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Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics

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The theory of "securitization" developed by the Copenhagen School provides one of the most innovative, productive, and yet controversial avenues of research in contemporary security studies. This article provides an assessment of the foundations of this approach and its limitations, as well as its significance for broader areas of International Relations theory. Locating securitization theory within the context of both classical Realism influenced by Carl Schmitt, and current work on constructivist ethics, it argues that while the Copenhagen School is largely immune from the most common criticisms leveled against it, the increasing impact of televisual communication in security relations provides a fundamental challenge for understanding the processes and institutions involved in securitization, and for the political ethics advocated by the Copenhagen School.

Over the past decade, the field of security studies has become one of the most dynamic and contested areas in International Relations. In particular, it has become perhaps the primary forum in which broadly social constructivist approaches have challenged traditional—largely Realist and neoRealist—theories on their "home turf," the area in which some of the most vibrant new approaches to the analysis of international politics are being developed, and the realm in which some of the most engaged theoretical debates are taking place.[1] Among the most prominent and influential of these new approaches is the theory of "securitization" developed by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and their collaborators, a body of work that has now come to be called the "Copenhagen School."[2] While sometimes portrayed as a distinctively "European" contribution to these debates over the social construction of security,[3] securitization theory has developed a broad and powerful research agenda of significance across the field of security studies, constituting, in the eyes of one supportive commentator, "possibly the most thorough and continuous exploration of the significance and implications of a widening security agenda for security studies"(Huysmans, 1997:186).

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[1] For example, Katzenstein (1996); see also the overview in Hopf (1998).

[2] The key texts are Wæver et al. (1993), Wæver (1995), and Buzan et al. (1998); the approach is extended in Buzan and Wæver (forthcoming, 2003).

[3] Indeed, the relationship between "European" and "American" theoretical positions is interestingly explored by Wæver (1999). One of the goals of this paper is to show how these divergences can be brought into dialogue, and to offset an unproductive dichotomization.

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Of course praise rarely lacks the company of criticism, and it is a mark of the vitality of the research agenda put forward by the Copenhagen School that it has attracted a substantial, varied, and increasing range of criticism. Securitization theory has been branded as "sociologically untenable" (McSweeny, 1996; 1999), as "encapsulating several questionable assumptions" (Knudsen, 2001: 358), as at best morally ambivalent, and at worst verging on politically irresponsible (Erikson, 1999). Indeed, one rationalist critic has even been moved to wonder if the forms of social constructivism with which the Copenhagen School has often been associated raise the old suspicion that there is something "rotten in the state of Denmark" (Moravscik, 1999).

This paper seeks to examine and clarify the contribution that the Copenhagen School and its theory of securitization make to the analysis of contemporary security practices, and to examine its relationship to the development of International Relations theory more broadly. The argument proceeds in three stages. First, I argue that while the Copenhagen School adopts a form of social constructivism, its roots lie also within the Realist tradition. In particular, its central concept of "securitization" bears the marks of an engagement with the radical form of realpolitik developed in the 1920s and 1930s by Carl Schmitt, and which provided a crucial background for the thinking of postwar Realists such as Hans Morgenthau. While I do not want to suggest that the Copenhagen School is in any way connected with the authoritarian politics that Schmitt is often associated with—indeed, as I hope to show, quite the opposite is the case—a recognition of the analytic and intellectual legacy is crucial in apprehending the bases of securitization theory.

Second, I hold that an awareness of this lineage is also essential in understanding the political and ethical stance of the Copenhagen School. The core claim of securitization theory—that security must be understood as a "speech- act"—is not only a sociological and explanatory tenet. As a speech-act, securitization is located with the realm of political argument and discursive legitimation, and security practices are thus susceptible to criticism and transformation. In this way, securitization theory is linked directly to recent explorations of the role of argument, action, and ethics in constructivist theories of International Relations (Risse, 2000). Once these factors are taken into account, securitization theory is largely immune from the most common criticisms leveled against it.

In the final section of the paper, however, I argue that the Copenhagen School's narrow focus on speech-acts as the key form of communicative action in security practices must confront the fact that contemporary political communication is increasingly embedded within televisual images. The increasing impact of televisual images and their global reach poses challenges for the Copenhagen School both at the level of its sociological claims and in terms of its political ethics. As political communication becomes increasingly entwined with the production and transmission of visual images, the processes of securitization take on forms, dynamics, and institutional linkages that cannot be fully assessed by focusing on the speech-act alone. Accordingly, securitization theory must develop a broader understanding of the mediums, structures, and institutions, of contemporary political communication if it is to address adequately questions of both empirical explanation and ethical appraisal in security practices.

Securitization Theory

Debates over the nature and meaning of "security" have become the focus of renewed controversy in security studies.[4] The field has been challenged to consider

[4] For surveys see Krause and Williams (1996), Smith (1999), and Barnett (2000). That these themes represent a "revival" of much older controversies can be seen by referring back to the work of Arnold Wolfers on "national security as an ambiguous symbol" (1962: ch. 10), a figure oft-cited by the Copenhagen School.

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questions surrounding the "broadening" of its agenda to include threats beyond the narrow rubric of state and military security, and to confront the claim that this agenda must also be "deepened" to include the security concerns of actors ranging from individuals and sub-state groups (often now formulated under the rubric of "human security") to global concerns such as the environment that have often been marginalized within a traditional state-centric and military conception. While securitization theory must be seen in the context of the shifting agendas of security, and as part of the broader theoretical movement to study the social construction of security,[5] the Copenhagen School has developed a distinctive position within these debates. In securitization theory, "security" is treated not as an objective condition but as the outcome of a specific social process: the social construction of security issues (who or what is being secured, and from what) is analyzed by examining the "securitizing speech-acts" through which threats become represented and recognized. Issues become "securitized," treated as security issues, through these speech-acts which do not simply describe an existing security situation, but bring it into being *as* a security situation by successfully representing it as such. As Wæver summarizes it:

> What then *is* security? With the help of language theory, 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." (1995:55).

This stance allows the Copenhagen School to argue simultaneously for both an expansion and a limitation of the security agenda and its analysis. On the one hand, treating security as a speech-act provides, in principle, for an almost indefinite expansion of the security agenda. Not only is the realm of possible threats enlarged, but the actors or objects that are threatened (what are termed the "referent objects" of security) can be extended to include actors and objects well beyond the military security of the territorial state. Accordingly, the Copenhagen School has argued that security can usefully be viewed as comprising five "sectors," each with their particular referent object and threat agenda (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998).[6] In the "military" sector, for example, the referent object is the *territorial* integrity of the state, and the threats are overwhelmingly defined in external, military terms. In the "political" sector, by contrast, what is at stake is the *legitimacy* of a governmental authority, and the relevant threats can be ideological and sub-state, leading to security situations in which state authorities are threatened by elements of their own societies, and where states can become the primary threat to their own societies. Even further from an exclusively military-territorial focus is the concept of "societal" security, in which the identity of a group is presented as threatened by dynamics as diverse as cultural flows, economic integration, or population movements.

Conversely, while treating security as a speech-act allows a remarkable broadening of analysis, securitization theory seeks also to limit the security agenda. Security, the Copenhagen School argues, is not synonymous with "harm" or with the avoidance of whatever else might be deemed malign or damaging (Buzan et al., 1998:2–5, 203–12). As a speech-act, securitization has a specific structure which in practice limits the theoretically unlimited nature of "security." These constraints

[5] See, e.g., Katzenstein (1996). The Copenhagen School also builds centrally on Buzan's early work on the expansion of the security agenda (1991).

[6] See Buzan et al. (1998). The possibility of a sixth, sacred or religious, sector has recently been advanced in Bagge Lausten and Wæver (2000).

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operate along three lines. First, while the securitization process is in principle completely open (any "securitizing actor" can attempt to securitize any issue and referent object), in practice it is structured by the differential capacity of actors to make socially effective claims about threats, by the forms in which these claims can be made in order to be recognized and accepted as convincing by the relevant audience, and by the empirical factors or situations to which these actors can make reference. Not all claims are socially effective, and not all actors are in equally powerful positions to make them. This means, as Buzan and Wæver put it, that the "Conditions for a successful speech-act fall into two categories: (1) the internal, linguistic-grammatical—to follow the rules of the act (or, as Austin argues, accepted conventional procedures must exist, and the act has to be executed according to these procedures); and (2) the external, contextual and social—to hold a position from which the act can be made ('The particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked')" (Buzan et al., 1998:32). The claims that are likely to be effective, the forms in which they can be made, the objects to which they refer, and the social positions from which they can effectively be spoken are usually deeply "sedimented" (rhetorically and discursively, culturally, and institutionally) and structured in ways that make securitizations somewhat predictable and thus subject to probabilistic analysis (Wæver, 2000)—and not wholly open and expandable. Finally, while empirical contexts and claims cannot in this view ultimately determine what are taken as security issues or threats, they provide crucial resources and referents upon which actors can draw in attempting to securitize a given issue.

At one level the Copenhagen School thus stands clearly within a broadly constructivist position.[7] Drawing upon the understanding of speech-acts developed by Austin and Searle which has been so influential in the development of constructivism in International Relations,[8] and sharing a number of the insights of neo-institutionalism, it examines security practices as specific forms of social construction, and securitization as a particular kind of social accomplishment. However, there is a further, less obvious, but equally powerful theoretical influence at work in securitization theory that sets it considerably apart from mainstream constructivism. For the Copenhagen School, "security" is not just any kind of speech-act, not just any form of social construction or accomplishment. It is a specific kind of act: what makes a particular speech-act a specifically "security" act—a "securitization"—is its casting of the issue as one of an "existential threat," which calls for extraordinary measures beyond the routines and norms of everyday politics. As they put it: "The distinguishing feature of securitization is a specific rhetorical structure. … That quality is the staging of existential issues in politics to lift them above politics. In security discourse, an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority; thus by labeling it as *security* an agent claims a need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means"(Buzan et al., 1998:26). Security issues cannot be reduced to the existence of objective possibilities of harm. Claims about security and threats are made politically efficacious through the authoritative declaration of an "existential threat" to the object concerned, and through their acceptance as "security issues" in these terms by a relevant audience. A successful securitization, it is thus argued, "has three components (or steps): existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules" (Buzan et al., 1998:26).

This aspect of securitization cannot be traced solely to speech-act theory. Indeed its roots lie not in contemporary constructivism, but in a much older Realist

[7] Indeed, Buzan and Wæver have explicitly declared that their understanding of security is "constructivist all the way down"(1997:245).

[8] In connection, see the treatment of speech-act theory in Wendt (1999).

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tradition, a tradition emanating from the thinking of the German jurist and political theorist Carl Schmitt. After a long period of obscurity, the influence of Schmitt on postwar Realism—and particularly on the thinking of Hans Morgenthau—is now becoming increasingly acknowledged and appreciated.[9] Although it is not possible to trace Schmitt's impact on the development of Realism fully in this context, I would like to suggest that its influence is vital in the understanding of a distinctive vision of security developed by the Copenhagen School. To be clear, I do not want to suggest that the Copenhagen School's theory of securitization is wholly "Schmittian," and I certainly do not want to imply that it is implicated in the authoritarian politics with which Schmitt (sometimes called the "crown jurist of the Nazi Party") is often associated.[10] However, I do want to argue that the specificity of "security" as a particular *kind* of speech-act in the work of the Copenhagen School is underpinned by an understanding of the politics of enmity, decision, and emergency which has deep roots in Schmitt's understanding of political order. The focus on "existential threats" as the essence of security echoes Schmitt's views on the specificity of "politics" as defined by exclusion and enmity. Equally, the definition of securitization as placing an issue "beyond normal politics," that is, beyond public debate, finds clear resonance in Schmitt's stress on decision and the politics of emergency.[11] Indeed, it might even be tempting to say that in the Copenhagen School the concept of "security" plays a role almost identical to that which Schmitt defined as his concept of "the political."

Securitization and the Schmittian Legacy

For Schmitt, the specificity of politics, what he terms "the political" cannot be inferred from the specific substantive content of any given issue. Whether issues are viewed as "political" or "nonpolitical" (treated instead as "economic," or "religious," for example) cannot be determined from the nature of the issues themselves—a fact amply demonstrated by the ways in which these issues have moved from being political to nonpolitical, and back again, throughout history (1996 [1932]:19–27).[12] In the face of this indeterminacy, Schmitt suggests that the nature of the concept of the political is not to be found in the issues themselves, but in a particular way of relating to them. What makes an issue "political" is the

[9] Neither Schmitt's thought or its influence can be discussed in detail here, particularly in regard to his complex relationship to Morgenthau. I pursue it further in Williams (forthcoming). For a superb exploration see Scheuerman (1999: 225–51). A very good, broad discussion in the context of international law is provided by Koskenniemmi (2001: 413–509). The connection is discussed biographically in Frei (2001); also useful are the briefer comments in McCormick (1997: 272–75). In International Relations, the issues are treated in different ways by Honig (1996) and Pichler (1998). An excellent discussion with clear connections to the themes considered here is Huysmans (1998). Morgenthau's own (harsh) comments on Schmitt can be found in Morgenthau (1977:16). Finally, also interesting is Charles Jones's suggestive—if tentative—linkage between Schmitt's ideas, particularly his *Political Romanticism*, and the thinking of E. H. Carr (Jones, 1998:160–63), though unlike in the case of Morgenthau there is little evidence of any direct connection here.

[10] For broader discussions of Schmitt's thinking in addition to those already cited, see Christi (1998), Dyzenhaus (1997), and Mouffe (1999).

[11] Again, see also the astute exploration of these links in Huysmans (1998).

[12] That Schmitt's understanding of the specificity of politics had a profound influence on Morgenthau can be seen clearly in his 1933 work on the "concept of politics" which contains an extended critical discussion of Schmitt and his "concept of the political." There, in partial agreement with Schmitt, Morgenthau argues that, "We must conclude that it is impossible to establish any distinction between political and non-political questions based on their subject matter, seeing that the notion of politics is not necessarily inherent in certain particular subject matter, just as it is not necessarily absent from other particular subject matters" ["Nous devons conlure qu'il iest impossible d'etablir une distinction, d'apres leur object, entre les questions politiques et nonpolitiques, etant donne que la notion du politique n'est pas necessairement inherente a certain objects determines, comme elle n'est pas necessairement absent d'autres objects determines"(1933: 32)]. My thanks to Thomas Jorgensen for his help with elements of this translation. Both Scheuerman and Koskenniemmi have clearly demonstrated that many of Morgenthau's early works bear the clear marks of his extended engagement with Schmitt's ideas.

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particularly *intense* relationship that actors feel toward it.[13] In its fullest form this intensification yields an absolute divide between friend and enemy in relation to a (any) given issue. "The political," as he puts it, "is the most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend-enemy grouping" (29). Or, as he phrases it even more starkly: "Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms itself into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings according to friend and enemy" (37).

It is this aspect of Schmitt's thinking that informs the Copenhagen School's formulation of "security" as a phenomenon that is concretely indeterminate and yet *formally* specific: constituted by a particular kind of speech-act. Just as for Schmitt it is the particularly intense relationship to an issue, rather than its intrinsic nature, that determines whether it is "political," for the Copenhagen School it is precisely this process (and indeterminacy) that defines the process of "securitization." Any issue is capable of securitization if it can be intensified to the point where it is presented and accepted as an "existential threat." This is also where Wæver draws the link between securitization theory and what he calls the "classical" tradition of thinking about security (and the classical Realist tradition in International Relations). In the classical tradition of "national security," he argues, the focus was on the *survival* of the state, a vision which reached its apex in the Clausewitzian logic of war as an ultimate and in principle unlimited struggle of wills. For Wæver, it is this focus on survival—on existential threats, situations of maximum danger, potentially unlimited struggle and sacrifice that needs to be both retained from the classical tradition and yet severed from its too-confining association with the security of the state. As he puts it, the goal is to "retain the specific quality characterizing security problems: urgency; state power claiming the legitimate use of extraordinary means; a threat seen as potentially undercutting sovereignty, thereby preventing the political 'we' from dealing with any other questions. With this approach it is possible that any sector, at any particular time, might be the most important focus for concerns about threats, vulnerabilities, and defense" (Wæver, 1995:51–22). In this way, the "logic" of security can be broadened—pried loose from too narrow a state-centrism and applied to other referent objects—without losing its *conceptual* specificity. The theoretical mechanism that makes this possible is the identification of "security" with a logic of existential threat and extreme necessity, a specificity that mirrors the intense condition of existential division, of friendship and enmity, that constitutes Schmitt's concept of the political.

A second aspect of Schmitt's thinking of particular importance in relation to the theory of securitization involves the ways in which his understanding of the concept of the political as defined by the relationship between friend and enemy is related to his decisionist theory of sovereignty. For Schmitt, sovereignty is defined by the act of *decision*, by the capacity to definitively decide contested legal or normative disputes within the state, and particularly to decide when a threat to the prevailing political order has reached a point where it constitutes an "emergency" and requires the suspension of normal rules and procedures so that the political order itself can be preserved. These are the situations that Schmitt characterizes as the "exception," and as he puts it in a characteristically pithy phrase, "Sovereign is he who decides upon the exception" (1985 [1922]:5).

The exception cannot, for Schmitt, be determined by prior rules that would stipulate what constitutes a true emergency. In such cases, a *decision* must be made,

[13] It has been argued that Schmitt's modification of his theory of the friend–enemy relation in the second edition of *The Concept of the Political* to include the concept of "intensification" was a direct (and, much to Morgenthau's irritation, unattributed) result of his engagement with Morgenthau's initial work on international law. See Scheuerman (1999:229–34, 258); Frei (2001:161); and Koskenniemmi (2001: 440–43).

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and as he puts it: "The precise details of an emergency cannot be anticipated, nor can one spell out what may take place in such a case, especially when it is truly a matter of an extreme emergency and of how it is to be eliminated" (1985 [1922]: 6–7). It is in such a case that the true nature of sovereignty is revealed.[14] The sovereign "decides whether there is to be an extreme emergency as well as what must be done to eliminate it. Although he stands outside the normally valid legal system, he nevertheless belongs to it, for it is he who must decide whether the constitution needs to be suspended in its entirety"(7). By contrast, the everyday situation of "normal" politics depends upon the reverse: "For a legal order to make sense, a normal situation must exist, and he is sovereign who definitively decides whether this normal situation actually exists" (13).

In Schmitt's analysis, all rule-bound orders (such as legal systems) depend ultimately upon a capacity for decision that itself stands outside of the given structure of rules. In his criticisms of legal positivism, for example, he argues that the application of any rule requires the existence of a prior rule which determines which particular rules are to apply to which particular instance. This rule structure is inherently indeterminate: no rule can cover definitively all of the different instances to which different rules might apply. At some level, there must simply be a *decision* (a Judgment) on this matter. To say that this decision must itself be governed by rules is only to defer the problem, for even if it were itself determined by a prior set of rules, these rules themselves would require adjudication and decision. If the process were not to go on infinitely, a position of final decision, itself undetermined by rules, must exist.[15]

It is in the realm of emergency that the essence of sovereignty as decision is most clearly illustrated. Here, Schmitt's claim that the essence of sovereignty lies in the act of decision merges powerfully with his famous vision of "the concept of the political." For Schmitt, the essence of politics—what he terms "the political"—lies in the relationship between friend and enemy, and in the possibility of mortal conflict. Friendship and enmity provide the foundational structure of allegiance, of solidarity, that underpin the capacity for effective decision. The commonality of friendship—and the limits prescribed by enmity—define the parameters within which values can be decided upon and the decisions of a "sovereign" actor or institution accepted by the society at large. Such a commonality, ultimately, is inextricable from enmity—from a group that is "not us"—and from the possibility of life and death struggle with that enemy. For Schmitt, the politics of the enemy are not normative.[16] They represent the essence of politics in itself. In principle, individuals can come together to form a group around any particular interest, but they will only become properly "political" if they enter into a friend–enemy relationship where the survival of the group and its ultimate willingness to engage in mortal struggle is at stake. "The political enemy," he argues,

> need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specifically intense way, existentially something different

[14] This position is clearly echoed in Morgenthau's analysis of sovereignty in *Politics Among Nations* (1967: 299–317).

[15] "Therein resides the essence of the state's sovereignty, which must be juristically defined correctly, not as the monopoly to coerce or to rule, but as the monopoly to decide" (Schmitt, 1985 [1922]:13).

[16] It must be noted—albeit briefly in this context—that there is a key ambiguity here, for while Schmitt often presents the concept of the political as simply "objective" it has often been argued that his vision of it is actually underpinned by a vitalistic commitment to violence and enmity as essential to the preservation of a "full" human life in opposition to the neutralization and de-politicization of liberal modernity. On Schmitt as an exponent of a conservative vitalism see Wolin (1992). For an excellent discussion in International Relations and securitization theory see Huysmans (1998).

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> and alien, so that in extreme cases conflicts with him are possible. These can neither be decided by a previously determined general norm nor by the judgement of a disinterested and therefore neutral third party. (1996 [1932]:27)

The affinity between this understanding of "the concept of the political" and Schmitt's decisionist theory of sovereignty is clear. The capacity for decision is underpinned —indeed almost defined—by its ability to be supported and obeyed by a given political grouping.[17] The fundamental division of friend and enemy and the capacity for authoritative decision are mutually supportive. A sovereign order—quite literally sovereignty in itself—is defined by the existence of such a center of decision and the acceptance of its decisions by the relevant group. For Schmitt, a "people" only becomes "properly political" when it is defined by the capacity for decision, and decision is ultimately underlain by the division between friend and enemy, along with the fear and "real possibility" of conflict and death that this encounter entails. Both the political and the decisionist vision of sovereignty are defined by the existence of enemies and the capability for setting aside existing norms in the name of preserving the normative and social order. In Schmitt's view, all functioning sovereignties are founded on this principle and capacity; those that do not possess it are unlikely to survive.[18]

It is important at this point to reiterate that I am not suggesting that the Copenhagen School follow Schmitt uncritically down the road to the authoritarian and conflictual political conclusions that he is often accused of drawing. For reasons that I will discuss in a moment, they depart from Schmitt at crucial junctures with important political consequences. However, it is equally clear that Schmitt's influence looms large in securitization theory, and that it is this legacy that sets it considerably apart from other social-constructivist approaches to security. The significance of the speech-act of security lies not only in its claim as a form of social explanation, but in its specific vision of "security" in itself. Reflecting the Schmittian legacy, the speech-act of security is presented as radically "unfounded" (Wæver, 1995:57): to be sure, it has social conditions and even certain forms of rules, but the act is not reducible to these conditions. Securitization marks a decision, a "breaking free of rules" and the suspension of normal politics. This act of decision is both the "primary reality" (55) of securitization and an expression of the existence (in cases of successful securitization), nonexistence (in cases of failure), or calling into being (creative mobilization) of "political" groupings that feel so intensely about a given issue that they are willing to act (in extreme cases) to the point of actual and potentially mortal conflict to secure a threatened object.[19]

The influence of the Schmittian legacy in the theory of securitization can be clearly illustrated by looking at one of the most controversial concrete aspects of the Copenhagen School's analysis of contemporary security relations, the concept of "societal security." The concept of societal security is designed to highlight the role that "identity" plays in security relations. Here, it is not the territorial inviolability ("military" security) or governmental legitimacy and autonomy ("political" security) that is threatened. Rather, it is the identity of a society, its sense of "we-ness," that is at stake and which—as in the case of some "ethnic" conflicts—can become the source of conflict. As Wæver has summarized it, this requires a movement away from security studies' traditional (and reductionist) focus on "state" security toward a dual conceptualization of security, with the security of the state distinguished from

[17] As he puts it in one place: "This grouping is therefore always the decisive human grouping, the political entity. If such an entity exists at all, it is always the decisive entity, and it is sovereign in the sense that the decision about the critical situation, even if it is the exception, must always necessarily reside there" (Schmitt, 1996 [1932]: 38).

[18] This is one element of his critique of Weimar liberal-democracy, explored most fully in Schmitt (1988 [1923]).

[19] The role of combat and killing as the ultimate expression of enmity, and thus politics, is discussed in Schmitt (1996 [1932]: 32–33), see also Rasch (2000).

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that of "society": "State security has *sovereignty* as its ultimate criterion, and societal security has *identity*. Both usages imply survival. A state that loses its sovereignty does not survive as a state; a society that loses its identity fears that it will no longer be able to live *as itself*" (Wæver, 1995:67). Both state sovereignty and societal identity are capable of being securitized—presented as existentially threatened and requiring emergency measures.

The concept of societal security has been one of the most influential and yet severely criticized elements of the Copenhagen School.[20] In a pointed and oft-cited critique, for example, Bill McSweeny has argued that while "societal security" highlights an important issue in contemporary security relations, the way in which it is developed by the Copenhagen School ends up reifying and objectifying both "society" and "identity" in ways that are analytically untenable and politically dangerous. By defining society in terms of identity, McSweeny argues, the concept of societal security effectively defines society as having a *single* identity. This involves a sociological distortion in which the fluidity and multiplicity of social identities are obscured, along with the processes of negotiation and accommodation through which they operate (1999:72). In addition to this reification of social reality, McSweeny charges that by defining society as having *an* identity, and by defining societal security as the defense of this identity, the Copenhagen School risks fostering and legitimizing intolerance, and encouraging and exacerbating (albeit unconsciously) securitizing dynamics between identity groups. Securitization theory, in short, produces a falsely objectified understanding of social identity that risks supporting—or at least not opposing—the rise of intolerant, exclusionary identities, that make conflicts more likely (74–78).

These and analogous issues have become the source of an extensive, often sophisticated, and occasionally acrimonious series of debates (ranging from issues of social-scientific method to questions of intellectual responsibility) over securitization theory and the concept of societal security.[21] Clearly, there are important issues of both method and political responsibility at stake. However, an awareness of the Schmittian themes at work in the Copenhagen School provides a different perspective on these controversies. Indeed, when these themes are appreciated a number of the sociological criticisms of the concept of societal security lose much of their force, or need to be cast in quite different terms.

The claim that the concept of societal security errs in assuming that "society" simply has an "identity" risks missing the radicality of the Copenhagen School's understanding of security. Within the specific terms of *security* as a speech-act (existential threat, authoritative decision) it is precisely under the conditions of attempted securitizations that a reified, monolithic form of identity is declared. It is when identities are *securitized* that their negotiability and flexibility are challenged, denied, or suppressed. Under the conditions of "existential threat" (i.e., attempts at a securitizing speech-act by certain actors) to identities, a Schmittian logic of friends and enemies is invoked, and with it a politics of exclusion. It is this very process (which may succeed or fail) that marks the difference between an identity issue (and situation) that has been securitized, and one that remains simply politicized and thus still more open to processes of negotiation, flexibility, and multiplicity. A successful securitization of an identity involves precisely the capacity to *decide* on the limits of a given identity, to oppose it to what it is not, to cast this as a

[20] Analyses inspired by the framework include Herd (2001) and Roe (2002). The concept of identity is also revealingly deployed—in a somewhat different form—in the context of European integration and Nordic foreign policies in Hansen and Wæver (2002).

[21] See, e.g., the initial response to McSweeny in Buzan and Wæver (1997) and McSweeny's rejoinder (1998). A commentary is Williams (1998), and a broad series of issues are raised in Erickson (1999) and the accompanying symposium. The specific question of societal security and the politics of migration is discussed in Huysmans (1998, 2000); Doty (1998/99); and Bigo (2000).

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relationship of threat or even enmity, and to have this decision and declaration accepted by a relevant group.[22] In the process of dividing between "us" and "them," the concept of societal security echoes the determination of friends and enemies beneath Schmitt's concept of the political, and the acceptance of absolute decision in conditions of emergency.

That a society *has* a multiplicity of identities is neither here nor there: a situation in which identity is being securitized is one in which this reality is being denied and seeking to be transformed. This is precisely what makes a "security" situation specific, and what makes "societal" security conflicts by definition exclusionary.[23] In extreme cases leading to violent secessionist movements within existing states, the conflict over societal security becomes a conflict over sovereignty, over the right and ability to decide. State and societal security can come into conflict as "societal"elements (and those who can effectively "speak" for them) challenge the state's right to decide. In this case, they may even securitize the existing state, treating it as a threat to their identity, and thus challenging the state's claim to sovereignty at its (Schmittian) decisionist core.[24]

A second of McSweeny's criticisms illustrates the point equally well. McSweeny argues that if an *a priori*, unified understanding of society as concerned with identity were set aside, and researchers went out and actually asked what individuals in society saw as their primary security concerns, they would find that questions of economic welfare rather than issues of social identity were preeminent (1999:72). While this is clearly to a degree an empirical question, and one undoubtedly likely to vary enormously in different contexts, it serves also to highlight the affinities of the Copenhagen School with Schmittian themes. From the perspective of securitization theory, economic well-being is not a "security" issue unless it is placed within the categories (and successful speech-acts) of existential threat. The uncontested fact that economic deprivation is a severe threat to life does not mean that it is capable of being effectively cast as a security issue. Only if this issue could be securitized (cast, as I have argued, in terms of friends and enemies) would it become so. For a variety of reasons (the abstractness of markets, and the individualized and intrinsically "risky" nature of capitalism among them), the Copenhagen School does not think that such a process is likely to succeed.[25] This does not, to repeat, mean that economic factors are not crucial to human life and well-being, or that economic factors may not be crucial in fostering processes of securitization; but it does mean that unless dynamics of deprivation generate effective mobilization as threats, and thereby collective support for *decisions* of threat that are the hallmarks of securitization, they remain distinct from issues of security.[26]

Finally, the stress on decision highlights yet another of the distinctive moves of securitization theory. Focusing on the speech *act* highlights the *decision* to securitize an issue. While the background conditions for enabling securitization to take place must exist, a focus on decision highlights the explicitly *political* nature of such a choice. Securitization can never be reduced to the conditions of its social accomplishment: it is an explicitly political choice and act (Wæver, 2000:252). This

[22] Note that this group need not pre-exist. The process of securitization could very well be part of a process calling into existence a group that did not previously think of itself as such. In this way, securitization theory also reflects the influence of the theory of practice—and particularly of representation and symbolic power—developed by Pierre Bourdieu. I will return to this theme later. For a good overview of Bourdieu's work in the context of International Relations see Guzzini (2000).

[23] The Copenhagen School has not dealt in detail with the possibility that a society could securitize an open, pluralistic identity rather than a narrow (for example, ethnic) one; however, see comments in Wæver (1999) and the reflections on North American identities in Buzan et al. (1998:129–31).

[24] See the discussion of "political security" in Buzan et al. (1998:ch. 3).

[25] See the analysis of the "economic sector" in Buzan et al. (1998:ch. 4). Interestingly, and revealingly, it was the attempt to provide such a mobilization that Schmitt saw as the heart of Bolshevism and the idea of class war. For an excellent discussion see McCormick (1997: 92–105).

[26] Situations such as the Rwandan genocide are tragically illustrative here.

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stress on decision clearly raises difficult analytic questions, since to focus too narrowly on the search for singular and distinct *acts* of securitization might well lead one to misperceive *processes* through which a situation is being gradually intensified, and thus rendered susceptible to securitization, while remaining short of the actual securitizing decision. The idea of security practices as operating, for example, along a continuum running from risk to threat, or from uncertainty to danger, might thus provide one of the most cogent criticisms of (or contributions to, depending on one's perspective) the ambivalences of too decisionistic an approach.[27] Yet at the same time, it is important to recognize that stressing the role of decision in securitizations focuses attention on the creative side of political action, on the interaction between the actor and the process, and on the intersubjective relationship between the speaker and the audience. In so doing, it also raises directly the question of ethics and responsibility for these acts, an issue to which it is now necessary to turn.[28]

Speech-Acts and the Ethics of Securitization

A second major criticism of the Copenhagen School concerns the ethics of securitization. Simply put, if security is nothing more than a specific form of social practice—a speech-act tied to existential threat and a politics of emergency—then does this mean that *anything* can be treated as a "security" issue and that, as a consequence, any form of violent, exclusionary, or irrationalist politics must be viewed simply as another form of "speech-act" and treated "objectively"? Questions such as these have led many to ask whether despite its avowedly "constructivist" view of security practices, securitization theory is implicitly committed to a methodological objectivism that is politically irresponsible and lacking in any basis from which to critically evaluate claims of threat, enmity, and emergency.[29]

A first response to this issue is to note that the Copenhagen School has not shied away from confronting it. In numerous places the question of the ethics of securitization are discussed as raising difficult issues. As Wæver has argued in relation to theorizing the highly sensitive issue of identity, for example,

> Such an approach implies that we have to take seriously concerns about identity, but have also to study the specific and often problematic effects of their being framed as *security* issues. We have also to look at the possibilities of handling some of these problems in nonsecurity terms, that is to take on the problems but leave them unsecuritized. This latter approach recognizes that social processes are already under way whereby societies have begun to thematize *themselves* as security agents that are under threat. This process of social construction can be studied, and the security quality of the phenomenon understood, without thereby actually legitimizing it. (1995: 66; see also Wæver, 1999).

As sustained as these considerations have been, it must be admitted that the answers are somewhat less searching than the questioning, and that this remains one of the most underarticulated aspects of securitization theory (Wyn Jones, 1999: 111–12). I would like to suggest, however, that there are two important issues at stake in these questions, each of which can be clarified through a greater recognition of the Schmittian elements of securitization theory. The first, and simplest point is that in some ways the Copenhagen School treats securitization not as a normative question,

[27] I owe this insight especially to Didier Bigo.

[28] Again, there are clear links here between securitization theory and classical Realism's stress on the "ethic of responsibility."

[29] Voiced, for example, in Erickson (1999). These issues are, of course, also central to debates concerning social constructivism more generally. See in particular the exchange between John Mearsheimer (1994/95, 1995) and Alexander Wendt (1995). A broad overview can be found in Price and Reus-Smit (1998).

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but as an objective process and possibility. Very much like Schmitt, they view securitization as a social possibility intrinsic to political life. In regard to his concept of the political, for example, Schmitt once argued,

> It is irrelevant here whether one rejects, accepts, or perhaps finds it an atavistic remnant of barbaric times that nations continue to group themselves according to friend and enemy, or whether it is perhaps strong pedagogic reasoning to imagine that enemies no longer exist at all. The concern here is neither with abstractions nor normative ideals, but with inherent reality and the real possibility of making such a distinction. One may or may not share these hopes and pedagogic ideals. But, rationally speaking, it cannot be denied that nations continue to group themselves according to the friend–enemy antithesis, that the distinction still remains actual today, and that this is an ever present possibility for every people existing in the political sphere (1996 [1932]: 28).[30]

In certain settings, the Copenhagen School seems very close to this position. Securitization must be understood as both an existing reality and a continual possibility. Yet equally clearly there is a basic ambivalence in this position, for it raises the dilemma that securitization theory must remain at best agnostic in the face of *any* securitization, even, for example, a fascist speech-act (such as that Schmitt has often been associated with) that securitizes a specific ethnic or racial minority. To say that we must study the conditions under which such processes and constructions emerge and become viable is important but incomplete, for without some basis for avoiding this process and transforming it the Copenhagen School appears to risk replicating some of the worst excesses made possible by a Schmittian understanding of politics.

I would like to suggest that it is in response to these issues, and in regard to the realm of ethical practice, that the idea of security as a *speech-act* takes on an importance well beyond its role as a tool of social explanation. Casting securitization as a speech-act places that act within a framework of communicative action and legitimation that links it to a discursive ethics that seeks to avoid the excesses of a decisionist account of securitization. While the Copenhagen School has been insufficiently clear in developing these aspects of securitization theory, they link clearly to some of the most interesting current analyses of the practical ethics of social-constructivism.

As Thomas Risse (2000) has recently argued, communicative action is not simply a realm of instrumental rationality and rhetorical manipulation. Communicative action involves a process of argument, the provision of reasons, presentation of evidence, and commitment to convincing others of the validity of one's position. Communicative action (speech-acts) are thus not just given social practices, they are implicated in a process of justification. Moreover, as processes of dialogue, communicative action has a potentially transformative capacity. As Risse puts it:

> Argumentative rationality appears to be crucially linked to the constitutive rather than the regulative role of norms and identities by providing actors with a mode of interaction that enables them to mutually challenge and explore the validity claims of those norms and identities. When actors engage in a truth-seeking discourse, they must be prepared to change their own views of the world, their interests, and sometimes even their identities. (2000: 2)[31]

[30] More broadly, it can be argued that for Schmitt it was not only a possibility, but a choice, a decision, that he paradoxically saw as *necessary* if a vital human life was to be lived. For an analysis of Schmitt in relation to a vitalistic romanticism and a virulent hostility to liberalism see again Wolin (1992). Schmitt's vitalism marks one of the clearest differences with the Copenhagen School, as discussed below.

[31] Risse's analysis here draws greatly on that of Habermas. For Habermas's own treatment of speech-act theory see Habermas (1984). For Habermas's own views on Schmitt see Habermas (1990); a recent brief survey of the relationship between Habermas and Schmitt in the context of International Relations is Wheeler (2000), and a more extended and varied collection is Wyn Jones (2001).

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As speech-acts, securitizations are in principle forced to enter the realm of discursive legitimation. Speech-act theory entails the possibility of argument, of dialogue, and thereby holds out the potential for the transformation of security perceptions both within and between states. The securitizing speech-act must be accepted by the audience, and while the Copenhagen School is careful to note that "[a]ccept does not necessarily mean in civilized, dominance-free discussion; it only means that an order always rests on coercion as well as on consent," it is nonetheless the case that "[s]ince securitization can never only be imposed, there is some need to argue one's case"(Buzan et al., 1998: 23), and that "[s]uccessful securitization is not decided by the securitizer but by the audience of the security speech-act: does the audience accept that something is an existential threat to a shared value? Thus security (as with all politics) ultimately rests neither with the objects nor with the subjects but *among* the subjects"(1998:31).

It is via this commitment to communicative action and discursive ethics, I would like to suggest, that the Copenhagen School seeks to avoid the radical realpolitik that might otherwise seem necessarily to follow from the Schmittian elements of the theory of securitization. Schmitt appeals to the necessity and inescapability of decision, enmity, and "the political." He appeals to the mobilizing power of myth in the production of friends and enemies, and asserts the need for a single point of decision to the point of justifying dictatorship. He mythologizes war and enmity as the paramount moments of political life.[32] By contrast, the Copenhagen School treats securitization as a social process, and casts it as a phenomenon largely to be avoided. Securitization is the Schmittian realm of the political, and for precisely this reason it is dangerous and—by and large—to be avoided.[33]

This element of the Copenhagen School is clearly illustrated in the concepts of "desecuritization" and "asecurity" which form integral aspects of securitization theory. As a consequence of their Schmittian understanding of security—and in contrast to many (indeed most) other forms of security studies—the Copenhagen School does not regard security as an unambiguously positive value. In most cases, securitization is something to be avoided. While casting an issue as one of "security" may help elevate its position on the political agenda, it also risks placing that issue within the logic of threat and decision, and potentially within the contrast of friend and enemy.[34] "Security,"accordingly, is something to be invoked with great care and, in general, minimized rather than expanded—a movement that should be sought in the name of stability, tolerance, and political negotiation, not in opposition to it.

"Desecuritization" involves precisely this process; a moving of issues off the "security" agenda and back into the realm of public political discourse and "normal" political dispute and accommodation. The transformation of many elements of European security as part of the end of the Cold War stands as a key example (Wæver, Buzan, Kelstrup, and Lemaitre, 1993). Similarly, the concept of "asecurity" designates a (probably optimal) situation in which relations are so firmly "politicized" that there is little chance of them becoming re-securitized, a case that Wæver argues is illustrated by the Nordic countries whose relations with each other constitute an "asecurity community" rather than a "security community" in the more conventional sense (Wæver, 1998b).

[32] See, for example, the direct discussion of—and partial contrast to—Schmitt's use of enmity in the construction of sovereignty in Wæver (1995: fn. 63); Schmitt also figures in the analysis of religion as a "referent object" pursued in Bagge Lausten and Wæver (2000:726, 733).

[33] Here, too, the links to classical Realism are strong, for as William Scheuerman (1999) has brilliantly illustrated, this was precisely the tack adopted by Hans Morgenthau in his extended critical engagement with Schmitt.

[34] Recognizing this particular Schmittian legacy hopefully also helps clarify the dispute between the Copenhagen School and those who think its scepticism toward the word and concept of "security" is politically debilitating.

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As a contribution to political practice, the sociological analysis of the Copenhagen School attempts to provide tools whereby these transformative processes can be fostered. By exposing the limits imposed by the securitization of specific issues, it provides resources for challenging these limitations. In presenting security as a speech-act, the Copenhagen School is doing more than developing a sociological thesis: it is presenting a political ethic. This does not mean that securitizations will always be forced to enter the realm of discursive legitimation. Indeed, part of the power of securitization theory lies in its stress on how "security" issues are often or usually insulated from this process of public debate: they operate in the realm of secrecy, of "national security," of decision. Equally, relations may be "sedimented" to such a degree that discursive ethics and tactics of social negotiation are unlikely to succeed and need to be subordinated (at least in the short term) to more traditional mechanisms of (relatively fixed) interest manipulation and material power balancing.[35] These are key elements of any analysis of security policy. But the limitations should also not be overstated. As resistant as they may be, these security policies and relationships are susceptible to being pulled back into the public realm and capable of transformation, particularly when the social consensus underlying the capacity for decision is challenged, either by questioning the policies, or by disputing the threat, or both.[36]

Speech-Acts, Communicative Practices, and the War of Images

I have argued thus far that recognizing the roots of securitization theory within the legacy of a Schmittian-influenced view of politics explains a number of its key and most controversial features. Charges of an ethically and practically irresponsible form of objectivism in relation to either the act of securitization or the concept of societal security are largely misplaced. Locating the speech-act within a broader commitment to processes of discursive legitimation and practical ethics of dialogue allows the most radical and disturbing elements of securitization theory emerging from its Schmittian legacy to be offset. Seen in this light, the Copenhagen School is insulated from many of the most common criticisms leveled against it.

But while locating the Copenhagen School in a broader vision of communicative action disarms many common criticisms, it also opens up a set of difficult issues. At the heart of these issues is the question of whether a theory so closely tied to *speech* for its explanatory and ethical position is capable of addressing the dynamics of security in a world where political communication is increasingly bound with *images* and in which televisual communication is an essential element of communicative action. As an increasing number of analyses have argued, and as events in the world of security seem daily to demonstrate, modern media is a central element of security relations. From the Gulf War to Bosnia and Kosovo, to the events of September 11 and their aftermath (not to mention perceptions of issues such as migration), a consideration of the role of contemporary communications media in the representation and conduct of security relations is almost inescapable.[37] In this final section, I would like to explore the salience of some of these issues for securitization theory, focusing particularly on their significance for its understanding of the relevant institutions of securitization, and for its form of social explanation based on speech-acts, and the ethical practices based on discursive legitimation within which it is located.

[35] Again, the links to classical Realism and a deeply social and historical understanding of balances of power seem a key influence here. For an interesting explanation, see Hobson and Seabrooke (2001).

[36] See, e.g., Wæver (1995:56); again, the strong affinities to Risse (2000) are clear.

[37] In a burgeoning literature, see Ignatieff (2000) and especially Der Derian (2001). For critical appraisals of the "CNN effect" see Robinson (1999, 2001). More broadly see Thompson (1995).

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As pointed out earlier, in the framework of securitization theory, any referent object may be securitized by any actor. In practice, however, this openness is constrained by two limiting conditions—one relating to the structure of the speech-act itself, and the other to the social position of the "securitizing actor" and the relationship between this actor and the audience being addressed. It may at this point be useful to review these points briefly. As a speech-act, securitization is portrayed as having a specific structure. Most importantly,

> [the c]onditions for a successful speech-act fall into two categories: (1) the internal, linguistic-grammatical—to follow the rules of the act (or, as Austin argues, accepted conventional procedures must exist, and the act has to be executed according to these procedures), and (2) the external, contextual and social—to hold a position from which the act can be made ("The particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked"). (Buzan et al., 1998:32)

Each of these conditions links securitization theory to broad movements within contemporary international theory. Focusing, for example, on how a successful securitizing act is related to the social and institutional position of the speaker, and thus to forms and relations of power well beyond the linguistic element of the speech-act in itself, clearly links securitization theory to the focus on epistemological, normative, and processual structures, and to questions of "logics of appropriate action" and institutional legitimation that have become the focus of neo-institutionalism. Indeed, there exist clear possibilities for a great deal of productive cross-fertilization between securitization theory and this burgeoning body of work in International Relations. However, it is around the issue of communicative action, and particularly in the question of the adequacy of the speech-act as an explanation of social action, that one of the greatest challenges to securitization theory lies.[38] At the heart of this challenge is the way in which a focus on speech and linguistic rhetoric are limited as tools for understanding processes of contemporary political communication in an age when that communication is increasingly conveyed through electronic media, and in which televisual images play an increasingly significant role. Indeed, while the theory of the securitizing speech-act opens up the research agenda of security studies, treating social communication in a strictly linguistic-discursive form risks limiting the kinds of acts and contexts that can be analyzed as contributing to securitizations.

The Copenhagen School's casting of security as a speech-act is not just a metaphor; it delineates a structure of communicative action, and a framework for the explanation of social practices. The act itself is conceived of in *linguistic* terms, the institution refers to the position from which it is *spoken*, and the appropriate tool for its recognition as a securitizing act is an analysis of the *rhetorical and discursive structure* (the "internal, linguistic-grammatical" rules and "conventional procedures") of the act and its consequences. Yet as numerous analysts have argued, and everyday practice seems increasingly to make inescapable, this focus stands in contrast to a communicative environment ever more structured by televisual media and by the importance of images. In this environment, speech-acts are inextricable from the image-dominated context in which they take place and through which meaning is communicated. The result of this shift, as Cori Dauber has pointed out in an insightful treatment of the role of images in security practices, is that "while it

[38] For a superb assessment of how the focus on speech also cannot adequately analyze security situations characterized by imposed silence, especially in gender relations, see Hansen (2000). Equally, as other assessments of securitization theory have stressed, there may be good reasons to avoid too narrow a focus on speech and decision, or too sharp a delineation between "politics" and "security," normality and emergency, that the Copenhagen approach often (though perhaps not necessarily) seems to imply. Instead, a sliding scale of securitization from "risk" (Bigo, 2000) or "violation" (Neumann, 1998) to threat and security may capture the processes more accurately.

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is often the case that the rhetoritician will focus on linguistic texts, on words themselves, in an increasingly media-saturated environment, ignoring visual imagery provides less and less satisfactory work" (2001: 209).

It is important to point out that the Copenhagen School readily acknowledges that a focus on speech alone is far too narrow an understanding of the structure of communication involved in securitization. The analysis pursued in *Security*, for example, is at pains to point out that it is not the *word* "security" that is indispensable to the specific nature of the speech-act (though it often may play a vital role) but the broader rhetorical performance of which it is a part. "It is important to note" they stress, "that the security speech-act is not defined by uttering the word *security*. What is essential is the designation of an existential threat requiring emergency action or special measures and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience" (Buzan et al., 1998:27). In this sense, therefore, the speech-act of securitization is not reducible to a purely verbal act or a linguistic rhetoric: it is a broader performative act which draws upon a variety of contextual, institutional, and symbolic resources for its effectiveness.[39] Crucially, however, this aspect of securitization theory remains almost wholly undeveloped. Indeed, taking seriously the role of images in the "media-saturated environment" of contemporary political communications provides a series of fundamental challenges for the analysis of security relations developed by the Copenhagen School.

First, as Ronald Deibert insightfully illustrated, to understand the importance of this shift in communicative action it is necessary to understand it as a shift of *medium*.[40] Different mediums (speech, print, and electronic, or—as Deibert terms it—"hypermedia") are not neutral in their communicative impact. The conditions of the production and reception of communicative acts are influenced fundamentally by the medium through which they are transmitted. In the aftermath of the extraordinary images of September 11, this point is obvious to the point of banality, but it raises complex questions of explanation. How, for example, is it possible to assess the events following September 11 without an appraisal of the impact that the extraordinary (and repeated) images of that event had on reactions to it? Similarly, how has the role of images—particularly the desire to avoid images of mass destruction and civilian casualties, and the representation of the goals of the military campaign—been involved in structuring understandings of the "appropriate" response? Analogously, in an area of long-standing concern to the Copenhagen School, the rise of migration on the "security" agenda in Europe must be viewed in the context of how migration is "experienced" by relevant publics. This experience is inevitably constructed in part by the images (and discussions based around them) of televisual media: nightly images of shadowy figures attempting to jump on trains through the Channel Tunnel between France and the UK, for example, or of lines of "asylum seekers" waiting to be picked up for a day's illicit labor (both common on UK television), have—whatever the voiceover—an impact that must be assessed in their own terms, constituting as they do a key element of the experience of many people on the issue of immigration and its status as a "threat." Clearly, the issues involved here are beyond the scope of this treatment. But it seems clear that any theory that is premised on the social impact of communicative action must assess the impact that different mediums of communication have on the acts, their impacts, and their influence on the processes of securitization.

[39] A number of references to the work of Pierre Bourdieu illustrate this point clearly. See Bourdieu (1990).

[40] Deibert (1997) provides an excellent exploration of medium theory and its implications for International Relations; see also Comor (2001). The, albeit controversial, *locus classicus* of medium theory is likely McLuhan (1964); an exploration of McLuhan's ideas in the contemporary setting is Horrocks (2000).

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This shift in communicative structures—in the *medium* of communication at the center of visual media—represents a key challenge for securitization theory. Most straightforwardly, this would entail a focus on how speech-acts are framed within visual imagery. As the linguistic and the image are reconfigured within performative action in an age of electronic media, a broader understanding of the rhetorics of securitization is required.[41] More complexly, it also requires an examination of the ways in which images themselves may function as communicative acts, an analysis of how meaning is conveyed by images, as well as an assessment of how images interact with more familiar forms of verbal rhetoric. Finally, it also calls for a focus on how televisual communications—often broadcast and received well beyond the political borders and cultural boundaries of their production[42]—impact on different audiences, and the securitizing consequences that may follow from this fact.

Analyzing security within the shifting structures of communication thus requires broader techniques for "reading" the rhetorics of securitizing acts, techniques attuned to the rhetorics of visual representation and reception, and their contextual aspects.[43] Such an approach would focus not only on the ways in which images impact on the speech-act of securitization in an age of images, but on the way in which visual representations of different policy options influence security practices. In what ways are visual representations structured, and how do they tap into deeply sedimented social perspectives? How do images have an impact on viewers that differs from the impact of words on listeners, or text on readers? How are images capable of contributing to processes of securitization or desecuritization, and how are they linked to more conventional speech-acts in this process? These are just some of the questions that a concern with mediums of representation and communication bring to the agenda of securitization theory and security studies.

Nor are these by any means hypothetical questions. Security policies today are constructed not only with the question of their linguistic legitimation in mind; they now are increasingly decided upon in relation to acceptable image-rhetorics. Questions of the acceptability and sustainability of security policies cannot be divorced from considerations of the impact of these policies within a logic of images. This has been equally clearly illustrated in the case of the Kosovo conflict where, as has often been noted, the types of operations undertaken by NATO were clearly structured around their relationship to the images that would be generated, and where rapid television reporting of military actions and their results to the public meant that media coverage itself became a key component of the decision-making process (Der Derian, 2001:180–203; Ignatieff, 2000:161–215). Securitizing moves are indeed "argued" here, but in a context permeated by the power of images. Again, the different fields within which these operate and the resources—both material and discursive—that different actors can mobilize in a given situation must be central to securitization theory.

Finally, a securitization research agenda requires an expanded field of institutional analysis. The institutional locus of effective securitization cannot be restricted to traditional organizational sites, such as Defense departments and foreign ministries. It must also account for the ways in which these acts are mediated through communications institutions ("the media") that are organiza-

[41] It is possible to argue, moreover, that the logic of images cannot be reduced to more traditional understandings of discourse and, as Martin Jay (1993) has argued, that it is a significant shortcoming of modern social theory that it has consistently sought to do so.

[42] Though, as many media and cultural analysts have pointed out, the very concepts of boundaries become extremely complex when discussing contemporary cultural flows and production. See, for example, Appadurai (1997).

[43] See, for example, Shapiro (1998).

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tionally distinct from the site of securitization, that are bound up with competing logics (commercialization, market share, audience attraction), and yet that are central to the securitizing act. This does not mean that the traditional institutions of security are losing their power (quite the opposite may be the case), but it does mean that the relationships among the different institutions (and their—often different—imperatives and strategies) are of central importance in understanding contemporary securitization practices.

Conclusion

The theory of "securitization" developed by the Copenhagen School provides an innovative, sophisticated, and productive research strategy within contemporary security studies. Much of the distinctiveness of this approach, I have argued, lies in the ways in which securitization theory combines themes common within social-constructivism with a particular reading of the classical Realist tradition, and especially the legacy of Carl Schmitt. When this synthesis is drawn out more clearly, many of the criticisms commonly leveled at securitization theory either lose much of their salience, or need to be cast in considerably different terms. Approaching security as a speech-act, the Copenhagen School holds that the specificity of "security" as a field of political activity can be maintained without either narrowing its meaning or application by either analytical fiat or existing convention, or broadening it beyond recognition or substantive delineation. Developing a reflexive approach focusing on the specific social practices constituting and facilitating securitizations, on decisions to make issues "security" issues, and even on the ethics of theorizing and analyzing security, it not only provides a framework for the analysis of security dynamics, but suggests that an engagement with political ethics must also be a key concern of a field where they have all too often been marginalized.[44] And, finally, while it is sometimes presented as a distinctly "European" contribution to security studies, the links between securitization theory and classical Realism within the Copenhagen School demonstrate how a re-engagement with the foundations of Realism (and its role in the development of International Relations) can foster an engaged dialogue and debate across analytic traditions (such as Realism and constructivism, or discursive ethics and security studies) that are today too often presented as inescapably divergent or incommensurable.[45]

This is not to say that the approach developed by Buzan, Wæver, and their collaborators is immune from criticism. As I have sought briefly to demonstrate, a key challenge for securitization theory is that its presentation of security as a speech-act is potentially too narrow to grasp fully the social contexts and complex communicative and institutional processes of securitization at work in contemporary politics. Equally importantly, placing the Schmittian legacy front and center in securitization theory necessarily demands a fuller interrogation of the ethical entailments and political consequences of accepting such a vision of politics and security—a demand particularly pertinent in light of the troubling political developments with which this legacy has often been linked.[46] Yet it is one of the great strengths of the Copenhagen School, and one of its most significant contributions to security studies and International Relations more generally, that it places these issues squarely on the agenda for the further development of the field. At a time when "security" is intensifying its hold as a dominant theme in contemporary politics, and increasing the range of its references (from "home-

[44] See particularly the thoughtful contribution made in Wendt (2001).

[45] On this issue see the reflections in Smith (2000) and Wæver (1998a).

[46] On these issues see the brief but suggestive comments in Wæver (1999: 338–39) and Bagge Lausten and Waever (2000: 739).

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lands'' to ''migrants'' to a ''war'' against a terrorist adversary defined in part by its lack of visibility, and thus its relative insusceptibility to traditional terms of strategic and political debate and evaluation), and when appeals to the politics of ''emergency'' are ever more prominent, such investigations are even more imperative.

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