

2017

## Public Discourse and the Securitization of Conflict

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### Recommended Citation

Edelman, Gilda Raizel, "Public Discourse and the Securitization of Conflict" (2017). *Senior Projects Spring 2017*. 124.  
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Public Discourse and the Securitization of Conflict

Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College

by

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2017

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## Introduction

How is it that some social movements are able to affect policy change while others are not? In this project, I conduct a comparative case-study that compares the ability of social movements and interest groups to affect policy change. While numerous studies have been conducted that treat public opinion as the independent variable in relation to foreign policy, i.e. *whether* it influences decision-making, there is considerably less attention paid toward public opinion as a dependent variable in the literature.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, sociologists have only recently begun to interrogate social movements as political phenomena. In the past twenty years, especially, sociologists studying social movements have shifted their focus from the socio-psychological pathologization of individual protesters toward utilizing political process theory, otherwise known as political opportunity theory, to examine the behavior of social movement organizations (SMOs) as institutional actors within civil society attempting to penetrate the political public sphere. Political opportunity theory involves the determination of the “event[s] or broad social process that serve to undermine the calculations and assumptions on which the political establishment is structured.”<sup>2</sup> In this project, I identify political opportunity as the ability to achieve salience in public discourse. To do so, I examine networks of communication as maps of the processes by which actors attempt to achieve dominance. I therefore demonstrate the more specific implications of achieving agency over the narrative of conflict in society.

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen McGraw. “Manipulating Public Opinion.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

<sup>2</sup> Doug McAdam. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 41.

Structural inequalities are shown to directly influence the manifestation of discourse in the public sphere, and thus the direction of public opinion.

Securitization theory comprises the overarching framework for this project, where analysis is based upon the characterization of securitization abroad, where the goal is to convince so-called “islands of civic engagement” to mobilize on behalf of others implicated in conflict. These islands take the form of SMOs and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) fighting to invoke international law in order to condemn the entities in question through foreign policy. Therefore, the analysis done in this project will involve the process by which conflict narratives become dominant in society. In the case of the anti-apartheid movement, analysis will be focused on the South African lobbying effort in the U.S. and its ultimate failure to prevent the U.S. from imposing sanctions. In the case of the pro-Palestinian movement, analysis will be focused on the ways in which the U.S. and Israel’s close military, cultural and ideological ties have shaped public discourse and has led toward a spiral of silence regarding Israel’s controversial security policy.

While this project may ultimately illuminate the structural obstacles faced by the pro-Palestinian movement in the U.S., its ultimate value does not lie in its ability to prescribe specific policy solutions. Rather, the effect of this project should be to emphasize the ways in which sociology can inform political science research in an increasingly globalized world that defies the traditional realist conception of an anarchic international system.

## Chapter One: Securitization Theory

This project involves two relatively recent developments in social science: securitization theory within international relations (IR), and social movement theory, within sociology. In this first chapter, I discuss the significance of the relationship between competing iterations of securitization theory—the Copenhagen School’s approach on one hand, and the Welsh School’s approach on the other. The analytical framework provided by the Copenhagen School guides the comparative case-study I conduct in this project, which involves the dilemma of treating civil society movements as securitizing actors in the analysis of securitization processes in the modern era. Within that analytical framework, the sociological theory of Jürgen Habermas illustrates the role of communication networks in producing securitizing discourse in society. The phenomenon Elisabeth Noelle-Nuemann defines as the *spiral of silence* occurs as a result of the processes that Habermas identifies within communication networks. In regards to the competing schools of securitization theory, I contend that the Welsh School approach does exactly what it falsely claims the Copenhagen School does—it relies upon a realist conception of international politics, and instead of holistically analyzing securitizing processes in a constructivist fashion, as does the Copenhagen School, it promotes the escalation of issues into a more dangerous zone of politics, just for the sake of the urgency implied. While I disagree with the Welsh School’s emancipatory view of securitization, I nonetheless recognize that it characterizes the way in which various secessionist groups around the world have chosen to fight for their independence. Therefore, I argue that the normative Welsh School approach must not necessarily represent the sole international relations lens by which we address civil society movements today; because as innovation in communication technology continues to foster an increasingly globalized civil

society, it will only become more likely that the number of instances of successful emancipatory securitizations will rise. Acknowledging the realist conception of international politics inseparable from the Copenhagen School's theoretical framework, how can securitizing processes of civil society movements be analyzed if there is no parallel framework in IR theory through which to fairly compare them with traditional securitizing actors? The solution I propose in this project that will facilitate the analysis of securitizations initiated by non-state actors is the application of the latest framework of social movement theory that recognizes the reality that sociologists no longer treat social movements as riots to be suppressed and prevented, but instead acknowledge their potential to compete on the international stage. Furthermore, a better understanding of the construction of threats in sociological terms reduces the ambiguity state leaders face when dealing with societal threats.

### **Applying the Copenhagen School's Framework for Analysis**

In each case examined in this project, there are two competing securitizing actors. The first securitizing actor is the mainstream institutional aspect, which acts in opposition toward the second securitizing actor, the social movement. In Chapter Three, I compare the securitizing actors of the mainstream institutional aspects of each case: on one hand, the U.S. pro-Israel lobby and its successful securitization of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the other, the status quo of U.S.-South African relations and its ultimate failure to withstand the force of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. Then, I compare the securitizing actors of the civil society movements of each case: the failure of the U.S. pro-Palestinian movement in comparison to the ultimate success of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement.

Next to consider is the identification of the precise threats alleged in each case. With the Copenhagen School's securitization theory, successful securitization boils down to whether or not the audience considers the alleged threat existential. In the case of the pro-Israel lobby's dominance over the pro-Palestinian movement in American public discourse, the pro-Israel lobby implicates the pro-Palestinian movement (depending on the specific entity being analyzed) as posing either a) a societal threat; b) an intentional political threat; or c) a structural political threat to the referent object of security of which, above all, is Israel's existence as a Jewish state. To be sure, the mission of the pro-Israel lobby prioritizes the U.S. – Israel relationship in general; however, it is the particular referent object of Israel's existence as a Jewish state that makes the securitization resonate. Thus, in Chapter Three I discuss the nature of the communication network that makes this securitization possible. Then, considered in a parallel way, is the case of the status quo of U.S. – South Africa relations and the anti-apartheid movement. Ultimately the U.S. was unable to successfully securitize its economic interest in South Africa because it would have been impossible to convincingly characterize such an economic "threat" in existential terms to Congress and the American people. Thus, even though it took years of steady coalition building, the anti-apartheid movement was able to successfully securitize the societal threat faced by the black population in South Africa. Furthermore, the apartheid regime failed to characterize the black population as an existential threat worth securitizing because the international community witnessed the atrocities committed by the apartheid regime via media coverage of the escalating conflict throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

Then, I compare the civil society movements of each case and their attempts to securitize their respective situations. For the case of the pro-Palestinian movement, I discuss the



ways in which the emancipatory view of securitization exhibited by certain elements of the movement only serve to undermine the movement, because it legitimizes the pro-Israel lobby's securitization of Palestinians. The existential threat of the pro-Palestinian movement against the U.S. pro-Israel lobby can be described in several ways in terms of Buzan's five sectors of security, depending on the entity within the movement being analyzed. All proposed solutions entertained by the pro-Palestinian movement represent either an intentional or structural political or societal threat, which can either be internal (i.e. Palestinian citizens of Israel) or external (e.g. Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza; foreigners mobilized by international civil society movement). The intensity of the threat is the variable which gives the pro-Israel lobby's message its salience, which I will explore by examining the ways in which the Israeli communication networks relay to the U.S., and how that becomes part of the U.S. communication network.

Both the processes by which audiences agree upon the securitization of a referent object of security as well as the effects of securitization are what I will be analyzing in the final two chapters of this project. In Chapter Three, the comparison of the mainstream institutional aspects of each case will predictably reveal that the lack of any institutionalized lobbying effort was one of the main factors that allowed for the anti-apartheid movement to eventually gain traction. Then, a comparison of the civil society movements of each case will reveal that, in addition to the factor of institutionalized lobbying, the degree to which each case embraced (whether intentionally or otherwise) an emancipatory view of securitization determined (or continues to determine) the outcome of these movements.

I devote the first part of this chapter to a discussion of the basis for the Copenhagen School's framework for analysis, as articulated by securitization scholars that notice the

unparallel nature of critical securitization theory due to its being based on a misinterpretation of Buzan and Wæver's non-normative securitization theory. Furthermore, I discuss the arguments relevant to the issues characteristic of the case-studies I examine in this project, focusing particularly on the discursive legitimation process of securitization and the theory of communicative action it invokes. Additionally, I discuss ways in which the Welsh School approach to securitization is flawed and potentially detrimental toward the attempt of marginalized people to achieve their emancipatory goals.

Finally, I deconstruct the elements of the Copenhagen School's definition of securitization as the process by which "an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object. . . enabling a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat."<sup>3</sup> First is how each school identifies referent objects of security. For the Copenhagen School, referent objects of security are typically the states. For the Welsh School, the referent object of security is the individual. Next is how each school treats security threats—how they are defined, and what constitutes a security threat. The Copenhagen School does not specifically seek to label things "security threats." Instead, it analyzes instances of securitization, where the reality is that for securitization to occur in the first place, issues must be commonly perceived by the relevant audience as imminent existential threats. Alternatively, the Welsh School views any kind of injustice being perpetrated against a group as capable of being securitized.

## **Defining Security**

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<sup>3</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 491.

International relations (IR) scholar Barry Buzan, of the constructivist, English School of IR theory, initiated the sub-field of security studies as we know it today with his 1983 book *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*.<sup>4</sup> Barry Buzan, alongside Danish IR scholars Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde are the foremost thinkers within the Copenhagen School of security studies. In 1998, they published their book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*.<sup>5</sup> Critical theorists Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones, also aligned with the English School, but with the underdeveloped “World Society” conception of international politics, represent the primary voices of the Welsh School. While the Copenhagen School considers securitization theory to serve an analytical purpose, the critical theorists of the Welsh School assert that the purpose of securitization theory ought to be to challenge the status quo of security in global politics, which they argue will continue to marginalize and subjugate people if security studies scholars do not actively pursue a mission to prioritize “human security” over state security.<sup>6</sup>

The Copenhagen School originally defined *security* as a “speech act” that, when “utter[ed]... by a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, “as a speech act, securitization is located with the realm of political argument and discursive

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<sup>4</sup> Barry Buzan. *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd, 1983)

<sup>5</sup> Buzan et al. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Ken Booth. "Security and Emancipation." *Review of International Studies*. 17, no. 4 (October 1991): 313-26.

<sup>7</sup> Ole Wæver. “Securitization and Desecuritization.” In *On Security*, 1-31. ed. Ronnie Lipschutz. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). PDF. Columbia International Affairs Online, Transcribed, proofread, and marked up in HTML, April 1998.

legitimation,”<sup>8</sup> so thus it subjects security practices “to criticism and transformation.”<sup>9</sup> However, the ambiguity of this definition, that somehow the speech-act itself “does” security, has proven to be misleading. Some scholars feel it limits the analytical scope of the theory such that it only covers traditional military engagements where war is formally declared. Scholars like Matt McDonald have struggled with this, who suggests that “a range of issues or dynamics are mentioned but *underspecified* in the securitization framework, most prominently the context of the speech act . . . suggest[ing] that dynamics such as the role of ‘facilitating conditions’ and the ‘audience’ are so undertheorized as to ultimately remain outside the framework itself.”<sup>10</sup> Over the years, several scholars have contributed toward the effort to address the gaps in the theory. For example, I refer to Michael C. Williams, who addresses the most common critiques of the Copenhagen School.

Firstly, Williams explains the Copenhagen School’s theory in the context of Carl Schmitt’s “concept of the political”, which Schmitt conceives is the way in which we relate to issues, which at its most extreme is characterized as the tension between friend and enemy and the recognition of the potential for that tension to escalate into mortal conflict to protect a referent object.<sup>11</sup> This helps explain the Copenhagen School’s focus upon a realist view of international politics. According to Schmitt, sovereignty is necessary in order to make the decision to securitize an issue, which is dependent upon the support it receives from a group united by a common political view, or in other words, the aforementioned recognition of the

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<sup>8</sup> Michael C. Williams. “Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics.” *International Studies Quarterly*. 47, no. 4 (2003): 511-31. 512.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies,” 512.

<sup>10</sup> Matt McDonald. “Securitization and the Construction of Security” *European Journal of International Relations*. 14, no. 4 (2008): 563-587.

<sup>11</sup> Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies,” 515.

potentially violent tension between friend and enemy.<sup>12</sup> Thus, in the absence of this friend vs. enemy mentality, securitization is not possible. Scholar Stefano Guzzini notes that the Copenhagen School's approach to securitization thus leaves "a subjectivist concept of security behind, where security is whatever significant actors may regard as such,"<sup>13</sup> which is not as ambiguous a conclusion as it may appear, considering the dynamic necessary for securitization defined above. So, it is nearly impossible under this view of securitization to operate according to the Welsh School's theory. For example, there is nothing "political" about securitizing economic issues, due to the inevitably risky realm of global markets. It is nearly impossible to precisely determine which specific transactions may have resulted in the disparagement of a population. For, risk is inseparable from the economy, so it is nearly impossible to determine with certainty whether actors made economic moves out of aggression or not. One exception to the rule, however, is the issue of societal security, the debate around which I will address in my discussion of existential threats later in this chapter.

With Schmitt's concept of the political in mind, therefore, the Copenhagen School discourages securitization at all costs due not only to its implication of deadly violence, but also because it bypasses deliberative processes that help politicians design better policy. After all, the issues that critical theorists wish to see securitized require long-term solutions, the consequences of which ought to be thoroughly considered before any law is passed. The Copenhagen School thus promotes "desecuritization" (i.e. a return of the issue to the realm of normal politics) as

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 518.

<sup>13</sup> Stefano Guzzini. "Securitization as a causal mechanism." *Security Dialogue*. 42, no. 4-5 (2011): 329-341. 330

much as possible.<sup>14</sup> The preferred state, then, is “asecurity” where international relations are so institutionalized that the likelihood of a re-securitization is minimized.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Referent Object of Security**

The Copenhagen School specifically refers to states and societies rather than individuals because it acknowledges that the state system came to exist primarily as a sacrifice of liberty on the part of the individual in exchange for protection against threats.<sup>16</sup> Ken Booth argues that individuals ought to be the ultimate referent of security, because states are “unreliable as primary referents because whereas some are in the business of security (internal and external) some are not.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Booth claims that “it is illogical to privilege the security of the means as opposed to the security of the ends.”<sup>18</sup> While the conciseness of this argument is appealing, at closer observation it does not make sense, even barring the fact that it falsely implicates the Copenhagen School. Indeed, “ultimately,” individuals are the referent object of security, and the Copenhagen School realizes this. Buzan acknowledges in *People, States and Fear* the “paradox” of national security in the context of the state system, that the state can only provide individual security by imposing threats.<sup>19</sup> Despite this, the state system emerged for a reason – individuals are likely incapable of defending themselves against any existential threat they may encounter in their lifetime, so they sacrifice personal liberty for the collective security the state provides. Buzan furthermore admits that a minimal, Lockean state is ideal; however, it is an unfortunate

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<sup>14</sup> Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization”

<sup>15</sup> Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies,” 524.

<sup>16</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Booth, “Security and Emancipation,” 319.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>19</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 20.

reality that most states operate according to a maximal view of the state, that it is “considerably more than the sum of its parts, or something different from them,”<sup>20</sup> and therefore sacrifices the liberty of individuals to pursue causes unrelated to serving the collective good. In the view of scholars aligned with the logic behind the Copenhagen School such as Guzzini, it is missing the point of securitization theory to attempt to make normative judgements on particular decisions to securitize threats because “the analysis of security is about not what security means but what security ‘does’.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, any normative securitization theory would make it so that any instance of violence could be theoretically be justified. It is thus considered more worthwhile to analyze the *processes* of securitization, looking at the sociology of how meaning is socially produced<sup>22</sup> so as to better a goal common to both approaches to securitization: to understand the systems that perpetuate injustice.<sup>23</sup>

### **Identifying Security Threats**

An individual unfamiliar with security studies may be easily convinced by the Welsh School approach to securitization theory, which conceives of securitization as an emancipatory mechanism. Along those lines, that same individual could be expected to assume that the role of a security analyst is to serve as a helpful reference for leaders who need to (re)prioritize their governing agendas. In order to fulfill such a role, one may accordingly presume that a security analyst maintain a vision of what issues are considered security threats. According to the Copenhagen School’s securitization theory, this imagination of what a security analyst does is

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>21</sup> Guzzini, “Securitization as a Causal Mechanism,” 330.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>23</sup> Booth, “Security and Emancipation,” 322.

actually backwards. The Copenhagen School theory does not particularly seek to label things as security threats, because by its logic, nothing is intrinsically a security threat. Rather, a security analyst following the Copenhagen School's definition of securitization analyzes the conditions under which the distinct political phenomenon of securitization occurs. Thus, if a situation does not fit that framework, there is no securitization to be analyzed.

Wæver defines security threats as “developments that threaten the sovereignty or independence of a state in a particularly rapid or dramatic fashion, and deprive it of the capacity to manage by itself.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore, security threats require in response a “mobilization of the maximum effort.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Copenhagen School theorists believe that the decision of a securitizing actor to speak security on an issue ought to be considered a last resort; for, securitization entails negative consequences that must be weighed relative to the imminence of the threat. To be sure, this is not to say that the Copenhagen School considers non-existential threats a lower priority than securitized issues; rather, it is to say that it is futile to attempt to appropriate language typically evocative of a sense of danger and/or urgency when the issue in question is clearly not existential, nor even imminently existential. For, securitization most often has the result of developing policy that, while it may diffuse a threat in the short term, is not meant to do so in the long term, because it is unlikely that long-term solutions drawn up quickly and without consideration are going to end up being sound policy decisions. Therefore, desecuritization should be pursued whenever possible, and securitization should be avoided at all costs, and only considered a viable option when the vast majority of the audience is convinced that anything short of immediate action to address a given threat places the referent object of

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<sup>24</sup> Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



security at undue risk for annihilation. When there is an option besides violence or even the threat of violence, the other option should be pursued. The only threats where it is appropriate to securitize are effectively existential threats because they are the only instances in which urgent decision-making is necessary and the resulting contingencies would amount to far less of a negative impact than failure to address the problem altogether. Once the threat is addressed, following the Copenhagen School's logic, executive decision-making ought to return to being checked by the institutionalized political processes of the state governmental apparatus. Accordingly, the Copenhagen School is said to represent a combination of neorealist and constructivist approaches to international relations analysis.

The Copenhagen School identifies five “sectors” potentially susceptible to security threats: military, political, economic, ecological and societal.<sup>26</sup> Buzan also identifies variables affecting threats in terms of their source (internal or external), intensity (physical range, temporal range and probability) and historical change (of threats in character over time).<sup>27</sup>

### **Existential Security Threats**

While the Copenhagen School does not define the specific characteristics of security threats it considers legitimate, nor does it seek to, the types of threats its securitization theory analyzes are always widely considered to be unambiguously existential. Likewise, the threats the Copenhagen School normally treats have to do with the military, political, and societal sectors, for, they not only threaten every aspect of the state, but they use force in a way that “threaten[s] to overthrow a self-created rule by consent, and replace it with an imposed rule by coercion.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Buzan et al, *Security*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 83.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

With military security threats, the referent object of security is the physical integrity of the state. When it comes to political security threats, the referent object of security instead is the legitimacy as well as the ideological constitution of a state. These threats can either occur as intentionally or inevitably due to structural conflicts of interest.<sup>29</sup> Buzan cites the case of the decision of the U.S. to formally condemn the South African apartheid regime as an example of the U.S. exacting an intentional political threat. Eventually, as it became increasingly politically untenable to remain neutral in regards to the human rights abuses perpetrated by the apartheid regime, the U.S. imposed sanctions on South Africa, in order to increase the inevitability of political reform.

Structural threats, on the other hand, are those that arise due to specific circumstances, or in other words, “when the organising principles of two states cannot simply ignore each other’s existence. . . thus play[ing] a zero-sum game with each other whether they will it or not.”<sup>30</sup> Buzan cites the territorial conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, where Muslims represent a demographic majority, as an example of a stalemate caused by structural political threats. While Pakistan’s primary *raison d’être* is its distinctly Islamic identity, when it comes to India, the stability of its secular government depends on the maintenance of tolerance among its population comprised of numerous distinct cultures, not to mention sixty million Muslims.

With societal threats, the referent object of security is identity. When identity is threatened, the existential fear is that “[the identity] will no longer be able to live *as itself*”.<sup>31</sup> Wæver warns that when societal security is approached from a state-centric perspective, things

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Wæver, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” 15.

get dangerous—either the state will feel threatened by elements of society, or the state might feel threatened by a strengthened state-less nationality within the state.<sup>32</sup> Societal threats are especially difficult to reconcile because, due to the fact that the securitizing actor is not operating under a recognizable framework, the threatened state often has no choice but to prepare for the worst-case scenario, which inevitably escalates the securitization into even more dangerous territory. Critical theorist Bill McSweeney criticizes the study of societal security because, to his mind, it “produces a falsely objectified understanding of social identity that risks supporting—or at least not opposing—the rise of intolerant, exclusionary identities, that make conflicts more likely.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Non-Existential Security Threats**

It is simply the nature of some sectors of society that makes it nearly impossible to identify the instances in which threats cannot be managed via normal means—such is the case with economic security threats. Most of the time, economic security threats can only be recognized in hindsight. To identify economic threats is a much more ambiguous task than it is to identify political or economic ones “because the normal condition of actors in the economic domain is one of risk, competition and uncertainty.”<sup>34</sup> “If one cannot determine the normal condition of something, it is hard to calculate what actions might pose threats to it.”<sup>35</sup> Economic downturns are also rarely viewed in terms of national security. Exceptions to this are the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies,” 519.

<sup>34</sup> Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 79.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

“traditional link between economic factors and military capability,”<sup>36</sup> as well as “economic threats to domestic stability.”<sup>37</sup> The latter is of particular interest to the Welsh School, as it advocates for the emancipation of those societies that pursue economic policies that render them increasingly dependent on trade, finding themselves locked “into a position of permanent economic disadvantage, so preventing them from solving the numerous problems which make them weak.”<sup>38</sup> Finally, natural disasters and the factors that contribute to them are considered ecological threats to national security by some in the field. Buzan suggests that issues like climate change ought to be relegated to international bodies, instead of being litigated at the state level.<sup>39</sup>

In the next chapter, I discuss the competing definitions of global civil society, a debate surrounding the concept of Global Civil Society in scholarship social movement theory in the context of securitization theory, indicating where it fills in the gaps associated with non-state actors becoming real threats. I will also discuss the evolution of social movement theory from its earliest conception as simply a means to explain why social movements occur, toward how it is used today as a means to study how social movements arise. \*

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 83.

## **Chapter Two: Discourse Theory and Social Movement Theory**

In the previous chapter, I provided a look into the basic logic of securitization theory, as well as an illustration of its framework for analysis as it applies to the comparative case-study central to this project. While the theory may provide an understanding of the characteristic political dynamics that occur when issues are securitized, it nonetheless lacks the specificity to explicitly account for the processes that we now acknowledge to occur at the state level as well as the local and meso-levels of analysis in cases of securitization. To my mind, that securitization theory is limited in its analytical scope is entirely acceptable, and does not serve to discount the value of the theory—it is simply an indication of different levels of analysis. Arguably, this ought not to be considered a weakness to be remedied in future attempts to develop comprehensive analytical frameworks; especially when there are analogous social science theories available that would address the level of analysis issue. Therefore, it makes sense to let the securitization account for the essential structure of the framework, letting sociological theory account for the processes that cause a characteristically securitized situation. Because this case-study deals with the interaction between social movements, interest groups and public discourse, I have chosen to utilize social movement theory and Habermas's communication model in my analysis. Social movement theory has developed to the point where researchers have shifted their focus from pathologizing the individual toward examining organizations and their interaction between the public sphere and the political public sphere. studies empirically observable political processes, making it consistent with the Copenhagen School's framework for analysis. The theories are, in essence, analogous; for, just as social movements must convince people to join their cause, securitizing actors must convince relevant audiences that their issues merit departure from the realm of normal politics. In other words,

both securitization theory and social movement theory address the processes by which “values, interests and ideas”<sup>40</sup> turn into action; where such processes involve how organizational networks successfully construct meaning in society and perpetuate collective action. In regards to this project’s analysis of interest groups, while there is no shortage of interest group scholarship, currently there is no distinctive theory that would necessarily satisfy the goal of this project to identify the mechanisms that determine the fate of social movements. Fortunately, however, interest group scholars have shifted their focus in recent years, finding social movement theory to facilitate more substantive research, thanks to its emphasis on the effect of political processes on institutionalizing behavior.<sup>41</sup>

In this chapter, I establish a basic overview of the sociological theories and concepts providing the means for comparison in this project. First, I discuss the use of the term *global civil society*, particularly in regards to its role in reinforcing a North/South paternalism. Next, I indicate the way in which social movement theory can be thought to exist according to the fundamental concepts related to Habermas’s communication model, showing how framing issues involving discourse in this way can help make sense of the effects of the interplay between the public sphere, political public sphere and the media. Furthermore, I define German scholar Elisabeth Noelle Neumann’s concept of the *spiral of silence*, which I argue is the result of rendered in American public discourse as a result of the dominant Israeli narrative in the U.S. which appeals to a wide array of constituencies. Then, I discuss the evolution of social

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<sup>40</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani. *Social movements: an introduction*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) 5.

<sup>41</sup> Marie Hojnacki et al. "Studying Organizational Advocacy and Influence: Reexamining Interest Group Research." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 15, no. 1 (2012): 379-99. 95

movement theory and how its currently predominant incarnation as *political opportunity theory* enables the analysis of political science issues that require more specific sociologically motivated research. Finally, I apply the theory to the two cases and indicate the format of the following two chapters.

### **From Civil Society to Global Civil Society**

Civil society as a concept has evolved considerably over the years. Aristotle, to start, viewed civil society as indistinguishable from the modern concept of the state, where a social contract binds everyone to equal treatment under the law.<sup>42</sup> The modern conception of civil society, however, is said to have come from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who was struck curious as to why a Marxist revolution was possible in Russia and not Italy.<sup>43</sup> Civil society, he figured, was the answer. He wrote in one of his notebooks that “In the East, the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between state and civil society, and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was immediately revealed.”<sup>44</sup> Mary Kaldor defines civil society as “the process through which individuals negotiate, argue, struggle against or agree with each other and with the centres of political and economic authority.”<sup>45</sup> Thus today, entities such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the social movement organizations (SMOs) examined in this project constitute civil society.

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<sup>42</sup> Mary Kaldor. "The idea of global civil society." *International Affairs*. 79, no. 3 (2003): 583-93. 584.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph A. Buttigieg. "Gramsci on Civil Society." *Boundary 2*. 22, no. 3 (1995): 1. 3 \*\*

<sup>45</sup> Kaldor, "The idea of global civil society," 585.

The idea of a “global” civil society came about in the 1970s, and has become associated with the struggle to counteract the influence of totalitarian states. Håkan Thörn provides a definition of global civil society that is especially attuned to the business of this project, where I am attempting to discern the forces engaged within the ostensibly nebulous realm of “public discourse” that serve to determine the fate of social movements. “[G]lobal civil society” according to Thörn,

is a political space in which a diversity of political cultures interact and intersect.

‘Political culture’ refers to processes of communication and articulation of political experiences, action strategies, identities, values, norms and rules – and to the institutions in which these processes are embedded.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, the “islands of civic engagement” where SMOs arise, as I suggested in the introduction, are the places where elements of one region’s political culture appears to align with another region’s political culture, and ultimately create a sense of solidarity, leading to the feeling of *cognitive liberation* necessary to mobilize a social movement; where cognitive liberation is defined as the “perceived probability of making a difference.”<sup>47</sup> Then, civil society forges links between groups across the world who are keen to use international human rights legislation to pressure their governments into legislating in favor of foreign policy designed to use diplomatic means to change the behavior of states in question.<sup>48</sup> So the social movements treated in this

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<sup>46</sup> Håkan Thörn. “Social Movements, the Media and the Emergence of a Global Public Sphere: From Anti-Apartheid to Global Justice.” *Current Sociology*. 55, no. 6 (2007): 896-918. 904

<sup>47</sup> Jacquelin Van Stekelenburg and Bert g. “Social Movement Theory: Past, Present and Prospects.” *Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa*. 1-32. 5. In reference to McAdam, *Political Process*.

<sup>48</sup> Kaldor, “The idea of global civil society,” 587.



project are both SMOs created as a result of global civil society, where islands of civic engagement were established in the U.S.—one successfully, the anti-apartheid movement, the other, the pro-Palestinian movement, that continues to struggle. The question of this project is thus, in a way Gramscian. What differences present in the social movements examined account for the success of one over the failure of another? Instead of civil society being the central distinguishing factor in this question, it is rather the social movements themselves. There is a degree of controversy surrounding the concept of global civil society

### **Habermas's Theory of Deliberative Democracy and Noelle-Neumann's Spiral of Silence Theory**

Thus, civil society represents an area of society that is integrated within the ordinary population. German sociologist Jürgen Habermas provides more detail surrounding the question of distinguishing the discursive climates present when thinking in terms of networks of communication. The logic that leads toward thinking of society in these terms could be said to have been established in his 1962 book *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, where he endeavored to apply his discourse theory to the realm of law and democracy. In doing so, Habermas puts forth his own normative theory of *deliberative democracy*.<sup>49</sup> His idea of deliberative democracy is based upon a broader attitude toward the function that the act of communication serves. For Habermas, non-strategic communication functions as the means by which progress occurs in society, as it facilitates a

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<sup>49</sup> Jürgen Habermas. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996) PDF.

mindset that is geared toward the ultimate rationalization of the topic being discussed. He applies this theory to an article he writes in 2006 “Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research” in which he argues that there is indeed an “epistemic dimension for the democratic procedures of legitimation.”<sup>50</sup> In order to do so, he references case studies that prove face-to-face public discourse facilitates empathy, in the sense that through communicating with those with whom you disagree, one is able to ascertain the context out of which opposing views emerge. Furthermore, Habermas emphasizes the reality that liberal democratic institutions in the modern era were actually designed so as to facilitate this kind of communication, for its “truth tracking potential”<sup>51</sup> that facilitates the democratic process. Calling for the “independence of a public sphere that operates as an intermediary system between state and society,”<sup>52</sup> Habermas presents his “communication model of deliberative politics”<sup>53</sup> demonstrating that

[m]ediated political communication in the public sphere can facilitate deliberative legitimation processes in complex societies only if a self-regulating media system gains independence from its social environments, and if anonymous audiences grant feedback between an informed elite discourse and a responsive civil society.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Jürgen Habermas. "Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research." *Communication Theory*. 16, no. 4 (2006): 411-426. 411.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 413.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 412.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 411.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 411-12.

Therefore, Habermas conceives of his communication model's value in terms of its "epistemic function of discourse and negotiation than in rational choice or political ethos."<sup>55</sup> This is the same way securitization theory treats meaning; public opinion in a communication model is thought to recondition itself through the act of communication.<sup>56</sup> Ideally, public opinion is shaped by deliberation among individuals in the public sphere, face-to-face. This type of discourse precludes the use of strategy or manipulation to achieve individual goals. In effect, this generates a "social space"<sup>57</sup> where actors engage in a face-to-face conversation and "take a second-person attitude, reciprocally attributing communicative freedom to each other."<sup>58</sup> Individuals leave such an interaction with a greater understanding of a topic, and the perspective to empathize with those with opposing views. For this reason, deliberation is considered "an essential element to the democratic process, and as such is precisely the task of the *public sphere*. Habermas indicates the three functions deliberation should theoretically fulfill in a democratic system: "to mobilize and pool relevant issues and required information, and to specify interpretations to process such contributions discursively by means of proper arguments for and against; and to generate rationally motivated *yes* or *no* attitudes that are expected to determine the outcome of procedurally correct decisions."<sup>59</sup> The public sphere is thus the sphere in which civil society is found, where individuals can potentially mobilize around certain issues that have been commonly ascertained and find ways to make the changes in government necessary to address those issues. This can take place domestically or it can take place in a global civil

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 413.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 360.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>59</sup> Habermas, "Political Communication in Media Society," 416.

society within a broader global public sphere, where SMOs and NGOs are able to capitalize upon international law in order to penetrate the *political public sphere*.

Situated at the center of the communication network, the *political public sphere* generates through its own institutionalized deliberation processes “legislative decisions and political programs, rulings or verdicts, administrative measures and decrees, guidelines, policies.”<sup>60</sup> The politicians and media professionals that report on them are considered “both the coauthors and the addressees of public opinions,”<sup>61</sup> and accordingly enjoy a substantial degree of influence. However, while politicians may use this influence to gain political power, they can only exercise that power through “institutionalized procedures.”<sup>62</sup> While the privilege of being able to access the media used to be restricted to the political elite (fitting with the realist logic of securitization theory), Habermas indicates five additional types of actors that appear in mass media, who alternatively may abuse their influence: lobbyists, advocates, experts, “moral entrepreneurs,” calling attention to under-reported issues, and intellectuals.”<sup>63</sup>

Thus, Habermas conceives of one’s capacity to derive meaning as being limited to one’s context or *lifeworld*, whether located among the many contexts of the public sphere or the political public sphere. This concept relates to the phenomenon I argue has manifested as a result of the success of the Israel lobby’s wide range of appeal, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s concept of the *spiral of silence*. She makes note of the reality that while there is a concept of public opinion that “carries a critical connotation” and is “founded on rational discussion”

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 415.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 416.

<sup>62</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 363.

<sup>63</sup> Habermas, “Political Communication in Media Society,” 416.

indicative of Habermas's idea of the kind of deliberative communication in the public sphere that serves to regulate and improve upon our political systems, there is also a "second meaning, which is older, [and] connotes pressure to conform."<sup>64</sup> For Noelle-Neumann, this second meaning is evocative of her theory of the spiral of silence, for which she identifies four central theses; that a) "[a]s social beings, most people are afraid of becoming isolated from their environment;" b) "[i]n order to avoid becoming isolated and in order not to lose popularity and esteem, people constantly observe their environment very closely" and act accordingly; c) "[w]e can distinguish between fields where the opinions and attitudes involved are static, and fields where those opinions and attitudes are subject to changes;" and d) "[i]ndividuals who, when observing their environments, notice their own personal opinion is spreading and is taken over by others, will voice this opinion self-confidently in public. On the other hand, individuals who notice that their own opinions are losing ground, will be inclined to adopt a more reserved attitude when expressing their opinions in public."<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Noelle-Neumann explains the logic behind her concept of the spiral of silence as a social psychological mechanism, indicating

[t]hat, as the representatives of the first opinion talk quite a lot while the representatives of the second opinion remain silent, there is a definite influence on the environment: An opinion that is being reinforced in this way appears stronger than it really is, while an opinion suppressed as described will seem to be weaker than it is in reality. The result is a spiral process which prompts other individuals to perceive the changes in opinion and

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<sup>64</sup> Neumann, Elisabeth. "Turbulences in the Climate of Opinion: Methodological Applications of the Spiral of Silence Theory." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 41, No. 3 (1977): 143-158.

<sup>65</sup> Noelle-Neumann, "Spiral of Silence Theory," 145.

to follow suit, until one opinion will be pushed back and rejected by everybody with the exception of the hard core that nevertheless sticks to that opinion.<sup>66</sup>

I argue this phenomenon has manifested in U.S. society as Israel continues to occupy a privileged status in regards to media access and the acknowledges the likelihood of the public embracing whatever is said as true. Thus, one of the most critical elements to consider when thinking about networks of communication is the role a self-regulating media system plays in creating dynamics like the spiral of silence. While a view may already be in the process of being silenced by a more dominant view in a spiral of silence, access to the media will only reinforce the process, especially in cases where media corporations stand to gain from giving more airtime to one view over another. In that case, “concentrated efforts to translate economic power to political influence can be seen to have a measurable effect.”<sup>67</sup> Moreover, even without such an incentive, some groups with already dominant views may enjoy privileged access to appear in media. This privilege arguably is able to be counteracted in the age of the internet, but with views that have already been so institutionalized, such as that regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the U.S., it is difficult to imagine the internet providing any discernable advantage for pro-Palestinian groups. It is more likely that the internet works in a different way, where discourse is given the appearance of being balanced, where in reality, while the less dominant view may be expressed, it is still disadvantaged in terms of access to the means to influence the political public sphere. The implications of such a scenario for a social movement may be its

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>67</sup> Habermas, “Political Communication in Media Society,” 421.

alienation from society. In the next section, I discuss the broader social movement theory in which status in a communication network is equivalent correlates to political opportunity.

### **Social Movement Theory**

As early as the 1920s, a group of sociologists came to approach the analytical treatment of social movements in terms of “collective behavior” which became a specialized field within sociology developed by the “Chicago school.”<sup>68</sup> In much the same way the Copenhagen school considers securitization to occur due to a discursive legitimation process, the school of collective behavior today studies “the transformation of institutional behaviors through the action of emergent normative definitions.”<sup>69</sup> So, both securitization theorists and sociologists studying collective behavior utilize Jürgen Habermas’ theoretical framework of communication networks. Where collective behavior is concerned, however, the theory is doubly applicable due to its basis around the understanding that new norms “appear when the traditional normative structure comes into conflict with a continually evolving situation.”<sup>70</sup> Habermas considers engagement with public discourse to be dialectical in nature, which suggests that the “continually evolving situation” mentioned could potentially be understood as a reference to public discourse as it evolves over time.

Unfortunately, much of the research conducted on social movements throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century was not as forward thinking. Sociologists contributed toward the development of

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<sup>68</sup> Della Porta, Diani, *Social Movements*, 12.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Della Porta, Diani, *Social Movements*, 12. In reference to: Herbert Blumer. “Social Movements.” In ed. A. McClung Lee, *Principles of Sociology*. (New York: Barnes & Nobles), 199-220. 199.

stereotypes surrounding those who participated in protests, casting them as people engaged in deviant behavior.<sup>71</sup> The theory of relative deprivation rationalized that individuals may have been driven to protest as a response to “some form of structural strain” (be it industrialization, urbanization, unemployment) that produced “subjective tension and therefore the psychological disposition to engage in extreme behaviours such as panics, mobs etc. to escape from these tensions.”<sup>72</sup> Mass society theory was conceived similarly, as participants in movements were considered to come from isolated backgrounds with no tangible resources or prospects.<sup>73</sup>

It was not until the 1960s that this view of activists was challenged, when a new model of social movement theory emerged: resource mobilization theory. While analysts had sought until then to theorize the existence of individual participants in social movements, they never managed to get close enough to them to glean their experience. However, the wave of movements occurring at that time raised the opportunity to topple the status quo in social movement theory, when some activists invited “an enlarged pool of analysts” to experience what it was really like to participate in a social movement. While beforehand social movement theorists may have imagined social movements to consist of but a few disorganized “transitory discontents,”<sup>74</sup> they were able to return with radically changed perspectives on social movement theory. Therefore, analysts established resource mobilization theory, which highlighted the “continuities between movement and institutionalized actions, the rationality of movement actors, the strategic

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<sup>71</sup> Jacquelin Van Stekelenburg and Bert Klandermans. “Social Movement Theory: Past, Present and Prospects.” *Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa*. 1-32.

<sup>72</sup> Stekelenburg and Klandermans, “Social Movement Theory,” 5, In reference to Doug McAdam, *Political Process*, 7.

<sup>73</sup> Della Porta, Diani, *Social Movements*, 7.

<sup>74</sup> J. Craig Jenkins. “Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements.” *Annual Review of Sociology*. 9, (1983): 527-553. 528



problems confronted by movements, and the role of movements as agencies for social change.”<sup>75</sup> Most importantly, they came away with the view that “grievances generated by [conflicts of interest] are sufficiently ubiquitous that the formation and mobilization of movements depend on changes in resources, group organization, and opportunities for collective action,” and “the success of social movements is largely determined by strategic factors and the political factors in which they become enmeshed.”<sup>76</sup> Whereas traditional theorists conceived of social movements as “extensions of more elementary forms of collective behavior,” resource mobilization theorists see social movements as “extensions of institutionalized actions” limiting their focus to affecting institutional change.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Thörn goes as far as to assert that the social movements occurring in the 1960s “contributed to the emergence of a new global political space.”<sup>78</sup> This new space would come to be characterized in large part by its “information politics” which included “carefully thought-out strategies of public information that provided a solid base for the [anti-apartheid] movement’s various public communication strategies.”<sup>79</sup>

The debut of resource mobilization theory cleared the way for political process theory to do so accordingly in the late 1970s. On the surface, the two theories would actually appear quite similar. For one, both consider social movements to be a *political* phenomenon,<sup>80</sup> contrary to the belief of early theorists, who sought to uncover the pathologies that led people to ostensibly extricate themselves from society as they knew them and become deviants. Another similarity

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<sup>75</sup> Jenkins, “Resource Mobilization Theory,” 528.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Thörn, “Emergence of a Global Public Sphere,” 901.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 902

<sup>80</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 36.

shared among the two theories is that they are both based upon a common view of the American political system, where it is given that wealth is to be concentrated in the hands of a few, precluding most of the population from ever imagining that they could exert influence over their own lives.<sup>81</sup> Political process theory takes this to indicate how it makes sense that marginalized groups form social movements, because they otherwise would lack the influence necessary to sustain a politician's attention long enough to reach a goal. On the other hand, proponents of resource mobilization of course recognize the magnitude of the wealth gap; instead of fundraising as they do to help alleviate the burden placed upon disenfranchised people, they raise funds among one another in order to afford things too expensive for one person to buy, but the collective nevertheless would desire and value.

For the purposes of this project, then, I have chosen to use political process theory. I favor this approach over the others, not only due to the others' inadequacies, but also due to its emphasis on social movement organizations (SMOs) as institutions of civil society that must navigate politics in order to hope to change them. For, it is unlikely that social movements operating within relatively stable liberal democracies would ever find themselves in the position to radically overthrow the government, or otherwise embody the old-fashioned activist stereotype as movements motivated solely by individual feelings of deprivation. McAdam speaks to the same dynamic, in his *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, where he writes that "the political process model is based on the notion that political action by established polity members reflects an abiding conservatism. . . encourage[ing] polity members to "resist changes which would threaten their current realization of their interests even more than

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

they seek changes which would enhance their interests."<sup>82</sup> In conjunction with this general mindset, there are characteristics that various social movement theorists have identified as important. Tilly, for instance, pays particular attention to a movement's "action repertoire," or, in other words, the varying strategies its members employ, depending on "spatial and temporal locations,"<sup>83</sup> and otherwise determined by the "structural variables" and "cultural context in which they originate."<sup>84</sup> Moreover, I agree with McAdam's particular fashioning of the theory to include the fundamental factors crucial to mobilize a social movement: a) the structure of political opportunity, organizational structure, and the level cognitive liberation within the movement.<sup>85</sup> McAdam conceives of political opportunity as "any event or broad social process that serves to undermine the calculations and assumptions on which the political establishment is structured."<sup>86</sup> Organizational structure involves factors including the degree to which an "indigenous" organizational structure existed, the membership and communication network that entails, and/or the ability to co-opt established communication networks. Cognitive liberation involves the natural changes in consciousness experienced by members of a collective. First, the perceived "system" loses legitimacy. Individuals might typically accept the authority of leaders and "the legitimacy of institutional arrangements" however once placed among a collective, individuals may begin to consider arrangements unjustified. Second, whereas individuals on their own may accept their condition as inevitable, once in a group they begin to demand change.

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<sup>82</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 38, In reference to Tilly, Charles. *From mobilization to revolution*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1978.

<sup>83</sup> Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, "Social Movement Theory," 10. In reference to Charles Tilly. *The Contentious French*. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986)

<sup>84</sup> Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, "Social Movement Theory," 10.

<sup>85</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 48.

<sup>86</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 43.

Lastly, individuals may consider themselves helpless on their own, but once in a group, gather the requisite courage to take charge of their fate.<sup>87</sup> A

### **Sociological Theories as Mechanisms of Securitization**

In the next chapter, I set out to apply this theoretical framework to the analysis of the cases in this project. I compare the mainstream institutional aspect of each case, will involve an interrogation of the network of communication that existed between South Africa and the U.S. in the apartheid era, specifically in the time directly preceding U.S. Congress passing the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. By examining the behavior of South African lobbies, I am able to ascertain the ways in which their appeal was limited to a specific constituency of conservative Americans. Strategies employed by lobbies included attempts to convince Americans that black South Africans would suffer if sanctions led companies to downsize.

I contrast the ultimate failure of South African lobbies to prevent a formal condemnation of the apartheid regime with Israel's success in institutionalizing favorable political discourse and, accordingly, a spiral of silence surrounding Israeli security policy. To do so, I first examine the ways in which Israeli state-building strategies contributed toward forming Israeli national identity. These strategies included the obfuscation of Palestinian historical ties to the contested region, which I demonstrate by discussing the ways in which Israeli government institutions influenced Israeli public discourse, including the passing of legislation that restricted schools' freedom to teach subjects like geography as they saw fit, as well as right-wing religious lobbies'

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<sup>87</sup> McAdam, *Political Process*, 49. In reference to Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward. *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 3-4.

adoption of expansionist rhetoric in order to broaden their appeal among the Israeli population. Moreover, I discuss the Israeli defense establishment and the way in which compulsory military service has led to less criticism of the human rights implications of Israeli security policy. Then, I discuss the ways in which pro-Israel lobbies in the United States have established a broad base of support in the U.S. that involves both Jews and other constituencies likely to support expansionism or institution of hawkish military policy in the Middle East. I conclude that the cumulative effect of these efforts has led to a spiral of silence among U.S. constituencies that would normally oppose a right-wing view toward security policy.

I then deal with the social movements involved in each case, and the ways in which they have either taken advantage of political opportunity to build significant coalitions of support, or been disenfranchised by an inability to do so. In the case of the anti-apartheid movement, I discuss how organizations were able to take advantage of mass media institutions in order to promote visibility of the movement, televising acts of civil disobedience, protests, incidents of police brutality; gaining sympathy from journalists deemed sympathetic to the movement, writing letters to the editor and producing informational material for journalists.<sup>88</sup> In the case of my analysis of the pro-Palestinian movement, I indicate how the disenfranchised position of Palestinians in large part precludes their ability to communicate the magnitude of their situation to the international community via a lack of access to relate their experiences in their own terms on mainstream media platforms.

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<sup>88</sup> Håkan Thörn. "Social Movements, the Media and the Emergence of a Global Public Sphere: From Anti-Apartheid to Global Justice." *Current Sociology*. 55, no. 6 (2007): 896-918.

## Chapter Three: Applications to the Anti-Apartheid Struggle and the Pro-Palestinian Movement

According to Habermas, modern democracies are designed to guarantee “the independence of a public sphere that operates as an intermediary system between state and society.”<sup>89</sup> Furthermore,

[t]he design is to guarantee... an appropriate contribution of a political public sphere to the formation of considered public opinions through... communication and association rights and a regulation of the power structure of the public sphere securing the diversity of independent mass media, and a general access of inclusive mass audiences to the public sphere.<sup>90</sup>

To the extent possible, then, public opinion ought to be trusted as a representation of political reality. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, one’s potential to derive rational opinions from communication will always depend upon one’s context in the broader communication network. Indeed, structural inequalities are inherent in a self-regulating media society, causing discursive patterns like the spiral of silence that distort meaning, and inevitably inhibit one’s ability to form fully rational opinions. Nonetheless, people hold fast to their opinions, and oftentimes take pride in them as manifestations of their core values. Social movement theory indicates be the source of the cognitive liberation necessary to mobilize social

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<sup>89</sup> Habermas, “Political Communication in Media Society,” 412.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

movements, and similarly, interest groups and lobbies. How do opinions become so entrenched and normalized?

I seek to demonstrate the conditions that, over time, contribute toward a spiral of silence, that further entrenches personal opinions, entangling them with identity and culture such that they eventually are rendered untouchable by deliberative communication. In terms of the political process model, I evaluate the differences between the dominant and repressed forces involved in a spiral of silence. I begin with a discussion of the various strategies by which the South African government as well as South African businesses lobbied against U.S. divestment and sanctions. Then, I contrast the limited scope of such efforts to the comprehensive approach of the American pro-Israel Lobby. To be sure, I am not going so far as to label the discursive relationship between the anti-apartheid movement and the South African lobbyists as constituting a spiral of silence of similar magnitude.

### **The South African Effort to Lobby the U.S. Government and the American People**

Toward the late 1970s, it became increasingly clear that if the South African apartheid regime were to at least ensure its continued “constructive engagement” with the Reagan Administration, it would have to adopt new means to influence the Americans.<sup>91</sup> It would have to attempt to appeal to those ideologically opposed to apartheid, in order to at least end apartheid on the Afrikaaner government’s own terms. Thus, South Africa invested heavily in efforts to gain influence in the U.S., allegedly hiring upwards of fifteen lobbying and public relations firms

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<sup>91</sup> Sanford J. Ungar. “SOUTH AFRICA’S LOBBYISTS.” *The New York Times*. October 12, 1985

throughout the 1980s to promote South African policies and provide “South African officials with government, business and media contacts” that would help “shape and target South African propaganda for maximum impact.”<sup>92</sup> In particular, the South African government paid Republican lobbyists to introduce South African dignitaries to influential Washingtonians, assist in writing the South African ambassador’s speeches and articles, and represent the South African Consul General in Chicago to address a lease dispute. On the other hand, the South African government paid Democratic lobbyists to take special care to inform South Africa of legislation that may affect relations. Further, the apartheid regime pressed lobbyists to convince Congressmen that the U.S. ought to invest more in South Africa in order to provide incentive for social change in the country.<sup>93</sup>

The South African government additionally paid lobbying firm Bill Hecht and Associates to represent the South African Department of Foreign Affairs and Information “to improve the image of South Africa... and to encourage a balanced and fair assessment of the situations.”<sup>94</sup> In addition, Bill Hecht and Associates advised the South African Embassy, hiring consultants to help improve South Africa’s image among black Americans and conservative groups.<sup>95</sup> The South African Embassy also targeted American Jews in its attempt to prevent sanctions, particularly invoking the reality that South Africa remained one of Israel’s allies.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Richard Leonard and Jennifer Davis, eds. *Apartheid Whitewash – South Africa Propaganda in the United States*. Africa Fund, 1989. 3.

<sup>93</sup> Ungar, “South Africa’s Lobbyists”.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.



The South Africa Foundation's PR efforts were perhaps the most extensive. The foundation recruited representatives to travel the country on speaking tours, hoping to convince the American public eventually to oppose sanctions. The Foundation also sent South African academics and businessmen to state their case, as well as unusually successful black South Africans, which Americans perceived as particularly pathetic.<sup>97</sup> Defenders of apartheid specifically sought to communicate that the U.S. was naïve to believe that if the black majority were to achieve proportional representation in government that they would embrace democracy. Rather, it was portrayed as more likely that the "alternative to white rule [would be] a Soviet-influenced, or outright Communist regime."<sup>98</sup> Instead of divesting, then, defenders of apartheid urged the West to "increase its stake in the South African economy, close economic and cultural gaps and promote the creation of a larger, capitalist oriented black middle class."<sup>99</sup>

While the Conservative Caucus and the right-wing religious organization the Moral Majority continued to oppose sanctions, even Republicans eventually began taking tougher positions toward the apartheid regime, despite all of South Africa's PR efforts. In October 1986, The Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 (H.R. 4868) became Public Law 99-440. Despite President Reagan's attempt to veto the law, it passed the House 313-83 and the Senate 78-21. So without regard to the success of the anti-apartheid movement, why did South Africa's efforts to influence American public opinion ultimately fail? To begin, the window of political opportunity for the South African government was decidedly narrow. The only possible opportunities for the apartheid government to attempt to appeal to American values was to either

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

a) rally the support of white supremacists; b) pursue religious fundamentalists; c) appeal to the fears of the business elite; d) invoke the threat of Communism; or e) promote the possibility that economic sanctions would only serve to harm the black population. Now, taken together, these possibilities do not translate considerably across the political spectrum. For the most part, these points may only have seemed threatening toward those Americans with political views right-wing enough at the time to disregard the plight of the majority black population in South Africa as a factor worthy of consideration when it came to whether to support sanctions or otherwise. There was no deeper identity issue at stake for the vast majority of white Americans, so anything that the Afrikaners could have said negatively about the black population would immediately be revealed as shallow attempts to manipulate American public opinion to revive their policy goals. In addition, there was no opportunity for the apartheid regime to attempt to silence the Americans as not knowing what they were talking about, because the civil rights movement still persisted in recent memory. There were no missed opportunities to be had for the apartheid regime—to return to the securitization framework, there was only a negligible audience for the securitization, so any securitizing move made on behalf of the South African government was made in vain. Lack of any audience or basis values significant to the majority of the American population diminished any capacity there may have been to create communication networks among followers, there was no chance that islands of civic engagement might arise either in favor of white supremacy or anti-Communism.

### **Origins of Limited Israeli Discourse**

In stark contrast to the case of the South African government's attempt to lobby the Americans, there is the Israel Lobby in the U.S.. The concept of the Israel Lobby refers to the all of the pro-Israel forces in America taken cumulatively (not to any single lobby). The most prominent pro-Israel lobby in the U.S. is the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Even before considering the activities of the Israel Lobby within the United States or with consideration to the United States, it is necessary to look back toward the State of Israel itself. Part of what I argue has contributed toward the spiral of silence surrounding American public discourse on Israel is a product of what has been required of Israeli state-building processes. Namely, I refer to the predominance of Israel's *Security Network*, which Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer claim "has been critically involved in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres" and "is made up of actors who (a) are connected by informal, nonhierarchical ties; (b) share common values and perceptions regarding Israel's security and the ways to promote it; (c) have identical or similar individual and collective interests; and (d) are capable of joining hands to influence policymaking on different levels and in various spheres of the country's public life."<sup>100</sup> Moreover, Israel's Security Network is described as involving "the institutionalization of beliefs, values, cultures, and particular forms of behavior" such that the policy process is streamlined by "limiting actions, problems and solutions."<sup>101</sup> I view this concept to be analogous to Habermas's communication model, where context necessarily limits one's potential to arrive at rational conclusions through deliberative communication. Barak and Sheffer argue that "it is the continued existence of Israel's Security Network, especially since 1967, which has hindered the emergence of more differentiated civilian and military spheres"

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<sup>100</sup> Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer. "Israel's "Security Network" and its Impact: An Exploration of a New Approach"

<sup>101</sup> Barak and Sheffer, "Israel's "Security Network,"" 237.

within Israel. Most relevant to this project is how Israel's Security Network has influenced public discourse on national security, through its strict control of the country's education policies, military censorship, journalism that is generally considered restrained, and nonetheless reflects the views of the DE.<sup>102</sup>

The tradition of the DE being deeply ideological and involved in determining state policy stems from the nature of the 1948 war, where Israeli militias were organized according to political institutions.<sup>103</sup> The fact that the war ended in Armistice Agreements led Israel to conceive of itself as facing continuous existential threat and thus ensured the future dominance of military industries. The reality of mandatory military service combined with a relatively young retirement age means that many retired military officers go on to work in civilian sectors, but nonetheless continue to remain loyal to the DE. What is perhaps most crucial, though, is that the civil society movements that do exist in Israel have had to do with national security and have served not only to indoctrinate young people, but to further securitize public discourse.<sup>104</sup>

Another way in which Israeli state building has disrupted public discourse is through its cartography practices, as Christine Leuenberger and Izhak Schnell explain in their comprehensive study of the ways in which the rhetorical power of maps helped legitimize Israeli "secular expansionism" advocated by the Likud Party.<sup>105</sup> By legislating against the use of

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>105</sup> Christine Leuenberger and Izhak Schnell. "The Politics of Maps: Constructing National Territories in Israel." *Social Studies of Science*. 40, no. 6 (2010): 802-842.

unofficial maps in schools, this further limits the ability of the public sphere to act as an “intermediary” between the state and society.

### **Comparing the Pro-Palestinian Movement to the Anti-Apartheid Movement**

Thus, when Israeli security policy becomes a topic of discussion in the U.S., an already restricted conversation becomes even more limited, in part because of Israel’s monopoly over the representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the media. Because of the restrictions that exist for Palestinians and those who travel in the Occupied Territories, filming the actions of the Israeli Defense Forces is nearly impossible. Therefore, Palestinians have very limited means to communicate on their own terms with islands of civic engagement that may exist around the world. On the other hand, organizations like the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) made informational material about apartheid accessible, and was able to build a “large archive of films and photographs related to South Africa and the anti-apartheid struggle.”<sup>106</sup>

Anti-apartheid movement activists succeeded in part because of their ability to “*systematically [develop] activist networks into informational networks*”<sup>107</sup> When information is so limited, it is difficult to maintain the cognitive liberation necessary to mobilize the actions of social movements. The more Israel uses mass media to publish its narrative, the more likely it is that Palestinian attempts to mobilize solidarity will be seen as an existential threat to the Israeli state, due to the fact that the conflict has been framed in those terms by both sides for so long.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 908.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 907.

Another area where the pro-Palestinian movement is deficient in comparison to the pervasiveness of the Israeli narrative is a means to identify in terms of cultural values. The fact that, ostensibly, at least, Americans seem to share a common sense of liberal democratic ideology with the Israelis, and that makes us more likely to empathize with them over an underrepresented society that is characterized as radical and to share little in common in terms of cultural affinities, like music and dance.

In contrast, to the failures of the pro-Palestinian movement, I present the ways in which the Anti-Apartheid movement was able to thrive. Firstly, the African National Congress developed a conscious media politics. Indeed, Thörn argues “that the emerging global success of the ANC... was partly due to the fact that it - and the organizations that were working closely with it – came to understand the importance of media work.”<sup>108</sup> While the movement took advantage of global media industries to attract the attention necessary to spread their ant-apartheid message, the movement was also able to develop its own independent media platforms, thereby creating “an alternative public sphere that would make it possible to address publics directly, thus freeing the movement from any dependence on global media industries.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Thörn, “The Emergence of a Global Public Sphere,” 905.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

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