Faculty of Social Sciences
Det Samfundsvidenskabelige Fakultet

Logics of Security: The Copenhagen School, Risk Management and the War on Terror

Rens van Munster

Political Science Publications
10/2005

1 Introduction

The debate about the meaning and significance of security for the constitution of political communities currently occupies a central place in critical security studies.[1] Focusing upon the link between security and the political, a range of theoretical and empirical studies has convincingly argued that security constitutes the political.[2] Departing with a nominalist view that names refer to objects, these studies have shown that naming is not just an act of providing a label to a pre-existing object but the discursive formation of that object itself.[3] Indeed, by now there seems to be a broad agreement in security studies that self-identity, to a degree, is constituted through the externalisation of the other as a threat. However, a performative act of naming can take many different forms, and it is not completely clear from these studies what distinguishes 'security' from other types of performative power.

In an attempt to excavate the logic(s) of security that are currently at work in world politics, this paper claims that the Copenhagen school, which has done systematic research into the logic of security, can add to our understanding of how 'security' performs its constitutive function. While the Copenhagen school has contributed little to the relationship between security and the political, this paper argues that it is possible to read the Copenhagen school in the light of Carl Schmitt's rendering of the political as the exceptional decision that brings the friend/enemy distinction into existence.[4] Although it is true that security can operate in this manner, this paper claims that the Schmittian logic does not exhaust all possible forms that the performative act of security can attain in contemporary world politics. More specifically, this paper argues that the Copenhagen school logic of security, which is based upon Schmitt's exceptional decisionism can be theoretically complemented with the more routine-like logic of risk management. To illustrate the importance of the logic of risk management for current world politics empirically, this paper will briefly analyse the 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States in relation to the war on terrorism. It is argued that the security practices deployed in this war are informed, to a considerable degree, around the logic of risk management. By way of conclusion, this study will

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1 For an overview, see Krause and Williams (1996; 1997). See also Hansen (1997) and Smith (2000).

2 See among others Dillon (1996), Walker (1997), Campbell (1998), Weldes *et al.* (1999) and Huysmans (forthcoming).

3 For a good discussion of the 'radical contingency of naming', that is, the performative power of discursive articulations, see for example Žižek (1989: 89-129) and Bourdieu (1991).

4 See also Huysmans (1998a) and Williams (2003).

end with a few normative considerations concerning the logic of risk management, arguing that practices structured around this logic can operate in ways that are undesirable for, or even in direct opposition to, the democratic ideals of liberty and equality.

2 The Exceptional Logic of Security: The Copenhagen School and the Political

Spurred by socio-political events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the demise of the Soviet Union and the rise of ethnic and intrastate conflicts, a debate emerged within security studies as to whether the neorealist conceptualisation of security was sufficiently broad to cover the wide range of threats to and human survival. On the one hand, the field was challenged by those who argued to include, besides military threats, a wide variety of other dangers to human well-being on the security agenda. On the other hand, neorealists were challenged by those who argued in favour of human security. In their view, the privilege given to the state was inadequate to address problems of human security who would need consideration on the level of the individual, sub-state groups or on the level of humanity as a whole. While the 'early' Copenhagen school has contributed to this debate (Wæver *et al.*, 1993), their 'later' writings demonstrate an increased dissatisfaction with the terms of the wide versus narrow debate (see Wæver, 1995; Buzan *et al.*, 1998). For the later Copenhagen school, the attitude of both neorealists and wideners towards security is troublesome because both take the security environment as pre-given and predetermined. Arguing that both camps treat threats and their referent objects as 'brute facts' that can be known outside the social context in which they emerge, proposes instead to study the processes through which specific issues become illocutionary constructed as security issues:

> 'Security' is thus a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat…The process of security is what in language theory is called a speech act. It is not interesting as a sign referring to something more real; it is the utterance itself that is the act. By saying the words, something is done (like betting, giving a promise, naming a ship) (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 24, 26).

What counts as a security issue depends upon how social actors frame the issue: "In this approach, the meaning of a concept lies in its usage and is not something we can define analytically or philosophically according to what would be 'best'" (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 24).[5]

[5] See also Wæver (1999).

Obviously, not all speech acts share the grammar of securitising acts. According to the Copenhagen school, the rhetorical structure of a securitising act needs to contain three necessary building blocks: (a) existential threats to the survival of some kind of referent object that (b) require exceptional measures to protect the threatened referent object, which (c) justify and legitimise the breaking free of normal democratic procedures. Thus, through a securitising act an actor tries to elevate an issue from the realm of low politics (bounded by democratic rules and decision-making procedures) to the realm of high politics (characterised by urgency, priority and a matter of life and death) (see Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 21-26).

It is important to note that securitisation is not a subjective process at the level of individual conscience (in the head of the securitiser, so to speak). To the contrary, the Copenhagen school considers the construction of a security problem as a social or inter-subjective phenomenon. Apart from the fact that a securitising act needs to combine the three building blocks in its grammar, the chance for a securitising act to succeed also depends upon the fact whether or not the targeted audience accepts the securitising act: "A successful speech act is a combination of language and society, of both intrinsic features of speech and the group that authorizes and recognizes that speech" (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 32).[6] Ergo, much depends upon the social position and authority of the securitising actor. For example, while no single authority has a monopoly on securitisation, it seems that in general security experts (military, police, secret service) and political actors such as government leaders are in a better position to convince an audience of the need for security than other actors. Nevertheless, while a speech act can be socially conditioned by the position of the speaker and so on, Wæver argues explicitly that a speech act is indeterminate and radically open: "A speech act is interesting exactly because it holds the insurrecting potential to break the ordinary, to establish meaning that is not already in the context" (Wæver, 2000: 286, fn7).

When viewed as a radical open act rather than a socially prefigured action, securitisation theory bears a remarkable similarity to Carl Schmitt's rendering of the political as the exceptional decision that constitutes the border between friend and enemy (see Huysmans, 1998a; Williams, 2003).[7] In a Schmittian framework, then, the essence of the political consists of the constitutive

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[6] Knudsen's (2001) critique that the Copenhagen school reduces security studies to the study of subjective images of security thus misreads the securitisation theory of the Copenhagen school. See also Buzan (1998: 33) and Wæver (2000: 252-3).

[7] Please note that the presence of an *intellectual* relationship does not imply that the Copenhagen school shares the *normative* agenda of Carl Schmitt (who was an explicit supporter of the Nazi regime). To the contrary, whereas Schmitt would view securitisation as the authentic moment of political life, the Copenhagen school views it as something to be avoided, opting instead for desecuritisation.

decision to decide on the enemy: "Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy" (Schmitt, 1996: 37). Although Schmitt does not deny that groups can compete with each other in economic, legal, aesthetic and moral terms, he claims that the political opposition between friend and enemy constitutes the most extreme of dichotomies: "The political is the most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend-enemy grouping" (Schmitt, 1996: 29). As such, for Schmitt the concept of the political occupies a similar place as the concept of security occupies for the Copenhagen school: "Just as for Schmitt it is the particularly intense relationship to an issue, rather than its intrinsic nature, that determines whether it is 'political', for the Copenhagen School it is precisely this process (and indeterminacy) that defines the process of 'securitization'" (Williams, 2003: 516).

Beside the element of existential threat or the enemy, the two other building blocks of a securitising act – exceptional measures and breaking free of normal procedures – can also be linked to Schmitt's rendering of the political. This is why, it is necessary to consider the link between the friend/enemy grouping and the concept of sovereignty in Schmitt's theoretical framework. In his definition of sovereignty Carl Schmitt reverses the traditional Weberian definition of sovereignty as the legitimate power to rule. For Schmitt sovereignty does not exist as the juridically sanctioned power to rule, but as the capacity to call such an order into being: "Order must be established for juridical order to make sense. A regular situation must be created, and sovereign is he who definitely decides if this situation is actually effective"(Schmitt, 1985: 19). The establishment of order, according to Schmitt, is secured through an exceptional act that cannot be founded on legal principles. In Schmitt's famous and oft-quoted words: "Sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception" (Schmitt, 1985: 1).[8] The definition of the sovereign as the one who can declare a state of exception consists thus of two components. On the one hand, it refers to the ability of the sovereign to put him or herself above the law by breaking free of normal procedures. On the other hand, sovereignty also exists in the capacity to create a new legal system out of the nothingness or radical openness that characterises the state of exception. To quote Huysmans at some length:

> "[T]he political significance of war does not reside in its actualisation but in its radicalisation of the exception into a real limit…War pushes the significance of the enemy to its most extreme realisation and it is here at this 'passage to the limit' that the political is grounded. It

[8] At page 22, Schmitt argues in similar terms that "[t]he exception does not only confirm the rule; the rule as such lives off the exception alone."

> is at the limit articulated by 'war' that everyday political routine collapses, that the normal rules do not tell us how to go on. It is at the limit that one finds the radical open condition which allows for calling into being new rules, a new community" (Huysmans, 1998a: 581).

Thus while war need not be actually present between friends and enemies, Schmitt nevertheless maintains that "the ever present possibility of combat" grounds the domain of the political and that a 'passage to the limit' is the authentic self-delineation of a political community (Schmitt, 1996: 32).

In their exploration of security, the Copenhagen school comes to similar conclusions. For them, too, the exceptional logic of securitisation is captured most adequately by the logic of war: "[I]n the extreme case – war – we do not have to discuss with the other party; we try to eliminate them. This self-based violation of rules is the security act, and the fear that the other party will not let us survive as a subject is the *foundational* motivation for that act" (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 26, emphasis added).[9] Or as the former American Secretary of State J.F. Dulles put it: "The ability to get to the verge without getting into war is the necessary art. If you cannot master it…if you are scared to go the brink, you are lost" (quoted in Wight, 1991: 194).

There is, then, a close interplay between security on the one hand and the identity of a political community on the other in the sense that, viewed in light of Schmitt's rendering of the political, the management of a security situation becomes a founding practice for the community (cf. Huysmans, 1998a: 579). The field of security does thus not – as is generally assumed in International Relations theory – exist alongside other functional realms such as the economy; rather, a security act establishes the community through the identification of an enemy. This leads to the paradoxical situation that the construction of a community ultimately depends on the existence and suppression of that what is said to threaten it. The other, which poses an existential threat to the self, thus also functions as the constitutive outside that brings the self into being, being both its condition of possibility as well as its condition of impossibility: "Ironically, then, the inability of the state project of security to succeed is the guarantor of the state's continued success as an impelling identity. The constant articulation of danger through foreign policy is thus not a threat to a state's identity or existence: it is its condition of possibility" (Campbell, 1998: 12-3).[10]

Hence security can be considered as a signifier that calls the friend and enemy into being: the categories of friend and enemy do not exist prior to the securitising act that performatively constitutes them. As Bourdieu puts it: "[T]he signifier is identified with the things signified

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[9] See also Wæver (1995: 53-54).

[10] For a more elaborate discussion of this logic, see Laclau and Mouffe (1990).

which would not exist without it, and which can be reduced to it. The signifier is not only that which expresses and represents the signified group: it is that which *signifies* to it that it exists, that which has the power to call into visible existence, by mobilizing it, the group that it signifies" (Bourdieu, 1991: 207).

Ergo, the point of departure for securitisation theory is that order is created through an exceptional decision that constitutes the border between friend and enemy. However, Bigo has rightly observed that such a conception of securitisation ignores the more every-day forms of securitisation (Bigo, 2001, 2002). Thus, as Williams claims, "to focus too narrowly on the search for singular and distinct *acts* of securitization might well lead one to misperceive *processes* through which a situation is gradually being intensified, and thus rendered susceptible to securitization, while remaining short of the actual securitizing decision" (Williams, 2003: 521). While everyday, routine-like processes of securitisation may indeed lack the intensity of an exceptional decision, it would be wrong to assume that these therefore are without any real significance for an understanding of security in the current world order. To the contrary, the current war against terrorism shows that the central focus of security is no longer focused on existential threats alone, but also on potential threats or risks. Before discussing this in more detail, it is first necessary to point out that the shift from existential threats to potential threats is by no means absolute. The exceptional logic of a Schmittian securitisation, and the more routine logic of a securitisation in terms of risk, do not mutually exclude each other. Nevertheless, it is useful, for analytical purposes, to distinguish between both logics as it may provide a better insight into the different dynamics that can inform the practices of security within the international system.

3 The Routine Logic of Security: The Constitutive Significance of Risk Management

Risk management differs significantly from exceptional logic of security that was put forward in the previous section.[11] Risk management, first of all, is not a decision that calls the binary opposition between friend and enemy into existence; rather, risk management should be considered as a regulating form of security that permanently identifies, classifies and constitutes groups/populations on the basis of the risk that is ascribed to these groups. Concomitantly, risk management does not consider friend and enemy as two, mutually exclusive, binary groupings,

[11] For a few notable exceptions to the opposite see Huysmans, 1998b: 501; Bigo, 2002. The security logic of risk management has so far been noticed mainly outside the direct context of international relations. See for instance Castel (1991), Ericson and Haggerty (1997), Lupton (1999), Hope and Sparks (2000) and Garland (2001).

but as end points on a continuum of threats that are more or less likely to concretise in the foreseeable future. Contrary to existential threats, risks only exist as potentialities, which entails that risk management is mainly concerned with making sure that risks are prevented from developing into concrete, acute threats to the survival of a community. Thus, rather than excluding an existential threat risk by staging it as the enemy that threatens survival, risk management seeks to measure, evaluate and reduce the dangerousness of so-called risky populations. To quote Castel at some length:

> "[A] shift becomes possible as soon *as the notion of risk is made autonomous from that of danger*. A risk does not arise from the presence of a particular precise danger embodied in a concrete individual or group…There is, in fact, no longer a relation of immediacy with a subject because there is no longer a subject. What the new preventive policies primarily address is no longer individuals but factors, statistical correlations of heterogeneous elements. They deconstruct the concrete subject of intervention, and reconstruct a combination of factors liable to produce risk. Their primary aim is not to confront a concrete dangerous situation, but to anticipate all the possible forms of irruption of danger" (Castel, 1991: 288).

In risk management, the subject is not encountered as a unique person with some sort of indispensable inner singularity, but as an aggregate of risk factors, a modulation that can be managed and tamed through continuous monitoring. Risk management reduces 'individuals' to 'dividuals', that is, a part of their identity (Deleuze, 1995). Risk management assembles personal, biographic characteristics into the collective identities of risk profiles. Whereas in the Schmittian dynamics of security, one is either friend or enemy, risk management does not operate on the basis of such stable identities, and everything depends upon the specific configuration of factors that are considered likely to produce risk. In the words of Hardt and Negri: "The Other that might delimit a modern sovereign Self has become fractured and indistinct, and there is no longer an outside that can bound the place of sovereignty…Today it is increasingly difficult…to name a single unified enemy; rather, there seems to be minor and elusive enemies everywhere" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 189). Thus whereas the exceptional decision creates a spatial order, risk management disrupts the link between space and order. Or, to put it differently, risk management "does not have to draw the line that separates the enemies of the sovereign from his obedient subjects; it effects distributions around the norm" (Foucault, 1978: 144). In risk management, therefore,

> "we detect a new dynamic by means of which security goes hyperbolic, since any assemblage, organisation or population, however differentiated and specified, may *become* acerbic. Security goes hyperbolic in as much as unlimited knowledge of infinitely defineable

assemblages, populations and networks is a necessary concomitant of the problematic of becoming-dangerous" (Dillon and Reid, 2001: 57).

Risk management, Foucault in turn concludes, brings "life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations" and makes "power/knowledge an agent of transformation of human life" (Foucault, 1978: 143). Because risk management is not focused upon an existing existential threat, the logic of risk management is by definition preventive (see figure below).

Figure 1. Three Differences Between Securitisation and Risk Management

	Securitisation	**Risk Management**
Representation of threat	Friend/Enemy opposition and personification of the enemy.	Friend/Enemy Continuum and inpersonal correlation of factors liable to produce risk.
Measures/ strategy	Exceptional measures that bypass normal political procedures; measures counteract existential threat.	Normal measures such as surveillance and risk profiling; measures contribute to the social control of large populations.
Objective	Elimination of threat; the elimination of a threat secures the collective survival of a socio-political order.	Management of risks against the background of uncertainty and contingency; risk management seeks to prevent risks from developing into existential threats.

The strategic goal of risk management is to intervene before the situation reaches to the point of extremity in which exceptional measures are called for. Instead of bringing conflict to the extreme of war, risk management "thus attempts to pre-empt or dedramatize conflict by acting upon the physical and social structures within which individuals conduct themselves" (Rose, 1999: 237). Effective risk management demands a *cybernetics of control* in which risk calculations, risk management and risk reduction form an integral part of security measures. This is exemplified, for instance, by the current security discourse of the United States in relation to the war on terrorism.

4 The National Security Strategy and the War against Terrorism

In opposition to the period before 9/11, American security discourse in the 2002 National Security Strategy seems more concerned with prevention than defence: "We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today's adversaries…To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act pre-emptively" (White House, 2002: 15).[12] The shift from defence to prevention takes its point of departure in the behavioural potentialities of states rather than their actual behaviour: "[T]he United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today's threats, and the magnitude of potential harm that could be unleashed by our adversaries' choice of weapons, do not permit that option. We cannot let our enemies strike first" (White House, 2002: 15). Whereas anticipatory self-defence as it is understood in international law still operated with an image of reactive violence, the war on terrorism replaces this picture with that of proactive intervention: "We must deter and defend against the threat *before* it is unleashed" (White House, 2002: 14).

As such, prevention entails a move from danger to risk. The aim is no longer to confront a concrete danger, but to intervene before threats have fully emerged. In a way, preventive security is virtual in the sense that it is one step further away from danger in its potentiality. But at the same time it is real, since the future increasingly determines present security choices (cf. Lupton, 1999: 93). The shift from defence to prevention, re-action to pro-action, deterrence to intelligence, and events to eventualities is to be considered mainly on an ontological level. Contrary to defence, prevention takes *in*security rather than security as the underlying value of security politics: "We are today a nation at risk to a new and changing threat. The terrorist threat to America takes many forms, has many places to hide, and is often invisible. *Yet the need for homeland security is tied to our enduring vulnerability*" (Office of Homeland Security, 2002, preamble, emphasis added). While defence implies protection, safety and trust, prevention operates on the basis of permanent feelings of fear, anxiety and unease – feelings that are

[12] The notion of pre-emption is not a new one in the context of international relations and international law. The International Court of Justice has ruled that pre-emptive violence in the case of self-defence is only allowed if the faced threat is immanent and overwhelming, leaving no time to neutralise the threat via other (diplomatic) channels. According to international law, a pre-emptive attack is only legitimate as a reaction to the enemy's determined decision to issue an attack. The way the notion of pre-emption is used in current American discourse, however, radicalises such a notion as it makes no mention of irrevocable acts committed by the other side. Indeed, as it only speaks of capacities and intentions, current United States discourse is better described as preventive rather than pre-emptive.

normally considered with the exceptional situation of an extraordinary threat. Preventive security is virtual security: on the one hand, risk is one step further away from danger in its potentiality but, on the other hand, risks are real in the sense that risk scenarios increasingly determine policy choices in the present.

The aim of the Computer Assisted Passenger Pre-Screening (CAPPS) system, for instance, is to gather data about all passengers flying to the United States. On the basis of information about name, age, address, passport, credit card number and previous travels, CAPPS classifies the potential dangerousness of all travellers. It constructs three different risk classes/identities: green, yellow and red, with green meaning non-dangerous and red meaning very dangerous. Muslim visitors from the Middle East are automatically assigned the yellow identity (cf. Ramonet, 2003; Lyon, 2003). However, surveillance is not just limited to foreigners entering the United States. The Terrorist Screening Center (TSC), a joint initiative of the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, the Intelligence Community, the FBI and the State Department, seeks to install surveillance and data collection as a routine of every-day life within and outside the United States. As Attorney General Ashcroft argues: "The Terrorist Screening Center will provide 'one-stop shopping' so that every federal anti-terrorist screener is working off the same page – whether it's an airport screener, an embassy official issuing visas overseas, or an FBI agent on the street." (Department of Homeland Security, 2003). The result is that the differences between inside/outside, police/military and FBI/CIA become increasingly blurred. On the one hand, there is an increasing internalisation of external security in the form of 'domestic spying' and data collection within the United States. On the other hand, externalisation of internal security (policing beyond borders) is taking place in remote places such as Afghanistan. Hence, Tom Ridge's (Secretary of Homeland Security) remark that the Terrorist Screening Center will make it possible to put intelligence to immediate use at the front lines of the battle against terrorism, misses the crucial point that there are no clear front lines in the war on terror. Rather, the front is everywhere and no one can expect to be exempted from the network of surveillance and inspection: "Conduct is continually monitored and reshaped by logics immanent within all networks of practice. Surveillance is 'designed in' to the flow of everyday existence" (Rose, 1999: 236). In a sense, then, everybody is guilty until his or her risk profile proves otherwise.

Securitisation, then, is not just an exceptional decision that, as the Copenhagen school seems to make us believe, takes place largely outside the normal order, but also something that increasingly permeates everyday life in the form of risk management. From a normative point of view, the logic of risk management seems preferable to the exceptional logic laid down in

securitisation theory. Risk management, if successful, stops a securitising process from developing into an exceptional decision through which the normal rules are abandoned in favour of a situation that is structured by the extreme logic of war. The downside, however, is that risk management may in turn lead to an increasing securitisation of societies under normal, peaceful conditions. By way of conclusion, the next section therefore concludes with a few normative arguments against the logic of risk management.

5 Conclusion: Some Normative Considerations on Risk Management

Reading securitisation theory in the light of Carl Schmitt's conception of the political can provide insight into the meaning and significance of existential threats for the constitution of political communities. However, this study has argued that the Schmittian notion securitisation at work in the Copenhagen school conception of security can be usefully supplemented, theoretically and empirically, with the securitising logic of risk management. Taken together, both logics are able to provide a complex picture of the dynamics of securitisation in world politics. But, while attention is paid to the issue of securitisation, the normative dilemmas of securitisation have, a few notable exceptions to the contrary, received little attention. Therefore, this section will end with a few comments on the possible normative problems of risk management, which could be provide some useful directions for future research on the normative aspects of securitisation. First, because risk management only functions if sufficient information exists about risk factors, this can lead to the paradoxical situation that liberal freedoms, such as privacy, are violated with the aim of protecting them against anti-democratic or anti-liberal forces. The war on terrorism seems to point in this direction as the anti-terrorist PATRIOT act extensively limits liberal freedoms (cf. Cole, 2002). A second reason is that in the world of risk management, the lack of information can lead to high, if not unacceptable, levels of uncertainty. Indeed, the fact that no reliable information is available about factors liable to produce risk may in the extreme case become a ground for preventive intervention. President George W. Bush hinted at this possibility in one of his remarks on the war against Iraq: "Many people have asked how close Saddam Hussein is to developing a nuclear weapon. Well, we don't know and that's the problem" (Bush, 2002). A third normative disadvantage of risk management is that the construction of risk populations can lead to discriminatory measures. Especially the increase of ethnic or racial risk profiles can contribute to a further social exclusion of groups (such as immigrants) that are already marginalised (cf. Lyon, 2003). A last disadvantage is that risk management, once started, might be difficult to stop. As there need not be a concrete threat, it is

difficult to determine when a threat has passed and when surveillance can be terminated. Threats are always potential, which justifies a constant risk awareness. Moreover, it is likely that the possible ineffectiveness of risk management will not bring about less but more risk management. That is, the failure to prevent a threat from happening can easily become an argument in favour of more risk management to make sure that such threats are unlikely to emerge again in the future. Although risk management as a process of securitisation can be desirable, it seems that in the long term desecuritisation is the more sustainable option for democratic societies. Or, to end with a quote by Ole Wæver, "transcending a security problem by politicizing it cannot happen *through* thematization in security terms, only *away* from such terms" (Wæver, 1995: 56).

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Rens van Munster holds an MA in European Integration and International Relations from the University of Twente, the Netherlands. He is a Ph.D. student at the Department of Political Science, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, where he is currently finalising his dissertation on European security and immigration. In 2003-2004, he was a Marie Curie Fellow at the Department of International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Further information

Department of Political Science and
Public Management
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Southern Denmark
Campusvej 55
DK-5230 Odense M

Telephone: +45 6550 1000
Fax: +45 6550 2280
E-mail: politics@sam.sdu.dk

ISSN 1399-7319