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Russia's Securitization of Chechnya

How war became acceptable

Julie Wilhelmsen

ROUTLEDGE

Russia's Securitization of Chechnya

This book provides an in-depth analysis of how mobilization and legitimation for war are made possible, with a focus on Russia's conflict with Chechnya.

Through which processes do leaders and their publics come to define and accept certain conflicts as difficult to engage in, and others as logical, even necessary? Drawing on a detailed study of changes in Russia's approach to Chechnya, this book argues that 're-phrasing' Chechnya as a terrorist threat in 1999 was essential to making the use of violence acceptable to the Russian public. The book refutes popular explanations that see Russian war-making as determined and grounded in a sole, authoritarian leader. Close study of the statements and texts of Duma representatives, experts and journalists before and during the war demonstrates how the Second Chechen War was made a 'legitimate' undertaking through the efforts of many. A post-structuralist reinterpretation of securitization theory guides and structures the book, with discourse theory and method employed as a means to uncover the social processes that make war acceptable. More generally, the book provides a framework for understanding the broad social processes that underpin legitimized war-making.

This book will be of much interest to students of Russian politics, critical terrorism studies, security studies and international relations.

Julie Wilhelmsen is Senior Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Norway and has a PhD in political science from the University of Oslo. She is co-editor of *Russia's Encounter with Globalization: Actors*, *Processes and Critical Moments* (2011).

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1 Introduction

Russians were reluctantly dragged into the first post-Soviet war against Chechnya in 1994. By contrast, the Second Chechen War was launched with a collective call for violent attack. Charles W. Blandy argues that the main difference between the two Russo-Chechen conflicts is not in terms of military strategy, but in terms of the 'resolute firmness of the political authorities in prosecuting the war in Chechnya, having secured the backing of Russian society as a whole'.[1] Most Russians had considered a new war against Chechnya totally unacceptable only half a year before Russian ground troops again entered Chechen territory in the so-called counter-terrorist campaign in October 1999. However, when October came, hardly a voice was raised in protest against the massive violence launched against this Russian republic.[2] How was this shift made possible? In more general terms: how does war become acceptable?

Scholars agree that the brutality and the extent of war crimes committed during the Second Chechen War were as massive as during the First Chechen War. While identification with Chechen suffering inflicted by war increasingly constituted a pressure to end the First Chechen War, no such pressures emerged in Russia during the Second Chechen War.[3] How can acceptance of massive violence against fellow citizens continue, when the human cost of war is revealed? This book seeks answers to these questions by exploring the 'securitization' of Chechnya in Russia from 1999 to 2001.[4] Advancing a post-structuralist reinterpretation of securitization theory, it argues that representations of the Chechen issue in Russia during 1999 comprised a re-drawing of the boundaries between 'Chechnya' and 'Russia' in Russian discourse that served to legitimize the violent practices employed against Chechnya and Chechens during the Second Chechen War.[5]

This is not a study of *why* the Second Chechen War was launched and what the motivations were, but about *how* it became seen as a legitimate undertaking. The new military campaign against Chechnya was allegedly planned well in advance, but this book will not delve into what the Russian leadership wanted to achieve by it.[6] The focus is rather on how broad public acceptance for a new war came about in the first place, and how such broad acceptance was sustained as the war unfolded in all its brutality. This book reveals how the intensive, observable linguistic practices that served to represent 'Chechnya' and

'Chechens' as an existential terrorist threat to an innocent and victorious 'Russia' made violent practices such as those used in the Second Chechen War possible and acceptable. It holds that a deep estrangement of 'Chechnya' and 'Chechens' from 'Russia' was created through a collective and intersubjective (re) construction of this territory and this group of people. This made war acceptable in the first place, and produced a new but enduring blindness to the suffering of Chechnya and Chechens in Russia.

The first post-Soviet conflict over Chechnya, which erupted into full-scale war in 1994, was initially represented as a local separatist conflict. On the Russian side a primary reason for going to war was given as preventing the new Russian Federation from unravelling along the pattern of the Soviet Union.[7] 'Chechnya' was not detailed as a threat to 'Russia' in any substantive way before the war was launched.[8] In Chechnya, the leadership headed by General Dzhokhar Dudayev mobilized the population around primarily nationalist slogans as part of the build-up to the war, and the claim that Chechens could not survive under Russian rule acquired resonance among the Chechen population as the war was fought.[9] During the First Chechen War and the ensuing interwar years, Islam came to acquire a more prominent role in Chechen society, particularly among certain warlords who turned to Radical Islam. Their statements increasingly presented 'Russia' as an 'infidel' enemy and as an existential threat to the Muslims of the North Caucasus.[10]

On the Russian side, representations of 'Chechnya' changed as well. During the interwar years, official statements depicted President Aslan Maskhadov's Chechnya as a partner and friend. When the Second Chechen War was launched in October 1999, that move was presented as a response to the September 1999 terrorist attacks in Moscow, Volgodonsk and Buynaksk, which were blamed on Chechens. According to the Russian leadership, Chechnya had become 'a huge terrorist camp'.[11] The war itself was labelled a 'counter-terrorist campaign'.

While these radical shifts in the representations of the 'Other' on *both* sides in the Russo-Chechen conflict need to be investigated in order to understand the sum of gross violence and terror associated with the Second Chechen War, this book tells only half the story. I do not seek to attribute all blame on the Russian side or to deny that atrocities were committed by the Chechen side. Atrocities were committed on both sides during the Second Chechen War. There is no doubt that the escalation of the conflict to such violent heights was the result of a reciprocal process. However, this book has a narrower focus. The puzzle it tries to solve is how this war came to make so much sense on the Russian side.

Based in the tradition of Critical Security Studies, the origin of conflict is understood not as the outcome of timeless structures, but as grounded in reflexive practices. Rather than the competition of existing sovereign states or ethnic groups, the constitution of collective identity provides much of the impetus behind conflict.[12] Michael C. Williams has formulated this standpoint as follows:

> This is not to say that empirical elements are unimportant, but such conflicts cannot simply be reduced to the competing interests of pre-given political

objects. They are about the creation of these objects, and the way in which different identities are constitutive of them.[13]

Guided by a post-structuralist reading of securitization theory, the book assesses Russian re-phrasing of Chechnya by analysing the process of naming and describing the Chechen threat in official language (Chapters 4 and 5), evaluating to what extent representations among key groups in Russian society resonate with these official representations (Chapters 7, 8 and 9), and what kind of policies and practices of war these representations legitimized (Chapters 10, 11 and 12). It covers the years from 1996 to 2001, with an emphasis on autumn 1999. This timespan captures Russian official representations of and policies on Chechnya during the period between the two wars (1996–1999) and then Russian representations of the Chechen threat during summer and autumn 1999, as well as the material practices undertaken against Chechnya until 2001 in what most reasonably can be called the Second Chechen War. The First Chechen War (1994–1996), as well as parts of several hundred years of Russo-Chechen relations (Chapter 6), will be re-visited several times, but not in depth.

Although it is the war against Chechnya that is presented, the book provides general insight into how the mobilization and legitimation of war comes about in Putin's Russia and to what effect. It shows how a re-phrasing of another group or territory as an existential threat is essential to making the exercise of violence widely accepted in Russian politics and, at the same time, how such a re-phrasing creates cohesion in the fragmented Russian polity. On the one hand, the making of an acceptable war in Russia is a much more complex social process than most accounts make it look like. It is not decided and grounded in one authoritarian leader, but is a collective and intersubjective endeavour in which many societal actors take part. On the other hand, broad and collectively articulated representations of existential threat trigger a re-articulation of the threatened 'Self' and serve to re-constitute and unite the Russian political community internally. During the crises in Ukraine, we again witnessed the making of an acceptable Russian war. The object subjected to war is different. This time it was the 'fascist' Ukraine that was projected as a threat to Russia. But the broad social process that made Russian military action against Ukraine seem necessary and legitimate to the Russian public was recognizable. For those of us who have studied Russian war-making over years, the counter-terrorist campaign against Chechnya was a laboratory, a test case of how war becomes acceptable in Putin's Russia.

This holds also today. When Russian military force was employed in Syria in 2015 and 2016, it was made reasonable through a broader social process. The projection of terrorism as an existential threat to Russia was the focal point in this process. As put by Putin in his 2015 state of the nation speech, 'Russia has long been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism. This is a fight for freedom, truth and justice, for the lives of people and the future of the entire civilisation.'[14] While this looks like a radical shift away from Ukraine and the West as Russia's contemporary radical Others, it still has the effect of uniting,

strengthening and re-constituting the Russian Self. Moreover, the articulation of international terrorism as the prime existential threat to Russia is powerful, credible and effective because it resonates with broad and enduring discursive patterns in Russian society. When Putin told the story of Russia's righteous fight against terrorism, the terrorist acts that sprang from the Chechen wars made up the foundation of his claims. A straight line was drawn from the Chechen threat to the present-day terrorist evil:

> We know what aggression of international terrorism is. Russia faced it back in the mid-1990s, when our country, our civilian population suffered from cruel attacks. We will never forget the hostage crises in Budennovsk, Beslan and Moscow, the merciless explosions in residential buildings, the Nevsky Express train derailment, the blasts in the Moscow metro and Domodedovo Airport.… It took us nearly a decade to finally break the backbone of those militants. We almost succeeded in expelling terrorists from Russia, but are still fighting the remaining terrorist underground. This evil is still out there. Two years ago, two attacks were committed in Volgograd. A civilian Russian plane was recently blown up over Sinai.… The militants in Syria pose a particularly high threat for Russia. Many of them are citizens of Russia and the CIS countries. They get money and weapons and build up their strength. If they get sufficiently strong to win there, they will return to their home countries to sow fear and hatred, to blow up, kill and torture people. We must fight and eliminate them there, away from home.[15]

Critical studies of Russia and terrorism

This study can be placed in the social constructionist camp. I believe that neither the threat nor the character of the Second Chechen War was determined by the nature of things.[16] It is not the aim of this book to argue that there was no Chechen threat, nor any threat from Radical Islamic fighters: determining the magnitude of the Chechen or Radical Islamic threat is scarcely feasible, and it is not my concern here.[17] The intention is rather to study how representations of 'Chechnya' in Russia have changed, how 'Chechnya' has been given a new meaning, and how this has influenced the means deemed legitimate for dealing with this Russian republic. Quite a few international *jihadi* fighters took part in the first post-Soviet war in Chechnya; the numbers participating in the Second Chechen War were not necessarily much higher. However, this fact was not spoken about during the First Chechen War, and the representation of 'Chechnya' prevalent in 1996 made negotiation and peace possible. In contrast, articulations of the Chechen enemy in Russia and of the Russian enemy among the Chechen insurgents during the Second Chechen War militated against such a solution.

The counterfactual reasoning which guides this book is that, if representations of Self and Other on each side of the Russo-Chechen conflict had been different, then different policies and practices would have been possible. In many ways,

the whole book is an exploration of how discursive practices matter and work in making war and violence acceptable. But I do *not* suggest that acceptance of the Second Chechen War was an inevitable outcome of attempts by the Russian leadership to make it so. Rather, I point out how representations negating the version of Chechnya as a terrorist threat *could have* emerged in Russia to make the war unacceptable. This is an important point to make, given that it is difficult to imagine anything *but* a war-prone Russia in today's situation. Moreover, it renders the overall approach of this book both critical *and* constructive, in the sense that it will not only reveal how war becomes acceptable, but also indicate how war can be replaced by peaceful interaction.

With this approach, the current book is part of a broader endeavour to address and understand international and national security through discursive approaches.[18] Discursive approaches have proved particularly fruitful in analysing Western responses to terrorism, presumably the gravest threat in our time.[19] The current volume dovetails with a whole row of studies on another war that was midwifed through the discourse on terrorism at the beginning of this century, namely the war on Iraq.[20]

The main empirical contribution of this book is that it provides an in-depth, discursive analysis of Russia's version of the War on Terror. It enquires into how the security notion of terrorism is locally crafted in a non-Western setting and uncovers what the terrorist threat means to *Russian* politicians and publics. In this, the book answers Hagmann's[21] call to investigate the local, time and context specifics of security concepts, such as terrorism, and takes this agenda beyond the analysis of European and North American security issues, which dominates the field.

While too little light has been shed on Russia's version of the War on Terror in Western scholarship, Russian security politics are also seldom subjected to critical perspectives of a scholarly nature.[22] It is fair to say that this book, together with Bacon and Renz's study of securitization in Russia from 2006 and Aglaya Snetkov's recent book, introduces systematic and discursive approaches to understand the conflict in and over Chechnya.[23] There are several excellent books on the Chechen wars with rich empirical accounts.[24] But many of these are weak on theoretical concepts, and there is a general disregard of social theory. Some of these accounts even present the difference between 'Chechnya' and 'Russia' as an eternal and given fact, thereby further reifying a divide that in reality is constantly in the making.[25]

This endeavour is fundamentally critical. Adopting the post-structuralist approach of deconstruction was a conscious choice.[26] The post-structuralist approach aims to expose the processes of power and 'Othering' that are embedded in discursive structures and can be used to show how categories of our time become tools for oppression. Specifically, this book aims to show how the category of terrorism has produced a Chechen threat that Russian politicians so often give the impression of merely describing.

To make my personal standpoint clear, I believe that the imprint of the terrorist discourse on Russian–Chechen relations was a 'bad thing'. It has

rendered concepts such as 'negotiation' and 'reconciliation' alien, and has legitimized the widespread use of violent emergency measures in Chechnya and the wider Northern Caucasus to this day. Not only has this created an even greater divide between Chechnya/Chechens and Russia: it will also pose an enormous challenge for social cohesion in the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Russian state in years to come.

Moreover, the concern that the War on Terror has legitimized breaches of human rights and triggered a process of legal backsliding in several Western countries can be doubled in the case of Russia.[27] Although Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union adopted a liberal and democratic constitution (as well as a full set of new laws to detail this constitution) and signed all relevant human rights conventions, liberal laws and the protection of fundamental human rights do not have deep roots in Russia. This book studies how anti-terrorist discourse has shaped Russian approaches to Chechnya and Chechens, and in the final event suggests that the counter-terrorist campaign contributed to thwart the budding legal regime for the protection of basic human rights in Russia.

On the more general level, it proposes that the classification of 'terrorist' and the prominence of this classification in security language worldwide have increased the legitimacy of violence at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The prominence of this classification has not only opened the possibility for many leaders to launch violent responses against those classified as terrorists – it has also changed the dynamics of already ongoing conflicts, by allowing new and often extra-legal practices of war and excluding the possibility of peaceful solutions. Chechnya is merely one example.[28]

The process of securitization reconsidered

To uncover the social process that makes war acceptable, the book is informed by securitization theory but foregrounds the web of meaning and representation between a myriad of actors in society to unearth the contents – and changes – in how war is articulated and carried out with public consent. This matters not only for the question of how war becomes acceptable, but also for the very practices through which the war is fought: the emergency measures that are enabled in a discourse of existential threat. The social process that enables the legitimate undertaking of violent practices spring from an accumulation of statements that construct a sharp boundary between the Other as an existential threat and the threatened Self. A core theoretical argument advanced throughout the book is that the construction of such boundaries for acceptable violent action takes place through an *intersubjective* process. Not only official statements but also historical narratives, as well as those voiced by groups looked upon as 'audience' to official speech, contribute to making violent practices acceptable. In the case of the Second Chechen War, the communities of journalists, experts and parliamentarians contributed heavily to, and even initiated, the discourse of existential threat that made the war a legitimate undertaking.

This approach to understanding how war becomes acceptable draws on key concepts in securitization theory in a selective yet deepening way. It embeds securitization theory more firmly in post-structuralism – a move that builds on the theories of Ole Wæver, but also one that revises Copenhagen School securitization theory in fundamental ways. Three key differences between Copenhagen School securitization theory and the theoretical approach developed in this book will be highlighted here and then elaborated upon in Chapter 2. First, when security is accentuated as part of a constant and continuing social construction of reality as post-structuralist discourse theory encourages us to do,[29] securitization becomes a gradual, intersubjective process, not an instant, individual and intentional event as in speech act theory.[30] In a post-structuralist reading, securitization is not one utterance by one actor, but is produced over time in multiple texts that *represent* something as a threat. It is a result of an intersubjective struggle through texts emanating from 'securitizing actors' *and* 'audience' over what level of difference and danger to attach to something. The core of the process of securitization is a securitizing narrative that draws on and interacts with discursive structures and materializes in concrete emergency measures. This is a very different process from the actor-centric process suggested by Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, which indicates a clear sequence, starting with a 'securitizing actor' that securitizes towards a 'significant audience' via a *speech act* in the Austinian 'once said, then done' (illocutionary) way.[31]

Second, in terms of the 'outcome' of an actor–audience agreement on something as an existential threat, Copenhagen School securitization theory merely states that this leads to the endorsement of emergency measures 'beyond rules that otherwise have to be obeyed'.[32] It gives no clue about what kinds of emergency measures are actually enabled in a process of securitization. In the post-structuralist perspective, meaning and materiality go hand in hand. Material practices are seen as intertwined with and complementing linguistic practices in the way proposed by Michel Foucault.[33] A post-structuralist framework for the study of securitization can therefore help us theorize the concrete material emergency measures that are enabled in a discourse of existential threat. When discourse is seen as a supra-concept which includes both significative practices and material practices, the statements that bring something into being as an existential terrorist threat are taken to acquire a logical and legitimate expression in material emergency measures. This book discusses not only how a new representation of the Chechen threat made it possible to launch the Second Chechen War, but also how the labelling of Chechnya (and Chechens) as a terrorist threat enabled the introduction of a whole series of counter-terrorist measures and practices against Chechnya (and Chechens) that might otherwise have been seen as illegitimate.

Finally, Copenhagen School securitization theory disregards the social effects that a process of securitization might have for the 'referent object' – the social entity that is said to be threatened. As McDonald suggested, 'a broader approach to the construction of security also entails a focus on how political communities themselves are constituted'.[34] Post-structuralist Self/Other literature encourages

us to expand the focus of study beyond the (re)construction of threat (Chechnya) to include the (re)construction of the Self, the referent object (Russia). Based in a post-structuralist reading of securitization theory, this study will reveal where and how the hefty re-articulation of Russian identity associated with the Putin regime started.[35]

Second generation securitization theory post-Copenhagen School

This book does not only revise and develop Copenhagen School securitization theory, it also contributes to expand its applicability and engages the growing body of literature referred to as second generation securitization theory post-Copenhagen School.[36] In line with the Critical Security Studies agenda of introducing a greater range of issues, theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, securitization theory was developed by Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan primarily to open up the study of security to a wider spectrum of issues beyond traditional military threats and to broaden the study of security, taking into consideration security by actors and referent objects other than the state.[37] While upholding the critical agenda, this study brings securitization theory back to the core of security studies by using it to understand how violence and war become acceptable in a state – Russia.[38] In this way, the book contributes to filling a gap in critical approaches to security identified by Hagmann: namely, that such approaches 'tend to focus ever more closely on political practices that have little bearing on *statist* foreign policymaking and thus interstate relations in the classic sense'.[39]

While Hagmann reworks securitization broadly into a framework to analyse how representations of danger are seized upon to justify distinct types of foreign policy strategies, this book will develop a framework to study the most dramatic of such strategies, namely war. Hagmann is uncomfortable with post-structuralism's focus on radical binary oppositions when theorizing the production of identity and consequently securitization theory's focus on posing threats as 'existential', because he wants to understand foreign policy production in general. But for the purposes of understanding how *war* becomes acceptable, the focus on radical Otherness and existential threat is crucial.[40] The possibility of launching violent measures on a scale such as war against an object, a territory or a social group hinges critically on representations of radical Otherness. Similarly, while Hagmann[41] draws on securitization theory *despite* the strong emphasis on the way in which naming threats as existential gives way to extraordinary – i.e. norm-breaking – powers, this book draws on it *because* of this emphasis on extraordinary force. War and violence is necessarily dramatically norm breaking, particularly when it is levelled by the state against its own citizens, as in the case studied in this book. How such extraordinary force is enabled by narratives of extreme difference and danger is the key to understanding how war becomes acceptable.

In many ways, the current endeavour joins efforts with Donnelly who has studied the war in Iraq through the prism of securitization.[42] As does Donnelly, I

want to work in the broader framework of the Copenhagen School approach but shift 'attention away from the speech act as the dominant action towards a larger intersubjective activity that may involve multiple players'.[43] Yet our attempts at developing securitization as a framework to understand our specific cases of war produce different results. Donnelly stays on the level of state leadership and reworks securitization theory through Wittgensteinian insights to explore the different kinds of rules that exist when security is spoken, in particular the *constraints* of spoken words on actions. I explore and develop securitization theory as an analytical tool for understanding how war becomes acceptable via post-structuralist insights, with particular emphasis on how the 'audience' within a state contributes to such legitimation and how this legitimizes and *enables* violent practices.[44] This framework implies studying the full cycle of war as a securitization process, how war is prepared and made reasonable in language and the concrete implementation of this language in material practices such as bombing, cleansing, torture and murder. While securitization theory has inspired hundreds of studies, few of them investigate concrete emergency measures and provide detailed empirical examples of the material practices that securitizations enable. The failure to move beyond language is also a critique that is constantly levelled against post-structuralist and discourse theoretical contributions to security studies. Therefore, this book should be a welcome contribution to both of these bodies of literature.

By advancing a post-structuralist version of securitization theory, the book also contributes to the already long-running scholarly debate on this theory itself.[45] Considerable attention has been devoted to the claim that the Copenhagen School approach builds on two separate meta-theoretical convictions – neo-realism and post-structuralism – something which gives rise to several contradictions and tensions. The debate has triggered efforts to specify and develop the theory into more distinct and coherent variants or views of securitization. Most notably, Balzacq[46] champions a 'sociological' version and Stritzel[47] suggests an 'externalist' version of securitization theory; simultaneously, they bracket what they call potential 'philosophical' or 'internalist' variants associated with post-structuralist traditions.

This book takes issue with Balzacq's attempt to dismiss the relevance of post-structuralism for theorizing the process of securitization, by mistaking it for Austinian speech act theory. According to Balzacq, 'those working in a post-structuralist tradition believe in a social magic power of language, a magic in which the conditions of possibility of threats are internal to the act of saying "security"'. This 'philosophical' variant, according to Balzacq '*ultimately* reduces security to a *conventional procedure*'.[48] Although Wæver indeed also seems to conflate the two in some of his writings, fundamental post-structuralist insights actually fly in the face of Austinian speech act theory. Most importantly, and as I will return to in the next chapter, the post-structuralist concept of discourse is an inherently social and intersubjective concept and stands in direct contradiction to the notion that 'the word … is the act … by saying it something is done'.[49]

In fact, the post-structuralist reading of securitization theory elaborated in this book seems to have more in common with the 'sociological' variant that Balzacq advances. Also a post-structuralist version sees securitization as a 'process that occurs within or as a part of a configuration of circumstances, including the context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience'.[50] A post-structuralist version considers the *discursive terrain* that any securitizing attempt feeds on and is launched into (see Chapters 2 and 6 of this book). However, it will emphasize the empowerment of the referent object at the expense of the thing that is said to threaten *as a consequence of a process of securitization* rather than emphasize 'the power that both the speaker and listener bring to the interaction', which the sociological variant is said to do.[51] A post-structuralist version will view securitization as a non-intentional process, because agency is placed in discursive practices and not in people. It therefore departs from the sociological version that sees securitization as both intentional and non-intentional. The conception of the audience, however, in many ways coincides. In the post-structuralist reading, the audience is *not* viewed as a 'formal-given-category, which is often poised in a receptive mode', as suggested by Balzacq, but rather more as an 'emergent category that must be adjudicated empirically'[52] just like in the sociological variant. As I will return to in the next chapter, the audience in the post-structuralist perspective is conceived of as a potential field into which the securitizing attempt is launched. The malleable yet fixed quality of discourses and the struggles between them means that the discursive reception of the securitizing attempt in the 'audience' is undecided. There is always room for change and appropriation of the securitizing narrative: it is not as if the 'audience' has already made up its mind before the transaction takes place.

Stritzel also offers a 'theorization of securitization as a specific conceptualization of discourse dynamics',[53] but grounds his re-reading of securitization theory in Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis.[54] With this move, Stritzel, as he notes, works in the tradition of problematizing the 'power in discourse', which is concerned 'with socio-political resources and power positions of actors, their political struggles and processes of authorization as specific moments in time to create, challenge, change or amend existing meaning structures, potentially establishing new discursive hegemonies as particular points in time'. By contrast, this book stays within the post-structuralist tradition of problematizing the 'power of discourse', where agency is located within discursive structures and through discursive changes rather than in social actors.[55] While Stritzel studies language *and* political constellations, this study focuses on language and how political constellations are created through discourse. In concrete terms, the focus is not on how the position as Prime Minister/President of Russia authorized Putin to speak security, but rather on how his speeches contributed to redrawing the boundaries between Russia and Chechnya in a fashion that empowered Russia at the expense of Chechnya and, in turn, authorized Putin as *the* speaker for Russia. The current explication of securitization theory does dovetail with Stritzel's in that I want to contextualize a securitization and follow how it travels from locale to locale. But again, while Stritzel broadens and

follows the securitizations in world affairs, my project has been to follow how the discourse of danger travels within a state: from newspaper pages to presidents and parliamentarians and down to policemen and soldiers, all the time enabling and legitimizing violent emergency practices.

Outline of chapters

Having briefly introduced the essence of a post-structuralist reading of securitization and drawn up the boundaries in relation to the Copenhagen School approach as well as those of core second-generation securitization theorists, Chapter 2 next explicates and details securitization as a framework to analyse how war becomes acceptable. The framework has been developed to address the specific case of how the Russian counterterrorist campaign against Chechnya became acceptable. It is hoped that it also provides some more general conceptual tools for researching the processes through which leaders and their publics come to understand some violent conflicts as difficult to engage in and others as logical, even inescapable. Chapter 3 translates conceptual tools into working tools by presenting the research method employed, as well as the sources relied upon in this book.

The first empirical chapter of this book, Chapter 4, begins by re-visiting the interwar period (1996–1999). It aims to show that Chechnya has not always figured as Russia's radical Other, nor does it need to do so. Tracing official representations of 'Chechnya' and 'Russia' as well as the policies and practices pursued by the Russian leadership in relation to Chechnya in these years shows that a 'discourse of reconciliation' dominated. The Chechen issue was desecuritized in official Russian language, enabling negotiation and cooperation. Chapter 5 then moves on in time and investigates the official representations of 'Chechnya' and 'Russia' during spring, summer and autumn 1999. Official statements presenting Chechnya as an existential terrorist threat to Russia accumulated during this time; I present the details of this official securitizing narrative. The chapter concludes that the Second Chechen War was justified well in advance by the Russian leadership – not after the fact, as with the First Chechen War.

Chapter 6 revisits the Russian discursive terrain, with an analysis of the multitude of historical representations of 'Chechnya' and 'Russia' into which the official securitizing narrative was launched. While the need for a new war against Chechnya was argued for at length by the Russian leadership, such a discursive terrain offers both possibilities and constraints. And indeed, the sharp demarcation between 'Russia' and the 'Chechens'/'Chechnya' is revealed as having been centuries in the making, resonating strongly with the new official securitizing narrative.

Chapter 7 then casts the net even wider by investigating representations of 'Russia' and 'Chechnya' in statements of the Russian political elite holding or campaigning for seats in the Federal Assembly during autumn 1999. Here the premise is that representations by groups presented merely as an 'audience' in

Copenhagen School securitization theory *could* have discarded the 1999 official securitizing narrative, even if it was well argued and resonated well with the Russian discursive terrain. In Chapters 8 and 9, expert and media texts are examined. They too detail and even expand the representation of 'Chechnya' as different and dangerous and that of 'Russia' as a righteous defender. The core argument throughout Chapters 7, 8 and 9 is that the process that brought Chechnya into being as an existential terrorist threat was not the achievement of Prime Minister Putin in isolation: it was a collective and intersubjective endeavour. The words of the political elite beyond the Kremlin, of the experts and the journalists, played a key role in transmitting the new core understandings of 'Chechnya' and 'Russia' to the broader Russian public. When the Russian ground offensive into Chechnya started in October 1999, the Second Chechen War had become an acceptable undertaking.

The three final empirical chapters, Chapters 10, 11 and 12, move from linguistic representations and on to investigating the material practices of war. Chapter 10 shows how the urgent security situation entailed in the securitizing narrative immediately became translated into the endorsement of emergency measures proposed by the Russian leadership. In line with the post-structuralist approach of this book, practical enactments of representations are given more attention than such initial formal endorsement. The practices that served to 'seal off' Chechnya and Chechens from Russia are presented. These practices were both logical and legitimate, given the new one-sided classification of Chechnya; and their enactment contributed to reify this classification with yet another layer. Chapter 11 examines the intensive and repeated bombing of Chechen territory, which was on a par with that of the First Chechen War, from September 1999 onward. Finally, the violent practices undertaken against the population of Chechnya in connection with the efforts to 'cleanse' this Russian republic of terrorists during the ground offensive from October 1999 onward are discussed in Chapter 12. A core concern throughout these Chapters 10, 11 and 12 is to show how language functioned to legitimize violent practices from the outset until they were carried out and how such material practices in turn served to constitute, confirm and cement the identity of Chechnya and Chechens as a terrorist threat to Russia.

The concluding Chapter 13 begins by presenting some general claims about securitization and war. It then summarizes the core findings of the empirical case studied throughout the book in order to draw out some broader perspectives on the functioning and consequences of the counter-terrorist campaign for Russia as a state. As a codicil, I present the life of Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov as an allegory of the Second Chechen War.

Notes

1 C.W. Blandy. 2000. *Chechnya: Two federal interventions. An interim comparison and assessment*. Camberley: Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, 46.

2 In January 1995 only 22.8 per cent of the Russian population was for the use of armed force to solve the conflict in Chechnya, and 54.8 per cent was explicitly opposed. This mood was confirmed in January 1997 by strong support (67 per cent) for the Khasavyurt Accord. By November 1999, 52 per cent were in favour of establishing constitutional order in Chechnya by use of the army (B.K. Levashov. 2001. *Rossiyskoye obshchestvo i radikal'nye reformy*. Moscow: Akademia, Russian Academy of Science, Institute of Social-Political Research, 850–852). Emil Pain has documented in figures the radical shift in terms of public acceptance for war against Chechnya (2005. The Chechen War in the context of contemporary Russian politics. In: R. Sakwa (ed.) *Chechnya from Past to Future*. London: Anthem Press, 67–78).

3 T.P. Gerber and S.E. Mendelson. 2002. Russian public opinion on human rights and the war in Chechnya. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 18(4): 271–305.

4 For key texts presenting the classical Copenhagen School version of securitization, see O. Wæver. 1995a. Securitization and desecuritization. In: R.D. Lipschutz (ed.) *On Security*. New York: Columbia University Press, 46–86; O. Wæver. 1995b. Identity, integration and security: Solving the sovereignty puzzle in E.U. studies. *Journal of International Affairs*, 48(2): 289–431; B. Buzan. 1997. Rethinking security after the Cold War. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 32(1): 5–28; B. Buzan, O. Wæver and J. de Wilde. 1998. *Security: A new framework for analysis.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

5 For key post-structuralist works on Self/Other see R.B.J. Walker. 1990. Sovereignty, Identity, Community: Reflections on the Horizons of Contemporary Political Practice. In: R.B.J Walker and S.H. Mendlovitz (eds.) *Contending Sovereignties: Redefining political community*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 159–185; S. Dalby. 1988. Geopolitical discourse: The Soviet Union as Other. *Alternatives*, 13(4): 141–155; M. Dillon. 1990. The alliance of security and subjectivity, *Current Research on Peace and Violence*, 13(3): 101–124; W.E. Connolly, 1991. *Identity/Difference: Democratic negotiations of political paradox.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; D. Campbell. 1992. *Writing Security.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press; I.B. Neumann. 1996. *Russia and the Idea of Europe.* London: Routledge; R.L. Doty. 1996. *Imperial Encounters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; L. Hansen. 2006. *Security as Practice*. New York: Routledge.

6 Former Prime Minister Sergey Stepashin revealed that Russia made its plans to invade Chechnya six months *before* the events that are thought to have triggered the Second Chechen War: the summer 1999 incursion into Dagestan and the apartment bombings in Russian cities. ('Russia planned Chechen war before bombings', *The Independent*, 29 January 2000.)

7 C. Gall and T.D. Waal. 1997. *Chechnya: A small victorious war*. London: Pan Original; A. Lieven. 1998. *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian power.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; J.B. Dunlop. 1998. *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a separatist conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

8 C. Wagnsson. 2000. *Russian Political Language and Public Opinion on the West*, *NATO and Chechnya.* Stockholm: Akademitryck AB Edsbruk.

9 J. Wilhelmsen. 1999. *Conflict in the Russian Federation: Two case studies*, *one Hobbesian explanation.* NUPI Report 249. Oslo: NUPI.

10 D. Trenin and A. Malashenko. 2004. *Russia's Restless Frontier: The Chechnya factor in post-Soviet Russia*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; J. Wilhelmsen. 2005. Between a rock and a hard place: The Islamisation of the Chechen separatist movement. *Europe–Asia Studies*, 57(1): 35–59; C. Moore and P. Tumelty. 2009. Unholy alliances in Chechnya: From Communism and nationalism to Islamism and Salafism. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 25(1): 73–94. R. Dannreuther. 2010. Islamic radicalization in Russia: An assessment. *International Affairs*, 86 (1): 109–126.

11 Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, cited in 'Tret'ya otechestvennaya?', *Monitor*, 15 September 1999.

12 K. Krause and M.C. Williams. 1997. From strategy to security: Foundations of critical security studies. In: K. Krause and M.C. Williams (eds.) *Critical Security Studies*. London: Routledge, 33–61.
13 Ibid., 47.
14 Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly December 3, 2015, available at Kremlin.ru (http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50864).
15 Ibid.
16 I locate this study in the social construction tradition on the basis of Ian Hacking's proposition that what unites various types of social construction work is a stand against inevitability (I. Hacking. 1999. *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
17 Threats cannot be understood as objectively given and cannot be studied as such. They are determined not by the nature of things, but through discourse. This is not to say that there is no substance to the threat (indeed – heinous, violent acts aimed at civilians may be committed). It is the *concept* (of terrorism) as a threat that is viewed as socially constructed.
18 For overviews, see K.M. Fierke. 2007. *Critical Approaches to International Security*. Cambridge: Polity; B. Buzan and L. Hansen. 2009. *The Evolution of International Security Studies.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; C. Peoples and N. Vaughan-Williams. 2010. *Critical Security Studies: An introduction.* London: Routledge.
19 Notable examples include J. Der Derian. 2005. Imaging terror: Logos, Pathos and Ethos. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(1): 23–37, on the elusiveness of the concept of terrorism; C. Weber. 2006. An aesthetics of fear: The 7/7 London bombings. *Millennium*, 34(3): 683–710, on how the aesthetics of fear were politically mobilized in the case of the London 7/7 bombings; O. Wæver. 2006. What's religion got to do with it? Terrorism, war on terror, and global security. Keynote lecture at the *Nordic Conference on the Sociology of Religion*. Aarhus, 11 August 2006, on the securitization processes at work in the rhetorical battles between George Bush and Osama bin Laden. See also B. Buzan and O. Wæver. 2009. Macrosecuritization and security constellations: Reconsidering scale in securitization theory. *Review of International Studies*, 35(2): 253–276. Several titles in the Routledge Critical Terrorism Studies are written from a related perspective: see R. Jackson, M. Breen Smyth and J. Gunning (eds.) 2009. *Critical Terrorism Studies: A new research agenda*. London: Routledge; B. Brecher, M. Devenney and A. Winter (eds.) 2010. *Discourses and Practices of Terrorism: Interrogating terror.* New York. Routledge; A.C. Stephens and N. Vaughan-Williams (eds.) 2009. *Terrorism and the Politics of Response.* New York: Routledge; R. Jackson, E. Murphy and S. Poynting (eds.) 2011. *Contemporary State Terrorism: Theory and practice*. London: Routledge; M. Thorup. 2010. *An Intellectual History of Terror: War*, *violence and the state*. London: Routledge; J. Holland. 2013. *Selling the War on Terror: Foreign policy discourses after 9/11*. New York: Routledge.
20 R. Jackson. 2005. *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language*, *politics and counterterrorism.* Manchester: Manchester University Press; S. Croft. 2006. *Culture Crisis and America's War on Terror*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; R.R. Krebs and J.K. Lobasz. 2007. Fixing the meaning of 9/11: Hegemony, coercion, and the road to war in Iraq. *Security Studies*, 16(3): 409–451; J. Holland. 2012. *Selling the War on Terror: Foreign policy discourses after 9/11*. New York: Routledge; F. Donnelly 2013. *Securitization and the Iraq War: The rules of engagement*. New York: Routledge.
21 J. Hagmann. 2015. *(In-)Security and the Production of International Relations: The politics of securitization in Europe*. London: Routledge: 3, emphasis added.
22 M. Galeotti. 2010. *The Politics of Security in Modern Russia*. Farnham: Ashgate.
23 A. Snetkov. 2015. *Russia's Security Policy under Putin: A critical perspective*. London: Routledge. The present book in many ways complements Snetkov's study

(2015). Her focus is on Russia's security policy under Putin from 2000 to 2014 as analysed through the prism of official Russian discourse on Chechnya. The current volume also scrutinizes the Russian discourse on Chechnya, but over a shorter timespan and in more depth. While Snetkov shows how official discourses are intertwined in the domestic–foreign policy nexus, this study focuses on the ways in which domestic constituencies beyond or beneath the official level of politics feed into discourses of existential threat in Russia. In this it also departs from Bacon and Renz's approach, which sees securitization as a narrow and intentional act undertaken by the political leadership across a range of policy areas to create an autocratic system (E. Bacon and B. Renz, with J. Cooper. 2006. *Securitizing Russia: The domestic politics of Putin*. Manchester: Manchester University Press). By contrast, this book focuses inward on the one event of how the Second Chechen War became an acceptable undertaking and moves beyond the level of general security policy to investigate and present the detail of brutal warring practices during the Second Chechen War.

24 Gall and Waal 1997; V. Tishkov. 1997. *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The mind aflame*. London: SAGE; Dunlop. 1998; Lieven 1998; S. Smith. 1998. *Allah's Mountains. The battle for Chechnya.* London: Tauris Parke; A. Nivat. 2001. *Chienne de Guerre. A woman reporter behind the lines of the war in Chechnya.* New York: Public Affairs; R. Seely. 2001. *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800–2000*. London: Frank Cass; M. Evangelista. 2002. *The Chechen Wars. Will Russia go the way of the Soviet Union?* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press; V. Tishkov. 2004. *Chechnya: Life in a war-torn society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Trenin and Malashenko 2004; A. Meier. 2005. *Chechnya. To the heart of a conflict.* New York: W.W. Norton; R. Sakwa. 2005. *Chechnya from Past to Future*. London: Anthem Press; M. Gammer. 2006. *The Lone Wolf and the Bear. Three centuries of Chechen defiance of Russian rule.* London: Hurst; M.D. Toft. 2006. Issue indivisibility and time horizons as rationalist explanations of war. *Security Studies*, 15(1): 34–69; J. Hughes. 2007. *Chechnya: From nationalism to Jihad*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press; J. Russell. 2007. *Chechnya: Russia's 'War on Terror'*. London: Routledge; E. Gilligan. 2010. *Terror in Chechnya. Russia and the tragedy of civilians in war*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

25 For an excellent treatment and critique of the 'historicist' approach to the Chechen conflict, see Hughes (2007).

26 M. Foucault. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon Books; J. Derrida. 1967. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press; J. Kristeva. 1980. *Desire in Language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. New York: Columbia University Press.

27 As a response to this concern, the UN established a Special Rapporteur on Terrorism and Human Rights in 2007.

28 For other examples, see A. Houen (ed.) 2014. *States of War since 9/11: Terrorism, sovereignty and the War on Terror.* London: Routledge.

29 E. Laclau and C. Mouffe. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics.* London: Verso; J.L. Austin. 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

30 The notion of *speech act* is taken from Austin (1962), who argued that statements can be used to perform an action, as with the statement 'I do' in a marriage ceremony. Austin called these 'performative speech acts'. The Copenhagen School paraphrases the illocutionary act for its definition of securitization (Wæver 1995a: 55).

31 Buzan, *et al*. 1998.

32 Ibid., 25

33 M. Foucault. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

34 M. McDonald. 2008. Securitization and the construction of security. *European Journal of International Relations*, 14(4): 563–587, 565.

35 For an account that sheds light on this process of articulating Russia as a strong state over the long timespan 2000 to 2014, see Snetkov 2015.
36 Key contributions to this literature are H. Stritzel. 2007. Towards a theory of securitization: Copenhagen and beyond. *European Journal of International Relations*, 13(3): 357–383; H. Stritzel. 2014. *Security in Translation: Securitization theory and the localization of threat*. London: Palgrave; R. Taureck. 2006. Securitization theory and securitization studies. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 9(1): 52–61; T. Balzacq. 2005. The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience, and context. *European Journal of International Relations*, 11(2): 171–201; T. Balzacq (ed.). 2011. *Securitization Theory: How security problems emerge and dissolve*. Abingdon: Routledge; McDonald 2008; M.B. Salter. 2008. Securitization and desecuritization: Dramaturgical analysis and the Canadian Aviation Transport Security Authority. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 11(4): 321–349; J. Vuori. 2008. Illocutionary logic and strands of securitization: Applying the theory of securitization to the study of non-democratic political orders. *European Journal of International Relations*, 14(1): 65–99; R. Floyd. 2010. *Security and the Environment: Securitization theory and U.S. environmental security policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; S. Croft. 2012. *Securitizing Islam: Identity and the search for security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; the 2011 special issue of *Security Dialogue* 42 (4–5) on The Politics of Securitization; Donnelly 2013; and Hagmann 2015.
37 For overviews of CSS, see Krause and Williams 1997; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010; C.S. Browning and M. McDonald. 2013. The future of critical security studies: Ethics and the politics of security. *European Journal of International Relations*, 19(2): 235–255.
38 While this means limiting the focus of the book to the mode of securitization which requires a radical separation of Self and Other i.e. national/societal security, it does not deny that several modes of securitization characterized by different logics (e.g. human security) may operate simultaneously, as suggested by R. Doty. 1998. Immigration and the politics of security. *Security Studies*, 8(2–3): 71–93.
39 Hagmann 2015: 3 emphasis added.
40 Ibid., 17–18.
41 Ibid., 18.
42 Donnelly 2013.
43 Ibid., 3.
44 For a useful distinction between critical constructivism (which Donnelly herself works from) and post-structuralism, see Donnelly (2013: 17–21).
45 Hansen's (2011) post-structuralist reading of securitization theory offers many suggestions similar to those presented here, but couched in a different language: she draws directly on Foucault, whereas I draw on a collective body of insight from various IR (international relations) scholars who employ a post-structuralist approach. See L. Hansen. 2011. The politics of securitization and the Mohammad cartoon crises: A post-structuralist perspective. *Security Dialogue*, 42(4/5): 357–369.
46 Balzacq 2005, 2011.
47 Stritzel 2007, 2014.
48 Balzacq 2011: 1.
49 Wæver 1995a: 55.
50 Balzacq 2011: 1.
51 Ibid., 1–2.
52 Ibid., 2.
53 Stritzel 2014: 39.
54 A confusing aspect of Stritzel's work is that he claims to build on Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, but constantly invokes Laclau and Mouffe to explain and explicate his discursive securitization theory. Laclau and Mouffe largely