

# Extraordinary Measures: Drone Warfare, Securitization, and the “War on Terror”

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The use of unmanned aerial vehicles or “drones,” as part of the United States’ (US) targeted killing (TK) program dramatically increased after the War on Terror (WoT) was declared. With the ambiguous nature and parameters of the WoT, and stemming from the postulation of numerous low-level, niche-, and other securitizations producing a monolithic threat, US drone operations now constitute a vital stitch in the extensive fabric of US counterterrorism policy. This article employs the theories of securitization and macro-securitization as discussed by Buzan (1991, 2006), and Buzan and Wæver (2009) to understand targeted killing, by means of weaponized drones, as an extraordinary measure according to the Copenhagen School’s interpretation. An overarching securitization and the use of the “security” label warrants the emergency action of targeted killing through the use of drones as an extraordinary measure. We argue that the WoT serves as a means of securitizing global terrorism as a threat significant enough to warrant the use of drone warfare as an extraordinary use of force. By accepting the WoT as a securitization process we can reasonably accept that the US’ response(s) against that threat are also securitized and therefore become extraordinary measures.

**Key words:** Copenhagen School, existential threat, extraordinary measures, Security Theory (ST)

Používanie bezpilotných lietadiel alebo „Dronov“, ako súčasť amerického programu cieľeného zabíjania (TK)<sup>1</sup>, sa dramaticky zvýšila vo vojne, ktorá bola vyhlásená proti teroru (War on Terror – WOT). V kontexte parametrov, povahe WOT, a vychádzajúc z rôznych postulátov a sekuritizácií, americké „drony“ predstavujú zásadný prvok v rozsiahlej štruktúre protiteroristickej politiky USA. Predkladaný článok využíva teórie sekuritizácie a makro-sekuritizácie, podľa Buzan (1991, 2006), a Buzan a Wæver (2009), ktoré tieto aktivity definujú ako cieľené zabíjanie prostredníctvom ozbrojených dronov, v kontexte s výnimočným opatrením a to v súlade s výkladom kodanskej školy. Na druhej strane sa tieto „núdzové akcie“, ktoré sa vyznačujú cieľením zabíjaním ospravedlňujú cez núdzové opatrenie a skrývajú sa za tzv. „bezpečnostné záujmy“. V rámci tohto článku sa domnievame, že WOT slúži ako prostriedok sekuritizácie globálneho terorizmu, respektíve hrozbu ktorá dostatočne ospravedlňuje používanie „dronov“ ako mimoriadnej sily. V prípade, že budeme akceptovať WOT ako proces sekuritizácie, je možné pripustiť aj skutočnosť, že odpoveď (e) Spojených Štátov Amerických proti tomuto ohrozeniu budú sekuritizované a stanú sa mimoriadnymi opatreniami.

**Kľúčové slová:** Kodanská škola, existenčná hrozba, mimoriadne opatrenia, bezpečnostné teórie

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## Introduction

The Bush administration's so-called "Global War on Terror" ([G]WoT) was an immediate response to al-Qaeda's (AQ) deadly assault against the United States (US) in 2001. The terrorist networks attacks were the impetus for the development of the US-led military campaign that sought to eliminate AQ and its affiliate terrorist organizations and cells in all global corridors. International in scope and with the support of the United Kingdom (UK), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and nearly half of the world's national governments, the WoT became a security superstructure and the driving principle behind US foreign policy that continues to impact the international system to this day. Buzan (2006, 1102) noted in "Will the 'Global War on Terrorism' be the New Cold War?" that with the framing of the WoT as a "long war" or another long *durée*, we are in the middle of a securitizing move that is of considerable magnitude that, "could structure global security for some decades, in the process helping to legitimize US primacy." The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon over a decade ago were set as the WoT's point of departure, yet one of the most prevalent features was its indeterminate end point – the difficulty in establishing the indefinable act of US victory in addition to absence of any clearly explained objectives of the "war" (Zalman & Clarke 2009). With its indeterminable parameters of time, focus on an "enemy" more akin to a concept not confined to national borders, and distinct legal and ideological infrastructure, security practitioners and theorists have regarded the former-WoT as one of the strangest and most unique "wars" in history (Zalman & Clarke 2009). For the most part, it is comparable only to the Cold War as a macrosecuritization that drew upon and tied together multiple interrelated issues to form a cluster of security concerns.

One of the critiques of the WoT was that it was not a war on a specified terrorist organization, such as that of AQ. Instead, the WoT seemingly allowed the Bush administration to declare war on any organizations that it deemed fit that utilized "terror tactics." Insurgent organizations affiliated with AQ assume a globalized identity, but are still regionally oriented. The American government has a *carte blanche* to involve American security forces around the globe in counterterrorism (CT) and counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. The open-ended objective of eliminating globalized terrorism permits the WoT to go on indefinitely.

The idea of the WoT and its explicit "long war" framing as a securitizing move was studied by the Copenhagen School's Buzan (2006) directly and Buzan and Wæver (2009) indirectly during its height in 2006, when the war in Afghanistan was experiencing considerable set-backs and shortly after the Obama administration came to power and brought with it not only a continuation of Bush's drone campaign but also a remarkable surge in drone operations with more drone strikes having taken place in

2009 than in the previous eight years of the WoT (New America Foundation, 2013). The WoT proved to be a successful macrosecuritization measure by the US (Buzan 2006, 1103; Kelstrup 2004). This was made possible partially as a result of AQ and its violent ideology having been widely accepted as a threat to Western civilization from within and outside of the Islamic world. With over 60 states that actively supported the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), over 30 states having sent forces in Iraq alongside American troops, and nearly 40 states having committed varying degrees of their forces to the campaign in Afghanistan, the WoT was a macrosecuritization success and structuring global security framework that securitized the issue of terrorism that threatened Western liberal democracy (Western civilization more broadly). The WoT simultaneously strengthened the primacy of the securitizing actor (in this case the US).

As a political instrument that was able to facilitate and justify US primacy, leadership, and to a lesser-extent unilateralism to both American and foreign public spheres as well as elites. Having securitized the threat of transnational terrorism, the WoT featured numerous extraordinary measures. Chief among these were and continue to be intervention and military campaign in Iraq and Afghanistan, long-term military occupations and presence in both of those countries, human rights violations including extreme forms of interrogation and torture (i.e., the Central Intelligence Agency's [CIA] policy of Rendition, Detention, Interrogation [RDI]), a reduction of civil liberties including phone-tapping and excessive surveillance measures, and even the acceptability of excessive collateral damage in order to meet the vague objectives of the WoT security program (Record 2003; Council of Europe [CoE] 2011). One of the most, if not the most, controversial measures employed during the WoT (and still to this day with no sign of abating) is the use of drones in America's targeted killing (TK) operations (Roth 2012).

This article employs the theories of securitization and macrosecuritization as discussed at length by Buzan and Wæver so as to view TK, including the use of drone warfare, as an extraordinary measure according to the Copenhagen School's interpretation. The object of this article is to examine how an overarching securitization and the use of the "security" label can warrant emergency action such as TK as an extraordinary use of force. The argument is presented that the WoT served as a means of securitizing global terrorism as a threat significant enough to legitimize the use of drones in this capacity. By considering the WoT as a securitization process that securitizes threats against Western liberal democracy we can understand that the West's responses against that threat are also securitized and therefore become extraordinary measures. Thus, as the threat presented by AQ was securitized by the US, a number of measure were moved out of the realm of politics and became entered the realm of security politics.

This article consists of six parts. First, we introduce the Copenhagen School and

how it engages with the theme of security (i.e., securitization theory [ST]). Second, although the Copenhagen School does not directly deal with the issue of threat, we proceed by linking the concept of security with threat within the context of international terrorism and the WoT. Third, we introduce the WoT as a securitization program that establishes a range of threats against the US. Fourth, we discuss extraordinary measures and political measures, and terrorism as an exceptional threat. In the final sections, we present a discussion of a host of emergency actions as they relate to the WoT with emphasis in this part placed on the use of weaponized drones and unmanned military systems. We argue that although drone warfare has not been securitized it has become securitized due to the fact that international terrorism has been securitized and therefore represents an exceptional threat that requires extraordinary measures to combat.

### **Copenhagen School and Security**

We employ the theory of securitization as this article's main theoretical basis. The theory was developed by a group of scholars<sup>3</sup> working within the field of security studies and whose work is collectively referred to as the "Copenhagen School" – the product of what is seen through the (classical) political realist perspective as the competitive and conflictual side of international politics, and the historical and socially constructed world (Williams 2003). Security theory examines the diverse character of security in five ways, those of: military, political, economic, environmental, and societal (i.e., non-military sources of threat and political versus military) (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998). The unique value of the theory of security, developed in part by Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, lies in its rejection of more traditionalist tendencies to confine the concept and practice of security to a single area (the wide versus narrow debate). The debate is an outgrowth of the "dissatisfaction with the intense narrowing of the field of security studies imposed by the military and nuclear obsessions of the Cold War" (Buzan et al. 1998, 3).

Security theory upholds the view that a distinct brand of politics can be applied to a far-reaching spectrum of issues within international relations (IR), revealing new agendas such as terrorism and other asymmetrical sources of threat. A very useful constructivist operational method is made available to social science researchers and scholars through the Copenhagen School's take on security that allows for differentiating between the more conventional process of politicization and that of securitization (i.e., the act of speaking about something as exceptional, falling beyond the realm of regular politics), (Buzan et al. 1998, 29). Because of the relationship between the meaning of security and social construction, we can understand, which actors can securitize and exactly what they can securitize (Abulof 2014; Wæver, Buzan, Kelstrup & Lemaitre 1993).

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3 Ole Wæver formulated this term and first used it in 1995. Since then, the term has become routinely used within the various strands of constructivism.



Figure 1. The Securitization “Spectrum” (Buzan et al. 1998; Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2010).

In the words of Magnusson (2012), “securitization represents an exit from the normal bound of politics, to a place where the rules and norms that restrict options for action are quite different,” and are seen as necessary in properly mitigating the threat that has been framed. Many aspects of the Cold War were securitized so as to legitimize the use of military intervention, excessive use of force, prolonged commitment of forces overseas, and even the potential application of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons (Buzan & Wæver 2009). Notwithstanding the production and deployment of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons to face the growing threat of Communism to the West and Capitalism to the East, nuclear weapons became a security threat. Therefore, “the securitization of nuclear weapons,” as noted by Buzan and Wæver (2009, 270), “was a counterpoint to the securitization of the other side embodied in deterrence theory.

These issues predominantly focus on the military aspects of interstate relations, and generally highlight the military dimensions of security. However, it is critical to note that notions of security (the threat and the referent object challenged by it) extend well beyond these parameters (Williams 2003; Abrahamsen & Williams 2009; Ayoub 1997). The most important points remain that securitization is a process built upon the understanding that a particular (illocutionary) speech act takes place during its process (Wæver 2004; Vuori 2008; Taureck 2006). Securitization as an empirical theory does not adhere to the concept of linear causality given that often times within IR there exists far too complex of phenomena to operate in this way.

The Copenhagen School’s formulation of ST does rest on several weak foundations. ST’s under-theorization of several aspects of the overall process including the relationship between the securitizing actor and the audience (i.e., the role of the audience) is one of its weaknesses (Barthwal-Datta 2009; Balzacq 2005; McDonald 2008; Stritzel 2007; Wilkinson 2007; Léonard & Kaunert 2011). Exactly who constitutes this audience and the manner in which the acceptance of a security concern raised by elites is assessed by social scientists contributes to the *problematique* (Léonard & Kaunert 2011; Wæver 2003). Audience also requires a clear definition so as to facilitate smoother processes of investigation that do not fall victim to misinterpretation (Léonard & Kaunert 2011; Wæver 2003). A major criticism that has been waved against the Copenhagen School’s interpretation of security rests in the idea of creating a typology of security and the legitimization of different responses to those threats.

Further criticism can be made against the Copenhagen School for its slender focus maintained on the speech act and that security exists outside of this discourse-action order as well as its neglect of the historical and social contexts that facilitate the development of security issues, and the construction of security within the larger realm of global politics and global political systems. However, the approach of the Copenhagen School has been fruitful in building a general analytical framework that

can be liberally applied to topics that range from immigration, health, the rights of minorities, and the WoT (McDonald 2008).

Traditionally, efforts to confront threats (whether in the form of terrorism or other violent groups) focused considerably on social, behavioral, and legal aspects (see Ghosh, Prelas, Viswanath & Loyalka 2009), yet efforts reach beyond these intangible devices, making use of the valuable technological developments of the modern world. Science and technology are just as practical considerations in confronting threats to the state and national security as social inventions. This should hardly be surprising given the degree to which technological tools have been applied, especially since the early years of the WoT. Technology is, as Balzaqc, Basaran, Bigo, Guittet, and Ollson (2010) state:

[t]echnology is a basic form of capacity tool. The police, the military, and intelligence services consistently resort to technological tools, including biometrics, drones, and wiretapping. Technology is generally presented as the means by which security will be better achieved. Nothing is less sure than the idea that technology will eventually help in improving security. Nonetheless, it remains that the massive resort to technological tools by the police, the military, and intelligence agencies has a profound impact on both security practices and the very structure of the modern state's security apparatuses.

The sociological and technological aspects of security and securitization help to provide balance to an approach that, if completely based on the Copenhagen School, would overwhelmingly "reduce practices to discursive practices" (Balzaqc, et al. 2010). While we anchor this research in the Copenhagen School and its ST outgrowth, we should like to underscore the necessity of this balance. We recognize, as well, that security and securitization are loaded concepts, which thus are likely to remain highly contested terms. This contestation has brought to light the necessity of further exploration of security but this has not gone far enough (see Baldwin 1997; Connolly 1999).

### **Threat and (In)Security**

The bipolarity and climate of two competing hegemonic superpowers with their own distinct and competing ideological served the basis for analysts understanding of security for decades prior to 1991. After the Soviet empire dissolved, a conceptual footing for many security analysts was lost, and the world of international relations was shot instantly into a state of radical flux, uncertainty from the point of foreign policy, and an extensive threat deficit on the part of the US (Buzan 2006, 1101 and 1103). The drastic decline that took place in military threats among Western powers was once

viewed as a void that would be nearly (if not entirely) impossible to fill. As Buzan (2006, 1101) explains, “[t]he terrorist attacks of 9/11 offered a solution to this problem, and right from the beginning the WoT had the feel of a big idea that might provide a long-term cure for Washington’s threat deficit.”

Security has constantly remained a question of contention and the center of debate among international relationists and security scholars. Although more traditional definitions of security often compete with newer and still emerging conceptions of this term, simply put, security is the achievement of a state of freedom from threat and the capacity for a state or society to adequately preserve its identity and functional integrity against a hostile force (Buzan 1991, 432). Buzan (1991, 432-3) argues that:

[t]he bottom line of security is survival, but it also reasonably includes a substantial range of concerns about the conditions of existence. Quite where this range of concerns ceases to merit the urgency of the “security” label (which identifies threats as significant enough to warrant emergency action and [extraordinary] measures including the use of force) and becomes part of everyday uncertainties of life is one of the difficulties of the concept.

One of the most important connecting factors between the concepts of security and that of threat lies in the view that states constantly strive to maintain their survival and the preservation of referent objects in the face of threat. Security is therefore clearly understood as a threat to a referent object and is comprised of the subsequent securitization of such threats regardless of whether those threats can adequately be classified as military or non-military in nature. A particular issue can appropriately be designated a security issue because of its salience and the perception that other issues are not as important in addition to the issues requiring action that lies beyond conventional political measures. Before the practice of securitizing an issue has taken place an audience needs to accept the speech act made by the actor otherwise the actor has undertaken a securitizing move. One of the primary questions to emerge in the face of such a move is whether or not a referent object is important enough in its survival to warrant an extraordinary measure.

### **Security and Securitization: From the Cold War to the WoT**

When the Cold War came to a rather abrupt end, the US was suddenly found itself operating within the international system deprived of a clearly defined strategic purpose, principle aim for its external policy, and could hardly find the existence of a marked threat against which it would be forced to defend itself and many of its interests

at home and abroad. The US' endeavors to replace the Soviet Union as its ideological opposite and main political and military opponent of four decades previously has been explicated by Buzan (2006) having turned to several other avenues to accommodate this new reality. The US turned its sights to Japan (with the view that Japan would emerge as the new economic superpower), followed by China (a Communist state that possessed the capability of becoming the most powerful state actor in the Asia-Pacific region given its economic potential and powerful military), Islamic states (that potentially threaten the foundations of Western liberal democracy), and considered the persistence of rogue states (given that states like North Korea, Iran, Cuba, Syria, Libya, and Serbia under the leadership of Slobodan Milošević) that were well-armed, unstable, and demonstrated a palpable risk to a global order. These states were considered viable options for aiding in the construction of a new threat for the US to contend with.

It is difficult to overstate the securitization program that emerged as a result of Cold War tension. Conflict short of outright war and the use of arms between the two main superpowers directly during the Cold War helped contribute to a securitizing process of unprecedented breadth and depth. It can be argued that the previous form of American unilateralism, singular leadership, and defender of Western principle and values that were considered the future witnessed during the Cold War had substantially influenced the hard security path of the US during in the post-Cold War era and further on into the era of the WoT. Although the US allied itself with other liberal democracies that held the same view about the Soviet Union and Communism as a threat, the US was the sole organizer and overall frontrunner of the ideological conflict from 1945 to 1991. Until the final days of the Cold War, the US considered itself the voice of principled and democratic societies the world over. Washington and the various US administration operating there acted on the belief that the US retained "the right and the duty to speak and act for humankind, and this claim was, up to a point, accepted in much of the rest of the West (Buzan 2006, 1103).

The securitization program of the Cold War was comprehensive in scope. Tension and armed conflict arose indirectly between the US and the Soviet Union (i.e., proxy wars with the most notable and classic being the Arab-Israeli Conflict [1948-present], the Korean War [1950-3], the Suez Crisis [1956-7], Vietnam [1957-75], and the Afghan-Soviet War [1979-89]), however, much of the conflict that took place during this period was not as a result of the superpowers intention to engage in war. The macrosecuritization of the Cold War was overwhelming and had a great impact on the securitization of threats so as to warrant the use of open and armed conflict in many parts of the world. Soviet nuclear tests and technological development was securitized, warranting the construction of a vast arsenal of nuclear warheads by the US. Strategic missile submarines, military intervention and counter-intervention, instigation of foreign civil wars, conventional weapons proliferation and counter-proliferation (i.e.

the arms race), and development of other weapons of mass-destruction (WMDs) such as radiological, biological, and chemical weapons were seen by US and Soviet policymakers as answers to these and other threats as a result of extensive securitization agendas for decades (Mastny, Holtsmark & Wenger 2006; Sapolsky, Gholz & Kaufman 1999).

Even though policymakers and military strategists within both the East and the West during the Cold War could only speculate at best about the potential outcome of their planning and decisions, including their responses to every move made by the other superpower, the Cold War was states Mastny (2006, 15), “a potential war in the making, and imagining such a war was what the belligerents’ military strategy was about.” This logic in part was carried forward into the post-Cold War interlude and well into that of the 9/11 decade and beyond (i.e., the post post-9/11 period). This term is associated with Benjamin Schwartz, Deputy Director for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, who spoke of the lessons that followed from AQ attack against the US in 2001 and the broad impact of those lessons in a discussion entitled “The Post Post-9/11 World: What We Have Learned and How Those Lessons Shape US Foreign Policy Today” at Brown University’s Watson Institute on April 24, 2014. Postulating the intentions of non-state actors, their capabilities to strike against the US, not through an equal measure of conventional measures, but through asymmetrical warfare, the targeting of sensitive and vulnerable infrastructure and sources of economic prosperity, growth, and drive of Western states was part of the framing of the WoT securitization program.

Treating the WoT as a “long war” can be seen as a securitizing move of significance. Buzan and Wæver (2009) discuss the WoT in terms of a macrosecuritization, referring to this as something that, “speak[s] to referent objects higher than those at the middle level (for example, ‘universal religions or political ideologies; one or more of the primary institutions of international society) and which aim to incorporate and coordinate multiple lower level securitizations (257). Securitizations that operate in this way can serve multiple functions such as structuring global security frameworks and paradigms for decades while strengthening at the same time the primacy of the securitizing actor (the US in this case). The Cold War was one of the most powerful securitizations in history, and a number of its features are reflected in the securitization program of the WoT during the Bush-Cheney administration and the succeeding administration of Obama. Macrosecritization, notes Wæver (1998), Buzan and Wæver (2009, 257), and Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1998), follow the same rules that govern other securitizations: “identification of an existential threat to a valued referent object and call for extraordinary measures with the key difference lying in the scale of their existence. They seek to bring tie together other securitizations from other levels and package them in unison at a “higher” level and taller order overall (Buzan and Wæver 2009, 257).

Macrosecuritization shares some characteristics with the concept of US grand strategy but the latter sets itself apart from the orchestration of the former by still encompassing such concerns as rising powers, global energy supply and demand, military technological development and proliferation, and the enlargement of capitalism. To this end, US grand strategy is a much more comprehensive with a greater emphasis placed upon traditional concerns as the abovementioned and US spending “aimed at meeting traditional challenges from other states, with only a small part specifically allocated for the WoT” (Buzan 2006, 1102). The WoT is therefore much more of a political instrument that can facilitate or justify US primacy as well as leadership and unilateralism to the American community at home and abroad and other public spheres overseas in other countries. In spite of the these difference that frame and assist in the classification of the WoT, the Cold War, and US grand strategy as one thing or another the US National Security Strategy (NSS) undertakes the promotion of the WoT as if it were grand strategy depicted during the Cold War (Buzan 2006). It is worth noting several factors that facilitated the rise of the WoT as a macrosecuritization:

- (a) The post-Cold War period was brought abruptly to an end by the AQ’s attacks launched against the US;
- (b) It solved the so-called “threat deficit” ushered in by the cessation of the Cold War;
- (c) Security definitions and priorities shifted for many states;
- (d) Helped frame American interests as universal principles;
- (e) Legitimized in its use of overwhelming force in defense of freedom and US principles and values, particularly as they were and continue to be attached to the future (Buzan 2006, 1103).

By the mid-1990s state existing within significant structures of power began to act according to the changing realities and understandings of security. Whereas the concept of international security during the Cold War was based on the understanding of the threat or use of force by states, concerns after the Cold War (although there was still an awareness of threats other than those presented by states and their militaries) took into account other aspects. For Example, postulations about the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 ranged from Saddam Hussein’s WMDs (i.e., the 42 short-range ballistic missiles [known as Scuds] launched against Tel Aviv, Haifa, and targets in the Negev Desert in Southern Israel by Iraq in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm), the harboring and training of terrorist operatives, economics interests over oil, and the human rights violations of the Iraqi dictator (most notably the Halabja poison gas attack or the Halabja massacre by Saddam Hussein on March 16, 1988) (Rostker 2000).

AQ provided the US and other states with good reason fear their potential even

though they could not necessarily meet the military power of those states in conventional terms. Having given these states a reason for perceive it as a threat, AQ's acceptance within public spheres in this way helped successfully brand the WoT, both within and outside the Islamic world (Buzan 2006, 1103). The macro-securitization was also substantiated by the creation of a large coalition that supported boots on the ground in Afghanistan and which involved NATO. Invocation of article 5 by NATO was another step in the legitimization of WoT securitization (Buzan 2006, 1103).

Moreover, many longstanding security concerns were tied together within the liberal order (crime, trades in drugs, technological development for WMDs, and other aspects within the dark side of the liberal international economic order [LIEC] related to trade finance, and the flow of peoples) (Buzan 2006, 1104). Globalization and the opening of borders feature many positive effects but the negative effects of globalization cannot be gainsaid. Therefore, little rebuttal was made when globalization was attached to the WoT securitization-framework as a security facilitator. The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), established by the UN and signed by over 40 countries is yet another step in concretizing the pathway for the WoT. The EU, with its well-established threat package also buttressed the WoT program by extending its already-existing threat bases' connections (the primary ones being immigrants, organized crime, and drugs) to terrorism (Buzan 2006, 1105). In short, tying together long standing security concerns that were both widely and deeply accepted problems for decades were driving (legitimizing) factors in the establishment and strengthening of the WoT securitization program. Looking to the future for ways to sustain the WoT, we find that further or future attacks (or merely the threat of attack) can serve as mechanisms for heightening securitization processes; this includes the consolidation of levels of fear in order to sustain the high pitch of securitization (Buzan 2006).

### **International Terrorism as an Exceptional Threat: Normal Vs. Security Politics**

As noted by Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2010, 78), "issues can become security issues simply by virtue of their presentation and acceptance as such, rather than because of any innate threatening qualities per se," even though that some threats are actually easier to represent as existential threats to a referent objects than others. This informs an interpretation of a spectrum along with issues that enable their positioning so as to see them as one type of issue or another while deserving of or requiring a particular type of action or response in order to address them. This intersubjective establishment not only informs the status of an issue but also the response to it via specific measures. The discursive move of in securitization launches an issue beyond the normal in politics, situating it in a way that calls for or legitimizes an extraordinary action by a state, or as Taurek (2006, 54-5) expresses, "where it can be dealt with swiftly and without the

normal (democratic rules and regulations of policymaking).

The difference in normal politics and security politics can be exemplified through state and organizational commitments in the realm of contemporary international affairs. One example that clearly describes a state's actions within the realm of normal politics is that of the EU and its engagement in peacekeeping missions. The EU's peace operations represent the EU as an international actor engaging in a broad range of crisis management activities in both civilian and military contexts within and beyond the confines of the Europe's borders (Tardy & Windmar 2003, 7). When the EU deploys peacekeeping units as it has through the EU Police Mission (EUPM), Operation Concordia, and Operation Artemis, the EU is engaging in normal politics. These missions are part of the EU's foreign and security policy and are written into the everyday practice at both the EU level and the state level for its various member states. Thus, when Germany deploys peacekeeping troops to Bosnia, Cambodia, or Somalia, whether organized by the UN, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), or by the UN, Germany is engaging in a practice embedded within its foreign policy and represents an act of normal political action, not an act of security politics.

Similarly, the US advances peacekeeping initiatives by contributing the expansion of the number, capacity, effectiveness of troops as well as managing mandates in Haiti, Sudan, and Liberia (among others) (US Department of State [DoS] 2010). As is the case with the EU, and other states the participate in these procedures, the US' commitment to and engagement in peacekeeping does not constitute an extraordinary action with elites having not referred to aspects of the peacekeeping environment or situations as exceptional threats that require action elevated to a higher level. If an issue is, however, elevated high enough and to a point where it comes to be an existential threat requiring security action, a general expectation might be that the execution of extraordinary measures becomes an obligatory course of action. Actors have a choice, irrespective of the status of an issue to address is in accordance with whatever means that actor deems appropriate. As Collins (2005: 573) explains:

[b]ecause the adoption of emergency measures occurs after the issue has become a security issue it cannot form part of the process of determining if it is a security issue. [...] it [an issue] is a security issue, because it has been presented and accepted by the audience as such, and it is this interaction between elite and audience that determines whether something has become a security issue. [...] The decision by the elite to resolve the existential threat through the political process does not mean the issue is less threatening, it just means that the actor prefers to pursue a solution through the political system.

He further reasons that:

to claim that an issue has become securitized is not only to claim that it has become a security issue but also to make a claim that the elite has responded by adopting emergency powers. [...] This means that the term securitized cannot be synonymous with an issue becoming security because it means more than this; it also reveals that the elite want to respond with measures outside of the normal political process.

Noting that a securitizing move and the creation of a security issue presents potentially undetectable risks with opportunities along the path of security action, grasping the full picture of why states choose to engage in higher profile and execute extraordinary measures is problematic. The most recent and one of the most powerful examples of this can be located within the depths of the WoT. In 2001, then-President G. W. Bush spoke of international terrorism as an existential threat and pursued its eradication through extraordinary measures considered today (and even then) to have been immoral, unfocused, ineffective, naïve, clumsy, and weaker than what could have been (McCriskin 2011).

The utility of the WoT securitization, even in spite of its many critics who rebuke its leaders and supporters, has as a result of its attachment with such a universal issue that stands in sharp contrast and opposition to such beloved values, peoples, and ways of life (in principles all that America embodies and stands for) as referent objects led to the establishment of a powerful narrative (McCriskin 2011, 786). At the heart of this narrative lie the dramatis personæ: the US and the liberal democracies of the world, and AQ and the “evil tyrants and murderers that support it” (McCriskin 2012, 786). Such a narrative, linked inextricably to the events of 9/11 has assumed such rich symbolism, emotional value, and representation of a zero-sum game, that the WoT securitization has become “institutionalized and normalized” or engrained as part of American foreign policy (Jackson 2011). “It has,” in Jackson’s (2011, 391) words, “in the years since 9/11 become a powerful social structure (a hegemonic discourse) that both expresses and simultaneously co-constructs US interests and identity.” The WoT and US opposition to the threat of international terrorism has become overly manifest within the US’ national security structure and deep into American culture (McCriskin 2011, 786).

If we are to accept the WoT to have become institutionalized by the majority of American society as just plain good sense, then we might reasonably assume that elites have no little or choice but to move stridently forward in addressing AQ and international terrorism as exceptional threats vis-à-vis extraordinary measures only even if an actor would prefer to find a solution through the (normal) political system.

Having intertwined the existential threat with American society to such an extent and with such extensive institutionalization having taken place over the previous decade, “it is then,” states McCrisken (2011), “extremely difficult for any policy-maker or opinion-shaper in the US, even a new president dedicated to ‘change’, to seriously challenge the underlying assumptions of the ‘war on terror’ and move policy significantly in a new direction” (786).

### **Drone Warfare as an Extraordinary Measure**

The previous section touched upon the idea of the WoT exerts a degree of influence on the new security environment of the post-Cold War era than that of the post-9/11 environment by acting as a powerful narrative of that dichotomizes the international community according to the understanding of the “West and the rest,” or in the words of Bush, “Us vs. Them” and “Good vs. Evil” (Greenwald 2008; Soblic 2009). The WoT also functions as a normative organization that allows the leadership of the US (both the Bush and Obama administrations) to construct understandings of and sensitivities about security and threats to that security. Within this normative organization we can observe public perceptions of the existential threat and the policy designed and implemented by elites as mutually reinforcing.

While many policies that were adopted by the US and other states allied in the fight against terrorism existed before 9/11, its main events and the WoT directly made them easier to introduce to the public and even helped legitimize “their application across a wider set of issues and areas than would otherwise have been the case (Buzan and Hansen 2009, 226). Taking into consideration that this section brings our attention directly to the marketability (to the public) and employment of extraordinary means to confront the existential threat posed by international terrorism, Buzan and Hansen (2009, 226) note:

[a]s Realists, Liberals, and critical widening perspectives all point out: in times of (discursively constituted) war, the money and manpower allocated to the military increase, and encroachment on civil, liberal and human rights are more likely to meet with public acceptance.

Concerns about terrorism were not entirely new by 2001 (although it was seen more as a peripheral problem in both public spheres and within IR by scholars), 9/11 elevated the prominence of terrorism to a new level. This might be said to have combined with the view that the events of 9/11 drilled the enduring truth into the hearts and minds those at all levels of American society that, “the absence of international conflict was not indication of an irreversible change [about the existence of violent and deadly

threats in the world], but [merely] a temporary lapse in the ebb and flow of tensions within an anarchical system (Buzan & Hansen, 2009, 229).

The extraordinary measures that have been implemented since 9/11 have served as some of the most explicit characteristics and definers of the WoT securitization program. Neither the Bush or Obama administrations have been enormously open about the use of any of them but when they have, a great deal of support, claims McCrisken (2011), was evident and often referred to the legitimacy of these measures as part of the US' responsibility to protect its citizens, to defend itself, and act if there exists the imminence of threat. Both administrations have maintained the elevation of international terrorism as an extra-politicized and thus securitized state, subjecting it to measures deemed well beyond the parameters of normal politics. In the last decade, the WoT has provided the institutional framework for putting these extraordinary measures into practice:

- (a) Abrogation of civil, liberal, and human rights and freedoms of individuals
  - a. Irregular rendition
  - b. Systematic torture
  - c. Military commissions
  - d. Indefinite detention
  - e. Political surveillance
- (b) US affording itself the right to attack based upon suspicion of further or imminent threat
- (c) State intervention and military campaigns such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan
- (d) Long-term military occupations and military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan
- (e) Acceptability of increasing military losses and collateral damage
- (f) Use of drones and unmanned military systems as part of an ever-growing TK campaign.

The extraordinary measures represent a toolkit of security actions that the US has put to use in its response against the existential threat of international terrorism as part of the WoT's core. One of the most direct means of defining these as extraordinary measure is simply by noting the extent of publicity as well as criticism and opposition they have received over the past decade, while viewing these actions as extraordinary measures can be achieved further still by signaling the level of discretion with which the US has treated to them. Policymakers and scholars alike have clearly accepted these as security actions in the WoT, many of which would unlikely claim that they do not stick out in the realm of normal politics. The considerable overlapping then seen amongst these various approaches as measures within the WoT can be taken as evidence that the use of drones falls within the field of extraordinary measures, particularly given that it

constitutes an action that has both emerged and evolved within the purview of the WoT.

We might also link the use of drones and TK more closely to those measures inescapably regarded as extraordinary in measure. With the closing of detention centers and an avowal to indefinitely abandon Guantanamo as a method of tackling (suspected) terrorists, the US invariably took a step back from one of its methods in the WoT. Here, two competing, but equally useful logics are at play and serve to frame the use of drones and TK as extraordinary means. First, viewing the use of detention and rehabilitation centers, not to mention the use of interrogation (whether in extreme forms or not) as an expression of normal politics, we can rightfully claim that this measure (undertaken predominantly by the US) was considerably ineffective in dealing with international terrorism for a number of clear reasons that center, at least in part, on:

- (a) The difficulty of capturing known and suspected terrorist abroad
- (b) Mitigating the efforts of those within prisons to radicalize anyone not fully dedicated to the cause of terrorism in the name of AQ or other groups or networks
- (c) The impossibility of guaranteeing that those released will not endow the existential threat by committing or re-committing themselves to terrorism's violent cause.

Stepping from the first logic considered we might consider this proposition in different light. If the practice of irregular rendition and detainment in such detention and interrogation centers as Guantanamo is taken as one of many extraordinary measures enacted in the fight against terrorism but that has come under increasing fire from domestic and international public spheres, there existed a need to step back from practice that can no longer be officially condoned and to fill the void with another measure capable of engaging with the threat. The rationale presented here is that while the acceptance of a certain degree of encroachment on civil, liberal, and human rights might occur, the continuity of any single measure that does so cannot necessarily be guaranteed or continued *ad infinitum*.

Using drones as a part of the US' evolving and expanding TK program (Obama's "Kill-Not-Capture" program) (McCrisken 2011) was ideal for taking the place of irregular rendition and exchanging one set of legal challenges with another – one that might be easier to deal with. Retracting from a program of irregular rendition and the use of extreme forms of interrogation that have become the focus of intense legal debate might even serve to shrink the political, military, and social gap that lies between states and the WoT. The prospect of achieving this and subsequently renders the identity of the WoT far more likely to be deeply internalized and become more stable as a result (Lasmar 2010).

The effectiveness of the US' TK program remains a topic of immense debate. Previously, it was noted that the use of drones has been dragged into the security domain and reasonably tagged as an extraordinary measure given the level of public outcry and criticism attached to it. In hindsight it seems that it might have only been a matter of time before those who actually employ the tactic begin to question its viability for future counterterrorism efforts. It is suggested here that drone warfare has not only become a concrete part of the Bush administration's 2001 securitization of terrorism and an iconic feature of the WoT, but TK as an extraordinary measure has by its direct effects and impact cultivated an understanding that it has come to represent a threat to toward the very objectives that it seeks to achieve. The drone program has undoubtedly given the US political and military leadership the mindset of having the strategic initiative – the ability to choose where and when to attack without constraint.

Director of the Center for Peace and Security Studies at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service Daniel Byman has noted on multiple occasions that the use of drone technology has enabled the US to more accurately strike at terrorists as opposed to conventional weaponry at the US' disposal (Lafontant, 2013). The marked difference between AQ and like-terrorist groups' offensive capabilities prior to 9/11 and after the establishment of the WoT can be attributed, suggests Byman, to the employment of drone warfare. They are relegated to a defensive position rather than being poised to strike wherever and whenever they like (Lafontant, 2013). Former-Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Leon Panetta, during the first year of Obama's presidency stated bluntly that, it's [drone warfare] the only game in town in terms of confronting or trying to disrupt the al-Qaeda leadership," and noted that AQ leaders no longer regard the tribal regions of Pakistan as "neither safe nor a haven" (Cable News Network [CNN] Politics, 2009). David Kilcullen reported to a congressional hearing in 2009:

[s]ince 2006, we've killed 14 senior al-Qaeda leaders using drone strikes; in the same time period, we've killed 700 Pakistani civilians in the same area. The drone strikes are highly unpopular. They are deeply aggravating to the population. And they've given rise to a feeling of anger that coalesces the population around the extremists and leads to spikes of extremism (McManus 2009).

Although the claim is often made that the drone strikes are having a significant impact on the operationality of AQ and present a clear practical effectiveness, their use compromises the ability of the US and its allies in the WoT to gain valuable intelligence information from the eliminated target. Despite his support for the use of drones in the fight against terrorism, Byman (2009) reported a darker reality related to drone

warfare that has raised concern regarding the idea that drones now pose a threat the US achieving its own objectives in the WoT, noting that, “[e]ven when they are effective, TK can create strategic complications. They create martyrs that help a group sell itself to its own community” (Byman 2009, 100). To build on the previous point:

[a]fter an arrest, security forces can interrogate the suspect and learn about future plots and additional operatives, who can then be arrested too. Killing suspects prevents them from striking, but dead men also tell no tales (Byman 2009, 98-9).

Collateral damage in these drone strikes also cultivates an environment where the indigenous civilian community will enlist or engage favourably with the targeted insurgents. An insurgency requires the indigenous populace’s “sympathy, acquiescence, silence, reaction to provocation, or fully active support” (Kilcullen 2010, 8). The collateral damage incurred by the drone strikes in Pakistan has become a relentlessly reoccurring issue between the American and Pakistani governments and has damaged bi-lateral relations. After numerous drone strikes, there have been protests with hundreds of protesters burning American flags and holding signs displaying anti-American slogans (Williams 2010, 872). Although the debate on whether anti-American sentiment is heavily instigated by the (collateral) damage incurred by the strikes continues, but there is a correlation to numerous temporary spikes in anti-Americanism. Anti-American sentiment in Yemen has been fuelled by the US drone strike program (Al-Haj & Batrawy 2012).

The debate regarding the efficacy of the use of drones given the negative impact it might have within the WoT even in spite of its positive impact raises a certain set of assumption regarding, not that it can reasonably be considered an extraordinary measure but rather to what extent has it become too extraordinary a measure in the securitization of international terrorism by the Bush administration. Rather than being considered purely a response or a security action set-up in the defense of the reference object in the face of an existential threat, it might well be taken as a sort of threat in and of itself. The view, while shown to exist within the US among political elites, has become overtly evident given widespread opposition that has formed in multiple societies beyond the US, including those Western liberal democracies that they are used to defend.

The secrecy of the drone program also creates a situation where it is difficult for the WoT to be desecuritized by the majority of the American population. States are permitted to securitize an issue through the consent of the population, even though the securitization message is controlled by in large by the government through the media. Five years after the 9/11 attacks with American forces deployed both in Afghanistan

and Iraq, only three percent of Americans believed that that terrorists were a great threat to the US (Bobbitt 2008, 7). There is hubris in American mentality when it comes to the drone strike program (Gardner 2013, 212-34).

There are a couple of factors that are instrumental in maintaining this hubris. With the drone program, no American lives are directly at stake by being in a hostile theater of operations as the drone pilots are hundreds (even thousands) of miles away. Therefore, there is a lack of domestic protests to bring the troops back home as they are at home or at safe operational bases. A second factor is that there is a general lack of widely distributed reports and images of the collateral damage incurred by the drone strikes in the Western media. This is in stark contrast of the desecuritization, (i.e., protest and opposition) movements in the Vietnam and Second Gulf Wars. The drone strike program not only allows for the strategic initiative to strike whenever and wherever deemed necessary, but also severely reduces the conversation within American discourse.

## **Conclusion**

Undoubtedly, the WoT has become one of the most comprehensive and successful securitization programs since the Cold War. It encapsulates an abundance of issues concerning nearly every facet of contemporary society, ranging from new conceptualizations of non-state actors such as asymmetrical threats to traditional states, the institutional infrastructure of laws and implications on civil society, to new modes of warfare and the normalization of extraordinary measures in the face of extreme threats. The events of 9/11 and America's immediate response ushered in what some might fear will go beyond an understanding of the 9/11 decade and become the 9/11 century. In spite of such speculate permanence, the WoT has served as a unique crossroads for issues concerning scholars and practitioners alike, and although terrorism and state-level responses were not new issues when AQ attacked the US homeland, 9/11 unequivocally raised these issues to a new level of eminence that are today probably entirely inescapable.

This article has engaged with one of the most prominent themes associated with the WoT: the use of drones in TK. It considers this use of force within the context of security studies to understand the manner in which we might claim that it represents an extraordinary measure employed to handle the existential threat posed by international terrorism and those who support it in various ways. This essay has argued that the WoT provided the critical security framework that elevated international terrorism to a threat level so significant as to legitimize the use of weaponized drones in defense of the referent object. It sought to achieve this by considering the Copenhagen School's interaction with security and ST, and highlight the importance of the linkage between

security and threat for establishing part of the environment in which response are required to address threat. A wide range of extraordinary measures that have become hallmarks of the WoT and the US' efforts within it were presented and discussed in the latter part of the essay. In this section TK was emphasized and connected to those measures already considered extraordinary or those requiring an exceptional degree of justification and that have and continue to face criticism within public spheres and at the elite level.

The Bush administration declared a global war on terrorism more ten years ago, and in doing so implied that the US would go to extraordinary lengths to defeat the existential threat that lies "out there." The former-president's framing of international terrorism and its supporters as an existential threat requiring immediate action, suggests that all means necessary should be put into effect to handle the threat (Magnusson 2012). The objectives of the WoT have not yet been reached (and may never be achieved), and as such, the extraordinary measures mentioned previously can adequately be seen as in place still. Even though the US has conducted itself in the WoT framing with consideration to the respect of human rights and international legal frameworks, its conduct has not been completely positive or innocent. The difficulty of the US in contending with the existential threat, while not always meeting the standards set by international law, is sufficient enough to raise attention not toward the ability of the US maintaining the securitization itself, but rather the challenge in preserving its continued use of measures seen as extraordinary. As Buzan (2006, 1111) remarks:

[a]lthough the general WoT macro-securitization has in many respects been rather successful, it has not gone entirely unopposed, and it is not difficult to imagine where additional lines of opposition might come from. So far, opposition is not so much to the general securitization itself as to the framing of it as a 'war' and, increasingly, to the practices that the US tries to legitimize within the WoT frame.

If we are to accept the view that the US has presented international terrorism as an existential threat rather well and to a considerable extent, we might then be agreeable to the opinion that what it is also engaged in is the mutually reinforcing idea that states as securitizing actors need to then justify the extraordinary measures implemented to address the threat, and that if such extensive efforts in justification were not required then considering such a measure as extraordinary might not be appropriate. In other words, the greater the level of justification that is required to sell a particular measure to the public in order to handle an existential threat, the greater the expectation is that that measure is likely to be considered extraordinary in use.

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