

A Perspective on Critical Security Concept and International Migration Nexus through Copenhagen School: The Quest for Societal Security

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between critical security concept and international migration. The main research question of the study is how international migration could be comprehended through Critical Security Studies (CSS) and Copenhagen School. CSS is believed to emerged subsequent to Robert Cox's renowned argument as problem-solving and critical theories after the 1990s. Thus, CSS questions the mainstream theories and their assumptions about the concept of security to deepen it. Traditional Security Studies (TSS) mainly consider state as the referent object, yet CSS promotes the idea that there might be other issues to be threatened such as society. Therefore, societal security is one of the areas of CSS' understanding of security. Additionally, Copenhagen School provided the idea that an issue might be put in the field of security through a speech act, that is, securitization, and international migration is one of the common focus areas of securitisation theory. This study, therefore, utilised CSS and securitisation frameworks to comprehend a critical view on international migration, focusing on societal security. This paper suggests that international migration should be considered as an opportunity for diversity rather than an existential threat, and a new political agenda for countries being compelled with xenophobia and societal security issues is needed.

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Introduction

How could we perceive international migration from the lens of societal security? To answer this question, we have to look up the discussion between critical and traditional security perspectives. Critical and traditional approaches have been competing in all science fields for decades. However, the critical vs traditional debate has been a significant progress in theoretical debates in International Relations (IR) field. Robert Cox's article triggered the debate regarding critical and problem-solving theories (Cox, 1981). The classification he provided argues problem-solving theories as they take the world into consideration as it is, whereas the critical theories approach is sceptical about world order and power relations (Browning & McDonald, 2013, p. 238).

As it is true that Cox's article and interpretation sparked a debate among IR scholars, Critical Security Studies (CSS) came to the agenda of scholars only in the 1990s (Booth, 2007, p. 29; Browning & McDonald, 2013, p. 236). Originally, CSS had its roots in peace studies (Peoples & Vaughan-

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Williams, 2021, p. 32). The critical theory and security studies nexus has been explained by Browning & McDonald (2013, p. 238) as follows:

Applied to the study of security, such an understanding of a 'critical' approach encourages a focus on the socially constructed nature of security and a series of fundamental questions such as: 'Whose security is (or should be) prioritised?', 'What are the key threats to security and how are they identified?', 'Where do security discourses come from?' and 'Whose interests do they serve?'

International migration, a worldwide phenomenon, has been paid attention to by various disciplines. Security studies are one of the vigorous fields to argue international migration from the perspective of different ways of security. The traditional perception of security mostly emphasises the state's security and military means of protection. Nonetheless, the critical vs traditional debate initiated the attempts to broaden the meaning and scope of security studies. As a part of this intention to deepen the understanding of security concept, CSS has been a hot topic since the 1990s among IR scholars.

The developments in CSS and security studies have also sparked discussions in the field of international migration. Increasing numbers of immigrants in certain countries, shrinking economies, terrorism debates, and cultural insecurities have been linked to each other. The increasing irregular migration has upraised concerns regarding border security, migration control, and securitisation (Kaynar & Ak, 2016, p. 244). Especially in Europe, international migration has been a hot topic for societal and economic security dimensions (Keser & Ak, 2016, p. 10). Therefore, international migration has started to be securitised in the context of Copenhagen School's (CS) securitisation. The perception of locals to the immigrants and immigrants' reactions to the incumbent culture and society emerge the tension between locals and immigrants; thus, international migration started to be evaluated through the lens of national security (Akarçay & Ak, 2018, p. 198). The speech act of securitisation as labelling an issue to be an existential threat to the referent object has been studied by various scholars over the years. Although it is commonly believed that there are three main areas related to immigration and security nexus, namely national, economic, and societal, the latter is the vital point of this study's scope. The existing literature provides insights into security and international migration. Yet, this paper is intended to provide brief information about CSS, CS, and the international migration relationship. This study will, therefore, briefly outline the CSS and immigration nexus and provide views on the societal security of immigration. To do so, in this research, we organised the paper as a theoretical discussion. After the theoretical frameworks of CSS and CS, we have clustered our ideas about societal security and international migration nexus regarding CSS and the securitisation of CS. In conclusion, this paper suggests that societal security and international migration nexus should be analysed thoroughly by States to prepare their political agendas for future migration waves. The governments should first address xenophobia, far-right populism, and societal security concerns.

Methodology and Literature

This paper methodologically follows a qualitative format through a literature review and a theoretical discussion. We have utilised secondary sources such as publications to comprehend the CSS approach and CS to achieve this end. The first part of the paper has been devoted to understanding what CSS is and how it applies to international migration. After providing the information regarding CSS and international migration nexus, we then look upon CS, securitisation, and societal security relationship. Although several research studies have studied the CSS and CS, this paper particularly seeks the answer to the quest for societal security and international migration. The unique value of this study comes from this approach to the international migration and security concerns nexus.

The CSS concept has diverged from TSS in the existing literature regarding emancipation, societal security, and ethics (Aradau et al., 2014; Nunes, 2012; Bourne & Bulley, 2011; Harrington & Lecavalier, 2014; Wæver, 2012; Booth, 2005). Furthermore, fear, risk, and violence have been integrated into security studies through the CSS approach (Birdiqli, 2014; Stamnes, 2004) while criticising realism's foundations regarding security (Newman, 2010). On the other hand, CS is formulated through securitisation and sectoral understanding in security studies according to the related literature, and it is labelled as a speech act (Wæver, 2012; Taureck, 2006). New sectors such as politics, the military, the environment, and society have been added to security by the CS approach (Buzan et al., 1998). Since this paper looks at the perspective through a societal security lens, immigration, incumbent culture, and identity relationship have been theoretically argued using the existing literature (Karyotis, 2007).

Therefore, this paper is formatted as follows: The discussion about CSS, brief information about CS and international migration, and then the criticism of security studies through CSS and CS primarily focusing on societal security concept. Besides the existing literature, the unique value and authenticity of this paper have been produced with the discussion part.

Critical Security Studies (CSS)

One could easily understand traditional security studies and their supporting points. World War II (WWII) and Cold War marked the traditional security perspective as military security due to the war-prone nature of IR. Security is, thus, "concerned with the preservation of the state from external threats by military means," according to the traditional approach (Mutimer, 2009, p. 10). Yet, the post-Cold War era triggered a new debate about security by asking these famous questions: What is security? Whose security? Therefore, one can easily distinguish the security perceptions of the Cold War era and the post-Cold War era (McCormack, 2010, p. 28). Obviously, the state-centred security understanding that the conflict between states was not applicable anymore after the Cold War (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 34). Accordingly, the optimistic and pessimistic views have competed during the post-Cold War era. Optimists presented their beliefs that a new era of peace was started (Krause & Williams, 2002, p. 33). As Fukuyama (1992) declared, the end of the Cold War was perceived as a military-oriented and state-centred security approach. On the other hand, the pessimistic view advocated that a clash of civilisations will occur as a result of weapons proliferation (Huntington, 1997; Krause & Williams, 2002, p. 33).

In this regard, CSS is believed to emerge after the Cold War, and the main point of CSS is to extend the security concept. Violence, fear, and risk have been added to the concept of security, and the reasons have been questioned for the security issues after the Cold War (Birdiqli, 2014; Stamnes, 2004, p. 162). CSS mainly aims to criticise traditional schools of security, which put the state at the epicentre of security issues. Another assumption of CSS is that security threats are socially and politically produced (Aradau et al., 2014). The politicisation of security challenges realism, the dominant theory of security during the Cold War posed by CSS; CSS scholars tended to approach security as a political process (Nunes, 2012, pp. 346–347). CSS also brought ethics to the security agenda (Bourne & Bulley, 2011; Harrington & Lecavalier, 2014). Although there are various schools in CSS, according to Wæver, Aberystwyth School should be taken into consideration as representing CSS due to the emancipatory concept (Wæver, 2012, p. 52). Emancipation is a vital concept of ethics. Booth (2005, p. 181) stated that it is the heart of CSS, and the connection between security and emancipation has been highlighted by CSS (Aradau, 2004, pp. 390, 397; Nunes, 2012, p. 350). As a security component, emancipation is explained by Booth (1997, 2007). Basically, according to Booth (1997, p. 110):

[e]mancipation means freeing people, as individuals and groups, from the social, physical, economic, political, and other constraints that stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do, of

which war, poverty, oppression, and poor education are a few. Security and emancipation are, in fact, two sides of the same coin.

CSS, according to Wyn Jones, “is for ‘the voiceless, the unrepresented, the powerless,’ and its purpose is their emancipation” (Wyn Jones, 1999, p. 123). Therefore, it is significant to understand that CSS is sceptical about the nature of security studies and the general concept of security. CSS challenges realism’s foundations by undermining its ontology, epistemology, and key features (Newman, 2010, pp. 83–84). The traditional approaches to security take the state as the one which should be secured, that is, the referent object. The referent object is, therefore, “[a]n entity that is taken as the focus for analysis in security studies” (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 4). Nevertheless, from an explicit position of view, CSS broadened the application of referent object terms. CSS warns scholars to approach security from the lens of the state, namely, national security (Wæver, 2012, p. 52). Instead of the military security approach in traditional security studies, CSS deepened the understanding and expanded the referent object, including environmental security, economic security, and human security (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 33). The breaking point was, generally, the human security approach of the 1994 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report. According to the UNDP Report, human security is described as it “means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease, and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life - whether in homes, in jobs or in communities” (UNDP, 1994, p. 3).¹ Therefore, the scope of security and its meaning have been broadened.

The state-based view of security is mostly concerned with the security of the state in means of securing the state from threats. This is mainly the realistic American strategic culture and foreign policy concerning state security and power relations (Demirkol, 2021). Yet, CSS broadens and deepens the understanding of security and its extent to various sectors. These sectors might be the environment, society, economy, health, or human beings as social groups (Bilgin, 2014). According to CSS, “[s]ecurity is about what is a threat, and the analyst can tell whether something really is a security problem and for whom” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 204).² Thus, security has no objective definition as it is a subjectively invented concept (Booth & Vale, 1997, p. 332). Being said, a theory -or a security theory- cannot be detached from society so that it is interpretative (Stamnes, 2004, p. 162). A CSS scholar would explicitly say that threats are constructed through subjective manners (Krause, 1998, p. 306).

The relationship between CSS and CS comes from their constructivist approach (Karyotis, 2007, p. 2), although they are considered different schools by Wæver (2012, p. 52). Hynek & Chandler (2013, p. 52) refer to CS as a second-generation CSS. Indeed, CSS is not a uniform approach and consists of different points of view on security (Stamnes, 2004, p. 162). According to Buzan et al. (1998, p. 205), they both are constructivists while noting that CS is more constructivist. The following section will therefore analyse the CS, societal security, and international migration nexus.

Copenhagen School (CS) and International Migration

After providing brief information about CSS, we smoothly pass to the CS and international migration. The societal security threat approach to international migration has been a trending issue in international migration studies (Kaygusuz, 2021, p. 65), as the far-right populist parties have gained more support in recent years, especially in Europe. CS, in this respect, focuses on the securitisation of migration through the societal security concept (Küçük, 2021, p. 7).

Deepening and broadening the meaning and extent of security crystallised with CS studies. CS refers to the studies of a research group at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute since 1985

¹ For a more detailed information about human security *see* Newman (2010).

² Emphasis in original.

(Wæver, 2012, p. 66). CS, mainly forms around three principles: i) securitisation, ii) sectors, iii) regional security complexes (Wæver, 2012, pp. 52–53). CS, as its main argument, conceptualises securitisation by advocating that it is a speech act (Taureck, 2006, p. 54). The speech act is done by a political actor or media, which are the two powerful actors, for instance. To securitise an issue, powerful actors come to the front and use their voices to impress the audience. The claim that the powerful actors make is that the issue is related to an existential threat to the referent object –generally the state. Yet, CS deepened the understanding of referent objects from a state-based perspective in political, economic, societal, and environmental sectors (Wilkinson, 2007, p. 9). Therefore, securitisation occurs if a powerful actor convinces the audience that something is a real danger against some existential thing so that it can take extraordinary measures against the threat. To put it briefly, a securitisation is a speech act, mainly done by powerful actors such as politicians or media, to put an issue into the core of security. To do so, there should be an existential threat against the referent object, or it should be perceived as an existential threat, and a powerful actor should utter the existential threat to the audience. After that stage, if the audience agrees or is convinced by the discourses of the powerful actor, then the issue becomes securitised and extraordinary measures could become available against this threat (Buzan et al., 1998). These are the basic assumptions and stages of the CS securitisation process.

The result of contrasting security perspective between traditional and critical security perceptions (Theiler, 2003, p. 250), societal security has been embedded in the security studies by CS by claiming that it did not have a place in traditional security studies (Buzan & Wæver, 1997, p. 242; Hama, 2017, p. 5; Høyland, 2018). To put it clearly, Buzan & Wæver (1997, p. 242) indicate that they “tried to show how ‘societies’ defined in terms of identity could be seen as the referent object for some cases”. Therefore, CS has basically taken identities into consideration in security studies. Indeed, this approach is related to international migration and its securitisation of it. Societal security is an attempt to keep the identity of the state in the same form (Wæver et al., 1993, p. 67). However, there should be a distinction between the state’s security and society’s security. The referent object is perceived as different in societal security than the state’s security or military security (Hama, 2017, p. 4). Accordingly, Wæver (2008, p. 581) defines societal security as the “defence of an identity against a perceived threat, or more precisely, the defence of a community against a perceived threat to its identity.”³ Therefore, societal security is a component of national security and a significant concept for it (Gierszewski & Piwowarski, 2016, p. 33). From the perspective of societal security, especially identities have been added to the national security agenda (Butler, 2007).

As being said, international migration is a core example of the securitisation process, and CSS, in this respect, attempts to analyse how the policy shift occurred regarding international migration from a positive perspective to security so that threat perception (Rumelili & Karadağ, 2017, p. 86). In terms of deepening the meaning of security, CS suggests new sectors related to security, namely, military security, political security, economic security, societal security, and environmental security (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 8). To the extent of this study, the most important sector is societal security, which refers to language, culture, religion, traditions, and related components of society (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 8). Societal security emerges when there is a threat perception against the societal identity (Küçük, 2021, p. 7), which is mainly believed that immigrants in a country pose it. Ilgit & Klotz (2014) argued that immigration’s impact on collective identity had been a debate on societal security, and migration is a significant component of societal security (Beňuška & Nečas, 2021, p. 476).

Generally, when the immigration and security nexus is examined, the military security view, which usually links immigrants with terrorism, is on the table. However, societal security is the second significant area of securitisation of immigration in the field of CSS. Societal security basically

³ Emphasis in original.

occurs when there is a distinction between locals and immigrants as self (good) and others (deviants). Immigrants, from this perspective, are labelled as dangerous to the incumbent culture and identity (Karyotis, 2007). Therefore, it becomes a security issue and poses a threat to the referent object, namely, culture. Although the economic security affected by immigrants is also questioned, while there are various answers to this question (Csanyi, 2020, p. 7), national security and societal security are the vitals for immigration policies in recent decades.

CS argues that migration is securitised; however, it should be de-securitised. The securitisation of immigration starts with uttering that immigrants are threats to the economy, culture, and national security. Accordingly, international migration has been perceived as a threat to national security, welfare, and identity in most countries, even though there is no solid empirical base to prove that immigrants cause terrorism (Demirkol, 2022). However, the easiest way to label immigrants as a threat is by calling them deviants to the incumbent culture. As security is defined to be free from threat, according to CS, societal security is keeping the identity and culture fixed during the flows of diversification of them (Wæver et al., 1993, p. 23). The relationship between societal security and international migration is crystal clear. Alexseev (2011) notes that, in 2005, almost half of the adult population in Russia supported the exclusionist approach to immigrants. This issue, generally, is as same in other countries as in Russia. Most of the increasing support for far-right parties in Europe, which has been a significant part of elections in the EU countries in recent years, focused on the societal security regarding immigrants. Štefančík et al. (2021) argued that the far-right populist political parties articulated a dichotomy of we/us and they/them to undermine a positive view on international migration. They clearly stated that far-right populist politicians focused on the so-called negative dimensions of international migration.

The belief that immigrants will destabilise the identity and culture of the locals is a form of securitisation of immigration from CS' perspective. By doing so, immigrants are posed as a threat against the referent object, identity. However, the idea that immigration poses a threat to society or diversity in society because immigrants create insecurity of identity is ambiguous (King, 2004, p. 200). The creation of otherness towards immigrants is quite a typical case in far-right populist politics. Yet, it generally does not have an empirical or scientific background for threat perception. Immigrants generally try to integrate into the local communities or avoid the local culture not being assimilated. The threat or risk perceived by immigrants to incumbent culture is a result of the securitisation process of international migration. Therefore, international migration should be considered and evaluated through the lens of securitisation and CSS. This evaluation will provide insight into societal security perspectives and populist rejection of immigrants in countries.

Conclusion

CSS has a point to criticise traditional security studies regarding their state-oriented view of security. Security should include other sectors and aspects such as the environment, humans, the economy, and society. According to CSS, security is a constructive process as it is constructed through one's perspective regarding threats to the referent object. At this stage, CS comes to the field as another constructive theory within the framework of CSS. CS mainly argues about securitisation migration and supports the de-securitisation of migration.

However, the securitisation of migration has been occurring worldwide during the last decades, especially after 9/11. The securitisation of migration has been accelerated after the terrorist attacks on the United States of America (USA) and the attacks in European countries. The common action of the target countries was blaming immigration for such terrorist attacks, and they have become paranoid about immigration regarding security concerns. Besides perceiving immigrants as a source of terrorism, they are also regarded deviants to the incumbent local culture. This perspective leads us to

the societal security concept of CS. Societal security refers to the securitisation of the identity of the dominant culture in a country. From this side, international migration poses an existential threat to the referent object, that is, identity.

The international migration-societal security nexus should be a topic to focus on nowadays. The increasing power of far-right populist parties all around the world endangers the perception of international migration and immigrants' rights regarding societal security. Xenophobic ideas are not rare issues today, including closing millions of refugees to the camps, pushing them out of their countries, or even attacking them on the borders. General European politics have seen this agenda in recent years during the elections. Most right-wing parties supported anti-immigrant discourse concerning the Syrian refugee protection crisis.⁴

On the one hand, rather than being anxious about societal security, many examples of successful integration processes should be considered. One great example is the case of Canada for refugee or immigrant integration into the local culture. On the other hand, it is also a shame for EU countries to exhibit exclusionary practices against immigration as the EU promotes the idea of unity in diversity. Diversity ought to be applied to immigrants as well.

From the perspectives of CSS and CS, international migration should not be considered an existential threat to the referent object –identity– but regarded as an opportunity for diversity. Populism against immigrants should be the first problem to be addressed in national politics before international policies, as it should be a bottom-up process. Therefore, a new political agenda for countries being compelled by xenophobia and societal security issues is needed.

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⁴ Using “Syrian refugee protection crisis” is a conscious attempt to highlight that it was not a “refugee crisis” but a “refugee protection crisis.” See, (Kale, 2017).

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