

Guest editors' introduction: practices of security and the political

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More than 2 years have passed since the first 'Critical Approaches to Security in Europe' conference was organized in June 2005 in Paris and the moment in which this special issue of the *Journal of International Relations and Development* (JIRD) goes to press. In the meantime, what was initially conceived as a one-time training school for both junior and senior academics interested in critical scholarship on security has developed both into a research network¹ and a collective author. The author — the 'c.a.s.e. collective' — has published a first article (c.a.s.e. collective 2006) that has already generated a set of responses (Behnke 2007; Salter 2007; Sylvester 2007; Walker 2007) and a response to the critics (c.a.s.e. collective 2007).

The collective article, co-written by a group of 25 scholars and conceived as a manifesto, proposed an overview of the main developments in the field of critical scholarship on security, proceeding from the encounters that occurred between a set of like-minded academics throughout the 1990s.² The piece argued that these encounters, combined with a set of institutional factors, provided for the constitution of a mostly European space³ for critically engaging with contemporary practices of (in)securitization (c.a.s.e. collective 2007). Four broad lines of research were suggested: the study of the effects of the so-called widening of the security agenda to encompass other fields of practice (such as development), the relation between the management of insecurity and the management of risk, the political implications of security practices with regard to the question of exceptionalism and relations between security practices and the 'politics of belonging'⁴ (c.a.s.e. collective 2006: 460–72). Parallel to these lines of research, the manifesto develops a reflection on the position of the 'critical' scholar within what is termed the 'science-policy nexus'.

This special issue of JIRD intends to develop some of these lines of reflection. The featured articles constitute either direct outputs of the initial 2005 conference (Jeandesboz 2007; Olsson 2007), or correlated reflections



inspired by the themes of politicization and securitization (Büger and Villumsen 2007; Chandler 2007). They provide an illustration of the dynamics at work in the c.a.s.e. collective, which, on the one hand, enable both collective and individual publications, and allows on the other the establishment of connections between research agendas that share a critical engagement with contemporary international developments. Mentioning c.a.s.e. in the title of this special issue should in this sense not be considered as an attempt to 'label' otherwise independent research — in contrast: these articles are gathered here precisely because they are the result of interaction within and without the collective.

In this context, the contributions are articulated alongside two inter-related problematiques. The first one can be summed under the general issue of the notion of the *political*. The various articles gathered here do not share the same understanding and definition of what 'the political' is, and it is not our aim in this introduction to fix the meaning of the very concept that is differently discussed or assumed in all articles. They, however, share a common interest for its relation with the practices of security. The effort to question the common 'framing' of politics through the language and grammar of security (Huysmans 1998a, b) brings to the conceptual core of this issue. What is in fact at stake through different processes such as securitization, bureaucratization or privatization of security is the potential exclusion of a certain number of issues from the realm of the political. The contributions of Olsson and Chandler aim at this question from different perspectives. For Olsson, the aim is to replace processes of (*in*) *securitization* within the broader question of (*de*) *politization*. In this perspective, securitizations appear as one possible political move to subtract an issue from the realm of 'normal politics' generally negating the political character of securitized actors' claims. It is therefore their very nature as political subjects that is negated. But what is the 'normal politics' of the Copenhagen school's framework? Are securitizations exceptional moves, or are they encapsulated in everyday politics (Aradau 2004)? From a different angle, Chandler addresses the question of the political through the concept of 'anti-foreign policy'. Whereas Olsson is preoccupied by the conceptual ramifications of what he terms 'anti-politics', Chandler explores them as a 'gap' between discourses and practices, focusing on the anti-political ordering effects of the 'security–development nexus' discourse. Büger and Villumsen's article finds its place in this issue as a multi-layered reflection on the relationship between academia and the sphere of 'traditional politics'. The authors show how the myth of a clean transmission from International Relations theory to the practice of International Relations (in this case the Democratic Peace theory) has to be replaced by a socially informed study of the social — and political — currency of IR theories within the political field.⁵



At different points in their lines of argument, the authors engage in this first moment of critical thinking, questioning the taken-for-granted assumption of everyday political discourse showing the inverted nature of (chrono)logical relations. Jeandesboz shows how the European neighbourhood policy (ENP) comes only as an *ex post* label to 'frame' potential threat-oriented policies from the EU's vicinity. Chandler moves in the same direction by showing how security-development rhetoric does not formulate the programme for foreign policy-making, but comes as a justification for incoherent policies deprived of political will. The refusal to take political discourse at face value therefore pushes the authors to focus on processes, that is, discursive and nondiscursive *practices* of security.

Their reflection on the sites of production of scholarly knowledge, which frames the production of knowledge as a *political* production, also leads to the second main problematique emerging from the special issue, that is, the interaction between practices of security emanating from the 'West' and its effects on 'outside' societies. Olsson thus raises the question of the political implications of depoliticized and depoliticizing private military companies' practices of security within Iraqi and Afghan societies, while Jeandesboz places emphasis on the technocratic practices of othering at play in the European Union's neighbourhood policy. Chandler brings in the issue of the depoliticized practices at play in the *anti-foreign policy* of Western democracies and their consequences in terms of the shifting of political responsibility onto non-Western governments and societies. They interrogate, therefore, the effects of the practices of security within Europe and the United States when they are deployed in other spaces and societies. If the question of Eurocentrism has been posed to security studies as a whole (Barkawi and Laffey 2007), a certain number of problems remain to be answered by 'critical' schools in this regard (Jackson 2006; Wilkinson 2007) and the c.a.s.e. collective has not been immune to this criticism. One way to go around the problem of the centrality of the European referent is to question the very definition and the function of 'Europe' (c.a.s.e. collective 2007). Another way, however, is to effectively bring the conceptual tools of c.a.s.e. to other parts of the world.

This, of course, brings to a broader question that goes beyond the purpose on this special issue. Namely, are the paradigms of the 'governmentality of unease' (Bigo 2002), the centrality of speech-act-securitizations (Wæver *et al.* 1998) or the horizon of emancipation (Krause and Williams 1997) the relevant tools to analyse security and political practices outside of Europe and outside of Western societies more generally? Rather than a direct answer to these questions, this special issue of JIRD shows a picture of the state of research within c.a.s.e. and hopefully also points to new directions for research within the field, both in terms of conceptual tools and fields of enquiry.



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Notes

- 1 Doctoral Training School 'Critical Approaches to Security in Europe', 16–19 June 2005, Paris; Seminar 'Critical Approaches to Security in Europe II', 29 September–1 October 2006, Tampere; Seminar 'Security, Technologies of Risk, and the Political', 23–24 November 2006, London and the upcoming Joint Seminar for Younger Scholars: 'Critical Approaches to Security in Europe III, Emancipation, Resistance and Violence', 29 November–1 December 2007, Odense. All these meetings have been possible, among other institutions, thanks to Cost Action A24: The evolving social construction of threats. A website dedicated to c.a.s.e. is available at: <http://www.casecollective.org>.
- 2 The piece reacted to, and arguably sought to move beyond, the proposal laid out by Ole Wæver (2004), who construes the repetition of these encounters as an indication of the emergence of so-called 'schools' of security studies tied to specific European locales (Aberystwyth, Copenhagen and Paris).
- 3 The 'European' character of the collective, we insist, only reflects the fact that the collective emerged as the result of an intensification of encounters and debates between scholars who happened to be in Europe at the time. By no means the c.a.s.e. collective is closed to the rest of the world in its composition (it includes members from Canada or the United States) or in its research agenda.
- 4 The term 'politics of belonging' is used in the manifesto in the way John Crowley (1999) develops it.
- 5 By 'currency of IR theories within the political field', we refer to the simple idea that commonly accepted discourse within one sector, or 'field' of society such as academia does not have to necessarily share the same level of self-evidence, acceptance and effectiveness in another one such as the political field. In fact, due to the autonomization process of modern societies, the taken for granted, internalized assumptions about what is an accepted and acceptable discourse (*doxa*) tend to diverge substantially between 'fields' (Bourdieu 1988).

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