Security as Storytelling: Framing Conflict, Crisis and Threat

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How do news stories know when to invoke the “war on terror”? Give credit to the person or institution that articulates an existential threat to a mutually cherished object in such a way that if we don’t rescue it now, there won’t be a “we” to rescue it later. According to securitization theory, that threat can be to political or military structures but equally to social and cultural ones. A purported flood of unvetted immigrants from terror-prone states, like having to press 1 for English or endure a smaller car in the name of corporate average fuel economy, suggests that America might never be made great again – and indeed is slipping from the grasp of those who want to pass such an exceptional America on to their children.

This project focuses on narrative and identity in securitization because storytelling is what news does, and events only become stories when they have a frame to be told through and an audience to be told for. It brings together empirical and humanistic approaches to studying security since the postwar rise of the so-called “national security state.”

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