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in Israel.

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Abstract: This paper examines rumour as a distinct type of speech act and makes a case for engaging with the spaces within which they are deployed and circulated in practice. Critiquing the rigid linguistic focus on speech acts within prevailing securitization theories, it follows insights from the field of political geography and anthropology in order to incorporate voices from the margins more fully into its analysis of threat construction. Examining the local deployment and circulation of rumours in religiously mixed Arab localities in Israel, it argues that the perlocutionary force of rumour is not only rooted in local security and policing arrangements but reveals a spatialization of violence that is particular to the margins. In so doing, this paper seeks to contribute to a broadening of the research agenda on the social construction of threat that would not only bring “security have-nots” to the centre of its analysis but draw attention to the margins as a particular type of *security space*.

Keywords: rumours, securitization, margins, space, Palestinians in Israel

Fragments of speech

■ Fragment 1:

“The riots were sparked by rumors that Christian youths had pasted photographs of young Druze women onto pictures of naked women and distributed them on the Internet. Subsequent police inquiries found that the rumors were baseless.”

(Rudge, 2005b)

■ Fragment 2

“They [the police] stood back all the time in Mughar. For three days they were battling in the city. And they put [the police] there, and they didn’t move, they didn’t say a word, they didn’t try to prevent. And there are rumours... they’re not rumours, they’re facts... that some of the police, who were Druze, took part in what happened.”

(Anonymous respondent, interviewed 2008)

■ Fragment 3

“Israel’s goal is to make Christians feel like a vulnerable minority and that they will be safer only if they have been trained by the army and have a gun. We hear Christian youngsters who consider enlistment saying things like, “I want to protect myself and my family,” she said.”

(Local activist, cited in Cook, 2013)

Between the tenth and twelfth of February 2005, inter-communal riots in the village of Mughar – a religiously mixed Arab community in northern Israel – resulted in the injury of twelve people (two by bullets), damage to the local Greek Catholic church as well as to dozens of businesses, homes and cars in the Christian part of town which had been broken into, vandalised or set alight. Over the course of the riots, two thousand Christians fled the village (Kanaaneh, 2005: 58; McGahern, 2011). The trigger for the violence was attributed to a rumour, described in fragment one, which was later revealed to be a hoax. The episode captured local and international attention not only because of the scale and intensity of the attack but because of a second rumour, described in fragment two, alleging police complicity in the violence. Seven years later, in October 2012, a government-initiated forum took place in the city of Nazareth to promote, in collaboration with church representatives, the voluntary enlistment of Palestinian Christians for military service (Cook, 2014).¹ The rumour described in fragment three emerged offering a possible explanation for this anomalous behaviour and the title of this paper: “they go to get a gun”.

The aim of this paper is not to determine the “truth” of these claims, but rather to interrogate the broader role, and significance, of rumour in processes of threat construction on the margins of a deeply divided society. A study of rumour, however, poses a number of immediate challenges. How can we weight and value rumours as a category of knowledge when they are illegible, stripped of authorship and accountability; when they are not, as Veena Das (2007: 9) notes, “tethered to a signature”? How can we use them as an analytical tool when the truth claims within them are subject to doubt and contention? The rumour which triggered the violence in Mughar was, after all, later revealed to be a hoax spread by a 16-year old Druze² boy following an online exchange of insults with local Christian youths (Rudge, 2005b). Four years later, however, in the mixed Arab city of Shfar’amr, another set of violent clashes³ occurred which was triggered by a similar rumour that local Christian youths had digitally manipulated and uploaded a video clip to YouTube showing the image of deceased Druze spiritual leader, Amin Tarif, alongside a pig (Khoury, 2009). Unlike the case in Mughar, the rumour which was alleged to have precipitated this particular episode of violence turned out to be “true” in the sense that there was a clear chain of materially certifiable, authoritative evidence which could be brought to bear on the case.

¹ While Palestinian Christians and Muslims are exempt from the draft introduced in 1950 (Krebs, 2006: 46), some enlist on a voluntary basis. “Why”, as Rhoda Ann Kanaaneh (2003: 6) put it, “have these men elected to engage in behavior widely condemned in their communities? Why have they chosen to serve in the army of a state that colonized them and that is occupying and fighting other Palestinians only a few miles away?” Couched in nationalist language and tropes of “model citizens” or “traitors”, “opportunists” or “dupes” (Kanaaneh, 2005), the absence of statistical data on the number and ethno-religious breakdown of volunteers, has fed sectarian-based rumours and stereotypes about the alleged proclivities of certain sections of the minority towards military service.

² The Druze are an Arabic-speaking religious community which split from Ismaili Islam in the 12th century. They are concentrated in Syria, Lebanon and northern Israel.

³ These clashes resulted in the stabbing of nine local teenagers. Several homes and businesses in the Christian part of town were also damaged or torched (Khoury, 2009).

The tendency to treat rumour as a “category of unreliable oral information” (White, 2000: 56) – as hearsay, as idle or malicious gossip – dates back, as Luise White reminds us, to the beginning of journalism and communication studies when rumours were distinguished from newspaper accounts as a lesser form of evidence. A reliance on written accounts and reports continues to define (and delimit) the research agendas and methods employed in much of the social sciences today. In his review of Charles Tilly’s contributions to the study of contentious politics, Sidney Tarrow (1996: 586) links the “event-ful return” in historical sociology and social history to a reliance on written historical accounts – primarily newspaper accounts – of reported “events” of collective action over time. Notwithstanding the ground-breaking nature of Tilly’s research in drawing attention to processes which connect seemingly disparate events over time, a reliance on newspapers as a source of evidence couches historically- and culturally-contingent forms of record keeping and ignores questions of access and representative bias: what events get covered?; why do some stories get left out?; and who decides?

Over the course of several years of ethnographic research in the Galilee, the number of events – particularly violent ones – which had *not* been covered in the mainstream press and which, as a result, appear to leave no written trace was striking. In 2008, for example, I met with local representatives from the mixed village of Rameh to discuss a well-known incident which had taken place there in 2003. An anti-tank missile had been fired through the wall of the local Greek Catholic church in an apparent hit-and-run attack. I was there *because* it had received some degree of press coverage (Ettinger, 2003). However, upon my arrival, the local representatives with whom I met were momentarily confused as to which violent incident I was referring to given that the previous week a grenade had also been thrown at a local Christian house. That this episode, and countless others like this, had not been deemed newsworthy led me to wonder what other histories of violence had been silenced and, if unreported, whether such violence was somehow less of a security threat than the stories typically covered as such in the mainstream press?

The “word on the street”, as the expression famously goes (and the title of Young, Pinkerton and Dodds’ 2014 article on rumour, race and the anticipation of urban unrest in the US reflects), suggests otherwise. Second-hand accounts of violence represent not only a key element in the exchange between researcher and local informants in the pursuit of “insider knowledge” (White, 2000) but a substantial part of local oral histories and security stories on the margins. These accounts evidence, in a fragmentary way, “what everyone knows” (Wright, 2008) regardless of whether it makes it into the official transcript or not. In the case of Rameh, as in Mughar and Shfar’amr, “everyone knew” that the perpetrators were Druze; that the weapons used in the attack were military weapons; and that the identity of the perpetrators was not only known to the authorities but that these authorities were turning a blind eye to the violence in return for their performance of compulsory military service – a

burden which they, and no other section of the Palestinian minority, is obliged to carry. In the official annals of history, such common knowledge is muted.

Despite a growth in recent years in the number of academic publications seeking to draw attention to the situation of Palestinians living inside Israel, the dearth of scholarship on not only their lived experiences but their insecurities is striking. The analytical frameworks adopted by the bulk of this scholarship continues to suffer, as As'ad Ghanem (2012: 361) notes, from as "oversimplification of the problem". Discussing five major books which were published in 2011, for example, Ghanem (2012: 361) noted that the problem is that "[t]he authors refer to the internal developments among the minority and the general Israeli state and society in very limited and minor terms". Drawing attention to a broader trend of treating "Palestinians [as if they] are merely silent objects: Israel is the powerful side, and its politics are behind all the developments" (Ghanem, 2012: 365), the space provided to address not only the "contingent, produced and shifting" nature of Palestinian identities (Kanaaneh, 2003: 10) but the complex and multiple strategies of contention on the margins of a deeply divided context remains limited.

The tendency to treat minorities as silent, essentialised objects of analysis is not unique to the study of Palestinians in Israel. In her now well-known essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discusses the epistemic violence of erasure of voices on the local, regional and international margins from the intellectual project of narrating the political. Compounded by methodological nationalism, the challenge of doing research on voices from the margins extends beyond "hearing" to one of recognising, and attending to, the multiple, fluid and sometimes contradictory nature of these voices in the first place. Recognising the limited opportunities for voicing political claims by marginalised groups, scholars from a wide range of disciplines have sought to address the important communicative and claim-making function of rumour as an alternative form of speech act (see, for example, Gluckman, 1963; Shibutani, 1966; Havilland, 1977; Foucault, 1978; Scott, 1985; Kapferer, 1990; Corbin, 1993; White, 2000; Das, 2007; Wright, 2008; Moulin, 2010; Burrell, 2012).

As a discrete and powerful form of speech act, rumours have, to date, not been incorporated within the literature on securitization. A number of critical studies have nonetheless recognised the narrow linguistic and elite-centred preoccupation with speech acts within the literature and sought to chart new and alternative research agendas for the field which would be more inclusive of "security have-nots" (Hansen, 2000; Aradau, 2004; Stern, 2006). From calls for a greater recognition of the "ontopolitics" of security (Bubandt, 2005) and of local "vernacular" forms of security (Huysmans 2011; Vaughan-Williams and Stevens, 2016); to alternative ways of thinking about and theorizing securitization (Aradau, 2004, Balzacq and Guzzini, 2015) in ways that would not only draw greater attention to the security dilemmas of silenced and disenfranchised communities but to security practices in

“real world” situations (Balzacq, 2005), the need to bring voices from the margins to the centre of analysis is clearly stated, and restated, in the literature. The question of *how* to go about doing this and opening up new and innovative methods which might challenge, disrupt or unsettle the “exclusionary trap” (Aradau, 2004: 403) of mainstream securitization theories and methods remains, however, poorly scoped out and developed in the literature.

This paper seeks to address this gap. Incorporating insights from the field of political geography and anthropology, it argues that a speech act-centred approach is insufficient to a theorization of securitization on the margins and contends that a closer engagement with the spaces within which speech acts (rumours in this case) are deployed and circulated (*security spaces*) offers the key to unlocking and understanding processes of securitization on the margins. As this represents a radical departure from prevailing approaches to the study of securitization in the literature, a note on methods is necessary here. Based on several years of ethnographic research on Palestinian Christians in Israel involving a combination of newspaper archival work, semi-structured interviews⁴ and participant observation in religiously mixed Arab communities in the northern Galilee region, this paper does not proffer an adjusted model through which securitization could be made to fit the margins. Rejecting the “methodological managerialism” (Squire, 2013) associated with the Copenhagen School’s approach to the study of securitization, it adopts, instead, a deliberately loose and ethnographically-inspired approach which would recognise and address the complex and messy ways of seeing, being in and, ultimately, securing the world on the margins. The methodological approach upon which this research is premised is, therefore, one which seeks to be “attuned to mess” (Squire, 2013). Being attuned to mess does not imply a lack of a clear research design but rather represents a challenge to “rationalist modes of knowing and a linear or neatly cyclical conception of the research process” (Squire, 2013: 35) without presuming to know all there is to know about these voices. Moreover, it recognises that “mess” – that is, the ambiguous, contradictory and sometimes incoherent nature of speaking security – is characteristic of politics on the margins.

Being attuned to mess in political and analytical terms, therefore, requires the adoption of an alternative set of “unsettling methods” (Kanaaneh, 2003). The three “fragments of speech” introduced at the start of this paper, which act as entry points and threads of the paper’s analysis, represent such an unsettling method. Borrowing from Das’ (2007) critical ethnographic study of panic rumour in India, a fragment is not considered to be “an objectified idea of meaning” (2007: 65) or a piece of a jigsaw which, if assembled together with other pieces, would result in a single “picture of totality”. It is, rather, a sketch of “a particular way of inhabiting the world” (2007: 5) which derives its meaning and significance

⁴ The identities of the respondents have been anonymised but included local residents, NGO representatives, church leaders, academics, journalists, civil servants, government ministers and Members of Knesset. The respondents were not asked to specify their religious affiliation; however, most of the 36 interviewed were Palestinian Arab (nine were Jewish) and male (five were women).

from the particular place and context in which it is uttered and circulated (iterated and reiterated). Typically ignored or treated in isolation, rumours have been dismissed to the margins of academic scholarship as random or anecdotal knowledge. Taken together, however, they weave a pattern of narration, explanation and claim-making which has the power not only to reveal hidden histories of violence but distinctive processes of securitization on the margins of a deeply divided society.

The paper proceeds as follows: the first section builds on, and departs from, existing critiques of security as speech act in the literature. Revisiting the three acts which make up Austin's "total speech act" (the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary) it identifies an unhelpful preoccupation within the literature with illocution over and above perlocution and argues that a focus on the perlocutionary force of rumours provides a greater range of analytical possibilities for a grounded analysis of security practices in "real world" situations. This sets up the case for a spatial analysis of rumour which stresses the contingent and mutually constitutive relationship which exists between "how" security work comes to be done and "where" it is done in practice. Even a cursory glance at the three fragments presented at the start of this paper reveals that the perlocutionary force of rumour to trigger a riot, heighten feelings of physical vulnerability and insecurity, or lead some to "engage in behaviour widely condemned in their communities" (Kanaaneh, 2003: 6) as is the case with Palestinians who elect to join the military, is as much materially grounded in local configurations of coercive power as it is in the content or intent of the rumours themselves. Section two builds on this work, elaborating its view of margins as a distinctive type of a security space while the third section applies this to Arab localities in Israel suggesting that mixed Arab localities in Israel represent a particular sub-category. The conclusion brings together these threads to consider the broader epistemic import of margins upon the deployment and circulation of rumour before offering some reflections on the implications which a study of voices on the margins might have for future directions in the theorization of securitization.

Speech acts

Coined by Ole Waever, and developed by the Copenhagen School (Buzan et al., 1998), securitization theory emerged in response to a desire to "broaden" and "deepen" the agenda of security studies in order to explore the social processes through which security threats are constructed. The principal tenet of securitization theory is that "the articulation of security produces a specific threatening state of affairs" (Balzacq, 2005: 171). More than a "narrative of survival" (Aradau, 2004), securitization involves a discursive move through which an issue, such as immigration or terrorism, which is perceived to be an existential threat to the survival a particular "referent object" moves from a field of "normal politics"

to one of “special politics” (Vuori, 2008: 65) where emergency measures and exceptional steps become possible.

Drawing on speech act theory developed by John Austin and John Searle, its analysis has typically focused on certain “securitizing speech acts” through which threats become represented and recognized as such (Abrahamsen, 2005: 57); such as when the Israeli prime minister claims that “Arab crime and lawlessness” has imposed a reign of “civil terror” and turned Arab towns in Israel into “the Wild West” (Lis, 2012), or when the British foreign secretary says that “marauding” migrants threaten the standard of living in Britain (Perraudin, 2015). The act of speaking is, thus, central to this theorization of securitization (Huysmans, 2011). However, as Hansen notes in ‘The Little Mermaid’s Silent Security Dilemma’, “the potential subject of security has no, or limited, possibility of speaking its security problem” (2000: 300). Examining “honour killings” (femicide) in Pakistan, Hansen addresses the complexities of identifying (gendered) insecurities and the uneven power-dynamics which are often involved not only in voicing security concerns but in locating and “hearing” them in political and analytical terms. More fundamentally, however, her analysis exposes the “inequality of access to discursive resources in security interactions” (Balzacq, 2005: 174) as well as the role of the scholar in perpetuating, however inadvertently, these codes of silence.

Despite the impact which the little mermaid analogy has had, there has been surprisingly little discussion about what a speech act is, could or should be. The literature remains vague on how to define securitizing actors (Hansen, 2000: 289), with traditional and relatively powerful political actors such as ‘political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists and pressure groups’ (Buzan et al., 1998: 40) retaining centre stage. This narrow focus on securitizing actors is a by-product of another analytical straight-jacket: the tendency to focus only on those speech acts and securitizing moves which have been deemed “successful” (Huysmans, 2002: 45), minimising the fact that the “ability to perform a successful securitization, to get a sufficient acceptance of the threat in question from the relevant audience” (Hansen, 2000: 289) depends upon existing arrangements of power and the structure of political opportunities (and constraints) to speak/act. Here, securitization theory assumes a pronounced Western liberal bias. As Vuori (2008: 65) observes, the bulk of securitization literature maintains a narrow focus “on political systems that can be considered more or less democratic”. The “democratic bias” implicit in its basic guiding assumptions has consequently meant that securitization theory has primarily been applied to those cases with which it most closely corresponds or “fits”, leaving the majority of contemporary political regimes in the shadows.

Describing the proliferation of “existential threats” in Israeli public discourse, Abulof (2014: 396) convincingly argues that securitization theory is insufficiently equipped to deal with cases such as Israel where securitization is not only “normal” but is “the rule rather than the exception” (2014: 401). Challenging the dichotomisation of politics into normal and exceptional fields, Abulof exposes the inadequacy of neat, linear understandings of the

process through which issues become securitized. To do this, he uses the analogy of a “securitizing train journey”. “In its simplified version,” he explains “securitization seems to entail a chain reaction of three distinct, binary steps in a linear sequence: a securitizing train leaves the rhetorical platform, picks up a sufficient audience along the way to its final, extraordinary, destination” (Abulof, 2014: 402). While this approach might assist in uncovering deliberately strategic discursive moves (fear-mongering, manipulation of audiences, etc.), it seems entirely inconsistent with an understanding of securitization as a type of “panic politics” (Roe, 2012: 254) where processes of securitization assume a more urgent, fragmented and chaotic form.

The consequence of these collective assumptions is an elitist (Huysmans, 2011) and mainstream(-ing) approach to security (Grayson, 2004) which, as Thierry Balzacq (2005: 171) reminds us, “does not provide an adequate grounding upon which to examine security practices in ‘real situations’”. Critiquing the preoccupation with the “linguistic competence of the actors involved” in successful securitizations, he contends that “the assumption of a speech act approach ultimately reduces security to a *conventional procedure* such as marriage or betting in which the ‘felicity circumstances’ (conditions of success) must fully prevail for the act to go through” (2005: 172). This is, he argues, in part due to a narrow reading of what a speech act is. Generally attributed to the work of Austin and Searle, speech act theory seeks to isolate a set of universal rules and practices which govern human communication and language use. Within this theory, three distinct types of act are understood to make up a “total speech act situation”. These are: the locutionary, the illocutionary and the perlocutionary. A locutionary act typically refers to the sense or meaning of an utterance (what is said); an illocutionary act focuses on the performance of articulating or uttering something (what is done in saying something); while a perlocutionary act refers to the effect of the utterance to bring about a change in “feelings, beliefs, thoughts or actions” (what is done by saying something) (Balzacq, 2005: 175).

While the Copenhagen School recognises the contingency of speech acts and the importance of social context in shaping interactions between securitizing actors and audiences, it nonetheless stresses the “moment” a speech act takes place (Roe, 2012: 255) – its “event-ness” – over and above its environment which accords the illocutionary force of the speech act a certain analytical centrality, if not dominance. Indeed, discussions of speech acts in the literature often conflate the total speech act situation with the illocutionary act itself (Vuori, 2004: 73). This tendency to weight the performance of the speech act over and above its effects downplays a crucial point which is that, in practice, it is perlocution which “is central rather than tangential to understanding how a particular public issue can change into a security problem” (Balzacq, 2005: 176). Thus, a shift in focus to the perlocutionary force of speech acts is not only necessary, it represents an important first step in liberating rumours from the exclusionary trap of prevailing approaches to security as a speech act.

Margins

A focus on the perlocutionary force rumours alone is, however, not enough. As Balzacq (2005: 171) reminds us, securitization is context-dependent and effective securitizations are both audience centred and power-laden. Yet, what does this mean in practical and analytical terms? How can “context”, in particular, be located and addressed? Here, the literature is less clear. This paper suggests that a useful way forward in the theorization of context as a “field of power struggles” (Balzacq, 2005: 172) is through a more substantial engagement with the spaces within which speech acts occur (defined here as *security spaces*).

While there are as many potential security spaces as there are securitizing speech acts, the focus of this paper is on one distinct type: margins. Generally understood to represent a variety of spaces of exclusion, underdevelopment and neglect which stand at a geographic remove from the centres of social, political and economic power, the study of margins has tended to focus on the experiences of disenfranchised and relatively powerless groups (for example, the urban poor, minorities, refugees, immigrants or prostitutes) in a certain set of “spaces apart” such as borderlands, peripheries, seam zones, enclaves, as well as various other “abject spaces” (Moulin, 2004) such as refugee camps and slums. Yet, margins are also sites of resistance, “deviance” and non-conformity which challenge the power of the centre and the sovereignty of the state.

This is particularly true of Israel. As an ethnocracy—that is, “a non-democratic regime which attempts to extend or preserve disproportional ethnic control over a contested multi-ethnic territory” (Yiftachel, 1999: 367-8)—Israel is a country of multiple margins. The work of political geographers has drawn attention to the ways in which patterns of marginalisation and segregation in Israel are not only embedded in uneven geographies of power but have produced distinctive patterns of ethnoregionalism which contribute to the maintenance of a system of economic, political and territorial control. This system of control is, however, not as robust or as stable as it often appears to be. Examining one “periphery of peripheries”—the Bedouin in Israel—Oren Yiftachel observes cracks in the system which this relatively powerless community occupy and operationalise. Advancing a notion of “gray space” to refer to those “developments, enclaves, populations and transactions positioned between the ‘lightness’ of legality and the ‘darkness’ of eviction/destruction/death” gray spaces are “neither integrated nor eliminated” but form “pseudo-permanent margins” (2009: 243) of the state.

This view, while focusing on questions of planning and development, resonates well with Das and Poole’s analysis of margins. Identified as “a necessary entailment of the state” (2004: 4), margins, for them, play a central role in broader order-making processes of the state. Offering “a radical rethinking of the state that a view from the margins requires”, they

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3 identify three different concepts of margins to make visible the shadowy, often illegible
4 imprint of the state on the margins: (1) “margins as peripheries seen to form natural
5 containers for people considered insufficiently socialized into the law”; (2) margins as “many
6 different spaces, forms, and practices through which the state is continually both
7 experienced and undone through the illegibility of its own practices, documents and words”;
8 and (3) “margins as a space between bodies, law and discipline” (2004: 8-10). What is
9 particularly useful about this approach is not only that it reveals margins to be contested
10 “sites of practice on which law and other state practices are colonized by other forms of
11 regulation that emanate from the pressing needs of populations to *secure* politics and
12 economic survival” (Das and Poole, 2004: 8, emphasis added), but that it highlights the role
13 of collective violence in these order-making processes.
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16 Departing from Giorgio Agamben’s sense of “exception” as a spatially and temporally
17 bounded event or as a condition that stands opposed to something called “normal” politics,
18 their “search for the margins often settles on those practices that seem to be about the
19 continual refounding of law through forms of violence and authority that can be constructed
20 as both extrajudicial and outside, or prior to, the state” (2004: 13). Using examples of “local
21 strongmen” in Peru, they argue that “the mutation of traditional authority made possible by
22 the intermittent power of the state” on the margins is a consequence of a complex
23 rearticulation of legal and extralegal authority between different groups and local sources of
24 authority which gives the impression of “the fading of the state’s jurisdiction” while at the
25 same time enabling “its continual refounding through its (not so mythic) appropriation of
26 private justice and violence” (2004: 14). This view meshes well with Yiftachel’s notion of
27 “gray spacing” in that it is “the practice of indefinitely positioning populations between the
28 ‘lightness’ of legality, safety and full membership, and the darkness of eviction, destruction
29 and death” (2009: 240) which reveals the presence of the state in coercive authority (re-
30 formations on the margins.
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33 Margins, therefore, not only represent the shadowy recesses of the state, they are also
34 “spaces of creativity” (Das and Poole, 2004: 19) and contestation where state power is
35 constantly challenged, undone and reconfigured. It is this “mode of potentiality”, however,
36 which also makes them particularly dangerous and precarious places to live. This insecurity
37 is evidenced and epitomised by the spatial tractability of rumour (its perlocutionary force)
38 which produces “affects of panic and a sense of danger even if ‘nothing happens’” (2004:
39 19). Examining the perlocutionary force of panic rumours to transform “everyday concepts
40 into lethal weapons” in India, Das (2007: 159) examined two major episodes of intra-
41 communal violence: the abduction and rape of close to one hundred thousand women
42 during the period of partition and, following the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, the
43 murder of almost three thousand Sikhs by mobile gangs. Reading these incidents of violence
44 as a crisis or failure of “ordinary grammar” to resolve “world-annihilating doubt” (2007: 7),
45 Das identified a “spatialization of violence” (2007: 110) which was particular to Delhi’s
46 peripheral neighbourhoods. This spatialization of violence was not simply an effect of the
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deployment and circulation rumours; it was an effect of the disaggregated and unstable distribution of authority and coercive force on the margins. The flourishing of rumours, by extension, should not solely be seen as a symptom of the fragile and precarious “access to context” (Das and Poole, 2004: 25) on the margins, but as a direct consequence of the uneven legal arrangement of coercive force and violence within the materially bounded security space that is the margins.

Mixed Arab localities in Israel

Just over twenty per cent of Israeli citizens are Palestinian. The overwhelming majority (90 per cent) live in approximately 78 Arab-only urban localities of varying size that are distinctive not only in terms of their lower socio-economic standing, underdeveloped urban infrastructure and public services vis-à-vis Jewish and mixed localities but by their very physical and geographic separation from Jewish urban population centres (Jabareen, 2014). Most are Muslim, but a significant number are also Christian and Druze, each community representing approximately 8 per cent each of the Palestinian population. Spread out in three main pockets of settlement across the country, the majority (60 per cent) are concentrated in the north making this the most heterogeneous region in Israel. Despite this, most Arab-only localities are not mixed (CBS, 2012). Approximately half of the Arab-only localities in the north are Muslim-only villages; five are Druze-only villages and a further two are Christian-only villages.

A few points on the particular demographic distribution of the Druze are necessary here. The majority live in either Druze-only villages (such as Julis) or in localities where they tend to form a clear majority (such as Bet Jann, Yirka or Buqei’a). In fact, the Druze represent the outright majority in eleven of the seventeen Arab-only localities in which they reside. Mughar is slightly unusual in this respect as the Druze majority stake (58 per cent) is lower than their usual proportional representation (of 75 per cent upwards). It is also the only mixed Arab locality where the Muslim and Christian population is evenly weighted (at 21 per cent each). Of the six remaining villages with a Druze (minority) presence – that is, where Muslims and Christians outnumber Druze – four have a Muslim majority (Ibillin, Abu Snan, Kfar Kanna and Shfar’amr) and two have a Christian majority (Rameh and Kfar Yasif). It is these mixed Arab villages where Druze do not represent the outright majority which have witnessed a distinctive pattern of intra-communal violence over the years.

The demographic composition of these villages provides at best a superficial explanation of this pattern of violence. To get a deeper and fuller understanding, we must examine the arrangement of coercive authority in these villages. Mughar does not have a police station. When the violence broke out in 2005, police were eventually deployed from surrounding police stations. The nearest one was located in the Jewish city of Carmiel approximately 20 kilometres drive away. The absence of police stations is, however, typical of the

arrangement of coercive authority on the margins and is not distinctive to mixed Arab localities. Only two Arab-only localities in all of Israel – in Nazareth and Shfar'amr – had, at the time of the violence⁵, their own police station. These two police stations, which date back to the British mandate, are amongst the most overburdened and understaffed police stations in the country with an average ratio of 1 police officer to every 1,288 residents in each city (Hasisi, 2010), reflecting another distinctive feature of policing in a deeply divided society: "under-policing" (Guelke, 2012).

The absence of police stations and the inadequate provision of formal policing arrangements is not only characteristic of the margins; it also follows the security logic of the state – a logic determined not only by fear and suspicion of the Palestinian "other" in its midst but, more specifically, by a fear of enabling access by a potentially hostile minority to the legal means of violence in society. Maintaining an uneven distribution of armed force is, as Yiftachel (2006: 36) observes, a central tenet of ethnocratic governance: "violent force is critical in assisting the state to maintain (oppressive) ethnonational control over contested regions and resisting groups. To that end, the armed forces (the military, the police), which bear the name of the entire state, are predominantly affiliated with the leading ethnic nation". This, however, raises a security dilemma for the state: how to police the margins in the absence of formal policing arrangements. The response – typical of strategies of policing on the margins – is a rearticulation of legal and extralegal authority which enables local "strongmen" (Das and Poole, 2004) to emerge.

In Israel, these local strongmen are often members of the Druze community. While their representation in the security forces is often exaggerated, Druze nonetheless make up the majority (approximately 55 per cent) of regular Palestinian police officers in Israel.⁶ The coercive authority of the Druze, however, is magnified by their presence in another unit. The Border Police is a paramilitary unit of the Israel National Police which is tasked, alongside border patrol and checkpoint duties, with matters relating to internal security (Weitzer & Hasisi, 2008: 367). Responsible for the policing of "public order" issues, notably protests and demonstrations in Arab areas, it has developed a negative reputation for its excessive use of force against Palestinians (Herzog, 2000: 464-6). More than three quarters of the Palestinians who serve in the notorious Border Police are Druze.⁷

Today, as much as 40 per cent of the adult male workforce amongst Druze is employed in security sector work as either professional career soldiers, police officers or security personnel (Derfner, 2009). The unique concentration of the Druze workforce in security labour has, however, brought about few positive returns for them in material terms. As with other segments of the Palestinian minority, they have witnessed the destruction of their

⁵ A new police station has since opened next to Umm el Fahem.

⁶ Muslims make up 25 per cent – typically distinguished between Bedouins (20 per cent) and non-Bedouin (5 per cent) – and Christians the remaining 20 per cent.

⁷ Overall, however, Palestinians are less than 25 per cent of all Border Police officers.

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2
3 traditional agricultural base through periodic land confiscations.⁸ One of the most well-
4 known material benefits of military service – the allocation of a plot of land for released
5 soldiers upon which to build a house for their family – has sought to redress this loss,
6 creating unique patterns of spatial settlement. New “discharged soldiers neighbourhoods”
7 have popped up on the edges of mixed Arab localities – including on both the eastern and
8 western edges of Mughar – to accommodate this practice. This, however, has not improved
9 their overall socio-economic standing either nationally or locally and the Druze remain “the
10 most rural, least educated, and least wealthy Arab subgroup” in Israel today (Frisch, 2001:
11 110).

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16 What is significant about this particular concentration of Druze men in security work is that
17 the Druze community has not only become the most heavily armed sector within the
18 Palestinian community, but the one with the greatest degree of access to Israel’s broad and
19 legally permissive gun culture.⁹ It is, as such, not only active police officers who carry arms
20 and have the opportunity to exercise a monopoly of violence on the margins, but also off-
21 duty and decommissioned police officers, soldiers and border police who take their
22 weapons home with them. This makes the Druze typical of Das and Poole’s understanding of
23 “strongmen” as key functionaries in the legal and extra-legal arrangement of coercive
24 authority on the margins of mixed Arab villages in Israel.

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31 **“They go to get a gun”**

32
33 Media coverage of the violence which descended upon Mughar’s Christian quarter on the
34 night of 10 February 2005 typically focused on the content of the rumour which triggered it.
35 A grounded analysis of the three fragments of speech set out at the start of this paper, by
36 contrast, provides an alternative account based on the perlocutionary force and spatial
37 tractability of rumours on the margins. Each speaks to the arrangement of coercive
38 authority on the margins, the societal impact of an uneven performance of military service
39 by one section of the local community and the affects of fear, suspicion and panic which this
40 generates.

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42
43
44 In an effort to make sense of the violence, most of the respondents interviewed for this
45 study highlighted the feelings of relative deprivation which the Druze community
46 experience as a result of their performance of military service. As one Druze respondent
47 observed:

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49
50 They serve in the compulsory service in the army and they are part of the Israeli
51 community. Even though they have made all of their duties, they did not get all

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55 ⁸ By 1962, they had lost more than two-thirds of their lands, and by the late 1990s, less than 1 per cent of this
56 traditionally rural community was able to support itself through agriculture (Firro, 2001: 48).

57 ⁹ Access to a gun permit, as well as employment in Israel’s security sector, is often dependent upon military
58 service.

of their rights. The Christians, they don't join the duties of the Israeli population but they got a lot of their rights.

Druze feelings of jealousy and resentment are, as a result, presented as a normal and inevitable consequence of this disparity. As one Christian respondent, however, pointed out, these sentiments are unlikely to be directed against Muslims who are similarly exempt from military service and who also fare relatively better off in socio-economic terms. "You see, they can't attack the Muslims. They know they can't do it. They are too strong for them." The Christians, by contrast, are understood to represent an "easy target" because of their small size and regional minority status. The fact that violent incidents such as these, while common, are rarely fatal and usually coincide with wider patterns of local electoral and municipal contestation, reinforces the view, commonly held by Christians, that the violence itself is both opportunistic and strategically-motivated.

During the 2003 municipal elections in Mughar, for example, a popular Druze candidate in the village who had succeeded in winning 20 per cent of the local vote was rumoured to have lost out on the mayoral seat because of Christian support for the incumbent mayor. Rumours of behind-the-scenes Christian machinations were also commonly expressed in accounts of struggles over the allocation of limited local resources. Controversy had, for example, been mounting in the village over how the local church-run school was being managed. Rumours suggested that non-Christians were being deliberately excluded from important decision-making processes by the Christian management. So, while the rumour which triggered the violence in Mughar addressed a perceived slight in cultural terms, it simultaneously spoke to, and involved, a much wider body of practical grievances. As one Palestinian NGO leader recounted:

[W]hen [the Druze] saw that Christians do not serve in the army, they finish high-school, go to university, return back with all... the professional jobs – doctors, advocates, teachers – the [Druze] said, listen, we are going to the army, we are going to serve three years for nothing, only to be part of this country. The Christians within these three years will finish university, come and take the good jobs, have all the places of trade because they have the time and ability to be more educated... And [because] they are the minority, and the [Druze] majority feel that... they are not the same as us, they didn't serve in the army, they didn't pay nothing for the Israeli community, and they got all of their rights... This situation makes those that are less educated to be jealous of them. And when you see that he has the good life, he has a car, he has a house, he is educated, he is beautiful. That means, I work very hard, I finish the army, the trade is not in my hands in my village, and I am jealous of him. Those who are more or less educated, people come and ask them, look what's going on there, and this brings the people to be very tough in their thoughts.

This sentiment demonstrates the power of rumour to enunciate a wide range of perceived grievances and insecurities on the part of the Druze. However, the perlocutionary force of the rumour – that is, the capacity of the rumour to transform and mobilise speech into

(violent) action – also reflects locally grounded knowledge shared by others concerning the material capabilities and asymmetries of weapons in these villages. As one Christian respondent observed:

They have weapons, and they all work in the Border Police, and they are the first line against the Palestinians, and this is where all their shortcomings come to the surface. They have someone they can abuse as they have been abused. It's a very understandable thing in psychology. The victim can be the most horrible victimiser sometimes. They have weapons...

The issue, for Christians, therefore, is first and foremost one of weapons and the *knowledge* that one group has greater access to them than others. However, as one witness to the violence who was interviewed by local media (Urquhart, 2005) alludes, it extends beyond the asymmetry of weapons to both the structure and culture of policing itself as well as to local attitudes and levels of trust in the police:

"The attacks on cars and people are nothing new. But this time they were very well organised. They had petrol and tubes to pour it through doors and they had tools to break into the houses. The Druze have no fear. They are in the police and army."

Indeed, what stands out in most accounts of the riots in Mughar, beyond the magnitude and intensity of the violence, was their longevity. The violence commenced on Thursday night but it was only on the following Saturday afternoon that the Israeli police finally responded, sending in 350 officers and using tear-gas to disperse the crowd which had at one point reached 1,500 people (Rudge, 2005a). For failing to intervene earlier and for allowing the rioters to go about the destruction and looting of Christian properties, the Israeli police have been singled out for criticism. As one Christian respondent put it:

They [the police] stood back all the time in Mughar. For three days they were battling in the city. And they put [the police] there, and they didn't move, they didn't say a word, they didn't try to prevent. And there are rumours – they're not rumours, they're facts – that some of the police, who were Druze, took part in what happened. OK, what happened, happened. What about... I don't know, I could show you pictures. How many houses were burned? How many shops were looted? I mean, why doesn't somebody go and investigate and order some arrests? Nothing! In Kfar Yasif they attacked the village, they burned 68 houses, many cars... and the police didn't interfere at all. They stayed out. They prevented people from coming in and trying to help... [I]n Rameh, they fired a rocket on a school. It's going on all the time.

While the inability of the Israeli police to deal swiftly to end the violence increased the sense of fear and physical vulnerability of Palestinian Christians, it was the indifference of the legal and political establishment to pursue justice on their behalf which compounded it. As one media source (Urquhart, 2005) reported:

The local police commissioner, Dan Ronen, told the Knesset committee on interior affairs that it was not the job of the police to become involved in inter-communal violence. "Police have no say in the matter. Don't expect the police to solve all communal internal conflicts. This is the responsibility of the heads of the community," he said.

This flippant disavowal of police responsibility highlights a broader exceptionalising discourse, and tactic, of the state which results from the particular arrangement of legal and extra-legal coercive authority on the margins. However, the absence of an adequate police response has only increased Christian feelings of insecurity:

"These people were abandoned to their fate. If the police, who were aware of the tensions in the village had acted immediately and taken the appropriate measures, the violence would have been prevented." (Rudge, 2005b)

It is within this ecology of fear and mistrust that rumours multiplied and underwent a complex process of (re)activation and (re)deployment. Old rumours of Christian voluntary enlistment resurfaced – similar to the one discussed at the start of this paper – only to be met with other rumours which sought to explain them away:

It's happening now, it happened before, especially in the '80s. Druze and Bedouins who go to the army have their weapons, and in every communal village, family struggle, they use these weapons against Christians when the struggle is with the Christians. So, the Christians in the '80s found themselves without any protection at all. Many of them, a big number, from the villages in the north, go to the army just to get a weapon. So, it's not connected to their political point of view. They just want to go to have a weapon and keep it in case. It especially happens in Mughar, in Kfar Yasif, in Abu Snan, in the villages where around you, you have Druze villages.

As another Christian observed, this reflects a view among Christians that they must look to themselves, and not to the state, for protection:

We want to go and serve in the military and basically in the police only to take a weapon to feel safe. This is the only answer of why Christians in these specific areas they are ready to go and serve in the army or the police or the civil service.

While there may be easier ways of getting a weapon¹⁰, this claim reveals an active process of internal securitization by Christians who seek to explain, defend and protect themselves not only from future violence but from the suspicious gaze of others. These securitizing moves are also, however, subject to manipulation by other sets of securitizing actors. Israeli Jewish authorities have proved particularly adept at using these rumours to their own advantage as part of traditional strategies of "divide and rule"¹¹. As the director of one NGO involved in youth empowerment among Palestinians observed, the authorities often send

¹⁰ Handguns are relatively easy to acquire on the black-market.

¹¹ For more on "divide and rule" strategies, see: Lustick, 1980; McGahern, 2011 and Robinson, 2013.

military spokesmen to visit schools in mixed Arab villages in the aftermath of a violent episode in order to encourage military enlistment among local youth. One ironic element of their recruitment strategy has not only been to play off tendencies which associate masculinity with military prowess but to acknowledge the negative societal impact of uneven patterns of military service upon the future security of Palestinian Christians in Israel.

[...] they play on macho stuff, like, if you go to the army you're a man because you have a gun. In some villages, the motive is also because of tensions. For example, in one of the villages a part are Druze, and most of them go to the army so they have guns in their houses. Sometimes there are fights, so the Druze have guns and you don't ask questions. So they come and tell you to go to the army and you'll have a gun and you'll be more of a man. They play on different levels. It's not only sectarian thing.

The strategic and selective engagement with rumours is also evident in local media coverage illustrating the complex and powerful role of rumours in multiple and, indeed, contending, processes of securitization as explained by another NGO spokesperson:

[It's] the way it's presented in the media. You'll see from time to time in the media, like in the Arab media, somebody writes about the fact that you have more and more Christians participating in the police service, or in the armed service. And sometimes it's not factual, just propaganda to send a message also to the Muslim community that the Christians are integrating. Like to try to separate the two communities from each other.

Conclusion:

The preceding discussion serves to illustrate that rumours are often more complex and fluid than the prevailing view of security as speech act allows. Familiar yet spectral, chaotic yet malleable, the rumours addressed here speak to, and reflect, a range of security dilemmas and practices by different sets of referent objects and securitizing actors (Druze and Christian, Palestinian and Jewish) which do not easily "fit" inside neatly ordered frameworks of analysis. This is not to suggest that other speech acts are somehow less complex and messy than rumours, but rather that rumours confront the analytical shortcomings of the literature in a way which more mainstream forms of traditional speech do not. Reflecting the critical methodological approach of this paper, the premise of this paper is that the analytical framework used to study security should address and reflect this real-world mess, not avoid it.

To do this requires a radical rethinking of our theoretical and methodological assumptions about security as a (particular type of) speech act. Departing from mainstream securitization

theories and methods of analysis, this paper uses fragments of speech to suggest that a spatial analysis of rumours provides a useful and necessary opportunity to challenge assumptions about “how” securitization comes to be done by looking at “where” it is done in practice. Such an engagement has been hitherto lacking in the literature. The preoccupation with the illocutionary force of rumours provides at best a surface account of processes of securitization, perpetuating elitist and mainstreaming understandings of security. A stronger focus on the perlocutionary force of rumours provides a good starting point in undoing this. The ability of rumours to trigger a riot, heighten feelings of physical vulnerability and insecurity, and cause some to enlist in military service (or make others believe that they are enlisting) reveals this force.

The spatial tractability of rumours in Mughar and the particular legal and extra-legal arrangement of coercive authority on the margins of mixed Arab villages reveals margins as distinctive types of *security space* through which the deeper perlocutionary force of rumours can be understood. The selective incorporation of one group into military service, the creation of local “strongmen” as well as of a broader ecology of fear, frustration, suspicion and jealousy, have all enabled and precipitated the circulation of rumours and the spatialization of violence in these villages. By examining one hidden history of intra-communal violence in Israel, this paper has sought to interrogate the broader role of rumours in processes of securitization and make visible the imprint of the state on the margins. The implications of this for local Israeli politics are clear: unless the particular articulation of coercive authority on the margins is rearticulated in a more equitable way, the cycle of rumours and violence will continue. The implications for scholarship on securitization are equally clear: A failure to engage with the spaces within which speech acts occur represents a failure not only to engage with the security dilemmas of marginalised communities but with politics in “real-world” situations. This paper has highlighted the epistemic import of a study of margins as a means of bringing voices from the margins to the centre of our analysis, but a great deal of potential remains to engage with these and other types of security spaces on the global and local levels.

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