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Bachelor Thesis
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**Framing of the International Oil Trade during the Iran-Iraq War:
Applying Securitization to American Agencies**

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Summary

In this paper I will determine how three American agencies framed the Iran-Iraq War and its attacks on the oil trade. I will analyze declassified documents of the Department of State, the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency in order to determine how these agencies framed the conflict. As a tool for analysis the framework of securitization will be used. This paper has two objectives. The first objective of this paper is to determine how the conflict was framed and how they differ in their framing. The second objective is to determine how useful the framework of securitization proves to be as a tool for analysis in framing within an agency.

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Introduction

On 22 September 1980 the Iraqi military invaded the Iranian province of Khuzestan, which resulted in the Iran-Iraq War. The presence of oil in both countries, became a major factor in the conflict. With a combined quantity of 7.6 million barrels of oil per day produced by the two countries the resource soon became an important asset in the war.¹ Both countries needed capital in order to fund their war, which for a significant part was sourced from the export of oil. This resulted in Iran and Iraq making the strategic decision to mount an offense on the oil producing capacity of their adversary. These attacks on oil infrastructure triggered a worldwide response and affected the international oil market.

In response US government agencies assessed the implications of the war for their country. Since the United States was the largest worldwide consumer of oil, a disruption of the global oil market could be problematic. After the overthrow of the Shah a year earlier the CIA and other American agencies had already concerned themselves greatly with the upkeep of the oil flow. News of another disturbance in the Middle-East was ill received.² Reactions to the developments in the Persian Gulf region were varied. This variance also existed in the way different agencies of the American government framed the conflict. This paper will consider these differences in framing by American agencies of the attacks on oil infrastructure during the Iran-Iraq War.

The Iran-Iraq War started on 22 September 1980 and ended in a stalemate on 20 August 1988. Once information on these developments in the Persian Gulf region reached American policymakers they assessed the situation. Every agency had its own view on the right course of action by the American government. This resulted in American agencies framing the conflict in various ways. This paper will cover the entire duration of the conflict. American agencies started the framing of the conflict the day the Iraqis invaded Khuzestan so this is where my analysis will start

In order to analyze framing of the Iran-Iraq War by American agencies, I will use the framework of securitization. Security studies have since the 90s been a prominent field of historical study. In 1998 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde set out a new framework of analysis for security studies, the framework of securitization. They intended to widen the security agenda beyond the original scope of the military and political sector while also providing an operational method to distinguish politicization from securitization.³

Securitization is the process by which an issue on the political agenda is transformed into a security threat that requires the use of extraordinary measures. In the framework of securitization the assumption is made that an issue is not by default a threat to security. An issue can only be labeled as a security threat after an intersubjective process in which actors agree on the validity of the threat.⁴ For securitization to take place an actor, which can be an authority, political party, a minister or some other important public figure, must

¹ Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, trans. Nicholas Elliott (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2015), 557–58.

² Razoux, 72.

³ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), VII.

⁴ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, 31.

deem an issue an existential threat to a referent object. This securitizing actor through a speech-act attempts to convince a relevant audience that an issue is an existential threat. According to Buzan and Wæver a successful speech-act needs to follow the rules of the act. It must follow conventional procedures and the act has to be executed according to these procedures.⁵ After the securitizing actor has convinced the audience of the existential threat through speech-acts, or securitizing moves, this actor will attempt to impose extraordinary measures.⁶

In the application of the framework of securitization in this paper one thing must be noted. The framework of securitization has been created to analyze public discourse.⁷ In this paper an attempt will be made to apply the framework to non-public discourse. Through the application of the framework as a tool for analysis on intragovernmental framing I will determine if the framework can also be applied to non-public discourse.

In this paper multiple securitizing actors will be examined in the framing of the Iran-Iraq War. In the United States a number of agencies construct foreign policy so framing of the Iran-Iraq War by multiple actors influences US policy. These securitizing actors are a number of agencies and individuals bound to these agencies. The first of these agencies is the Department of State which is responsible for carrying out foreign policies of the United States. The Department of State is headed by the Secretary of State.⁸ The second agency is the National Security Council (NSC) which is a forum for the President where he and his top security advisors and cabinet officials meet regarding national security and foreign policy.⁹ The third actor will be the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and its employees. The CIA provides the United States government with intelligence on foreign affairs.

An analysis of declassified documents of three different agencies will provide information on how the attacks on the international oil trade during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988 were framed by US agencies. This paper will therefore be divided into three chapters according to the sources of the documents. Each chapter will first determine how the conflict was framed by its respective agency. Afterwards each chapter will provide information regarding the applicability of the framework of securitization.

In order to answer the main and sub questions of this research a plethora of primary sources will be used. The primary sources which will be the focus of this study have been published by the federal government of the United States. The US Government has authorized the release of sensitive documents from a range of Presidential libraries and executive agencies. These have been compiled in the database called the Declassified Documents Online (USDDO). The number of documents which are present in the database is constantly expanding as new entries are made. The database offers an advanced search

⁵ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, 32.

⁶ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, 25.

⁷ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, 23.

⁸ 'Department of State Organization Chart', *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed 26 September 2020, <https://www.state.gov/department-of-state-organization-chart/>.

⁹ 'National Security Council', The White House, accessed 26 September 2020, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/>.

function which allows the search for multiple terms.¹⁰ The USDDO also offers the option to search within the full text of a document or just in the title. The advanced search option also offers the ability to search within a specific database which is useful when a single agency is the focus. The search terms used for this research are: 'oil', 'Iran Iraq War', 'Ronald Reagan', 'Gulf War', 'energy resource', 'threat', 'Hormuz'.

When selecting primary sources for this research the framework of securitization has been the focus. A primary source needs to meet certain conditions for it to be compatible with securitization. An author must write about an issue and frame it as a threat or discuss the measures that must be taken to halt this threat. Because the sources which are used for this research have varying origins the range of information they provide varies as well. The sources mostly deliver the viewpoints of different agencies on the Iran-Iraq War and the global effect on the oil trade. The sources provide abundant information on the internal politics of policy making. However, most sources do not provide information on the way the policies proposed are perceived. The sources provide equally limited information on implementation of policy.

This research paper will be divided into three chapters. Each chapter contains an analysis of a different governmental agency regarding framing of the attacks on international oil trade. The first chapter will concern framing by the Department of State. In order to see how the Department of State framed the conflict, publications by the Department of State from the period 1980-1988 will be used. Then, the applicability of the framework of securitization on this case will be evaluated. In this chapter I will first determine who framed the conflict and how. Consequently, information from the sources on the extraordinary measures which the Department of State proposed will be provided. Afterwards it is important to consider the audience of the documents and in conclusion I will see if the framework of securitization proved to be useful.

In chapter 2 the National Security Council will be the object of study. When applying the framework of securitization to the National Security Council it is important to note who the securitizing actors are. Is the National Security Council the securitizing actor or are developments of the Iran-Iraq War securitized by external actors? Once again, declassified publications will be analyzed to determine securitizing actors, extraordinary measures, audience and whether the securitization was successful. Thereafter, the framework of securitization and its helpfulness will be evaluated.

In the third and final chapter framing by the CIA of the Iran-Iraq war will be analyzed. Declassified documentation of the CIA will be used to see how this agency frames the conflict. First it is important to note what the CIA's role is within the US government. Afterwards documents that fit into the framework of securitization of the CIA will provide information on how this agency framed the conflict. In conclusion this chapter will consider the implications CIA discourse has for the framework of securitization and how useful it proves to be as a tool for analysis.

¹⁰ 'U.S. Declassified Documents Online - About', accessed 22 September 2020, <https://go-gale-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/ps/staticResource?userGroupName=utrecht&inPS=true&prodId=USDD&type=About>.

Chapter 1 - Department of State

Introduction

This chapter will analyze the role of the Department of State (DoS) in framing the attacks on oil producing and transporting infrastructure during the Iran-Iraq War. An analysis of documents published by the Department of State will provide information on how this agency framed these attacks. The framework of securitization will be used for analysis of the documents. In addition to this, this chapter will also determine how helpful applying the framework of securitization in this case is. In order to analyze framing by actors of the DoS this chapter will first provide a brief explanation of the responsibilities of the DoS and the Secretary of State. Secondly, a short introduction of a number of securitizing actors aligned with the DoS will be introduced followed by an analysis of the developments these securitizing actors frame as a security threat. What do these actors frame as a threat and what do they suggest will happen if no extraordinary measures are imposed to halt this threat? Consequently I will determine if the audience has accepted the securitizing moves and if securitization was successful.

Department of State

The Department of State is comparable to governmental bodies of other nations that concern themselves with foreign policy like the Dutch *Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken* or the English Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. A large part of its tasks is to maintain diplomatic relations with other nations and control and direct embassies. The Department of State is headed by the Secretary of State and has different offices that have their own area of expertise.

Securitizing Actors

When studying primary sources of the DoS regarding the Iran-Iraq War one man is particularly important. This is Secretary of State George Schultz who held the position of Secretary of State for the majority of the duration of the Iran-Iraq war and until the end of the Reagan presidency.¹¹ Other people who are important are mostly unnamed securitizing actors.

Securitizing Moves

At the start of the Reagan administration a number of primary objectives were determined regarding the energy policy of the administration. According to a document which circulated at the Department of State in 1981 titled 'International Energy Policy: New priorities' this new energy policy had three aims. The first aim was to prevent and prepare for a disruption of the oil supply while also trying to reduce demand. Secondly, if a disruption would occur it had to be resolved by international cooperation and by maintaining a high stock of oil. The last aim was to facilitate transition to non-oil alternatives by removing barriers to development and production of these alternative

¹¹ Michael F. Hopkins, 'Ronald Reagan's and George H. W. Bush's Secretaries of State: Alexander Haig, George Shultz and James Baker', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 6, no. 3 (2008): 228.

energy sources.¹² This document shows that from the start of the Reagan administration accessibility to oil and other energy sources was an important point on the agenda.

The determination of the Reagan administration to maintain a large reserve of oil and proper accessibility to resources is a theme which is frequently mentioned in documents published by the Department of State. In 1983, early on in the war when the number of attacks was still at a low level, Secretary of State George Schultz stated that escalation of the Iran-Iraq War must be prevented. According to him escalation of the conflict would threaten international navigation in the Gulf and the oil trade.¹³ Schultz also stated it would be in the best interest for the United States that the conflict ends with victory for neither side.¹⁴ In 1984 Schultz proved to be right about escalation of the war. 1984 would see the same number of attacks on oil tankers as the first four years of the war combined.¹⁵ With an increase in the number of attacks the Department of State had to respond.

Half a year after Schultz expressed concern regarding developments in the war the Department of State in collaboration with the Department of Defense posted a paper on possible United States responses to developments in the Gulf. The departments sketched four different scenarios with different levels of threat and probability. In each scenario the threat to navigation in the Gulf and the most fitting response by the United States is assessed.¹⁶ Based on the information found in this document, two things can be concluded. Like George Schultz already mentioned in 1983, the United States prefers an outcome of the conflict in which neither side wins the war. If the Iran-Iraq War ends in a status quo balance in the region can be achieved. Another thing that becomes clear is that the Department of State and the Department of Defense are certain that if left unchecked the Iranians will be victorious over the Iraqis. For this reason the majority of sources discuss the strategies that are best suited to either strengthening Iraq, but not too much, or preventing Iran from becoming too strong.

Extraordinary Measures

In order to halt or decrease escalation of the Iran-Iraq war the Department of State suggests multiple strategies. However, one strategy has primacy in the sources. The

¹² 'List of Reagan Administration Objectives and Priorities for an International Energy Policy. Points Include: The Prevention of a Disruption of Oil Supply; International Cooperation in Emergency Preparedness; Transition to Non-Oil Substitutes by the Removal of Impediments to the Development and Production of Alternative Energy Sources', 1982.

¹³ 'Secretary of State George Shultz Expresses Concern over a Possible Escalation of the War between Iran and Iraq Resulting from the Pending Sale of French Missiles to Iraq' (Department of State, 3 September 1983), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

¹⁴ 'Secretary of State George Shultz Provides Information on a Turkish Assessment of Probable U.S. Objectives with Respect to the Iranian-Iraqi Conflict. This Confrontation between These Two Countries Threatens the Stability of the Persian Gulf Region and U.S. Access to Its Energy Resources' (Department of State, 21 June 1984), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

¹⁵ Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 563.

¹⁶ 'A Paper Prepared by the State and Defense Departments Divides Scenarios on Likely Iranian Escalation in Its War with Iraq into the Following Three Categories: (1) Escalatory Acts Most Likely to Occur but Less Threatening to Western Interests; (2) Escalatory Acts Which Are Less Likely to Occur but Are More Threatening to Western Interests; (3) Major Military Victory by Iran with the Imminent or Actual Collapse of the Iraqi Government. Also Included Is a Report on How an Escalation of the Iraqi-Iranian War Could Impact the Flow of Energy to the West' (Department of State, 20 March 1984), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

primary strategy the Department of State suggests to decrease escalation is to limit arms sales to either belligerents. The department of State attempts to achieve this goal on a number of occasions during the war. In 1983 the Dassault Corporation struck a deal with Iraq to sell them 24 Mirage F-1s which would be delivered in 1985. For the Iraqi government this timeframe was too long. In the meantime the French government offered the Iraqis to rent them 5 Super Etendards, a Dassault Corporation manufactured fighter plane. Tehran criticized this development as it would shift the balance in the conflict.¹⁷ Washington also criticized the French loan as is evident by George Schultz who warns of Iraqi usage of the fighter planes against Kharg Island or oil tankers. In order to prevent escalation Schultz proposes to urge the French to cancel or at least delay the delivery of the planes, press the Iraqis to refrain from provoking the Iranians and ask the Gulf States to dissuade the Iraqis from escalating the conflict.¹⁸ The strategy of preventing escalation by limiting arms sales, put forth by George Schultz, remained important for the duration of the war as is evident in other documents that appeared after escalation of the conflict in 1984. For instance in a summary by George Schultz of a meeting in 1985 between Under-Secretary of State William Schneider and Foreign minister of Iraq, Tariq Aziz. In this meeting Schneider provides details on the countries the US has and will approach to prevent arms sales. These include a number of western countries like Italy, Portugal, and the UK but also include Argentina, Brazil and China.¹⁹ China also makes an appearance in another document. A few years later in early March 1987 Michael Armacost, Under-Secretary of the Department of State, had asked Chinese premier Zhao Ziyang to refrain from the sale of arms to Iran. He responded by saying 'We did not do in the past what we should not do and [...], we will not do in the future what we should not do.'²⁰ Still, Chinese weaponry was used by the Iranians mid-March which prompted Armacost at the end of March in a meeting with a Chinese Ambassador to raise the issue again.²¹ These documents show the strategy the DoS pursued during the war. In these documents we can find elements like securitizing actor, audience and extraordinary measures. This raises the question whether the framework of securitization can be applied.

The Department of State concerns itself with foreign policy and relations with other nations. In the sources used for this chapter premiers, ambassadors and other representatives of the UK, France, China, Italy, Portugal, Argentina and Brazil are the audiences. These are the audiences which the Department of State tried to convince of the threat that the Iran-Iraq war poses to the Gulf and international oil shipping. After framing the Iran-Iraq war as a threat and convincing the audience the conflict presents a threat,

¹⁷ Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 273.

¹⁸ 'Secretary of State George Shultz Expresses Concern over a Possible Escalation of the War between Iran and Iraq Resulting from the Pending Sale of French Missiles to Iraq'.

¹⁹ 'Secretary of State George Shultz Summarizes a Baghdad Meeting between Under-Secretary of State William Schneider, Jr. and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz. Discussion Centered on U.S. and Iraqi Efforts to Prevent Foreign Arms Transfers to Iran' (Department of State, 9 October 1985), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

²⁰ 'During Under-Secretary of State Michael Armacost's 3/23/1987 Meeting with Chinese Ambassador Han Xu, Armacost Expressed Concern over China's Weapons Sales to Iran, in Particular the SILKWORM and HAIYING-2 Missiles' (Department of State, 23 March 1987), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

²¹ 'During Under-Secretary of State Michael Armacost's 3/23/1987 Meeting with Chinese Ambassador Han Xu, Armacost Expressed Concern over China's Weapons Sales to Iran, in Particular the SILKWORM and HAIYING-2 Missiles'.

the Department of State tried to impose extraordinary measures which they found fitting to halt the threat. As previously mentioned the main way the Department tried to prevent the threat from becoming real is by preventing escalation. The extraordinary measure that must be taken according to the Department of State is to keep Iran from acquiring new arms. However, the question remains whether this instance of securitization by the Department of State is successful.

Conclusion

By examination of the sources it became clear how the Department of State and its Secretary framed the conflict. The Department of State viewed escalation of the Iran-Iraq War as a threat to the global oil supply. This became evident in 1983 when Secretary George Schultz stated that escalation would threaten international navigation in the gulf.²² The department held this point of view for the entire conflict as can be noted by the numerous documents that provide details on contact with actors of foreign nations. However framing an issue as a threat does not yet constitute securitization.

We can only speak of securitization when a relevant audience is convinced that an issue is a threat. However, before an audience can be convinced that the issue is a threat we need a securitizing move. A securitizing move in the form of a speech act which according to Buzan and Wæver must follow conventional procedures.²³ Since contact with foreign actors through diplomacy is a conventional procedure we may assume that the first condition for a proper speech-act has been met. Secondly, a successful speech act must be made from a position of authority.²⁴ Since George Schultz is the Secretary of State he is in a position which provides him with the contextual and social authority to deliver such a speech act. We may assume the second condition for a speech-act has been met. Both conditions are met so we can pose his speech acts are successful.

What remains is determining whether the audience has accepted the validity of the threat. Because we are dealing with multiple audiences in this chapter this must be determined on a case by case basis. This is where the source material meets its limits. From the sources we can pinpoint a number of failed and a number of successful cases of securitization. In the case of the French, securitization was unsuccessful since the planes were delivered to the Iraqis. Likewise, in the case of the Chinese securitization was unsuccessful as Chinese arms were used by the Iranians after the speech acts. However, in the case of the UK and Portugal we can speak of successful securitization as they refrain from the sale of arms to Iran.

In regard to the application of the framework of securitization this chapter shows its strengths. If enough source material is available to satisfy the needs to determine securitization the framework can be applied. In the case of the Department of State enough sources are available. This case study of the Department of State can be an

²² 'Secretary of State George Shultz Expresses Concern over a Possible Escalation of the War between Iran and Iraq Resulting from the Pending Sale of French Missiles to Iraq'.

²³ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*, 32.

²⁴ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*.

argument in favor of the application of the framework of securitization to non-public discourse.

Chapter 2 – National Security Council

Introduction

During the Iran-Iraq War the role of the National Security Council was to inform the President on national security and foreign policies. In combination with this advisory role the National Security Council was also the President's principal platform to coordinate policy among government agencies. As stated in the introduction, this chapter will discuss the role of the National Security Council in the framework of securitization. Does the National Security Council assume the role of securitizing actor or of audience? The question rises whether a rigid dichotomy exists in the role of the National Security Council as securitizing actor or audience. Through an analysis of declassified documents published by the National Security Council the role of the National Security Council will be determined.

Important declassified documents for this research are the National Security Decision Directives (NSDD). These directives were issued during the Reagan Presidency, but have counterparts for every other presidency since Truman. The overarching name for these documents is National Security Directives, but they acquire a different name each presidency. Their primary goal is to communicate orders of the current President to officials and agencies, though they mainly provide guidance rather than specific instructions.²⁵ Most of the NSDDs issued by Reagan were classified from the general public with a few exceptions. The number of NSDDs issued by Reagan is estimated to be 300 but the number is up for debate.²⁶ For this paper only NSDDs that provide information on the Iran-Iraq War or energy policy will be used.

Securitizing Actor

Due to the dualistic nature of the National Security Council we must first determine whether the NSC is the securitizing actor or the audience. If just the NSDDs are taken into consideration one might find the NSC, or Ronald Reagan, to be the securitizing actor.

A number of NSDDs provide an argument in favor of the NSC as securitizing actor. NSDD 87, issued on 30 March 1983, provides information on US energy security policy. In this NSDD Ronald Reagan frames the escalation of the Iran-Iraq War as a threat to oil production capacity. He states 'The Iranian invasion of Iraq and the repeated threats by the Khomeini regime against other Persian Gulf countries raise the distinct possibility that much of the present surplus in production capacity could be quickly eroded by unpredictable events.'²⁷ He continues this line of discourse in NSDD 114 issued on 26 November 1983. In this document Ronald Reagan states 'Because of the real and psychological impact of a curtailment in the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf on the international economic system, we must assure our readiness to deal promptly with

²⁵ Catherine M. Dwyer, 'The U.S. Presidency and National Security Directives: An Overview', *Journal of Government Information* 29, no. 6 (2002): 411–12.

²⁶ Dwyer, 413.

²⁷ 'National Security Decision Directive 87 Comprehensive U.S. Energy Security Policy' (National Security Council, 30 March 1983), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

actions aimed at disrupting that traffic.’²⁸ This statement by Reagan can be interpreted as a securitizing move as this discourse presents the ‘curtailment in the flow of oil’ as an existential threat to the international economic system. A similar statement is found in NSDD 134 where Reagan states that ‘a major disruption and the resulting price increases on the U.S. is inevitably a serious problem for us, and not just our allies.’²⁹ He continued with similar discourse in NSDD 141: ‘the trends in the war are ominous, [...], there is a growing risk that key oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, [...], may be targeted for attack by either conventional or terrorist means.’³⁰ While these statements framed the Iran-Iraq War as a threat to international oil trade through a speech-act, this does not constitute securitization.

The speech acts by Ronald Reagan in the NSDDs check the necessary conditions for a speech act. They follow the rules of the act and the securitizing actor holds a position from which the act can be made.³¹ Still it remains difficult to determine if securitization was successful. In order for securitization to be successful the audience needs to be convinced by the securitizing actor that extraordinary measures have to be taken to halt the threat. The audience of the NSDDs are government agencies like the Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, US armed forces, and the intelligence community as these have a permanent seat at the NSC.³² As Ronald Reagan is the President, government agencies generally have to act as they are ordered by Reagan. One could argue that for this reason securitization does not have to be successful in order to implement extraordinary measures. According to Paul Roe in order for successful securitization to take place a securitizing actor needs to acquire both moral and formal support from his agencies in order to adequately tackle the securitized issue. He requires formal support in order to adopt the extraordinary measures to tackle the supposed threat and he needs the moral support from his audience regarding the ‘securityness’ of a given issue.³³ Reagan always has formal support but without the inclusion of moral support by his agencies he will not be able to tackle the threat adequately. Reagan can still implement measures without moral support making it hard to determine if this is a case of securitization.

Another problem is that the NSDDs mostly offer guidance rather than specific instructions. This means that the NSDDs lack clearly defined extraordinary measures. Even if we would be able to conclude that the audience is convinced that the threat exists, it would still be difficult to assess to what level the extraordinary measures have been implemented. It is impossible to rate the level in which a multitude of agencies followed

²⁸ ‘National Security Decision Directive 114 US Policy Toward Iran-Iraq War’ (National Security Council, 26 November 1983), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

²⁹ ‘National Security Decision Directive 134 US International Energy Policy Goals and Objectives’ (National Security Council, 27 March 1984), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

³⁰ ‘National Security Decision Directive 141 Responding to Escalation in the Iran-Iraq War’ (National Security Council, 25 May 1984), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

³¹ Michael C. Williams, ‘Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics’, *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2003): 514.

³² Alan G. Whittaker, Frederick C. Smith, and Elizabeth McKune, ‘The National Security Policy Process: The National Security Council and Interagency System’ (Fort Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2008), 11.

³³ Paul Roe, ‘Actor, Audience(s) and Emergency Measures: Securitization and the UK’s Decision to Invade Iraq’, *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 6 (2008): 616.

the guidance of the NSDDs. If we would equate successful securitization with the implementation of extraordinary measures no clear answer can be provided to the question whether securitization was successful.

Audience

The structure of the National Security Council can be used as argument in favor of the NSC's role as audience. The heads of different agencies meet with the President at the National Security Council and have their role on the council. They provide the President with information on US security and recommendations on policy. Still the President makes the final call on the shape of foreign policy.³⁴ The structure of the NSC shows how policy decisions are made but we cannot determine securitization. It is difficult to provide a detailed example of a case where an issue was securitized and the National Security Council was the audience during the Iran-Iraq War. The problem is that the majority of documents regarding the NSC are still classified. Presidential briefings and notes from meetings are unavailable. Daily briefings to the President, who is the chairman of the National Security Council, are still classified as well.

Conclusion

From analysis of documents published by the National Security Council we have been able to assess how Ronald Reagan through the National Security Council framed the attacks on the oil trade. In the National Security Decision Directives Reagan clearly formulates the dangers the Iran-Iraq War posed to the oil trade. An escalation of the conflict could result in harm to the oil trade resulting in a rise in prices. This would hurt the US and have a negative impact on the international economic system. Even though framing by the NSC of the Iran-Iraq War poses the conflict as a threat this is not yet securitization. The framework of securitization poses a number of issues when using it as a tool for analysis of the role of the National Security Council.

The National Security Council as securitizing actor holds more ground than the agency as audience. The speech-acts conform the conditions for a successful speech-act. Therefore, we are able to conclude that the NSC makes securitizing moves. However, the framework of securitization also entails the audience who must agree on the threat. The problem is that Ronald Reagan as head of the NSC enjoys permanent formal support from his audience. Because of his permanent formal support, he is able to implement policy without the need for a convinced audience. Even though he might not enjoy moral support from his audience his policy will still be implemented to a degree. Another problem is that we lack information on the extraordinary measures the NSC proposes. So even if he would have both moral and formal support, due to the lack of clearly defined extraordinary measures we cannot determine securitization.

The framework of securitization has in this case proven to be effective when it comes to the determination of what is being framed and who is framing. Still, in order to satisfy other aspects of the framework more information is required. Information that is sparse in the case of the National Security Council. Essential information on the audience and its response is necessary in order to determine a case of securitization. This case study shows

³⁴ Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, 'The National Security Policy Process', 35.

that the framework of securitization is more applicable to public cases of framing and securitization.³⁵ This is of course the intended usage of the framework however, as time passes more documents become declassified which might result in better application of the framework on non-public discourse.

³⁵ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*.

Chapter 3 – CIA

This chapter will analyze the role of the CIA as securitizing actor during the Iran-Iraq War. To what extent did the CIA frame attacks on oil infrastructure and shipping as a security threat? An analysis of declassified documents of the CIA will help us understand how the CIA framed the attacks on oil infrastructure during the Iran-Iraq War. The documents will be analyzed through the lens of securitization. This means that this chapter will examine how the events in the Gulf were framed as a threat to the global supply of oil. In this chapter I will also determine whether the framework of securitization can be applied to rhetoric of the CIA. Since the CIA documents are not public I will determine if the framework can be used as a tool for analysis. This chapter will first provide a small introduction to the CIA and its role within the United States government. Secondly, important discourse will be analyzed that fits into the framework of securitization from a number of CIA primary sources. Lastly, this chapter will consider the implications the CIA discourse has for the framework of securitization.

CIA

The CIA has been enacted in 1947 under President Truman and was instructed to ‘correlate, evaluate, and disseminate intelligence, as well as to perform other duties related to intelligence gathering on national security issues.’³⁶ The CIA is mostly concerned with foreign intelligence gathering but has in the past also spied on domestic targets.³⁷ Although the CIA does not have the responsibility of formulating policy, its role in providing intelligence and the way this intelligence is presented and framed in their reporting can have significant consequences for policy making.³⁸

Securitizing moves

On 22 September 1980, the day the war started, the CIA released two intelligence assessments in the form of memoranda regarding escalation of the Iran-Iraq War. The audience of the memoranda is unknown but the information they provide is significant. One of the memoranda details the strength of the army and navy of both belligerents. Information which is of value from this memorandum is the targeting of oil facilities by Iraq in retaliation to an Iranian attack and that the fighting has moved to a region economically significant for Iraq. This will have an impact on the economic capabilities of Iraq during the war.³⁹ The second memorandum provides information on the impact escalation will have on neighboring states and their view on escalation. It is clear from this memorandum that the Gulf States preferred an outcome in which Iran does not win and Iraq does not lose. A viewpoint similar to George Schultz’s in chapter 1. The Gulf States also feared that escalation would threaten the flow of oil which the CIA agreed with. The CIA warned of the spread of hostilities: ‘imports and exports of all the major Persian gulf oil producers would be threatened.’ Later on, in the same document, the CIA continued:

³⁶ Marc Becker, *The CIA in Ecuador* (Duke University Press Books, 2020), 26.

³⁷ David Robarge, ‘CIA in the Spotlight: The Central Intelligence Agency and Public Accountability’, *Journal of Intelligence History* 9, no. 1–2 (2009): 105–26.

³⁸ Becker, *The CIA in Ecuador*, 38.

³⁹ ‘Intelligence Assessment Details Prospects for an Escalation of the Iranian-Iraqi Conflict. Issues Include: Military and Political Indicators; Balance of Iranian and Iraqi Ground Forces’ (Central Intelligence Agency, 22 September 1980), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

'If the conflict goes on much longer, [...], anxieties will mount, no doubt leading to strong upward pressure on world oil prices.' The CIA provided a final comment on the consequences for the oil market: 'if supplies from both Iran and Iraq are disrupted for a sustained period the oil market would quickly tighten.'⁴⁰ These documents clearly suggest that on the first day of the conflict the CIA already used discourse securitizing the attacks on oil facilities and shipping. The two CIA memoranda framed the escalation of the conflict as a security threat to the international oil trade.

Reminiscent of the 1984 paper by the Department of State and the Department of Defense that was discussed in chapter 1, the CIA presented an intelligence analysis on the possible outcomes of the Iran-Iraq War. This document, released in 1982, provides details on the ways the conflict could play out and what implications different scenarios would have for the United States. Oil capacity of both Iran and Iraq are mentioned frequently and the effects different outcomes would have for the broader Gulf region and its oil trading capacity. The worst-case scenario for the United States would be a severe escalation of the war with an Iranian invasion of Iraq. This would trigger a broader Arab-Persian war threatening the closure of the Strait of Hormuz resulting in a halt of the oil trade through the Gulf.⁴¹

On 20 July, soon after the release of the intelligence analysis, Henry Rowen, a National Intelligence Council chairman, discusses the conflict in a document titled: 'The Iranian threat to American interests in the Persian Gulf'. He discussed the importance of the Gulf region for the United States. He placed oil on a pedestal framing it as the greatest asset of the Gulf region and of the greatest importance for the United States. When discussing the importance of the Gulf region and its oil supply to the US, Rowen stated: 'The power to interrupt the supply of this [oil] flow entails the power to wreak havoc on the economies of the west.' Later on in the document he describes the possible magnitude of the crisis: 'the interruption of oil supplies from the Gulf area [...], would result in a fall in worldwide economic output comparable to the Great Depression of the 1930s in the US.'⁴² As the conflict developed, the perception of the CIA was that the conflict intensified. This second pair of documents indicates that the CIA framed the war as a threat to the oil trade from the beginning of the war. These documents also show that during the early years of the war the CIA has occupied the same point of view regarding the conflict.

However, the CIA did change the way they frame the Iran-Iraq war a few years later. On 18 June 1984 a memorandum was sent by the Deputy Director of Global Issues titled: 'Persian Gulf War: Oil Market Response'. Even though that year 32 ships had suffered

⁴⁰ 'Intelligence Assessment on the Impact of an Escalation in the Fighting between Iran and Iraq on the Following: Economical Matters; Shipping in the Persian Gulf; Oil Market Stability' (Central Intelligence Agency, 22 September 1980), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

⁴¹ 'Intelligence Analysis of Possible Outcomes of the Iranian-Iraqi War. Issues Include: Outcome 1 - Border War with No Peace, but No Invasion; Outcome 2 - Cease-Fire, Withdrawal, and Negotiations; Outcome 3 - an Iranian Military Occupation of Iraq; Outcome 4' (Central Intelligence Agency, 12 May 1982), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

⁴² 'National Intelligence Council Chairman Henry Rowen Asserts That the Consolidation of Power in Teheran, Iran, by the Islamic Republican Party and Its Apparent Intent to Spread Its Islamic Revolution to Its Arab Neighbors Could Damage U.S. and Allied Interests.' (Central Intelligence Agency, 20 July 1982), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

attacks,⁴³ the vision of the CIA and the framing of the Iran-Iraq War changed. Instead of emphasizing the threat generated by the Iran-Iraq war this memorandum downplays the effects the Iran-Iraq War will have on the international oil market. It states that an escalation of the war may momentarily raise oil prices but that they will rebound quickly. Actors on the oil market believe that in the event of an escalation the Strait of Hormuz will not close. They also believe external oil sources will provide in the event of a supply disruption and major consuming countries will provide other nations access to their stockpiles.⁴⁴

The speech acts by the CIA in this memorandum counteract the previous securitizing moves by the CIA. These speech-acts can be interpreted as desecuritizing moves. Instead of framing the developments of the Iran-Iraq War as a threat these speech-acts instead desecuritize the developments removing the threat predicate assigned to the conflict in the previous documents.

Conclusion

The case of framing the Iran-Iraq War as a threat to the international oil trade by the CIA is different from the previous two chapters. The CIA's perception of the Iran-Iraq War has made a significant turnaround during the conflict. The discourse used by the CIA during the early years of the war is similar to the framing of the war by the Department of State. However, after a few years the CIA changed its position on the war.

From the first four documents it is clear how CIA actors thought about the Iran-Iraq War. The CIA took a clear position regarding the Iran-Iraq war by applying discourse like: 'If the conflict goes on much longer, [...], anxieties will mount, no doubt leading to strong upward pressure on world oil prices.'⁴⁵ In 1982 Henry Rowen continued this same line of reasoning with: 'the interruption of oil supplies from the Gulf area [...], would result in a fall in worldwide economic output comparable to the Great Depression of the 1930s in the US.' Both of these statements can clearly be interpreted as securitizing moves by the CIA framing the conflict as a security threat.

Then, in 1984, the CIA changed its position. In the last two documents the CIA did not frame the conflict as a threat but instead desecuritized it. According to Wæver and Buzan desecuritization is 'the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere.'⁴⁶ By removing the 'threat' discourse regarding the Iran-Iraq War the CIA desecuritized the attacks on international oil shipping. Consequently, the war is not an existential threat anymore which requires extraordinary measures.

In regard to securitization as a framework for analysis this chapter has shown that the framework is in this case only partly helpful. Due to missing information in the sources some conditions for the framework are missing. According to Wæver and Buzan a

⁴³ Nadia El-Sayed El-Shazly, *The Gulf Tanker War: Iran and Iraq's Maritime Swordplay*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2016), 347.

⁴⁴ 'Oil Market Response to Attacks on Shipping in the Persian Gulf' (Central Intelligence Agency, 18 June 1984), U.S. Declassified Documents Online.

⁴⁵ 'Intelligence Assessment on the Impact of an Escalation in the Fighting between Iran and Iraq'.

⁴⁶ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, *Security*, 44.

successful speech-act needs to follow the rules of the act and must follow conventional procedures and be executed according to these procedures.⁴⁷ The information has been presented in memoranda and intelligence assessments which we can only assume are conventional procedures of the CIA. Also, the sources do not provide information on the audience. In order to determine successful securitization, we need information on the response of the audience. The audience, who must accept the Iran-Iraq War as an existential threat to the international oil supply,⁴⁸ is unknown so we cannot speak of a successful case of securitization. Even though we cannot determine a successful securitization, securitizing moves have been made and threat discourse has occurred. This means that in this case part of the framework was a helpful tool for analysis.

⁴⁷ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, 32.

⁴⁸ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, 32.

Conclusion

This research paper set out to complete two objectives. The first objective of this paper was to determine how different agencies of the US government have framed the Iran-Iraq War as a threat to the international oil supply. This has been done using the framework of securitization as a tool for analysis. The second objective was to provide insight into the applicability of the framework of securitization and its usefulness as a tool for analysis.

Framing of the Iran-Iraq War by the Department of State, the National Security Council and the CIA has a number of similarities and differences. This trio of agencies has framed the Iran-Iraq War similarly during the early years of the war. Broadly speaking each agency assessed that an escalation of the conflict would result in increased attacks on shipping in the Persian Gulf. These attacks would hinder or halt international oil navigation resulting in a price increase. Consequently, the price increase would damage the US and the global economy.

In the matter of framing only the CIA diverged from this line of reasoning. The CIA shifted its position in the middle of the war. Instead of discussing the possible negative effects of an escalation the CIA emphasized the marginal effect escalation would have. Downplaying the price increase as a temporary disturbance. A disturbance which the oil market will easily recover from. What is notable about the CIA's position is that it completely counters the framing of the Department of State and the guidance of the NSDDs. While George Schultz was advocating policy to prevent escalation, the CIA framed the conflict as if no policy changes were necessary. While the NSC and Ronald Reagan were underscoring the necessity to prevent a price increase by maintaining the flow of oil through the Persian Gulf the CIA stated a price increase would not matter.

The determination of the way agencies framed the conflict was through analysis with the framework of securitization. Using this framework has brought some insight into its weaknesses and its strengths. The first weakness of the framework which became clear in chapter 2 and chapter 3 was its impracticability when relevant sources are missing. According to Wæver, Buzan and de Wilde the intersubjective determination on the validity of a threat by the audience is what eventually determines securitization.⁴⁹ In order to determine whether the audience has, through an intersubjective process, agreed that an issue is indeed a threat we need sources. In the case of chapter 2 and 3 many of these relevant sources are still classified. Another weakness is in the determination of securitization. From the sources it might seem evident that an audience has indeed agreed on the 'threat' of an issue. However, this does not mean that the extraordinary measures which the securitizing actor proposes are implemented or to what degree. In conclusion on the framework's weaknesses, this research shows that the application of the framework to non-public cases can only be successful in case where an abundance of source material is available. When more source material is accessible the response of the audience can be ascertained which allows the framework to be a useful tool for analysis.

Even though the framework meets its limits in the case of a gap in sources, for research into framing a part of the framework has proved useful. Even in the event that major parts

⁴⁹ Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde, 31.

of source material are missing, the concepts of 'speech-act' and 'securitizing move' proved to be useful in the analysis of framing. The conditions for a successful speech act can be used as a way to determine if an actor is indeed in the position to frame an issue. This might be a useful tool in the selection of sources a researcher wants to use for his research. The concept of securitizing move can be used to determine if someone is actually framing an issue to the extent that it warrants extraordinary measures.

This research paper has set out to determine how a number of US agencies have framed the Iran-Iraq War. A number of agencies have appeared in this paper while not all relevant agencies have been covered. This means research into other agencies and their practice of framing is required. Other areas where this research proves its limit is in the actual transpiring of events during the Iran-Iraq War. Since this research entailed framing it does not provide insight into the way things were actually handled by the US government. However, this research can still be relevant to provide more behind the scenes information on how foreign policy is formulated by the US government.

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