

Copenhagen School: Revisions

Petr Ocelík

MEB401 / MEB427 / ESS427

10th November 2016

Outline

- Securitization: assumptions
- Internal inconsistencies (Balzacq 2005):
 - speech act vs. pragmatist act
 - speaker-audience relationship
- External insufficiencies (Stritzel 2007):
 - discursive context
 - threat-texts
 - power positions: embedded agency

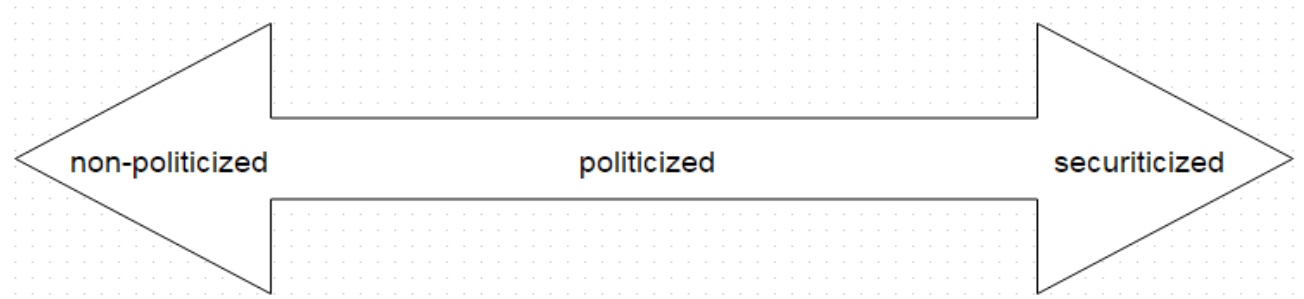
Security as a social construct

- There is **no “essence”**, no universal feature of security.
- Security is **socially constructed** and **intersubjectively shared.**
- Security is **a self-referential practice:** an issue becomes a security issue only by being labeled (via illocutionary act) as one.



→ Focus on **discursive construction** of security issues.

Securitization



- Framing
 - standard (depoliticized)
 - politicized
 - securitized
- **Securitization actors:** ones that declare – via illocutionary speech act – existential threat towards a particular referent object.
- **Functional actors:** ones that significantly affect the dynamic of the security environment (sector).
- Audience acceptance
- Exceptional measures
- Linkages

Speech acts

- **Locutionary act:** the literal meaning of the utterance.
- **Illocutionary act:** the social function of the utterance, for what purpose it is used in a given context.
- **Perlocutionary act:** the effect of the utterance in a given context.

“I warn you, the oil is running out!”

- Locutionary act: made vocal sounds, said that with a Czech accent.
- Illocutionary act: making a warning about (an existential) threat.
- Perlocutionary act: made you (audience) feel insecure (or amused).

Facilitating (felicity) conditions

1. The speech act is following the **grammar of security** (i.e.: existential threat to referent object requires extraordinary measures)
2. The **relationship between speaker and audience** (i.e.: the speaker has a privileged/authoritative position in relation the audience)
3. **Features** of the alleged threats that **either facilitate or impede securitization** (i.e. information about the alleged threat outside of the speech act)

Balzacq's revision

- Distinguishes between **brute** and **institutional** threats.
 - **Institutional** threats: depend on social construction / intersubjectivity
 - **Brute** threats: do not depend on social construction (natural catastrophes)
- **Reduction of speech acts to illocutionary acts** is misleading.
 - does not allow interaction with the audience (performative effects)
- **Solution:** broader concept of a **pragmatic act**
 - strategic use of language centered at a specific audience
 - cultural embeddedness (“clues from ‘the real world’”)

Balzacq's revision: pragmatic act

The processes of securitization – a pragmatic act – consist of:

1. A relatively stable **system of discursive resources** (metaphors, images, stereotypes, etc.),
2. **mobilized by an agent** (securitization actor), who
3. strategically **targets the audience** to build
4. a coherent **network of implications** that convene with actor's actions, by
5. portraying the **referent subject** (entity that threatens) in a way that
6. a **customized political act** must be taken to block its development
7. within a **specific social and space-time context**

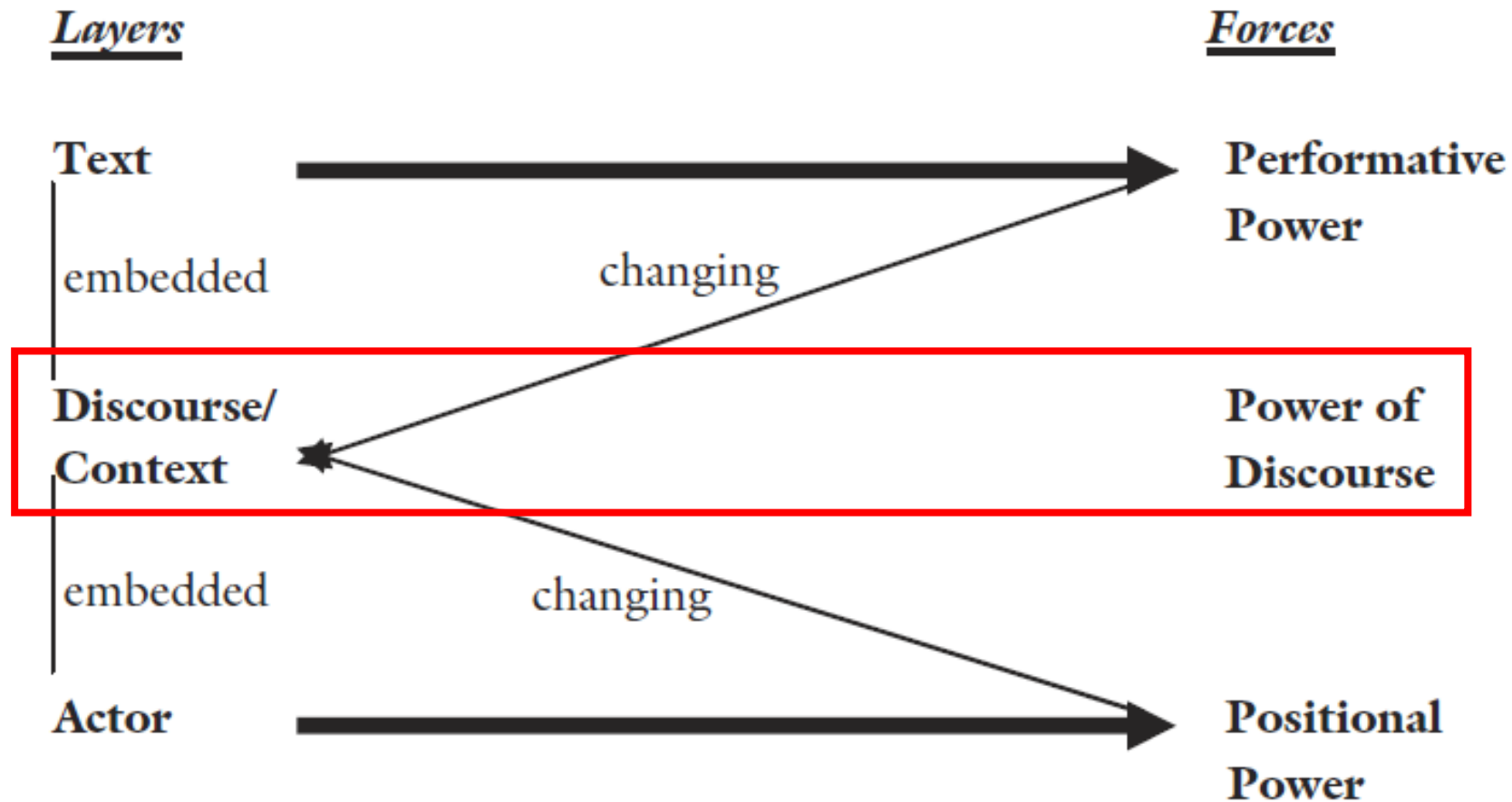
Balzacq's revision: situated interactive activity

- The speaker and the audience need to engage in responsive activity → the speech act is just “**a blueprint**” based on which **audience flesh out missing meanings/details**.
- Thus, the speaker's argument has to employ terms that resonate with understandings (by speeches, gestures, images, etc.) of audience.
- → relation to **external reality** (external to securitization process)
- The **success of securitization** is here given by **mutual** (intersubjective) **understanding** and the speaker's ability to identify audience's feelings, needs and interests.

Stritzel's revision

- Distinguishes between **internalist** and **externalist** position (compare with Balzacq 2005).
- **Internalist position:** speech acts are capable to transform understanding of a certain issue (if the felicity conditions are fulfilled): *“By saying the words, something is done.”* (Buzan et al. 1997: 26)
- **Externalist position:** securitization is a **process** – not just a particular speech act - that takes place in concrete **socio-temporal context**.
 - Broader discursive environment
 - Production of “threat-texts”
 - Power positions (field)

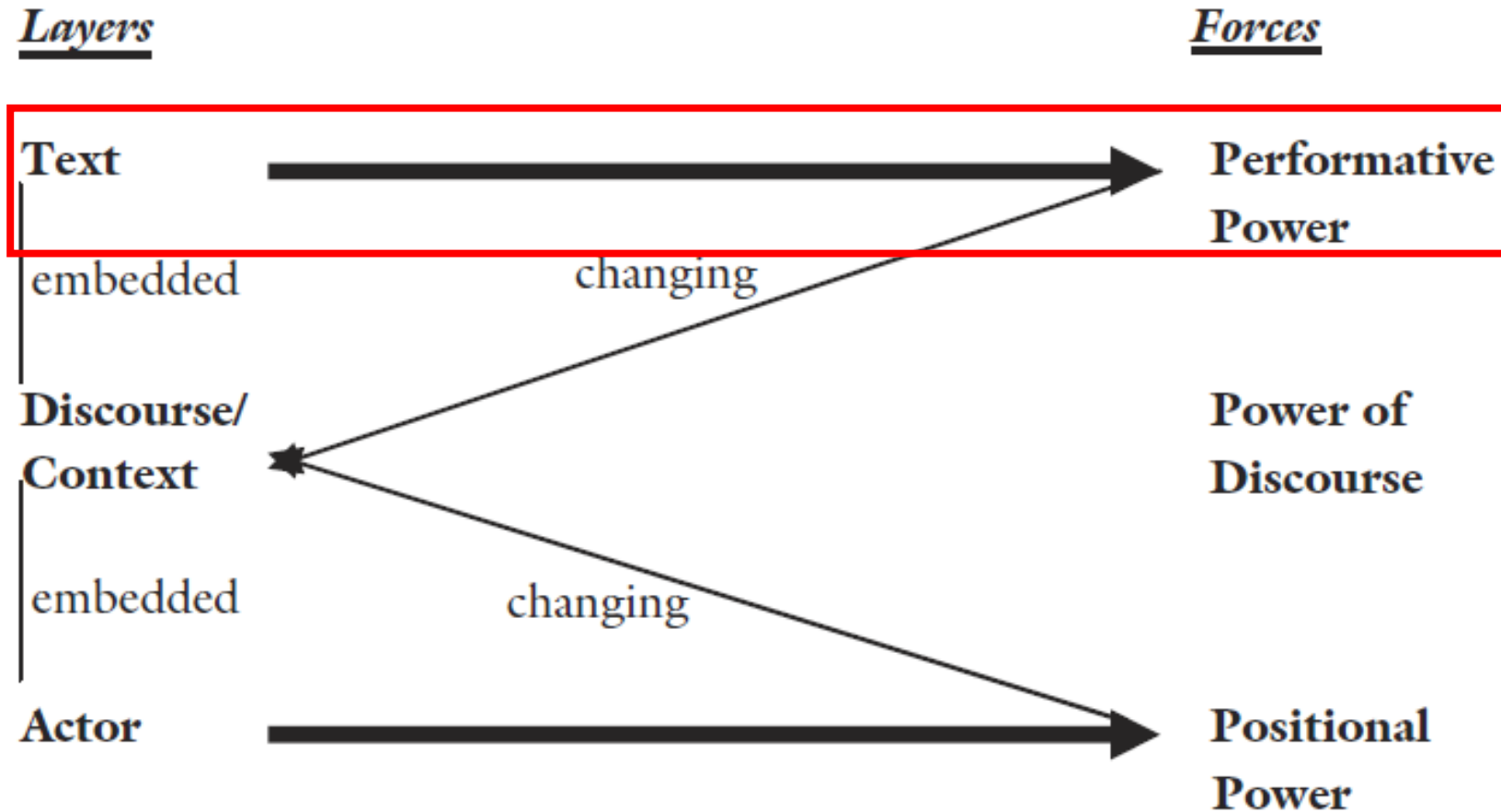
Stritzel's revision



Discursive context / embeddedness

- The speech acts and texts (“threat-texts”) are embedded within a **network of constitutive rules and narratives** that surround them.
(Stritzel 2006: 369)
- The (security-related) **meanings do not come “out of nowhere”** or just from securitization actors’ heads.
 - involved actors/audiences need to **understand a speech act** (or a threat-text)
- Actors exploit **discursive contexts as stocks** of ideas, images, analogies, metaphors or – **historical/cultural traumas** (Sztompka 2000).

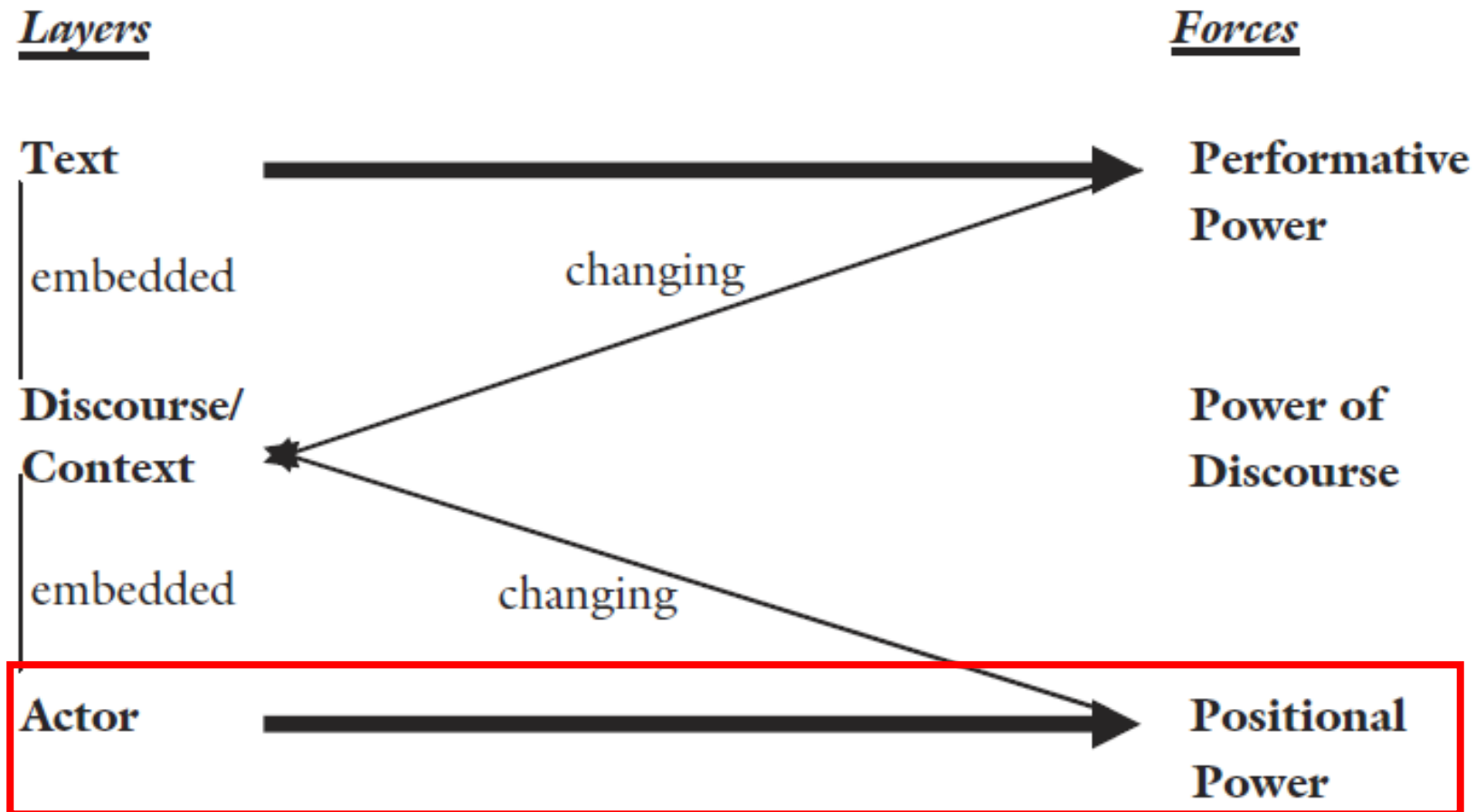
Stritzel's revision



“Threat-texts” (Stritzel 2007)

- In contrast to exceptional speech acts, threat-texts **evolve over longer periods of time** and have **performative force** that shapes discourse as well as (consequently) power-relations.
- Again, **“fit” of the threat-text** with the **existing discourse** (its **resonance**) is crucial for its influence.
- → **localization** (Stritzel 2011): re-interpretation of a threat-text in a particular context where it meets a new (local) audience.
- **Thus:** what counts as a security practice in one period or locale, does not necessarily count in the same way in other periods/locales (ibid.).

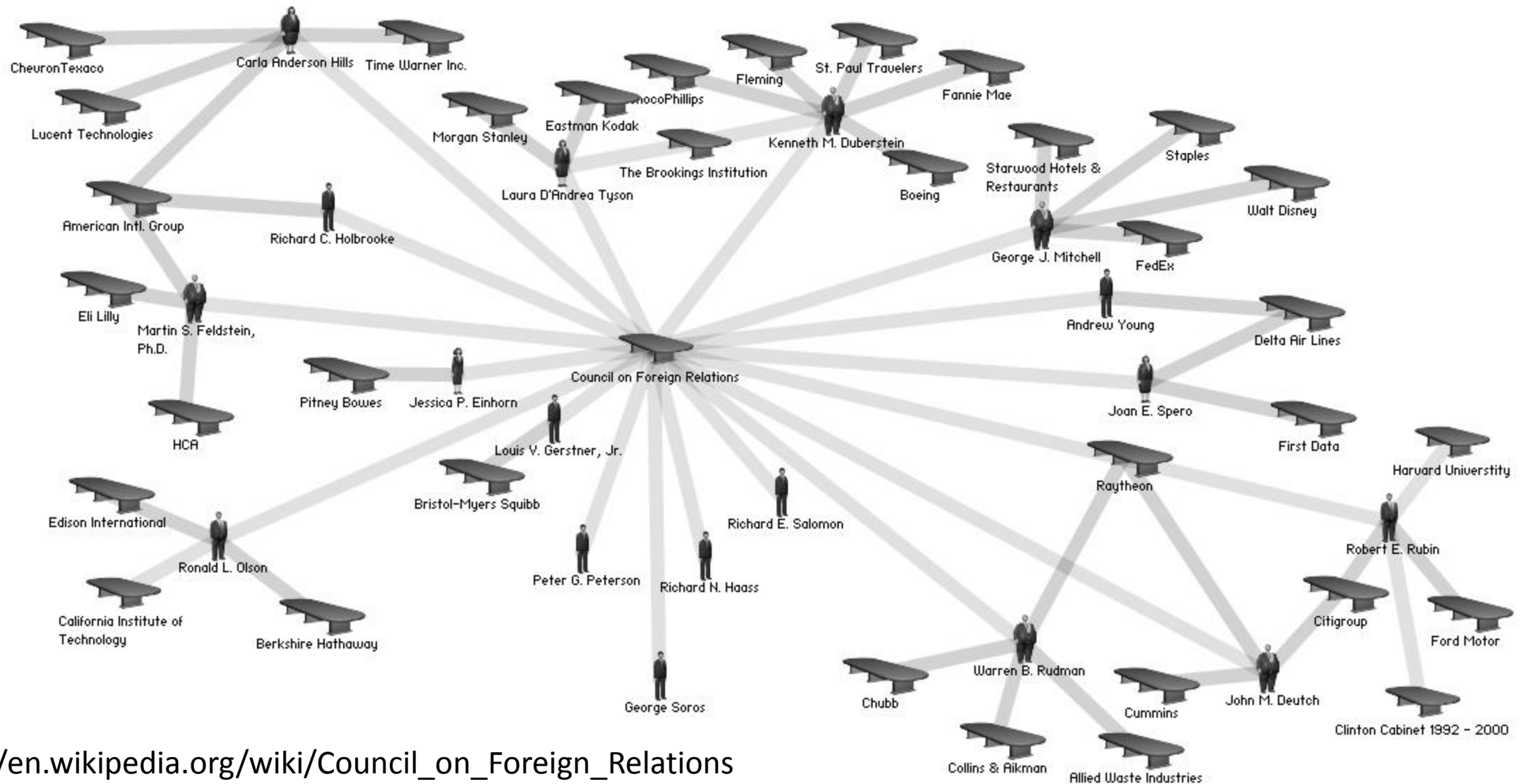
Stritzel's revision



Power positions: embedded agency

- Agency is embedded **sociopolitical context** where actors occupy different **power positions** defined by access to cultural (knowledge), moral (legitimacy), and formal (capability to make decisions) resources.
- → There is an **uneven distribution of opportunities and constraints** to the actors.
- → This embeddedness poses **objective** (in sense actor-independent) **limitations** (objective context according to Balzacq) to securitization moves.

Power positions: embedded agency



Conclusions

- Internal inconsistencies:
 - speech act vs. intersubjectivity (securitization actor – audience)
 - what is the position of securitization theory within the whole framework? (Eclecticism of the Copenhagen School)
- External insufficiencies:
 - is contextual understanding of securitization necessary?
 - is there added value of the introduced concepts in comparison to facilitating conditions?
- Your thoughts? What to do with the CS? How does this influence our understating of security?