

Chapter 1

The Securitization Theory and Migration: The Case of Russia's Securitization of Europe's Migration Crisis

Oktay F. Tanrisever

Middle East Technical University (METU), Turkey

Hasan Selçuk Türkmen

Middle East Technical University (METU), Turkey

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical juxtaposition of the case of Russian military involvement in Syrian civil war and its connections with Europe's recent migration crisis. Securitization theories of Copenhagen and Paris schools provide useful tools for contextualizing Russia's efforts to justify its military involvement in the Syrian conflict. This chapter also purports to answer the question of how did Russia manage to facilitate its military involvement through securitization and speech acts despite its diminished international reputation due to the Ukrainian crisis.

INTRODUCTION¹

Russia's active military involvement in the Syrian civil war by the end of 2015 had taken the international community by surprise. Given the problematic relations between Russia and the West mainly over the Ukrainian crisis after 2013, the surprise was substantiated. How could Russia easily manage to exert itself in the middle of another world crisis while the repercussions of the annexation of Crimea were

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3322-1.ch001

still strongly fresh on the minds? In this study, we look into this problematique. We argue that Russia managed to facilitate its military involvement in Syria through securitization of Europe's refugee crisis by engaging in a consisting set of speech acts/discourses aimed at influencing Western international and public opinion. Building upon the main argument of Western policy failures in the Middle East, Russian foreign policy makers tried to convince the world that their involvement in Syria provides a more reasonable solution to the civil war than the Western ones, as the domination of the latter culminated in a series of international problems, first and foremost the refugee crisis that have been hitting the EU countries since 2014. This study is composed of two main parts. In the first part, we provide an overview of the concepts produced by Copenhagen and Paris schools of securitization theories as well as a brief analysis of the nexus between security and migration. The second part is devoted to the case study of Russia's military involvement in Syria and its relational aspects to the EU migration crisis in the light of the theoretical frameworks analyzed in the first part.

SECURITIZATION THEORY: CONCEPTUAL TOOLS

Copenhagen school's conceptualization of "securitization" (Buzan et al, 1998) along with Ole Wæver's concept of "speech act" that holds "insecurity not as an environmental condition upon which one acts but as the discursive rendition of insecurities through security practice" (Huysmans, 2011) are linchpins of current security studies literature. Yet, questions remain on the processes of securitization (McDonald, 2008) and implementation of speech acts (Stritzel, 2007). As we aim to employ these conceptualizations in our analysis, it is essential to provide an overview of relevant debates. For Buzan, Wæver and Wilde, an issue can be that of security as far as it is designated as an existential threat for a referent object (1998, p. 21). As one of the main lines of debates in this literature, the referent object is not limited to state but can be widened and diversified, producing both new "sectors" of security as well as new takes on the traditional sector of military/political sphere. In the second part of this chapter, we argue that in our case the referent object is international public opinion rather than individual states. At this juncture, the issue of audience is crucial. The distinction between the referent object and the audience must be neatly made as these two can easily become intertwined. As it is in our case study, the referent object of security can well be the audience itself.

The model on the process of securitization delineated by Buzan (1998) provides a fitting conceptual framework vis-à-vis our case study. In this model, Buzan argued that securitization means an issue is taken beyond the sphere of politicizing, "fram[ing] the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics" (1998,

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