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Short communication

Beyond national security: The nation-state, refugees and human security

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ABSTRACT

International migration is one of the key factors that are shaping our globalizing world. There is an increasingly growing literature on migration, which reflects this significance of international population movements. This article reviews three recent books, which focus on the role of nation-states in managing and shaping migration processes and examine the relationship between national and human security. While the work of Elizabeth Mavroudi and Caroline Nagel takes a bird's-eye view of migration, it underlines the nation-state-centred perspective in migration studies. Gabriella Lazaridis and Wadia Khursheed focus on the member states of the European Union, and analyze discourse, practice, and consequences of the securitization of migration that has dominated in Europe since 9/11. On the other hand, Innes' book also deals with securitization, but it concentrates on security seen "from below". Drawing on experiences of asylum seekers, Alexandria J. Innes criticizes the privileging of the nation-state in security analysis. Taken together, these works pose both empirical and normative questions about the role of the nation-state in the context of migration. Although the works do not provide ultimate answers, they suggest potential future research directions. I argue that there are two problems which seem to be particularly compelling. First, what are the functions and the consequences, given its current ineffectiveness, of securitization policy? Second, how can state security be reconciled with inclusive human security?

Introduction

There is no doubt that international migration is one of the key factors that are shaping our globalizing world. Although only about three percent of the world's population lives outside their country of origin, the international movement of people has far-reaching consequences for migrants and for both the sending and receiving societies. International migration also generates emotionally charged public debates and is the key topic on policy agendas worldwide. The increasingly growing literature on migration reflects this significance of international population movements. However, despite the growing body of literature, there is no agreement as to the main causes, nature, and consequences of migration. Migration studies remain a divided research

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field. One of the contested topics is the role of the nation-state in migration processes. Recent years have seen the emergence of transnationalism and cosmopolitan paradigms, which speak of the diminishing significance of the nation-state both as the object of people's loyalty, and as the effective external bounded entity capable of controlling migration flows and integrating migrants into homogenous national culture [1]. This review article examines three recent works in migration studies that focus on the role of the nation-state in migration processes [2–4]. I find these books particularly interesting, especially in the context of the contemporary migration crisis. Taken together, these three remarkable books pose an important and timely question about the significance of national security and its relation to human security.
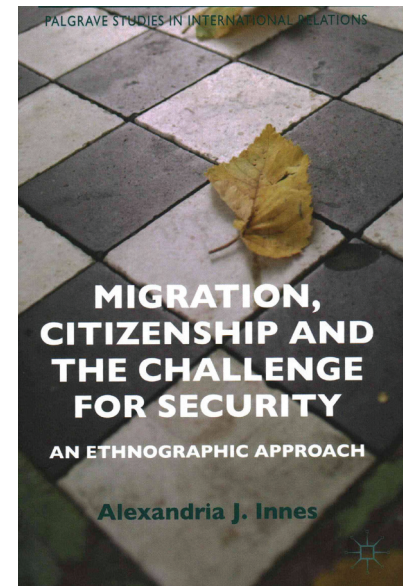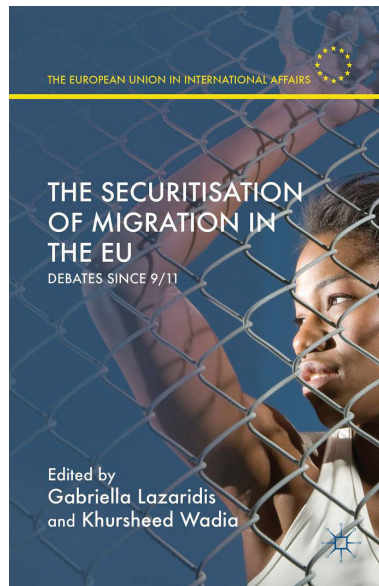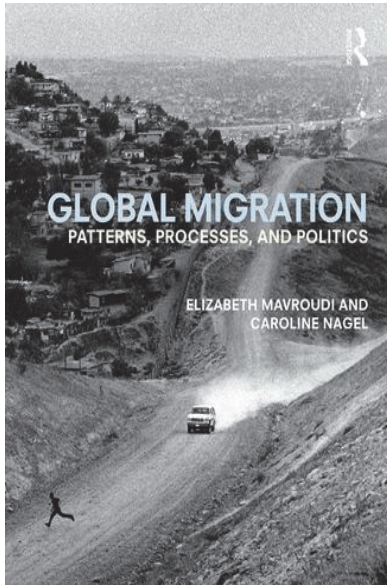
Migration and the nation-state

In *Global Migration* [2], Elizabeth Mavroudi and Caroline Nagel provide a bird's-eye view of international migration, and they do not deal with it in more depth. This lack of detailed discussion is completely understandable and justified, since they take a broad perspective with the intention of synthesizing our knowledge of migration processes in the global context. In my opinion, they are quite successful in realizing this daunting task. Their book is well-structured, combining the rigour of academic reasoning with an accessible writing style. It also covers most of the important issues in migration studies; however, as I will point out, the book is not exhaustive, and certain themes are left relatively unexplored.

Mavroudi and Nagel [2] discuss three general issues. First, they consider questions concerning what migration is; who counts as a migrant; and why, where, and under what conditions people migrate. What is important from my point of view is that they take a nation-state-centred perspective, arguing for focusing on immigration and emigration instead of speaking in more general terms about mobility. Let me clarify that the term mobility, in contrast to the concepts of immigration and emigration, does not assume that the nation-state is the main referent point in analysis. Although the authors concur that in many cases there is no clear distinction between migration and mobility, they are not eager to abandon the idea of privileging the concept of the nation-state in their discussion of peoples' movement. As they explain:

"Certainly, we must view state practices through a critical lens; but approaching state power critically requires that we make state practices – and the assumption about belonging and membership that underpin them – more visible rather than less visible. As much as state-produced categories obscure the causes and consequences of migration, these categories and the policies that flow from them have a crucial role in shaping migrants' realities and experiences" [2, p. 7].

But in my opinion, such an approach does not sufficiently take into account the fact that migrants' experiences are also shaped by many other factors, and that national borders play various roles for different migrants. To give two examples: First, it seems to me that foregrounding the nation-state point of view causes the authors to neglect the non-national context, especially the city context. As many researchers have emphasized, cities, and not just global ones like New York and London, play an increasingly important role in the global economy. For instance, cities compete to attract migrants, especially those who are highly skilled; they develop policies that aim to integrate them, and in consequence cities and urban spaces should be considered as an important and distinctive context for migrant adaptation and integration [5–8]; Second, the authors also underplay the role of transnational areas, such as the European Union, which, by enabling the free movement of people in turn generates more fluid, circular, and undefined flows of people. These multidirectional, transient, and complex flows blur 'the distinction between

migration and other forms of mobility, such as tourism, commuting and student migration' [9,10].

Trying to answer the questions of why, where, and under what conditions people migrate, the authors consider key theories of migration, for example: economic theory, new economic theory, and neo-Marxist structural theories. However, in my opinion their overview of various theoretical approaches is rather sketchy, especially in its treatment of the transnationalism perspective and network theory. The authors mention this latter approach in passing, and the term 'networks' is not even in the index. The authors focus more on a descriptive discussion of the various reasons for migration and different migration patterns. While they attempt to provide a picture of migration in the global context, there is relatively little discussion of some regions, especially Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. It seems to me that this latter region is particularly interesting in the context of migration because of the growing number of migrants pushed out of their towns and villages by extreme weather conditions. However, the book pays little attention to this relatively new phenomenon of climate or environmental migration related mainly to global warming [11].

I would like to stress that the big advantage of the book is that it examines current migration patterns in a broad historical perspective. Apparently following the works of the historical-structuralist school of thought in migration studies, the authors start with the emergence of the European-centred global economy in the early modern period. This historical context helps to better elucidate the specificity of contemporary migration patterns and to undermine some common and widespread opinions concerning for example the growing number of migrants in the contemporary world.

The second general question discussed by Mavroudi and Nagel [2] revolves around broader economic, social, and political processes related to migration in the context of both the sending and receiving societies. Thus, the book raises themes such as the economic consequences of migration, especially the relationships between migration, development, and modernization and the integration of migrants into labour markets. The authors offer a nuanced view, pointing out both the beneficial and disadvantageous results of migration. For example, while they underline the positive role of remittances for receiving societies, at the same time Mavroudi and Nagel [2] discuss research indicating that remittances sometimes reinforce class divisions and devitalize underdevelopment of rural areas. For instance, migrants usually come from relatively better-off families, and their money flows back to already privileged groups. Moreover, the inflow of remittances may give the local government an excuse not to invest in improving the infrastructure in rural areas. As for social processes, the authors also draw our attention to complex issues of identity maintenance and transformation, place-making practices, and attempts to maintain the link with people and places left behind. The problem of migrants' identity is closely connected with more political issues of integration and citizenship, which are also discussed in the book. However, in my opinion the discussion of integration and citizenship is at times rather superficial and uncritical,

since it reproduces the dubious and widely criticized dichotomy between ethnic and civic nations. For example, the critical arguments pertain to whether civic nations actually exist at all, or to the alleged openness of the civic nation [12]. Even if the authors do not agree with these criticisms, they could engage more fully with arguments developed against contrasting ethnic and civic nationalism.

The third question discussed in the book (in addition to reasons and patterns of migration and broader social, economic, and political processes) relates to various attempts of controlling and managing migration by nation-states. This is in accordance with the authors' nation-state perspective throughout the entire book. The authors suggest that the nation-state is the main institution which shapes and mediates global processes, including the flow of people. This power of the state is most evident at borders, which are constantly monitored and controlled. In my view, Mavroudi and Nagel [2] are convincing in their argument that contemporary states have ever greater technological capacities to control peoples' movements. However, the power of the state regarding migration is not limited to controlling its borders, but it also embraces the state's capacity to decide who can be granted citizenship rights. The book rightly discusses various forms of border politics and unequal distribution of asylum, resident status, and citizenship rights by nation-states, especially in the context of refugees. It must be stressed that the authors do not unreflexively accept the nation-state perspective, but try to look critically behind official discourse that is often taken for granted. Thus, for example, they do not treat undocumented immigrants as breaching the law, but rather examine how the state produces the category of vulnerable 'illegal' immigrants who live under permanent threat of deportation. The authors also note the growing willingness of nation-states, especially in the EU and North America, to monitor their borders and to detain and deport 'undesired' immigrants, displaying increasing reluctance to grant asylum rights. While this problem of the increasing eagerness of nation-states to police their borders and control citizenship is quite comprehensively discussed, it also leaves some questions relatively overlooked. In my opinion, the authors do not provide answers to two important questions. First, the authors have little to say about the effectiveness of this increased effort to curb 'undesired' migration. Second, they generally do not discuss the reasons for the rising security concerns connected with migration.

Securitization of migration

The volume edited by Gabriella Lazaridis and Wadia Khursheed [3] focuses exclusively on the issue of securitization of migration in the European Union. Securitization of migration pertains to the above-mentioned tendency to define migration in terms of threats to state security. The book consists of chapters written by established academic researchers and practitioners specializing in migration studies, ethnic and racial studies, and security studies. Although the volume brings contributions from various authors, it constitutes a coherent and well-structured reading. The book is divided into three parts, which deal

with different but related problems. Thus, the book starts with chapters discussing theoretical and conceptual questions related to the securitization of migration. This first part attempts to answer the question of how and why the link between migration and securitization has been constructed. It demonstrates that the European states simultaneously liberalize immigration policy and increasingly see migration as a security problem. Thus, the EU states divide immigrants into 'desirable' (high-skilled) and 'troublesome' (e.g. refugees, low-skilled, Muslims) who are defined through the prism of terrorism, social expenditures, and cultural threat. The first part of the book discusses not only the public discourse on securitization, but also the role of academics and practitioners who produce the expert knowledge on migration. Much space is also devoted to practices of securitization, both at the nation-state and EU levels, for example the extension and normalization of detentions and deportations of 'unwanted' migrants, stricter asylum policies, and attempts to control borders more effectively through outsourcing and offshoring border control to transportation companies, which can be fined if they carry passengers without valid visas. However, in my opinion this aspect of the privatization of immigration is not fully explored. It raises interesting questions about the changing nature of the nation-state, which paradoxically exercises its sovereign power over borders but at the same time delegates that power to private companies. The authors link the securitization of migration with the September 11 attacks, which gave rise to the tendency to equate migration with terrorism. However, it seems to me that this does not explain other aspects of securitization connected with defining migration not in terms of the threat of terrorism but in terms of cultural or economic danger.

The second part of the book brings a change of perspective, and in my opinion it contains the most interesting chapters. This part poses the question of the consequences of securitization for detainees and migrant communities, especially Muslim groups, in the UK and France. Thus, in this part the articles propose a view 'from below' on the issue of security. The articles analyze an increasing tendency to monitor and scrutinize ethnic communities, which are regarded as a potential threat to national security. This monitoring involves not only the discursive construction of an atmosphere of suspicion, but also such practices as increasing the numbers of unwarranted arrests; stop-and-search policies; informal racial profiling; and heavy patrolling and extensive use of surveillance technologies, e.g. CCTC, in neighbourhoods, especially those which are predominantly Muslim. Drawing on qualitative research, this part of the book examines how migrants themselves experience securitization in their daily lives. A separate chapter is devoted to the under-researched theme of female detainees, who seem to be particularly vulnerable and at risk to various types of abuses. These chapters speak of the ineffectiveness of securitization practices. Furthermore, they convincingly suggest that these practices may bring reverse effects. Thus, the number of 'undocumented' and 'undesired' migrants in the EU is not falling. There is also a growing sense of insecurity among ethnic communities, which feel that

they are not fully accepted by receiving societies. In other words, the politics of securitization seems to be counter effective, since it marginalizes migrant communities and makes them subject to constant suspicion, which may inhibit their integration into mainstream society. Thus, and paradoxically, the securitization of migration produces a widespread feeling of insecurity among ethnic minorities, which may lead to their alienation from the receiving state. Importantly, this feeling of insecurity cannot be separated from the broader social and economic context, which also adds to a sense of anxiety and marginalization among ethnic communities. While this part of the book presents a detailed and thorough examination of the consequences of securitization for migrants, it does not provide an answer to why, given that securitization fails to bring the intended results, this type of politics continues to exist. Thus, in my opinion the authors do not answer the question of what other social or political function this counter-productive policy plays. I concur with the editors, who postulate that more research should be undertaken in this regard, especially *"within anthropology and psychology, on what the erection of walls and borders across Europe and elsewhere signifies on a psychological level"* [3, p. 12].

The third part of the book suggests that the securitization of migration may have something to do with the rise of far-right political parties in Europe. However, the link between far-right parties and securitization is not straightforward. In my opinion the book is not clear on this issue. Having read the book, I do not know whether the anti-immigrant discourse of right-wing parties pushed European governments to take a harder stance on immigration, or, on the contrary, the mainstream discourse and practices of securitization undertaken by the nation-state gave credence to right-wing ideologies that blame immigrants for all of society's ills. Although the third part of the book deals with the far-right parties in the context of securitization, it does not provide an answer to this question. This section focuses mostly on analyzing the ideologies and activities of selected extreme-right parties: the British National Party, Greece's Golden Dawn Party, Italy's CasaPound, and factions within Scandinavia (the Danish People's Party, the Norwegian Progress Party, the Sweden Democrats, and the Finns' Party). These chapters analyze how those far-right parties frame migration as a multifaceted threat to national security, pointing out the similarities and differences between them. The case of the CasaPound party seems to be particularly interesting, because it actually pursues neo-fascist racist ideology, but conceals it through appeals to apparently universal ideas of protection of all cultures and traditions. In my view, this part of the book is rather descriptive and, as I have already suggested, it is relatively weakly connected with the wider issue of securitization. Although the book sets forth interesting questions about the relationship between the success of far-right parties and the increased securitization of migration, the problem warrants further and more detailed analyses, for example regarding electoral support for far-right parties. Contrary to what we can read in the chapter devoted to the Scandinavian far-right [3, p. 229], in my opinion, this support seems to be connected not so much with the actual number but rather with the perceived

number of immigrants [13]. To sum up, in my opinion the book edited by Lazaridis and Khursheed [3] clearly demonstrates that the politics of securitization provides freedom from fear at the cost of migrant insecurity. It "*poses a dilemma: whether to adopt national-societal or human-centric perspectives, and whether the divergent and competing approaches to security (national, societal, and human) can or should ever be reconciled*" [3, p. 11]. Unfortunately, the book does not try to suggest any possible solution to this appealing and timely dilemma. The editors just call for more research that could shed light on the ways in which the nation-states may provide more inclusive security.

Towards human security

The inconsistency between national security and migrant security is the subject of Alexandria J. Innes's book [4]. She also recognizes the growing tendency towards the securitization of migration in the European states, which manifests itself in the adoption of stricter requirements for gaining asylum status. As a result, in recent years more and more asylum applications have been turned down in the EU member states. In her book, on the one hand she focuses on the people who escape from persecution and seek asylum in Western liberal-democratic states. While on the other hand, she examines the European states' asylum policies: whom states consider to be asylum seekers, and under what conditions, as well as how states deal with asylum seekers. She combines down-to-earth ethnographic methods with law and policy analysis. Moreover, she is interested in the broader theoretical significance of her findings for security studies. In my opinion, her work is an excellent theory-soaked empirical study which critically considers widespread and taken-for-granted assumptions about the primacy of state security.

According to Innes [4], the state-centred perspective dominates not only in policy practice, but also in security studies. She starts her analysis with a critical overview of various theoretical approaches in security studies to demonstrate to what extent they privilege state security. To problematize the concept of state security, she draws on the Copenhagen school and feminist theory. Thus, she understands security not as static *Ding an sich*, but rather as a discursively constructed and maintained social process. Moreover, following the feminist critique of overconcentration on the state and high politics, she focuses on everyday issues and practices. In other words, she turns to the migrants themselves to examine how they understand and practice security in their daily lives in the context of the increasing securitization of migration in the EU. It is here where the ethnographical method is useful, since it gives a voice to those who have experienced state securitization practices. In order to explore how migrants practice security, Innes [4] draws on asylum seekers' narratives that she collected between 2010 and 2011 in Greece and the UK. She conducted eighteen in-depth interviews and six-month-long participant observations in migratory advocacy organizations that help migrants in Greece and the UK. Additionally, she used eight semi-structured interviews with volunteers and workers within migratory organizations.

Innes [4] relies on qualitative data to introduce the history of five asylum seekers, all of whom faced many troubles and complications in their claims for asylum protection. Thus, we are confronted with details of migrants' long and difficult journeys to Europe, their motives behind the decision to apply for asylum status, and their struggles with bureaucracy. Although they considered themselves to be asylum seekers or refugees, their status was insecure, since the state officially regarded them as undocumented migrants and denied their applications, or the interviewees were in the process of seeking asylum which they perceived as tedious and frustrating. Drawing on the asylum seekers' narratives, Innes [4] analyses a gap between migrants who regard themselves as refugees and how the state defines and grants asylum protection. She indicates how the asylum laws and practices of European states, such as outsourcing and offshoring and strict asylum criteria, put migrants in a liminal state without a guarantee of basic rights and *eo ipso* without security. Innes [4] also discusses the dichotomy between asylum seeker and economic migrant implied in refugee law and evoked in public debates in the EU. In my opinion, she convincingly argues that this distinction relies on false and simplified notions of forced migration and voluntary migration. Innes [4] persuasively states that this simplified dichotomy does not take into account the complex motivations of refugees and denies them agency by treating them as grateful passive victims. Moreover, the dichotomy implies the linear and unidirectional migration process: from the country where migrants suffer persecution to the first safe country. However, in reality the process of choosing a destination country is much more complex, long, and complicated, especially since the concept of a first safe country is not clear. Nevertheless, the refugee law does not recognize the fact that decisions about destination country are often taken during transit, not at the moment of migrating. In consequence,

> "... on seeking leave to remain in a state, the asylum seeker must bear the burden of proof that migration was forced, which means that the individual cannot have asserted agency in the process to claim. Where agency is detected (such as choosing to leave one country to travel to a particular destination) the asylum claim is undermined" [4, p. 111].

Migrants who are denied asylum are constructed as illegal and consequently unwanted and deportable. While Innes' [4] analyses of migrants' experiences are persuasive and compelling, I wonder, given her feminist perspective, why she does not pay more attention to gender differences and how they influence migrants' experiences of (in) security.

As noted, for Innes [4] the analyses of migrants' life histories and experiences have broader theoretical significance. This is the way of subverting the traditional concept of state security and in turn providing a starting point for investigating a more just and inclusive understanding of human security. As she writes,

> "... rather than using empirical studies to bolster a theoretical standpoint, or explaining the empirics through theorizing, the practice I show in the empirics

is the theory. In this way, the theorization of security I lay out in this volume is truly experiential" [4, p. 150].

Consequently, Innes [4] encourages us to think about security from the point of view of asylum seekers, from the perspective of those who are excluded from state security and whose experiences demonstrate that the territorial sovereign state is an inadequate security provider. She argues that looking at the practices of people who define themselves as asylum seekers permits us to broaden our understanding of security. People who self-identify as asylum seekers often practice security outside the category of the sovereign state, relying on the assistance of migratory organizations, relatives, and ethnic networks, as well as their own capacities, recourses, and ingenuities. Yet, while it is clear to me that analyzing refugees' practices can help us to think about security in a broader way, it is much less obvious how to provide and guarantee this more inclusive security for asylum seekers. In other words, the author claims that abusing asylum seekers' rights is not accidental or temporal, but constitutes "structural effects of the state system" [4, p. 73]. The international system consisting of the territorial sovereign state, which is the main provider of rights, is ill suited to protect the rights of mobile persons, especially those who escape persecution from states. In my opinion, the book convincingly suggests that the international system needs some restructuring. However, it does not present any hints about how the international system should be reshaped. It encourages us to consider security outside the nation-state, but it says nothing about how to make refugees less vulnerable and less susceptible to the abuse of power by states. In short, even if asylum seekers practice security beyond the nation-state, their life and fortune depends to a great extent on the decisions of the nation-state, since for example they can face deportation to their countries of origin, where they can be persecuted, tortured, or killed. To sum up, the book compellingly encourages us to think about security beyond the nation-state, but it seems to me that it says too little about how to improve the institutional system of protection for refugees.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the book by Mavroudi and Nagel [2] presents a comprehensive and broad picture of complex questions related to international migration. In my opinion it is quite a successful attempt to synthesize our knowledge on migration. At the same time the authors put forward arguments as to the dominant significance of the nation-state in migration processes. However, in my view they overestimate the role of the national state and do not pay enough attention to various non-national factors. The two remaining books under review are more focused and concentrate exclusively on the crucial issues related to nation-state sovereignty. The book edited by Lazaridis and Khursheed [3] revolves around the European Union member states' attempts at controlling migration flows for the sake of national security. In my view, the

book interestingly and compellingly demonstrates the inconsistency and ineffectiveness of securitization policy. On the other hand, the volume authored by Innes [4] takes an even more critical and normative stance and focuses on the question of security from the perspective of vulnerable migrants who seek security and protection. In my view, it rightly questions the taken-for-granted privileging of national security over human safety. This, in my opinion, taken together these three works poses an important empirical and normative question about the role of the nation-state in the context of migration and migrant rights. Although the works do not provide ultimate answers, they suggest potential future research directions. In my opinion, there are two problems that seem to be particularly compelling. First, what are the functions and the consequences, given its current ineffectiveness, of securitization policy? Second, how can state security be reconciled with inclusive human security?

Conflict of interests

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding this article.

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