Analysing but Not Seeing: What's Missing When We Forget Images in IR

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Following the inauguration of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States of America (USA), and the barrage of articles printed, arguments had and words penned on issues from his anti-women positioning to his Russian bedfellows, this article takes a different approach to analysing his rise to power. Whilst important to analyse the words spoken by President Trump and his opponents, and there are many who do so, there is something glaringly absent in most analyses of his campaign: images. Specifically, political cartoons and what they 'did' to resist his White House bid. Looking at a collection of the political cartoons created over the past two years by Trump opponents it struck me that Trump was being portrayed as a security threat to the country he sought to 'Make Great Again'. As such, I began looking at these images through a securitization framework to see how they communicated and spoke 'security' during the Trump campaign. As Karin Fierke (2016) said of emotions, there is a struggle in IR when it comes to taking images seriously because it is so desperately seeking to be a science, resisting the necessarily messy and overlapping methodologies required for analysing images. Below, I offer an indication what such analyses can offer securitization theory and give a brief overview of how images were implicated in anti-Trump (anti-right wing) resistance.

Securitization Theory predominantly deals with non-traditional (non-military, non-state-centric) security threats, and their social construction as such. For example, how Muslims were constructed as security threats post-9/11 (Eroukhmanoff 2015). Yet, it is fundamentally flawed by its exclusive emphasis on the on the spoken work, overlooking the implication of images in constructing 'security'. Rather than offering a genealogy of securitization theory, I specifically evaluate what visual securitization theory offers security studies and IR. Using Trump's right wing sentiment and policies, I ultimately argue that a visual approach provides a fuller understanding and contextualisation of 'security' than an epistemologically biased speech act approach.

This critical moves made here problematize dominant ways of studying security, pushing 'at the boundaries of existing assumptions' (Fierke 2015, 2,9). By removing the shackles of linguistically bounded securitization theory and a-chromatic (a lack of attention to colour) visual theories, my argument unfolds in two ways. First, I depart from an exclusive emphasis on the Speech Act and ignorance of visuals in constructing security. This provides greater contextualisation to our understanding of security in a global context where the visual and discursive are intimately connected (Williams 2003; Bleiker 2015). To overcome the linguistic-epistemological bias of securitization theory, this article adopts the position that nothing is exclusively visual or verbal (Mitchell 2006, 5; Bleiker 2015, 878). Second, I consider Andersen et al.'s E-IR piece which critiques the already scarce visual securitization literature for its chromophobia – its distinct fear, avoidance and ignorance of the importance of colour. Moving beyond a-chromatic scholarship I show that colour use in securitizing images is political and important to how securitizing images are interpreted (Andersen et al. 2015). Colour establishes the boundaries of what is important and focused on.

Securitization Theory: Beyond the Speech Act

Securitization Theory was first theorized by the Copenhagen School with the publication of *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Buzan et al. 1998). Elements of the theory, however, can be traced back to the earlier

works of those authors. For a genealogy see Floyd (2010) or Stritzel (2007). There is much debate about the type of theory securitization is, and what it should study. Generally, securitization holds that 'security' is a social construction: a threat is identified by a speaker who makes a securitizing move by presenting this threat to an audience – which is undertheorized by the Copenhagen School – as existential to a referent object and requiring immediate, emergency action. The issue is presented as above politics, beyond the current rules of the game. If the audience accepts, the securitizing move becomes a securitization. Securitizing moves, according to the Copenhagen School, are Speech Acts where the verbal articulation of something as threatening that constitutes it as such (Buzan et al. 1998, 26). This ignores the interlinkages between the visual and the verbal in constructing security, leaving any understanding produced by speech-act-based approaches incomplete and not fully contextualized (Williams 2003; Bleiker 2015; Hansen 2011). This paper fill this gap by theorizing visual securitization as necessary to understanding security.

What happens when you see a Swastika? For me, it triggers an emotional response predominantly characterised by horror, revulsion, and fear. I imagine concentration camps, gas chambers, bloodshed, death, and destruction. Every individuals' response is different. Describing emotions is a qualitatively and quantitatively complex task (Bleiker 2015, 876). Regardless, images and symbols 'evoke, appeal to and generate emotions' (ibid). When one sees a visual, they are confronted by ideas, emotions, and perceptions all triggered by that visual. These visuals may act as securitizing moves, whether created for that purpose or not. Images matter, but there is a methodological tension in IR vis-à-vis assessing and analysing their exact impact.

Images '[serve] as a domain of critical practice and counter-memory for the issues, perspectives and people occluded by securitization' (Campbell and Shapiro 2007, 132). In fact, they speak multivocally[1] to a greater degree than the spoken or written word, enabling audiences to determine what they say (Hansen 2011). Because the 'voice' of an image is situated partly with the audience, one image can have multiple, competing voices (Barthes 1977; Mirzoeff 1999). There is a competition to define what images 'say' because they 'do not exist prior to their constitutive relations with producers and spectators' (Heck and Schlag 2012). This is exemplified by the fact that images are perceived within certain contexts, and that audiences read their own individual selves and cultures into the meaning of images. This said, there is a ''surplus value' that escapes our attempts to define them definitively' (Bleiker 2015, 873). Resistance to the inclusion of visuals in IR is attributable to this unquantifiability because it poses methodological hurdles.

Hansen's early work (2011) classes images as securitized (constructed as threatening) rather than securitizing (constructing something/someone as threatening), and Bleiker (2015) takes a similar stance, arguing that values are read into the images by audiences. I am unconvinced by this, and Hansen (2016) shifts her position in a recent article, conceptualising images as constructing security. I advance that images can speak security, and actively participate in the construction of, and are drawn upon to facilitate, securitization(s). They form part of the 'intersubjective structures of meaning available within a particular situation at a particular historical juncture' therefore necessitate empirical study (Weldes 1996, 285). Helping to (re/de)construct particular narratives, images are continually interlaced in discursive, iconic, symbolic, and textual milieus (Hansen 2011, 53). Images and speech acts are inextricably linked: analysing both is fundamental 'to grasp fully the social contexts and complex communicative and institutional processes of securitization at work' (Williams 2003, 528).

By overlooking visuals scholars ignore the interconnection of visual and linguistic. Context and the medium through which threats are constructed are crucial factors in securitization therefore 'speech-acts are inextricable from the image-dominated context in which they take place and through which meaning is communicated' (Williams, 2003: 525).

Methodologically I intersect Hansen's (2011) visual securitization with Heck and Schlag's (2012) iconological approach. Taking a methodologically pluralist approach gives deeper understanding of the complex dynamics involved in the way images construct security. Hansen's model examines the visual itself, its immediate intertextual[2] context, wider policy discourses, and texts ascribing meaning to the image. Heck and Schlag consider the: pre-iconic natural subject of an image and the objects depicted; iconographic[3] nature of the image; and iconological[4] interpretations. Visual securitization is: 'images [constituting] something or someone as threatened and in need of immediate defense' where immediacy, circulability, and ambiguity facilitate securitizing potential (Hansen 2011, 51).

Moving beyond a-chromatic scholarship, it is crucial to examine what colour 'does' in securitization. Colours are: a visual modality in human communication; 'part of systems of signification that participate in the creation of meaning in certain fields'; and in this system of signification are part of the 'system of the sensible' which modulates what can be seen and what cannot (Andersen et al. 2015, 3–4). Most visual securitization scholarship is a-chromatic. However, studying colour is studying the political within security because colour is a 'semiotic vehicle' that classifies, creates hierarchies, and marks 'individuals, groups, ideas, values, and so on, into specific symbolic categories (e.g. class, gender, nation, race, or security)' (Guillaume et al. 2016). Failure to analyse colour leaves visual securitization scholarship partial and ignores how colour enacts and (re)appropriates security. Colours draw attention to certain things, distracting from others, and are used to 'signify and communicate messages, expectations and identities' that construct boundaries between what is seen and what is ignored (Andersen et al. 2016).

Hansen (2011, 60) explains that different genres of discourse make different political claims, therefore editorial cartoons of Trump makes a different political claim than say the video of him suggesting he would 'grab her by the pussy'. Videoing is a documentary genre; editorial cartooning is a 'critical narration', lying firmly in the performative genre. The former gains political authority from 'documenting an external reality' whereas the latter 'acts on and into' a situation, engaging with it by using irony, satire or parody, rather simply reproducing reality (Hansen 2011, 61). It is important to understand that different genres of image do different 'work'. Editorial cartoons are not necessarily claims to *truth* per se, but rather interpretations of. Compared to videos which are given documentary status. Editorial cartoons are 'fast read', meaning they are designed to be quickly understood – often easily misinterpreted. An editorial cartoon is a 'free-standing image' that may have a caption and combine text and images (Hansen 2011, 65; 2016, 4).

The Far Right and Trump

The far right is an umbrella term comprising multiple heterogeneous movements and parties with different ideological tendencies, mobilising against different 'enemies', and all using different methods to achieve their variegated goals (Ramalingam 2012, 1). Much like terrorism, there is a definitional problem vis-à-vis far right movements. I conceive far right as 'movements that focus directly on race/ethnicity and/or promote violence as a primary tactic or goal' (Blee and Creasap 2010, 271). I hold that by defining a group as part of the far right, 'They can be distinguished from mainstream conservatism' (Durham 2003, 97). This distinction comes from 'extremist and violent political activity' directed at 'specific communities and actors who are blamed for the failed aspirations and grievances of belligerents' (Holbrook and Taylor 2013, 2). Violence and targeting by these groups could be read as securitization(s) that form part of the 'move and counter-move' securitization game: the back and forth process where securitizations are made on all different sides, levels, and by different actors (Stritzel and Chang 2015, 549).

Trump's campaign and his victory have increased, or at least brought out from the shadows, and legitimised far-right sentiment and action. Trump has made a variety of securitizing moves against immigrants, women, and the LGBTQ community – analysis of which goes beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I engage with the visual securitization of Trump. There is an overwhelming number of cartoons making securitizing moves against Trump. However, there are three overwhelmingly recurring themes: Trump as 'stupid' and/or mentally ill; lack of qualification to hold office; and divisive/backwards policies and links to the Ku Klux Klan and/or Nazism.

'Get Her Out of Here' – Mike Lukovich

To demonstrate the impact of editorial cartoons, I have chosen to take Mike Lukovich's *Get Her Out of Here* image. Lukovich has been particularly prominent in cartooning presidential candidates over numerous election cycles, therefore has a certain authority in his field. His cartoon, originally published in the Atlantic Journal, brings together many of the broad themes identified above in a particularly confrontational way, therefore easily and clearly shows the import of images in IR. For copyright reasons, the image cannot be published on E-IR.

This editorial cartoon is comprised of both text and drawings. It features a yellow, green and white bus on a grey background with buildings. The bus has the text 'TRUMP' on its side, and its destination indicator also features the text 'TRUMP'. On the bus sits a monochrome crowd, with Rosa Parks and a man featured in colour. Parks is

identified by the text 'ROSA PARKS'. A man points to her yelling (suggested by capitalization[5]): 'GET HER OUT OF HERE! …'.

The man featured in colour is not specifically identified as Trump in this cartoon. However, the striking similarities in appearance, exaggeration of his distinguishing hair, and by being on a 'Trump' bus identify him as a caricatured Trump. There are also intervisual links to other images (a; b; c; d; e; f; and g) which, when read together with their intertextual links, identify him. In other words, other cartoons depict Trump in the same way, hence we can confidently interpret the figure depicted in the cartoon at hand as Trump. Not labelling the figure has a dual function. Firstly, it leaves ambiguous who is shouting at Parks is: he *could* just be an ordinary member of the public. This ambiguity increases the image's securitizing potential because it points out that Trump's extreme views and rhetoric have influence over an entire society and have ignited mass right-wing sentiment. This provides a basis for securitizing Trump *and* his supporters. Second, it requires the audience to engage with the image and read themselves into it: they must interact and decipher who the figure is, which forces the audience to think about what the image is saying and whether they accept the moves it is making. The image's ambiguity is reinforced: it is left open to interpretation. This highlights the multivocal and ambiguous securitizing nature of images: they have a 'voice' in the securitizing process that brings the audience in – something the Copenhagen School overlooks.

This editorial cartoon critically engages with Trump and his policies, giving it a journalistic quality (Hansen 2011). Colourisation of Rosa Parks, Trump, and the bus are crucial because they establish what audience's focus on. Here, colour draws our attention to the bus and the events unfolding on it, shifting attention away from the background and the threat Trump poses to other passengers. Trump and Parks become the focal point of this image's security argument, enhancing its 'fast read' nature, and ensuring that its securitizing move is immediate, impactful and understandable within the wider context of the election. It constructs an opposition between Trump and Parks that iconologically transcends the individuals and can be read as a battle between progressive, inclusive politics and backwards, divisive politics. This is a recurring theme in Lukovich's cartooning[6].

Addressing the specific colours used, Trump's blue suit and Parks' pink attire (under black top) (re-)construct, and express gender stereotypes (blue for boys, pink for girls). In so doing, this image also makes a gender (in)security argument and metaphorically constructs Trump as a threat to equality. One only needs to look at news reports and Trump's 'locker room banter/talk' to see the intertextual linkages (*The New York Times* 2016). Further, the green, white, and yellow bus – the traditional Montgomery bus colours – makes an iconological link to the 1955 bus boycott that sparked the US Civil Rights Movement (Burns 1997). Both iconological representations make intertextual links to recurring themes of division that appear in wider discourse where Trump is constructed as a divisive actor, threatening a return to a politics of black segregation and women's exclusion. By engaging with events and practices in current and past world politics, this image identifies Trump as a threat to black people, women, and America. Images like this have ramifications for how the security dialogue unfolds; ignorance of this provides only a partial understanding of security.

In many respects the image securitizes the USA's former and potential future self. It securitizes Trump as a threat to the entire country, especially when read alongside the images linked in note seven that depict his lacking political experience and childishness/stupidity. The image becomes a securitizing move that constructs Trump as a threat that could plunge the USA back to a turbulent, exclusionary past. While having its own 'voice' this cartoon functions as a summary of other voices speaking security because of the journalistic identity of editorial cartoonists: it is a depiction and engagement with the constructed political reality that brings together the 'truth claims' from various actors. So, one could argue that this image is an amalgamation of different actors' speech conveyed by an artist in visual form. And because drawing-as-medium has a 'wide-ranging register through which to make intertextual[/intervisual] 'quotations' to other texts and images' it is not independent of societal influence (Hansen 2016, 9). This is a type of speech previously unacknowledged, and is especially pertinent given arguments that the media elected Trump by creating a spectacle.

The argument holds that something is lost when the visual context is excluded in analyses. Visual Securitization can provide a deeper contextualisation and understanding of the securitization process than solely speech-based scholarship. It allows engagement with broader cultural and social constructions in research without adhering strictly

to the Copenhagen School's original theory. It breaks from an epistemological speech act bias that silences certain actors.

Summarily, Lukovich's cartoon speaks security in the sense that it captures the divisive nature of Trump's blatant misogyny and racism – metaphorically conveyed through colour use. This cartoon then forms part of the construction of Trump as a security threat to those individuals with the audience giving the image meaning through their interpretation of it. Images are inherently ambiguous in how they speak, and Trump supporters would perhaps read this image as a positive depiction of Trump's securitizing move against black people and women. The securitizing strategy of this depiction is strengthened by the fact it explicitly chooses to (through caricature) belittle Trump and construct him as the Other, and an Otherer, by making him appear backward and someone to be feared and/or hated. What this then highlights is Stritzel and Chang's (2015) point that securitization is a back-and-forth process where actors (that is, all actors, e.g.: Trump, his supporters, anti-Trump actors, etc.) are continually (re)articulating and (re)interpreting securitizations. Understanding how images help to shape, and are implicated in this process adds another dimension of understanding and allows for greater critical engagement with these processes.

Conclusion

Security is not solely constructed discursively but also through the visual. Dominant securitization scholarship tends to ignore the latter in favour of the former, leaving it unable to handle the entire context within which security is being spoken. Nothing is purely visual or purely verbal. Resistance to visual scholarship precludes the understanding which securitization theory aims for, leaving it partial. The desire expressed here is less a universal theorization of visual securitization across contexts, rather creating the conceptual space for a visual (securitization) analysis in and against right wing movements, and across different mediums.

Visuals work differently from words, circulating in more complex and rapid ways. Being unable to fully capture circulation given this article's scope I have instead shown that images work across space and time, crossing 'numerous borders — spatial, linguistic, psychological and other ones' and 'speaking' to a large audience that cannot be ignored when dealing with securitizations. This is security being spoken at an everyday level, in a way that does not register with or follow the traditional grammar of securitization theory, and is therefore ignored. This *must* be remedied to better understand 'security' through a securitization lens.

Notes

[1] Images are able to speak in multiple ways that speech cannot: visually, silently, and having their voice(s) read into them by multiple audiences (Barthes and Heath 1977, 46–47). Their voice(s) is(/are) potentially unbound because they cannot be controlled by producer(s).

[2] Intertextually holds that 'text simultaneously quote other texts, yet are also destabilized through such quotations (Hansen 2006). Imagery provides visual intertextuality – intervisuality (Hansen 2016, 10).

[3] Iconographic Analysis assesses images in their conventional and allegorical content (Heck and Schlag, 2012: 9).

[4] Iconological Interpretation seeks to understand the meaning of an image through its symbolic form content (Heck and Schlag 2012, 9).

[5] See Hansen (2016, 9).

[6] See a; b; c; d; e; f; and g.

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