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SECUR(ITIZ)ING THE WEST

The Transformation of Western Order

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1. Introduction[1]

The future of 'the West' (or, alternatively, 'NATO', 'transatlantic relations', the 'Western security community' or the 'Atlantic Order') has been a hotly debated topic at the center of International Relations theory (IR) ever since the end of the Cold War. One of the astonishing aspects of this debate – the debate about the future of NATO at its core – has been that IR scholarship for a long time oscillated between two extremes. On the one hand a group of mostly 'liberal' observers argued that NATO was certain to survive (with the implied consequence being that the broader Atlantic order would adapt successfully as well). On the other hand an equally outspoken group of 'realists' argued that NATO was certain to collapse – with far-reaching consequences for the geostrategic repositioning of the US and the EU / European states. What is more, these extremes on a spectrum of possible positions between breakdown on the one hand and successful adaptation on the other were actually propagated by some of the most reputable scholars in the discipline. It is ironical, however, that irrespective of paradigmatic descent the structure of both accounts was quite similar. In spite of major differences – in spite, even, of mutually exclusive predictions – as to the expected path of change, realist and liberal accounts for a long time relied heavily and in equal fashion on causal arguments which emphasize large-scale causal processes which were almost always framed in statist structural terms. Only recently has there been a guarded convergence. As a result, most observers nowadays agree that the transatlantic order is going through some major changes. Yet while there is consensus that the depth as well as the pace of these changes are more far-reaching than in past decades, it is unclear exactly how deep and how far these changes reach. [2] It is here where this paper and the research project it sketches take its starting point.

The aim of the project we propose is to systematically reconstruct the transformation of the West in order to better understand how the normative foundation of the Atlantic order is changing through new pattern of de-/securitization. Ever since the end of the Cold War in 1989/1990, and especially since 9/11, the state and future of the transatlantic relationship has been discussed passionately in both political and academic circles. The cohesiveness of the transatlantic community (of values as it were) by and large taken for granted since the heydays of the Cold War has apparently become problematic. Linking U.S. and European interests and

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[1] This is the first draft of a proposal intended to be submitted to a German Foundation for funding. In addition to the three principal authors Christian Weber and Matthias Hofferberth, two prospective doctoral students, have contributed research for potential case studies. Christian Weber drafted the section 'Research Area I' (The West vis-à-vis Russia and China), Matthias Hofferberth drafted the section 'Research Area III' (Terrorism, Islam and the West). Please do not quote or cite this paper without the authors' permission.

[2] For an overview of recent works examining the crisis in transatlantic relations see Anderson/Ikenberry/Risse forthcoming, Daalder/Gnesotto/Gordon 2006; Ilgen, ed. 2006; Peters 2006; Dannreuther/Peterson 2006; Andrews 2005; Evangelista/Parsi 2005; Gardner 2004; Gordon/Shapiro 2004; a collection of articles in Vol. 80, No. 4 of International Affairs (2004), especially the overview provided by Erik Jones; Pond 2004.

identities 'the West' purports to represent a central semantic category – but with a rather diffuse meaning. We propose to conceptualize 'the West' as an empty signifier, as a placeholder for a non-defined universality with the power to integrate different interests and identities because of its emptiness. In opening up different ways of relating to 'the West' this very semantic structure has made it possible to conceive of the West as a distinct, yet unspecified form of normative order. While the content of 'the West' remains unspecific, the patterns of relating to it change over time. We will reconstruct the discursive practices effecting such a gradual transformation in terms of dynamics of de-/securitization, of naming potential and possible threats to 'the West' articulated within the Transatlantic space. This opens up a perspective on transformations within the West as a political order treating change not only as an irritation measured against the past but also as the creative source of institutional consequences shaping the future. We assume that changing ascriptions of threat – for example the transformation from a bipolar system with nuclear threats by superpowers to a multipolar system with asymmetric threats by terrorists – may trigger gradual transformations not only in the patterns of de-/securitization but also in the institutional structure of transatlantic relations, especially as far as its classical institutional manifestation, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is concerned. While NATO seems to be the obvious core to study the transformation of Western order, the West cannot be reduced to it. In order to capture the variety and dynamics of institutional consequences and discursive shifts within the West we will, therefore, also examine its relationship to significant others, especially Russia and China, as well as internal changes relating to the question of how societies in North America and Europe deal with Islam, Islamism and the challenge of terrorism.

The paper will proceed in five steps. First we will summarize our overarching research objectives (section 2) followed by a discussion of the relevant literature focusing in particular on the debate about NATO's future, the conceptual work of the Copenhagen School and Ernesto Laclau's idea of an empty signifier (section 3). In section 4 we will spell out our research design in more detail which is followed by our methodological approach as well as the three research areas which we tentatively envisage to examine in more detail during the course of the project (section 5). The paper concludes with some preliminary suggestions of the potential contributions and merits which our project could provide to the study of political transformations at the global level in general and the transformation of Atlantic order in particular (section 6).

2. Research Objectives

The envisaged project has three key objectives. First, it aims at a systematic reconstruction of the transformation of the West in order to be able to better understand how the normative foundation of the transatlantic relationship is changing through intersectoral patterns of de-

/securitization. In this respect the project builds on and expands the work of the so called 'Copenhagen School' and their conceptualization of security as a performative act (3.3.1.). We conceive of acts of securitization (ie. the act of 'speaking security') as a social mechanism which by necessity yields specific institutional consequences, thereby reproducing/transforming the Western order. While securitization leads to a durable (institutionalized) state of emergency where the existence of the Atlantic order is endangered by a perceived threat, de-securitization aims at shifting the focus of attention to a deceleration of securitizing practices. Because dynamics of securitization and de-securitization are sectorally interlinked we will choose our research areas (and 'case studies') from different sectors in order to include a variety of potential de-/securitization moves (section 5.2.). In the course of this research project we also hope to refine some of the theoretical concepts of the securitization approach, especially the concept of de-securitization.

In focusing on the transformation of the West as a *transnational order* our second aim is to adapt Ernesto Laclau's concept of an empty signifier in order to provide a conceptual framework for transcending the dominant state-centric perspective of the Copenhagen School and a basis for the substantive (empirical) analysis of the stipulated transformation processes (section 4). While 'the West' is commonly described as a culturally defined civilization with a clear and stable 'essence', we propose to re-think the West as a form of normative order which is forced to re-articulate its factual normative foundation continuously. This move differentiates this project from policy oriented studies which generally treat change only as an irritation measured against the past (3.1) while neglecting the creative potential necessarily entailed in (individual as well as collective) action.

Third we aim at making a contribution to the methodologically reflective analysis of macro-political processes at the global level, here exemplified by the securitization of 'the West' (section 5.1.). In doing so we will suggest a three-step methodology in order to examine the transformation of macro-social orders (such as the transnational order of the West) in more detail. In particular we will develop a heuristic of different forms of institutional consequences which will guide our empirical research (section 4.1.).

3. Situating the Project: The State of the Art

3.1. The Institutionalization of Western Order: NATO and Beyond

NATO, the 'transatlantic relationship' or the 'Atlantic Order' (Ikenberry 2007) have long been considered (more or less) synonymous with 'the West' (or 'Western civilization'). From its inception, the transatlantic military alliance enshrined in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

(NATO) was considered "far more than a defensive arrangement". In the discourse of North American as well as European state representatives it was an expression of a community, "an affirmation of the moral and spiritual values which we hold in common" (both quotes from Dean Acheson (1951), quoted in Jackson 2003: 224). Significant others (such as Japan or China) shared this perception of an indistinguishable Euro-American symbiosis well before the end of World War II.[3] Some even argue that NATO as an alliance was only possible because the discourse of 'the West' legitimated the alliance – or even that 'the West' became 'the relevant actor' for the process of bringing NATO about (Jackson 2003, see also Jackson 2006, chpts. 4-7).

In a broader disciplinary perspective such accounts are still marginalized (as the publication of Jackson's article in the *Journal of Political Philosophy* vividly demonstrates). The mainstream disciplinary perspective in IR is still largely shaped by two competing narratives. The dominant one centers on the creation of NATO as a significant break in established patterns of American as well as European geostrategic thinking where NATO marked a revolution for each of the two sides to the Washington Treaty. For the United States it amounted to a radical break with its long-cherished tradition of isolationism, for Western Europe, it symbolized a similarly radical breakout from centuries of loosely knit and quickly shifting alliances in a multipolar system (Kaplan 1999: 7; Kissinger 1994: 457). An alternative (though less fashionable) narrative stresses continuities rather than discontinuities. Whereas in this reading the creation of NATO also appears as a significant new step in America's engagement with Europe this narrative nevertheless emphasizes "a continuous stream of mutual engagement between the United States and Europe over decades' throughout the 20th century as the distinguishing feature of transatlantic relations (Kahler 1995: 35; Link 1995). The first narrative stresses the security/power dimension of the foundation of transatlantic relations; the second embeds it in a broader and more densely knit network of political, economic and societal relations. In this fashion these competing accounts also reproduce one of the central paradigmatist dividing lines in the discipline dividing 'realists' and 'liberals'.

Ever since 1989/1990 – or what is commonly referred to as 'the end of the Cold War' – this dividing line between realists and liberals (incl. more recent 'constructivist' variants) has been defining for the academic study of transatlantic relations. During the 1990s the initial question of whether or not NATO would disappear (as its traditional counterpart, the Warsaw Pact, had in 1991) was gradually replaced by the more openly phrased question about the extent to which transatlantic relations might experience (more or less far-reaching) changes. Most of the answers to these questions fell into one of two rubrics. First, scholars close to the realist tradition basically

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[3] Already in the 19th century the Chinese 'yang' basically translated into 'West', targeting Europeans *and* Americans collectively, cf. Osterhammel 2004: 21-24.

argued that NATO was bound to dissolve sooner or later (Walt 1990: vii; Walt 1998/1999; Waltz 1990: 210; Mearsheimer 1990: 75-76). This prediction was based on the rationale that since alliances are responses to external threats, significant shifts in the level of threat (via changes in the balance of power, revised beliefs about other states' intentions or new means to provide for security) will change the underlying calculus which initially led to an alliance's formation (Walt 1997: 158-159). As result the alliance will collapse – "eventually" at least (Walt 1997: 173). For some realists such as Waltz this has actually happened since todays NATO is nothing but an instrument in the hands of its most powerful member, the US (Waltz 2000: 18-20). One of the key research questions arising from this perspective was whether the EU (or some alliance of European states) would try to balance against the strongest power in the system, ie. the US. While some authors do observe such a tendency (Layne 2003, 2006; Posen 2004; Walt 2004) even many realists expect only a mild form of 'soft balancing' (Pape 2005) due to the fact that the US is not threatening Europe militarily (for a critique see Brooks/Wohlforth 2005 plus correspondence in International Security 30:3).

In contrast, scholars closer to the liberal tradition have argued at least until the fall-out over Iraq that the Atlantic Order was more likely to adapt successfully to the new environment since it was more than just a military alliance. Three variants are identifiable. First, for some liberals the core of 'the West' was essentially a loose informal concert of the strongest powers with the US standing at the top (Watson 1997: 132, 126). This system was thought to be "expansive and highly durable" because of preponderant American military as well as economic power, the benefits of geography rendering the US into an "offshore" power, and the "liberal character of American hegemony" with its inbuilt "mechanisms to make itself less threatening to the rest of the world" (Ikenberry 2001: 193-194). The rationalist-institutionalist variant argued that a deeply entrenched and highly specialized institution such as NATO would rather adapt "by changing its task" (Keohane 1992: 25) than dissolve. Since NATO was not merely an alliance in the form of contractual security guarantees but rather a "hybrid" "security management institution" addressing both threats and risks (Wallander/Keohane 1999: 34) and since, in addition, NATO's procedures as well as practices were sufficiently flexible (or "portable") to deal with a new set of problems, the alliance was expected to adapt rather easily to a changing strategic landscape. At least until the disputes over Iraq, these predictions seemed to be largely borne out. Not only did the alliance succeed in inventing new institutional mechanisms such as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), the Partnership for Peace (PfP) or the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF), it also succeeded in adjusting established institutional structures (such as the command structures and the practice of multinationality of its forces) to the new environment (McCalla 1996: 464-469; Haftendorn 1997: 28-29, Theiler 1997: 121-133, Wallander/Keohane

1999: 43-45, and Wallander 2000: 724-725). At least initially, the third (constructivist) variant of liberalism was even more outspoken in predicting continuity. While liberals in this line of thought did "not necessarily expect NATO to last into the next century", they did expect "that the security partnership among liberal democracies will persist in one institutional form or another" (Risse 1996: 396). Rather than remaining fixated on NATO as an alliance adherents to this view emphasized an underlying community of shared values among liberal democracies built on "mutual sympathy, trust, and consideration" and expressed in institutions which externalize the internal norms of democracies and which together "constitute the collective identity of a security community among democracies" (Risse 1996: 368, 370; Schimmelfennig 1998: 213-214). In this reading a Western perception of a Soviet threat may have helped in fostering a sense of common purpose within NATO, but "it did not create the community in the first place". Rather, "the collective identity led to the threat perception, not the other way around" (Risse-Kappen 1995: 32). As a result, rather than leading to its own demise, the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact should have resulted in actually reinforcing a highly successful security community. In many ways the Eastern enlargement of NATO was interpreted along these lines (Schimmelfennig 1998: 211-228). The fall-out over Iraq led to a slight readjustment, however. In emphasizing "norms of democratic decision-making among equals" constructivists argued that security communities such as NATO would only persist if these norms were observed (Risse 2003: 3). Some even diagnosed "an acceleration of a seismic reordering of global affairs" based on identity differences between Europe and America (Hopf 2005: 42).

Moreover, some of the most original research stems from authors which either shun such paradigmatic labels or are obviously hard to categorize under any of them given the particular theoretical or methodological approach they chose.[4] The significant contribution of these authors notwithstanding, the future of transatlantic relations has gained most prominence in IR in the context of paradigmatic exchanges. In many respects a dualistic and paradigmatic realist-vs.-liberal undercurrent still shapes the disciplinary discourse about the ongoing transformation of the Atlantic Order. One of the ironies of this is that the structure of both realist an liberal explanations is often quite similar since both rely heavily and in equal fashion on causal arguments which emphasize *large-scale causal processes* which are almost always framed in rather *statist structural terms* even though they essentially entail slow moving causal processes (Hellmann 2007). This temporal dimension of the causal processes presumably shaping the course of developments is seldom spelled out in detail, however. For instance, although threats play a crucial role both in realist accounts of bringing NATO into existence and in causing its collapse

[4] For a sample of important contributions which are difficult to locate in a paradigmatic context see Katzenstein 2005; Wæver/Buzan 2000, Buzan/Wæver 2003; Williams/Neumann 2000, Sjursen 2004, Klein 1990, Mattern 2005.

neither the pace nor the duration of the temporal categories 'appearance of threat' or 'disappearance of threat' are usually specified. This applies in similar fashion to comparable liberal accounts. On the whole, therefore, mainstream scholarship on the transformation of the Atlantic alliance (as the core of the Atlantic Order) has for a long time oscillated between two extremes: the position that NATO is certain to survive (liberals) and the position that it is certain to collapse (realists). Only recently have there been signs of a slow convergence with some Realists implicitly granting that NATO may not be dead after all (Walt 2004) and constructivists acknowledging that the conflicts over Iraq may indeed amount to a sharp break with established norms of cooperation (Risse 2003; Risse 2007). It remains unclear, however, what follows from this.

While this brief presentation of the mainstream disciplinary discourse illustrates that the study of transatlantic order is mainly restricted to an analysis of NATO's persistence (or lingering), 'the West' certainly reaches beyond the Atlantic alliance, as even realists concede. One of the assumptions underlying this research proposal is that both the vociferous confrontation between realists and liberals as well as their highly inconclusive encounter after more than a decade of scholarly exchanges stem from a one-sided disciplinary preference for structural explanations presumably more suited to theory building and an accompanying neglect of the implications of incorporating time and agency in accounting for the evolution of transatlantic relations. By aggregating the attributes of individuals or organizations into seemingly enduring variables that are correlated with outcomes, the actors behind these transformation processes have long been divorced from their actions (cf. Aminzade 1992: 457). *Timeless* (structural) concepts such as threat, value, identity or institution have dominated at the causal level often reducing processes to mere conditions. The actual meanings which (individual and collective) actors attach to their actions remained out of sight. This research project aims at addressing this gap by building on the conceptual work of the so called 'Copenhagen School' as well as on Ernesto Laclau's idea of an empty signifier. While the linguistic approach of the Copenhagen School provides us with a conceptual framework for re-constructing security dynamics within the Western order as sectoral patterns of securitization and de-securitization the idea of an empty signifier provides us with a conceptual tool to reconsider the contingency of signification processes by focusing on the actual meanings actors attach to 'the West' in concrete act.

3.2. The Political Geography of the West: The Social Construction of Order

Geographical directions such as West, East, South and North[5] encompass a distinct meaning in politics, especially in international relations. Geographical representations order our understanding of political space (and thus identity) by establishing territorial, cultural, religious and/or social borders (Albert/Jacobsen/Lapid 2001). As Yosef Lapid has argued "the dynamic nexus constituted by interrelated processes of bordering, ordering, and collective identity building opens a uniquely well-situated analytical window to observe issues of mobility, fluidity, and change in contemporary world politics" (Lapid 2001: 2). While the literature on transatlantic relations generally takes the underlying transnational order more or less as an institutional given our focus rests on a conceptualization of 'the West' as a semantic category. Our reference to Ernesto Laclau's concept of an empty signifier is supposed to provide us with a better understanding of the inclusive and exclusive dynamics of signification processes (and thus the re-production of the underlying normative order). Before introducing Laclau's perspective in more detail, however, we will provide a brief overview of previous academic encounters with the West as well as show how the conceptual work of the Copenhagen School equips us with an analytical tool box.

In the past, attempts to define the meaning, the identity and the borders of the West have largely focused on an ontological description of a 'Western civilization' as a "thing-like entity" with "an enduring essence" (Collins 2001: 422; Bonnett 2003: 332)[6]. Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" exemplifies such a discrete and essentialist conceptualization where 'the West' is reified as a concrete entity with a dispositional essence (Huntington 1993, 1998). In a sense the popularity of Huntington's essentialist idea of a global struggle among coalitions of states united by some common cultural heritage is astounding given that long before other writers (such as Edward Said with his influential critique of the Western representation of 'the Orient') had already emphasized the *social and historically contingent construction* of cultural representations and their normative implications (Said 1978, 1994). Criticizing a reified concept of social order, scholars working in the critical geopolitics strand of IR also share an interest in the social construction of geographical representations and its implications for identity politics (Dalby 1988,

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[5] For a genealogy and conceptual history of the West, see Bonnett 2004 and Mamadouh 2006. While 'the North' imbues a different meaning within the modern development discourse as opposed to the 'underdeveloped' 'South' (e.g. Doty 1996), the 'Northerness' of Europe has raised special attention by some scholars analyzing the social construction of a Northern region and its identity implications (e.g. Wennersten 1999, Aalto 2000, Lagerspetz 2003).

[6] "The contemporary idea of the West refers to far more than a geographical entity. It is a social, political and ethnic designation designed to evoke those values, practices and people that are, in other contexts, described as one of the following: democratic, capitalist, free, modern, developed, Christian, white" (Bonnett 2003: 332).

Agnew 1998, O'Tuathail 1996)[7]. From this perspective, 'the West' entails more than just a geographical demarcation. It stands for the representation of a 'geographical identity' which helped to "discipline domestic social and cultural differences within these spaces" (O'Tuathail 1993, cited in Agnew 1998: 118). Thus, the disciplinary effects of external securitization (West / East antagonism) showed in de-securitizing intra-Western relations, especially as far as a "Western European non-war community" was concerned (Wæver 1998). Since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact one could argue that the political West has lost its constitutive Eastern counterpart. Marko Lehti and Pertti Joenniemi have recently pointed out that the concept of 'the West' has become less powerful in shaping the political space between North America and Europe (Lehti/Joenniemi 2007). They suggest that the idea of a Western political community is increasingly multiperspectival because actors attach different meanings to the term. Without such differentiation as to significational diffusion others have declared that 'the West' has essentially ceased to exist (Fukuyama 2002, Kagan 2004, Cox 2005). Our project sides with the Lehti/Joenniemi view regarding 'the West' foremost as a (unspecified) signifier of order. We argue that since the end of World War II the signifier of 'the West' founded a common identity between North America and Western European states at least in part because actors *could* attach different meanings to it. This intuition leads us to ask how social mechanisms impose, maintain and transform normative orders through performative acts. If 'the West' constitutes a powerful semantic category which shapes action then discursive shifts in its meaning are more important than paradigmatic fixations on material causes. Since the Copenhagen School has provided some important conceptual tools to examine such discursive processes we will now turn to a summary of their key concepts.

3.3. The Copenhagen School of Security Studies and the Empty Signifier

3.3.1. Securitization Theory as a "Tool Box"

While securing the West by securitizing its existence has been the ordering macro-structure during the heydays of the Cold War, the decline of the Soviet empire as the threatening other has made room for the question how the Western identity and security discourse might change as a result. In many ways the macro-political transformation of the 'East-West conflict' went hand in hand with the rise of discursive approaches in IR. When the "linguistic turn" (Rorty 1969) had

[7] Agnew and O'Tuathail argue that geography as a discourse is a form of the power/knowledge nexus. They claim, that geopolitics "should be critically re-conceptualized as a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft 'spatialize' international politics in such a way as to present a 'world' characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas. In our understanding , the study of geopolitics is the study of spatialization of international politics by core powers and hegemonic states" (O'Tuathail 1996: 59-60). For an overview of geographical approaches, see Newmann 2001; for critical geopolitics, see O'Tuathail 1996: 57-74.

finally arrived at IR's disciplinary edge attention turned on processes of signification and the constitution of meaning by language in use (for an introduction in the field of IR see Fierke 2003, 2002). Especially the concept of security has aroused special attention (Baldwin 1997, Wolfers 1952, Walt 1990, Krause/Williams 1996, Kolodziej 1992, Lipschutz 1995). The conceptual work of the Copenhagen School, especially as far as the work of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver were concerned, departed from the rather narrow focus of a 'wide'-vs.-'narrow' definition of security by advocating an explicitly constructivist / linguistic perspective.[8] In this view security is neither an objective fact (like rationalist approaches assume) nor just a subjective perception (like soft-constructivism and cognitive approaches suggest). Rather security rests on an intersubjective understanding (Buzan/Wæver/de Wilde 1998: 29-31). Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde argue that security is essentially a speech act[9] – a performative act – with a specific grammar (Buzan et al. 1998: 23-26; Wæver 1995: 55). As a performative act, security is a self-referential practice with a specific rhetorical structure: Security is about the survival of a threatened *referent object*. Because the survival of the referent object is considered a just cause securitization justifies the use of *extraordinary measures*, including the use of force, to protect it. To be successful, this move of securitization has to be accepted as legitimate and appropriate by an *audience*. As an ordering mechanism, securitization entails far reaching political and ethical consequences because „[s]ecurity is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics" (Buzan/Wæver/deWilde 1998: 23). While *politicization* presents an issue as a matter of *choice*, ie. normal politics, *securitization* frames an issue as urgent and existential calling for extraordinary measures which reduce the possibility of choice to an either-or level, ie. whether we act or not. Especially Wæver has stressed the "anti-democratic implications" of securitization (Wæver 2003: 12; see also Wæver 2005; Buzan/Wæver/deWilde 1998) because it represents a failure of handling challenges politically, ie. within the normal procedure of (democratic) politics. This is what the opposite of securitization, de-securitization – ie. the process of actually moving issues "off the security agenda and back into the realm of (…) 'normal' political dispute and accommodation" (Williams 2003: 523) – is supposed to refer to. In many ways the result of de-securitization, normal politics, is of particular interest to the process of the transformation of the West since it entails the key question whether (and if so: to what extent) global politics can be politicized (and civilized) rather than securitized. Yet the securitization literature is to a certain extent ambivalent in this regard. While Wæver

[8] Wæver himself has emphasized that the Copenhagen School provides a "conceptual apparatus" rather than a "theory" (Wæver 2003:21). For critical appreciations of the securitization approach see McSweeny 1996, 1998, 1999 (for a reply see Buzan/Wæver 1997), Williams 1998, 2003, Huysmans 1998, Balzaque 2005, Hansen 2000, 2005, Behnke 2000, Eriksson 1999, CASE 2006.

[9] Buzan et al. refer to Austin's and Searle's speech act theory (Austin 1962, Searle 1969). Opposing a representational understanding of language, language is understood as a relational, differential and rule based system where meaning (the signified) is constituted by the specific use of signifiers.

himself (eg. 1998: 92) is quite evasive, others have argued that (unlike politicization) de-securitization presupposes a grammar of security itself and is therefore unable to escape the problem of speaking security (cf. Aradau 2001).[10] Here Carl Schmitt's notion of exception resonates where the *act* of speaking security constitutes the community by the radical differentiation between friend and foe (Schmitt 1996 [1932], see also Odysseos/Petito 2007, Behnke 2004, 2005; for a critical standpoint see Herborth 2005, Huysmans 2006: 127-141).

The underlying idea of the ordering effects of security also resonate within the *sectoral* approach of the Copenhagen School. Security sectors are „types of interaction" (Buzan/Wæver/deWilde 1998: 27) which differ according to their (dominant) referent objects of security.[11] The concept of security sectors has been commonly applied to the study of European migration, the question of societal security and identity politics (Wæver et al. 1993). While Jef Huysmans and Didier Bigo have demonstrated how the securitization of migration within the EU enabled new institutions and widened the competences of agencies (Huysmans 2000, 2006; Bigo 2000, 2001), Bill McSweeny has criticized that the concept of security within the Copenhagen school is still centered around the nation state as a key concept of political order, presumably leading to a reification of society and identity (McSweeny 1996). In defense of the Copenhagen School, Williams has pointed out that the reification of identity and society is not a theoretical decision made by Buzan et al. but already an effect of securitization (Williams 2003: 519-520).

The third key concept of the Copenhagen School is the concept of *regional security complexes* which refers to the idea that security dynamics are foremost a regional phenomenon (Buzan/Wæver 2003). According to Buzan and Wæver the evolution and formation of a regional security complex is driven by the "interplay between, on the one hand, the anarchic structure and its balance-of-power consequences, and, on the other, the pressure of local geographical proximity" (Buzan/Wæver 2003: 45). Thus, pattern of de-/securitization (and pattern of amity and enmity) form regional orders where the security policies of the actors are interwoven like in a cobweb. In Buzan's and Wæver's reading Europe (and especially the EU) illustrate such a regional security complex where North America is only partly included. For the purposes of our project of tracing the transformational processes of reinventing (or disbanding) 'the West' Buzan's and Wæver's decision of 'splitting' EU-Europe and North America up and assigning them to two separate regional security complexes is going one step too far since it presumes what

[10] Aradaus's description of de-securitization as a "normalization of threats" is unsatisfactory, however, because the normalization of threats could also mean an institutionalization (and routinization) of the state of emergency. This would leave us unable to differentiate between a state of emergency which we might consider undesirable and desirable normal politics (as deliberative procedures).

[11] While the military and political sector traditionally refer to the securitization of the state and its sovereignty, societal security refers to threats in identity terms. The referent objects in the economic and ecological sectors remain rather unspecified. Although Buzan et al. stress that the boundaries and referent objects of the sectors are contingent the survival of the state and its sovereignty has traditionally been at the core of securitization.

we consider problematic.[12] Whereas the Copenhagen School in general and Buzan/Wæver 2003 in particular excel at the level of bold strokes it is our goal to reconstruct changing patterns of de-/securitization and their institutional consequences in more detail.

3.3.2. The Idea of an Empty Signifier

As discussed above, 'the West' is a semantic category actors refer to in terms of de-/securitization. Reconsidering the double function of the West as an inclusive and exclusive concept with a rather diffuse meaning, we tentatively suggest to re-conceptualize the West as an *empty signifier*. Introduced by Ernesto Laclau, the concept of an "empty signifier is […] a signifier without a signified" (Laclau 1996:36).[13] Laclau argues that an empty signifier depends on the structural impossibility of signification and represents the limits of a discursive system. Referring to the (post-)strucuralist understanding of language, meaning is constituted through relations of difference and every significational system needs limits. But the limits of the system cannot be signified; otherwise they would be part of the system (Laclau 1996:37). Laclau concludes that the possibility of a signifying system (ie. its limit) also constitutes its impossibility (i.e. the system's incapability of signifying its limits). Therefore, to count as limit something which cannot be named has to be excluded from the discursive system. The empty signifier thus necessarily establishes an antagonistic relationship between the system of signification and its outside, the other (Laclau 1996:37; Torfing 1999:174).

The social antagonism between the significational system and its other is made possible by *a logic of equivalence* and a *logic of difference*. Although language is perceived as a relational system, internal differences enter into a relation of equivalence as elements of the system by excluding something which is not part of the system. While the exclusion of a threatening other enables a chain of equivalence between different significations *within* the system as they relate negatively to the other (ie. not being the other), the meaning of the system is simultaneously *emptied of any*

[12] For a description as to what the Western security community presumably amounts to in substantive terms see also Wæver 1998. This difference between 'Copenhagen' and our project notwithstanding, Buzan and Wæver (2003) are to be lauded for an impressive and highly original conceptual as well as substantive contribution which represents one of the major additions to an otherwise quite predictable realist-vs-liberal and/or rationalist-vs-constructivist debate.

[13] See also Culler 1985, Barthes 1957. Culler argues that the concept of an empty signifier – despite its significational emptiness – presupposes the status as a signifier and thus relates to a signified although we may not know its meaning (Culler 1985:115). Citing Shakespeare: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more: It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." (Macbeth Act V, Scene V).

For an introduction to Laclau and the empty signifier, see Torfing 1999:173-177, Critchley/Marchart 2004, Andersen 2003. The best application of the empty signifier concept is Martin Nonhoff's study about social market capitalism in Germany. Nonhoff has re-constructed how the concept of social market capitalism was emptied of a specific meaning within the German discourse and became an empty signifier by establishing chains of equivalence and difference (Nonhoff 2006). For work referring to Laclau/Mouffe in IR, see Nabers 2006, Diez 2001, Wennersten 1999, Aalto 2000, Lagerspetz 2003.

positive signification producing an empty signifier as a placeholder for an undefined universality.[14] A genealogical perspective on the evolution of 'the West' as a dominant signifier of order between North America and Europe illustrates how the Atlantic order effected an exclusion of a threatening other and, at the same time, enabled an inclusion of different meanings within a common significational system. While the overall disciplinary effects of bipolar confrontation solidified the interplay of equivalences and difference consolidating the West as normative order by excluding the USSR as the 'empire of evil', the collapse of the Eastern block re-opened the horizon of possible significations thus vindicating the theoretical argument that meaning is never fully fixed – and possibly undermining a cornerstone of Western normative order.[15]

4. Research Design

4.1. Securitization Theory and the Transformation of Normative Orders via Institutional Consequences

In contrast to a concept of order where conflicts pose a dramatic challenge to its taken-for-granted normative foundations we define order as a contingent arrangement of institutional consequences. In the following section we will argue that the Western order is made possible and re-produced through patterns of de-/securitization which by necessity yield institutional consequences. A brief discussion of how institutions have been dealt with in IR shows that this research is based to a large extent on rationalist (and therefore largely static) assumptions. We argue that an understanding of the transformative trends within the Western order requires a dynamic and process-oriented research design asking how institutions are constituted by and through performative acts. As a result our envisaged substantive research will focus on how a variety of institutional consequences are brought about through particular security practices.

Although international organizations, institutions and regimes have been at the core of IR for some time, there is still a debate about appropriate definitions (Risse 2002: 605; Duffield 2007). In one of the most recent and comprehensive efforts John Duffield (2007) has suggested to systematize the field by distinguishing three types of institutional approaches. According to this view institutions have traditionally been defined primarily as formal organizations (Sandholtz 1993, Haas/Keohane/Levy 1993, Martin 1993). It was only in the 1980s that authors such as

[14] Laclau clarifies that a completely empty signifier is rather unlikely except to a mystical discourse. To be more precise, an empty signifier presents a continuum where the goal of complete emptiness and thus universality is aspired by hegemonic articulations but unattainable.

[15] Laclau's and Mouffe's influential book *Hegemony and Social Strategy* (1985) formulates a political theory of hegemony. So far, our suggestions to use the concept of the empty signifier do not include a full appreciation of Laclau's and Mouffe's theory. On the whole, we are quite sure that there will remain some fundamental differences between the work of Laclau/Mouffe and our project. Recently, Chantal Mouffe has argued against the predominance of the West representing a cosmopolitan project by advocating a multipolar order (Mouffe 2005).

Oren Young (1989) began stressing the social character of institutions calling for a "behavioral approach". Rationalists and constructivists have pushed the debate further by distinguishing between institutions as rules (Keohane 1988, Krasner 1988) or norms (Finnemore/Sikkink 2001, Klotz 1995, Wendt 1999). In this view institutions are social facts actors act upon. They are about "relatively stable sets of related constitutive, regulative, and procedural norms and rules that pertain to the international system, the actors in the system (including states as well as non-state entities), and their activities" (Duffield 2007: 7-8; for a similar definition, see Keohane 1989: 3-4). In order to provide a systematic heuristic of institutions guiding our research we will differentiate institutional consequences according to their *degree of formalization* (formal/informal), the *level* at which they materialize (domestic/national, regional, international, global) and the *functions* they perform (constitutive, regulative and procedural).

Conceptualizing institutional consequences as a result of creative action enables us to reconsider the transformation of Western order without pre-judging whether its normative foundation is eroding or lasting.[16] Thus, our project starts with a selection of specific institutional consequences as consensual descriptions or practices of change within the transatlantic space. We argue that institutional consequences such as the establishment of the NATO-Russia-Council, the creation of dual-hatted European battle groups in the context of ESDP or the informal coordination between EU interior ministers on the one hand and the US Secretary for Homeland Security are the result of successful moves of de-/securitization.

4.2. Patterns of Securitization and De-securitization

In following the Copenhagen School we assume that the identification of successful moves of de-/securitization hinges on our ability to distinguish between three levels of order: the private sphere, the political sphere and the security sphere. While 'security issues' within the private sphere are problems of individuals (e.g. human rights violations in China) an issue is considered politicized when it enter the public discourse requiring political action within the normal procedure of (democratic) decision making. Securitization in contrast establishes a state of emergency where extraordinary measures are justified. It is only *after* an issue has already been securitized that a de-securitizing move becomes possible by either removing the issue from the security agenda and re-introducing it into the normal decision making process or by shifting the focus of (security) attention (more or less intentionally) from one issue to another breaking established institutionalized routines (cf Buzan et al. 1998: 29). For conceptual clarity, we will differentiate two dimensions of de-securitization. First, de-securitization can refer to a securitized

[16] For an elaboration of the underlying pragmatist theory of thought and action see Hellmann et.al. 2005 and Wagner et.al. 2006.

issue which actors attempt to remove from the security agenda. In this case it is a question of power whether the issue is re-introduced into the normal decision-making process or whether it remains securitized. Second, de-securitization may be the result from a slackening or collapse of institutionalized security routines which are largely unintended and may result from 'doing other things'. Both dimensions of de-secrutization dissolve the state of emergency created by the initial securitizing move. Taken together politicization, securitization and de-securitization are conceived of as processes which transform the normative foundation of the West as a transnational community via the institutional consequences they yield.

4.3. Speaking Security Successfully: The Institutionalization of Speech Acts

Not every move of securitization is successful[17] so the question becomes how we recognize it when we see it. As a performative act security has no truth conditions, only facilitating conditions. Buzan et al. distinguish two categories influencing the success of a securitizing speech act: the internal, linguistic grammar and the external, contextual and social circumstances (Buzan et al. 1998: 32). A move of securitization has to follow the rules of grammar. Framing an object, actor, or situation as threatening without calling for exceptional and immediate measures does not count as an act of securitization. Such an incomplete speech act would lead to a situation of insecurity including the perception of a threat but no extraordinary measures. Accordingly, the securitizing actor has to invest some social capital, e.g. a position of authority where she is privileged to speak security. A resonance with the historical use of security supports a successful speech act (Wæver 2003: 14-15). Last but not least, a move of securitization requires the acceptance of an audience that the speech act is legitimate and appropriate. A number of scholars have criticized that Wæver and his co-authors don't denote how this acceptance occurs or who the audience is. In order to formulate a "corrective" to the Copenhagen School, Thierry Balzacq has argued that a successful securitization move is audience-centered, context-dependent and power-laden (Balzacq 2005). Since facilitating conditions cannot be evaluated theoretically but only empirically we will pay special attention to those conditions which enable and constrain the success of de-/securitization moves.

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[17] The limited focus on speech acts (in opposition to non-linguistic practices) is discussed by Williams 2003, Hansen 2005. Our project will follow a broader understanding of performative acts including, for example, visual representations.

4.4. Beyond Military Security: Intersectoral Security Dynamics and 'the West'

While traditional security issues have dominated the Western order since the end of the Cold War, societal, economic, and environmental issues constitute an essential dimension of transatlantic cooperation. As already discussed above changing patterns of de-/securitization are interlinked with intersectoral dynamics. Especially the societal dimension of the West is often perceived as marginal and secondary although it mirrors the Western identity discourse most visibly. IR theories often conceptualize society as a residual category involving everything except 'the state'. From a liberal perspective political decisions are explained and caused by domestic processes of preference building (e.g. Moravcsik 1997). This short-handed understanding of society as a residual category for the challenge between particular interests and their assertion/enforcement narrows our understanding of social change fundamentally. While many commentators describe 'the West' as a form of community ('Vergemeinschaftung') its ideational core is part of a continuous process of reproduction and transformation. Thus, as an ordering mechanisms securitization helps to stabilize a community or society where identities are perceived as fluent, ambivalent and unfounded. This anti-foundationalism of the securitization approach directs our attention to the contingent processes of signification and the institutional effects enabled by them. Then, intersectoral dynamics become observable through the lenses of securitization theory where security is a matter of performativety.

4.5. The De-/securitization of an Empty Signifier

We have tentatively identified the 'unit of analysis' of the project proposed here as performative acts, which, by referring to 'the West' yield institutional consequences. Both the Copenhagen School of security studies and Laclau's political theory of hegemony serve as elements of a conceptual tool-kit which is designed to trace this very link between performative acts and institutional consequences. Obviously, the question of *how* particular speech acts relate to the West is inept to be answered at a merely conceptual level. Having emphasized, at a general theoretical level, that the future of 'the West' hinges on contingent processes of signification rather than trans-historical macro-dynamics we have committed ourselves to tracing particular instances of signification instead of partaking in pundit-like speculations as to where 'the West' may go, get stuck, or eventually end up. Following through on the metaphor of a 'conceptual tool-kit' – as opposed to the proverbial hammer constituting a world of nails – the theoretical reflections presented here are expected to help us identify manifold and radically different ways of relating to 'the West'. Hence, the following ideas as to how performative acts and institutional

consequences may be related must not be mistaken for empirical results. They are simply meant to specify the scope of what we may observe in the field.

As 'the West' is increasingly portrayed as a threatened, endangered space security dynamics constitute an obvious starting point. A key merit of the Copenhagen School, the distinction between dynamics of securitization and desecuritization exempts the field of security studies from a narrow focus on the defence of pre-established national interests. Securitization rather depicts a particular mode of political agency characterized, as we have argued above, by a rhetoric of exception, which employs presumably existential threats as a trigger to set off extraordinary measures. Desecuritization, by contrast, refers to the gradual process of rhetorical disarmament which aims at the withdrawal of a particular issue off the security agenda thus replacing the logic of exception, immediate necessity and emergency with the routinized patterns of normal politics. Looking at the West from a security perspective that is informed by the Copenhagen School thus by no means confines 'the West' to the realm of security policy. It simply provides a particular angle which allows us to trace a particular kind of transformation of the West as a political space by observing how different issues are securitized or desecuritized, ie. moved on and off the security agenda.

While, despite all efforts to move beyond the traditional frame of the military-political, the state still figures prominently in the Copenhagen School we propose that the West has become an important alternative key site of reference in processes of both securitization and desecuritization. Laclau's concept of an empty signifier has been introduced as a tentative conceptualization of the semantic role of 'the West' in political discourse. Precisely because it is such an infinitely broad, vague, and underspecified concept, 'the West' might be effective in integrating a broad set of performative acts, which relate to each other (through a chain of equivalence) simply because they share a reference to 'the West' as opposed to some undefined threat commonly known as 'the Other'. Hence, while the Copenhagen School allows us to distinguish securitization and desecuritization as two fundamental dynamics, the concept of an empty signifier provides us with a tentative idea of *how* performative acts may refer to 'the West' in order to situate themselves within the broader framework of a normative political order.

A common trait of processes of securitization on the one hand and the structure of Laclau's empty signifier on the other is their emphasis of the constitutive role of an external threat. To be sure, Wæver's account of the linguistic construction of political threats must not be equated with Laclau's more philosophically inclined reflections on the boundaries of systems of signification. However, combining them for heuristic purposes seems possible to the extent that such boundaries of discourse are actually observed in terms of a chain of difference juxtaposed to the chain of equivalence – ie., to the extent that the Laclauian 'Other' is communicatively

processed in terms of a chain of difference which is composed of categories jeopardizing those contained in the chain of equivalence. We may then conceptualize performative acts securitizing 'the West' in terms of direct references to such a chain of difference. An immediate threat to 'the West' is thus invoked triggering, unwittingly or not, an institutional response. While acts of securitization are thus characterized by a negative reference to 'the West', a reference to something *outside* 'the West', which is taken to necessitate an institutional response *within* 'the West', acts of desecuritization would be characterized by a positive reference to 'the West' via the corresponding chain of equivalence.

While, again, we are not in a position to present results of actual research, it seems plausible to assume that images of the West as an open multilateral space are then commonly associated with processes of desecuritization while successful instances of securitization are more likely to trigger the self-image of a fortress defending what is held to be the normative achievements of the West.

5. Framework of Analysis

5.1. Methodological Implications and Implementation

As this project seeks to make a methodologically and conceptually innovative contribution to the analysis of the transformation of Western order our aim is to develop a research design that allows to reconstruct micro-processes of institutional transformation which are treated as expressions of larger discursive shifts. How these discursive shifts, ie. changing patterns of de-/securitization, take place and yield institutional consequences is the central research question of the proposed project. While our research areas seek to include a wide range of transatlantic policy issues and institutional consequences at work our methodological approach will translate our conceptual apparatus into substantive research.

We propose a reconstructive research design in order to better understand how the normative foundation of the West is changing. In our view a *logic of reconstruction*, first of all, requires a fallibilistic understanding of research that encompasses not only the results but also the methodological presuppositions of the research process itself. Our general research methodology thus corresponds to the position Anselm Strauss has proposed under the heading *grounded theory*. Empirical findings as well as the theoretical and methodological presuppositions by virtue of which they are produced should be continuously conceived of as open, and potentially subject to revisions (cf. Strauss/Corbin 1998). In this sense, grounded theory has much in common with

discursive approaches by emphasizing an anti-foundationalist, re-cosntructive perspective where processes of signification are historically contingent.[18]

For the purpose of this project, however, *grounded theory* provides at best a general methodological orientation, insofar as it remains self-consciously indeterminate when it comes to describing (or prescribing) what should be done 'in the field'. As the methodological procedures need to be adequate in the light of the subject at hand, rather than picking a subject that seems adequate in the light of some method at hand[19], specific methodological rules need to be 'field-specific'. As we seek to analyze speech acts not as individual utterances but rather as elements of a larger communicative context of action (one could say discourses), hermeneutic methods that focus on the reconstruction of latent structures of meaning in textual data, seem to be an obvious starting point. However, as most of these methods have been developed in the context of ethnographical research, they need to be modified when applied to reconstructing the transformation of Western order. While the re-construction of institutional consequences starts on a micro-level our aim is to connect our findings in order to describe the transformative dynamics of the West on a macro-level. 'Knowing the field' is a generally recognized prerequisite of interpretive research (cf. Strauss/Corbin 1998, Strauss 1991, Soeffner 2004, Oevermann 2000). Hence, the problem of becoming knowledgeable about 'the field' – a problem which becomes ever more complex as one climbs the ladder from 'micro' to 'macro' – needs to be reflected as a first step of the research process. Moreover, the selection of texts to be analyzed, again a specific problem of research at the macro level, should be based on criteria that are open to intersubjective control. At the concrete level of methods – rather than methodology – we thus propose an analytical three-step that specifies the historiographic reconstruction of the field, the process of text selection, and the interpretive procedures themselves as separate steps of the research design.

In a first step, the necessary competence in the field of research is to be acquired. As this involves crucial decisions that have major ramifications in the course of the research project, it might be a more delicate matter than social scientists usually tend to assume. Being critical of both the sources that are used and the decisions that are made in order to structure the subject matter is necessary to avoid the pitfalls of a naive historicism that seeks to tell the story *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist.* Significantly, drawing distinctions between two sets of collective actors within the West, say 'North America' (including the US and Canada) on the one hand, and the 'European Union' on the other reflects a set of presuppositions that will become most significant

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[18] The relation between the study of discourses and grounded theory is barely discussed in IR although both 'methodological orientations' are interested in the significations actors ascribe to objects.
[19] This is Vertzberger's (2002: 28) key criticism of foreign policy analysis in the U.S.

during the research process. Making such decisions transparent – and thus open to criticism – is a crucial function of historiographic methods (Rüsen 1990, Bauer 2004: 7-17).

Secondly, the selection of texts and speech acts to be analyzed is obviously a crucial step in the research process. Which particular kind of texts matter for a specific research question, and how should a large set of texts, such as, for instance, parliamentary debates be reduced to workable quantities? According to our reconstructive methodology questions such as these cannot be answered according to a set of previously fixed rules. We thus self-consciously adopt the iterative procedure *grounded theory* refers to as *coding* as an open strategy of "data collection", a form of discursive ethnography where the selection of texts is continually improved on account of field-specific experiences (Strauss 1991; Strübing 2004). If the process of data collection itself thus should remain open and subject to possible revisions, systematic points of reflection need to be incorporated. Hence, background interviews are planned in both early phases of the research process where they contribute to the process of gathering field-specific knowledge as well as in the final phase, where a critical evaluation and refinement of the results is at stake. In both cases background interviews have supportive function, while the actual analysis focuses on public statements within the political field.

However, such a strategy of *data collection* remains agnostic as to how the collected material should actually be interpreted. In a final step, hermeneutic methods are employed in order to make the standards for the interpretation of texts as explicit as possible. Treating texts as *protocols*, as traces of social praxis so to say, hermeneutic methods specialize in disclosing the ways in which meaning is produced. In contrast to many forms of discourse analysis, a hermeneutic approach thus does not treat discourse as an ontological sphere in itself, where structures of meaning can somehow be found. Conceiving of texts as artifacts of social praxis implies that structures of meaning, too, are always embedded in praxis. The interpretive procedure can be characterized as a process of *sequential analysis* which traces at the micro-level of individual segments of the text how a specific range of pragmatically appropriate connections is enabled, while at same time previously enabled connections are excluded (Oevermann 2000, Soeffner 2004).[20]

This combination of a historiographic reconstruction of the subject matter, an 'ethnography of discourse' that explicates the criteria in the process of text selection, and the hermeneutic reconstruction of how meaning is produced in actual speech acts could be ideally described as a succession of steps logically building on each other. According to the open logic of the research process that comes with a *grounded theory* perspective, however, the results should

[20] A somewhat similar approach can be found in the Copenhagen School which conceptualized security issues as the pragmatic result of speech acts of securitization (cf. Buzan/Wæver/de Wilde 1998).

remain open to revision at each stage allowing for an iterative process of moving back and forth between different steps. Hence, it is only in the *combination of all three steps* that an *empirically grounded* understanding of processes of transformation becomes possible.

5.2. Research Areas and Cases

According to our reconstructive perspective the selection of research areas and cases should be guided by internal standards which bear in mind the unique and multifaceted character of each research area. Instead of looking for standards that discipline the research process through externally defined rules we seek to explicate the selection of research areas and cases by internal rules as it is, for instance, recommended by the methodology of *grounded theory*. A historical reconstruction of the research areas allows us to reconsider a plurality of institutional consequences and bears the advantage to take notice of significant shifts which are overlooked by other studies who select their cases on account of external principles.

First, in selecting and delimiting research areas we have been guided by our judgment as to what will most likely be recognized by a majority of fellow scholars in the field as representing characteristic and defining sets of interaction within 'the West'. Great power rivalry, the transformation of NATO as a security institution, and the question of how North America and Europe deal with the challenges of Islamic fundamentalism meet this requirement. While the first research area focuses more on the systemic macro-dimension of Western self-descriptions and its genealogy in the context of great power rivalry, the representation of Islam *within* the Western order in the third research area refers to a more internal identity discourse where traditional borders of domestic and foreign policy problems begin to blur. As NATO still figures prominently as the key security institution within the transatlantic space, the second research area will reconsider institutional dynamics and discursive shifts relating to the alliance.

Second, our specific case-selection within the research areas will be guided by two analytical questions in order to provide some (provisional) criteria for the *exclusion* of cases. First, problem descriptions which entail the potential for transnational solutions will be of special interest. Although the causes and effects of fundamentalist Islamism can be revealed on regional and national levels the effects of the 'war on terror' do have a global scope. Hence, problems which cannot be solved by one actor domestically promote the build-up of transnational institutions which then may refer to the West in terms of de-/securitizing the Western order. Second, we are interested in all those institutional consequences which are enabled by *either securitization or de-securitization* moves. Our goal to reconstruct the changing patterns of Western order and its normative foundation is based on dynamics of both securitization *and* de-securitization. While

securitization establishes and stabilizes an institutionalized state of emergency de-securitization seeks to unmake those exceptional practices by shifting the attention to other issues. From this perspective, successful moves of securitization as well as de-securitization lead to institutional consequences re-producing Western order.[21] Instead of selecting independent cases – as propagated by King, Keohane, Verba (1994: 128-149, 199-207) – we seek to productively include the interrelations and intersections between our research areas and cases. For the purpose of the project proposed here, we select research areas where 'the West' figures prominently as a referent object of de-/securitization. This is not meant to imply, however, that alternative patterns of reference do not exist. Declining references to 'the West' as a framework concept of normative integration in transatlantic relations could rather be an indicator for a fundamental shift of the normative foundations of the transatlantic order.

The following sketches of the three research areas to be examined in detail in the course of the project provide a brief overview of the central developments which constitute the starting point of our empirical research. In each of the three research areas we will aim for two things: First, we will outline in summary fashion central policy problems regarding the West as a common signifier of order based on the literature in the specific sub-field. Second, we will discuss potential institutional consequences and developments within the research areas for illustrative purposes in order to provide an idea as to what might be examined in detail later on. It is important to note, however, that the question of case selection according to the research design outlined above can only be settled in the field, i.e. after the research process has actually begun.

Research Area I: The West vis-à-vis Russia and China[22]

During the Cold War, 'the West' as a signifier referred predominantly to NATO as a military alliance representing and protecting a community of free and democratic states with shared interests and values. The antagonistic relation towards the Warsaw Pact reinforced a situation where rivalries between great powers where reduced to a bipolar order. One could argue that 'the East' as the constitutive other had a disciplinary effect on inner-Western relations. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the subsequent dissolution of the ideological, economic and military ties of the Eastern Bloc, the West was deprived of its constitutive counterpart. Starting from this idea, the central question to be asked in this research area is whether 'the West' will be able to maintain its function as an integrating concept in the relations towards potential rivals in the East. In particular, the cases in this research area will focus on

[21] For the ontological dimension of security, see Huysmans 1998, Dillon 1996.
[22] The following outline of the research area is authored by Christian Weber, PhD-student, Goethe-University Frankfurt a.M.

processes of securitization and de-securitization in the relations towards Russia and China and the institutional consequences that follow from these practices.

Although political and military tensions between East and West have significantly decreased throughout the last decade, Russia and China are still seen with a certain degree of suspicion. In public and academic discourses, they are often depicted as rivals and sometimes even as future threats. Important actors still draw a dividing line between a democratic West and the non-democratic rising powers in the East that appear different and threatening. In securitizing moves such as these, the West is a possible but by no means a self-evident referent object. The important point here is that these references are characterized by a logic of difference and presumably enable the reproduction or creation of institutions that serve as a common shelter or bulwark against Russia or China as the threatening other.

It is not difficult to point at instances in which a logic of difference dominated the accounts of the relations with Russia and China. Concerning China, since the mid-1990s, Western scholars and politicians tried to assess the power potential and the aims of the Chinese leadership in order to assess in a more informed fashion whether Western states should be either concerned or dispassionate about China's impressive economic growth rates and its increases in military spending (see Harris 1995). Apart from being an expanding economic power that must be dealt with in terms of trade competition, China is perceived as a non-democratic country, a violator of human rights and a potential candidate for regional hegemony in East Asia. While some American scholars see China clearly as a long term threat to American security and to the power position the U.S. has established in the region (Gertz 2000; Huntington; Cf. Mearsheimer 2001: 396-402), most observers are more doubtful of China's power potential and try to come to balanced conclusions about the future relations between the West (particularly the USA) and China (Carpenter 2000, Christensen 2001, 2006, see Friedberg 2005; Callahan 2005). In Comparison to China, Russia didn't seem to be a peer competitor of the U.S. or even a security threat for the West in the mid-1990s. However, already beginning with the tenure of Foreign Minister Primakov in 1996, Russia began to pursue a foreign policy that re-emphasized Russia's national interests vis-à-vis the European Union and the United States (Dobriansky 2000: 140; Mankoff 2007: 125). The need for such a posture was confirmed in the eyes of Russian leaders by the hard-nosed foreign policy approach of the West that didn't respect vital Russian interests: the continuing Eastern enlargement of NATO and the bombing of Yugoslavia despite of Russian disapproval demonstrated the powerlessness of the former superpower, and, fuelled by the financial crisis in 1998, seemed to demand a reassertion of Russia as a major player in Eurasia and in the world (Trenin 2001, 2007; Mankoff 2007: 127-129). The recent conflict over a (Western) missile defense system in Eastern Europe symbolizes how tensed current relations seem to be. It

could be argued that relations with Russia are in a phase of re-securitization with a rather unclear outcome. Led by Yeltsins successor Vladimir Putin and reinforced by constantly high prices for oil and natural gas on the world market, Russia has reemerged as an "energy superpower" (Berman 2004/05: 62) that uses its vast resources of natural gas as an instrument of foreign policy. As conflicts over missile defense, energy supply and the future of the Kosovo have shaped the relations with the West lately, again observers either depict Russia as a threat to European energy security (Umbach 2006) or caution against a "new battleground" in Central Asia and the Caucasus (Berman 2004/05).

Hence, instances of a securitization of Russia and China can easily be found throughout the last decade in different sectors and at different points in time. Some Western policies, for example those demanding export controls of military goods, trade sanctions against China or neighborhood policies of the EU in Central Asia and the Caucasus should be interpreted as consequences of these practices.

Despite of these instances of securitization and the according institutional transformations, it still seems quite uncertain whether Russia or China will eventually be perceived as a significant threat to the West comparable to the Eastern Bloc during the heydays of the bipolar era. Both states have undergone major changes that make them appear less different and less threatening than before. It can also be observed that significant actors in Europe and in the U.S. de-securitize relations towards China and Russia and refer to the West in a positive way as a community of universal values that former rivals should aspire to join. Rather than drawing dividing lines, they underline the common ground and move issues off the security agenda. A logic of equivalence would be characteristic of these discourses, in which positive references to the West make the creation of common institutions or the extension of traditional formal Western organizations possible.

In the economic realm, for example, China is seen by both Europeans and Americans as an emerging competitor but not as a danger. Since the 1970s, China has followed a capitalist path and, by and large, played by the Western rules of free trade. It definitively approved those rules with its accession to the World Trade organization (WTO) in 2001. Despite all warnings of a rising China becoming a future threat to the U.S. and the West, there are still no signs of a serious security dilemma. In contrast, Sino-Western relations have been marked to a significant extent by a peaceful integration of China into the world economy, which is shaped by Western values of free trade. Equally, Russia's foreign policy under Boris Yeltsin and notably his Foreign Minister Kozyrev was marked by a rapprochement towards the European Union and the search for a strategic partnership with the West as a whole (Dobriansky 2000: 140; Mankoff 2007: 124). Although Russia was still far from being regarded as a part of the Western community

(Baranovsky 2000), the signing of the START II-treaty in 1993, the membership of Russia in NATO's Partnership for Peace program in 1994 and its incorporation in the Council of Europe in 1996 were the most visible institutional signs of a growing accommodation and cooperation between the West and the former enemy.

Examples for a de-securitization of the relations towards Russia, as well as China are abundant. In the case of China, the incorporation into the WTO and the developing EU-China human rights dialogue since 1995 are the most visible institutional consequences that presumably may be traced back to practices of speaking security. Continuous institutional rapprochement of NATO and Russia, from the creation of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in 1991 to the founding of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) in 1997 up to the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002, are examples of institutional consequences that question whether moves of de-securitization or (re-)securitization have occurred.

Investigating such processes of securitization and de-securitization in detail, we seek to find out whether 'the West' is still granted an important role in the relations with China and Russia or if the 'nation state', 'Europe' or the 'democratic community' have become alternative referent objects striving for hegemony. In the case that the signifier 'West' has not vanished from these discourses, we will be able to understand which place, role and status actors in Europe and in North America. ascribe to it. It will be possible to identify the new identity markers for the West and the non-West, to reconstruct, whether the West is divided in its different views towards a European East (Russia) and an American West (China) and to analyze to what extent processes of de-/securitization vary across the economic, the security and the societal sector.

Research Area II: Past, Present and Future of NATO

Until now, history has disproven the death of NATO long foretold by neo-realists: Neither the Suez crisis, France's remove from the integrated military command structures of the alliance in 1966 or occasional suspension of Greece's forces in 1974, the dual track policy in 1979/1980 and its public opposition in many Western European countries, détente, the inclusion of new members and eastern enlargement in the 1990's, the dissolution of the Warsaw pact nor the recent conflict about going to war in Iraq in 2003 or the proposed construction of a missile defense system in Europe has posed serious enough a challenge to threaten NATO's existence.

Founded in 1949 as a military alliance between North America and Western European states in order to provide mutual defense (especially against the rising Soviet Union) NATO has experienced many institutional changes throughout its almost 60 years of existence. Although NATO summits have occurred before the historical juncture of 1989/1990, meetings after the collapse of the USSR sketch most explicitly the essential policy lines of the institutional

transformation of the alliance: In 1991 in Rome, the heads of state and government of NATO members described the new tasks of the alliance after the Cold War pushing for a broad approach to the concept of security, the 1994 summit initiated the Partnership for Peace (PfP), and in Madrid and Paris (1997) Eastern enlargement was declared. On the occasion of NATO's 50th anniversary 1999 in Washington member states decided to take military action against Serbia, revised their strategic concept and resolved their complicated partnership with ESDP (e.g. Berlin-plus agreement), at subsequent meetings in 2002 the NATO-Russia-Council was created (Rome) and a military concept for defence against terrorism was accepted (Prague). On the most recent summit meetings in Istanbul (2004), Brussels (2005) and Riga (2006) NATO has continued to respecify its organizational structures, procedures and strategies as well as its policy goals in the context of global terrorism (Gardner 2004, 2005; Yost 2007; Aldrich 2004; Gordon 2001, Foster/Wallace 2001), especially with respect to new strategic concepts (Berenskoetter 2005) and policies vis-à-vis 'rogue states' (Rhodes 2004). One could argue that NATO has successfully transformed itself from a military defense alliance to a globally operating security entrepreneur – just like institutionalists demanded.

While NATO has been characterized as a collective defense system during the Cold War out-of-area missions have become a defining part of NATO's activities today. Whether one looks at the ongoing ISAF mission in Afghanistan and KFOR in Kosovo or the completed missions in Bosnia and Macedonia, NATO's long-term security engagement abroad is striking. The increasing 'out-of-area business' has forced NATO and its member states to rethink their military structure and capabilities: command structures have changed, armament policies and security strategies are revised. The terror attacks of 9/11 have had a remarkable impact on the alliance especially because the proclamation of Article 5 has NATO operate in an ongoing state of emergency. While out-of area missions during the 1990s were generally implemented as UN peace-keeping and peace-enforcement missions in failed and failing states, in the 21st century NATO has become part of an uncertain, timeless and global 'war on terror' where civilian aims and conflict prevention are perceived as more and more important.

Beside NATO's internal organizational dynamics, some commentators argue that the fast development of a European foreign, security and defense policy (CFSP/ESDP) poses a challenge to the alliance and may in fact constitute an attempt of some EU member states (especially France) to counter-balance American preponderance and hegemony (Layne 2006, Howorth, Menon; Peters 2006, Hopf 2005). Whether ESDP represents – in neo-realist terms – an attempt of counterbalancing U.S. power or not remains an open question but it is obvious that the security cooperation between the USA and the EU/Europe has become a more complex affair: new military and civilian headline goals and their compatibility are discussed, new headquarters

and command structures are established, new strategies are developed and partly implemented. The question of how future relations between NATO and EU/ESDP (and between the U.S. and EU/Europe) may look like – competition, compatibility or something in-between – has inspired a variety of publications, especially in the aftermath of the Iraq conflict and the 'neo-conservative revolution' in the USA[23].

Trends on both sides of the Atlantic (and within the U.S. and Europe) referring to NATO's out-of-area missions, the 'war on terror' and the development of ESDP boost our interest as to whether the West will remain the common point of reference of the transatlantic community. How are the patterns of de-/securitization changing? What institutional consequences do they produce and maintain? To overcome the paradigmatic debates as to whether NATO will survive or die, the proposed project takes seriously the request to pay more attention to the actors and how they relate to the semantic category of 'the West'(cf. Hellmann 2006). Such a perspective which is sensitive to the dynamics of de-/securitization may help to unravel the driving forces of the gradual transformation of NATO and – in a more comprehensive sense – of Western order as such.

The institutional consequences arising from the summit meetings described above give a first impression of the variety and scope of NATO's transformation. The establishment of a North Atlantic Cooperation Council and the Partnership for Peace attempting to tackle the changing strategic environment by including new partners or the Combined Task Forces, a new battle group concept (NRF), a renewed command structure and the principle of multinational forces in the military field as well as the overall enlargement of the alliance since 1952 (!) or the establishment of Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center (EADRCC) in the civilian sector stand out as some of the most striking examples of formal institutional consequences. While the analysis of organizational change is often restricted to merely describing new structures (decision making bodies, decision making processes), we will focus on reconstructing how these transformations were made possible by moves of de-/securitization.

A second question sheds light on the NATO's more informal practices which imbue a gradual transformation of how problems are framed and acted upon. The day-to-day politics of NATO's out-of-area missions as well as new 'grand strategies', the cooperation between NATO and ESDP or the Mediterranean dialogue are such informal practices which call for a more micro-oriented, ethnographically sensitive research perspective.

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[23] Especially the policy-oriented literature is nearly infinite. For recent publications regarding NATO/EU as well as transatlantic relations, see Lundestad 2003, Gordon/Shapiro 2004, Gardner 2004, Dannreuther/Peterson 2006, Evangelista/Parsi 2005, Baylis/Roper 2006, Peters 2006, Illgen, Andrews 2005, Selmon/Shepherd 2003, Kaplan 2004, Sloan 2005, Jäger/Höse/Opperman 2005, Kagan 2002. One of the major shortcomings of the policy-oriented literature is its negligence of the taken-for-granted assumptions and normative implications of their arguments.

Institutional consequences regarding NATO can also be differentiated according to their level and function. While most institutional (organizational) changes occur on the level of the alliance itself, international institutions like the PfP, regional cooperation like the Mediterranean dialogue or national discourses about the constitutional limits of out-of-area missions in Germany reflect the enormous variety of transformative processes in the West. Accordingly, the functions of these institutional consequences are highly different, yet interwoven. Constitutive institutions like the bipolar block confrontation or the 'war on terror' are accompanied by chiefly regulative and procedural institutional consequences.

Re-constructing the constitutive sources of these institutional consequences in terms of securitization and de-securitization moves provides us with a better understanding of how NATO continues to be the primarily institution between Europe and North America although its security practices are changing and becoming more contested.

Research Area III: Terrorism, Islam and the West[24]

Since 9/11, the threat of Islamist terrorism has had a striking impact on Western democracies and their domestic identity discourses. As a new phenomenon, terrorism has strongly influenced the image of Islam within the Western world and created a new dynamic (Urban 2006).[25] However, an intense debate about the relationship between Islam and the West had already started immediately after the end of the Cold War. In the early 1990s this debate culminated in Samuel Huntington's proclamation of a so-called "clash of civilizations" (Huntington 1993). For some observers, the end of the Cold War marked a decisive turning point in history. Ideological and political conflicts were replaced by cultural ones. Thus, in the 21st century, Huntington argues, the occidental and the oriental world will clash in potentially violent ways. In fact, a peaceful coexistence between the West and the Islam would then appear to be impossible in the future (Huntington 1996: 435ff). Although his ideas were by no means novel, Huntington succeeded in popularizing the concept of the "clash of civilizations" between the West and the Islam. His book became highly influential for Western observers, who "were bewildered by the fact that the rest of humanity did not rush to embrace the triumphant Western creed, by the persistence of a wide range of interstate disputes, and even by the reemergence of conflicts long dormant" (Hunter 1998: 5). Indeed, many conflicts after the end of the Cold War were motivated by religion as soon as at least one party involved in the conflict referred to Islam.

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[24] The following outline of the research area is authored by Matthias Hofferberth, PhD-student, Goethe-University Frankfurt a.M.

[25] Despite this new phenomenon, the image of an "Islamic threat" to the West has a long intellectual history, which goes back to the Arabic conquest of Spain in the 8th century and culminates with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the Turks besieging Vienna in 1529 for the first time (Schimmel 1990). It is at this point in history where a common Western identity is constructed in opposition to the oriental and Islamic world of the east (Höfert 2003).

This in turn led to a vague anti-Islamic attitude and rhetoric within the West. Many observers have argued that Islam and modernity, democracy and universal human rights were fundamentally different concepts and thus nearly impossible to reconcile (Büttner 1996: 57ff). Thus, one can easily argue that the Western image of Islam already began to deteriorate after the end of the Cold War (Chimelli 1999: 5ff).[26]

Hence, there had already been a notion of mutual distrust and potential hostility between the occidental and the oriental world before the events of 9/11. Obviously, the spectacular and violent attacks and the subsequent "war against terror" further accelerated the deterioration of the relations between the orient and the occident. The image of violent and radical Islamists fighting against the West has come to dominate the identity discourse after 9/11. The terrorist bombings of Bali in 2002, in Madrid 2003 and in London 2005 cast further shadows over the relations and framed the discourse on Islam as a violent religion (Metzger 2005: 6ff). Thus for many observers in the West the discursive borders between Islam as a religion and Islamism, between Islamic and Islamist activism, terrorism and Jihad diminished in recent years (Nagel 2005: 32ff). Within current IR debates, the 'war on terror' is often discussed in terms of its consequences for the West and NATO (Cox 2005; Jackson 2003), its legitimacy and efficiency (Bellamy 2005; Brunnée/Toope 2004), with respect to how different countries engage in counterterrorism (Katzenstein 2003) and how one can deal with terrorism in general (Aradau/van Munster 2007). Indeed, the 'war on terror' has become a "macro-securitization" (Buzan 2006).

As the international dimension of the "war against terror" dominates the debates, the question of Islam and its societal integration within the Western order itself are by and large marginalized. Islam understood as a religion as well as a way of life is a part of Western societies. Through global migration the task of integrating Muslims into Western societies despite mutual hostility and distrust against the backdrop of fear of further terrorist activities has become an urgent and vital political problem for all Western societies. [27] At the same time, this problem is transnational in character and cannot be solved by any single country (Tibi 2005: 356ff; Landmann 1996 (4)). Focusing on these inner-Western issues, one can imagine a variety of institutional consequences of de-/ securitization. Engaging in an intercultural dialogue with Islam

[26] Interestingly, this notion was rather reciprocal than one-sided. The general Muslim opinion of the West also deteriorated. Many Muslims feel threatened by globalization and betrayed by the West. Historical experiences such as the end of Muslim cultural, intellectual, scientific and technological superiority in the Renaissance and the colonial trauma – almost all of the Islamic world came under some sort of Western colonial control – still strongly influence the Oriental image of the West. Moreover, Western interventions in the second half of the 20th century further stipulated the problematic relations. These various aspects result in the emergence of an anti-western solidarity between different Muslim countries (Fuller/Lesser 1995: 13ff).

[27] Indeed, it is often neglected that the Islamic terrorism is also a Western phenomenon. While some of the suicide terrorists of 9/11 lived and studied in Hamburg, Germany, the four suicide bombers of the London bombing in July 2005 were all born and raised in the UK (House of Commons 2006: 13f).

or strengthening the rights of police investigation (e.g. controlling communication; and increasing public surveillance) would be two plausible ways of providing security with regard to migration.

Other institutional consequences are to be expected within the area of countering terrorism. Dealing with terrorism is not a new phenomenon for European states. Most European states had their experiences with terrorist groups such as the ETA in Spain and France, the IRA in the UK and the RAF in Germany (Hilker 2006: 193ff). Still, global Islamist terrorism is a new phenomenon. Terrorism is no longer limited to one country, it operates transnationally. With its multinational networks, Al-Qaeda is the prototype of the new kind of terrorism. Recruiting, financing, training, and the potential aims are located in different countries all around the world (Schneckener 2006). At the same time, new strategies to fight and counter terrorism have to be developed, which do not harm the Western notion of civil rights (Urban 2006, Beyer 2006; Daase 2005). Terrorism as a new everyday risk within Western societies does indeed pose new questions to policy makers. How can the West react to this new phenomenon? How much security is enough and how can it be achieved when the target of the terrorists is the very foundation of Western civilization? How can Islam and terrorism be securitized and what institutional dynamics and changes result from this new discourse?

Obviously, 'homeland security' and Europol are exemplary illustrations of institutional dynamics of de-/securitization of terrorism. Thus, these two institutional dynamics provide a tentative starting point for this research area. According to the reconstructive research design, these two examples are to be understood as possible illustrations and not as "cases" in a more conventional way. The recognition of the challenge of terrorism has rendered possible a new system of homeland security laws within the West where liberal rights are weighed according to the goal of comprehensive security and strengthened internal security institutions and agencies such as Europol. Although neither 'homeland security' nor Europol is a direct response to terrorism, they became more prominent in the wake of 9/11.[28] Hence, in the wake of the terrorist threat Europol has significantly enhanced its competences. Today, Europol collects and coordinates databases about not only Islamism and terrorists but also about trafficking, organized crime and hooligans. Moreover, in the light of the new threat of terrorism the debate about widening the competences of Europol is intensified. As an immediate institutional consequence responding to Islamic terrorism, Europol shall initiate, conduct or coordinate investigations itself in the near future (Günther 2006: 97ff; Engel 2006).

[28] In general, the term "homeland security" refers to the broad national effort at all levels of government to protect the national territory from both internal and external threads and hazards (Howard 2006; White 2006).

In the age of Islamic terrorism, national security can only be achieved through international cooperation.[29] Obviously, issues of migration and societal integration of Islam have been discussed in a different light since the events of 9/11 and questions of homeland security have become more important. The project will take a closer look at these debates and the resulting institutional changes. The focus is to uncover the disciplining effects of de-/securitization dynamics. How these discursive shifts and changing patterns of de-/securitization take place and what they mean for the "West" as an empty signifier with regard to the oriental world will be the focus of this research area.

5.3. Empirical Data and Sources

The reconstruction of significations of the West will be conducted by analyzing discourses on popular culture as well as the more traditional political and elite discourse. As the borders of signification do not necessarily run across the Atlantic but (more often) across Europe, we suggest to select our empirical sources in the following manner:

- *first step*: Is there a common European and/or EU position? If so, then we have a sound starting point for our empirical investigations.

- *second step*: If there is no common European and/or EU position, have there been attempts to reach a common position? Such quarrels should be documented well and accessible in English even if a broad variety of European states has been involved. The individual positions could be compared to the American perspective to trace processes of coalition building. A typical constellation would be US + EU-minority vs. EU-majority. Given this constellation, it would be most interesting to analyze how the transatlantic order is framed, for example between the USA and Poland, during these conflicts.

On the European side, we will analyze official EU documents as well as publicly stated positions by the member states. These documents are available to the public; thus the outcomes of the project will be open to intersubjective control. On the basis of case by case decisions documents of other European institutions, e.g. the Council of Europe, can be incorporated. On the American side, we will analyze official documents by the government, the house of representatives and the senate. Articulations by other actors – especially states like Japan, Australia, New Zealand or the Eastern and South-Eastern EU candidate states which are

[29] Thus, the international character of security and the issue of international cooperation are already mentioned within the US homeland security strategy (Office of Homeland Security 2002: 59ff).

sometimes associated with the West – will be included if those actors participate in the de-/securitization moves we are focusing on. Statements by societal actors will be included to the extent that they meet the same criteria. Only material published in English will be analyzed as this ensures that the audience for the statement is primarily transnational.[30]

6. Conclusion

Our planned project focuses systematically on inter- and transsectoral pattern of securitization *and* de-securitization articulated within the Atlantic community in order to tease out possible transformations of Western order itself. Securitization theory allows us, first of all, to understand the ordering effects of security as a performative act. Thus, referring to 'the West' in security terms, ie. *securitizing* the West, can be regarded as a social mechanism to *secure* the existence of the West as a dominant signifier of order and identity in the transatlantic space. Then securitization triggers institutional consequences which tend to normalize the politics of emergency while de-securitization amounts to a re-politicization of politics by opening up issues to the normal, participatory procedures of everyday political conduct thus slackening the security's logic of exception and emergency. Second, maybe because it has been one of the most innovative research projects of the last decade, conceptual problems within securitization theory are far from being settled. Thus, our project aims to progressively enhance securitization theory, especially when it comes to conceptualizing and studying de-securitization and the facilitating conditions of successful speech-acts of securitization. Recently, normative aspects of the securitization approach have been discussed passionately problematizing the Schmittian legacy of securitization theory. As the question of order and security is inextricably linked to an idea of normativity the possible implications of a transformation of the Western security practices are far-reaching. Third, the concept of security sectors emphasizes that the referent object of security can be different from the state and allows us to better understand how moves of de-securitization in one sector may be related to processes of securitization in other sectors: How is the West represented? What are the dominant referent objects of Western order and how are they changing? To what extent is the West observed as a value community where a common identity is held to be threatened?

Our proposition to conceptualize 'the West' as an empty signifier allows us to reconstruct the different meanings actors attach to it while taking into account at the same time that the significational references to the Western order engender equivalences between these different meanings. Re-thinking 'the West' as oscillating between a logic of difference and a logic of

[30] Our empirical data is not restricted to political speeches but also includes semi-academic works like Huntington's reference to 'the West' as a culturally defined entity.

equivalence reflects the idea that normative orders are reproduced by a contingent play of justification. Secondly, while the idea of an empty signifier assembles different representations within the system into a chain of equivalence different meanings are not annihilated. Thus, citing conflicting representations about the West as evidence of an eroding normative foundation of the transatlantic order seems premature. Third, empty signifier excludes something which is not part of the system, the other that can only be described in antagonistic, opposite and thus negative terms. East-West relations during the Cold War are an obvious example of such a process of inclusion/exclusion within an antagonistic logic. In contrast to Laclau/Mouffe, however, we emphasize the contingency of relations of difference, which can play out in manifold ways of negotiating the boundaries between identity and difference. This oscillation between inclusion and exclusion, the interplay between a logic of equivalence and a logic of difference is crucially important to the re-production of Western normative order. Whether the semantic category of 'the West' will remain the dominant signifier of order between North America and Europe depends on its practical use – therefore, discursive shifts leading to alternative, possibly competing signifiers which may symbolize a 'divided West' would have far-reaching consequences for the normative foundation of the political space we have come to know as transatlantic.

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