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Increased Securitization Measures Toward Refugees in Industrialized Societies Post-9/11

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Abstract

At the end of 2015, the United Nations reported an estimated 16.1 million refugees in the world. That number jumped to 21.3 million by June 2022. Despite the record-breaking number of forcibly displaced populations, countries across the globe are closing their doors to refugees—making it more difficult for them to seek protection. This paper addresses the question: *why are industrialized societies increasing their securitization measures toward refugees post-September 11 terrorist attacks?* The research on this topic suggests that there is an established relationship between the traditional framing of social, political, and economic threats and their influence on the immigration policy-making process. Building on top of this established relationship, this paper focuses specifically in the context of refugees. Based on the evidence from case studies of the United States and the European Union, this research argues that developed societies use rhetoric and language to portray refugees as a source of security threats, which justifies the securitization measures these governmental institutions would implement. By bridging the connection between fears of insecurity and securitization measures, this paper sheds light on how the current securitization measures are making it more difficult for refugees to seek protection and safety.

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Why are countries closing their borders to prevent the entrance of refugees? Shouldn't developed societies be the ones at the forefront of this humanitarian protection effort? The recent Russian invasion of Ukraine has displaced millions of Ukrainians into neighboring European countries. Although the EU eased its refugee admission policies specifically for Ukrainian refugees, it is not always the case for refugees of other origins. Instead, as refugees increasingly become the center of discussion and debate, more countries are adopting policy measures that are making it difficult for them to enter their borders.

This research hopes to understand why countries, especially developed societies, are intensifying their securitization measures toward refugees and asylum seekers at their borders. The period of focus is post-September 11 terrorist attacks to the present day, which marked a significant change in the framing of immigration and the necessity for stricter border controls. The basis of this research is built on the Integrated Threat Theory and the Copenhagen School's definition of securitization. This paper will use the United States and the European Union as examples to argue that due to the perceptions of threats, industrialized countries are increasing their securitization measures toward refugees. Specifically, the unsupportive policies for refugees were the results of an emerging security threat that was magnified after the September 11 terrorist attacks, coupled with the existing framing of social, political, and economic threats.

In the following sections, the paper will provide some context on the current refugee situation and the existing literature on this topic. Then, it will explain the theories and methodologies that were used in this research. Next, the analysis of the two case studies will demonstrate securitization measures adopted post-9/11 in developed societies. Lastly, the paper will close with a review of the research and areas for exploration in future research.

Context: The Current Refugee Situation

Before addressing the literature on this topic, I will provide a brief overview of the history of refugee admission and the current situation. Through the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951 and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1967, more than 140 countries agreed “to protect refugees on their territory and under their jurisdiction... [and] to extend relevant rights to refugees in accordance with international human rights obligations” (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2017). Despite the agreement between these states, there has been a lack of success in providing aid and shelters to the forcibly displaced, especially in light of recent conflicts that have resulted in record numbers of refugees.

Present-day media and news often use the words asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees interchangeably. However, these labels are quite different, and this research will address refugees specifically, instead of the migrant population as a whole. The most commonly adopted definition of a refugee in academics comes from the 1951 Refugee Convention. In the Convention, a refugee is defined as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin [due to] fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR 2021). This excludes any movement as an effect of fear and necessity, such as economic opportunity. To summarize, the main difference between migrants and refugees is that refugees are displaced involuntarily and often deemed temporary, while most migrants choose their destination and the duration in the host country. In addition, it is necessary to differentiate between refugees and asylum-seekers. Asylum-seekers are individuals who are seeking refugee status or complementary international protection status but have yet to receive the final decision on their claims. It is important to note

that every refugee was an asylum-seeker initially, but not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee (UNHCR Glossary, 2022).

Literature Review

In the following section, I will explore the literature on the topic of refugees and showcase the gaps and limitations in this body of work, as well as argue that my approach would better demonstrate the evolution of securitization measures specifically oriented toward refugees. Since the 1980s, scholars have been analyzing the security concerns raised by refugee migration beyond the humanitarian scope. Previously, refugees crossed international borders in light of natural disasters, persecution, and armed conflicts. The host countries' humanitarian efforts are aimed to relieve suffering and provide shelter. However, geopolitical tension during the Cold War planted a seed of fear in the public attitude and political policies towards refugees. The change from government-sponsored arrivals of refugees to the increase in individual asylum applications marked the change to a stricter immigration policy. Since threats are the fundamental factors that might challenge the security of society, it's important to put non-military threats into the context of refugees. The preexisting threats mainly surround social, political, and economic threats. Many scholars have described how each of these threats are closely intertwined with one another, and the public often cites these threats as the reason for securitization (Lohrmann 2000).

A great deal of research on refugee perceptions focuses on refugees being perceived as a threat to society. In this regard, Vala and Pereira argue that the idea of threat, "driven by social context and opaque new social facts", eventually produces "uncertainty, insecurity, and anxiety" (2020). The social threat consists of cultural and religious threats, which are deeply connected to the receptivity of refugees by the host countries. The social threat is mainly fueled by the

identity-related markers that highlight the difference in culture and religions between an inside group (host country citizens) and an outside group (refugees) (Filiandra 2022). This feeling of insecurity extends beyond differences, it arises from the perception that the “action of a group, its beliefs or characteristics are opposed to the achievement of the goals or well-being of another group,” which creates a divide and hostile attitudes (Riek, Mania, and Gaertner 2006). The data gathered by Gravelle and Kovar further support this finding. In both the European Union and Canada, perceptions of cultural threats played a greater role in shaping attitudes toward accepting refugees, in comparison to economic threats (Gravelle and Kovar 2018, 2019). This identity-based fear is exacerbated by the stereotypes surrounding refugees, which often lead to the connection to other threats (Hynie 2018). For instance, individuals with Arab- and Muslim-sounding names often face more discrimination in Western countries (Adida, Laitin, and Valfort 2010). Furthermore, the threats perceived by the ingroup do not only simply change the perception of refugees, but further trigger changes in political and economic policies that are aimed at promoting the ingroup's distinctiveness to the outgroup (Vala and Pereira 2020).

While many works have focused on the perception of refugees as a social threat, others have explored perceptions of refugees as a threat to the political landscape in the host country. As Lohrmann points out, the conflicts of interest at the political level are highlighted by the difference in identities (2000). In his data analysis, Gravelle provides another example: conservative party supporters who reside in areas with fewer immigrant populations (in addition to their perception of economic and cultural threats) are more likely to have a restrictionist mindset toward refugees (2017). Altındağ and Kaushal examined how the entry of Syrian refugees affected voter preferences in Turkey. Their analysis shows that Turkish voters' attitudes towards refugees are very polarized based on their political party affiliation. The Justice and

Development Party (AKP) is the main architect of the “open door” policy for Syrian refugees. The inflow of refugees reflected a modest change in political party affiliation, “a one-percentage-point increase in the population share of refugees led to between a 0.47 and 0.72 percentage point reduction in AKP support” (Altındağ and Kaushal 2020). In addition, tracing voters' behaviors during elections between 2011 and 2015 has shown an increasing number of previous-AKP supporters “turned indecisive or expressed an unwillingness to vote” (Ibid).

Different from Turkey, studies have shown that refugee inflows often lead to extreme right-wing anti-immigration parties gaining support in Western countries. For example, German right-wing populists and their discourse of fear about “Islamization” has led to demonstrations in the cities that eventually resulted in the federal government adopting restrictive reforms, emphasizing securitization (Ilgit and Klotz 2018). On the other hand, Canadian electorate politics do not follow the pattern of gaining electorate support after creating a divide. In fact, Black and Hicks have found that perspectives on immigration policies play a larger role in more competitive elections, where “political parties chase the votes of minorities and newcomers who are concentrated in closely contested urban ridings” (2008). However, the perceived political threat also impacts the host countries' policies that concern the economy as the government provides aid and support to refugees.

The perception of economic threat goes hand in hand with that of the social and political threats. Filiandra defines economic threat as the perception of competition for scarce material resources. This view of economic competition is further heightened by perceptions of the cost required to accommodate refugees (2022). A few scholars have focused on Turkey and its economy after receiving one of the largest numbers of refugees in the world. Since 2011, the nation has spent more than \$8 billion US dollars, equivalent to almost 1% of its GDP, on housing

Syrian refugees (Aiyar et al. 2016). The economic cost dedicated to accommodating refugees echoes the concept of the zero-sum game: if the outgroup gains then there are losses for the ingroup (Filiandra 2022). This translates into difficulties for refugees in integrating into the labor market. Opaque regulations and the extra burden on employers meant that they were less willing to hire refugees (Desiderio 2016).

Continuing with the case study on the Turkish economy, researchers have found that it is especially difficult for refugees to integrate into the host nation's labor market. Esen and Binatli found that regions with a high concentration of the Syrian refugee population have more unemployed people (2017). Turkey's 2014 Migration Reform did not allow refugees access to the formal local labor market, leaving them working in the informal sector. However, this new mass entry into the informal sector has resulted in the withdrawal of undereducated, female Turkish workers in informal agricultural jobs from the labor market (Aiyar et al. 2016). This competition in the labor market sheds light on the fears of economic threats that many host countries worry about.

Most of the aforementioned literature focuses on the traditional framing of threats: social threat, political threat, and economic threat; each of these threats are closely intertwined with each other. However, in recent years, there has been a rising concern regarding the general security in host countries: the public associates crimes, violence, and terrorism with the inflow of refugees. The recent literature has expanded to include case studies of this emerging security threat. Specifically, these studies focus on the host countries' response and the framing of their narratives after particular events that raised their security concerns. For instance, the 2015 Paris Attacks led to US officials publicly urging the Obama administration to change its Syrian refugee replacement policies. Paul James Pope's analysis of the thirty-six US governors'

narratives highlights how fear-based language was used to justify “a state of exception to the rule of law citing public order and security” (2017). The governors who expressed rejection of receiving Syrian refugees used a “symbolic link between the mostly Muslim Syrian refugees and the Muslim extremist terrorists who attacked France to characterize the refugees as ‘villains’” (2017).

Utilizing the difference in identities and targeting the specific events to create fears and uncertainty, the strategy of framing is more prevalent than one might think. Another effort that followed similar political narrative framing and exploiting identity differences is the Trump administration’s “Muslim ban” policy. Negative stereotypes toward Muslims played a central role in drawing support for Trump and his policy that prohibited “travel and refugee resettlement from select predominately Muslim countries” (Collingwood, Lajevardi, and Oskooii 2018, 2019). However, the government is not the only actor that is crafting political narratives to justify the need for securitization. News media have also demonstrated their extensive contribution in framing narratives and enlarging the difference in identities. In 2009, seventy-two Tamil refugees arrived in British Columbia, Canada. Most of the Canadian media coverage of this event followed a similar pattern: portraying the immigration system as “failing” and emphasizing “issues of criminality and terrorism.” Instead of focusing on human rights, the discussion focused on security. As a result of this narrative, the framing laid the foundation for the “refugee reform Bill C-11 to be ushered through Parliament later that summer” (Bradimore and Bauder 2009).

As the past literature mainly focuses on the preexisting threats that surround social, political, and economic threats, there is a lack of connection to demonstrate how they interact with the emerging security threat surrounding fears of violence and crimes. This research hopes

to bridge the connection to examine how the fears of insecurity, in addition to the preexisting fears of social, political, and economic threats, have exacerbated the emphasis on securitization in developed societies. I hope to trace the trend of these perceived threats and fear of insecurity to reflect the increase in securitization policies adopted by governmental entities over time.

Theory and Thesis

As this paper has presented an overview of scholarly work on the perception of refugees through the traditional framing of threats, it will now shift its focus to the emergence of the security threat. Framing refugees as a security threat after the September 11 terrorist attacks significantly expanded many governments' securitization policies. This paper argues that industrialized countries are increasing their securitization measures toward refugees due to the perceptions of threats, which ultimately lead to policies that oppose refugees. Specifically, an emerging security threat after the September 11 terrorist attacks, coupled with the existing framing of social, political, and economic threats, has led to an increase in securitization.

The argument is constructed on the Integrated Threat Theory first proposed by Walter G. Stephan and Cookie White Stephan in 2000. The theory is composed of four main components: realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes. Realistic threats are threats imposed by the outgroup to the existence, the political and economic power, and the physical and material well-being of the ingroup. Secondly, symbolic threats highlight the "perceived" differences in "morals, values, standards, beliefs, and attitudes." Next, intergroup anxiety is the perception or expectation that interacting with someone other than themselves will result in negative outcomes. Lastly, negative stereotypes embody threats to the ingroups as they are the basis of expectations for the outgroup's behaviors that would result in negative outcomes.

All these components come together to form the perceived threats that ultimately lead to prejudice.

As introduced in the Literature Review section, there has been recent work (such as Filiandra, Vala, and Pereira) on expanding the Integrated Threat Theory to apply it specifically to refugees. This paper will build on the basis of this psychology and sociology theory to examine how governmental entities used rhetoric to create a sense of urgency, as well as instill fears of threats, when responding to refugees.

In addition, many existing scholarly papers on securitization and immigration build their case using the Copenhagen School's definition of securitization. Introduced by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, securitization has two main components: the "speech act" and the "securitizing moves." In essence, the two compose a threat that can only be addressed through extraordinary solutions. The case studies used in this paper will follow this definition of securitization to highlight how governmental institutions justified their policy measures toward refugees.

Methodology

To examine how developed societies are increasingly adopting securitization measures toward refugees, this paper will use the US and the EU as case studies to analyze their response to refugees following the September 11 terrorist attacks. These two entities are selected because they consist some of the most advanced countries in the world today. Given their economic capabilities and political influence in the world, this research hopes to understand *why* they are drifting away from their responsibilities to protect human rights and adopting some of the strictest policies toward refugees. The paper will use published scholarly articles as guides in laying the foundation of the issue. The analysis of the rhetoric and language will be drawn from

primary and secondary sources, including government reports, memorandums, and official statements. The paper examines the rhetoric used by government institutions and assesses the actual policies adopted as a result of their language. However, a systematic way of analyzing rhetoric and language would be helpful in future research.

Analysis

The migration of people across borders has been a prevalent topic throughout history: from the European immigration to the New World between the 1500s and 1800s to the labor migration in the increasingly industrialized European countries post-World War II. Despite the large number of migrants that have traveled across borders, traditionally perceived threats of newcomers were evident throughout history. The perceived threats are the results of the three dimensions of interactions that newcomers have with local citizens: the cultural and religious dimension, political dimension, and socio-economic dimension (Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas 2016). As mentioned in the review of past literature, these three perceived threats are closely intertwined and play important roles in laying the foundation of structuring the feelings of threat and fears for the receiving country. However, there is a fourth reemerging threat that further exacerbates these traditional threats and results in unsupportive policies for refugees.

This paper will assert that the 9/11 attacks were a pivotal moment that influenced and forever changed many industrialized societies' perspectives and rhetoric toward refugees and their impact on security. The 9/11 attacks marked the start of an era of securitization that has changed policy agenda and the way of life. To build this case, this section will first examine the United States' securitization measures toward refugees. Then, the analysis will focus on the European Union's policy change after the 9/11 attacks and its response to the 2015 Refugee Crisis. Finally, the section will close with comments on the implications of these border policies oriented toward refugees.

Before diving into specific case studies, it is important to clarify the definition of securitization in the context of refugee migration and reception. One of the most prevalent and widely used definitions of securitization comes from that of the Copenhagen School.

Securitization, according to the Copenhagen School, has two “inseparable parts.” The first is the “speech act,” in which the public officials assert that the problem at hand (real or perceived) represents an “existential threat” to the state and its common values. This problem cannot be solved through ordinary means, thus the requirement of the second component—the response. The second part is a “securitizing move,” which are the measures to be taken in order to resolve the threat in question (Buzan, Waever, and Wilde 1998). Given the precondition of a problem unsolvable by ordinary means: Copenhagen School argues that securitization enables “exceptional measures to be used, justified by appealing to national security interests” (Hutchison and Rygiel 2020, 2012). In essence, there are two main components in achieving securitization: the actors who frame the particular problem and the measures taken to address that specified problem.

The United States’ Securitization Measures Towards Refugees

The United States (US) has been a leader in the humanitarian relief effort, tracing back to World War II. In 1948, the US Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act, which allowed thousands of European refugees to resettle in the States. This effort would continue throughout the Cold War, as the US accepted refugees fleeing from communist regimes in Asia, Central America, and Eastern Europe. Much of these refugee admission policies were primarily based on an ad hoc basis, depending on the global humanitarian needs and the ongoing mass migration.

Eventually, the US government adopted a more systematic approach to its refugee admission process. The creation of the Refugee Act of 1980 initiated the country’s federal effort to resettle refugees under the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). This new system created permanent procedures for vetting, admitting, and resettling refugees into the US; increased the annual refugee admission ceiling to 50,000; and granted the president the authority

to admit additional refugees in times of emergency. This legislation lays the foundation of the present-day refugee admission process; in the coming years, authorities will change various components of the legislation to achieve securitization.

It is worth noting that in the US, asylum seekers follow a different protocol than those applying for refugee status. Many of the existing research on securitization discuss US immigration as a whole, but this paper will focus on the US's securitization measures specifically in the context of refugees. This section will demonstrate how the 9/11 attacks changed the preexisting refugee admission process in the US drastically as the government leaned towards more securitization measures.

On September 11, 2001, four airplanes were hijacked by militants from the Islamic extremist group al Qaeda; the terrorists carried out suicide attacks by crashing the planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing nearly 3,000 people. As the nation most affected by the 9/11 attacks, the US demonstrated a significant and obvious change in its perceptions toward immigration security: deviating from the traditional security concerns surrounding cultural, political, and economic issues to the concept of "homeland security." The immediate adoption of increased security measures can be seen through the changes in government policies and the American way of life, including visa controls, information collection, and prescreening at airports. The creation of the Department of Homeland Security as a direct response to the 9/11 attacks paved the road for how the US government would later implement its increasingly stringent immigration and refugee admission policies.

The US government's response to the 9/11 attacks was the immediate adoption of securitization measures, achieving both components outlined in the Copenhagen School's definition of securitization. First, the US government appealed to the public through an identity-

based fear construction—achieving the “speech act.” The US government portrayed an image of the terrorists as those with specific identities and characteristics. Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, “a fear-stricken public watched images of nefarious, dark-skinned, and bearded Muslims flash across millions of television screens” (Aziz 2011). The purpose of this portrayal was to justify the response that the US government deemed necessary. A decade after the 9/11 attacks, media coverage of terrorism is still dominated by fears of international terrorism: Muslims, Arabs, and Islam, working against a “Christian America.” Meanwhile, domestic terrorism was portrayed as isolated incidents by “troubled individuals” (Powell 2011). Under the US government’s and the news media’s framing of the 9/11 attacks, the fears of terrorism justified the exceptional solution of the ever-stricter securitization measures.

The “securitizing move” that followed the 9/11 attacks immediately was the suspension of the refugee admission program for several months. President George W. Bush cited national security concerns as justification for the suspension (U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants 2001). Even after the moratorium was lifted, other securitization measures followed. A comprehensive review of the refugee admission procedures was conducted, and new security measures were implemented as a result of the review (Dewey 2003). One of the measures adopted was the Security Advisory Opinion reviews (SAOs), in addition to the normal clearance process for refugee claimants. SAOs are managed by the US Department of States but it is a process across multiple agencies where names and information are cross-checked among various government databases. Significant delays often result from the SAO process when the information of a refugee claimant approximates or matches the existing information in the government database (Kerwin 2011). The newly implemented security check requirements made

it impossible to process even half of the 70,000 refugees whom the Bush Administration pledged to admit in the fiscal year 2002 (US Senate Subcommittee on Immigration 2002).

Policies to increase security regarding refugee admission continued into the 2010s. In 2011, the Department of Homeland Security initiated an additional security screening process, the inter-agency check (IAC). The existing SAO screening is only for selected refugees, but IAC is required for all refugees. Many security checks overlap between the SAO and IAC, which resulted in significant delays in the refugee admission process (Kerwin 2011). As of July 2011, the Department of State estimated that nearly 70,000 *approved* refugees were waiting for clearance to travel to the US.

The 9/11 attacks had a lasting effect on the US's implementation of securitization measures, which made it more difficult for refugee claimants. In 2005, Congress passed the REAL ID Act of 2005, aiming to standardize the issuance of identification. Beyond the security concerns of identification, the REAL ID Act specifically set up bars for those who are applying for refugee status. The legislation put in requirements for those seeking refuge to provide evidence of the experienced persecution; however, many refugee claimants cannot provide such evidence or documentation. This abnormal addition to the refugee application requirements highlights the continued securitization efforts years after the 9/11 attacks, almost as a deterrence strategy to discourage future refugee claimants.

If the US's securitization measures were a continuation in the decade following the 9/11 attacks, then the year 2017 was when the increase of securitization hit the peak. Prior to winning the 2016 presidential election, candidate Donald Trump demonstrated "speech acts" of securitization throughout his campaign. At a rally in Ohio, Trump portrayed the threats brought by the Syrian refugees were "not only a matter of terrorism, but also a matter of quality of life"

(*The Guardian* 2016). Trump then continued to make later proved false claims about the economic cost of admitting these refugees, “the Hillary Clinton plan would bring in 620,000 refugees in the first term... her plan would cost \$400 billion in terms of lifetime welfare and entitlement costs” (Ibid). Trump’s rhetoric not only alludes to the traditional framing of threats (economic burden) but also the emerging security threats of violence and crimes. This aggressive language would later lead to policies that address both aspects of the threat, which are securitization strategies oriented towards refugees.

Soon after taking office, President Trump conducted a series of “securitizing moves” as forecasted by his speech acts. Less than a week after Trump was sworn into office, he issued an executive order suspending the refugee resettlement program for 120 days (*PBS* 2017); deprioritizing admissions of refugees from 11 "high-risk" countries and later required additional screening (Batalova et al. 2021); banning the entry of Syrian refugees indefinitely. After signing the executive order, Trump justified the act as “new vetting measures to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the US” (*BBC* 2017). The rhetoric and identity-based justification highlight the decades-long securitization measures adopted by the US: these *unconventional* security measures are *necessary* to prevent future terrorist attacks.

However, the Trump administration’s securitization measures did not end there. For the fiscal year of 2018, the Trump administration submitted a budget proposal that slashed the Refugee and Entrant Assistance program by more than 31% (Mandelman 2017). Along with the budget cut, Trump significantly reduced the refugee resettlement program in 2018, by shutting more than 20 offices and downsizing the operation of another 40 agency offices across the US (*Reuters* 2018). In addition to the budget cut and downsizing of the refugee resettlement program, Trump also reduced the refugee admission ceiling significantly. Throughout his

presidency, Trump reduced the refugee admission ceiling continuously: from 50,000 in 2017 to the record-low of 15,000 in 2021. His justification was simple: if there were fewer refugees, it would be less costly (*The New York Times* 2017); thus the result in budget cuts and office closures.

Trump's justification for his securitization measures continued even to his 2020 presidential election. At a campaign rally in Minnesota, Trump claimed that his opponent Biden was planning to "inundate [the] state with a historic flood of refugees... he will turn Minnesota into a refugee camp, overwhelming public resources, overcrowding schools and inundating your hospitals... bringing foreigners... from the most dangerous countries in the world, including Yemen, Syria, [and] Somalia" (*The Washington Post* 2020). The traditional framing of economic and social threats, in addition to the security threats, hints at another round of increased securitization measures the Trump administration would implement if his presidency continued.

The framing of incoming refugees as threats to the US persisted for decades after the 9/11 attacks. The US's response to the fears of insecurity can be summarized as a continuation of increased securitization measures across administrations. The combination of "speech acts" and "securitizing moves" worked so effectively in justifying the necessity for extraordinary security measures. As the paper will demonstrate in the following section, the US is not the only developed society that adopted securitization measures post the 9/11 attacks.

The European Union Securitization Policies at Its Borders

Following the discussion of the US's securitization measures toward refugees, this section will shift its focus to the European Union's (EU) policies when it faces large influxes of refugee claimants at its borders. As this paper will demonstrate, the EU has had a long history of policies oriented toward border control, and the Schengen Agreement added further

complications in achieving an effective system when addressing large numbers of refugees. In the early 1990s, the EU was looking for ways to improve the control of refugee flows as there has been a sharp increase in refugee claims during the 1980s. During the same time, EU states were in the process of building a Europe “without borders:” the Schengen Area.

The Schengen Agreement recognized the ending of internal border control, but it also brought concerns over the regulation of the freedom of movement. Specifically, EU states were worried that refugee claimants would enter from the state with the most relaxed external border controls and then take advantage of the suppressed internal border controls to arrive in any state (Barutciski 1994). To address this concern, the implementation of the Schengen Agreement led to two main measures. First, the Schengen states imposed visa requirements on the nationals of most migrant-generating countries. To enforce this, sanctions were imposed on carriers that transport asylum seekers and those that do not have a requisite visa. Secondly, the states that issued the visa or in which the refugee claimants first arrived at will be responsible for examining the claims. However, due to this coordinated approach, the options available to refugees were greatly reduced.

The crisis in the former Yugoslavia (also referred to as the Balkan Refugee Crisis) was a test to the newly developed system. When refugees from Croatia first started crossing the international border in 1991, the initial response from countries like Hungary, Austria, and Italy was to open their borders and accept several thousands of refugees. To achieve this, these countries either dropped the visa requirements for ex-Yugoslav nationals or provided provisional admission (Ibid). However, when the war spread in early 1992, many countries began to alternate their entry policies in order to limit the number of refugee claimants arriving at their borders. By 1993, EU ministers imposed stricter visa requirements and diminished the

possibilities of large arrivals of refugees. Throughout the following years, EU member states imposed and dropped visa requirements continuously as politicians reacted to the public mood toward refugee policies.

As demonstrated through the EU's response to the Balkan Refugee Crisis in the 1990s, the EU lacked an effective governing system that allowed its member states to work collectively in addressing the issue of mass migration of refugees. This is because the EU is a relatively new governing system; it started as a community promoting democracy and economic collaborations in the 1950s. By the 1990s, the EU had 15 member states, and 7 of them participated in border-free travel under the Schengen Agreement. In this relatively shorter history of the union, the EU's main focus has not been on refugee protection and admission. As with any institution, the EU had limited attention and resources as it expanded eagerly to include more member countries in Europe. Thus, the EU did not take action unless the issues are present and pressing.

In order to compare and evaluate the EU's policies to that of other societies, it is essential to understand how the EU operates as a collective, as well as the dynamics between its member states—acting independently when responding to international crises. This paper will analyze the EU's response to the 9/11 attacks and the 2015 Refugee Crisis to demonstrate how there has been an increase in securitization policies oriented toward refugees, as well as to highlight the difference in response made by the EU and independent member states.

The EU has seven main institutions that make decisions for the collective; the legislation process can be a complicated and slow process that might take months of negotiations between the various institutions. Like any other government entity, the EU has limited time and energy that constrain the legislation process to focus on urgent priorities. In the early 2000s, the EU was focused on two main tasks: the implementation of the euro as a new single currency and the new

round of enlargement to include more member states. During the time of the 9/11 attacks and its aftermath, the EU as an institution was consumed by the introduction of the euro to its 12 member states while battling with the start of a recession and complications of the EU budget. The EU's ambition to expand from 15 members to include 26 or more by the end of the decade further strained much of its time and energy (Walker 2001). Thus, although the EU demonstrated securitizing moves in its response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the policy discussions were mainly surrounding border management in general and not specifically applied to refugee migration and admission.

The EU's response to the 9/11 attacks exemplified the characteristics of securitization. As defined by the Copenhagen School, the two indispensable aspects of "speech acts" and "securitizing moves" were both present in the policy discussion in the final months of 2001. On November 15, 2001, the European Commission issued a statement communicating a common policy on illegal immigration where it advocates that "the border controls must respond to... fight against criminal networks... terrorist risks... and [create] mutual confidence between Member States [without internal frontiers]." In December, the Council of the European Union issued another statement that echoed the same message: "The European Council asks the Council and the Commission to work out arrangements for co-operation... for external border control... and examine [the possibility for] a mechanism or common service to control external borders."

The themes of these institution statements reiterate the assumption of the link between migration movements and the source of insecurity. The call for a focus on "external border control" paves the path for the policies that the EU would adopt in the future years. Although there was no specific mention of refugees, the rhetoric and language of the EU institutions set the tone for the political environment which indirectly underscores that security threats originate

from “outside” and border control measurements were necessary (Neal 2009). The portrayal of the roots of insecurity would eventually become the focus of future policies as political narratives become increasingly targeted to specific regions in the world.

Now that the “speech act” has been found evident, the initial “securitizing moves” were present as well; they included the exploration of creating a “European Border Police” or “European Border Guard.” As early as October 2001, five EU member states had already begun working on a feasibility study on the idea of a border police mechanism for the EU collectively. There were also various national pilot projects aimed to create “national contact points” to increase communication and coordination among EU member states in achieving a common external border management system. One of these projects included the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA). Although SCIFA would play a more significant role in providing resolution to issues surrounding immigration and asylum in recent days, the Committee lacked concrete operational progress during the early 2000s.

Overall, the EU’s response to the 9/11 attacks focused on working towards “common cooperative external border control mechanisms” (Council of the European Union 2001). However, the policies proposed were rather vague and general, lacking implementations that would have significant effects. The emphasis on collaboration and cooperation on border control paved the road for future policies when the EU turned toward even more aggressive securitization measures.

Fast forward to the 2010s, the Libyan Civil War, the Syrian Civil War, and the War in Iraq have caused the forced displacement of millions. These armed conflicts ultimately led to the largest influx of refugees seeking to enter Europe in 2015. Commonly referred to as the 2015 Refugee Crisis, there was a record-breaking number of 1.3 million migrants seeking asylum in

the twenty-eight member states of the EU (UNHCR 2015). Facing the never-seen-before masses at its borders, the political debate surrounding refugees and asylum seekers was brought to the EU's center stage.

Following its precedent securitization policies, the EU's response to the 2015 Refugee Crisis was to adopt stricter external border control while framing this large movement as a security issue. To develop a solution and adopt a policy for addressing the large refugees at its borders, the European Commission prepared the European Migration Agenda in May 2015. The agenda's action plan consists of policies oriented toward internal and external actions. For internal actions, the Commission called for the formation of hotspots to control movement, evaluate asylum applications, and collect their information; these hotspots are mostly located in member states who are the "main entrance" to Europe, such as Italy and Greece (European Commission 2015). The second main aspect of internal actions proposed was to put quota and redistribute migrants for each member state; the proposal imposed a quota of 120,000 refugees to be divided among the EU member states (*The Guardian* 2015).

The external actions the Commission advocated for were stricter border control policies and an increase in policies oriented specifically toward "[fighting] against migrant smuggling and trafficking" (The European Agenda on Migration, The European Agenda on Security 2015). In doing so, the EU focused on the externalization of border control by calling for closer cooperation between member states to address the security issue. The European Commission enhanced Europol's "joint maritime information operation" and established a Common Security and Defense Policy Operation in the Mediterranean to "dismantle traffickers' networks" (Carrera et al. 2015). The EU also sought to address the external border security issue by establishing a

collaborative relationship with the origin or transit states in the neighboring region. For instance, Turkey became a transit state for Syrian refugees who were attempting to enter the EU.

In March 2016, the European Council and Turkey reached an agreement aimed at stopping the flow of irregular migrants into the EU from the Turkey border. This agreement would later be known as the “EU-Turkey Deal,” the fruit of negotiation and collaboration after the EU convinced Turkey to serve as a transit state for refugees. The joint action plan outlined a close collaboration between the two. All new irregular migrants entering the Greek islands from Turkey will be returned to Turkey; in exchange, “for every Syrian being returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled to the EU” (European Parliament 2016). Turkey will also combat irregular migration routes to Europe via Turkey and further “inform... people seeking refuge... about the risks linked to irregular departures as well as the possibilities available to them to enter in an orderly manner into the European Union” (European Commission 2015). The EU also planned to dedicate a six-billion-euro humanitarian aid for Syrian refugees in Turkey under the “Facility for Refugees in Turkey.” Overall, the purpose of such policies is to securitize the European borders by reducing the existing pressure at its borders as well as sending a message to dissuade incoming refugee claimants and asylum seekers (Terry 2021).

Despite the EU’s Migration Agenda that aimed to tackle the issue as a collective, as well as its existing Schengen Agreement, some member states adopted their own border policies when facing the peak of the 2015 Refugee Crisis. In September of 2015, Hungary completed the construction of a fence along its border with Serbia (UNHCR 2015). Aside from Hungary, a few other European countries also temporarily reinstated their border controls, ending the two decades of open borders in the EU. The difference in border control measurement between the

member states made it extremely difficult for the refugees. These securitization measures adopted by individual member states highlighted the fears of threat that were perceived from the large influx of refugees entering their borders. In fact, a study analyzing the surveys taken between May 2016 and November 2016 found that a majority of European citizens (70%) support the return of refugees when “the cause for their displacement has become obsolete” (Gerhards and Dilger 2020).

In both of the case studies on the US and the EU, one can see a clear cycle that is being played out for the past two decades. This cycle closely exemplifies the definition of securitization as introduced by the Copenhagen School. The refugees and their migration movement are often portrayed as a security concern through the use of rhetoric and language by authorities. Once the political narrative is constructed, the public sense the urgency of the issue and the necessity to adopt “extraordinary” responses to tackle the issue. To appeal to the public, the government adopts stricter securitization policies toward refugees. This cycle repeats whenever there is a major influx of refugees or incidents that can be drawn to the connection of border security (such as terrorist attacks).

The consistent increase of securitization measures in recent years not only made it extremely difficult for refugees who are fleeing from war and persecution but also blurred the line between a developed country’s responsibilities in providing humanitarian protection and its security.

From the above analysis of the cases of the US and the EU, one can see the common factor that is driving developed societies to adopt securitization measures toward refugees—the fears of threats and insecurity. However, if all policies continue to be constructed based on security: developed societies are not only running away from their responsibilities to protect

human rights, but they are also placing heavier burdens on third countries that become transit host states for refugees. There should be more collaboration between developed societies in not only tackling the issue of large refugee influxes but to provide assistance and aid to alleviate the cause of forced displacement at its origin.

Conclusion

As refugees are consistently at the center of global discussion and debates, governmental entities across the globe are adopting different, yet similar, policy measures. The paper utilizes the US and the EU as examples, examining how the 9/11 attacks marked a pivotal point in escalating their securitization measures. Through analyzing the rhetoric and the policies adopted, this paper builds the argument that developed societies are turning towards securitization measures as a response to the fears of threat and insecurity.

This research mainly relied on primary, secondary resources, and preexisting studies on the issue of refugees and security as guides for analysis. Much of the analysis of the rhetoric and language of government reports are built on the basis of repetition across multiple mediums. This analysis could be expanded further to include a systemic analysis that produces statistical evidence to highlight the tone and word usage in these sources. In addition, the limited time frame given to complete this research restricted the expansion to further analyze a few more significant events that took place between the 9/11 attacks and the 2015 Refugee Crisis.

Future research can dive deeper into incidents like the 2004 Madrid Bombings, 2005 London Bombings, and the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks; there could be new findings on how governments reacted to these “security” incidents. Shifting the focus to the present day, the EU easing its policies to accept Ukrainian refugees created a double standard in refugee admission. Further research could provide insightful information on how the EU justified this difference in policy and whether the EU is shifting away from a security-driven refugee policy.

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