



THE SECURITIZATION OF MIGRATION ISSUE: HUNGARIAN CASE

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Abstract: *In the paper, main points of the securitization theory are explored, while the Hungarian case is used to explain each step in the process of successful securitization of migration issue. Widening of the security studies has brought 'new' issues into security discourse, and, thus, shaped new security sectors related to societal and environmental realms. Therefore, societal security as one of new security agendas has brought a substantial range of threats that could not be explored through the realist state-centric or military-centric security positions. The speech act as a main point within the securitization theory embraces a powerful connotation since officials through statements could bring a range of different issue into security realm and legitimize the use of extraordinary political measures. For the analysis of main reasons for the securitization of migration issue, a number of relevant books, scientific publications and articles, working papers, and newspaper articles are used as a primarily source of information. This essay applies qualitative research method in the form of case study. The theory tested in the article, is the Securitization theory developed by the Copenhagen School of security studies.*

Keywords: securitization, migration, Hungary, Speech Act, European Union

Introduction

Seen only in terms of military state power, the notion of security, according to Barry Buzan, was an underdeveloped concept for a very long time (1991). A new, holistic approach in security studies was needed where all aspects of security from micro to macro level would be explored in-depth. Broadening and deepening the concept of security is one of the main features of the securitization theory developed by the Copenhagen school (Buzan, Barry, Ole Waever, and Jaap H. de Wilde, 1998). Copenhagen approach to security adopts 'Speech Act Theory', as a preliminary point in the securitization process, stressing linguistic features as a sort of political action. Authors argue that, by talking security, an actor is able to present any issue as an extremely important, thus, making that issue worth of handling it by extraordinary measures. (Barry et al., 1998, p.26) A certain speech performance must take place in

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order for the securitization process to start and eventually develop into successful security action.

Extracting an issue from the wide pool of different sectors and designating it as an existential threat requires the act of saying security. The first securitizing step is done after an agent (here the agent is defined as a person that holds public position within state establishment) has managed to present chosen issue as an extremely dangerous threat which demands immediate action. For the chosen issue to become legitimized it must be accepted by the audience or designated referent object defined traditionally as a state. (Waever, 2003) What defines every security act is negotiation between securitizer and audience (Barry et al., 1998, p.26). If one issue is to become a security issue it is not enough to be spelled out in public, but also it has to be acknowledged as such by a significant audience.

Typical demonstration of the security act could be found in the current migrant crisis. Labeling refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle East as a dangerous security threat and the EU's official response to their movement depict the course of constructed security issue. Many European officials have portrayed the recent migration influx in a negative, hostile manner. For instance, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban alerted Europe about harmful consequences that migrants might bring crossing the EU border. Arguing that migration influx brings explosive consequences for the whole of Europe, Orban illustrates immigrants as a hazardous threat, who are the main cause of current Europe's madness (Traynor, 2015). Or the time when Martin Schulz, the European parliament speaker, in the midst of refugee crisis, said "*the Schengen treaty is under threat, that's absolutely clear...*" (Traynor, 2015). Statements of such kind are aimed to create a security issue through portraying refugees and asylum seekers as a threat, and to legitimize the practice of urgent political measures in resolving migration problem.

The securitization theory entails certain movement of selected issue, from the sphere of regular politics to the domain of emergency politics. As Weaver points out, labelling one issue as a security issue triggers the securitization process and, at the same time, legitimizes the usage of unusual political actions (Weaver, 2003). For security studies, this brings a whole new perspective, because security issue can be anything that a securitization actor declares it is and the audience accepts it as such. There are no given, fixed meanings and security itself is socially constructed.

Broadening the concept of security: migration as a security threat

The securitization of migration issue is connected to the widening of the security concept within Security Studies (Hammerstad, 2011). Unlike traditional security approach that emphasizes national security, understood solely in terms of the state sovereignty defense against military threats, extended security theory has introduced new sectors of analysis.

In attempt to set out a new agenda for security studies, the Copenhagen School widens its research by claiming that issues from five different sectors – economic,

environmental, societal, military and political- might obtain security status (Barry et al., 1998, p.1). Previously, traditional security studies were focused mostly on military-political area, thus, neglecting other important aspects of the security concept. In this paper, the focus is on *societal security*, since the case studied is related to migration and identity issues that fall into the realm of societal sector.

Societal security has brought a substantial range of new threats that could not have been explored through the realist state-centric, military-centric security positions. Defined by the proponents of Copenhagen School as phenomena of collective identities and actions taken to defend such identities (Barry et al., 1998, p.120), societal security has raised new fears and threats. Finally, the logic of identity enters security discourse. Waever talks about *identity* as a survival line to a society. If one community can distinguish itself as 'us' or 'we', then it is able to survive (Waever, 2003, p.15). On the other hand, if that identity is threatened in any way, survival of community is at great risk as well.

According to the Copenhagen approach, not just that *migration* could be securitized, but it is indicated as the most common issue to be perceived as a threat to societal security (Barry et al., 1998, p.120). The threat is constructed when a host community perceives coming migrants from different community as a group with strong influence that might override or significantly change host's identity. Migration as a non-traditional phenomenon in security studies has started to gain more attention with the introduction of societal security as an issue that could severely challenge cultural identities (Panic, 2009, p.36). Therefore, one could argue that, within the societal division, one issue could be securitized, if it is perceived as a threat to the existence of certain collective identity, language or culture.

In recent years, the massive arrival of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa has become a hot topic in debates throughout the EU. Many European state members feel threatened by this substantial influx of migrants. Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic despite the EU's official call for implementation of quota system for relocation of migrants, refused to host any asylum seeker further (Bendix, 2017). Nationalist governments in these countries are using security rhetoric to justify their unwillingness to open the borders, arguing that hosting more migrants might make them more exposed to extremism. Seen as an existential threat to the "*very existence of a 'way of life', a language, or a community*" (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p.81), refugees and asylum-seekers movements have received a negative attention even from some EU's officials. "*Today, everything is immigration,*" stated the EU president, Donald Tusk, "*we live in sobering, shocking times*" (in Traynor, 2015), emphasizing 'sad' and 'dangerous' side of refugee movement.

Proponents of the Copenhagen School offer us a very valuable insight in the constructive study of migration issue as a security threat (Barry et al., 1998). Nonetheless, to be successful, the securitization of one issue has to meet certain conditions. For fruitful securitization, only a speech act is not enough, it is merely a first step in this complex process of transferring one issue from regular political discourse to emergency political arena. Waever argues that, in order for the securitization process to be effective, certain '*felicity conditions*' must be met (Waever, 2003, p.14). The first, out of

three important conditions, is about ‘*saying security*’ or preparing one issue to be fully securitized by presenting it as an existential threat and, at the same time, legitimate the use of extraordinary political actions to deal with it. Second condition emphasizes the role of authority that has enough credential to persuade public in the presence of existential threat. Precisely through this process, “*the actor has claimed the right to handle the issue through extraordinary means, to break the normal political rules of the game*” (Buzan et al., 1998, p.24). And finally, historical background as the third facilitating conditions brings attention to the importance of historical narratives and symbols. If one issue is to be securitized it has to carry historical connotations of threat, danger or harm as tanks or polluted water (Waever, 2003, p.15). Historical background in a security act is aimed to invoke feelings of insecurity and fear.

The development of migration into security issue within the EU

How did the linkage of security concerning migration within the EU occur? The reasons for the heavy securitization of migration issue within the EU could be found in some previous, unfortunate events such as terrorist attacks in Western Europe during the 1970s and 1980s which were associated with Kurdish and Algerian diasporas (Koser, 2011). Although some authors argue that the discourse which connects migration to security in the EU has been reinforced in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001. Since then migration has started being attached strongly to terrorism and national security even in the EU (Karyotis, 2007; Schmid, 2016). On the other hand, some opinions suggest that worries over migration issue in the EU originate from the time of founding the European Community (EC). Even in the late 1960s and the 1970s immigration was increasingly a question of public concern in the EC (Huysmans, 2006, p.65). But the difference was in the nature of concerns. During 1960s and 1970s the reason for introduction of more restrictive policies regarding immigration was more of economical kind. Member States wanted actually to protect domestic labour with more constraining immigration policies. Still immigrants were not considered as security threat or attracted considerable negative attention.

During 1980s, the question of migration started becoming important political and security issue. Huysmans argues that abolishing internal borders brought more restraining migration policy and the political construction of this socio-economic issue into security one. Moreover, “*spillover of the economic project of the internal market into an internal security project*” led to the situation where “*immigration and asylum have been integrated into a policy framework that defines and regulates security issues arising from the abolition of internal border control*” (Huysmans, 2000, p.752-753). After introducing common migration policy, the EU started to privilege citizens of Member States, but at the cost of certain deterioration of migrants’ image. Since that time, immigrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees have been receiving negative attention within Europe, and their inclusion has become more challenging.

The Europeanization of migration policy

The development of European internal market led to the securitization of migration issue. The European Community wanted to strengthen its internal relation but at the same time to secure its frontiers against dangerous migrants from third countries. For instance, the Schengen Agreement from 1985 emphasized the need of the EU to protect itself from outsiders; the Article 7 summarizes this idea:

The Parties shall endeavour to approximate their visa policies as soon as possible in order to avoid the adverse consequences in the field of immigration and security that may result from easing checks at the common borders. They shall take, if possible by 1 January 1986, the necessary steps in order to apply their procedures for the issue of visas and admission to their territories, taking into account the need to ensure the protection of the entire territory of the five States against illegal immigration and activities which could jeopardize security. (Schengen Agreement 1985, article 7)

Thus, this agreement set out the future *'fortress attitude'* in sense that illegal migrants could pose a serious threat to this internal project and jeopardize its future development.

It all started as a great economic project but soon Europeanization of market penetrated other fields, such as cultural and societal realms. Strengthening of external borders led to certain securitization of migration issue in a way that migrants from third countries were constructed as perilous group that could endanger EU's cultural uniqueness based on certain multiculturalism, democracy, and tolerance. Precisely, the debate over multiculturalism reveals ambiguous nature of migration policy developed within the EU (Huysmans, 2006, p.76). The Europeanization of migration agenda involves hostile feelings towards immigrants and asylum seekers perceiving them as aliens and a serious threat to the internal market, thus confronting the idea of multiculturalism. However, the EU is a project based exactly on the idea of cohabitation of different nationalities. What makes the EU project inconsistent and fragile is precisely this contradiction between restrictive migration policy and the idea of multiculturalism as peaceful coexistence of different nations and cultures. Hungarian Prime Minister went even further introducing *religion* in his security discourse as a crucial shaping factor of EU's identity and the dividing line between domestic population and Muslim migrants. Victor Orban argues that he is a defender of European Christianity against a Muslim influx (Traynor, 2015). Slovakia followed Hungary in the attempt to use religion as national identity feature and declared it will only accept Christian migrants under an EU relocation plan (Sims, 2015). Preservation of cultural identity has become a very important item in the EU and nationalist governments throughout European Union are emphasizing every difference which could clearly divide *'us'* from *'them'*.

Even though European identity is based on the idea of multiculturalism, promoting pacific coexistence of different nationalities, immigrants and their distinctive cultures are considered as something dangerous and undesirable that could harm political, economic and social integrity of European Community. One could argue that European officials are imposing security discourse that portrays migration as a cultural challenge in order to prevent any spark of possible disintegration within the EU

(Huysmans, 2000, p.757). There is a widespread fear that debate over multiculturalism and migration could arouse national and xenophobic feelings among Member States and lead to a possible dissolution of union. As Huysmans argues, the discussions about multiculturalism are grounded on a variation of the fear of the return of the old Europe (Huysmans 2000, p.766). Securitizing migration as a serious cultural danger has a big impact on current migration crisis in Europe and on responses of Member States, especially those that are on the frontiers of Community, and suppose to act as 'guardians' of unique European values and identity.

Hungarian case

Current migrant crisis in Europe raised some displeased questions regarding security, identity, and even religion. Leaders of some Member States like Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic have all recently expressed a strong preference for non-Muslim migrants. In August 2015, Slovakia stated that it would only accept Christian refugees from Syria. Similarly, Poland has focused on granting only Syrian Christians asylum, and the head of the country's immigration office admitted that, "[applicants'] religious background will have [an] impact on their refugee status applications" (Jeanne, 2015). By emphasizing the differences between 'us' and 'them', officials could easily manipulate their audiences and construct threat out of numerous events. The phrase 'European migrant crisis' refers to a period beginning in 2015, when increasing numbers of people fleeing from war, conflict or persecution arrived in the European Union territory, crossing the Mediterranean Sea or travelling overland through Southeast Europe (UNHCR, 2015). Since then, European migrant crisis has been frequently used in the official EU's political discourse. The massive influx of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq is seen as an existential threat to the European political space. The main argument of many European officials pointed against open-border policy is that migrants are coming from completely different cultural background and precisely such kind of difference is considered as threatening to the EU's specific cultural identity.

Desperate refugees and asylum seekers are flooding Europe in attempt to find peace and security, but many European officials are more than concerned, especially, those who are on the frontiers of the European Union. Hungarian prime minister recently expressed fearful feelings among European citizens. "*We Hungarians are full of fear, people in Europe are full of fear, because we see that the European leaders, among them the prime ministers, are not able to control the situation.*" (Birnbaum and Witte, 2015). Hungary's leader is pointing out the seriousness of the migration problem, and how it is of existential importance to deal with it as soon as possible.

Furthermore, Hungary as a transit state for a massive flow of refugees and asylum-seekers, has to be more secured, at least according to Hungarian Prime Minister, because if this country does not protect its borders from dangerous outsiders that could lead to deterioration of national as well as the European cultural identity. Orban is of opinion that refugees and asylum seekers represent an existential threat to Hungarian and European collective identity, and a great financial burden. In his speech, Viktor Orban, was very clear about unwelcoming migrants to the EU. "*Everyone would be better*

off if they did not come here. This is important. It would cost less, and there could be no moral objection to our conduct. Instead, we choose not to protect our borders, they come here, and we are then faced with financial burdens many times greater” (Orban, 2015).

Regarding border protection, Hungarian Prime Minister was not any less harsh. He wants to make it perfectly clear that Hungary has the right to protect its external borders: *“a country which has no borders or is unable to protect them, should the need arise, is no country at all... The fact that there is no actual border control at these border crossing-points after we introduced a legal regime under special rules which does not employ joint border controls and which we commonly refer to as “Schengen” does not mean that there are no borders. There are borders...”* he continues, in the same manner *“...under the Schengen Agreement we agreed to pretend that there are no borders, but which also have external borders which we have agreed to protect.... Therefore, it is the duty of Hungary, Greece, Italy, Spain and France, which all have such external borders, to protect these borders with their national forces, as national borders”* (Orban, 2015).

The main message behind such daring statements is construction of the urgent need to protect community from an external peril. Moreover, in this situation the application of exceptional political measures is legitimized by importance and urgency of the threat.

Building the wall

In the case of Hungary, decision to create physical border was a result of certain *‘securitization plot’*, that is, presenting one issue as an existential threat that requires the use of extraordinary measures to combat that threat (Vaughan-Williams and Peoples, 2012). After focusing on all negative sides of migration influx in Hungary and the EU, Viktor Orban concluded that the best solution for the refugee and asylum seekers problem is to construct physical border as a security symbol. Thus, in his official speech, Orban points out the need for safeguarding the border by building the wall. *“There is no physical border between Serbia and Hungary. Or at least if a line can be a physical border, there is no physical structure above that line which would enforce the rule that no one can cross the Hungarian state border other than at designated border stations. This is why migrants are pouring in: because we are unable to enforce this rule”* (Orban, 2015). Here, the wall represents an extraordinary political measure used for the purpose of fighting against existential threat – migrant influx.

According to Hungary’s Prime Minister, Hungary and the whole European Union are going to be saved from *‘dangerous migrants’* only if border is secured enough to prevent any further influx of refugees and asylum seekers. In that regard, Orban suggests double-secured border *‘we needed to build a tall border fence with good technical parameters as a durable, long-term solution, and at the same time a rapidly-erected wire border fence in front of it. We needed to build the two simultaneously, and once complete, we will have to maintain them both until the current madness subsides’* (Orban, 2015). The fence is a product of successful securitized process which included all steps of constructing the migration influx as security issue. The wall stands as a modern extraordinary political measure applied for solving the migration problem in Europe separating *‘us’* (the EU) from *‘others’* (perilous migrants).

Conclusion

Widening of security concept has brought some 'new' issues into security realm. For instance, the question of migration has become one of major political and security issues. Societal security as a relatively 'fresh' sector in Security Studies presents certain broadening of narrow traditional approach focused on solely military power as a main mean of protection and safety. Migration issue entered into security discourse with the Copenhagen School that argues how not only political, economic or military but societal and environmental sectors as well define security theory. The construction of migrants primarily as an essential threat to *societal security*, that is, the threat posed to the *identity* of the society.

Recent events regarding massive migrants influx into the European Union show that migration issue can be heavily securitized and as such could legitimized the use of extraordinary political and security measures. After Hungarian Prime Minister had made several statements pointing out the seriousness of the problem, Hungary built tall fence on the border with Serbia to prevent further flow of refugees and asylum seekers into the EU's territory. This Hungarian official managed to construct, through the official security discourse, migration issue as an existential threat that needs to be dealt in an urgent manner. Hungarian case is the proof of successful securitization process of the migration issue. Hungarian borders remain still heavily protected.

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