

Research Article

European Union's Securitization and Favoritism Phenomenon: Lesson Learned from the 2015 Europe's Migrant Crisis

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Abstract

This research article aims to portray the phenomenon of how Europe's perspective and attitudes toward migration. Race, culture, and politics all play a prominent role in Europe's reception of migrants. This article precisely focused on the role of the European Union (EU) during the 2015 migrant crisis. As Europe faced the struggle where 1.3 million refugees and migrants illegally entered Europe by sea in 2015, compared to roughly 200,000 in 2014. Moreover, the current 2022 Ukraine war resulted in over 4.9 million refugees with 3.3 million of them having filed for temporary residence in few European countries. The author argues that European countries have responded to the issue differently, with some welcoming migrants and others rejecting them. This article finds the reasons, namely: (1) securitization within the EU, i.e., raising the issue of migration as a "matter of European security"; and (2) the phenomenon of favoritism, as evidenced by selective solidarity, racism, and anti-immigrant rhetoric. This article attests that both securitization and favoritism culture in Europe must be recalculated and used as lessons learned so that there is no bias in allowing forthcoming migrants and so that the EU continues to exist.

Keywords: Europe, favoritism, migrant, racism, securitization

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I. Introduction

The unprecedented surge of migrants who entered Europe in 2015 led to a crisis for the region, not only a migration phenomenon. As 1.3 million refugees and migrants reached Europe's borders, around 3,550 people lost their lives en route to Europe. Over 75% of them had escaped persecution and war in Syria, Afghanistan, or Iraq (Spindler, 2015). The route they were taking was very perilous, either from the 'Central Mediterranean route' from Libya to Italy; or the 'Western Balkan route' from Turkey to Greece, through the Balkans to Central Europe. Prior to July 2015, the Western Balkans route by sea crossing was favored owing to its shorter distance and cheaper rates for smugglers. More than 90% of the sea arrivals in Greece were Syrians and Afghanis, whereas the sea arrivals in Italy are considerably more diverse, including Eritreans, Nigerians, and Somalis (Wagner, 2015). But the problem that arise is European Union (EU) member states responded to the crisis in discord. There were contentious disputes among member states, which resulted in reinstating border restrictions and amending laws to tighten legislation and limit the rights of asylum seekers.

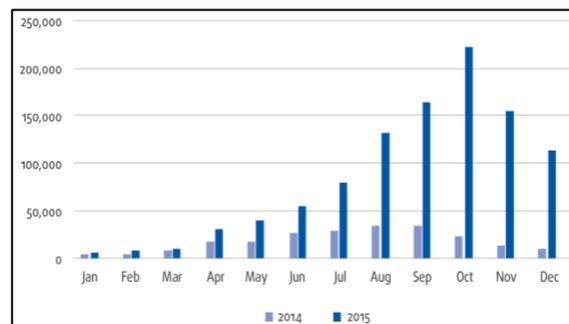


Fig. 1. Monthly arrivals in the Mediterranean Sea (persons)

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2016, p. 6)

From the figure above, the comparison number of arrivals is a huge gap. Starting in April 2015 and reaching its peak in October 2015. The author perceives that arguably reasonable to say this is not merely migration, but *a crisis* since its rapid increase in numbers of arrivals. This crisis can be stated as the *departure point* of this research. Later, the following question is how Europe has responded to the crisis.

António Guterres, the head of the United Nations (UN) refugee agency, now UN Secretary-General, enacted a series of essential principles or key guidelines on September 4, 2015, to shatter the present fragmented approach that has led to Europe as a whole failing to develop an effective shared response. Guterres asserts that “Europe cannot continue to react to the crisis piecemeal or incrementally. No state can do it on its alone, and no state can refuse to contribute” (Clayton, 2015). Conclusively, this involves taking immediate, brave steps to stabilize the situation and then sharing responsibilities. The EU must be prepared to offer immediate welcome, assistance, and registration with the agreement and cooperation of the appropriate states, particularly Greece, Hungary, and Italy. With the support of the UN High Committee for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and civil society, the EU should activate its asylum, migration, and civil protection agencies and procedures (Clayton, 2015).

Genuinely, migration has been a top issue for the EU for many years. Several efforts have been implemented to regulate migratory flows and enhance the asylum system. For the 2014-2020 budget, the EU raised its funding for

migration and asylum by €10 billion (Vermeulen, 2019). European Commission also enhanced its Common European Asylum System (CEAS) as recognized in the 1951 Geneva Convention for its protection of refugees. In addition, a Dublin System reform to properly distribute asylum seekers across EU nations was implemented in 2016. However, member states were unable to achieve an agreement on how to share responsibilities (European Parliament, 2021). This article aims to explain why the EU responded to the crisis in discord and what lessons can be learned.

II. Methods

This research involves qualitative data analysis, with the author adjusting the data and keywords through three stages. The first is data reduction, where selecting and riveting data becomes a sharper and classed analysis. The author will organize the data to conclude. The second is data presentation, which might include narrative text and graphics. Third, the conclusion, where the method for developing an explanatory pattern till generating the proposition plot to answer research problem formulae (Klotz & Prakash, 2008, pp. 11-15). The author begins to consider the theoretical framework to help for situating and interpret the findings. The author uses a theory of securitization and the concept of favoritism to strengthen the argument.

a. Securitization Theory

Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde (1998) first mentioned securitization, called Copenhagen School through their book called ‘A New Framework for Analysis’. Securitization is a perspective on security based on the idea that the world (including security threats) is socially-created, making it hard to

determine whether threats are 'real' or not. Securitization adds to security studies by broadening security concerns beyond the typical military and political spheres to include non-state actors as security agents, with people serving as the referent object alongside the state. According to this viewpoint, security occurs on a spectrum, ranging from non-politicized to securitized issues (Tafese, 2017, p. 565). In short, how to bring the issue into a 'matter of security'.

To calculate whether the securitization process happened, there are four elements should be existed: (1) *securitizing actor*, someone who acts and tries to persuade the issues to move into a matter of security, not merely in the normal political sphere; (2) *existential threat*, something that may interfere the security and the survival of the community; (3) *referent object*, a thing that is vulnerable and must be secured; and (4) *audience*, a final target from securitization who must be convinced and acknowledge the issue as a security threat (Buzan, et al., 1998).

As a result, the securitizing actors should address the audience's interests, feelings, and experiences throughout the *speech act* in their language to mobilize the audience towards the securitized threat. A speech act is an action made by the securitizing actor to convey the issue as an extensive danger that might affect the audience (Tafese, 2017, p. 566). For instance, the irregular migration and the sudden numbers of arrivals on Europe shores are an existential threat in the Europe region and are framed as security questions through an act of securitization.

b. Favoritism

In literal translation, favoritism is unfair support shown to one person or group,

especially by someone in authority (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). This conception was chosen by the author to see the continuity of the phenomenon that resulted because of the securitization of the member states. Matteo Camboni & Michael Porcellacchia (2020, pp. 1-2) demonstrated a theoretical study of how government policy favoritism inevitably originates and creates conflict in communities. Begin with the act of 'discrimination', followed by asymmetric power that divides the society into classes, which unknowingly become the root of internal conflicts. As this article argues that securitization leads to favoritism phenomena, such as the practices of racism in life in Europe.

c. Structure of the Article

This part mentions the writing flow of this article, which begin with the surging number of arrivals in 2015 to Europe as the departure point until the conclusion. The author shows the framework of thinking to make this article more understandable, as drawn below.

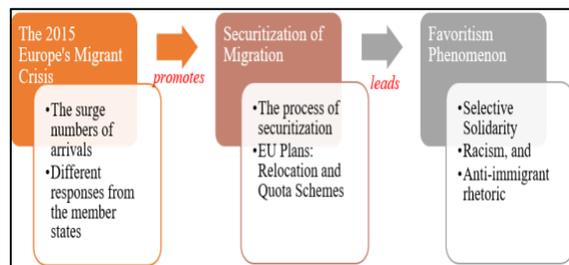


Fig. 2. Research Framework

Source: Author

Arguably, the *departure points* to start this article begins with the 2015 Europe migrant crisis as stated in the introductory (section I). That crisis *promotes* the member states responded differently, they prioritize their national security first rather than helping or sharing the responsibility with other EU member states called securitization of migration,

explained in section III. Next, the act of securitization *leads* to the favoritism phenomenon in Europe, which is later discussed in section IV. Ultimately, ended with the conclusion in section V, where the author sums up and mentions the lesson learned can be used for the upcoming migration challenges in the EU.

III. Securitization of Migration in the EU

This is where the results and discussion section begin. After the momentum of the 2015 migrant crisis, Europe downs into several responses. The first major reason to answer that is that there is a securitization of migration. What Copenhagen school has taught about the securitization theory, is that the process of securitization succeeds only if meets the four elements, namely: securitizing actor, existential threat, referent object, and audience. Thus, through an act of securitization, the problem is framed as a security threat, and a securitizing actor articulates an already politicized issue as an existential threat to a referent object (Tafese, 2017, p. 565).

That figure shows that securitizing actors, such as state governments, political actors, and even the media, may help to initiate the securitization of migration. They conduct verbal acts or activities to highlight problems as an actor. The securitization actor said and identified that Europe was facing an existential threat or in this article a surge in migration in 2015 by asylum seekers who came from the Mediterranean Sea and entered several frontline countries such as Italy and Greece in a movement or statement through a speech act. The speech act is done through *framing* agenda, namely the accompaniment of issues and information on the mindset of the community. In Europe, many governments demonstrate a strong link between migration to terrorism, transnational crime, and border control. Furthermore, there is a risk of spillover in terms of how the community would compete with the refugees for employment and control of existing resource assets (Huysmans, 2000, p. 756). Securitization measures are required since there are referent objects that are threatened and must be secured promptly, in this article are Europe's homogeneity and the security of each EU member state. Interestingly, they may accept the problem of migration as a security concern in the fourth factor, namely the audience or those who are the targets of this securitization effort; none other than the targeted audience is individuals from numerous EU member nations. The audience showed any racism agenda, bias, and prejudice towards migrants; later be explained in section IV.

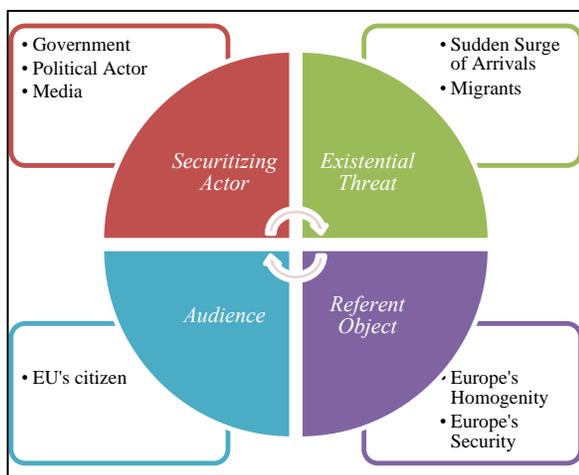


Fig. 3. The Process of EU's Securitization of Migration

Source: Author

The atmosphere of securitization can be proved through differences in each country's response to the EU's collective policies. In September 2015, the EU, along with its EU Plans, is attempting to address the situation of migrant overcrowding in Italy, Greece, and Hungary by

implementing a policy of *Quota Schemes*, which is a distribution plan for migrants who must be moved (by allocating a minimum quota) by each EU member state. Within two years, the relocation plan is projected to be able to move 160,000 migrants. Depending on the state's geography and per capita income, each country is saddled with varying numbers. The top three countries with the most relocation quotas are the following: Germany has a proportion of 25.1%, which translates to 40,206 refugees; France has a percentage of 19.2%, which translates to 30,783 refugees; and Spain has a percentage of 12.5, which translates to 19,219 refugees (Batchelor, 2015).

However, even though the majority of EU nations favor the idea of *quota schemes*, the *Visegrad* (V4): Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, and Slovakia opposed the quota being set; and Finland abstained. Migration poses a threat to EU unity and migration is being securitized issue. Despite that, in the end, Finland came close to reaching the relocation objective, relocating 1,975 people or 95% of the target. Then, Romania and Slovakia are still relocating 728 and 16 people, or 17.4% and 1.8% of the target, respectively (Sabic, 2017, p. 6). The *Visegrad* countries, especially Hungary showed the empirical facts that securitization of migration happened.

IV. Favoritism Phenomenon in European Perspective towards Migration

As securitization of migration occurred, it leads to the next undeniable phenomenon that the author argued is the *favoritism* phenomenon. Where the audience, in this case, is EU citizens who perceive migrants in everyday life. In this section, the discussions focused on

the phenomenon of selective solidarity, racism, and anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Firstly, the existence of selective solidarity. Begin with the fact that European society already had '*us*' and '*them*' scenario that distinguishes one group from another, in this case, native locals and migrants since the 1980s (Huysmans, 2000, p. 759). That scenario develops a sense of superiority over others and creates inequality. According to Magni (2020, p. 3), inequality causes selective solidarity. Individuals exposed to inequality favor redistribution if it benefits native-born citizens. Inequality encourages the view that natives receive welfare priority and deepens the gap between natives and migrants in daily life. In 2016, the crisis of solidarity was proven by the EU's failure to agree on the reform of the Dublin Regulation in sharing responsibilities for fairly hosting migrants (Fine, 2019). As a result, they continue to argue over who should take in asylum seekers and other migrants who arrive on Europe's borders – being selective. The selective solidarity recently continues in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine resulting in 2.5 to 6.5 million persons will be internally displaced and 1.2 to 3.2 million will flee the country. According to UNHCR, Europe is experiencing the 'fastest-growing refugee crisis since World War II' (Fenix Aid, 2022). On March 2, 2022, European Commission activated the Temporary Protection Directive for Ukrainians. Poland and Hungary which refused to relocate refugees from the Middle East during the 2015 crisis are now, greeting thousands of Ukrainians with open arms – this proves Europe's selective humanity (Aghi, 2022). The contrasting treatment of asylum seekers from Ukraine and asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa once again confirms the selective sympathy and racism in the EU (Ciobanu, 2022).

Secondly, the racism in Europe is just the continuation of being 'selective' and one form of favoritism phenomenon. Under the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) Shadow Report 2015-2016, thousands of racist attacks against migrants were reported across the EU. In 2016, 3,729 assaults against refugees and asylum seekers were documented in Germany, amounting to more than 10 hate crimes every day. In Greece, 75 racist acts against immigrants and refugees were recorded in 2015, up from 60% in 2014 (Georgina, 2017). Another act of racism is shown by exploitation in the labor market. Any form of discrimination or lack of recognition of qualifications happened in 60% of migrant-background employees in Belgium (Georgina, 2017). Moreover, many scholars argued that Europe experienced *racist backlash* through the closure of the Balkan route to hold thousands of migrants in Greece. That has sparked a xenophobic response throughout Europe, alleging the need to protect his country's security. Several countries, like Macedonia, Croatia, and Serbia, have purposefully refused to accept refugees, and the V4 countries have announced an ideological battle to secure the Balkan route. The Islamophobic narrative promoted by Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, is their motive for closing migration and refugee routes. PM Orban is renowned across Europe as an opponent of liberal democracy and a protector of Christianity against Islamization (Fotiadis, 2015). Those are examples of how racism is arising across Europe.

Lastly, one essential securitizing actor is the media. In this section, the author proved how effective the anti-immigrant rhetoric is in the favoritism phenomenon. A study led by the University of Torino Italy explained that over the past two decades, anti-immigrant rhetoric in the media has grown, possibly lowering prosocial

behavior and boosting outgroup hatred against migrants while developing favoritism for natives. The negative portrayals of migration in public and media discourse promote prejudice and distrust against migrants (Conzo, et al., 2021, pp. 2-3). Myriad politicians and media commentators in several member states, like Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Lithuania clarified that irregular and particularly Muslim migrants are not welcomed through their spread of anti-migrant statements and racist hate speech. The rhetoric continues by the use of harassing diction in describing migrants, such as "human *garbage*" mentioned by Polish politician, Janusz Korwin-Mikke; "what is closer, *shoot all*" tweeted by Slovenian journalist, Sebastjan Erlah (ENAR, 2016, pp. 9-10); "*migrants flood* trains in desperate bid to leave Italy" reported by BBC News (Bell, 2015); "*stop the immigration flood*" reported by the Washington Times (Thomas, 2015). From those dictions: human garbage, shoot all, migrants flood can be stated for fostering any anti-migrant narratives.

V. Conclusion

To sum up, this article shows the intertwined factors that cause discord responses among V4 countries namely securitization and favoritism. Begin with the sudden upsurge of migrants entering Europe's shores in 2015 triggered myriad responses from the member states. This is a challenge to the EU's integrity. Because the region was unprepared to accommodate an influx of 1.3 million asylum seekers, this became a "migration catastrophe." The crisis *promotes* the securing of migration. This is illustrated by the growing importance of migration as a threat nexus. Securitization actors ranging from governments and politicians to European media execute speech actions to

persuade the public that uncontrolled migratory surges endanger European homogeneity and security. The EU Plans are also ineffective; the EU migration strategy simply underlines the presence of a "solidarity crisis" in the region.

Furthermore, securitization *leads to* favoritism, such as selective solidarity, racism, and anti-immigrant rhetoric. If the 2015 crisis may be used as a lesson, it is useful to remind the people that the EU still has numerous flaws. Racism, favoritism, and securitization are still prevalent. The author hopes for the EU to avoid bias and prejudice in the future. For example, when Russia invades Ukraine in 2022, partiality must be abolished to create fair receptions in order to promote European migration in the future.

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