Introduction

Nearly 15 years after 9/11, whether or not migration is the subject of securitisation appears to be a question worth asking. Is the linkage between migration and security a stable and enduring feature of contemporary society and politics? Or is the assumption of migration’s securitisation misplaced and lacking the appropriate evidence? Some scholars have suggested that migration has, indeed, been addressed as a security issue in both the pre- and post-9/11 period (Huysmans 2006; Van Munster 2009). Others, by contrast, question whether it is appropriate to claim that migration has been securitised in a context marked by intensified concerns over terrorism (Boswell 2007a).

Christina Boswell (2007a) suggests that it would not do to simply presume the securitisation of migration, nor would it do to automatically assume that 9/11 led to an intensification of such processes. Rather, she claims that it is important to pay attention to institutional interests and cognitive factors conditioning processes of securitisation (or non-securitisation), if we are to better understand whether or not migration has become articulated and addressed as a security problem in a post-9/11 context. This chapter concurs with Boswell’s suggestion regarding the importance of unpacking processes of securitisation, rather than assuming their presence. However, it also suggests that her challenge to the claim that migration has been securitised post-9/11 falls short, because it fails to take on board some of the key insights of scholars in the field of critical security studies.

Rather than simply ask whether migration has or has not been securitised post-9/11, the chapter contends that it is more appropriate to pose this as a question regarding as to how far, in what ways, and with
what consequences migration been has securitised over the past 15 years and more. This can facilitate appreciation of the securitisation of migration, which is neither absent nor present in any straightforward way. By contrast with Boswell, this chapter thus argues that raising these broader questions can help us to develop appreciation of securitisation as an absent presence in the contemporary European context.

**An entrenched divide**

A key argument of this chapter is that divergent responses to the question of whether or not migration is securitised not only reflects divergent conceptualisations of securitisation, but also the entrenchment of a disciplinary divide between scholars of migration studies and scholars of critical security studies. In order to develop such an argument, the analysis examines key dimensions of Boswell’s argument regarding the absence of securitisation, in order to set out some of the elements of critical security studies that she appears to overlook.

Boswell argues that, although there is evidence of the securitisation of migration in the United States, this is not the case in the European context (2007a: 590). Specifically, she argues that there is no evidence of a direct causal linkage between migration and terrorism at the level of political discourse or rhetoric in the European context, and that at the level of practice, there is evidence of the transportation of migration control instruments into anti-terrorism practice, but not of the transportation of anti-terrorism practices into the field of migration control (Ibid.). Drawing on neo-institutionalism and systems theory, she argues that there is no evidence that 9/11 led to the securitisation of migration. This, she suggests, is a finding that is demonstrative of the deficiencies of scholarship in the field of critical security studies.

We will come back later in this chapter to consider some of the assumptions that Boswell imports through her reading of critical security studies as primarily exploring how ‘public discourse can legitimise security practices’ (Ibid.). For now, however, it is worthwhile reflecting on the broader academic context within which her intervention is situated. In particular, this chapter will emphasise the significance of a series of differences, which arguably suggest an entrenched divide between scholars of migration policy and critical security studies scholars. This divide can be understood primarily as reflecting the different emphasis or focus of each body of literature, which also reflects a different political orientation and a different account of what serves as an important