

# Migration and Security

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Migration emerged as a security issue in a context marked both by the geopolitical dislocation associated with the end of the Cold War and also by wider social and political shifts associated with ‘globalization’. As such, current debates surrounding migration and security reflect changes both in the nature of migration, as well as in the nature of thinking about migration. While it was previously considered to be a social and economic phenomenon belonging to the fields of socio-economic history, historical sociology and anthropology, migration is now pivotal in debates surrounding global politics (Castles and Davidson 2000; Castles and Miller 1993; Sassen 1996; Sayad 1999: 303-413; Soysal 1994). This is evident in its introduction into the extending field of security studies, which has found in migration a means to develop an alternative narrative in a context where the fall of the Iron Curtain and the break up of the Soviet Union had destabilised its dominant script.<sup>1</sup>

As a largely US and European oriented subdiscipline of IR, security studies fell into a crisis after 1989-91 (Bigo 1995), resulting in the introduction of various ‘new’ insecurities into the field of analysis. Indeed, the increasing uses of the term ‘security studies’ was itself instrumental in opening up the military-focused bipolar security

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<sup>1</sup> Our presentation starts from developments in security studies in IR. Analysts from disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, criminology, and social history have studied aspects of the nexus between migration and security, independent of the focus on migration that emerged in security studies towards the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The importance of this point is not that security studies in IR comes late to these issues, but rather to be clear on the disciplinary angle that informs our overview. Given its inherently multidisciplinary dimensions, migration remains one of these terrains in security studies that is particularly open, or at least has great potential, to be a productive meeting ground for various disciplinary foci.

agenda to new areas (Buzan 1984, 1991; Buzan et al. 1998; Haftendorn 1991; Tickner 1995). In this context, the cross-border movement of people was a key issue that moved into the sphere of security studies (e.g. Heisbourg 1991; IISS 1991; Loescher 1992; Widgren 1990). Yet migration opened a contested terrain in security studies, which this chapter will further explore (Bigo 2002; Ceyhan and Tsoukala 1997; Guild and van Selm 2005; Huysmans 2002, 2006; Newman and van Selm, 2003; Wæver et al. 1993). To what extent can migration be conceived of as security issue in the strategic sense that IR and traditional security studies analysts understand security? What kind of insecurities does migration raise, and for whom or what? What is the impact of framing migration in terms of security, and what alternative frames of reference might be used? How can a critical political analysis of mobility be developed out of the nexus of migration and security?

In charting the plurality of ways that such questions are answered, this chapter draws attention to the complexity of current debates surrounding migration and security. The first section shows how the analysis of the migration/security nexus has been approached both from a traditional strategic perspective through a focus on the security of the state, as well as from a human security perspective through a focus on the security of individual migrants. Drawing attention to the normative dilemmas posed by the framing of migration as a security issue, it concludes by drawing attention to the critical importance of conceptually re-framing the relation between migration and security. This feeds into the second section, which charts a diverse body of critical work in which security is conceived of as a knowledge, discourse, technology or practice that mediates the relation between the social processes of human mobility and the search for governmental control and steering capacity over them. Considering how this body of

work can be developed in terms that open up the migration/security nexus to a richer analysis of the relation between mobility and politics, the final section claims that security questions should not be allowed to dominate the terrain of migration, but should be examined in relation to a range of political and socio-economic questions.

### **Analysing the security/migration nexus**

The migration/security nexus can be broadly viewed from two different directions: from a security studies perspective and from a migration studies perspective. This renders the field highly differentiated and contested, because it is structured according to divergent research agendas. Indeed, the fields of security studies and migration studies are themselves complex and multi-faceted. Within security studies, security can either be approached in strategic terms as a value or condition to be achieved, or it can be approached in critical terms as a knowledge, discourse, technology or practice. Within migration studies, migration can refer relatively narrowly to economic migration, or it can be approached more broadly to incorporate forced migration, thus bringing refugee studies and labour migration studies into a broader field of research. This suggests that the very meaning of the concepts of migration and security are highly contested, and are used to identify various practices that articulate different rationales.

While we primarily approach the nexus of migration and security from a security studies angle in this chapter, we also draw attention to key developments in the broad field of migration studies that speak to this nexus. Specifically, we show how analysts from both migration studies and security studies tend to approach the migration-security nexus in traditional terms by conceptualising security as a value to be achieved. The

first part shows how this approach is developed in strategic terms through a focus on the security of the state, or in humanitarian terms through a focus on human security.

Challenging these traditional approaches in terms of their failure to challenge exclusionary debates and practices in the global North where migration is largely seen as ‘threatening’ if it is not carefully managed, the final part closes by making the case for a critical re-framing of migration and security.

### *Strategic and humanitarian approaches to the migration/security nexus*

Many of the leading works introducing migration into the area of security studies have done so through defining migration as a central dimension of a rounded security agenda. Thus, it has been argued that migration needs to be factored into the calculations of national security strategy, and that national security needs to be factored into the calculations of migration policy (Koslowski 1998; Rudolph 2006). Such strategic approaches treat security as a value or condition that is affected by migration flows and, thus, by state policies to manage such flows. In this regard, they have been important in giving migration studies greater legitimacy within the US mainstream of IR and strategic studies (e.g. Choucri 2002; Weiner 1992/93).

There are two key ways in which these strategic analyses draw attention to the relevance of migration for security studies. First, they calculate how far migratory and demographic developments bear upon national security questions (Choucri 2002; Heisbourg 1991; Loescher 1992). Considerations here range from refugees turning to violent political actors (Loescher 1992), to the effect of migration on social cohesion and the availability of a sufficient work force (Rudolph 2006). In this regard, scholars at

the nexus of security and migration have opened up the area of migration studies beyond its classical economic focus on the state's selection of migrants (e.g. Constant and Zimmerman 2005). This has contributed to a wider process in which migration studies and refugee studies have begun to overlap.

Second, strategic analysts draw attention to the relevance of migration for security studies by showing how security concerns impact on a state's migration policies (Loescher 1992; Rudolph 2006; Vernez 1996; Weiner 1995; Weiner 1992/93). In particular, such analyses focus on formulating general laws about how migration movements constrain or influence security policy, and vice versa. For example, it has been argued that: '... as geopolitical threats increase, policies regarding international labour mobility (migration) should become relatively more open in order to facilitate the production of wealth to support defense' (Rudolph 2006:31). Although migration (or at least certain forms of migration) is often defined as 'threatening' national security, strategic analysts who approach security as a value or condition to aspire to have also made the case for less restrictive migration policies precisely through using security as a frame of reference.

In contrast to strategic analyses of migration and security, analysts of human security focus attention on the security of the individual over that of the state. This entails both a pragmatic and a normative or ethical dimension. In pragmatic terms, the emphasis on human security over state security can be understood as increasingly necessary in a context whereby political concerns regarding security and migration have shifted beyond the state to the transnational or global level. Such a shift is evident, for example, in the European Union's commitment to a Global Approach to Migration (European Council 2005). In normative or ethical terms, a focus on human security

signals a shift away from the state as *the* subject of security, and brings into view the security of humans who migrate. Such a focus largely entails a humanitarian approach, which has been re-affirmed in relation to refugees and asylum seekers (Nadig 2002), as well as in relation to the trafficking of (primarily women and children) migrants (Clarke 2003).

Despite its widespread pragmatic and normative appeal, a focus on human security is of limited effect in radically re-framing of migration. Human security is largely incorporated as a dimension internal to global migration management, and thus risks doing little more than pragmatically tinkering within the strategic frame of state security (Koser 2005). Even if we take the state out of the picture, human security remains caught within a framework that entails highly selective operations that effectively exclude those migrants that states within regions such as Europe, North America and Australasia. This is evident, for example, in the growing linkage between migration and development, which is largely orientated to a security and migration control framework over a development framework (see Samers 2004; Lavenex and Kunz 2008). It can similarly be seen in relation to humanitarian intervention, which brings a commitment to human security in line with state security (Liotta 2002).

Notwithstanding these limitations, some analysts have made a pragmatic case for human security and humanitarianism in the attempt to ensure that liberal democratic states move "...closer to realising the values they claim to live by now" (Gibney 2004:260). A pragmatic humanitarianism may be critical as a normative or ethical approach that holds the liberal democratic state to account in the face of excessively restrictive migration controls. However, it is less critical as a political approach. Humanitarianism is essentially concerned with the protection of vulnerable populations

and with redressing harmful practices, and in this regard it tends to approach the migrant as a disempowered victim rather than as a political actor. In this regard, pragmatic humanitarians fail to move beyond a security frame in which ‘undesirable’ migrants are either politicised as ‘threatening’ subjects or are de-politicised as ‘vulnerable’ subjects (see Aradau 2004, 2008; Nyers 2005; Squire 2009).

### *Normative dilemmas and the migration-security nexus*

Strategic and human security approaches to the migration/security nexus are problematic in terms of their potential reification of migration as a ‘threat’. By approaching security as a value or a condition to aspire to, analysts from these approaches tend to assume that migration policy can be developed in terms that increase the security of states, in terms that increase the security of migrants, or in terms that increase the security of both states and migrants. In so doing they bring free movement firmly into the field of security, thus consolidating the articulation of migration as a security ‘threat’ (Huysmans 1995). This clearly does not signal the definition of all migrants as ‘threatening’, but rather it legitimises exclusionary distinctions that have become widespread across Europe, North America and Australasia in terms that identify ‘undesirables’ such as ‘illegal immigrants’ and ‘asylum seekers’ as necessitating intensified controls (Squire 2009). Both strategic and human security approaches thus potentially consolidate what critical security studies scholars have defined as the securitisation of migration or free movement (Bigo 2000, 2002, 2005; Huysmans 2006; van Munster 2009).

For this reason, strategic and human security approaches are limited in their ability to open up the intellectual terrain at the nexus of security and migration in all its sociological, political and normative richness (Huysmans 2006). Strategic approaches not only delete from the security field the normative questions of how securitising migration produces exclusions, violence, and inequalities; they also reduce the political and social complexity of migration to the strategic interaction between states. Migration becomes a factor in the calculation of power and national security of states (e.g. as an economic resource or as a cultural factor affecting social cohesion). Human security approaches open up normative questions and shift attention beyond the state, but do not go far enough in considering how framing migration in terms of two conflicting security claims – human versus national security - produces particular effects in terms of the assemblage of relations between people and in terms of the struggle for professional and political legitimacy. These questions require a critical and political analysis of the social processes that the linkage of migration and security entails.

### **Critical analyses of the migration/security nexus**

One way in which a political sociological approach to the migration/security nexus can be developed is in the analysis of the effects of the political framing of migration as a threat on public perception and opinion formation. Over recent years public opinion regarding migration in many countries within the global North has become hostile toward ‘asylum seekers’ and ‘illegal migrants’. An analysis of the discrepancy between perceptions of migration and the objective threat that migration poses, and an analysis of interrelation of threat perceptions of migration in the political elite and the wider

public is of political interest in this regard (Lahav 2004). However, a cognitive approach underplays the social materiality of the securitising processes – security seems to exist primarily in the mind. This requires a more critical analysis of the circulation of discourses, the application of technologies, the development of legal categories and questions of form-filling, professional routines and training that construct, sustain and constitute migration as a security ‘threat’. A continuous and intensive circulation of discourses of immigration floods, for example, can change dominant language through which migration is approached. Such changes usually go together with changes in institutional locations of migration policy. A language of floods legitimates a stronger focus on border controls and a more crucial position of border police, as compared to employers interests for example. What matters here is not so much what people believe but the nature of and the available palette of languages upon which ordinary people, policy makers and professional organizations can draw when speaking about migration as well as the skills and knowledges that border police bring to the management of migration as compared the skills and knowledge of employer organizations and unions. It is here that critical security studies opens up the analysis of the migration/security nexus to all its political and social richness, while at the same time maintaining critical distance from objectivist accounts in which ‘undesirable’ migrants are identified as ‘threatening’. Rather than a value or a fact, security becomes a language and/or an interest, knowledge or professional skill linked to particular organizations, that are always shaped in a relation to other languages, actors and practices that contest it.

Critical security studies scholars have developed various distinctly political analyses of the social processes that are constitutive of the migration/security nexus. Approaching security as a practice or frame of domination and/or exclusion, such

analysts have examined various sites, agencies and technologies at the intersection of migration and security. Important sites in this regard are camps in which migrants are detained (Le Cour Grandmaison et al. 2007; Nyers and Moulines 2007; Perera 2002; Puggioni 2006), and border areas through which migrants pass, such as airports, embassies and customs (Bigo and Guild 2005; Bigo 1996b; Salter 2008; Muller 2005). In terms of agencies, critical analysts look at the increasing role of security professionals, including private agencies, in the regulation of movement (Bigo 1996a; Guiraudon 2000, 2003). They also examine various security technologies employed in the regulation of migration, such as visas, asylum procedures, and surveillance (Bigo and Guild 2005; Lewis 2005; Lyon 2005; Salter 2003).

What each of these approaches share is the idea that security practice is a specific strategy or technique of (de)politicizing and governing migration. In analysing the politics of insecurity, critical security analysts examine the struggles over the legitimacy of specific methods of governing the migration area (e.g. storing finger prints on police databases versus privacy rights) and the legitimising effects that can be derived from using security language in politics (e.g. evoking terrorism and asylum abuse to politically justify unpopular security measures in airports). Such analysts focus on the precise nature and effects of using security instruments, knowledge and discourses in the area of migration (Aradau 2008; Huysmans 2006), as well as on the institutions sustaining the process (e.g. Pilkington 1998). The presence of security policies in the migration area are thus explained both by the political use of security language in the migration field (Wæver, et al. 1993) and by the use of references to migration related issues in security debates like counter-terrorism (Huysmans and Buonfino 2008), as well as by the presence and relative power of security professionals and experts in a

policy field (Bigo 1996a; Bigo 2002; Boswell 2007; Guiraudon 2003; Guiraudon 2000) and by the transfer of security practices between different policy areas, such as policing football hooligans and migration (Tsoukala 2004). In undertaking such analyses, critical scholars of the migration/security nexus highlight the exclusionary and violent effects of security practices on particular groups of migrants (Guild 2002, 2003; Le Cour Grandmaison et al. 2007; Walters 2002). In addition, they examine the political effects of profiling and surveillance techniques of mobile people like finger printing, data storage and mining, camps, visas, passports, etc. (Bigo 1996b; Bigo and Guild 2003; Bigo and Guild 2005; Bonditti 2004, Huysmans 2006; Walters 2002), while focusing attention on the exclusionary re-articulation of borders and identity (Epstein 2007).

### **Moving beyond the migration/security nexus**

Critical security studies scholars have opened up a range of challenging questions that are important to the analysis of the migration/security nexus: What does framing social and political relations by means of security practice do to the assembling of relations between people? What is the leverage of security discourse, technology, knowledge and practice in struggles for political and professional legitimacy? The focus on these questions signals a radically different conception of security (and insecurity) from that outlined in the first section, namely one in which security is conceived less as a value to aspire to as it is conceived of as a *constitutive mediator* of the relation between mobility and politics. Rather than conceptualising security in terms of an expression of the dangers that human mobility actually is or is perceived to pose, critical analysts thus conceive security as having various meanings and as constituting social and political

techniques of governance that effectively shape human mobility. For example, framing migrating women as victims of human trafficking places their migration firmly in a criminalized context which reinforces exclusionary practices and underplays the impact of economic developments, personal ambitions and family relations ((Andrijasevic, 2004 & 2009). This brings to the fore the normative nature of writing security, where security knowledge easily slips into a securitising knowledge. By borrowing the language of human trafficking, developing crime statistics differentiating between immigrants and the native population, or presenting security as a choice between individual and national security, security knowledge sustains the idea that migration is a question of insecurity, which tends to radicalize exclusions and legitimate violence.

The issue of migration has brought to the fore questions as to whether or not, and how, an issue should be securitised. In this regard, one of the most important questions is whether it is possible to do security studies without contributing to the process of securitisation (Huysmans 2002). This has led to significant debates surrounding the desecuritisation of issues such as migration (Waeber 1995; Huysmans 1998; Aradau 2004b). A critical way in which the reification of migration as a security ‘threat’ can be moderated, in this context, is to place the question of security practice within an agenda that researches the political nature of mobility. Security then enters as one among other issues that impacts on, shapes, and constrains mobility, rather than being the central focus. This can be conceptualised as a critical political sociology or as critical political theory of the migration-security nexus.

There are various ways in which this critical approach can be developed. Let’s mention two of the many possibilities. First, it can be conceived of in terms of an analysis of the ways in which exclusionary techniques of governing remove the political

agency of specific migrants (for example by approaching migrants as victims requiring 'treatment' rather than as autonomous people making specific claims about their rights, ambitions and/or equal standing as human beings). Rather, than having security as its central focus, the question of how to reinsert political agency into the analysis becomes the key question, while security enters as a method of governing that impact on the constitution, or more likely the destitution, of political agency (Nyers, 2006; Aradau, 2008; Neocleous, 2008). This runs more in line with a rights-based approach, which has been posed as an alternative to a security orientated approach in relation to forced migration (Goodwin-Gill, 2001); trafficking (Jordan, 2002); and 'illegal immigration' (Cholenewski, 2000). However, rather than focusing on the pre-given rights of individuals, critical analysts have shown how mobility can serve as a mode of 'becoming political' in a context of global inequality (see Chimni 2000; Jordan and Duvell 2002). Analysts of migration and security have moved in this direction over recent years by considering how citizenship claims that are 'mis-placed' according to the exclusionary and de-politicising frame of security entail a mobile form of political agency (Andrijasevic, 2009; McNevin, 2006; Nyers and Moulin, 2007; Nyers, 2008; Squire, 2009).

A second example of how to the migration-security nexus can be opened to a wider political analysis is to introduce the question of violence and its political legitimacy. The violence exercised by refugee warriors or upon the body of migrants would then not be reduced to a question of trading off human security versus national security. Instead of security, the political nature of violence takes the foreground. For example, what does the exercise of violence upon the body of refugees, i.e. in detention centres, and the resisting violence the latter impose upon their own bodies, i.e. by

sewing lips and eyes or attempting suicide, tell us about the nature of modern state and international politics and the political role of violence in it? (Edkins 2000; Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 2005; Le Cour Grandmaison et al. 2007; Nyers 2006, pp. 97-122). What is important in each of these approaches is that security is not the central focus of analysis, but it is conceived of as one of the techniques at play in a larger setting. In this regard, security or securitisation is not presumed to be central to the analysis of migration or mobility (see Boswell 2007). Rather, the central focus concerns the wider political questions that are articulated in relation to mobility and migration policies

## **Conclusion**

.Addressing security in relation to conceptions of political agency, the legitimacy of violence, various technologies of inclusion and exclusion, and the struggle over conceptions of citizenship, is an important move in ensuring that security does not do the unifying work in the analysis. Security is a particular practice, concern and technique that always operates in relation to other political issues. Hence political research of the security-migration nexus requires an understanding of how security practice operates within a political field where various approaches to human mobility are contested and how it bears upon struggles over the definition of (legitimate) political agency, the role of violence, competing conceptions of justice, etc. Such a reading of the migration/security nexus, undertaken in much critical work on migration and security, takes the research away from simply refining our understanding of the security dimensions of migration and the nature of securitising mobility. It embeds securitising processes in social and societal negotiations of central political questions, which are

rarely engaged exclusively in security terms. Instead of reaffirming assumptions regarding the 'threat' posed by migration to states or to individual migrants (section 1), and instead of remaining caught within the frame of security (section 2), a critical political theory or sociology of migration and security thus analyses security as a distinctly problematic mediator of the relationship between mobility and politics.

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