Identity and the Construction of National Security

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Constructing National Security

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Presentation structure

Identity and the construction of national security

Theory

- Securitization theory
- Social identity theory
- Democratic identity

Empirics

- US involvement in 1971 Bangladesh War
Securitization theory

Securitizing Actor

Securitizing Move (claim)
- Existential Threat
- Referent Object

Audience
- Accept claim
- Accept valuation

Outcome of successful securitization ➔ Issue moves from normal politics to security politics
Securitization theory

- Facilitating conditions: Internal and External
  - Internal: Logic of the security argument
    - Existential threat
    - Valued referent
    - Potential solution
  - External facilitating conditions
    - Securitizing actor political authority
    - Proposed threat commonly seen as threatening
    - Composition of the audience*
    - Social, political, and cultural context*
Social Identity Theory

- Social identity theory (SIT) gives us a basis for understanding how identity functions in society
  - How identity derived from group membership shapes the social behavior towards ingroup and outgroups
    - Original focus on how ingroup-outgroup dynamics drive social conflict
  - Three commonly accepted elements of SIT
    - Self-categorization*
    - Ingroup affect
    - Ingroup ties
    - **Cognitive load**
Categorization

- What happens in categorization?
  - Partitioning the social world into ingroups and outgroups
  - Groups are represented by prototypes/identities
  - Members of groups are depersonalized

- How does this link in with corporate and social identity?
  - Social identity provides the basis for behavioral expectations, while contestation takes place over corporate identity (activation of identity).
Identity and construction of democratic security

- Ties that bind key to successful securitization
- One of the strongest: basic operative norms underpinning democratic governance.
  - peaceful conflict resolution
  - rule of law
  - Compromise
- These norms in turn strongly inform the democratic identity of the state and society
Identity Mechanism

- **Macro level**
  - Democracy
  - Democratic identity

- **Micro level**
  - Security behavior
  - Securitization dynamics
Broader Implications: Security Space

• Not this exactly…

• But rather, a way to think about how domestic (and international) social structures/orders shape how security is practiced in the international system

• Boundary conditions of security – a set of meta-stable social and political structures that define a security space in which some securitizing moves are less likely to succeed while others are more likely to succeed
Broader Implications: Social orders

• The relationship between domestic and international social orders?
• The real significance of the balance of power is the political and social orders it empowers and disempowers.
• What does the international order look like with an authoritarian state with weak rule of law at its center?
Rising Powers

- case studies of U.S. relations with India and China also address the timely and timeless issue of rising powers
- Challenges the claim that rising powers necessarily drive conflict
Case selection and methods

- Key problem: dog that did not bark.
- Solution: Focal points
- Key problem: relevance
- Solution: U.S. relations with India and China, need variation in the nature of the external regime
- Methods: look at public security discourses and, where possible, private communications.
- Establishing public acceptance of securitizing move: Public opinion polling
1971 Case: Background

• In 1971, the United States and India came close to war, or at least armed conflict.

• East and West Pakistan disintegrated into Pakistan (West) and Bangladesh (East).

• India became militarily involved, supporting the breakaway Bangladesh.

• The Nixon Administration framed it in terms of global geopolitics: Pakistan, a ‘friend’ of the United States, was being “screwed [by] a friend of Russia’s.”
The Case: 1971

- Nixon and Henry Kissinger attempt to publically construct India as a threat, but did so in a very half-hearted manner
  - Not because they did not see India as a threat
- Nixon and Kissinger both used heavily threat-laden terminology
  - India ‘raping’ Pakistan.
  - Indians were ‘bastards,’
  - the ‘most aggressive goddamn people out there,’
  - in need of a ‘mass famine’ to restrain them.
- Kissinger: Indira Gandhi hoping to use 1971 to say “that the United States didn’t give her a warm reception and therefore, in despair, she’s got to go to war.”
- The Indian’s close allies with Soviets: “leaking everything right back to them.”
The Case: 1971

- Nixon/Kissinger did make some effort to securitize:
  - “[W]hat we may be witnessing is a situation where a country equipped and supported by the Soviets may be turning half of Pakistan into an impotent state and the other half into a vassal.”
  - Kissinger went so far as to call the situation ‘our Rhineland’ a clear reference to Nazi aggression in WWII.
- Nixon and Kissinger securitizing move toward India half-hearted
  - Downplayed Indian democracy
  - Played up undemocratic interpretations of Indian behavior
  - Meets expectations of my approach
- Why such a big difference in public versus private securitization?
The Case: 1971

• Nixon identified the key element: shared democracy
  – “[Y]ou see this is where the rest are wrong, where they said that if aggression is engaged in by a democracy it’s all right. But where it’s engaged in by a dictatorship, it’s wrong…then they say but India is a democratic country, and Pakistan is a totalitarian country, a dictatorship, and therefore India—we shouldn’t be on the side of a dictatorship but on the side of the democratic country.”

• Kissinger complained about a “strong feeling of many Americans for India,” because “American liberals had oversold Indian democracy
The Case: 1971

- Nixon and Kissinger not able to securitize India, but did try (albeit weakly) to reconstruct it as nondemocratic.
- The democratic identity of the U.S. public played a critical role in shaping and constraining, the securitizing move.
- Shared democratic identity between the U.S. and India made a securitizing move impossible.
Wrap up

• Why don’t democracies fight? Because other democracies are part of the self, regulated by the same rules of political conflict resolution.

• Domestic orders are intimately linked to international behavior.

• Call for a more holistic approach to security

• Future work:
  – Rivalries
  – Linkages between international order and domestic order
Thank you for your time,
and I look forward to your questions