account of what constitutes just securitization in practice, when the practices might feasibly extend, for example, from armed force, to geoengineering, to the provision of development assistance?

Floyd is right to note that her argument that a “just reason”—which she links to the presence of an *objective* existential threat—is needed for securitization to be permissible is likely to be troubling for some scholars working with the securitization framework. Indeed, to them, this argument will seem inconsistent with the spirit of a framework that was developed precisely to make sense of how security is given meaning through political and social processes rather than because it meets criteria developed by an analyst. If securitization is viewed as a framework for coming to

terms with the constructed nature of security, can we really talk about “real” or “objective” threats (pp. 77–79)? Some scholars might also push back on the marginal role for audience acceptance or the necessity of exceptional measures in Floyd’s account of securitization, but it is likely to be her account of “objective threat” that is seen as most controversial in potentially challenging the general spirit of the framework itself. What is clear, either way, is Floyd’s impressive familiarity with the core contours of the debate about the securitization framework and its application.

It is here, within the context of debates about securitization and desecuritization, that Floyd’s book makes the most substantive contribution to the literature. What is harder to accept is the claim implied in the first part of the book’s title and made directly in the conclusion that this book constitutes a “systematic normative theory of security” (p. 207). It does not, really. Rather, what it constitutes is a systematic normative theory of *securitization*. For those who are interested in the relationship between security and ethics, but who are skeptical of the securitization framework’s claims to capture something timeless or universal about the meaning of security or the way it works politically, much of the book’s analysis (when we should securitize or desecuritize, for example) will not speak directly to their research concerns.

Ultimately, it must be said that it is hard to imagine anyone finding themselves in agreement with all the claims made in this book, and there are many arguments advanced that will rile plenty. These range from Floyd’s claims that ecosystems and nonhuman species are only morally significant if they help meet basic human needs (p. 20); to her claims that “torture is sometimes morally permissible” (p. 170); to her

claims that “pacifism is out of touch with reality” (p. 72). And her distinction between “those who are morally wicked and those that are not” (p. 119) will surely cause some to flinch. But while a reader might desire gentler forms of critique, or the embrace of uncertainty or ambiguity, it is the author’s general rejection of equivocation that allows her to provide a clear and specific set of criteria for what makes securitization permissible. It certainly will not be everyone’s cup of tea, but Floyd leaves us in no doubt about where she stands on a range of issues, planting her “just securitization theory” flag firmly in the ground in the process.

With *The Morality of Security*, Floyd continues the work that has established her as an important—if sometimes blunt—voice in debates about securitization and the ethics associated with it. The book is provocative, and the scale of ambition associated with establishing criteria for when securitization is justifiable will likely make this book a

target for critique. But it is a pleasant change of pace to see a book in the broad tradition of critical security studies in which the author takes on the task of outlining and defending a set of normative and ethical standards and commitments, rather than restricting herself to challenging those of others. Floyd tackles head on the normative questions that the architects of the securitization framework have always been deeply concerned with. The result is a refreshing addition to the scholarship on the relationship between ethics and security that will be necessary reading for anyone working in the “cottage industry of securitization studies.”

—MATT McDONALD

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Dwelling in the Age of Climate Change: The Ethics of Adaptation, Elaine Kelly (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 224 pp., cloth \$110, paperback \$29.95.

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According to the fifth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, anthropogenic climate change is likely to cause significant human displacement in the coming decades as people scramble to cope with an intensification of natural disasters, increased warming, and the effects of drought on agricultural production. Additional concerns will include access to clean water, sea level rise, and competition over natural resources. But

while climate change-induced migration has received extensive analysis from political geographers, security experts, and others, it has been undertheorized by moral and political philosophers. Elaine Kelly’s book goes a long way toward redressing that imbalance of attention.

Granting asylum rights to climate refugees is going to become an increasingly pressing imperative, and there is an obvious moral case to be made—applying the