

Securitization of Forced Migrants in the European Union

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to discuss the EU's responses to arriving forced migrants during the ongoing Ukraine conflict and whether the EU has selective humanity towards forced migrants who come from varied backgrounds. The theory of securitization will be applied to analyze the EU's responses towards the arriving forced migrants. Greece will serve as a case study to show securitization works within EU states and explain the EU's failure to handle the 'refugee crisis' in 2015. Then, through the comparison to the EU's current response to Ukraine refugees, it seems that the EU does have a double standard towards forced migrants from different cultural backgrounds and ethnics.

Keywords: forced migration, Ukraine, securitization, right-wing parties, Greece

1. Introduction

After the breakout of the Ukraine conflict, over 2 million Ukraine citizens departed their country within the first 12 days. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees also estimates that millions more of Ukraine refugees might be left their country in the following months [1]. Consider the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the continuous influx of forced migrants, the EU states' ability to resettle refugees might be challenged.

This paper aims to discuss EU states' responses towards the influx of forced migrants. The theory of securitization will be introduced to explain the EU's responses and further unveil their motivations. Then, Greece will serve as a case study to discuss why during the 2015 'refugee crisis', some of the EU states do not welcome forced migrants by applying the notion of securitization.

Finally, this paper will discuss the huge influx of forced migrants from Ukraine caused by the ongoing conflict, and the EU states' reactions. By comparing the EU's response to this event and the 2015 'refugee crisis', this essay will further whether the EU has a double standard towards the races or cultural backgrounds of refugees.

2. Theoretical Frame

This part will introduce the concept of securitization and the phenomenon of the EU's securitization of the "refugee crisis." The term "securitization" refers to a process that could be used to study nations' political responses related with security. It is based on ideas that proposed by the Copenhagen School. By applying the securitization theory, EU's responses towards arriving refugees could be explained. The theory of securitization will be introduced before further discussion.

2.1. Securitization Theory of Copenhagen School

It is introduced by the Copenhagen School that securitization is a discursive process that begins with the production of a threat to the community. Once the threat has been constructed, members of the community will demand for the implementation of exceptional methods in order to counter the threat. A specific existential threat necessitates immediate response, as well as the justification of actions that go against conventional political agenda. Therefore, an existential threat must exist in order to justify breaching the rules in reaction to it, which is referred as the exception logic. It is further explained by Buzan, Waever, and Wilde that securitization happens when a securitizing actor utilizes a rhetoric of existential threat, which is known as speech act, and separates a problem from what would normally be considered normal politics [2]. Based on the securitization theories discussed above, a discursive process is likely to start when an object is identified as posing a threat to a certain referent. Through their speech acts, securitization actors including political or religious elites could advance this trend. The problem will then be shifted to security-related considerations, allowing for its resolution through the use of emergency politics and subsequent actions. Lastly, the securitization process should be widely accepted by domestic citizens to be successful. This is due to the fact that although people are an integral element of society, their security may not be the same as that of the state. If the target audiences approve of the securitization move, the actors behind it are likely to take extraordinary measures outside of the scope of normal political discourse while disregarding morals and regulations [3].

In the background of migration study, forced migrants are likely to be securitized as a threat to societal security. Societal security in the Copenhagen School presents a wide approach that says that, just as states are concerned with their survival and integrity, communities should fight against challenges to their essential values and national identity in order to maintain cultural traits [6]. As people who migrate tend to come from a wide variety of racial/ethnic/religious/cultural/economic backgrounds, it's natural that some may worry about the impact on social cohesion, which may further pose negative impacts on nations.

2.2. Securitization Theory of Paris School

The importance of security procedures and structures is emphasized by another school of thought among academics focusing on securitization. The Paris School focuses on security through by focusing on professional practices and bureaucracy. It is further noted by the Paris School that security is the capacity to control borders, handle threats, identify at-risk individuals, and define the purview of orders [3]. Furthermore, securitization may be ingrained in political strategies and tactics. The logic of routine is the name given to the research logic used by the Paris school [4]. Securitization, according to the logic of routine, is a process of constructing and inscribing meaning through governmentality and practices, based on the summary of Bourbeau [5]. It sees the securitization process as a set of routine and standardized procedures carried out by bureaucrats and security specialists, which technology considered as a crucial part.

2.3. Securitizing Forced Migrants

As mentioned above, the securitization of a certain issue could cause reactions without moral or legal concerns. In the background of discussing 'refugee crises' within the EU states, forced migrants are usually securitized because securitizing actors convince their audience that these forced migrants pose threats to the EU identity and stability. As a result, the securitization of forced migrants may make violence and expulsion towards them legitimated.

Far-right parties in EU states could be the answer to who are the major securitizing actors of forced migration.

3. Case Study

The case study will focus on Greece as one of the most significant transit countries for migrants looking to apply for asylum in EU member states. Since Greece serves as the main entry point for refugees who have a Muslim background into the EU through the Mediterranean. Additionally, the study of Greece offers a typical illustration of how forced migrants are securitized by far-right parties for their interests, which further justify violence against refugees. Along with the rhetoric of far-right parties, refugees are securitized by the Greek government through its actions and policies. To specifically illustrate how the Greek government securitized refugees on the national level, the Evros fence will be used as an example.

3.1. GD and the Securitization of Refugees in Greece

Far-right parties in EU states are crucial actors in advancing the objective of securitizing the refugee crisis and subsequent immigrants through their speech actions. The example of the Golden Dawn, a far-right Greek political group, will be provided. Even if GD disbanded in September 2019, it still serves as a decent example of how far-right parties in EU states securitize refugees.

2009's economic meltdown in Greece showed deeper structural weaknesses in the country's political structure. Due to the financial crisis, there was a sense of mistrust between the general people and the political elites, while the growth in migrant population in the same year allowed far-right political groups to grasp the chance to gain political power and a seat in parliament. GD, a beneficiary of securitizing forced migration, received the third-highest number of votes in the 2014 Greek election [7]. Golden Dawn has become an actor in the securitization of refugees through the acquisition of political power and social influence and has also performed speech acts for the preservation of Greece's cultural heritage. The party's principal focus was immigration policies, and they reassured their followers that they were devoted to empowering unhappy citizens and protecting Greece's culture [8]. Right-wing parties of the EU, including GD, also usually propose the idea in their speech acts that the flood of refugees will reduce work prospects for local citizens, which cause their unemployment and increase the cost of maintaining social order, resulting in a decline in the national economy and therefore the welfare of the nation [9]. These securitization approaches made by the GD had created a scenario of forced migrants as "The Other" as a threat undermining the mythologized society of Greece. The success of the securitization of refugees made by right-wing parties such as GD also exposes racism towards non-European people and considers them subaltern, who could be viewed as a threat to the identity of EU states and deserve less support than native Europeans.

3.2. Evros Fence

In the years after the installation of the Evros fence, as a message that Greece would not be an "unfenced backyard", the number of unauthorized migrants crossing Greece's border with Turkey has dramatically reduced [10]. This resulted in forced migrants seeking additional ways to enter Greece in order to reach their EU target nations. The Evros fence might be considered as an exceptional measure to the rising issue of illegal migration across the border of Turkey. Just as the political controversy surrounding the Evros fence indicates, the installation of the fence was primarily symbolic, indicating that Greece does not serve as the gateway to the EU. In addition, the declarations made by the Greek government indicate that Greece is fulfilling its commitment to the EU as a guardian of the external borders, safeguarding not only its citizens but also the rest of the EU nations. This speech act further legitimized the installation of this fence, as an exceptional measure. In addition, the fence's construction was supplemented by the deployment of a surveillance system, including thermal sensors, as well as enhanced inspections of the land border, both of which were deemed securitizing

practices according to the Paris School as mentioned above [4]. The border monitoring of the EU's borders, as part of the securitization practice, was transmitted down to the national level of Greece as part of the process of increased integration in the sphere of migration policy. The rhetoric and speech acts that surround securitization at the national level in Greece are influenced by various border policies. The need for security warranted exceptional measures both at national and EU levels. According to this viewpoint, forced migration flows must be stopped at the EU's outer borders to protect both Greek inhabitants and their national identities, as well as the broader EU region. As refugees may pose a threat to the culture and society of EU states because of their totally different cultural background. The example of the Evros Fence could indicate that EU states as a whole do not welcome refugees, which further exposes the problem of selective humanity of the EU.

4. Ukraine Refugee Influx

4.1. EU's Responses

In comparison to the discourses used for forced migrants from other regions, the rhetoric on Ukrainians was more compassionate and viewed them as members deserving of the greatest support. It is explicitly invoked to conduct border inspections swiftly and with sensitivity, keeping into consideration the needs and vulnerabilities of refugees. To be more specific, the EU's policy includes the removal of visa restrictions and passport requirements, and the simplification of border checks [11]. From the perspective of securitization theory from the Paris school, security practices are not conducted towards Ukrainian refugees, which means they are not securitized. Being not securitized further shows that Ukrainian refugees are not regarded as a threat to the EU's security.

The media emphasized that Ukrainians are identical to the rest of the European people, which appeared to be a justification for treating other refugees differently. The similarity to the refugee crisis of 2015 is obvious, but the disparity in treatment is so glaring that certain media outlets feel compelled to rationalize the differences between Ukrainians and refugees by knowingly or unwittingly expressing racist beliefs [12]. In retrospect, the perspective of how thousands of Ukrainians received asylum and the contrast with the crisis in 2015 may suggest that refugees were not viewed as "the other" instead of "us" for Europeans. There are also ongoing efforts to facilitate these migrants' entry into host nations and their access to social benefits, labor markets, and healthcare systems in the member states of the EU [13]. Previously, some of the member states of the EU announced that neither they nor the whole EU could accept all refugees. In 2015, 1.3 million individuals arrived in Europe, but more than 5 million were welcomed in the EU during the first weeks of the war in Ukraine alone. According to the most recent UNHCR statistics, there are 6,865,625 Ukrainian refugees in EU states, with 3,933,695 of them sheltered by national protection schemes as of August 23, 2022 [14]. When compared to the figures above, the former claims made by EU states to legitimize their policies to exclude non-European asylum seekers becomes absurd.

4.2. Responses from Right-wing Parties in EU States

From the above background, the EU has demonstrated its compassion and willing to receive Ukrainian refugees. However, as discussed before, right-wing EU parties argue that the influx of refugees will limit job opportunities for local inhabitants, thereby generating unemployment, increasing the expense of maintaining social order and undermining nation's welfare.

It seems that right-wing parties should continue to oppose the EU's policy of embracing arriving Ukrainian refugees by applying their speech acts to securitizing refugees as before. However, Ukrainian refugees are not securitized and right-wing parties of EU states show agreement to the EU's decision. Right-wing parties that demonstrate anti-immigrant attitudes before, such as National Rally and AFD, choose to welcome Ukraine refugees. Right-wing parties in EU member states have

joined the majority of other political parties and, more importantly, pro-Ukrainian public opinion in condemning the violence in Ukraine and supporting Ukraine refugees [15]. Besides, for this reason, from the perspective of securitization, Ukraine refugees are not considered as a threat to the collective identity of the EU, since Ukrainians are identical to the other Europeans as described by the media and politicians.

Also, right-wing parties' decision to welcome Ukraine refugees also could reveal that the statement about accepting refugees will cause unemployment and undermine social welfare might be exaggerated, as from this event, the EU has showed that it has the ability to receive such a large number of refugee influx. This further shows the EU's double standard towards refugees.

5. Conclusion

From what has been discussed above, it seems that the EU shows a double standard towards forced migrants who come from varied races and backgrounds. In the case study part of Greece, it is shown that refugees are securitized because they are regarded by the EU states that they may pose a threat to the security of the identity of EU. Since during the 2015 'refugee crisis', refugees were from non-European backgrounds, which means they have cultural differences with Europeans. The successful securitization towards these refugees that pushed by right-wing parties for their political interests, also demonstrates that EU citizens as audiences, accept that these refugees should be regarded as a threat, which further causes expels and violence towards refugees. The case of the establishment of the Evros Fence as an exceptional measure, shows that, from the EU level, refugees are viewed as a threat to the national identities of EU states.

While compared to EU's responses to Ukraine refugees, the situation is largely different, which reveals a hierarchy of migrants. The influx of Ukrainian refugees is not securitized since they share a similar culture with EU states. Based on the analysis above, Ukrainian refugees are welcomed and the EU's responses were quick. From this event, the EU shows that it has the capability to handle the influx of a huge number of forced migrants without undermining its stability and welfare, which may indicate that right-wing parties' discourses towards refugees are exaggerated. While the EU's success in handling the huge influx of Ukrainian refugees might also benefit from the EU's improvements of its asylum system, it is still unknown if the EU could still behave successfully if it faces another influx of forced migrants who from a non-European background.

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