MASTER THESIS

Securitization of irregular migration in Croatia

Culture, Communication and Globalization

Study Board for Cross-Cultural Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

Aalborg University

Student: Daniela Bender

Supervisor: Óscar García Agustín

31st of May 2024

Aalborg, Denmark

Table of Content

Abstract

Amidst Europe's growing migration challenges, Croatia found itself at the crossroads of one of the busiest migration routes. Many factors, including its geographical position, evolving geopolitics, the appearance of non-traditional threats, and a rise in the number of migrants whose origins were mixed, contributed to the securitization of irregular migration. Frequently associated with the Balkans, the newly founded state sought to bolster its position in the recently joined European Union by demonstrating that it could solve the challenges on the European level and align with the West. Whilst the initial response of the government appeared to be humanitarian in nature, reports were gradually shifting, revealing the strategic plan responsive to Western European policies. Many individuals at first connected the migrations to events that occurred in Croatia during the 1990s, but the views started to mix, and migrations began to be associated with negative connotations as a result of changes in the public statements of the main political actors and evolving European realities. The situation gradually led to the deployment of stricter border measures as a response to regulating the migrations towards the neighbouring European Union members and protecting its national security, as well as the changing interests of developed Western states which served as the destinations during the first waves of the migration flow.

Keywords: security, securitization, Copenhagen School, migration, irregular migration, Croatia, European Union

1. Introduction

Migration has re-emerged as one of the pressing issues of the twenty-first century, interwining with myriad of global challenges and reshaping socio-political environment of numerous nations. The recent migration flows, driven by number of social, political and economic reasons prompted extensive debates within public, political, and academic circles.

Throughout history, migration has been an inherent aspect of human existence, driven by many factors that transcend geographical boundaries and cultural divides. The records and anthropological evidence attest that migrations happened internally and externally, from ancient civilisations to modern societies, since individuals and communities always sought to improve their circumstances (Manning, 2015). At their core, migrations arose from the inner desire for change, exploration, and new opportunities; however, amidst ongoing conflicts, political instability, and humanitarian crises in various regions across the globe, we have observed millions of individuals and families compelled to venture into foreign territories in search of safety, security, and basic human necessities. That has been particularly evident in regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and parts of Asia, where civil wars, armed conflicts, and persecution by authoritarian regimes have left whole communities with no choice but to flee home and search for refuge elsewhere (Ileri, 2019).

In 2015, entry of more than a million refugees and migrants to European territories had a significant impact that raised concerns about the effectiveness of the current security structures. The demanding nature of the phenomenon and irregular crossings established difficulties for the transit and destination countries, out of which the majority seemed unprepared for such a sudden task. Some of the fundamental tenets of the European Union, such as the principle of 'free movement', have been abolished as a result of the European Union's inability to come to a consensus on a common stance and strategy regarding the migrations. In the face of these events, migration became a key part of the security agendas, as ensuring the integrity and security of the whole Union required fast solutions.

Croatia, being a transit country situated at the external border of the European Union invested significant efforts in establishing a humanitarian system that would adequately respond to the situation. At a peak of the crisis, the country saw thousands of migrants crossing its borders daily, necessitating urgent humanitarian responses and coordination among various organization and state bodies (Hrvatski Crveni Križ, 2016).

To fully grasp the complexities of the mentioned crisis, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of the historical context of migration in the European Union and specific migration history of Croatia, as well as to familiarise oneself with fundamental theories that are going to guide this paper. Building on the historical foundation, the paper transitions to the events of 2015. This period, marked by the refugee crisis is presented with Croatia's response to the crisis. The analysis will therefore trace the evolution of these events, providing a comprehensive overview of how they have shaped current migration dynamics.

1.1. The Research Question and the Aim of the Paper

Central to this study is the question: How did the Croatian government securitize irregular migration in the face of migratory pressures? This inquiry leads the analysis, examining the attitudes of the main political actors, public and the measures implemented to address and manage irregular migration.

Given the importance of migrations in contemporary state discussions and security agendas, it is essential to analyze the process of securitization through the specific contexts of individual countries. Each country's unique circumstances shape its security perceptions and priorities, influencing how certain issues are framed as security threats and how they are addressed. Understanding these national dynamics is crucial not only for development of effective domestic policies but also for enhancing regional and global security cooperation, and implementing comprehensive policies for the benefits of the migrants and host countries.

1.2. Literature Review

Examining the existing academic literature that relates to the topic of the paper is crucial for establishing a solid foundation for the analysis. In this section, the author provides a necessary context and background that inform the current understand of the migration policies and securitization.

1.2.1. Europe: Framing Irregular Migration as a Threat

Despite the numerous advantages of the arrival of migrants on the European territory during the previous decades, ranging from addressing labor shortages to enhancing demographic diversity and contributing to economic growth, there was a shift toward restrictive policies (Blotevogel et al, 1993). While dissenting voices advocating for

multiculturalism existed, migrations began to be seen as destabilising forces in European societies (Huysmans, 2000). The adoption of such policies was driven by changes in the labor market, influenced by factors, such as technological advancements and globalization, leading to job competition, wage stagnation, and potential exploitation of the workforce due to the influx of migrants.

In spite of the restriction of labor migrations, immigration continued based on family reunification, which can be attributed to the lack of emphasis on migration policy within Europe at that time (King, 1993; Korella et Twomey, 1995; Koslowski, 1998). Closer to the 1990s, the immigration discourse began to be politicized. The sudden shift can particularly be ascribed to the exploitation of the universal right to asylum which became a new avenue for irregular migration. In alignment with Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and 1951 UN Convention Status of Refugees, *"Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."* (United Nations, 1948). However, scholars such as den Boer (1995) observed that asylum, once primarily regarded as a humanitarian mechanism for protecting individuals fleeing persecution, has been increasingly portrayed and utilized as a pathway for economic immigration within Europe. Since some individuals exploited the system, European governments were prompted to prioritize the identification of 'false' asylum claims while ensuring support for genuine cases, making the management of the migration and asylum policies within Europe complex. Because asylum began to be associated with the debates on irregular migration, the line between legitimate asylum seekers and irregular migrants blurred out in the public discourse, wherein asylum seekers were sometimes viewed with suspicion (den Boer, 1995).

Tatalović and Malnar (2015) observed that in addressing migration, states encounter the necessity to manage migration through the establishment of normative and institutional frameworks which allows them to control the entry more efficiently. Hence, migration policies of the European countries already began to shift in the 1980s with the prevention of irregular migrations as the primary objective. Contrary to the strict external policy, there was a gradual liberalisation of internal migration controls within the European Community prompted by the Schengen Agreement in 1985. Although not yet in force at the time until 1994, the agreement aimed to eliminate border controls within the internal borders of the European Community (Batinić, 2017).

However, the end of Cold War brought new challenges for Europe. The continent was characterized by numerous tensions, geopolitical realignments and ideological reconfigurations, but also with over 1.3 million individuals who emigrated from former communist states within a year (1989) (Zlatković Winter, 2004). Such events represented a significant political and demographic weight on both, originating and hosting countries. Among Western European countries, Germany hosted the largest number of refugees (Zlatković Winter, 2004). In order to address these types of situations in the future, it prompted policy coordination within interstate cooperation, leading to migration policy development. The official evolution happened in 1992 when the member states' national issues regarding migration and asylum shifted to become a part of the Union's international relations and further accession negotiations (Batinić, 2017).

As the state of affairs started getting back to normal, the attack of September 11th, 2001 marked a turning point in modern history and profoundly altered global perspectives on security. Considering Europe's proximity to the neighboring region and its historical involvement, it was challenged with unknown future events. Therefore, the situation prompted introspection, the reorientation of national security strategies, and the reinforcement of migration protocols (Adamson, 2006). Of particular concern to the states were risks associated with irregular migration, which referred to movements of individuals across the territory of foreign nations without proper documentation or authorization of the state in question. As it frequently involves threats to national security - such as human smuggling, trafficking, and terrorism, the implications for the countries of transit and destination are significant.

Examples as such represented threats which do not adhere to the traditional notions of state-to-state conflicts and began to garner more attention. The once dominant realistic approach in international relations which focuses on power dynamics between states started to lose its prominence. Instead, critical approaches such as constructivism gained importance and challenged the core assumptions of realism. These "newly" perceived threats were characterized by non state actors and transnational processes that could not be addressed solely through military means or power balancing. Such approach brought the security studies on a completely different level of understanding by proving that norms of states are not fixed but are shaped through interactions (Buzan et al., 1998).

Apart from the prevailing sentiment among European societies, when new events unfolded and migrant flows intensified, security concerns and the view of migrants as a potential danger to social order created an additional layer of prejudice. As a result of the mounting anxiety about the consequences of ongoing migration flows and a feeling of vulnerability that Europe potentially condoned itself to, the migrants began to be characterized by expressions of unwelcomeness and heightened mistrust. During that time, European policymakers endeavored to forge partnerships with neighboring countries as a strategic imperative to mitigate potential security risks. Meanwhile, Europe demonstrated unwavering support for the United States throughout this period, albeit with differing views within European organizations and political parties. While some advocated for a pacifist approach, the escalating conflicts in the Middle East and other regions globally led to widespread displacement and forced migration, resulting in waves of migrants and refugees seeking asylum in Europe (European Union, 2021).

Prompted by the stricter controls, some migrants resorted to unconventional means of crossing, including traversing through natural borders to avoid the official checkpoints. In addition, numerous criminal organizations exploited the vulnerability of these individuals, leading to a heightened number of illegal activities such as migrant trafficking and smuggling resulting in a large number of migrants across the territory of the European Union. With the escalation of numbers of irregular crossings, the countries began to stricten their approaches and implement physical barriers, increased border patrols, advanced technologies, and legal measures to limit their entry and stay, including stricter penalties for smugglers and forged documents (European Commission, 2024).

Given that in recent years migrations have become a potential source of numerous new security challenges, the connection between security and migration has never been more expressed than it is the contemporary era. However, due to the complexity of the phenomenon, it still persists and presents significant implications for societies and governments.

1.2.2. Migration on the Territory of Croatia

Croatia's unique geographical location as a Southeastern European, Balkan, and Mediterranean country attributed to its present geopolitical importance (Džidić 2024; Vučić 1995). Its proximity to several non-EU countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia,

and Montenegro, made it a key juncture on the so-called Balkan route, which has been one of the major pathways for migrants from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa attempting to enter the European Union. However, a large number of migrant arrivals in 2015 marked a pivotal moment in country's history considering the not so distant conflicts that forced hundreds of thousands of its people to seek asylum in other European nations and greatly altering the ethnic composition within the former federal states as a response to the widespread violence (Batinić, 2017). Kranjec and Župarić-Iljić (2014) assert that the timeframe of the 1990s accounted for the majority of Croatia's migratory experience due to the massive population emigration which resulted in detrimental impacts on its economy and national security (Jakešević & Tatalović, 2016).

Throughout the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s, the country faced significant challenges in rebuilding its institutions, infrastructure, and economy. During that time, the delay in Croatia's entry into NATO and the European Union left the country in a state of strategic vulnerability. However, the urgent need to address the immediate security concerns arising from the 1990s conflict diverted attention and resources away from European integration and its ability to modernize the security apparatus (Grubiša, 2009). Some scholars anticipated that the changes to the existing pattern would happen as a result of Croatia's entry into the European Union, while others held the view that this development would facilitate migration towards Croatia and have profoundly adverse effects on the country's economy, social fabric, and the preservation of its identity (Čačić-Kumpes et al., 2012; Pavić, 2005).

Although migration through Croatian territory in the previous decades was not uncommon given its strategic geographical location that granted access to the wealthier European countries (Lajić, 2002), only a small number of individuals, who migrated from neighbouring countries, parts of Asia and Africa chose to remain on its territory. That can be attributed to the fact that migrants often aim for countries with a higher standard of living where they can secure better living conditions, healthcare and education. The underdeveloped integration policies in Croatia have contributed to that aspect (language barriers, limited support systems, etc.). Guided by the unfavourable conditions, Ajduković et al. (2019) acknowledge that most of the migrants transiting through Croatia persisted in their migration towards the West, while liberalisation of the job market and Croatia's accession into the European Union led to ongoing emigration motivated by economic factors (Župarić-Iljić and Gregurović, 2020).

High unemployment rates, lower wages, and limited job prospects have driven Croats to seek better opportunities abroad. The economic crisis that preceded its European Union accession worsened the already existing issues in the country, leaving many Croats with a pessimistic view of their future economic prospects at home. The liberalization of the job market allowed them to easily relocate to countries with better economies in the Northern and Western European countries, where the demand for labor was higher (Anđelković, 2023). According to the demographic research, dissatisfaction with the general socio-political situation has also been a significant driver of the emigration in the recent waves. However, the mass emigration has led to a demographic decline and a shortage of skilled labor in Croatia (Croatia Week, 2024).

Since it joined the European Union, Croatia has been developing its integration policies, but unlike other nations in the European Union, Croatia is unaccustomed to the encounters with heterogeneous groups. Despite the legislative adjustments to align with the European Union directives, it faces issues with practical obstacles such as language barriers and recognition of foreign qualifications, which can be explicable by the fact that the majority of its immigrant population are from former Yugoslav countries which consequently establishes considerable cultural and linguistic parallels (Kuti, 2014).

1.2.3. Laws and Regulations

Through this time, offences involving state borders became one of the priorities in Croatian security concerns and were implemented in the national documents. One such document is the "Strategy for the Republic of Croatia's National Security" from 2002, which marked a significant milestone in Croatia's security policy framework amidst a period of domestic and regional transformation. In alignment with the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, it represented a conceptual roadmap endorsed by the highest political and legislative body, the Croatian Parliament. The root reasons behind the implementation of such a document were Croatia's geopolitical position, prevailing security challenges and risks, effectiveness and efficiency of the country's national security operations and systems, and availability of resources (The Croatian Parliament, 2002). Thus, the document states that '*Intensification of transnational threats inside and outside the region – global terrorism, organized crime, refugee crises [emphasis added]– will, directly and indirectly, influence national security of the Republic of Croatia*' (National Security Strategy, 2002), acknowledging the importance of cooperation between regional and other European states to

successfully combat possible threats and accomplish broader security objectives. This document therefore served as a comprehensive blueprint that delineated the country's stance and approach to strategic security concerns and outlined Croatia's orientation towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Whilst being regulated by multiple laws and regulations, Croatia's migration policy cannot be considered well thought-out public policy. Croatia's journey towards migration policy was influenced by its aspiration for European Union membership. As a part of the accession process, it needed to align its policies with the European Union standards and regulations, including those related to migration. Therefore, the Migration Policy of the Republic of Croatia was adopted in 2007, as its prerequisite. The country's foreign policy has shaped the way its legal framework has evolved, however, it has been lacking in the development of migration strategy, which can be attributed to a relatively limited experience with the arrival of migrants and the fact that its society is emigration-oriented. Jakešević and Tatalović (2016) therefore highlight that despite Croatia's established legislative framework, strategies and action plans (e.g., the Foreigners Act, the Act on International and Temporary Protection, and the Croatian Citizenship Act, Migration Policy, etc.) outlining measures for the "*reception, protection, and integration*" of foreigners into Croatian society, the framework has not been thoroughly tested.

1.3. Design Method

This study adopts deductive reasoning to investigate how the Croatian government securitizes irregular migration. The approach begins with the application of the theory as a theoretical framework which posits that issues are constructed as security threats through specific speech acts by political actors and accepted by the targeted audience (Buzan et al., 1998). From the theory, the author derives a research question which leads the systematical analysis of empirical data, including public statements, policy documents, and newspaper articles.

To interpret and explain the significance of the collected data, research employs qualitative data analysis, which allows for a comprehensive investigation into the meanings present in the textual data. Textual data, which may exist in various formats - verbal, printed, or electronic - can be analysed *"in the context of surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, and newspaper articles"* (Džidić 2024; Kondracki and Wellman, 2002). This

method is widely applied in political communication analysis, including electoral campaigns and political speeches (Džidić 2024; Kaid and Johnston, 2001).

According to Bryman (2016), qualitative researchers have an incentive to offer precise details because they place a significant value on the contextual understanding of the situation. In other words, to understand a situation or a phenomenon properly, it is important to grasp the background and environment in which it occurs. For qualitative researchers, the context is not merely background information; it is an integral part of understanding the phenomena itself. For instance, behaviour that may appear unusual when seen alone can frequently be clarified when taking into account the surrounding circumstances and contextual elements. These factors may, among others, encompass cultural norms, historical events, or personal experiences. Qualitative researchers, therefore, strive to achieve a more thorough understanding of the behaviours being studied by considering these characteristics (Bryman, 2016).

This research employs interpretivist epistemological tradition which prioritizes understanding of the subjective meanings and interpretations that individuals and communities assign to social phenomena. By analyzing the media articles and public statements of the main political actors, an interpretivist approach uncovers the rhetorical strategies and discursive practices that frame irregular migration as a security threat. This involves looking at the language and metaphors used to depict migrants and migration. Moreover, this approach recognizes the importance of context, in Croatia's case, government portrayal of irregular migration is likely influenced by the broader European Union policies, regional political dynamics, and the country's historical experiences with migration (Dudovskiy, 2024).

While valuable for its context rich insights into social phenomena, interpretivism has several notable disadvantages primarily due to its subjective nature and the potential for research bias. Since interpretivist research relies on the perspectives and interpretations of the researcher, the findings are often influenced by researcher's personal biases, beliefs, and experiences. This subjectivity can distort the data, leading to conclusions that reflect the researchers viewpoint rather than an objective reality. For instance, researcher studying securitization of irregular migration might unconsciously highlight narratives that align with their own views on migration policies. The reliability of the data in interpretivist studies can also be problematic. Since the data is often qualitative and derived from subjective

interpretations, ensuring consistency and repeatability of findings is challenging. Different researchers might interpret the same data in various ways, leading to different conclusions (Dudovskiy, 2024).

According to the research, the ontological tradition that aligns with interpretivist epistemological tradition is constructivism, which *"contends that individuals' views are directly influenced by their experiences"* and that *" individual experiences and views shape their perspective of reality"* (Corner et al., 2019). This means that social reality is neither objective nor external. Constructivism gained prominence as a part of globalization which led to a rise of worldwide events that differed from traditional ideas and perceptions (Rukavina and Bašić, 2016). The realists and liberals failed to appropriately address issues that were deemed as non-traditional threats. Although constructivists have certain similarities with liberal beliefs, their main emphasis is not on propagating liberal beliefs. Instead, they are concerned with the role of thought and idea (Jackson and Sorensen, 2013).

In the context of this study, the concept of security is not seen as an inherent property of migration but as a social construct shaped by political discourse and media representations. This perspective aligns with the Copenhagen School securitization theory, which argues that security issues are constructed through speech acts by influential actors who frame certain phenomena as existential threats (Buzan et al., 1998).

This process involves articulation of irregular migration as a threat to national security, public order, or cultural identity, thereby justifying the adoption of exceptional measures and policies, which can among others, include stricter border controls and stricter immigration laws. By framing the irregular migration as a security issue, states aim to legitimize actions that might otherwise be seen as extreme or controversial, seeking to rally public support and political consensus around these measures (Buzan et al., 1998).

1.4. Data Collection

The qualitative data analysis approach frequently involves various stages of data collection and analysis, enabling researchers to enhance their understanding and discover novel insights as they advance. Ensuring the reliability of the research is contingent upon the elements of data collection, assessment, and interpretation that allow the author to address specific research questions and evaluate the consequent findings (Padrtova, 2017).

The units of analysis for this research primarily consist of press publications sourced from the official website of the Government of Croatia. Additionally, the research incorporates a variety of other sources, including books, peer-reviewed articles, domestic and international newspaper articles, and official documents from Croatian government, European Union and other relevant institutions. While some of the collected data is in English, the majority of the material for analysis is in Croatian language. Furthermore, the selection of publications was guided by their relevance to the topics such as migration, border measures and national security in Croatia. The securitizing actors were identified based on the frequency of their appearances in the selected publications within the specified timeframe - the onset of the migrant crisis in Croatia in September 2015 until the April 2024 - to illustrate the gradual changes over time. Although some data utilised in the research derives from literature predating the migrant crisis, it remains relevant and applicable to the analysis of the contemporary events.

1.5. Structure

The paper's introductory section provides a concise preface to the situation that will be elaborated upon in the analysis section. It explains the reasoning for the author's research significance and poses a research question that guides the direction of the paper. Furthermore, it incorporates the literature review and outlines the approach and procedures used to conduct the research.

In the second section of the paper, which addresses the theoretical framework, the author introduces the concept of security, Buzan's sectoral analysis, the principal theory utilised in this paper (Copenhagen's School securitization theory) and a critique of the theory.

The core of the paper is section three: the analysis. Since the central part of this section is the securitization process, the author selected the period between 2015 and 2024 as the timeframe. The author concludes the analysis and further elaborates upon the findings in the preceding paragraphs and sections.

By providing a summary in the final section of the paper, the author concludes the entire paper. The bibliography containing the analyzed data is appended subsequent to the conclusion.

2. Theoretical framework

The concept of security within the last few decades underwent a conceptual expansion, encompassing a wide range of issues beyond the traditionally known ones. Grounded in scholarly discourse, this chapter elucidates diverse security dimensions, offering insights into the nature of security and evolving conceptualizations and theories.

Before the 1990s, security discussions primarily revolved around traditional aspects centered on military threats and adopted a state-centric approach (Džidić, 2024). With the demise of the bipolar world, there was a notable shift in the discourse, as observed by Lindström (2005), towards a broader understanding of security. Originating from the Conflict and Peace Research Institute of Copenhagen, during the 1980s Copenhagen School guided by scholars Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, aimed to resolve complexities of security concerns within Europe. Central to this approach was the conceptualization of security not merely as an abstract concept but as an ongoing process shaped by the everyday practices of individuals, institutions, and states, and their interactions. They expressed disapproval of the conventional understanding of security and emphasized the concept's wider scope and the substantial risk posed by non-military threats (Buzan et al. 1998). Motivated by its importance in contemporary discourse, Buzan laid the groundwork for understanding security through the lens of what he termed 'sectors of security'. Complementing the sectoral approach, Wæver developed the concept of 'securitization'. By combining these analytical tools, Copenhagen School greatly contributed to security studies (Buzan, et al., 1998; Does, 2012) offering a systemic way to understand and address emerging dynamics of security.

2.1. The Concept of Security

Security can be defined in various ways, depending on the context in which it is used. According to the dictionary, security is *"the state of being free from danger or threat"* (Oxford Languages, 2024), while in the realm of international relations and national security studies, it is often related to the protection of a state or society from various risks, therefore, Walt (1991) defined security as *"the study of threat, use, and control of military force"*. Despite its apparent simplicity, the term has historically been a somewhat overlooked or underdeveloped area of study, attributing historical dominance to the military component and positioning the state as the primary referent object in security discourse. By the end of the last

century, the changes in political objectives have greatly shifted the meaning of security and what constitutes security threats, as inserted by Wohlfeld (2014).

Buzan's sectoral analysis departs from narrow perspectives and posits that threats are not confined to traditional state-to-state military threats. Although neorealist views are shown in his analyses, by critically examining and deconstructing the various components of security, he exhibits a constructivist approach, encouraging social construction and highlighting the role of perceptions, identities, and discourses. By challenging security as a static and predetermined concept, he underlines the fluidity in security dynamics, broadening the scope and enabling the identification of new referent objects - individuals, states, and international systems, how each of them perceives security and how they intersect with political, military, economic, societal, and environmental sectors of security (Buzan, 1991). Each of these sectors possesses its own importance, and although military threats have traditionally received attention, the growing understanding of security has highlighted the critical roles that other sectors fulfil.

Given that his method aims to understand security through various levels, particularly those larger entities that possess an inherently "shapeless" nature (Stone, 2009), he recognizes the necessity to first distinguish between individual and national security due to distinct values that apply to different referent objects. Regarding state security, values closely tied to security must be thoroughly examined in the context of the state itself, unlike individual values that are relatively easy to understand as they directly relate to their safety and well-being (Buzan, 1991). This implies that the considerations individuals have in order to achieve a sense of security are either irrelevant or fail to fully understand the complexity in the context of the state.

While military threats appear to be the most immediate and pressing due to their ability to directly challenge national security, Buzan's (1991) sectoral analysis expanded the security concept to include other non-traditional forms of threat: political instabilities, economic vulnerability, societal unrest, and environmental degradation, which means that security in the realm of national security is contingent on a multitude of state-specific factors. Accordingly, it is imperative to analyze the *"physical base of the state"*, *"institutional expressions"*, and the broader socio-political context in which it operates (Stone, 2009; Buzan, 1991). That kind of understanding recognised that the well-being of states is not solely contingent upon their ability to defend themselves from external threats. Instead, it

highlighted the importance of internal factors, such as law enforcement and economic stability, and safeguarding the interests and security of the nation, among others.

2.1.1. Regional Security

Considering that all states function based on the network of relationships, understanding the concerns of the state also requires looking at the broader international context in which they exist. Buzan (1991) therefore asserts that *"one cannot understand the national security of any given state without understanding the international pattern of security interdependence in which it is embedded"*, positing that external influences generate a substantial impact on state security. For example, neighbouring countries' policies can directly impact a state's security environment, as changes in military posture, border controls, or diplomatic relations. As today's world is interconnected, how states operate might influence regional and even global security dynamics.

Grounded in that belief, Buzan (1991) introduces several concepts, including *"amity and enmity among states"* describing the spectrum of possible interstate relationships that are formed by a variety of geopolitical and sociopolitical factors (e.g., territory, ideology, ethnicity, history, etc.) that underpin the concept of *"security complex"* (Buzan, 1991). A security complex refers to the interconnectedness of security concerns within a region, suggesting that the safety and stability of one country is inherently linked to the security conditions of the neighbouring countries. For this reason, when security concerns are deeply intertwined within the complex, policy solutions must be developed and implemented in the same context (Stone, 2009; Buzan, 1991).

2.1.2. Policy Responses

Buzan's (1991) analysis of the state and nation inherently prompts the question of how concerns are being addressed considering national security. Concepts of *"insecurity, threats, and vulnerabilities"* therefore present a fundamental divide within national security strategies (Buzan 1991). While threats represent external dangers frequently targeted by international security strategies, in contrast, vulnerabilities are internal weaknesses that may be exploited by external threats; thus they are often a centre of national security strategies. Buzan (1991) argues that neither approach alone can ensure complete security, as states exclusively focused on national security may be ill-prepared to respond to external threats, while one solely prioritising international security may overlook internal vulnerabilities.

Although he advocates for a balanced approach, he acknowledges the complexity of achieving such a balance. The pursuit of absolute security is deemed unattainable, as the sacrifices required would be too great. This leads to the ethical dilemma of whether the end justifies the means in security policy, a question that lacks a straightforward answer (Stone 2009; Buzan 1991).

2.2. Securitization Theory by Copenhagen School

The concept of securitization emerged within the discourse of European security in the late 20th century. Through the collaborative efforts of Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, public issues can be observed through three distinct stages: non-politicized, politicised and securitized (Džidić, 2024; Buzan et al., 1998). Securitization sets itself apart from other methods of issue framing by converting the perceived threat into a security concern.

Initially, it was conceived by Wæver as a 'speech act', denoting a *"linguistic representation"* through which a certain issue was framed as an existential threat (McDonald, 2008). While the conceptualization persisted in subsequent discussions, his 1998 text expanded the discourse and gave attention to the role of the audience. As per Wæver's (1998) explanation - security threats are not naturally existing entities; rather, they are products of political discourse and community consensus. When certain issues are labelled as potential threats to security, they undergo a transformation in perception and treatment. Securitization occurs when that potential threat is presented as an existential threat to a referent object, thereby justifying the use of extraordinary measures to address it.

Further, it is important to note that securitization is an ongoing process influenced by changing circumstances and political dynamics. As situations evolve and new information emerges, the urgency and perception of a given threat may also change. This raises a question about de-securitization, or in other words, a reversed process where a previously securitized issue is gradually reintegrated into normal political discourse and policy-making. It can occur through various means, such as shifting public perceptions, changes in leadership, or diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions (Wæver, 1993).

2.2.1. Securitizing Actors

The fundamental role that the speech act plays in the construction of security threats is a reflection of the importance they give to the role of language. Džidić (2024) highlights that

actors engaged in these activities are not limited to the political sphere. National and international organizations, security experts, the military, and scientists, may all be considered securitizing actors if the security issue pertains to their area of expertise. Through persuasive speech acts, securitizing actors engage in strategic discursive practices seeking to convince their audiences of the legitimacy and severity of certain issues by framing them as existential threats, thereby gaining societal or political authorization to take urgent and exceptional measures in response (Emmers, 2010). The perceived credibility of these securitizing actors plays a crucial role in shaping the reception of security arguments - it can either bolster or undermine the effectiveness of their speech acts.

Vuori (2011) stresses that the role of functional actors, even if they do not directly securitize a specific issue is significant. When the issue is presented as an existential threat, functional actors take sides either with the securitizing or desecuritizing actors. They comprise the academic community, non-governmental organizations, various institutes, and influential individuals (Džidić, 2024; Eroukhmanoff, 2017).

2.2.2. Referent Objects

Securitizing actors seek to safeguard entities that are deemed to be of significant importance to security. These entities, referred to as referent objects are perceived as being under existential threat (Buzan et al., 1998), and might differ based on the specific security sector they are associated with (Džidić, 2024). The identification of a referent object is crucial for the start of the securitization process, as securitizing actors construct the issue based on the threat it imposes on the designated referent object. Hence, it is important to understand referent objects to analyze the progression of the securitization process as they expose fundamental motives that drive the securitization move.

For instance, when discussing irregular migration as a security concern, economic well-being, national security, and cultural homogeneity are the most frequently cited referent objects according to Huysmans (2000). Roe (2010) additionally notes that irregular migration threatens all five of Buzan's security sectors when society is viewed as a referent object.

2.2.3. The Role of the Audience

While speech acts undoubtedly serve the securitization process, their efficacy is contingent upon a confluence of factors. Central to this understanding is the recognition of

audience reception or, to use Wæver's (2003) definition: *"those who have to be convinced in order for the securitizing move to be successful"* - as a key determinant of the securitization process. In other words, the role of audiences transcends mere passive reception discourse; they are active participants whose evaluation and interpretation of security claims are critical factors in deciding the success or failure of securitization initiatives.

The absence of the audience as the unit of analysis within the Copenhagen School framework limits the ability to thoroughly examine the relationship between securitizing actors and their audiences, thereby hindering the efforts to assess the role and influence of the audience. Côté (2016) therefore implies that securitizing actors face minimal constraints in their decision-making in regards to the securitization process.

The definition as mentioned earlier is an example of a frequently restated audience's duty in the securitization process, focusing on the securitization actors and speech acts, often at the expense of a deeper examination of the audience itself (Côté, 2016). However, additional research has revealed that the audience is not a single entity but that it is comprised of multiple stakeholders with varying degrees of power and influence (Balzacq, 2005). In his article, Côté (2016) upholds the established scholarly claim that audience identification is case-specific. In that sense, attempts to narrow the audience may limit audience analysis to specific political collectivities or institutional actors, overlooking the diverse array of perspectives and interests in society and marginalising alternative voices that challenge mainstream security narratives (Hansen, 2000; Wilkinson, 2007). In their works, Vuori (2008) and Balzacq et al. (2015) depart from previous conceptualizations and identify the audiences according to *"what they contribute to the securitization process, rather than (...) by characteristics"* (Côté, 2016).

By categorizing audiences into two distinct groups - the general public and policymakers - scholars such as Roe (2008) highlight the differential roles: the general public, compromising individuals and societal groups who may provide moral support for security initiatives, and, on the other hand, policymakers who can formally support the use of extreme measures in response to perceived threats. Formal support, as elucidated by Balzacq (2005), pertains to the explicit approval of securitization moves by institutional actors with decision-making authority, such as policy-making institutions or governmental bodies. In contrast, moral support refers to the broader societal acceptance of securitization moves by the general public or civil society actors. While it may reflect public sentiment or solidarity within the perceived

security agenda, it does not necessarily translate into concrete action or policy implementation. As noted by Léonard and Kaunert (2011), securitizing actors may strategically direct their discourse towards either group, depending on the objectives of their securitization efforts, allowing them to tailor their rhetoric in accordance with the intended audience.

Côté (2016) offers a comprehensive definition of audience, describing it as *"the individual(s) or group(s) that has the capability to authorize the view of the issue presented by the securitizing actor and legitimize the treatment of the issue through security practice"*. Through the definition, the author eliminates the need for *context-specific definitions* and makes it practical to define the audience within different contextualizations. The approach concentrates on the detection of the audience that can influence the process of securitization, while audience identification remains case-specific. It allows the explanation of the situations that other definitions were unable to adequately capture - it does not disregard the part that audiences play in approving securitization, nor does it classify them into the *"moral"* and *"formal"* groups (Côté, 2016).

2.2.4. Critique of Copenhagen School

Regardless of the fact that Copenhagen School expanded the scope of security studies, their approach has been frequently faced with criticism for being extremely limited, concentrating solely on the speech acts, and lacking practical implementation. In order to enhance the notion beyond the speech act, several researchers made contributions to bolster the concept's practicality and ability to clarify the formation of particular security concerns (Does, 2012). Scholars argue that by prioritizing speech acts, the Copenhagen School overlooks important contextual factors by emphasizing the significance of different constructions of security (McDonald, 2008; Balzacq, 2011). According to their perspective, the exclusive focus on speech acts fails to account for diverse ways in which meaning, including notions of security and threat can be presented. By contradicting the securitization process which places security practices behind speech acts and limits security to extreme circumstances, Paris School argues that security is equally built and applied through various everyday practices; border controls, surveillance systems, and the deployment of security forces, as well as the role of non-state actors (e.g., non-governmental organizations, international organizations, etc.) (Does, 2012).

While Williams (2003) and Möller (2007) support the claim that language alone does not necessarily serve as an exclusive means of securitization, they recognize that communication encompasses various modalities beyond verbal expression and reveals the broader understanding of the communication, the role of visual imagery and non-verbal cues in conveying and shaping security issues. Media transmissions and printed publications play a crucial role in disseminating these visual representations to audiences worldwide, thereby influencing how individuals perceive the state of affairs. With such presentations, mediums contribute to the construction of specific meanings of security and threat, suggesting that visual representations are not only powerful tools for conveying information but also important drivers of the securitization process as visible during the previous decades (e.g., 9/11 attacks, War on Terror, migration crisis, border fences, etc.) (McDonald, 2008).

3. Analysis

Flows of migrants coalesced predominantly along two primary routes: the Mediterranean and Balkan corridors. While the Mediterranean corridor, served as a focal point for migrants attempting to reach Europe from North Africa and the Middle East, often embarking on dangerous sea journeys, the Balkan corridor typically involved land-based travel through countries in southeastern Europe, including Turkey, Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Croatia, among others. Eventually, it became evident that in contrast to the journey through the Mediterranean corridor which is lengthy, uncertain, and psychologically taxing, the Balkan corridor was a preferable alternative offering overland travelling, safety and accessibility.

Although there were initial signs of solidarity, European states have witnessed a decline in unity. The already existing European Union policies seemed undesigned to handle sudden influxes, resulting in the response to the migration wave which was quite different among economically advanced European Union members compared to those on the periphery. Whilst developed countries managed the influx based on their needs, others were left struggling to cope with the challenges posed by uncontrolled migration, eventually leading to deep divisions among European Union member states. Apart from the previously described obstacles, limited opportunities for migrant integration and the escalation of xenophobic attitudes posed further issues. In addition, migrants' impatience to get to their destinations quickly grew. This created a risk of transit nations closing their borders, as well as tensions between receiving and sending countries, disagreements over transit routes, and divergent

new policies. The absence of a unified migration policy and deep political divisions meant that responses to the crisis were largely fragmented, with individual member states implementing their measures through different approaches; whereas some adopted stricter border measures, others focused on humanitarian responses.

Through the public speeches of political elites along the Balkan route, it was visible that those states predominantly pursued open border policy, facilitating the unhindered movement of migrants. However, that gradually changed with the number of migrants arriving. As the latest country to join the European Union and a Balkan country, Croatia became one of the transit zones bridging unstable regions with more prosperous Northern and Western Europe. During the peak of the migration crisis, it has found itself along one of the busiest migration routes.

Although the original route passed through Serbia and Hungary towards the rest of Europe, the situation escalated when Hungary fortified its border with Serbia, effectively rerouting the migration flow (Archick & Margesson, 2015). Given Croatia's extensive number of border crossings distributed across its territory, each requiring monitoring and surveillance to prevent unauthorized entry, there was a cause for concern. Apart from the established sea and border crossings, numerous historical transportation routes such as roads and railways, waterways, and natural passable boundaries traverse the random spots of the state border, putting it up with challenges related to transnational crime, irregular migration, and smuggling activities.

As migrants converged on its territory, the country faced issues of managing their presence in accordance with European Union protocols, prompting questions about the security of its country and citizens (Tatalovic & Malnar, 2015). The statistics revealed a stark escalation in the influx of migrants in Croatia within a relatively short timeframe: from September 2015 when the number of migrants stood at approximately 1,200, the three upcoming months marked over 550,000 individuals entering the country out of which many migrants did not seek refugee status nor asylum as their ultimate destinations were nations in the Western Europe (Dettmer et al., 2015).

In the face of the rapidly evolving migrant crisis and the absence of clear directives from the European Union to guide responses, Croatia had to develop its own strategy for managing the movement of migrants through its territory. That posed a significant challenge to its authorities, who had to devise a response that would be deemed legitimate by its population

but also maintain good relations with key European actors. Notably, the unforeseen nature of the crisis and the absence of time to analyze and prepare policymakers to define their course of action contributed to the disparity of attitudes.

3.1. The "Blame Game"

Confronted with a significantly higher number of migrants than anticipated and planned for, the Croatian government under the leadership of Prime Minister Milanović chose to assist in the movement of migrants through Croatian territory. In contrast, the opposition and President Grabar Kitarović expressed concerns about the potential security risks associated with migration. That divergence in opinions fueled broader debates and criticism within Croatian political circles on the appropriate response to the crisis. Since it was decided that Croatia would facilitate a humane transit of migrants through its territory without becoming a permanent refuge, in anticipation of the upcoming parliamentary elections, the government had to demonstrate its ability to manage the situation, aware that any mishandling could potentially give the upper hand to the opposition (Vlada RH, 2015; Ostojić, 2016).

As refugees entered Croatian territory, they were transported to the temporary reception camps, assisted and subsequently transferred to the borders of neighbouring European Union member states. Within the initial days, transit centres became overcrowded and the reduced possibility of onward migration contributed to the heightened tensions among migrants. The local and county authorities described the situation as a humanitarian catastrophe, and the media depicted it as general chaos (Žabec et al., 2015). Police interventions aimed at maintaining order with limitations, as the situation remained delicate and prone to escalation. Although the government made an effort to restore law and order, it was decided that the transition from Serbia would become restricted to keep the conditions humane. By doing so, authorities tried to balance the ratio of arrivals and departures and the overall situation at the transit centres.

In the public statements, Prime Minister Milanović emphasized the necessity of adhering to rules to ensure the proper functioning of the whole migration management system. The comments were specifically oriented towards the policies of neighbouring Serbia, stressing that regional cooperation was crucial for handling the influx effectively. It implied that Croatia's internal stability was closely tied to its role in assisting neighbours, particularly

those further along the migrant route and that a fragmented approach could undermine the efforts, thereby arguing that collective strategies and shared responsibilities among the countries are essential to prevent any country from being overwhelmed (Vlada RH, 2015).

During that period, there was almost no interaction with the general public as the government managed the situation within designated reception centres and borders. By concentrating the management exclusively within controlled environments and limiting public interactions, the government aimed to prevent potential public unrest. Direct contact was therefore limited to people living near the borders and camps, and volunteers who sought to assist in the camps through initiatives such as distributing food, water, and necessities in collaboration with the Croatian Red Cross (Hrvatski Crveni Križ, 2016). On the opposite, the broader Croatian population followed the development of the situation from a distance. Their primary source of information was media publications, which reported on the government's actions and the conditions at the borders and camps. The media, therefore, played a significant role as a functional actor in shaping public perception. Minister of Interior Ostojić was the key figure who oversaw the situation and provided daily updates to foreign representatives and media (Ostojić, 2016). He often expressed the government's commitment to the security of its citizens, assuring that they were safe and that every migrant in Croatian territory was under police monitoring.

Despite the precondition that could have fueled the fear of 'others' - such as the prevalence of right wing conservative opinions and the traditionalist nature of Croatian society - there was no escalation in xenophobia during this period (Cvrtila et al., 2019). Research on media coverage of the migrant crisis revealed that migrants were primarily portrayed as victims through the use of emotional images and personal stories (Slijepčević and Fligić, 2018). While different actors spoke on behalf of the refugees, HRT (Croatian Radio Television) briefly provided refugees with a platform to express their views. This platform, however, predominantly focused on the humanitarian efforts of Croatian authorities and the empathy shown by the public in facilitating their transit through Croatian territory (Šarić, 2019).

As Croatia directed the refugees and migrants towards Western Europe, the fragmented European opinions at the time and the continuous inflow of migrants prompted some of the member states to implement ad hoc policies (Ostojić, 2016; European Parliament 2016). A month after the crisis poured into Croatian territory, Hungary closed its border. The abrupt decision disrupted the established route that thousands of refugees and migrants were

using daily, leading to immediate challenges for Slovenia and Croatia. Migrants, forced to find new routes, often encountered increased hardships and their impatience to reach Western European countries grew. Soon such a situation resulted in a bottleneck effect on Croatian territory, increasing the pressure on Slovenian borders and reception capacities. Prompted by the Austrian notice to build a fence, Slovenia started erecting barriers to control the flows (Harrison, 2015). Such a scenario brought Croatia into a challenging situation within a short period of time, as its transit and reception facilities became overwhelmed (Subbotovska & Kirka, 2015).

One of the main topics in the Croatian media at the time was the disputes between the left and right political factions. Headlines frequently focused on their conflicts and indicated political tensions and disagreements. The opposition capitalized on this opportunity to critique the government, highlighting its failures and the threat posed to the citizens and the European Union (Bradarić, 2015). Additionally, actions taken by the Croatian government were at the forefront of the President's speeches, directing attention towards key specifics of the government policy, including foreign relations and national security, as well as broader considerations concerning the European Union and the Schengen Area. The President publicly expressed criticism regarding the reception of migrants, urging the chief of the general staff of the Croatian armed forces to heighten the level of preparedness if necessary, to protect the borders from 'illegal migrants' (Tešija, 2015). In her discourse, she emphasized the importance of long-term strategic planning to address the security challenges arising from the influx, while accusing the government of transforming Croatia into a hot spot and declaring the possibility of border closure (Ostojić, 2016).

From the outset of the crisis, the government's attitude opposed the idea of border closure and the discourse primarily centred on maintaining law and order to reassure the public of its capability to manage the situation. Prime Minister Milanović often asserted that the border closure is futile because people will always find ways to pass through and consistently acknowledged that migrants do not threaten the country (Vlada RH, 2015a; Vlada RH, 2015). His language avoided anything that could frame them as a security threat and often presented migrants with empathy. To delegitimize the opposition, through critique, Milanović distanced himself from the opposing views, particularly those of Croatian President Grabar Kitarović, who had meetings with Hungarian Prime Minister Orban, known for his anti-immigrant, nationalist policy (Despot, 2016). By doing so, the Prime Minister affirmed Croatia's stance

to align itself with Western European countries, projecting an image of solidarity and responsibility.

Primarily, that meant that the behaviour of Croatia was conditioned by the stance of the recipient countries. This premise characterized the statements of several political actors, including the Minister of Defence, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Minister of Interior, who expressed that the shutdown of the German borders would lead to a "domino effect" in the European Union along the migratory route (Vlada RH, 2015b; Veljković, 2015) which exposed Croatia's uncertain nature within the wider European response to the crisis. It meant that any delay or hesitation in securing its borders could have placed Croatia at a severe disadvantage if the others decided to do so since the increased number of migrants presented a challenge that could not be addressed solely on the national level.

This realisation was particularly alarming to Croatian citizens who did not perceive the influx as a significant threat, as the prevailing belief was that migrants had no intention of settling in Croatia due to the lack of opportunities and conditions they sought. That initial perception changed following the first few weeks of the crisis. It became evident that if the neighbouring countries closed their borders, Croatia would inevitably become a trap for thousands of immigrants, irrespective of their intentions to stay. The current socio-political environment, marked by globalization, economic instability, and rising unemployment exacerbated anxieties making right-wing ideologies more appealing (Soudil, 2015).

Given that Croatia had not fully recovered from the previous upheavals, the initial humanitarian impulse to help others slowly vanished giving way to a rational attitude, and while the government made efforts to assist the refugees and migrants, the public discourse began to incorporate concerns beyond humanitarian aspects, such as financial, organizational, health, and legal issues (Smiljanić, 2017; Esterajher, 2015). The situation only escalated the conflicts with the ruling party, who accused the President of orchestrating a crisis in the nation in collaboration with Hungary, as her actions were seen as an attempt to weaken the credibility of the government in the eyes of the public, paving the way for the Croatian Democratic Party to gain political ground and potentially seize power (Deutsche Welle, 2015; Despot, 2016).

3.2. Securitization of Irregular Migration

The terrorist attacks that took place on European soil until the end of the year significantly altered public discourse by intensifying fears regarding the national security risks associated with irregular migration. This led to a growing tendency to depict irregular migration as a security concern, emphasizing the potential for terrorist infiltration, criminal activities, and social unrest. Such portrayals justified the adoption of stricter border measures aimed at protecting European territory and identity (Crone et al., 2017).

Following the lead of the neighbouring countries, Croatia changed its approach to security-oriented (Lalić, 2016). The Minister of Interior, Ostojić, stated that Croatia would only permit refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan to pass through, classifying economic migrants as 'illegal' (Balen, 2015). This policy change highlighted Croatia's evolving response to irregular migration and reflected a broader regional trend (Index.hr, 2015; European Parliament, 2016). European Union states declared that the Balkan route had closed after the EU-Turkey Deal was signed to stem the arrival of migrants (France24, 2016; European Parliament, 2016a). This meant that the potential asylum and refugee seekers were granted entry on the individual assessment. In contrast to the previous discourses, Croatian political actors diligently enforced new measures in alignment with other European countries, while irrespective of their ethnic or national background, all migrants were classified as 'others' that represent a threat to Croatia and the European Union as of 2016 (Lalić, 2016; Čepo et al., 2020).

The socio-political climate in Croatia during this period was heavily influenced by broader European trends. As per the findings of the sociological research on the behaviour of young people conducted for the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, Europe and Croatia were witnessing the rise of conservativism among young people (Soudil, 2015). The events evoked anti-Islamic sentiments, growing awareness to safeguard Christianity and the European identity and the rise of populist and nationalist movements across Europe resulting in significant electoral victories of right-wing parties in 2015 (Ileri, 2019). Taking into account the state of the country at that time, which had not yet fully stabilized following its accession to the European Union, as well as the impact of the open-door policy on its citizens and the situation with terrorist attacks in Europe, the parliamentary elections resulted in the victory of the right-wing coalition whose rhetoric addressed these anxieties directly. Despite experiencing internal government turbulence and a

change in leadership, the year concluded with the ascension of Prime Minister Plenković to power (Vlada RH, 2016).

Building upon the lessons, the newly established government took steps to adopt a new National Security Strategy in 2017 representing a significant departure from its 2002 predecessor (Vlada RH, 2017). Central to the core message of a new strategy is the internalization of the concept of human security and Croatia's membership in the European Union and NATO as fundamental pillars of its security system. The document considered the potential global threats stemming from long-standing geopolitical instabilities surrounding the European Union and the recent migration crises. It recognized that irregular migrations constitute a significant security threat at various levels, from national to global. Significantly, the new strategy aligns with the European Union migration policies suggesting that Croatia's security policies and practices are designed not to only address domestic security concerns but also to contribute to collective security objectives at the European Union level. This approach acknowledged that security is not an isolated concern but rather intersects with various dimensions and recognizes the potential lack of physical character. Irregular migrations are primarily framed as a threat to national security throughout various sections of the document (Vlada RH, 2017).

3.3. Stricter Measures: Pro European Stance

The reinforcement of border controls with Serbia triggered the shift in the migration route through Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since the shift happened, the Croatian police have faced substantial challenges due to the extensive border. This resulted in reports of border breaches and irregular crossings as migrants sought alternative pathways to avoid controls. As a candidate country for Schengen accession, Croatia was obliged to demonstrate its capability to effectively manage its borders and prevent irregular crossings, since prevailing circumstances have undoubtedly subjected it to heightened observation. Prime Minister Plenković therefore frequently emphasised the interdependence between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union in the endeavour to reduce the volume of unauthorized border crossings (Vlada RH, 2018).

Throughout the years, there have been instances where the efforts to handle irregular migration often manifested in returns that have been met with condemnation. Allegedly, Croatian police violated the internationally guaranteed right to request asylum and frequently

resorted to cruel treatment of irregular migrants. Despite the pushbacks not being sporadic occurrences, but rather constituting a systemic practice across several European Union countries, Croatia faced mounting allegations of engaging in pushback measures against irregular migrants at its borders. Based on the reported cases in which the children also took part, humanitarian and legal concerns were raised by organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International (Euronews, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2023). The Ministry of Interior concluded that these allegations were without merit, maintaining that the disputed action was carried out in adherence to legal procedures, asserting that each individual apprehended by the Croatian police is informed about their right to seek asylum (MacGregor, 2023; Vlada RH, 2019b). Regardless of the criticism, Frontex, the European Commission, and high-ranked officials like German Chancellor Angela Merkel supported Croatian protection of the borders, as indicated by significant funding allocated to Croatia for border measures (Vlada RH, 2018d).

Since the issues of irregular migration placed significant pressure on Croatia, government leader was prompted to take clear stances on border security and migration policies. On several occasions Croatian Prime Minister Plenković emphasized his committment to maintain the borders with Bosnia and Herzegovina open and the importance of addressing irregular migration through reforms rather than through divisive measures such as building fences (Jerković, 2020). That however, did not mean that the Croatian government lacked a strict stance on irregular migration. As stated by Minister of Interior Božinović unauthorized individuals cannot unilaterally decide to relocate and expect institutional support (Vlada RH, 2018d; Vlada RH, 2018b). According to the Foreigners Act, migrants who cross the state border may face return decisions. However, when a migrant declares their intention to apply for international protection, the Law on International and Temporary Protection is applied, allowing them to be formally admitted as asylum seekers under standard operational procedures (Vlada RH, 2019b). This approach balanced the enforcement of national sovereignty with humanitarian obligations, ensuring that while Croatia controls its borders, it also respects human rights (Vlada RH, 2019a).

Despite the political affiliation with right wing party, government led by Prime Minister Plenković has taken a more centrist and pro European stance, particularly in terms of its approach to international agreements and cooperation with the European Union. This shift is for example visible in their support of Global Compact for Migration, a significant international agreement which marked a pivotal moment in the global approach to migration.

According to Minister of Interior Božinović, the Compact represented the first acknowledgement by the global community that migration is an issue that requires systematic management. The agreement was seen as a groundbreaking step, signaling a shift from ad hoc to structured approach in addressing migration (Vlada RH, 2018b; Vlada RH, 2018d). The document set out the framework of 23 objectives aimed at making migration safer, orderly, and legal. While it emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and shared responsibilities among countries, it is a non binding document that upholds the authority of individual nations to decide who can enter and remain on their territory (United Nations, 2019).

Unlike the government under Milanović, which faced opposition primarily from outside parties, Prime Minister Plenković now contends with opposition even within his right wing faction (Vlada RH, 2018a). Despite this internal challenge, his migration policy reflects pro-European stance through several key aspects. Plenković's strategy seeks to balance a humanitarian approach, security measures, and adherence to European laws and values. One of the primary objectives of his government is the protection of European Union external borders. The government has therefore significantly invested in modernizing border controls and enhancing technical equipment. Furthermore, under his leadership, Croatia actively collaborates with European agencies such as Frontex to ensure effective control of migration flows, therefore Croatian police officers participate in operations across the EU, and Frontex is present at Croatian borders to support migration management. Another crucial aspect of his policy is a humanitarian approach towards migrants and asylum seekers. Despite the strict border measures, Croatia is comitted to fulfilling international obligations towards refugees and migrants, including the right to asylum, while Prime Minister actively engages in the regional cooperation aimed at better coordination of migration policies.

In that aspect, cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina is particularly important, as it is a key transit route towards the European Union. The government's approach therefore includes supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in strengthening its capacities for managing migrations, humanitarian assistance, and cooperating on security measures.

Croatia's entry into the Schengen area in 2023 marked a significant milestone in its European integration process. However, the transition also highlighted the already existing issues with irregular migration. As Frontex reported, there were over 300,000 irregular crossing attempts into European Union which marked the highest level observed since the

peak of the migration crisis in 2015-2016 (Frontex, 2024). Consequently, throughout the year, Croatia experienced a notable increase in irregular migration, with the number of migrants tripling compared to the previous periods. This led Austria to extend its border controls with both Slovenia and Hungary. Regardless of Croatia's entry into Schengen, the Interior Ministry emphasized the continued necessity of police checks and joint patrols to address the migrations effectively. Croatian Prime Minister Plenković publicly supported the followup border measures undertaken by Slovenia, recognizing the importance of protecting national territories and order (Tesija, 2023). The situation evolved by the end of the year, when in response to the persistent challenges of irregular migration, Croatia, in coordinated manner with neighboring countries, decided to temporarily reintroduce border controls. This decision was influenced by several factors, including heightened terrorist threats following the recent incidents in Europe, conflicts between Israel and Hamas, and the Russian military agression on Ukraine (Desku, 2023).

Furthermore, due to the unknown composition of migrant groups, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina became concerning, not only for the European Union and Croatia but also for the country itself. Besides migrants, smugglers have become a significant problem for Croatia. In the early stages of the migrant crisis, border crossings were disorganized and could be easily intercepted. With the growth of criminal organizations, organized crime networks infiltrated every segment of the migrant route, from the start to the destination. Although the operational management is upheld by a contingent of 6000 border police, supplemented by an additional 2000 personnel from intervention and specialized police units, a persistent challenge lies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, where the visa regulations remain unaligned with those of the European Union (Dnevnik.hr, 2024b).

To combat such issues, a Pact on Migration and Asylum was introduced in 2020 by European Commission, but due to various circumstances - not concluded until 2024. It proposed a new system of shared responsibility among member states and measures to enhance the integration of migrants. One of the primary objectives of the Pact is the control and determination of asylum rights at the border itself, preventing individuals from entering the European Union territory if they do not qualify for asylum. This right was often exploited by migrants, who, upon entering the European Union, would request asylum to integrate into the system to subsequently move to another state. That was seen in 80% of the cases in Croatia, including one instance involving individual who was involved in the terrorist attacks that took place in France. Reactions to the Pact were divided. Some welcomed the proposal

towards a fair migration policy, while others expressed concerns over the fairness of burden sharing mechanisms (Glas Slavonije, 2015; Bošnjak, 2019).

In line with the objectives of the Pact, Croatia continues to enhance the protection of the external borders through detection (using cameras, drones, and other types of sensors) and reaction, although some parts of the border still represent major issues for Croatian police (Barić, 2024). Minister of Interior Božinović announced the continuation of the modernization and strengthening of the capabilities of the police and the army and focused on the government's objective of implementing European legislation and actively contributing to the development of European laws (Vlada RH, 2024). In his addresses, the Minister emphasized that legal border crossings have become easier, while illegal entries and criminal activities face more effective barriers from the Croatian police, regarded as the strongest border police force in Europe (Vlada RH, 2024a). He confirmed that *"Croatia is the most successful in protecting the external borders of the European Union"* and reminded that this accomplishment extends to preventing the migrant smugglers, as well as blocking the arrival of irregular migrants. Within the first months of 2024, around 700 smugglers were taken into custody, while irregular crossings dropped by 32% (Vlada RH, 2024b). *"We are a step ahead of others"* he stated confirming that Croatia already prepared for the introduction of the new system for registration of entrance and exit of third-country nationals into the European Union area - EES, and is waiting for the rest of the states to implement it to start (Vlada RH, 2024b).

3.4. Discussion

It is observable that Croatia's geographical context profoundly influenced its approach to addressing migrations. Beyond serving as a transit route to Western Europe, Croatia's borders represent the longest external borders of the European Union (Lajić, 2002). Consequently, the country's efforts to secure its borders and handle mass migration can be attributed to its geopolitical position, an influence that further intensified upon its entry into the Schengen area in 2023. Once known primarily as an emigration oriented country, Croatia has transformed into a key partner of the European Union in combatting irregular migrations. Except its geographical position, a major role played its proactive stance to align with European Union migration policies.

Despite early efforts by the opposition to frame the irregular migration as a threat, it was not until the end of 2015, that Croatia's securitizing efforts gained momentum. The findings indicate that the shift in Croatian policy happened gradually, influenced by the decisions of the neighbouring European countries. Hence, the migration crisis vividly illustrated the relationship between regionalism and national security, demonstrating that the security of one state cannot be considered isolated from its neighbours (Buzan, 1991a).

While some countries advocated for greater solidarity and burden-sharing, others prioritized border security and national interests. As the media disseminated the information regarding the tragic events that took place in Europe, complemented by the high number of migrant arrivals, the discourse surrounding migration shifted towards security, resulting in a change from open door policy to restrictive policy in the majority of countries. To effectively manage its national security, Croatia aligned its measures to the decisions of neighbouring European Union countries along the migration route, including, most importantly, non-EU countries such as Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina from where the migrants arrived. As neighbouring countries erected fences and temporarily closed borders, while a large number of migrants continued to enter Croatian territory, public awareness and critical attitudes towards migrants heightened. Once countries along the route ceased accepting economic migrants and introduced quotas, the Croatian government followed those steps. It kept the humanitarian stance towards legal migrants while it framed irregular migrations as a threat to the state, the European Union, and the Schengen area. Although political actors had a prominent part in this aspect, as they possess the authority to influence the public, the importance of opposition and media should not be neglected either.

When the EU-Turkey deal was signed, it aimed to control the irregular migration flows into Europe, therefore European Union declared the Balkan route closure. However, although the agreement reduced quite a high number of migrants, others found alternative paths to reach European soil which resulted in new waves of migrations. Findings suggest that one of the persistent issues for Croatia and the European Union is that Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have not aligned their visa systems with the European Union, inadvertently creating loopholes for irregular migrants and smugglers. Although aligning their regulations is necessary for their accession to the European Union, this remains challenging. The difficulty remains in countries' reluctance to restrict visas from nations integral to their national interests (e.g. Russia, China, etc.) which are often at odds with the European Union.

Since this issue continues to present challenges today, implementing a synchronized visa regime across these countries would be a critical step towards reducing irregular movements.

The author posits that framing irregular migration as a security threat often results in a reactive rather than proactive approach. Therefore, the rise of populism and nationalism that happened in Europe, cannot be completely attributed to the refugee crisis. Prioritizing border control and deterrence over humanitarian and integrative solutions can, indeed, amplify xenophobic rhetoric and achieve the opposite of what is desired - which was in the end visible during the migrant crisis. The emerging xenophobia poses a paradoxical situation; while such rhetoric is typically thought to harm foreigners primarily, it equally represents a threat to the native population. Some examples in Northern and Western European countries (e.g. Malmo in Sweden, Paris in France, etc.) have shown that such behaviour towards foreigners can lead to isolation within their groups where they seek safety, thereby separating themselves from the rest of society. The next generations growing up in this type of environment will then project the same environment, which contributes to the creation of a society akin to those where significant numbers of immigrants have settled and incidents occur due to social inequalities, isolation, and ghettoisation. The question stands: does Croatia, or any other country want to foster a safe society that promotes dialogue, or will it succumb to the negative effects of xenophobia, thereby creating a divided society where no one feels secure?

If properly integrated, migrants can significantly contribute to the socio-economic fabric of host countries. Policies that facilitate education, healthcare, and employment, and a supportive environment in host countries are critical steps towards a sustainable and humane migration policy.

Given this complexity, the author holds the opinion that future research should explore the long-term effects of securitization on migrants and host societies. Additionally, it should explore ways to develop better integration policies.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that migration is a fundamental aspect of human history and present, and will continue to be a persistent global phenomenon. As observed in Europe thirty years ago, similar patterns are emerging today where migration flows are responses to conflicts, economic disparities, and political instability. For instance, the migratory movements from Eastern to Western Europe in the late 20th century were largely driven by the collapse of communist regimes and the subsequent economic and political

transformations. Today, we see analogous movements from the Middle East and North Africa. While efforts to address migration issues at borders are sometimes necessary, they are often insufficient on their own. Effective border management policies and tools are critical components of migration governance, but not the only one. Considering that the movement has always been a response to socio-economic and political forces, and in the contemporary era those issues are complemented by globalization, *"migration is not merely a problem to be solved",* but a reality to be managed (IOM, 2024).

The phrase encapsulates that migration requires an ongoing management and highlights the importance of implementing policies that would lead towards effective integration programs and addressing the root causes.

Conclusion

The concept of security began to evolve towards the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century influenced by the recognition that global security challenges extend beyond traditional state-to-state threats, as scholars and policymakers increasingly acknowledged non-traditional security threats. One of the main contributors in that field was the scholars from Copenhagen School who developed sectors of security and securitization theory. At the core of the theory is the notion that security threats are not objective, pre-existing conditions but are instead socially constructed through intersubjective processes involving securitizing actors and audiences. Therefore, securitization is a process through which influential actors construct an issue as an existential threat to a referent object through speech acts. If accepted by the audience, this construction allows the adoption of extraordinary measures that would not be justified under normal political procedures (Buzan et al.,1998). As such, the theory provides a framework for understanding how irregular migration is framed and treated as a security threat.

Largely driven by the conflicts in Syria, as well as the ongoing conflicts and economic instabilities in the Middle East and North African regions, the number of people seeking asylum in Europe overwhelmed existing systems and infrastructure, leading to a humanitarian crisis. Confronted with the massive wave of migration, European countries decentralised the decision-making within the structure of the European Union based on their needs and priorities. This exposed underlying shortcomings and fractures in their solidarity. Developed countries exerted their influence and pursued policies that reflected their political

characteristics and national interests, while on the other hand, less influential member states tended to adapt to the prevailing circumstances dictated by their geopolitical positions rather than asserting their agendas. The crisis not only tested European Union cohesion but also brought immigration to the forefront of political agendas, influencing public opinion and policy-making across the continent.

Countries like Croatia served primarily as temporary routes for migrants moving toward their final destinations, without the intention of attracting them or providing extensive assistance beyond what was necessary for humane transit. Initially, the Croatian government and other nations on the Balkan route adopted an open-door policy with a humanitarian stance, which evoked compassion and proactive assistance among the public. However, as inconsistencies in European Union migration policies became apparent and unilateral decisions by particular member states began to impact transit countries significantly, Croatia faced increasing pressures and the initial compassion and openness gradually shifted towards a security-oriented policy.

Reflecting on the research question, the Croatian government through speech acts framed irregular migration as a potential threat to national security and the broader European Union. This approach was bolstered by the prior securitization of irregular migration in neighbouring countries and the growing fear among the Croatian public. Such a situation legitimized the government's security-centric policies, leading to enhanced surveillance and increased personnel along its borders, particularly those with Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with Frontex. Additionally, Croatia pursued regional and global agreements to manage irregular migration more effectively in the coming years. Further, it advocated for synchronized visa systems and coordinated border control policies among neighbouring countries to curb irregular migration.

Although countering irregular migration has been a major focus of the European Union, the issue remains a significant challenge for its member states, including Croatia. Data indicates that the process of securitizing irregular migration has had minimal impact on the actual flow of migrants into Croatia, particularly when comparing initial securitization efforts to current developments. Instead, research shows that securitization has largely facilitated public intolerance towards migrants. Without addressing the root causes of migration, such as poverty, conflict, and political instability, efforts to control migration through restrictive policies are likely to remain ineffective. These policies may even exacerbate the humanitarian

consequences of migration by pushing migrants into more dangerous and precarious situations. As such, security discourse has been and continues to be related to migrants. Some of the main topics of discussion in international politics surrounding migrations are issues related to border protection, with a particular emphasis on the protection of the external borders of the Union and Schengen.

Bibliography

1. Adamson, F. B. (2006). Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security. *International Security*, *31*(1), 165–199. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4137542

2. Anđelković, K. (2023, August 15). *The Croatian emigration crisis continues*. Total Croatia. https://total-croatia-news.com/news/croatian-emigration-crisis/

3. Ajduković, D., Čorkalo Biruški, D., Gregurović, M., Matić Bojić, J. & Župarić-Iljić, D. (2019). Izazovi integracije izbjeglica u hrvatsko društvo: stavovi građana i pripremljenost lokalnih zajednica. Zagreb: Vlada Republike Hrvatske, Ured za ljudska prava i prava nacionalnih manjina.

4. Archick, K. & Margesson, R. (2015): Europe's Migration and Refugee Crisis. https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10259.pdf. 1-2.

5. Balen, V. (2015b, November 19). *Hrvatska više neće Primati Ekonomske Migrante*. Večernji.hr. https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska-vise-nece-primati-ekonomske-migrante-1038577

6. Balzacq, T. (2005). The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience and context. European Journal of International Relations. 11(2): 171–201.

7. Balzacq, T. (2011). A theory of securitization: Origins, core assumptions and variants. In: Balzacq T (ed.). Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve. New York: Routledge, 1–30.

8. Balzacq, T., Léonard, S. and Ruzicka, J. (2015). 'Securitization' revisited: Theory and cases. International Relations. Epub ahead of print 5 August 2015. DOI: 10.1177/0047117815596590.

9. Barić, L. (2024, January 28). *Situacija na Granici Se Jako promijenila. "Migranti Su Jadni, sad imamo veći problem."* index.hr. https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/situacija-na-granici-se-jako-promijenila-migranti-su-jadni-sad-imamo-veci-problem/2532278.aspx

10. Baričević, V. & Koska, V. (2017). Stavovi i percepcije doma - će javnosti o nacionalnim manjinama, izbjeglicama i migrantima. Zagreb: Centar za mirovne studije.

11. Batinić, M. (2017). Migrantska politika Europske unije i Hrvatske na testu izbjegličke krize 2015.

12. BIRN. (2018.). Montenegro Opens Probes into ISIS Fighters, Recruiters. BalkanInsight.com.

13. Blotevogel, H.H., Müller-ter Jung, U. and Wood, G. (1993). From Itinerant Worker to Immigrant? The Geography of Guestworkers in Germany'. In King, R. (ed.), 83–100.

14. Bošnjak, I. (2019, May 18). *Božinović: Ilegalne ulaske migranata nećemo dopustiti.* Glas Slavonije. https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/399574/1/Bozinovic-Ilegalne-ulaske-migranata-necemo -dopustiti

15. Bradarić, B. (2015, September 20). *"Neka Milanović trg Maršala Tita Preimenuje U Trg Franje Tuđmana."* Večernji.hr. https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/karamarko-u-tovarniku-izbjeglicama-treba-pomoci-ali- ova-vlada-je-pokazala-neorganiziranost-1025833

16. Buzan, B. (1991). People, States and Fear: An Agenda For International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

17. Buzan, B. (1991a). 'Is International Security Possible?'. In New Thinking About Strategy and International Security , edited by Kenneth Booth, 31–55. London: HarperCollins.

18. Buzan, B. (1998). Security, the State, the New World Order, and Beyond. On Security. New York: Columbia University Press. ch.7

19. Buzan, B., Wæver, O. & de Wilde, J. (1998). Security: A New Framework for Analysis. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

20. Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.

21. Brochmann, G. (1998). Controlling migration in Europe: Nation State dilemmas in an international context. In International Migration. Process and interventions, 22-41. Amsterdam: IMES.

22. Corner E.J., Murray E.J. &Brett S.J. (2019, February 24). Qualitative, grounded theory exploration of patients' experience of early mobilisation, rehabilitation and recovery after critical illness. 9(2): 24

23. Côté, A. (2016). Agents without agency: Assessing the role of the audience in securitization theory. *Security Dialogue*, *47*(6), 541–558. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26293812

24. Croatia Week. (2024, January 22). *How many people with Croatian roots live around the world*. https://www.croatiaweek.com/how-many-people-with-croatian-roots-live-around-the-wor

25. Crone, M., Falkentoft, M. F., & Tammikko, T. (2017). *An extraordinary threat? Europe's refugee crisis and the threat of terrorism*. Danish Institute for International Studies. https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/910914/Report_05_Europes_Refugee_Crisis_Web.pdf

26. Cvrtila, V.,Slijepčević, M. & Levak, T. (2019). Migration, the Perception of Security Risks and Media Interpretation Frameworks in Croatia and Hungary, Studia Polensia, 8 (1): 7–30.

27. Čačić-Kumpes, J., Gregurović, S., & Kumpes, J. (2012). Migracija, integracija i stavovi prema imigrantima u Hrvatskoj. *Revija za sociologiju*, *42*(3), 305-336.

28. Čepo, D., Čehulić, M. & Zrinščak, S. (2020). What a Difference Does Time Make? Framing Media Discourse on Refugees and Migrants in Croatia in Two Periods, Hrvatska i komparativna javna uprava, 20 (3): 469–496.

29. den Boer, M. (1995). 'Moving Between Bogus and Bona Fide: The Policing of Inclusion and Exclusion in Europe'. In Miles, R. and Thränhardt, D. (eds), pp. 92–111.

30. Desku, A. (2023, November 20). *Croatia strengthens border controls amid irregular migration concerns*. Schengen.News. https://schengen.news/croatia-strengthens-border-controls-amid-irregular-migration-concerns/

31. Despot, S. (2016, February 19). *Predsjednici Odjednom Više Ne Smetaju Izbjeglice*. Faktograf.hr. https://faktograf.hr/2016/02/19/predsjednica-odala-priznanje-bivsoj-vladi-oko-izbjeglica/

32. Dettmer, M., Katschak, C. & Ruppert, G. (2015): German Companies See Refugees as Opportunity (2015). Accessible at http://www.spiegel.de/ international/germany/refugees-are-an-opportunity-for-the-german-economya-1050102.html

33. Deutsche Welle. (2015, October 19). *Hrvatska: Primati Izbjeglice Ili Zatvoriti Granice? – DW – 19.10.2015*. dw.com. https://www.dw.com/hr/hrvatska-primati-izbjeglice-ili-zatvoriti-granice/a-18791522

34. Dnevnik.hr. (2024, March 20). *Nova meta Zorana Milanovića*. https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/sto-o-stavovima-zorana-milanovica-o-migrantima-misli-sdp-i-njegovi-partneri---838993.html

35. Dnevnik.hr. (2024a, March 24). *Božinović o migrantima koji dolaze u Hrvatsku*. https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/davor-bozinovic-o-migrantima-koji-dolaze-u-hrvatsku---839599.html

36. Dnevnik.hr. (2024b, March 27). *Kako izgleda zaštita hrvatske granice: "Migranti podcijene Savu i plove Improviziranim čamčićima."* Dnevnik.hr. https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/dnevnik-nove-tv-istrazio-kako-izgleda-zastita-hrvatske-granice---840086.html

37. Dnevnik.hr. (2024c, March 27). *Poznata agencija piše o Hrvatskoj*. https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/afp-pise-o-desecima-tisuca-migranata-koji-rade-u-hrvatskoj---840108.html

38. Does, A. (2012). Citizen (in)security in the Northern Triangle of Central America: An analysis of the Construction of the Maras. Graduate Institute

39. Dudovskiy, J. (2024). *Interpretivism (interpretivist) research philosophy*. Research. https://research-methodology.net/research-philosophy/interpretivism/

40. Džidić, G. (2024). *Sekuritizacija iregularnih migracija u Republici Hrvatskoj iz perspektive kritičke geopolitike* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Zagreb. The Faculty of Political Science).

41. ECCHR. (2020, December). *Case report push-backs in Croatia - ECCHR*. European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights. https://www.ecchr.eu/fileadmin/Fallbeschreibungen/Case_report_Croatia_UN_HRC_Dec2020.pdf

42. Emmers, R. (2010). 'Securitization'. In A. Collins (Ed.) Contemporary Security Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp 133-150.

43. Eroukhmanoff, C. (2017). Securitization theory. u: Mcglinchey, S., Walter, R., Scheinpflug, C. (ur.): International Relations Theory. Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing. str. 104-110.

44. Esterajher J. (2015). Iskustva zbrinjavanja prognanika i izbjeglica suvremena izbjegličko-migrantska kriza u Hrvatskoj, Političke analize (6) 23: 15-22.

45. Euronews. (2023, September 29). *Croatia: Sharp rise in illegal immigration since Schengen entry last year*. https://www.euronews.com/2023/09/29/croatia-sharp-rise-in-illegal-immigration-since-schengen-entry-last-year

46. European Commission. (2024). *Migration and asylum*. Migration and Home Affairs. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum_en

47. European Council. (2024). Western Balkans Route. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy/western-balkans-route/

48. European Parliament. (2016, January). *The Western Balkans – Frontline of the migrant crisis*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573949/EPRS_BRI(2016)573949_EN.pdf

49. European Parliament. (2016a). EU and Turkey statement and action plan.

50. European Union. (2021). A decade of opportunities and challenges. https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history/2010-2019_en

51. France24. (2016, March 9). *Slovenia, Serbia take steps to shut down Balkan migrant route*. France 24. https://www.france24.com/en/20160309-slovenia-serbia-take-steps-shut-down-balkan-migrant-route

52. Glas Slavonije. (2015, November 15). *Terorist Iz pariza prošao Kroz Hrvatsku 8.listopada*. https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/285316/1/Terorist-iz-Pariza-prosao-kroz-Hrvatsku-8listopada

53. Gregurović, M., Kuti, S., & Župarić-Iljić, D. (2016). Attitudes towards immigrant workers and asylum seekers in eastern Croatia: Dimensions, determinants and differences. *Migracijske i Etničke Teme / Migration and Ethnic Themes*, *32*(1), 91–122. https://doi.org/10.11567/met.32.1.4

54. Grubiša, D. (2009). 'The Europeanization of Croatia's Security Discourse'. 47–8.

55. Hansen, L. (2000). The Little Mermaid's silent security dilemma and the absence of gender in the Copenhagen School. Millennium: Journal of International Studies 29(2): 285–306.

56. Hansen, L. (2011). Reconstructing desecuritisation: the normative - political in the Copenhagen School and directions for how to apply it.". British International Studies Association.

57. Harrison, E. G. (2015, October 31). *Still, the refugees are coming, but in Europe, the barriers are rising*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/31/austria-fence-slovenia-wire-europe-refugees

58. Hrvatski Crveni Križ. (2016, March). *Godišnje izvješće o radu u 2015 godini*. https://www.hck.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/TKO SMO/Skupština/Godisnje izvjesce/GODISNJE_IZVJESCE_2015.pdf?vel=3441717

59. Human Rights Watch. (2023, May 11). *Croatia: Ongoing, violent border pushbacks*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/05/03/croatia-ongoing-violent-border-pushbacks

60. Huysmans, J. (2000). The European Union and the Securitization of Migration. Journal of Common Market Studies, 38(5), 751–777.

61. Huysmans, J. (2006). The politics of insecurity: fear, migration and asylum in the EU. Routledge.

62. Ileri, M. B. (2019). *Testing the Securitization Paradigm of the So-called Copenhagen School In the Case Study of Europe Migrant Crisis 2015*. Instituto de Estudios Europeos.

63. Index.hr. (2015, November 19). *Hrvatska Zatvara Granice za ekonomske migrante*. index.hr. https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/hrvatska-zatvara-granice-za-ekonomske-migrante/857017.aspx

64. Jakešević, R., Tatalović, S. (2016). Securitization (and de-securitization) of the European refugee crisis.

65. Jackson, R. & Sørensen, G. (2013). Introduction to International Relations:Theories and Approaches (Fifth Edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

66. Jaulin, T. (2010). The Impact of EU Migration Policy in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. IDEA. https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/chapters/the-role-of-the-european-union-in-democracy-building/eu-democracy-building-discussion-paper-39.pdf

67. Jerković, D. (2020, January 25). *Štitimo Hrvatsku I Europsku Uniju policijom i bez žice!*. Glas Slavonije.

https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/422481/11/Stitimo-Hrvatsku-i-Europsku-uniju-policijo m-i-bez-zice

68. Kaid, L. L. & Johnston, A. (2001). Videostyle in presidential campaigns: Style and content of televised political advertising. Westport, CT: Praeger.

69. King, R. (1993). 'European International Migration 1945–90: A Statistical and Geographical View'. In King, R. (ed.), pp. 19–39.

70. Kogovsek, N. (2015, October 27). *Refugees: The situation in Slovenia.* beyondborderlines. https://beyondborderlines.wordpress.com/2015/10/27/refugees-the-situation-in-sloven ia-reports-from-neza-kogovsek-from-the-peace-institute-ljubljana/

71. Kondracki, N. L., Wellman, N. S. (2002). Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education. Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior. 34: 224-230.

72. Korella, G. and Twomey, P. (eds) (1995) Towards a European Immigration Policy (Brussels: European Interuniversity Press).

73. Koslowski, R. (1998). 'European Union Migration Regimes, Established and Emergent'. In Jopke, C. (ed.) Challenge to the Nation-State. Immigration in Western Europe and the United States (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 153–88.

74. Kumpes, J. (2018). Religioznost i stavovi prema imigrantima u Hrvatskoj. Migracijske i etničke teme, 34 (3), 275-320. https://doi.org/10.11567/met.34.3.3

75. Kranjec, J. & Župarić-Iljić, D. (2014). Croatia - Diversity of Migration Trends and Policies // Proliferation of Migration Transition: Selected EU New Member States / Medved, Felicita (ur.). Brisel: European Liberal Forum (ELF). 152-188.

76. Kuti, S. (2014a). *Researching Third Country Nationals' Integration as a Three-way Process - Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of Integration.* Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2016-05/INTERACT-RR-2 014-13.pdf

77. Lajić, I. (2002). Hrvatske migracije početkom 21. stoljeća. *Migracijske i etničke teme*, *18*(2-3), 135-149.

78. Lalić, Sara (2016). Uloga medija u oblikovanju javnog mnijenja prema izbjeglicama i tzv. izbjegličkoj krizi, http://www.dostajemrznje.org/ wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Uloga-medijau-oblikovanju-javnogmnijenja-prema-izbje glicama.pdf

79. Léonard S and Kaunert C (2011) Reconceptualizing the audience in securitization theory. In: Balzacq T (ed.) Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve. New York: Routledge, 57–76.

80. Lindström S. (2005). "The changing nature of security: The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and non-military security," presented at the workshop on The Status of International Mediterranean Studies (European Research Institute, University of Birmingham)

81. MacGregor, M. (2023, May 10). *Croatia accused of new mass expulsions of migrants to Bosnia*. InfoMigrants. https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/48806/croatia-accused-of-new-mass-expulsions-of-migrants-to-bosnia

82. Malkki, L. (2002). "News from Nowhere. Mass Displacement and Globalized 'Problems of Organization'". Ethnography 3/3: 351–360.

83. Manning, P. (2015). Migration in human history. In D. Christian (Ed.), *The Cambridge World History* (pp. 277–310). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

84. McDonald, M. (2008). Securitization and the construction of security. European Journal of International Relations 14(4): 563–587.

85. Möller, F.(2007) `Photographic Interventions in Post-9/11 Security Policy', *Security Dialogue* 38(2): 179-96.

86. National Security Strategy. (2002). The Croatian Parliament (Hrvatski Sabor). https://www.soa.hr/UserFiles/File/Strategy_Republic_of_Croatia.pdf

87. OIM. (2024). *How to "Solve" migration: A practical guide*. OIM Oficina Regional para Centroamérica, Norteamérica y el Caribe. https://rosanjose.iom.int/en/blogs/how-solve-migration-practical-guide

88. Ostojić, R. (2016, June). A European Perspective of the Migration Crisis: Croatian Experiences. https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kroatien/13060.pdf

89. Oxford Languages. (2024). Dictionary - online translation - bab.la. https://en.bab.la/dictionary/

90. Padrtova, B. (2017). *Securitization of the Arctic: U.S. Securitizing Actors and Their Strategies*. Informační Systém. https://is.muni.cz/th/o6uon/Padrtova_PhD_thesis_FINAL.txt

91. Pavić, R. (2005). Hrvatska i EU (EUnija) – u središnjoj južnoj Europi, tj. na Balkanu i njegovim rubovima (Hrvatska): sve još nije gotovo!. Adrias. (12): 73-90.

92. Reuters. (2015, October 17). *Refugees Cross into Slovenia after Hungary closes its border with Croatia*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/17/refugees-slovenia-hungary-closes-border-croatia

93. Roe, P. (2008). Actor, audience(s) and emergency measures: Securitization and the UK's decision to invade Iraq. Security Dialogue 39(6): 615–635.

94. Roe, P. (2010). Socijetalna sigurnost. u: Collins, A. (ur.): Suvremene sigurnosne studije. Zagreb: Centar za međunarodne i sigurnosne studije Fakulteta političkih znanosti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu –Politička kultura.

95. Rukavina, B., & Bašić, F. (2016). Politički diskurs i konstrukcija stereotipova o migrantima među studentima Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. https://www.irh.hr/hijerarhijski-prikaz/brosure/95-politicki-diskurs-i-konstrukcija-stereotipova-o-migrantima-medu-studentima-sveucilista-u-zagrebu/file

96. Slijepčević, M., & Fligić, S. (2018). 'Analiza medijskog praćenja izbjegličke krize u Hrvatskoj i interpretacijski okviri (framing).' Suvremene teme 9 (1): 31-48.

97. Smiljanic, D. (2017). 'Development of the Croatian National Security Strategy'. p. 112.

98. Soudil, E. (2015, December 23). *Ksenofobija I islamofobija truju sve više Mladih I U Hrvatskoj*. Glas Slavonije. https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/288864/1/Ksenofobija-i-islamofobija-truju-sve-vise-mladih-i-u-Hrvatskoj

99. Subbotovska, U., & Kirka, D. (2015, September 21). *Balkan officials clash over migrants*. The Detroit News. https://eu.detroitnews.com/story/news/world/2015/09/21/europe-migrants/72551818/

100. Stone, M. (2009). Security According to Buzan: A Comprehensive Security Analysis. Sciences Po. Columbia University, School of International and Public Affairs.

101. Šarić, Lj. (2019). Visual Presentation of Refugees During the 'Refugee Crisis' of 2015–2016 on the Online Portal of the Croatian Public Broadcaster, International Journal of Communication, 13: 991–1015.

102. Tatalović, S. & Malnar, D. (2015). Sigurnosni aspekti izbjegličke krize. Političke analize, 6(23), 23-29.

103. Tešija, J. (2015, September 17). *Centar za mirovne Studije šokiran jer, tvrde, Predsjednica na Izbjeglice Gleda Kao na Okupatorsku Vojsku*. Telegram.hr.

https://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/centar-za-mirovne-studije-sokiran-jer-tvrde
-predsjednica-na-izbjeglice-gleda-kao-na-okupatorsku-vojsku/

104.   Tešija, V. (2023, September 29). *Slovenia tightens control of border with Croatia
against migrant influx*. Balkan Insight.
https://balkaninsight.com/2023/09/28/slovenia-tightens-control-of-border-with-croatia
-against-migrant-influx/

105.   The Croatian Parliament. (2002, March 19). *Strategy for the Republic of Croatia's
National Security*. Sigurnosno obavjestajna agencija (SOA).

106.   Total Croatia News. (2015, October 14). *Slavonski Brod prepares for the arrival
of refugees*. Total Croatia.
https://total-croatia-news.com/news/slavonski-brod-prepares-for-the-arrival-of-refuge
es/

107.   United Nations. (1948). *Universal declaration of human rights*.
https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

108.   United Nations. (2001). Responsibility of States of Internationally Wrongful Acts:
16. Annex to General Assembly resolution 56/83 of 12 December. United Nations.

109.   United Nations. (2019, January 11). *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and
Regular Migration*. International Organization for Migration.
https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/451/99/PDF/N1845199.pdf?
OpenElement=

110.   Vecernji List. (2015, October 12). *"Prihvatni centar premješta se u Slavonski
Brod zbog humanijeg odnosa."* Večernji.hr.
http://www.vecernji.hr/hrvatska/ranko-ostojic-prihvatni-centar-premjesta-se-u-slavons
ki-brod-zbog-humanijeg-odnosa-1030216

111.   Veljković, S. (2015, October 20). *Pusić o zatvaranju hrvatske granice: Sve je
moguće, ali mi to ne želimo*. Večernji.hr.
https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/vesna-pusic-o-zatvaranju-hrvatske-granice-sve-je-mog
uce-ali-mi-to-ne-zelimo-1031844

112.   Vlada RH. (2015, September 24). *Premijer Milanović: Pitanje Granice Može Se
Riješiti Već Danas, Ako Srbija počne kontrolirati intenzivan Tok Migranata*. Vlada
Republike Hrvatske - Premijer Milanović: Pitanje granice može se riješiti već danas,
ako Srbija počne kontrolirati intenzivan tok migranata.
https://vlada.gov.hr/print.aspx?id=17781&url=print

113.   Vlada RH. (2015a, October 2). *Predsjednik Vlade Milanović za BBC: Izbjeglička Kriza Treba Se Rješavati na svojem izvorištu*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/predsjednik-vlade-milanovic-za-bbc-izbjeglicka-kriza-treba -se-rjesavati-na-svojem-izvoristu/17844

114.   Vlada RH. (2015b, October 21). *Ministar Obrane Kotromanović: Hrvatska neće slati vojsku na granicu bez obzira na Slovenski Primjer*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/ministar-obrane-kotromanovic-hrvatska-nece-slati-vojsku- na-granicu-bez-obzira-na-slovenski-primjer/17965

115.   Vlada RH. (2016, October 19). *Izglasano Povjerenje novoj vladi. Predsjednik Vlade Plenković: Svjestan Odgovornosti I Izazova, vjerujem U hrvatsku!*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/izglasano-povjerenje-novoj-vladi-predsjednik-vlade-plenko vic-svjestan-odgovornosti-i-izazova-vjerujem-u-hrvatsku/19496?lang=hr

116.   Vlada RH. (2017, July 14). Hrvatski Sabor Donio Strategiju nacionalne sigurnosti RH.https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/hrvatski-sabor-donio-strategiju-nacionalne-sigurnosti-r h/22071

117.   Vlada RH. (2018, September 20). *Hrvatska igra Važnu Ulogu U Sprječavanju Većeg intenziteta istočno-mediteranske i zapadno-balkanske Migrantske Rute*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/hrvatska-igra-vaznu-ulogu-u-sprjecavanju-veceg-intenzitet a-istocno-mediteranske-i-zapadno-balkanske-migrantske-rute/24412

118.   Vlada RH. (2018a, November 17). *Ministrica Marija Pejčinović Burić: Populiste u Hrvatskoj Nije teško prepoznati, raspiruju Strah I nesnošljivost*. Ministarstvo Republike Hrvatske - Ministrica Marija Pejčinović Burić: Populiste u Hrvatskoj nije teško prepoznati, raspiruju strah i nesnošljivost. https://mvep.gov.hr/print.aspx?id=181906&url=print

119.   Vlada RH. (2018b, December 10). *Ministar Božinović: Moramo Gledati u Budućnost, migracije su jedan od Najvećih Izazova Današnjice*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/ministar-bozinovic-moramo-gledati-u-buducnost-migracije -su-jedan-od-najvecih-izazova-danasnjice/24923

120.   Vlada RH. (2018c, December 15). *Ministar Božinović: Policija Sprječava Nelegalne migracije, što joj je i dužnost po hrvatskom I Europskom Zakonodavstvu*. vlada.gov.hr.

https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/ministar-bozinovic-policija-sprjecava-nelegalne-migracije-sto-joj-je-i-duznost-po-hrvatskom-i-europskom-zakonodavstvu/24963

121.   Vlada RH. (2018d, December 15). *Ministar Božinović: Zna Se što je legitimni i zakonit Ulazak U Državu*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/ministar-bozinovic-zna-se-sto-je-legitimni-i-zakonit-ulazak-u-drzavu/24964

122.   Vlada RH. (2019, January 29). *Ministar Božinović: Hrvatska Vodi odgovornu nacionalnu I Europsku Politiku štiteći granice od ilegalnih migracija*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/ministar-bozinovic-hrvatska-vodi-odgovornu-nacionalnu-i-europsku-politiku-stiteci-granice-od-ilegalnih-migracija/25207

123.   Vlada RH. (2019a, February 20). *Ministar Božinović: Sve zemlje na Migrantskom Putu Moraju Više Surađivati*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/ministar-bozinovic-sve-zemlje-na-migrantskom-putu-moraju-vise-suradjivati/25356

124.   Vlada RH. (2019b, March 13). *Božinović U odgovoru amnesty internationalu: Prioritetna Politika Mup-a su zakonite I Održive migracije*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/bozinovic-u-odgovoru-amnesty-internationalu-prioritetna-politika-mup-a-su-zakonite-i-odrzive-migracije/25498

125.   Vlada RH. (2024, April 6). *Božinović: U Javnom Prostoru čujemo Nebuloze O ilegalnim migrantima*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/bozinovic-u-javnom-prostoru-cujemo-nebuloze-o-ilegalnim-migrantima/42240

126.   Vlada RH. (2024a, April 12). *Božinović: Hrvatska Dostigla Europsku Razinu U tehničkoj I Infrastrukturnoj opremljenosti vanjske granice EU*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/bozinovic-hrvatska-dostigla-europsku-razinu-u-tehnickoj-i-infrastrukturnoj-opremljenosti-vanjske-granice-eu/42277

127.   Vlada RH. (2024b, April 15). *Božinović: Hrvatska granična Policija Najuvježbanija na Razini Europske Unije*. vlada.gov.hr. https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/bozinovic-hrvatska-granicna-policija-najuvjezbanija-na-razini-europske-unije/42288

128.   Vučić, P. (1995). Politička sudbina Hrvatske. Zagreb: Mladost.

129.   Vuori, J.A. (2008). Illocutionary logic and strands of securitization: Applying the theory of securitization to the study of non-democratic political orders. European Journal of International Relations 14(1): 65–99.

130. Vuori, J. (2011). How to Do Security with Words: A Grammar of Securitisation in the People's Republic of China. Turku: University of Turku Press.

131. Walt, S. (June 1991). "The Renaissance of Security Studies". International Studies. Quarterly 35, no. 2: pp. 211-39.

132. Wæver, O. (1993). *Securitization and desecuritization* (Vol. 5). Copenhagen: Centre for Peace and Conflict Research.

133. Waever, O. (1998). "Securitization and Desecuritization", On Security, Ed by Ronnie Lipschutz, New York, Columbia University Press. p.6

134. Wæver, O. (2003). Securitization: Taking stock of a research programme in security studies. Unpublished manuscript, University of Copenhagen.

135. Wilkinson, C. (2007). The Copenhagen School on tour in Kyrgyzstan: Is securitization theory useable outside Europe? Security Dialogue 38(5): 5–25.

136. Williams, M.C. (2003) `Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics', *International Studies Quarterly* 47(4): 511-32.

137. Wohlfeld, M. (2014). Is Migration a Security Issue? in: Grech, Omar & Wohlfeld, Monika (eds.). Migration in the Mediterranean: Human Rights, Security and Development Perspectives. Malta: MEDAC. p.61

138. Zlatković Winter, J. (2004). Suvremena migracijska kretanja u Europi. Migracijske i etničke teme, 20(2-3), 161-170.

139. Zorko, M. (2018). Geopolitika i teritorijalnost. Naklada Jesenski i Turk.

140. Zorko, M. (2023). Strategija/strategije nacionalne sigurnosti i izazovi geopolitičkog položaja Republike Hrvatske: Nacionalna sigurnost Republike Hrvatske u 21. stoljeću. Zagreb: Fakultet političkih znanosti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Naklada Jesenski i Turk, Institut za sigurnosne politike. str. 97-120.

141. Žabec, K., Patković, N., Korljan, Z., & Mesić, M. (2015, September 17). *Hrvatska Zatvorila granicu DOSAD Stiglo 11.000 izbjeglica, Granični Prijelazi sa Srbijom Zatvoreni do Daljnjega, imigranti I Dalje Stižu Kroz kukuruzišta, U Belom Manastiru Opći Kaos*. Jutarnji List. https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/hrvatska-zatvorila-granicu-dosad-stiglo-11.000 -izbjeglica-granicni-prijelazi-sa-srbijom-zatvoreni-do-daljnjega-imigranti-i-dalje-stizu -kroz-kukuruzista-u-belom-manastiru-opci-kaos-301816

142. Župarić-Iljić, D., & Gregurović, M. (2020). Dismantling security discourses and threat perceptions related to asylum seekers and refugees in Croatia.

Cosmopolitanism, Migration and Universal Human Rights, 181–201. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-50645-2_14