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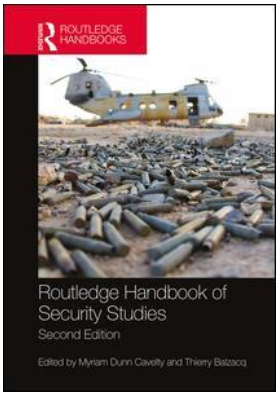

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MIGRATION AND SECURITY

Jef Huysmans and Vicki Squire

Today, migration, mobility, and borders are familiar themes in the study of international politics.[1] That was not always the case, however, and particularly not in Security Studies. In the 1970s and 80s you would have been hard pressed to find any analysis focusing on migration in Security Studies. 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).

Many things have changed since the 1980s, but four have played a central role in understanding how migration has emerged as a concern for scholars of Security Studies specifically:

1. The end of the Cold War and the rise of new security issues in Security Studies;
2. The development of new approaches to security;
3. The rise of international human security agendas; and
4. Developments in counter-terrorism policy in the wake of 9/11.

As a sub-discipline of International Relations (IR), largely oriented towards the US and Europe, Security Studies fell into a crisis after 1989–91, as both security institutions and security scholars lost their international bearing. What to do now that the insecurities that had dominated European and US agendas for decades no longer demanded priority? In reply, a discourse and institutionalisation of 'new' insecurities took centre stage. Moreover, the increasing use of the term 'Security Studies' was itself instrumental in opening up the military-focused bipolar security agenda to include new areas of study (Buzan 1991; Tickner 1995). In this context, the cross-border movement of people was a key issue that entered Security Studies (Heisbourg 1991; Widgren 1990). Simultaneously, migration and borders became a central area for the development of constructionist understandings of security, an approach that does not take security as a given, but analyses the processes through which a phenomenon is politically reframed as a security issue. Moreover, in the 1990s refugee policy became linked to the global human security agenda, while mass migration was defined as a key human security concern by the United Nations Development Programme. In the wake of 9/11, these developments were intensified and reconfigured through counterterrorist policies, as well as through analyses concerned with the effects of such policies on human mobility, immigrants, and borders.

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These developments of a migration/security nexus opened up a contested terrain within Security Studies (Bigo 2002; Guild and van Selm 2005; Wæver et al. 1993). The immediate questions in this context were:

- To what extent can migration be considered a serious security threat for states?
- What kind of insecurities does migration raise, and for whom or what?

In parallel, another set of questions emerged. They were not oriented towards strategic policy development aimed at defending the state, but concerned with the consequences and legitimacy of securitizing migration:

- Is it legitimate to govern migration through security policies?
- Through which political processes is migration framed as a security question, and what alternative framings exist or are possible?
- What are the consequences of politicizing migration as a security issue?
- How can a critical political analysis of mobility be developed out of the nexus of migration and security?

In charting the terrain through which these questions have emerged, 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 security perspective, through a focus on the security of the state, and 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 emphasizes the critical importance of the conceptual framing of the *relation* between migration and security.

This feeds into the second section, which charts a diverse body of critical work. Here, security is not a condition of the state or the individual, but refers to knowledges, discourses, technologies, and/or practices that mediate 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.

Strategic and humanitarian approaches to the migration/security nexus

In this section, we specifically show how analysts from both migration studies and Security Studies tend to approach the migration/security nexus in traditional terms, through conceptualizing security as a value to be achieved by means of national security policies and/or humanitarian actions. We conclude the chapter by introducing challenges from Critical Security Studies, which make a case for a reframing of migration and security.

Migration in traditional Security Studies

Many of the leading works introducing migration into the area of Security Studies have done so by 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

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that national security needs to be factored into the calculations of migration policy (Rudolph 2006; Weiner 1995). Such strategic approaches, which are important in giving migration studies greater legitimacy within the US mainstream of IR and strategic studies, treat security as a condition that is affected by migration and, thus, by migration policies.

These strategic analyses calculate the extent to which migratory and demographic developments bear upon national security questions. Such considerations range from fears of refugees and immigrants becoming 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 migration and security have opened up the area of migration studies beyond its classical economic focus on the state's selection of skilled and unskilled migrants for economic purposes (cf. Constant and Zimmerman 2005). This has contributed to a wider process through which the relationship between migration studies and refugee studies has been reconfigured (cf. Scheel and Squire 2014).

Strategic analysts also draw attention to the ways that security concerns impact on a state's migration policies. However, not all strategic analyses of the migration/security nexus define migration as a threat to national security (Rudolph 2006: 31). Migration can equally importantly become a condition of national security, thus supporting arguments for a less restrictive migration policy. What defines this approach is that it understands the migration/security nexus as a calculus of how migration impacts, positively as well as negatively, on the security of a state.

Human security and migration

Analysts of human security focus attention on the security of the person rather than that of the state and bring into view the protection of humans who migrate. This humanitarian approach has been reaffirmed in relation to refugees and asylum seekers (Nadig 2002), as well as in relation to the trafficking of (primarily women and children) migrants (Jonsson 2009).

Despite its widespread pragmatic and normative appeal, a focus on human security is of limited effect in radically reframing migration. Human security is largely incorporated as a dimension that is internal to global migration management (Koser 2005). This is evident, for example, in the growing linkage between migration and development, which does not effectively transcend a migration-control framework due to the predominance of political and institutional concerns over security (Lavenex and Kunz 2008).

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 realizing the values they claim to live by now' (Gibney 2004: 260). A pragmatic humanitarianism may be critical as a normative 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 that challenges the securitization of migration. Humanitarianism is essentially concerned with the protection of vulnerable populations and with redressing harmful practices. In this regard, it tends to approach the migrant as a disempowered victim rather than as a political actor. As such, humanitarianism does not escape a framework of security, but is integral to an approach through which migrants are either politicized as 'threatening' subjects to be feared, or are depoliticized as 'vulnerable' subjects to be pitied (see Aradau 2004; Pallister-Wilkins 2015; Squire 2015a). A shift from fear to pity here does not decouple migration and security, but intensifies security concerns in both international and domestic debates over migration. Indeed, debates regarding the migration/security nexus involve the coarticulation of both human and national security concerns. Rather than featuring as two discrete and mutually exclusionary approaches, strategic and human security approaches largely come together through their mutual securitization of migration.

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A critique

So how precisely do strategic and human security approaches come together in terms that securitize migration? These approaches share the potential reification of migration as a 'threat'. By approaching security as a value or a condition to aspire to, analysts from each approach tend to assume that migration policy can be developed either in terms that increase the security of states, or in terms that increase the security of migrants, or indeed 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'. This legitimizes exclusionary distinctions that have become particularly widespread across Europe, North America, and the Asia-Pacific in terms that identify 'undesirables' such as 'illegal immigrants' and 'asylum seekers' as necessitating intensified controls. Both strategic and human security approaches thus potentially consolidate what critical Security Studies scholars have defined as the securitization of migration and free movement (Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2006; Squire 2009).

For this reason, strategic and human security approaches are limited in terms of their ability to open up the intellectual terrain at the nexus of migration and security in all its sociological, political, and normative richness. Strategic approaches not only eliminate the normative questions regarding how securitizing migration produces exclusion, violence, and inequality; 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 the 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. Most notably, human and strategic security perspectives render the management of threats (whether to the person or to the state) the defining stake of migration policy, while conferring legitimacy on policy-making assemblages of security agencies, development experts, human rights lawyers, migration experts, NGOs and humanitarian organizations. It is in a context of exclusionary and technical or bureaucratic relations that a critical and political analysis of the social processes involved in the linkage of migration and security is required.

Critical analyses of the migration/security nexus

One way in which a less strategic and more critical political sociological approach to the migration/security nexus can be developed is in the analysis of the effects that the political framing of migration as a threat has 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', 'illegal migrants', and sometimes migration more generally. An analysis of the discrepancy between perceptions of migration and the objective threat that migration poses, as well as between threat perceptions of migration in the political elite and in the wider public is of political interest in this regard (Lahav 2004).

Social materiality

However, focusing on threat perceptions underplays the social materiality of the securitizing processes – security in this literature seems to exist primarily in the mind. By contrast, critical scholars suggest that the securitization of migration implies more than simply perceptions. Of particular importance are the societal circulations of security discourses, the application of

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security technologies, the development of legal categories through material practices such as form-filling, and professional routines that construct and sustain actions through which migration is governed 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 that employs metaphors such as 'floods' legitimates a stronger focus on border controls and a more crucial position of border police, as opposed to employers' interests, for example (Garrelli et al. 2013). What matters here is not so much what people believe, but the nature and the available palette of languages that publics, policy-makers, and professional organizations can draw upon when speaking about migration, as well as the skills and knowledge that border police bring to the management of migration compared to the skills and knowledge of employer organizations and unions (see Andreas 2009).

It is here that Critical Security Studies opens up the analysis of the migration/security nexus to 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 is understood in terms of a language, knowledge, and professional skill-set linked to particular organizations, which is always shaped in relation to other knowledges, discourses, technologies, or practices that contest it.

The question is not whether migration is indeed a security issue or not, but rather how the migration/security nexus has gained potency as a method of governing migration in certain situations. In shifting attention to the social and political processes that construct phenomena as a security issue, these critical approaches avoid taking insecurities as given. The policy question is not what needs to be done to reduce insecurities provoked by (particular categories of) migration. Rather, consideration is paid to the consequences of governing migration by means of security policies or practices, and to how the negative consequences of this, and the securitization of migration more broadly, can be avoided.

Sites, agencies, technologies

Critical Security Studies scholars have examined these questions in relation to various sites, agencies, and technologies at the intersection of migration and security. Important sites in this regard are camps in which migrants are detained (Ilcan 2013; Johnson 2013; Le Cour Grandmaison et al. 2007). The border areas or zones through which migrants pass, such as airports, embassies, and customs are also important sites of investigation (Infantino and Rea 2012; Muller 2005; Salter 2008).

In terms of agencies, critical scholars, among others, have looked at the increasing role of security professionals, including private agencies, in the regulation of movement (Bigo 1996a; Guiraudon 2000). Such research also examines various security technologies employed in the regulation of migration, such as visas, asylum procedures, biometrics, and surveillance (e.g. Amoore, 2006; Bellanova and Fuster, 2013).

All of these approaches share the idea that security practices involve a specific strategy or technique of governing and (de)politicizing migration. Politically speaking, migration and mobility are one of the key areas in which the legitimacy of security measures is heavily contested. Such a focus therefore does not simply invite sociological investigations into how issues become securitized, but also demands a political analysis of (a) the ways in which the process of securitizing migration confers political legitimacy on particular groups or actions (for example, nationalist movements and parties); and of (b) different contestations of security knowledges, discourses, technologies, or practices (for example debates on data protection and privacy in relation to

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demands for a more intensive gathering and storage of data from refugees, migrants, and mobile people more generally). Critical analysts thus focus on the precise nature and effects of using security instruments, knowledges, and discourses in the area of migration, as well as on the institutions sustaining such processes (e.g., Pilkington 1998; van Munster 2009).

The presence of security policies in the migration area is thus explained not only by the political use of security language in the migration field and by the use of references to migration-related issues in security debates like counterterrorism. The process of securitizing migration includes the presence and relative power of security professionals and experts in the migration policy field (Bigo 1996a; Boswell 2007; Guiraudon 2000). It also includes the transfer of security practices and instruments between different policy areas concerned with controlling mobility. For example, in the European Union there have been significant transfers between the policing of football hooligans through travel restrictions and the control of migration (Tsoukala 2004). Similarly in the North American context, scholars have considered how a range of separate issues become associated with migration through security and policing knowledges, discourses, technologies, and practices (Andreas 2009).

Inclusions/exclusions

In undertaking such analyses, critical scholars of the migration/security nexus highlight the exclusionary and violent effects of security knowledges, discourses, technologies, and practices on particular groups of migrants (Guild 2009; Le Cour Grandmaison et al. 2007; Walters 2002). There has been a proliferation of critical scholarship over recent years that examines the political effects of profiling and surveillance techniques on mobile people. This includes a focus on fingerprinting, data storage and mining, camps, visas, passports, etc. (Bigo and Guild 2005; Bonditti 2004; Muller 2005).

Beyond the field of critical Security Studies, related concerns have emerged in debates regarding the role of border walls as markers of a waning (or resurgent) sovereignty in a post-9/11 context (Brown 2010). The concern here has not only been with the exclusionary articulation of borders and identity (Epstein 2007). The political and practical characteristics of exclusionary and violent knowledges, discourses, technologies, or practices have been debated, in particular in terms of their exceptional or routine status (e.g. Basaran 2008). These debates are important for the field of critical Security Studies and the migration/security nexus, because they prompt consideration of how the securitization of migration might be challenged, or transformed from a security question to a non-security issue.

Moving beyond the migration/security nexus

Critical Security Studies scholars conceive security as having various meanings and as constituting social and political techniques of governing that effectively shape human mobility. In other words, security is not conceived of as a value to aspire to or a condition of insecurity that needs addressing but as a *constitutive mediator* of the relation between mobility and politics. This brings to the fore the normative nature of writing security, where security knowledge easily slips into a securitizing knowledge.

In this regard, one of the important questions for critical studies of the migration/security nexus is whether it is possible to perform Security Studies without contributing to the process of securitization. This has led to significant debates surrounding the desecuritization (Wæver 1995) of issues such as migration. Sociological analyses of desecuritization aim to study how in a situation of securitized migration, migration can be taken out of the security policy area and governed through non-security instruments. Such process includes delegitimizing the role of security

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professionals and discourses, taking migration out of the realm of 'the exceptional', changing routine governmental techniques of managing migration, and so on. Yet although such an approach has often been called for, such analyses are hard to find in Security Studies, critical or not.

A more fruitful approach, at least in terms of the existing literature, has been to displace the focus on security by developing an analysis of the politics of mobility. Security knowledges, discourses, technologies, and practices through which migration is governed often remain significant in these analyses, but they are placed within a wider understanding of the political significance and contestations of mobility (Guild 2009; Ilcan 2013). Security, along with its linkages to migration, then becomes one of several issues that affects, shapes, and constrains mobility, rather than the defining concern. Important here, then, is that security is not privileged either as a value or as a governing practice in the analysis of migration.

A growing literature looks at the political agency of migrants. Such studies take issue with analyses that overstate the capacity of restrictive and humanitarian security policies to destroy the agency of migrants. They mostly study situations in which exclusionary techniques of governing, including security practices, imply an impoverishment of 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). Yet, rather than focusing on the details of the methods of control and their effects in terms of discriminations, objectifications of subjects, and destitution of political agency, they study what migrants are actually doing and how their actions gain political significance (e.g. Aradau 2008; Johnson 2014; Mezzadra 2011). This is more in line with a rights-based approach, which has been posed as an alternative to a security-oriented approach in relation to forced migration (Goodwin-Gill 2001); trafficking (Jordan and Duvell 2002); and 'illegal immigration' (Cholenewski 2000).

However, rather than focusing on the inherent rights of individuals, these 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 in recent years, such as by considering citizenship claims as claims to being political through demands to the right to hold rights. Such claims are seen as significant politically because they are 'mis-placed' or irregular according to an exclusionary and de-politicizing frame of security (e.g. Andrijasevic 2010; McNevin 2006; Nyers and Moulin 2007). Others have looked more closely at how what are sometimes defined as 'abusive' actions by migrants – such as their 'tricking' of the system – are forms of resistance rather than simply opportunistic practices. These interpretations look less at rights claims and more at the everyday practices of mobility and how they resist through escaping or appropriating the governmental techniques of control (Bagelman 2013; Papadopoulos et al. 2008; Scheel 2013; Squire 2015b).

Another method by which the migration/security nexus has been opened to a wider political analysis of mobility has been to foreground the question of violence that is committed against the body of migrants and its political legitimacy. Refugees fighting the government in their country of origin from abroad or the violence exercised upon the body of migrants are in this sense not reduced to a question of matters of human security and national security. Instead of security, the political nature of violence takes the foreground. For example, some have opened up the question of what the exercise of violence against the body of refugees (e.g. in detention centres), as well as what the forms of resistance that involve self-imposed violence (e.g. lip or eye sewing, hunger strikes or suicide attempts) tell us about the nature of the modern state and international politics and the political role of violence in it (Edkins 2005; Le Cour Grandmaison et al. 2007; Nyers 2006: 97–122).

Others have pointed to the significance of indirect forms of violence enacted through material forces such as the desert or the sea, raising the question of how such violence plays into the legitimization of restrictive measures (Doty 2011; Squire 2014; Sundberg 2011). Like the

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literatures foregrounding migrant agency, these studies take key political issues at stake in the governance of mobility – in this case the nature and political significance and legitimacy of violence – rather than the techniques of security practice as the main object of analysis. Security or securitization is then part of, but not presumed to be central to, the analysis of migration or mobility (see Boswell 2007; Squire, 2016). Rather, the central focus concerns the wider political questions that are articulated in relation to mobility and migration policies.

Conclusion

In the first section of this chapter we considered how the migration/security nexus is developed and sustained through the interplay of national and human security concerns. In Security Studies each is represented by a discrete set of analyses, one focusing on how migration raises issues of national security and the other focusing on how current conditions and policies endanger individual migrants or people in an interconnected world. As a result very few analyses look at how both are interconnected in practice and jointly sustain the governing of migration through security techniques.

We then moved on to examine how critical Security Studies scholars have unpacked the social and political processes through which migration is made into and sustained as a matter of security. The migration/security nexus in these terms is then not seen as the result of threats to national security and to migrants as such, but in relation to changes in the governing of migration. In other words, the nexus is seen as a consequence of a political and governmental reframing of migration.

The chapter concluded with a proposal to study the migration/security nexus indirectly. Instead of homing in on security threats or the processes of securitization, we highlight the significance of analyses that situate the securitization of migration within a wider analysis of practices of citizenship, violence, or political subjectivities. Such political analysis of the migration/security nexus has developed an understanding of how security knowledges, discourses, technologies, and practices operate across a political field where various approaches to human mobility are contested through struggles over the definition of (legitimate) political agency, the role of violence, competing conceptions of rights or justice, etc. These readings of the migration/security nexus thus shift research away from simply refining our understanding of the security dimensions of migration and the implications of its securitization. It embeds securitizing processes in social and societal negotiations of central political questions, which are rarely engaged exclusively in security terms.

Note

1 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 twentieth 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.

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