

P16 - Critical Discourse Analysis, Policy and Power

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”Surrounded by threats – How securitization research can be complemented by critical discourse analysis to uncover relations and conceptualizations of power”

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IPA 2015 - 10th International Conference in Interpretive Policy Analysis (Lille, France)

Abstract: This paper builds on the work on securitization and security discourse as has been presented by the Copenhagen School, which suggests that securitization is a form of politics, where all considerations and events are immediately politicized through the prism of security issues. This is a simplified view of complex, often internationally formed politics of security. Securitized politics easily become a simple affair of judging threats and appropriate responses. In determining security, might and power are often seen as the key element through which these issues are solved. Critics of the CPH School have stated in the past that the methodology through which securitization has been discussed has relied too much of discourse, and too little on discourse analysis and the way discourse is constructed. This paper will utilize critical discourse analysis as qualitative tool to offer more robustness to an analysis of securitization and security discourse.

Keywords: *securitization; security discourse; exceptionalism; CDA; torture; war on terror*

1. Introduction

This paper builds on the work on securitization and security discourse as has been presented by the Copenhagen School (Buzan et al. 1998; Buzan and Weaver, 2009). The Copenhagen School, henceforth CPH School, suggests that securitization is a form of politics, where all considerations and events are immediately politicized through the prism of security issues. This is a simplified view of complex, often internationally formed politics of security. Securitized politics easily become a simple affair of judging threats and appropriate responses. In determining security, might and power are often seen as the key element through which these issues are solved.

Within this reckoning of politics immigration, for example is seen as a potential hazard for home-grown terrorism. The threat posed by outsiders more or less sidelines any benefits the society might derive from their presence. Securitization, then, is not only a change of policy; it is a change in the mode of thinking, when all political and societal concerns are first and foremost issues of

security. This thinking is enabled by the change in political discourse – through security discourse. This discourse is tied integrally to the securitization of the society and its institutions; securitization will arguably lack legitimacy without supporting discourse, and equally security discourse would make little sense without institutions dedicated to upholding them.

Securitization as a mode of thinking is closely linked to the state of exception, as envisioned by German political philosopher Carl Schmitt (Schmitt, 2005). The normal deliberative measures of politics can be – within this thinking – legitimately suspended due to concerns over security. The sovereign state can and must suspend legal restrictions that would hamper its capacity to respond to the threats decisively and successfully. Securitization makes the claim that it is grounded in political realism (Laitinen, 2005), and must be followed to avoid disastrous events, such as acts of terror. Securitization is not only reactive, but can also be interpreted to be pre-emptive (Ferrari 2007).

Arguably securitization is a way of enabling political actions that go against the grain of liberal democratic thinking in the western world. When contextualized properly, the existential crisis that is at the heart of securitized politics legitimizes barbaric actions, when they are targeted at barbaric enemies. This state of exception is perhaps best encapsulated by the specter of the ticking time bomb that was seen, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, to be sufficient cause for engaging in torture (Luban, 2005). The central role of securitization politics and discourse in defining and indeed legitimating dubious western practices in the War on Terror (WoT) have been discussed previously by many scholars (see e.g. Wheeler, 2003; Jackson, 2009; 2011; Krebs and Lobasz, 2007).

The noteworthy concern of securitization is indeed its all-encompassing nature. A society governed by threats and non-threats is a society that has integrated fear as a reactive force in politics. The common-sense nature of securitization threatens to override – as Schmitt suggested it should – democratic deliberation. It is prudent, therefore to outline this process: how is securitization constructed? The CPH School notes that it is socially constructed, i.e. securitization is enabled, produced, re-produced and maintained through discourse. In the War on Terror, President G.W.

Bush explicitly stated the division of the world to enemies and allies as exclusive categories, and western civilization was portrayed as under attack, following Huntington's (1996) famous thesis.

In this paper I will utilize critical discourse analysis as qualitative tool to offer more robustness to an analysis of securitization and security discourse. Integrating the methodology of CDA to securitization has been limitedly explored (see e.g. Ferrari 2007; MacDonald & Hunter 2013) and could considerably expand on the field, given that critics of the CPH School have stated in the past that the methodology through which securitization has been discussed has relied too much of discourse, and too little on discourse analysis and the way discourse is constructed (see e.g. McDonalds, 2008). Here we clearly find a place where CDA could provide interdisciplinary insight into how power in discourse is constructed and maintained, and thus how security discourse has been able to break through public debate so successfully. The common-sensical nature of security discourse would form a natural target for CDA.

We will begin by discussing the characteristics of securitization and security discourse and their representation of the Schmittian state of exception. The first half of the paper will also discuss how this state of exception has played right into the way that the United States is itself often considered an exceptional nation, and how security discourse has been shaped through dialogue before, during, and after the WoT. The second half the paper will seek to discuss – through critical discourse analysis – how moral absolutes in the American context explain how at the same time an evil moral act can be justified by a subjective understanding of exceptional times requiring exceptional means. We can find the mutually exclusive discourses of moral right and security through readings of presidential statements and statements of security policy. A rudimentary model for applying CDA to securitization discourse will allow forthcoming research to utilize this methodology with a wide range of primary materials.

2. The form of exceptionalism and securitization

Exceptionalism can be defined both as a policy and a mentality – a national philosophy. While all nation states have originally defined themselves as more or less unique and exceptional, the form of exceptionalism that is most raw and readily available to us can be found in the foreign policy of great powers. As such, the United States offers us a highly visible and, indeed, and *exceptionally* relevant example of exceptionalism that is grounded both in the foreign policy of a great power and a domestic philosophy built on inherent exceptionalism (Poutanen, 2015; 2012). Exceptionalism is, as a concept, almost common-sensical. Politicians or even average who draw on its discourse do not have to do so explicitly, as it is something that most (internal) audiences will automatically recognize and accept. Outsiders, who are ruled out by exceptionalism, obviously contest this representation, if for no other reason than to deny legitimate control over them by the hegemon deeming itself exception.

In other words, much of international law has been written out to protect smaller operators (states) from the power of larger ones. Exceptionalism runs against the liberal strain of political thought by enforcing and imposing the idea that some nations are not held to the same standards or restrictions. Resorting to exceptionalism means resorting to *realpolitik*: the rules have to be bent in favor of action (Laitinen, 2005). This is also the way Schmitt (2005) viewed exceptionalism: the sovereign decides upon the exception, and cannot be bound by rules at the moment of crisis.

For Schmitt, a German political philosopher and legal scholar informed by the intra-war period in Europe in the 20th century, the crisis was endemic to the affairs of state. Schmitt considered that an administration too single-mindedly committed to the rule of law would find itself unravelling, thus legitimating extra-legal actions (McCormick 1998, 231; Scheppele 2004). It was necessary not to hamper the capabilities of the sovereign from making fast and decisive decisions, bypassing democratic procedure, if necessary. Liberal democratic norms are more like guidelines than legally binding rules to enable states to navigate through unexpected or exceptional crises (Bielefeldt 1998, 26). It is hardly surprising that the roots of securitization are found in Schmitt's philosophy.

Schmitt was a Hobbesian thinker, who saw the primary role of the state leadership as one guaranteeing safety and order in a chaotic and dangerous world (Howse 1998, 74). We should note, however, that Schmitt, did not advocate for the complete dismissal of the democratic process. Schmitt expected that once the crisis was dealt with, the state should return to its democratic state of affairs. Schmitt's exceptionalism makes the reaching assumption of the sovereign always acting with the best interest of the citizens at heart (McCormick 1998, 241). Schmitt hadn't, it seemed, considered the possibility of making crisis the new norm that extends the (perception of) exceptional threats and thus exceptional governance, as we shall see has been the case with WoT.

The reality claims made by securitization form a discursive strategy: by defining the perceived realism and naiveté of the respective parties, security discourse seeks to legitimate itself while delegitimizing its opposition. In this, security discourse seeks discursive dominance and hegemony in terms of not only reality but truth. The exercise of power produces, reproduces and constitutes social relations via various techniques of "political management, and through the elaboration of ideologies and fantasies" (Howarth 2010, 310). The mobilization of discursive techniques conceals these relations, and ideological constructions naturalize relations of domination.

Populist rhetoric especially in an economic downturn that strongly divides groups into "us" and "them" can serve securitization extremely well, and even allow it gain parliamentary acceptance. Securitization in international politics derives some of its legitimation from the protection of the western civilization from barbarism (Huntington 1996). On the other hand, securitization remains only valid as long as it holds this legitimacy, and given that breaking international rules and norms is an in-built feature, proponents of securitization can also understand they will be held culpable these breaches of norms if their legitimacy isn't accepted. If these measures can be legitimated through the democratic process, arguably no culpability can be assigned, unless it is extended to the entire populace that allowed for, and consented to the securitization policies being implemented.

As such, securitization legitimates the use of force in the western foreign policy tradition that has tended to stress more humanitarian concerns (Harle & Laitinen 2004, 7). Similarly securitization offers scenarios, where even the most liberal politician would see a call for exception, but then turns that scenario as the new norm (Luban, 2005). The CPH School's conceptualization of securitization means, in its simplest form, the setting of national security as the supreme yardstick for all political considerations (Buzan et al. 1998). The worldview that securitization enables and its discourse constructs is starkly divided into threats and non-threats, enemies and allies. Threats and enemies can be excluded from the normal political rules, treaties, and practices (Laitinen 2005, 50). Even erstwhile allies can be later designated as security risks.

This is one of the inherent problems of securitization: the fluidity and reciprocity of international politics may also feed into securitization efforts of the opposition (Buzan and Wæver, 2009). In other words, if, for example, the United States outlines Russia as a crucial, existential security risk to itself¹, it also makes sense for Russia to discursively reciprocate and equally construct the United States as its primary security threat. Securitization feeds and builds upon itself, creating permanent contexts of threat and risks, that can only be met by securitization policy; everything else would simply pose too great of a risk. The existence of securitization and security discourse perpetuates the need for their existence.

3. American exceptionalism

I have previously argued (Poutanen 2012; 2015), that American exceptionalism in particular contains two very distinct strains of exceptionalism. This division between types of exceptionalism can also be found in the CPH School's conceptualization of inclusive and exclusive universalism respectively (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 260-261). On one hand, there exists what we could consider positive American exceptionalism, such as its exceptional inception and political and moral mission as an unblemished liberal democratic nation. Within this exceptionalism, the United States is (or at

¹ Russia is often represented as the "radical other" for western securitization moves (Jensen 2012, 94).

least should act like) a force of good in the world. This is the mythic national identity described by e.g. sociologist Richard Slotkin (1973; 1998) in his works. The self-image through the mythical origins of the nation is the underlying ideology that enables the exceptionalism of the United States that represents it as a shining city on a hill, where the mistakes of Old Europe would not be repeated. This positive self-image is also politically infinitely reproducible through cultural artefacts and discourse.

On the other there equally exists an understanding of American exceptionalism that doesn't bind it to the same rules as others. The definition of a national identity explicitly states who we are, but it also implicitly defines what threatens us (Laitinen 2004, 46). It relates equally to mythical origins of Manifest Destiny and assumed entitled leadership. This negative exceptionalism finds *American* use of military force by default legitimized by this positive exceptionalism. Securing the national identity of the United States has historically often been affirmed through the force of arms: making the world "safe for democracy" has been a long trend in US foreign policy (Laitinen 2005, 46; Buzan and Wæver 2009, 263). Assuming the mantle of the protector of the free world against Communist aggression played into this conception of exceptionalism that aimed at making the world safe from threats.

Within positive exceptionalism, the US promotes international moral norms through leading by example, whereas within negative exceptionalism the US unilaterally declares, that whatever institutions have been constructed hold no control over sovereign US foreign policy. American exceptionalism not only allowed for, but demanded the United States to spearhead democracy in its foreign policy, regardless of the actual feasibility of these initiatives (Buzan & Wæver 2009, 266). American neoconservatives in particular have embraced security discourse as an extension of exceptionalism, as they mutually support power politics especially abroad (Fukuyama, 2007).

The recorded cases of torture – or enhanced interrogation as the more palatable euphemism defines it – have served as a case in point for exceptionalist thought that is made apparent and

legitimate through security discourse. It also served to distance the activities from human rights violations: if the United States had indeed tortured, it had only tortured because a) no other option had been available in the face of clear and present danger and b) it wasn't even real torture as such, because torture is morally reprehensible, and a country such as the United States, with its inherent goodness, could never resort to such actions. The discourse of exceptionalism, in other words, legitimizes itself.

It seems that a particularly Schmittian reading of American exceptionalism was triggered by an exceptional event, namely the terrorist attacks on the 11th of September, 2001 (Scheppelle, 2004). In his analysis of neoconservative foreign policy, Francis Fukuyama notes that exceptionalism was strongly recontextualized to support power political ambitions in American foreign policy (Fukuyama 2007, 23). Neoconservative politics distinctly outline that the US shouldn't limit itself too much with international treaties or institutions (Kagan 2004; Chomsky 2006, 165-166). The discursive construction of the WoT as a state of exception and as an existential struggle embedded securitization deeply into US foreign (and domestic) policy. In this the neoconservatives departed even from Schmitt's theory, within which the state of exception was not envisioned to be indefinite. America would be constantly under threat within this thinking (Mueller 2002).

The reconstruction of American exceptionalism through security discourse drew on the familiar positive, even idealist exceptionalism as well as highly pragmatic and realist power politics that was begun during Ronald Reagan's presidency, when the international relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were characterized by the president himself as a conflict between good and evil, explicitly (and famously) referring to the Soviet Union as "an empire of evil" (Reagan 1982; 1983).² Within the same speech, Reagan also framed the United States as a nation which

² It should be noted that not all US presidents have uncritically subscribed to states of exception and exceptionalism even the new and unparalleled risks of the Cold War (Wheeler 2003, 192). For example, Harry Truman commented that "We do not believe in aggressive or preventive war. Such war is the weapon of dictators, not of free democratic countries like the United States." (Truman, 1950)

embodies positive exceptionalism³. This discourse was immediately recognizable from the founding myth of the United States, where barbarism was defeated by force (Slotkin 1998, 650; Goodnight 1986). As such, the concept of exceptionalism is readily available to American audiences; they recognize it and are relatively likely to accept it.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States considered itself the victor of this existential struggle. In a unipolar world the US could, to an extent, define the normative environment of international relations.⁴ The need for securitization politics diminished, but one could say it remained dormant in the national identity and discourse. The discourse was resurrected immediately after 9/11 through the rhetoric of president George W. Bush, which included, among others, the “axis of evil”, which morally categorized opposites and enemies to the United States (Dunmire 2009; Ferrari 2007; Buzan 2006). The mission of the United States was made explicit: “We will defend our freedom. We will bring freedom to others and we will prevail” (Bush 2003a).

Critics have noted that this discourse emphasizes that only the US represents freedom, peace, and stability on a global scale, and only the US can bring freedom, peace and stability to other nations (Laitinen 2005, 49; Jervis 2003, 367). Security discourse built on the use of power and controlling geopolitical spaces was legitimized through drawing on a higher, ideological mission or purpose unique to the US (Harle & Laitinen 2004, 5-6). Fittingly, Buzan and Wæver (2009, 255) have defined macrosecuritization as an ongoing level of perceived conflict. These conflicts entail self-reinforcing rivalries linked with identity politics.

4. Discursive exceptionalism of torture

Given that the United States had been caught unprepared by acts of terror, securitization dictated that this cannot ever happen again. Discursively the United States, through president Bush, declared that in terms of security, the United States only recognized allies and enemies in the post-9/11

³ “But whatever sad episodes exist in our past, any objective observer must hold a positive view of American history, a history that has been the story of hopes fulfilled and dreams made into reality” (Reagan 1983).

⁴ As the winner of last great struggle between civilizations it was entitled to do so (Huntington 1999; Fukuyama 2007, 101-102).

world (Bush 2001). Those civilians and soldiers captured through the course of going after the terrorist threat were classified as threats as securitization demanded. Even if they had not been directly involved in terrorist activities, they might have information that would pre-empt new attacks on American soil (Wheeler 2003). President Bush introduced in what has become known as the Bush Doctrine the right of the US for pre-emptive and preventative military action: the USA is justified in striking first before the danger materializes (Bush 2002)

Accordingly, the Bush administration engaged in an active process to work around the various legal statutes or conventions⁵ that would limit the intelligence apparatus of the US from gather crucial intelligence, and to discursively legitimate this policy. The context surrounding torture had to be reworked and subjectively rephrased to dull the discursive unambiguity of the prohibition on torture. The focus was moved from human rights to speculative security (McKeown 2009, 6, 13). The general argument relied heavily on explicit exceptionalism: since the WoT formed exceptional circumstances, the standing laws, norms or conventions were not applicable, and such no breaches of them were possible (Sands 2009, 126; Foot 2006, 133). After the attacks, the United States openly reframed the conflict accordingly; President Bush said that "In this conflict, America faces an enemy who has no regard for conventions of war or rules of morality" (Bush 2003b).

However, a more careful reading reveals that the conventions do, in fact, take into account states of exception caused by terrorism (see e.g. Sands 2009, 86, 89-90). Nigel Rodley summarizes humanitarian argument as follows: "The prohibition against torture [...] could not be formulated in more absolute terms", further stating that, "there can be no excuses, no attenuating circumstances" (Rodley 1987, 55). Even the so called ticking time bomb scenario, which has captivated popular imaginations, has been addressed (Rodley 1987, 75). Indeed, the clauses in the convention have been formed specifically to defuse exceptionalist arguments. These prohibitions stand even if other parties in aggression have not signed on to these conventions (UN-CAT 1985).

⁵ The United States is party to the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UN-CAT 1985) which, was interestingly enough, promoted by the conservative president Ronald Reagan in his time (Reagan, 1988).

Regardless of these safeguards, torture was quickly institutionalized through the torture memos (Scheppelle 2004) through an extensive discursive campaign where the ticking time bomb scenario became the dominant de facto context for intelligence gathering. In other words, in the WoT, securitized politics recognized nothing else but imminent attacks, and assumed that the captives⁶ would have critical information. As such, torture became intuitively the only way to secure this information quickly (McKeown 2009, 36). Despite the implausibility of every single interrogation or captive entailing hundreds if not thousands of lives hanging in the balance, this was the way how torture could be discursively repackaged (Luban, 2005; van Dijk 2008, 255).

Similarly, since the word 'torture' was not used, and instead the euphemism of 'enhanced interrogation' was disseminated through the chain of command⁷, the interrogators were invited to (morally) distance themselves from the act of torture by renaming it. Bandura (1999; 2002) also notes that dehumanizing (and othering⁸) the enemy, through discourse as authoritative as presidential speeches, has previously been, and also was in this case, a key way of legitimizing one's own actions by setting selective points of comparison that didn't refer to any liberal or humanitarian values. Because the opposition was so unquestionably evil, its opponents could do no real harm. Moreover, the barbaric enemy that gave no quarter would deserve none either (Laitinen 2005, 46; Foot 2006, 134).

We should not, however, assume that there was no resistance to this change in policy and mindset. Later exhaustive reports (e.g. *United States' Senate Select Committee on Intelligence* 2014) note that professional interrogators saw this shift as extremely problematic. After the inauguration of the first Obama presidency there were clear signs of retreat from some aspects of WoT securitization rhetoric after prisoner abuses were brought to light. The state of exception was

⁶ The torture memos classified all captives as enemy combatants, not prisoners of war, who would have very limited or no legal protections (Scheppelle 2004, 44-48).

⁷ When in doubt, soldiers tend to rely heavily on the chain of command to enforce their beliefs that whatever it is they're doing is for the good of their country (Sands 2009, 80).

⁸ Discursive hegemony creates political frontiers, where antagonism is essential for construction (an 'Other' as juxtapositioned identity limiting policy practices: Howarth 2010, 313).

significantly diminished as a discursive weapon as it was arguably wielded too readily to legitimize for example to war against Iraq. Buzan and Wæver (2009, 274) note that the popular view of the WoT no longer allows for the unquestioning implementation of securitization policy and discourse. In other words, with the redaction of the torture memos and the re-establishment of institutions regarding interrogation made the previously dominant security discourse untenable. This is not to say exceptionalism no longer dominates the use of power in American power politics, but rather that it has moved from torture to new fields, such as drone warfare.

5. Tortured discourse

To great extent, the security discourse in regards to torture relied on tacit recognition of an exceptional threat that required exceptional means, but also offered assurance that the US, as an exceptional country itself, could handle this. This aspect was repeated extensively in American pop-culture in addition to political and media attention, increasing the salient understanding of exceptional times and means (Poutanen 2012). The TV show *24*, for example, served to showcase and implicitly legitimize torture as the means of getting actionable intelligence from captives (Lithwick 2008) within the inherent discursive persuasiveness of the ticking time bomb scenario, where submitting one person to torture would save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

The success of *24* in influencing and outright supporting security discourse was notable to the extent that it influenced US military training (Sands 2009) with the Pentagon having to explicitly ask the writers for *24* to tone down the plotlines where torture was portrayed as standard operating procedure (Mayer 2007). Previously torture was solely in the realm of the villains in pop culture, but in the era of WoT, even American heroes – reluctantly of course – could engage in torture when the audience knows that a) the subject is a terrorist and b) he definitely has the necessary intelligence. The audiences would find themselves suddenly rooting for the torturer to break his subject finally down (Foot 2006). As such, they were made complicit in the very real practices that

happened in American detention centers (or those run by proxy). As long as the popular discourse supported the Bush administration, it could act more freely.

The first legitimization crisis of the program arguably coincided with the increasing information of prisoner abuse in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, and the release of the torture memos to the public. The torture memos were leaked into public (see *The New York Times* 2009a/b) and they were also officially reviewed and rejected by formal committees (*Committee on Armed Services* 2008/2009⁹). Torture as an institution is yet banned (White House 2009) again found morally repellent, but the individuals the Obama administration has been remarkably reluctant to prosecute those individuals that enabled officially sanctioned torture to take place. "We did a whole lot of things that were right, but *we tortured some folks*. We did *some things* that were contrary to our values." (White House 2014; emphasis added).

Regardless, the US holds its own exceptionalism a key part of its national identity, which includes continuing to act as global leader in establishing and maintaining order:

In all that we do, we will advocate for and advance the basic rights upon which our Nation was founded, and which peoples of every race and region have made their own. We promote these values by living them, including our commitment to the rule of law. [...] [O]ur support for universal rights is both fundamental to American leadership and a source of our strength in the world. (White House 2010).

It seems somewhat questionable to make claims on global moral leadership with very little in the way of taking moral responsibility.

Previous cases of torture (e.g. in Chile or Argentina) have been followed by admissions of culpability and attempts to take responsibility, as is required by the adherence to international norms (McKeown 2009, 10). However in the US, in terms of accountability, John Yoo and Jay Bybee the most prolific authors of the memos were found in an internal review of the US Department of Justice guilty of a lapse in judgement, but not of any actual crime or felony (*United States Department of Justice, Office of Professional Responsibility* 2009). The men involved are far

⁹ The committee report notes, for example, rather dubious reclassifications of legal form: "Violent acts aren't necessarily torture; if you do torture, you probably have a defense; and even if you don't have a defense, *the torture law doesn't apply if you act under the color of presidential authority*" (p. xvi, emphasis added).

from repentant: Doug Feith, also involved in the crafting of the torture memos, told Philippe Sands in an interview, that to attack the United States was to “attack the moral authority of one of the few governments that is entitled to moral authority” (Sands 2009, 231). This statement would seem to speak volumes of how ingrained exceptionalism was in the thinking of G.W. Bush era neoconservatives (Halper & Clarke 2004).

In public former Bush administration officials have claimed that the new interrogation techniques were crucial in the acquisition of significant intelligence, which could not have been acquired through other means. They argue that given the nature of the clandestine services, regrettably no such information or concrete examples can be published. These operatives, which include e.g. vice-president Richard Cheney, who stand most to lose from authorizing illegal activities as official policy, also hold on to the information that could exonerate or incriminate them.

Eugene Robinson comments the evident problems within this line of argumentation:

The fallacy lies in the fact that it is impossible for [former vice-president] Cheney to prove that anti-terrorism methods within the bounds of U.S. law and tradition would have failed to prevent new attacks, as he has attempted to do in the press in April-May of 2009. Nor, for that matter, can Cheney demonstrate that torture and other abuses were particularly effective (Robinson 2009).

Indeed, no uncontroversial concrete evidence over the efficacy of torture – that could hope to legitimize it – has been put forth in reviews, books, or reports thus far (see e.g. Sands 2009, 177; *United States' Senate Select Committee on Intelligence* 2014). Various stakeholders have also made statements that directly counter any claims over the efficacy of torture to the point of claiming they were more than anything detrimental to established practices and norms regarding interrogation (Shane 2009; Isikoff 2009; Soufan 2009). The use of torture and the breach of norm have, in fact, made it harder to proceed according to due legal processes, highlighting the implications of temporary dominance of security discourse over legal practice.

In the light of the idealistic positive exceptionalism, in which the US likes to view itself as the moral leader of the free world, the fallout of these practices is clearly problematic. Addressing the

reality of torture causes arguably a crisis of identity, as it entails admitting that its position as a shining city on a hill has been compromised, and that it doesn't hold an inherent higher moral ground when compared to other countries. Like torture itself by the torturers, the act in its abstract sense is distanced from official US policy and represented as individual misjudgments, rather than officially sanctioned practice (Bandura 2002; McKeown 2009, 17), despite the fact that documents that originated from the Department of Justice are nothing but official policy documents.

In essence, the argumentative structure of torture defenders lacks any physical or material evidence, and exists solely in the realm of discourse (arguably as ideology). A critical analysis would find that the argumentation put forth hinges heavily on whether or not one subscribes to a (mythical) national identity. Given that this identity is greatly shared, despite the neoconservatives falling from power, not even president Obama's administration seems willing to openly call for restitution. Some commentators find this would be extremely problematic given how strongly Republican neoconservatives hold onto securitization policy (Shane 2013). Ironically, in the US any discourse that would question American exceptionalism would in itself be exceptional. Instead, by engaging in drone warfare, the Obama administration has maintained American exceptionalism in the continued conflict that keeps security discourse constantly underscoring foreign affairs¹⁰.

6. Security discourse analysis

Discourse analysis in itself has been a feature of analyzing securitization politics from the early stages of its definition by the CPH School. Security discourse was a staple of politics during the Cold War, but was temporarily suspended as it lost some of its meaning at its end. Arguably pre-9/11 US foreign policy was much more optimistic and idealistic in nature (Scheppelle 2004).

Securitization cannot happen without considerable discursive priming, where the audiences' receptivity to security discourse (or rhetoric) is constructed (McDonalds 2008, 574). In the case of

¹⁰ The Obama administration has ruled that "imminent" threat, which would be grounds for mobilizing a drone strike at a target that would pose a threat to the United States doesn't have to be de facto imminent (*United States Department of Justice* 2013).

terrorism, however, the familiar tropes of Cold War discourse fell readily back into use; the WoT should be seen as a part of a longer continuum of security discourse (Wheeler 2003).

The problem of the CPH School has been, despite later attempts to broaden securitization theory beyond the momentary intentionality of a single actor and the way discourse itself has been dealt with in the theory as simple oration. A degree of critical methodological rigor and addressing the encompassing form of discourse has been found lacking by many scholars (see e.g. McDonalds 2008; Strizel 2012) who seek to expand the field of discourse that is engaged in securitization politics to include a variety of actors and institutions over a longer period of time (Salter & Piché 2011).

Previous research following the theory outlined by the CPH School has approached securitization security discourse from various approaches regarding securitization between states, such as investigating political discursive strategies in presidential speeches regarding preventive war as a strategy of fear (Ferrari 2007, 620; Wheeler 2003), the politicization of discursive spaces around security concerns in Norway (Jensen 2012), or applying critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics on extensive security operations involved with the London 2012 Olympics (MacDonald & Hunter 2013).¹¹ Given the pervasive and nearly ever-present nature of security as a political corn, taking a more holistic approach to security discourse is necessary. The contextual significance of securitization and discursive intertextuality creates interplay securitization between the political and popular imaginations (Williams 2003). The complicity of popular culture is necessary for security discourse to achieve the necessary power of articulating a new hierarchy of political concerns.

Buzan and Wæver (2009, 266) note that “a certain vagueness is probably often necessary for a macrosecuritisation, especially when the threat is not manifest and material” with a noted lack of specificity, which can be interpreted as another discursive measure to remain unbound by

¹¹ Research into more social aspects of securitization can be found, for example, in an analysis of the securitization of organized crime (Strizel 2012) and the discursive securitization of poverty (Lorenzo-Dus & Marsh 2012). Also environmental issues can be subsumed under securitization concerns (Hajer & Versteeg 2005; Hartmann 2010).

definitions of what can and can't be done in the interests of security. Analyses focusing specifically on the WoT tend to focus on the inherently problematic nature of securitization and security discourse as blunt instruments of hard power, that do not necessarily capture the complex reality of modern, asymmetrical security threats.

The credibility of the United States has suffered considerably as a global leader promoting moral principles and the rule of war throughout the WoT: “moral authority is not a product of pious pronouncements or noble intent. Nor is it earned through moral-sounding policies that fail to deliver moral results” (Lord and Saunders 2013). The old alliances forged in the 20th century – barring the rise of a belligerent Russia – are not taken as granted as they were before. The way the US has perceived threats and resorted to force in resolving its foreign policy goals has created a rift between the US and its western allies, arguably less inclined (or less well positioned) to utilize securitization policy (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 258)¹².

Neoconservative American exceptionalism as defined by the Bush Doctrine security discourse diminishes those international institutions that have been set up to protect national stability. The implicit cognitive dissonance of a security discourse that asks other nations to accept American exceptionalism is softened by the Bush Doctrine's discursively represented willingness to shoulder the burden global security: “Once again, this nation and all our friends are all that stand between a world at peace, and a world of chaos and constant alarm. Once again, we are called to defend the safety of our people, and the hopes of all mankind. And we accept this responsibility” (Bush 2003c). In essence, the US sets itself up here as a global sovereign in Schmittian terms (Wheeler 2003, 209).

Promoting a simple moral discourse of the complex world of international relations has served the US poorly, even if it feeds into American exceptionalism and by that extension the American national identity (Jackson 2011). One could even claim that the US has become trapped by its own exceptionalism, subjecting it to the idealism of positive exceptionalism – which is extremely

¹² Kim Scheppelle argues that many US allies saw “9/11 not as a moment when the rule of law should be suspended, but precisely a moment when the rule of law needs to be strengthened” (Scheppelle 2004, 3).

difficult to live up to – while the allure of utilizing negative exceptionalism to achieve political goals in the traditions of *realpolitik* remains ever-present. A change in administration cannot be expected to change established institutional discourse completely; the failure of president Obama to follow up on his ambitions as a presidential candidate to dismiss security discourse has been thwarted by the persistence of the WoT.¹³ The War on Terror, like the Cold War preceding it, have become institutionalized and normalized in policy and in American culture.

Studies by Jackson (2009; 2011) and Krebs and Lobasz (2007) have looked into the discursive formations, ideas and ideology of the War on Terror, concluding that the general argument is that “the war against terrorism is necessary, legitimate, proportionate, defensive and just” (Jackson 2011, 393). Solely discursive means by a limited set of actors might not be sufficient if there is no institutional support for them: an event to trigger security discourse may be required to prime the audience: the WoT is “expressed through, and constituted by, first, a set of rhetorical and ideational elements, and second, an array of material practices” (Jackson 2011, 392). There have been, of course, countering narratives to the hegemonic narrative put forth by the Bush administration, but these have lacked political efficacy against the grand narrative, which has been in place ever since the Reagan era (Zalman and Clarke, 2009). This is where CDA as a methodology has great potential in bringing a new methodological approach to the analysis, given the dialectical nature of discourse formation and maintenance as the starting point for CDA.

7. CDA as a tool to approach security discourse

Critical discourse analysis emphasizes the power behind discourse rather than just the power in discourse (how people with power shape the ‘order of discourse’ as well as the social order in general, versus how people with power control what happens in specific interactions such as interviews). It correspondingly emphasizes ideology rather than (just) persuasion and manipulation

¹³ Zalman and Clarke (2009, 102) argue that “virtually all of the main policy planks of the war on terror put into place by the Bush administration are being continued in the new administration”, even if in some ways softer power tools have been discursively emphasized.

(van Dijk 2006; Fairclough 2014). It views discourse as a stake in social struggle as well as a site of social struggle for defining the reality of socio-political challenges, including premises, goals, and the arguments that connect the two. Accordingly, critical discourse analysis would be well versed to investigate the formulation and maintenance of security discourse and formulate a critical and necessary inquiry pertaining to the potential consequences of securitization to politics and society (Laitinen, 2005). If the CPH School has been criticized of dealing with discourses one-sidedly, CDA specifically seeks to avoid overemphasizing the social determination of discourse or the construction of the social in discourse (Fairclough 2014).

In his critique of incomplete security discourse analysis Matt McDonald has pointedly asked why the CPH School hasn't addressed the asymmetry of discursive power; "how are some voices empowered or marginalized to define security and threat?" (McDonald 2008, 573). Arguably CDA as a method would be most beneficial and quite operable here. The effectiveness of resistance to security discourse depends on "people developing a critical consciousness of domination and its modalities" (Fairclough 2014). On a superficial level the preceding analysis has, in fact, juxtaposed the form of securitization and its starting point with its rather controversial outcomes. For example, securitization seeks, through redefining political actors in simplistic categories, to offer an easily digestible worldview that favors decisive action as means to achieve security. Achieve security, note, for that one individual state, at the expense of others, if necessary.

As such, securitization is by default an inviting tool for a hegemon, which can, out of sound judgement or outright paranoia, find itself under constant siege. Aggressive forms of hegemony seek to undermine the status quo, but also alternative fight aggressively for the status quo to preemptively defuse critique (Howarth 2010, 321)¹⁴. Indeed, Laitinen (2004) notes that success in hegemonic securitization policy and security discourse doesn't mean that all threats have been

¹⁴ This can happen both in foreign and domestic policy: Krebs and Jackson (2007) discuss how culturally embedded security discourse into culture could not be countered without appearing unpatriotic, disloyal, or naïve.

eliminated, but that the threats experienced by the hegemon are understood as universally (as is possible) by global community (see also Buzan and Wæver 2009).

In this case, security discourse has clear and concerning consequences as it highlights the use of power and exceptionalism as means to promote and protect US policy aims. Once the discursive model of securitization grips its audience, it becomes naturalized in its practices and institutions, it ceases to be a relation of power and becomes a relation of domination where agents are complicit in their acceptance (and to others may appear as illegitimate or unjust: Howarth 2010, 323). While the practice of torture has been discontinued, its euphemistic representation still enjoys a very high acceptance rate in the United States (*Pew Research Center for the People & the Press 2014*)¹⁵. From a critical perspective, the persistence for support for enhanced interrogation shows how deeply security discourse can capture the imaginations of the citizenry, despite official accounts detailing the reality of the policy (*United States' Senate Select Committee on Intelligence 2014*).

Here CDA could be coupled with the theory of moral disengagement as put forth by Bandura (1999; 2002) to discuss how moral justifications, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparisons or outright dehumanization appear as public legitimating strategies within security discourse. For example, dehumanization would proceed on the principle that if the United States is seen as an exceptional country also the enemies the United States face must be exceptionally evil. Securitization efforts are based on articulation, but if they fail, the efforts are redefined through negotiations and discursive strategies to provide a comprehensive list of legitimating, accentuating circumstances. The list is adapted from Albert Bandura's strategies of moral disengagement (Bandura 1999, 194-201) to cover previously mentioned examples. A close reading of texts defending torture could be, for example, categorized under the following (and subsequent sub-)categories for close readings of security discourse documents.

¹⁵ Luban (2005, 1438-1439) argues that by historical comparison, modern interrogation techniques are represented as "finessed", and as such they might not even be considered torture. In the liberal reimagining of torture it is 1) purely for the purposes of information gathering; 2) the only option at hand; 3) always the exception, not the rule; and 4) torture under these circumstances can be construed as self-defense.

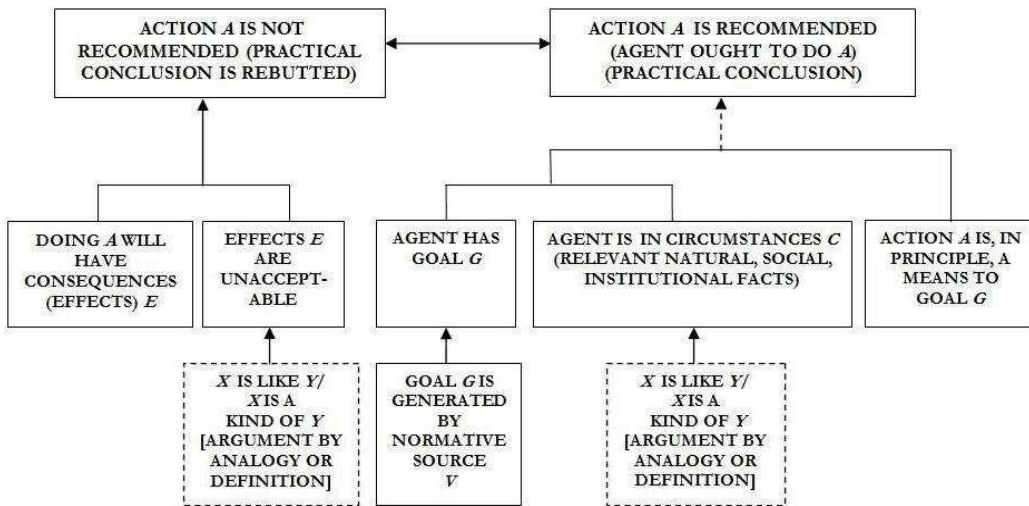
1. The euphemistic label of “enhanced interrogation” will sanitize torture as professionalism (although this wasn’t the case: Isikoff 2009; Soufan 2009)
2. Moral justification can be found coupled with dehumanization, which juxtapositions ‘us’ with ‘them’, making detrimental conduct morally acceptable when it targets barbarians without rules (Bush 2003b).
3. Advantageous comparisons follow from moral justification both in dehumanization (terrorist attacks vs. surgical strikes also borrow from euphemistic labeling) and exceptionalism
4. Displacement of responsibility minimize individual concerns by referring to the chain of command (the torture memos), but also allows blame for abuses to be assigned to subordinates who are portrayed as misguided or overzealous (Abu Ghraib scandal)

Given CDA’s normative perspective, the disconnect between the rationalization of torture and its reality seems both a suitable and necessary point of analysis (as is argued by Fairclough & Fairclough 2012, 95-98). CDA utilizes social realism between material and discursive elements as a nimble interdisciplinary approach, especially comparable in hegemonic analyses. Given that both the CPH School (Buzan et al. 1998, 32-33) and its critics (McDonald 2008, 574) see security discourse often articulated from “a position of institutional power,” CDA would seem to fit the analysis of security discourse quite well. CDA brings in social elements (power, ideologies, etc.) with discourse, and it describes, explains (structures of mechanisms), and assesses the arguments, and is thus normative in nature (Fairclough 2013, 177-178).

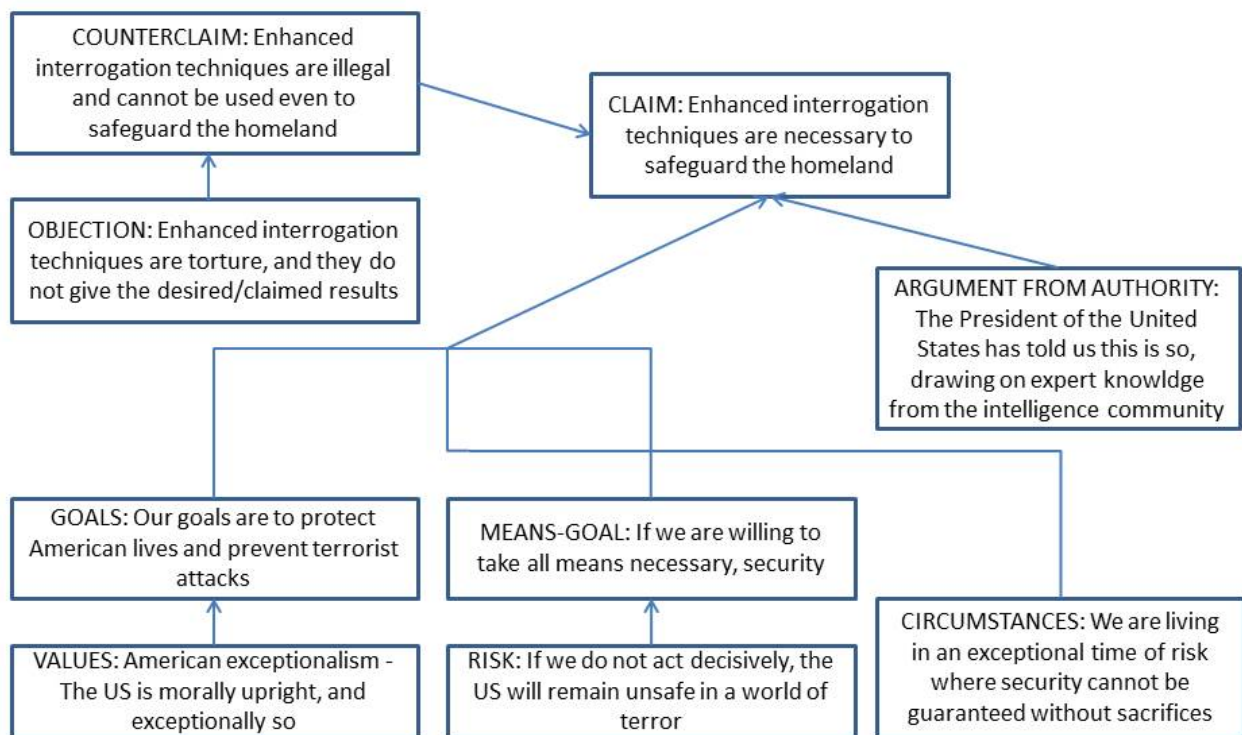
The argumentative turn of CDA also provides us with the chance to submit the arguments presented by those politicians looking to make claims and promote policy through securitization to practical argumentation analysis (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012).¹⁶ The following chart was used

¹⁶ The practical arguments include: a Value premise (underlying values, concerns, morals), a Goal premise (desirable alternative future), a Circumstantial premise (existing state of affairs), a Means–Goal premise and a Claim (or conclusion). The flow charts for constructing these argumentative patterns can be found in Fairclough & Fairclough 2012 or in Fairclough & Fairclough 2011).

by Fairclough & Fairclough (2011, 258) to categorize the dominant argumentation structures of austerity politics:



Following this model, this flow chart can be applied to many public speakers, both politicians and media figures. A similar model could be constructed over the arguments for legitimating torture:



Depending on the selected timeframe, this argumentative structure can be revised to include arguments on a timeline. For example, the figure above illustrates the way that argumentation was

represented in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 (2001-2003). A different argumentative structure could be constructed when taking into account the content and motivations behind the torture memos (2009-2010), and later again from a perspective of hindsight after the publication of several internal reports into the practice and efficacy of torture. We can expect some of the claims arguing for torture to stay the same, but the counterclaims and objections to gather more weight.

Are then, the stated goals pursued by the United States under securitization their real goals? Yes, and no. Within the institutions of security discourse the stated goals are the real goals, but this entails a complete surrender to the ideology of the exceptionalist hegemon. In terms of safeguarding national security, the stated goal is the real goal, even if the means by this is pursued are not sustainable. The stated goal of global security is not at all met, quite the contrary. Here CDA would respond very well to the requirements set by McDonald (2008, 575) to follow security discourse with an analysis that gives space to alternative, even emancipatory discourses¹⁷. Given the persuasive nature of security discourse, a critical discourse analytical approach would seek to offer explanatory critique beyond just a particular event or discourse – thus supplementing securitization theory exactly where it has been most criticized. The explanatory critique of CDA outlines how discourse and non-discursive elements are related to each other in particular ways in organizations, institutions or societies (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999,: 33; 56-59).

In addition to explanatory power, CDA enables systematic critique of the presented argumentation. The earlier quote from Robinson (2009) is a serviceable example of discursive critique that follows the logic of CDA. We can draw on the previous analyses outlined in the sections 2-4 to confirm this following the form critique embedded with argumentative analysis:

(1) criticism of the conclusion of the argument which seeks to reject it by arguing that pursuing the line of action advocated will have consequences that will undermine the goals or values advanced in the argument, or other goals that cannot be compromised; (2) criticism of the validity of the argument on the grounds that there are other (better) means than those advocated for achieving the goals, or indeed other goals, and that if they are added to premises the argument will no longer hold; and (3) criticism of the rational acceptability (or truth) of premises,

¹⁷ Fairclough (1992) notes that one of the aims of CDA is, indeed, emancipatory critique.

e.g., of the way in which the existing state of affairs is represented, interpreted and problematized. (Fairclough 2013, 190)

On all counts of objective analysis over its argumentation structure, securitization runs into immense difficulties. Only if thoroughly embedded in the social reality constructed by a) exceptionalism, b) securitization, and c) institutions producing, reproducing and maintaining security discourse can the argumentative structure they jointly represent be seen to hold up. The assumptions inherent to this argumentative structure, however, cannot withstand critical scrutiny: those who promote torture cannot show its efficacy in a way that doesn't rely on faith; they assume that dominating violence will not invite a countering reaction (arguably the success of ISIS in post-invasion Iraq serves as an example of this); they assume claiming exceptionalism by fiat resonates beyond a narrow interpretation of national identity. This interpretation would seem to hold in particular in the case of the United States; arguably no other nation subscribes as broadly as the US to the idea of national myth of historical exceptionalism.

As such, exceptionalism as part of security discourse has more (institutional) support there, allowing it easier access to a hegemonic, dominating discourse. This is not to say, however, that the argument outlined here is distinctly American. Strong populist movements in any nation can draw on established narratives that quite often emphasize exceptionalism, thus finding through securitization a possible path to power, given the right circumstances. Under the hegemony of security discourse discursively constructed and highlighted external threats become tools of rationalization that forego deliberative decisionmaking that may have long-reaching consequences.

8. Conclusion

The US has – perhaps understandably – consciously sought to impose its own security concerns as universal concerns (in terms of security and morality: White House 2002) to the rest of the world. Philippe Sands points out that international norms that support human rights take decades to build, and it relies on universal moral absolutes (Sands 2009, 185, 270). If these absolutes are reworked

into something that is constantly susceptible to states of exceptionalism, their institutions and discourses erode. When replaced by security discourse by the claimed moral leader of the free world, other countries may take note and also ask for similar allowances when it comes to human rights (Foot 2006, 139; McKeown 2009, 11-12). Additionally, other countries may also respond to securitization policy by reciprocal increases of military tension. Arguably such a situation is already taking place between Russia and the West in the Ukraine.

Security discourse erodes universal norms to the advantage of national interests, which makes its discourse a key interest when it comes to hegemonic constructions of reality that rule out any other interpretations. At the same time the United States is itself captured by this discourse, which politically draws from Reagan's simplistic and ideological moral divisions of good and evil, but also harkens back to a longer tradition of American exceptionalism (Poutanen 2015). Security discourse harnesses positive exceptionalism and its idealism to the use of negative exceptionalism as a legitimating measure of power politics. At the same time negative exceptionalism undercuts American attempts to have its positive exceptionalism accepted. The elements that enable the construction and reproduction of American exceptionalism also constrain the possibilities of seeing major changes in international counterterrorism policies (Jackson 2011, 407).

As discussed in this paper, security discourse and securitization politics have a habit of trying to expand; as established, securitization relates to the politicization of all decisionmaking in terms of security concerns. Social and environmental policies undoubtedly tie in with security, but through securitization this aspect becomes the overriding, even characterizing viewpoint for these policies. Similarly it seems that while appealing in its representation of unambiguous rhetoric and decisive decisionmaking, reliance on securitization is poorly adaptable to long term humanitarian endeavors, such as the promotion of human rights on a global scale.

Security discourse is understandably appealing for politicians to stir up support for policies, but the contextual requirement of a society under siege can obfuscate more complicated problems and

consequences. To some politicians this may be desirable, but from the perspective of deliberative democracy hardly so. From a normative critical perspective, security discourse operates as any dominating discourse – such as austerity discourse – and reproduces the world into the image that it represents. A world defined nations surrounded by threats can be expected to create political solutions that are aggressive and exclusive, as immigration, economy, and other political dimensions are incorporated under security concerns (see e.g. van Dijk 2008). Securitization can also be expected to increase xenophobia and support anti-immigrant discourse found in public, presidential speeches and official policy outlines pertaining to national security.

Critical discourse analysis could be utilized, given its flexibility as a methodology to applied in various fields, to give some analytical robustness to the conception of securitization as put forth by the CPH School. Similarly, given the form of security discourse, it would fall within the interests of critical policy analysis that CDA as a methodology represents. Critical theory should provide critique and solutions/suggestions; this is both explanatory and normative, which clarifies the relationship between policy aims, goals, and their state rationales (Fairclough 2013, 187). This process seeks in its simplest form to identify internal contradictions within the social reality, including those between what is supposed or said to happen and what actually does happen.

Following Fairclough, critical policy analysis should clarify political and ideological characteristics of problematizations, especially dominant ones (see also: Howarth and Griggs 2012: 337). Applying CDA would help scholars with US interests to better understand the way securitization and negative exceptionalism are entwined in a way that is costly to the United States' image abroad. It would further help to understand and motivate normative attempts towards desecuritization. Within CDA the connection between normative critique of discourse and praxis is provided through explanatory critique, which shows normatively flawed discourse to be part of flawed aspects of the represented reality, which therefore need to be changed (Fairclough 2014).

Clearly, from the perspective of deliberative democracy – which remains a key CDA ideal – securitization is close to anathema. The citizenry will be held captive by securitization policy and discourse, which in times of exceptional crisis may be legitimate in the Machiavellian sense of the ends justifying the means, but as Schmitt noted, a crisis should be clearly defined and once it has passed, a return to normalcy should follow. Securitization lends itself too readily to power politics to consider it a neutral political and discursive strategy. Arguably soft power approaches would be conducive for long-term stability in the international system than the application of hard power which tends to beget oppositional responses.

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