

Migration Control in Europe after 9/11: Explaining the Absence of Securitization

Christina Boswell

Migration Research Group
Hamburg Institute of International Economics
Neuer Jungfernstieg 21, 20347 Hamburg
Tel. +49 40 428 34357
christina.boswell@hwwa.de

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Migration Research Group, HWWA

It is not a new insight to observe that 9/11 has had far-reaching consequences for the framing of debates on security in Europe, including in “softer” security areas such as migration. Indeed the received wisdom is that 9/11 provided an opportunity for the securitization of migration.¹ In the language of the critical security studies literature, it opened up a number of discursive opportunities to associate terrorism with immigration, thereby framing the issue in such a way that (certain) immigrants were categorised as posing an existential threat to European societies.² And as a result, so the theory goes, it helped legitimize practices and technologies in migration control that were usually reserved for emergencies or national security threats (Huysmans 1995, 1997; Buzan et al. 1998:23-6). One of the areas of migration policy most frequently characterised in this way is migration control – understood as policies to exclude irregular migrants or other unwanted foreign nationals through entry restrictions, border control, apprehension, detention and deportation. There is a fairly widespread perception that the threat of terrorist provided a pretext for the more rigorous exclusion of immigrants through these instruments of migration control.

I certainly do not want to deny that this dynamic has been present in some instances – the most obvious case being provisions on the exclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees or the expulsion of fundamentalist clerics in a number of European countries.³ The tendency towards securitization has clearly been pronounced in the case of US policies on border control (Tirman 2004). But by and large, there is remarkably little evidence of attempts to securitize migration in Europe through explicitly linking irregular migrants and new entrants to terrorism. Indeed, as I shall argue, a number of cognitive and political factors militated against sustaining any coherent linkage between the two. With a few exceptions, the exclusion of migrants as a strategy for reducing the terrorist threat became untenable, and as a result, public debates on migration control in Europe remained surprisingly untouched by the anti-terrorism agenda.

One can, however, observe a rather different dynamic at the level of policy practice. Law enforcement agencies at national and EU level were keen to utilise migration control practices and technologies to abet counter-terrorism activities. Systems for monitoring and gathering data on irregular migrants and asylum seekers, as well as the surveillance opportunity offered by border control, have been harnessed as a component of a counter-terrorist agenda. Paradoxically, then, migration policy

¹ See, for example, Berthelet 2002; Zuconi 2004; van Krieken 2005; and discussions on securitization within two major European research projects: the MIDAS project, based at Birmingham University (<http://www.midas.bham.ac.uk/>); and CHALLENGE, based at CERI, Paris (<http://www.libertysecurity.org/>).

² For the concept of securitization, see Huysmans 1995, 1997, 2000; Bigo 2002; Waver et al. 1993; etc.

³ The UK and Germany are obvious examples (see discussion in part two of the paper).

practices have been exploited for counter-terrorism purposes, rather than vice versa, as the critical security school would predict.

How can one explain the absence of securitization, or variations in the degree of securitization, in different areas of the political system? I argue that while the critical security studies literature offers a useful account of how public discourse can legitimise security practices, it cannot adequately explain the more variegated patterns that have emerged since 9/11. Its concepts of “traversal” between policy areas, convergence of agendas, or the “security continuum”, gloss over the distinctive dynamics of different parts of the political system, and simplify the relationship between them. This can be attributed to two deficiencies: its lack of an adequate theory of organizational action; and an under-specified theory of functional differentiation between the systems of politics and the administration. I aim to show how insights from neo-institutionalism and systems theory can help address these deficits, and provide a better theoretical basis for making sense of the empirical findings of the paper.

The article begins by raising some initial queries about the theoretical assumptions of the securitization thesis. Part two explores how migration control has been framed in political discourse in Europe before and after 9/11. Drawing on examples from European countries, it shows how attempts to securitize migration have been constrained. The third part examines the dynamics of securitization in the practice of law enforcement agencies working on migration and terrorism. Focusing on the example of EU cooperation, it shows how interior and police officials have sought to exploit monitoring practices and data on migration to advance counter-terrorist goals. In the final part, I consider the implications of these trends for theories of securitization. I argue that literature on securitization would benefit from the introduction of some theory of functional differentiation between different parts of the administration, and between the administration and politics.

1. Securitization in Political Discourse and Praxis

A number of prominent contributions in critical security studies have pointed to the securitization of migration policy in Europe over the past decade or more. The central thesis is that immigration has increasingly been portrayed as a threat to European societies, or has even become the “new focus for insecurity” (Waeber et al. 1993), ascribed responsibility for a range of socio-economic and cultural problems (Heisler and Layton Henry 1993; Huysmans 2000). This type of discourse is performative, in that such causal attributions contribute to the reconfiguration of social and political alignments. The shift in discourse consolidates categories of collective identification, thereby helping mobilise support for the relevant political community (Huysmans 1995, 1997, 2000). And it confers legitimacy on the state in its function of protecting citizens from external threats (Bigo 2002; Huysmans 1997; see also Edelman 1977: 4-5). In practical terms, it justifies a range of policies to control migration that would otherwise not have been considered legitimate (Buzan et al. 1993: 24-5).

Much of the literature makes a distinction between the respective levels of political discourse and practice (Bigo 2002, 2005:67-8; Huysmans 2000; Buzan et al. 1993), which offers a useful basis for

analysis. The level of discourse describes the attempt by sections of politics and the media to mobilise public support for a security agenda; while the level of praxis describes the technologies and practices employed by security professionals in a political field. We can further specify this distinction in terms of the two subsystems of the political system: the systems of politics and the administration (Luhmann 1981: 79), each of which operates according to a different logic of action. In democratic systems, the system of politics comprises the set of political parties concerned with the competitive mobilisation of electoral support through gathering and selecting social demands for state action (Poggi 1990: 138). The resonance of its demands is dependent on their communication through the mass media; and politics also relies on the media as a sounding board for gauging public opinion. Political mobilisation involves not only generating support for rival political programmes, but the competition to frame issues in a particular way. Framing refers to the selection and construction of certain questions as legitimate objects of societal concern, requiring public action of a certain kind (Gusfield 1981: 3; Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). Clearly, framing must provide a plausible narrative that fits available information about the social phenomena in question. But there will inevitably be different ways of defining the issue consistent with available information, especially in policy areas such as immigration or terrorism, which are subject to quite considerable gaps in knowledge. Securitization denotes one particular way of framing migration issues, which, as we saw, involves portraying migration as an existential threat that justifies a particular sort of public action.

Now while there may be some evidence that securitization has occurred in a number of cases, some caution is needed in employing the concept as a heuristic method. This would imply narrowing the focus of observation to the search for one rather specific type of issue framing. As guide for empirical enquiry, then, the concept of securitization may serve to constrain observation of alternative trajectories in the framing of migration issues. And one can certainly imagine possible scenarios under which politics would not have an interest in securitization – for example where this would create unfeasible expectations about the state's capacity to control migration, or where it would conflict with other goals of the liberal state (Boswell 2006). In other words, there is not reason to expect politics to be driven exclusively by an interest in encouraging public unease or introducing more stringent security measures. For this reason, I prefer to first enquire into the more general issue of how migration issues have been framed, and how this construction was affected by debates following 9/11, rather than presupposing that this framing took the form of securitization (though this may well turn out to be the case).

The second level at which securitization may be said to occur is that of policy practice. This refers to the activities of the security professionals, law enforcement agencies and other parts of the administration involved in the elaboration and implementation of collectively binding decisions on questions of migration and internal security. Unlike in the case of politics, these agencies are not primarily occupied with securing public legitimacy; rather, their activities must be understood as guided by a conception of organizational interest that does not reliably react to signals from its environment. The securitization literature seems to offer two possible theories of the content of this organizational interest, both implicitly based on a power-maximizing logic. The first is that security agencies have a

basic interest in colonizing other areas: expanding their influence through exporting their technologies and practices into other policy domains (Bigo 2002; Tsoukala 2005: 165). Securitization thus occurs as security professionals infiltrate the field of migration, applying policing and surveillance methods. They are abetted in this by the symbolic capital acquired through the legitimisation of security approaches in public discourse. The second related theory is that these agencies attempt to expand their power through avoiding scrutiny: they engage in “venue-shopping” to liberate themselves from domestic constraints generated by democratic institutions (Guiraudon 2000). In this case, securitization occurs at the EU level as security professionals “go European” to avoid parliamentary scrutiny or judicial accountability that would impede their activities at the national level. In contrast to the colonisation thesis, the notion of venue-shopping implies that security professionals can, and indeed often do, manage to expand power through avoiding being the object of public debate – in other words, precisely by freeing themselves from the requirement of public legitimation.

The thesis about securitization at the level of practice appears to be plausible as an account of many areas of European migration policy. But as in the previous case, we should be aware that this describes just one possible pattern of organizational behaviour. Expanding power through colonisation or venue-shopping is not the only possible logic of organizational action. A significant body of literature in organizational sociology has shown that organizations are not exclusively interested in power-maximisation or the efficient implementation of their ascribed mandates. Rather, they are concerned to avoid uncertainty and generate commitment from members and constituents in their environment through consolidating roles and routines within the organization (Scott 1995; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; March and Olsen 1994). Moreover, organizational action is mediated by the cognitive frames through which organizations make sense of their environments and define their goals (Hedberg 1981; Dery 1986; Weick and Bougon 1986). Thus power-seeking behaviour does not reliably emerge from an ontological condition of organizations and their environments, or “fields”. A security agency may be motivated by alternative logics of action, possibly even avoiding the acquisition of new technologies or practices that might reveal inconsistencies in goals or deficits in implementation (Bommes and Geddes?). And even assuming colonisation or venue-shopping are internalised as organizational interests, organizations may have a patchy grasp of the conditions for effective implementation of these goals. The implication is that one should not read too much rationality or efficiency into organizational action (Luhmann 2003). For this reason, we should be equally cautious about adopting the notion of securitization, or a power-seeking theory of organizational action, as a concept for guiding empirical enquiry.

Finally, we should consider the question of the relation between these two levels. As mentioned, securitization in discourse can legitimise the extended use of certain security practices. But this public legitimation does not have to be a precondition for securitization at the level of policy practice. Indeed, administrative agencies may have substantial scope for action without being held accountable to public or judicial scrutiny. Again, the precise scope of this freedom to act without scrutiny will be a matter of how issues are framed in public debate. Demands for accountability in public debate may only surface sporadically, and not necessarily as a function of the societal impact of decisions being

taken. It is worth pointing out, though, that a major shift in practice may prompt attempts to re-configure the framing of an issue in public discourse, in order to avoid too great a discrepancy between public debate and practice.

In short, the insights of the critical security studies literature offer a useful way of thinking about the political agendas underlying the framing of migration issues in public discourse, as well as the expansionist tendencies of many security agencies. However, adopting the theory's assumptions about politics and organisations as a heuristic device is problematic. It obscures possible alternative patterns of issue framing in public discourse, and takes for granted a uniform rationality in explaining organizational action. I shall return to these points in the final section.

2. The (non-)Securitization of Migration Control in Public Discourse

The Framing of Migration Control Issues pre-9/11

The issue of migration control in Europe has been highly susceptible to rival attempts at framing since the early 1990s. Introducing the concept of framing is not intended to suggest that irregular migration and border control are imaginary problems, whipped up by populist politicians or the mass media. But the contexts in which these questions come to the fore as major issues, and the way they are handled by politics and the media, vary considerably. One reason for the scope of variety in construction is the problem of observation. Irregular entry, stay and employment are difficult to observe and measure, so the policy area is characterised by a high degree of epistemic uncertainty. This means that any assessment of scale and gravity of the problem is very much open to competing claims.

There is a second feature of this policy area that makes it prone to dissembling on the part of governments: the problem of ambivalence. For a number of reasons, governments and the administration often have limited incentives to be transparent about the problem. James Hollifield and others have famously pointed to a conflict of interests in the area of migration policy. Governments want to control irregular migration, but they are also sensitive to a range of rival pressures: notably, the business lobby, civil liberties considerations, and judicial constraints to excluding certain categories of migrants (Hollifield 1990, 1992, 1999; Joppke 1999; Freeman 1996). These considerations make it virtually impossible for any liberal democratic state to achieve the level of control that is demanded by more populist politics and media (Boswell 2003). Governments and immigration agencies therefore have an incentive to intentionally fudge the issue, maintaining a degree of "deliberate malintegration" between policy goals (Hall 1981: 18), in order to avoid scrutiny on their record of apprehending and deporting irregular migrants. But for this same reason, the issue of irregular migration has often proved to be an irresistible target for opposition and populist media claims about the state's loss of control. This makes irregular migration especially susceptible to framing. It may be utilized by different actors in politics, the media, and interest groups, to mobilise public opinion for quite different ends.

At risk of simplification, one can discern three different tendencies in the framing of irregular migration in Europe, which were already prominent before 9/11. First is the notion that there are hordes of illegal migrants invading the territory of European countries. Irregular migrants are portrayed as impoverished, desperate and frightening aliens, who will use all possible means to reach European countries. This kind of framing has been especially prominent in southern European countries with porous sea borders. Sections of the UK media and public have displayed similar reactions to irregular entry into the UK, as epitomised in reactions to attempts by asylum seekers to reach the UK from France through the channel tunnel.⁴ This is a clear example of securitization in political rhetoric, with states responding with a range of highly visible and often symbolic security measures. The Italian government, for example, declared a state of emergency in March 2002, after a ship of 928 Iraqi Kurds landed in Sicily; and France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the UK have been operating joint naval patrols of the Mediterranean since September 2003, as part of the so-called “Operation Ulysses”.

A second way of framing the problem of border control focuses on the social and economic impact of irregular stay and employment. This is more typical for north European countries with a longer history of welfare state protection. Concerns tend to revolve around abuse of welfare provisions and social services, and the fear that irregular workers will undercut and thus displace domestic workers. More generally, one can discern an underlying anxiety that these new entrants are not playing by the accepted rules, and that their transgressions are not being effectively monitored or punished by the state. These concerns tend to extend to asylum-seekers as well as irregular migrants, insofar as asylum-seekers are characterised as would-be “economic migrants” abusing the asylum system to gain access to welfare and/or employment in Europe. Typical policy responses include employer sanctions, monitoring of abuse through identity cards and control of access to social services, and restrictive asylum systems.

A third strand in the discourse has focused on the problem of smuggling and trafficking of persons. Trafficking and smuggling “networks” are portrayed as dangerous and exploitative, involving such nefarious practices as forced labour in prostitution or sweat shops, and the use of highly dangerous smuggling routes. The typical characterisation of such networks is that of sophisticated international criminal structures often engaged in drug or arms trafficking. Since they operate outside of European welfare systems and regular labour markets, they are not seen as a socio-economic threat. Nor are they threatening national identity by importing huge numbers of foreigners who threaten to “swamp” the indigenous population. Rather, the problem is disturbing because this form of “modern-day slavery” is practised within European states without effective state control. The discourse about trafficking and smuggling is quite widespread across European countries. Because of the clear linkages to organised criminality, the issue has been seen as a legitimate area for engagement by police agencies, and has been the object of EU judicial and police cooperation. It has also been a priority area in relations with countries bordering the EU that are considered to be source or transit countries for trafficking, notably the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe.

⁴ This revolved around the question of the Sangatte Red Cross reception centre near Calais, which in Summer 2001 began to serve as a base for hundreds of asylum seekers to try to cross the channel tunnel into the UK.

The three patterns of framing therefore imply rather different constructions of the problem of border control and irregular migrants, and call for different policy responses. What unites the three characterisations, however, is the emphasis on exclusion as the preferred solution. Whether the concern is about floods of destitute migrants, abusers of the welfare state, or sinister trafficking gangs, the proposed remedy is to bar entry, or to deport unwanted immigrants. Correspondingly, the rhetoric and public policy debate at both national and EU level has focused predominantly on a repertoire of policy measures aimed at excluding migrants: limiting entry through restrictive visa policies, carrier sanctions and border control; curtailing overstay through detention and deportation; and imposing various penalties to deter irregular entry, labour or abuse of asylum systems. EU policy has also focused on cooperation with neighbouring countries to stop irregular emigration, and to facilitate the return of irregular migrants to countries of origin or transit, hence the epithet “fortress Europe”.⁵

The Impact of 9/11: More of the Same

The events of 9/11 clearly caused a huge shock in Europe, and many European countries quite rapidly concluded that similar attacks could occur on their territory. There was an immediate recognition that the attacks involved an international network of activists operating across borders and moving between countries. As more information emerged in the days and weeks to follow, it also became clear that many of those behind the attacks were immigrants residing in European countries – much was made of the case of Mohammed Atta, a student who had been living in Hamburg. Nonetheless, over the first few weeks there was only a rather vague profiling of those involved. Epistemic uncertainty left a considerable window of opportunity for framing the issue in public debates. And there were several rather knee-jerk attempts to address the security threat through migration control policies. The UK Home Secretary David Blunkett insisted that Britain would not “offer hospitality to terrorists”, and announced provisions to facilitate the detention and removal of foreign nationals.⁶ The German Interior Minister Otto Schily made similar statements to the effect that asylum seekers and refugees suspected of terrorist activities should be immediately be deported. While EU member states announced the strengthening of external border controls, and the reintroduction of periodic checks at the borders between Schengen countries.⁷

However, the linkage between terrorism and illegal immigration was difficult to sustain, and from late 2001 onwards references to terrorism are almost wholly absent from debates on irregular migration and migration control in Europe. This emerges quite clearly if one looks at press reporting on migration issues in European countries from 2002 onwards. In Germany, both 9/11 and the Madrid bombings of 11 March 2004 occurred at a time of quite heated debate on a new Immigration Law. Shortly after the

⁵ An alternative to exclusion has been adjustment of status, in the form of periodic regularizations (esp. Mediterranean countries and Belgium). However, such programmes are usually seen as a last resort for clearing up the backlog of irregular migrants already present for long periods, and it is frowned on by north European countries as creating a “pull” factor for future migrants.

⁶ House of Commons, 15 October.

⁷ See Council of the European Union, Presidency Note, European Union action following the attacks in the United States (13155(01), Brussels, 24 October 2001.

US attacks, Otto Schily decided to delay the debate on the bill, to make certain it was “watertight” against terrorism. But with the exception of a few isolated comments about the need to ensure terrorists were not abusing the German asylum system, and provisions to deport fundamentalist clerics, discourse on migration in Germany remained largely untouched by the issue of terrorism. The main critique of the draft Immigration Law remained concerns about increasing labour migration during a period of high unemployment in Germany, and the problem of integration.⁸ The press was quite preoccupied with the problem of Al-Qaida “ sleeper cells ” operating in Germany, and radicalisation amongst Germany’s roughly 3 million Muslims; but these questions were for the most part not linked to the issue of irregular immigration and migration control.

France, meanwhile, experienced an intensive discussion of the problem of irregular migration from late 2001 through 2002, focused on the *sans papiers*, many of whom were Muslims from the Maghreb. But there was scarcely mention in the press of possible links with terrorist organizations, even from the populist Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy. Indeed, Sarkozy announced plans for a regularisation in Autumn 2002: hardly a step that implied a hardening of migration control.⁹ There is a similar absence of any reference to terrorist networks in debates on reforming the asylum system to reduce the growing numbers of claimants. Nor does the question of terrorist activists feature in the argumentation about restricting the number of visas granted to Algerians in Spring 2003.¹⁰ Indeed, the latter was justified with reference to the problem of growing numbers of *sans papiers* – with a marked absence of any framing of the issue in terms of keeping tabs on possible Islamic fundamentalism. And yet it is easy to see how such a linkage could have been made – as indeed it was in US press coverage of migration issues in France.¹¹

The absence of any linkage between migration control issues and terrorism is even more pronounced in the case of Spain. In the aftermath of the Madrid bombings of 11 March 2004, the vast majority of suspects held in connection with the attacks were Moroccan.¹² Morocco was the major source country for Spain’s growing stock of *sin papeles* – in April 2004 it was estimated that there were around 200,000 irregular migrants of Moroccan origin living in Spain.¹³ Morocco was also the most important transit country for irregular migration from Africa; indeed, from Summer 2004 onwards, concerns about irregular migration started to focus on attempts of a number of people to cross into the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Moroccan territory. And yet in Spring 2004, days after the Madrid attacks, the new Prime Minister Zapatero announced a marked shift in migration policy away from a focus on security issues, instead emphasising labour market and economic needs. In Summer 2004 he put forward plans for a major amnesty for irregular migrants resident in Spain, which resulted in the legalization of more than 700,000 migrants between February–April 2005, the largest group of whom

⁸ See, for example, *Die Bild-Zeitung*, 14 December 2001. See also *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 22.3.04 for Shily’s comments in the wake of 11 March.

⁹ *Le Monde*, “Nicolas Sarkozy demande un réexamen des dossiers des sans-papiers”, 6 September 2002.

¹⁰ *Le Monde*, “Le gouvernement français entend poursuivre une politique restrictive de délivrance des visas”, Sylvia Zappi, 3 March 2003.

¹¹ See, for example, *Wall Street Journal*, “As more Muslims settle throughout Europe, ominous trend emerges”, by Ian Johnson and John Carreyron, 11/07/2005.

¹² *BBC News Online*, “Madrid Blasts: The Islamic Connection”, 30 March 2004.

were Moroccan (19.3 %).¹⁴ To be sure, this relatively open approach was complemented with a fairly “securitarian” approach to border control. But there is no evidence that the government made any attempt to link the problem of irregular entry with the threat of terrorism: quite a remarkable fact, given the apparent incentives to do so after 11 March.

Given the importance of regional cooperation on migration control it is also worth briefly considering how the linkage between migration and terrorism was treated in political rhetoric at the EU level.¹⁵ The Council of Ministers in the area of Justice and Home Affairs held extraordinary meetings following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, as well as 11 March and 7 July 2005 in London. In their 20 September 2001 Declaration, the Council did state the need to “strengthen controls at external borders”; but the only explicit linkage to migration was the “risk of large-scale population movements as a result of heightened tensions following the attacks on the US”.¹⁶ In the 19 March 2004 meeting to discuss the Madrid bombing there was again a reference to “strengthening border controls”, and the initiative to create “an integrated borders management agency” was mentioned as relevant to counter-terrorism activities. But migration control was not otherwise mentioned, except in the context of the problem of support for religious extremism amongst members of EU countries,¹⁷ a theme that received reinforced attention in the statement following the London bombings. EU discussions on migration policy, meanwhile, continued to follow the timetable and goals set out in European Council conclusions that pre-dated 9/11. Migration control remained high on the list of priorities, but the explicit rationale for this focus was the need to combat trafficking, and better protect Europe’s external borders from unwanted immigration. The most significant European Council document emerging from the period after 2001, the Hague Programme, again failed to draw a link between terrorism and migration control. It stressed the need for better managed migration in order to prevent “humanitarian disasters” – but again, migration control was emphatically *not* defined as a means of excluding potential terrorists.¹⁸

¹³ *El País*, “Los marroquíes piden a Zapatero un consejo islámico que controle imames y mezquitas”, Tomás Bárbulo, 7 April 2004.

¹⁴ *El País*, “El Gobierno perdonará a los empresarios que regularicen a extranjeros ‘sin papeles’”, Elsa Granda, 22 August 2004; *El País*, 27.4.2005.

¹⁵ In this case, will look at political statements rather than press coverage, since the latter is in general relatively thin for EU issues, and diverges between countries. However, we can assume that European Council Conclusions are formulated with public reactions very much in mind (as opposed to, e.g., minutes of regular JHA Council meetings, which are (admittedly edited) summaries of discussions that follow the logic of ministerial interests).

¹⁶ Extraordinary Council Meeting – Justice, Home Affairs and Civil Protection, Brussels, 20 September 2001 (12019/01 (Presse 327)).

¹⁷ Extraordinary Council Meeting – Justice and Home Affairs, Brussels, 19 March 2004 (7555/04 (Presse 94)).

¹⁸ The Hague Programme: Strengthening Freedom, Security and Justice in the European Union, Annex 1, Presidency Conclusions – Brussels, 5 November 2004 (1492/04).

Explaining the Non-Securitization of Migration Control

In light of the securitization thesis, these observations seem to be quite anomalous. Why did politicians and the media not exploit concerns about terrorism to mobilise support and legitimise more extensive powers for migration control? One possible answer is that the profiles of international terrorists that emerged after 9/11 did not correspond in any obvious way with established framing irregular migrants in Europe. The debate on Al-Qaeda networks from Autumn 2001 onwards depicted terrorists as single-minded fanatics, who were able to cleverly exploit European rules on entry and stay to achieve their fundamentalist goals, but who otherwise had little regard for the welfare or employment benefits European countries might have to offer.¹⁹ The typical image was of a network of sleeper cells operating in highly organised way, well-trained and with access to ample resources. This hardly fitted the image of large numbers of destitute and desperate migrants arriving on the shores of southern Europe, or the “economic migrants” keen to cheat welfare systems and take low-skilled jobs from native workers. The image of these generally well-educated religious fundamentalists was also fairly incongruous with images of organised criminal networks involved in trafficking women and children for prostitution – although of the three types of irregular migration, this was the one most frequently associated with terrorist activities.²⁰

Perhaps even more undermining for such a linkage, though, were the emerging revelations that European nationals were involved in terrorist attacks. In this sense, any discursive opportunities to link migration and terrorism were constrained not just by a “stickiness” or lag in adapting established patterns of framing the migration control problem (Hansen 2002). They were also blocked by the growing body of information on the profile of the European Muslims involved. We can elucidate this point through considering in more detail a case where a European government *did* attempt to draw such a linkage, and was thwarted for these reasons: the UK Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act (ATCS), 2001.

The ATCS Act was introduced into parliament in November 2001, as a direct response to the attacks of 9/11. Part four of the act explicitly covered immigration and asylum, setting out provisions to facilitate the deportation of foreign nationals suspected of being international terrorists, or their detention in cases where their removal or departure was prevented by law or by practical considerations.²¹ Part four was controversial for a number of reasons, not least because the provisions on detention without trial implied a derogation from the European Convention on Human Rights.²² More tellingly for our discussion, however, were two sets of criticism advanced by the so-called Newton Report of 18 December 2003. This was the report issued by a special Review Committee composed of members of the Privy Council, set up by the ATCS Act as a mechanisms to review part

¹⁹ See, for example, John Hooper, “Double life of suicide pilot: War on terrorism”, *The Observer*, 23 September 2001.

²⁰ In fact, there were some claims that Al-Qaeda activities were financed through trafficking, e.g. by David Blunkett.

²¹ Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, available at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2001/20010024.htm>.

²² House of Lords and House of Commons, *Review of Counter-Terrorism Provisions*, Eighteenth Report of Session 2003-2004, HL Paper 158 HC 713, 4 August 2004.

four. The first criticism related to what the committee considered to be an unwarranted focus on foreign nationals:

The Home Office has argued that the threat from al Qaeda-related terrorism is predominantly from foreigners, but there is accumulating evidence that this is not now the case. The British suicide bombers who attacked Tel Aviv in May 2003, Richard Reid ("The Shoe Bomber"), and recent arrests suggest that the threat from UK citizens is real. Almost 30% of Terrorism Act 2000 suspects in the past year have been British. We have been told that, of the people of interest to the authorities because of their suspected involvement in terrorism, nearly half are British nationals".²³

The report therefore strongly urged the government to "deal with all terrorism, whatever its origin or the nationality of its suspected perpetrators" (ibid., p. 11). The Home Secretary accepted this point in Parliament:

On 11 September 2001, the threat that arose was from overseas nationals – the people that were involved in the attacks on that day... Since that period, there has been a continued involvement of UK nationals as well in that approach, and increasingly so.²⁴

The bias towards foreign nationals was not only considered to be ineffective as an anti-terrorism measure, but was also discriminatory in its effect.²⁵ The Labour MP Vera Baird summarised both points in the debate in the House of Commons:

[the threat] comes equally from UK citizens, but the measures provide protection only against foreign nationals. Having derogated from the European Convention, abrogated basic rights to freedom and risked community disharmony, we have at best gained only partial protection.²⁶

The second concern was that even assuming the provisions targeted the right group, it was not clear that the focus on deportation of those who could be removed would reduce the terrorist threat. Again, to quote the Newton Report:

Seeking to deport terrorist suspects does not seem to us to be a satisfactory response, given the risk of exporting terrorism. If people in the UK are contributing to the terrorist effort here or abroad, they should be dealt with here. While deporting such people might free up British police, intelligence, security and prison service resources, it would not necessarily reduce the threat to British interests abroad, or make the world a safer place more generally. Indeed, there is a risk that the suspects might even return without the authorities being aware of it (p. 54).

As the Conservative Shadow Home Secretary David Davis commented in Parliament, "releasing people whom we believe to be international terrorists to travel the world seems to be a peculiar policy".²⁷ Indeed, the Home Secretary Clarke subsequently defined the new goal as "to prevent an individual from continuing to carry out terrorist-related activities".²⁸

²³ Privy Counsellor Review Committee, "Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 Review: Report", London: The Stationery Office, December 2003, pp. 53-4.

²⁴ Hansard, 22 February 2005

²⁵ Interestingly, Blunkett countered that removing the distinction between nationals and foreigners would lead to more discrimination, since it would imply targeting Muslims of both British and foreign nationality.

²⁶ Hansard, 25 February 2004

²⁷ Hansard, 25 February 2004.

²⁸ Hansard, 22 February 2005. As indeed epitomised by the tabloid outcry over the government's failure to stop a suspected terrorist from leaving the UK (see papers from August 2005).

The debate around part four of the ATCS and the Newton Report therefore illustrates rather well some of the cognitive and practical obstacles to pursuing the linkage between terrorism and migration control. It was becoming increasingly clear that a large proportion of suspected terrorists were European nationals. This rendered instruments of migration control largely irrelevant in the fight against terrorism. And even where terrorist suspects were involved in such activities, exclusion did not seem to be an effective instrument for suppressing their activities. To be sure, the popular media was often less interested in these niceties. In tabloid reporting, one often finds a loose grouping of foreigners and terrorists as part of the same problem. But debate within parliament required more precision, and politicians had little choice but to respond to new information. The focus of activities therefore shifted increasingly towards monitoring and intelligence gathering on suspects, including British nationals. The watchword became surveillance, rather than exclusion through entry control or deportation.

I have so far stressed cognitive factors as a determinant of the framing of migration control issues in political discourse. But it is important to bear in mind that the securitization of migration control issues would also have conflicted with a number of the policy goals of European governments. While concerns about irregular migration were high on the migration policy agenda, many European governments were simultaneously attempting to generate public support for the introduction of more liberal policies on labour migration. Centre-left governments in the UK and Germany had recently introduced new programmes for high-skilled migrants, and were loosening access to the labour market for foreign students. The Social Democratic government in Spain, as we saw, was keen to regularise illegal workers to meet the demand for labour in the Spanish economy. More generally, European governments had an obvious interest in keeping open mobility for the purposes of business, tourism and study. So there was no strong incentive to encourage a linkage between terrorism and migration policies that could have negative repercussions for business-friendly policies on entry and access to labour markets.²⁹

3. Surveillance and Migration Control

While there is little evidence of a securitization of discourse on migration, developments at the level of practice suggest a rather different dynamic. Here one can observe a number of linkages between practices and technologies employed for migration policy and the counter-terrorism agenda. However, the main shift has occurred not so much in the area of migration control, where priorities and practices have by and large continued to develop along the lines already established before 9/11. Rather, the linkage is evident in terms of the utilization of migration policy tools by agencies involved in counter-terrorism activities. Policy instruments such as data-bases providing information on foreign nationals, passenger information supplied by airline carriers, and checks at international borders have been harnessed in order to enhance the surveillance of suspected or potential terrorists.

We can illustrate this by looking more closely at developments in the gathering and use of data on foreign nationals for the purposes of counter-terrorism activities. This pattern of using migration control instruments has been especially pronounced at the EU level, which will be the focus of the discussion, though these developments more or less parallel those in many countries.³⁰

The Use of Data on Foreign Nationals

At the time of the attacks on the US, there were two main regional databases collecting information on third country nationals in Europe: the Schengen Information System (SIS), and Eurodac. SIS was from the outset defined as a tool for use by police, as well as border and immigration officials. In 2003, the SIS database contained over one million records on persons (and 14 million on objects), the vast majority of which were alerts on third country nationals to be refused entry to the Schengen area. This category included both convicted or suspected criminals, and those guilty of failure to comply with immigration rules – including many rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants (Hayes 2005). The second database existing at this time was Eurodac, a database of fingerprints of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants who had sought entry into one of the member states of the EU. Eurodac was a tool of the Dublin Convention, set up to help establish which country was responsible for assessing an asylum application, and to avoid multiple applications in different countries. The database currently contains around 272,000 records, consisting of fingerprints and an identification number (Masse 2005).

Soon after 9/11, the JHA Council began to debate possibilities for using data gathered for the purposes of border and migration control as part of their package of counter-terrorism measures.³¹ At the first Extraordinary Council meeting on 20 September 2001 to discuss the impact of 9/11, ministers were already examining “whether to extend, in the context of counter-terrorism, SIS access to other public services”.³² At the November 2001 meeting, the Austrian delegation presented a paper on the possible use of the SIS to combat terrorism, and it was agreed that this option be further investigated in the context of discussions about an improved “second generation” SIS, the so-called SIS II.³³ These ideas were developed in subsequent discussions on SIS II. For example, at the Council meeting in June 2003 ministers considered possibilities for allowing access to a wider number of authorities, holding the data for longer time periods, and using the data “for purposes other than those for which

²⁹ Interestingly, where governments did have an interest in mobilising support for otherwise controversial measures, it did prove expedient to make the linkage. E.g. of Blunkett and the introduction of ID cards: counter-terrorism originally played no role in the justification, but after 9/11 became a central part of the argument.

³⁰ E.g. the UK. It should be stressed that is beyond the scope of the paper to look at practice in terms of day-to-day implementation of new rules by border officials and security personnel. Nonetheless, changes in data are a clear case of change triggered by an interest in revising the framework of practice – they have little or no symbolic value, indeed they may be politically damaging, bringing only rather abstract assurances, but raising civil rights issues. As such, changes in rules governing data usage fit the subsystem of administration rather than politics, as defined earlier.

³¹ These discussions, and the decisions taken by the JHA Council, are summarised in the minutes of each (usually monthly) meeting of justice and home affairs ministers in Brussels. The minutes and decisions taken are far less high-profile than the conclusions adopted at half-yearly European Council “summits”, and provide a better indicator of the priorities and thinking of officials involved in policy practice.

³² Extraordinary Council Meeting – Justice, Home Affairs and Civil Protection, 20 September 2001 (op. cit.).

³³ In fact, Statewatch claims there was an informal agreement in the EU SIS working party to extend access to authorities dealing with terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11. See Hayes 2005.

they were originally introduced in the SIS”.³⁴ Many of these proposals were introduced in a series of agreements on the new functions of SIS II, culminating in a Regulation adopted by the Council in April 2005.³⁵ This provided for access to SIS by Europol and Eurojust, although usage was restricted to fulfilment of their judicial and police tasks, and – at least at this stage – did not allow for the use of data on immigration for the purpose of criminal investigations.³⁶

The use of data on foreign nationals also proceeded through a second track: the development of a new database on visas. At the September 2001 extraordinary meeting, the Council had called on the Commission to “submit proposals for establishing a network for information exchanges concerning the visas issued”.³⁷ The idea was to store information on visas issued to foreign nationals, as well as information on decisions to refuse, revoke or prolong visas. The VIS was considered first and foremost to be a migration control instrument: it made available information relevant to decisions on whether to grant entry to foreign nationals. Yet from the outset, a number of member states preferred to describe VIS as a tool for addressing multiple goals: counter-terrorism, as well as the fight against fraud, and migration control (Masse 2005).³⁸ In February 2004 the Council adopted conclusions on the development of VIS, and a decision establishing the legal basis for VIS followed in June 2004; the system is expected to be established in 2006.

Discussions on the development and usage of the three data-bases gained impetus after the March 2004 bombings in Madrid. At the Extraordinary Council Meeting of 19 March 2004, the Council considered the use of data-bases, and especially SIS II and VIS, to be one of the central planks of the counter-terrorism strategy.³⁹ Moreover, there was a new emphasis on the possible “interoperability” between databases. The Council invited the Commission to propose ways of improving the interoperability between SIS II, VIS and Eurodac in the fight against terrorism. The issue was a priority in the Hague Programme, adopted in November 2004, which introduced the “principle of availability”: the notion that authorities dealing with internal security should be able to obtain necessary information from other member states.

The question of interoperability has been most sensitive regarding access to VIS and Eurodac. As we saw, both databases were primarily designed as instruments of migration control. Indeed, the January 2005 draft Regulation to establish VIS proposed that access to the data should be restricted to the asylum, immigration and visa authorities of participating member states. But in March 2005, the JHA Council concluded that access to VIS should be made available for the purposes of counter-terrorism activities, and invited the Commission to present a proposal to this effect. The London bombings again

³⁴ Meeting of the Council – JHA, 5-6 June 2003 (9845/03 (Presse 150)).

³⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 871/2004 of 29 April 2004 concerning the introduction of some new functions for the Schengen Information System, including in the fight against terrorism.

³⁶ There are indications that it may well be extended. See, e.g., German proposal in the debate on “new ideas” for counter-terrorism. Note from the Council to COREPER, “New Ideas on Counter-Terrorism from the July JHA Council: Next Steps”, Brussels, 2 September 2005 (11910/05).

³⁷ JHA Extraordinary Council Meeting, 20 September 2001 (op cit.)

³⁸ The lack of clarity over its ascribed functions was reflected in confusion over its legal base: whether it should be an instrument under police and judicial cooperation (and thus within the third pillar), or under immigration and asylum, which was now under the first pillar and subject to co-decision from May 2004 (check).

prompted calls for swifter action, and the Commission was urged to “bring forward the communication on enhanced interaction between the VIS, SIS II and Eurodac and proposal for law enforcement access to the VIS by November 2005”.⁴⁰ The Commission duly presented a communication on enhancing interoperability and synergies between the databases in November 2005, which supported the case for interoperability. It argued that the “absence of access by internal security authorities” to VIS, SIS II immigration and Eurodac represented “a serious gap in the identification of suspected perpetrators of a serious crime”.⁴¹ The document suggested a number of ways in which access could be extended, and even mooted the idea of uniting the three systems under the management of a single organisation.

The proposals for interoperability have been criticised by a number of bodies. Although they have received scant attention in the mass media, several NGOs and parliamentary committees have expressed concerns about data protection issues arising from increased access by different agencies.⁴² Other commentators have criticised the lack of transparency and accountability in the decision-making process (Hayes 2005, Mitsilega 2005), and the apparent lack of proportionality between data collection and its effectiveness in meeting goals of internal security (Masse 2005). These ethical issues are seen as especially acute in light of plans to introduce biometric data in identity documents, considered to be a particularly intrusive form of control.⁴³ What is of more interest for the current argument, however, is the fact that interoperability implied the use of information originally gathered for the purposes of migration control for the goal of counter-terrorism. As the UK Parliament’s Select Committee on European Scrutiny argued, “Eurodac and VIS were not established to assist the prevention, detection and investigation of terrorism and serious crime. It is arguable, therefore, that it would be unacceptable in principle to use the databases for purposes for which they were not intended by granting law enforcement authorities access to them”.⁴⁴

Explaining Interoperability: The Colonization of Immigration Policy?

Leaving aside the normative and legal questions raised by this utilisation of data, what are the implications of this interoperability for theories of securitization? *Prima facie*, the notion that security agencies are appropriating the instruments of migration policy would seem to support the securitization thesis. We might expect that this “colonization” of migration control tools would imply a merging of – or at least blurring of the distinction between – immigration and security functions,

³⁹ JHA Extraordinary Council Meeting, 19 March 2004

⁴⁰ JHA Extraordinary Council Meeting, 13 July 2005

⁴¹ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on improved effectiveness, enhanced interoperability and synergies among European databases in the area of Justice and Home Affairs, Brussels, 14.11.2005, COM(2005) 597 final.

⁴² Data Protection Working Party, “Opinion on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Visa Information System (VIS) and the exchange of data between Member States on short stay-visas” (COM (2004) 835 final), adopted on 23 June 2005.

⁴³ Indeed, it is surprising that there was not more of a public furore over far more controversial developments on data protection, notably the decision by the EU to oblige air carriers to disclose extensive information to the US authorities on passengers travelling to the US (Mitsilega 2005). It demonstrates the unevenness of media and public attention and scrutiny of policy developments.

⁴⁴ House of Commons – Select Committee on European Scrutiny, Fifteenth Report, 2005.

resulting in integrated policy practices. This seems to represent a clear example of the type of “traversal” that is often referred to in the critical security literature (Huysmans 2000: 770). And to be sure, the new multi-functionality of migration control instruments may well have a number of impacts on the technologies and practices employed in migration control – a case in point being the incorporation of biometric data into passports, or the introduction of identity cards in the UK. In such cases, it is likely that the requirements of efficiency and technical sophistication imposed by security agencies will influence the nature of migration control instruments. At the very least, then, the technologies employed for identifying foreign nationals and (potential) entrants is likely to undergo significant change.

However, it is important to note that this does not imply a shift in the self-defined organizational goals, or even the practices within immigration agencies. As I argued earlier, organizations define their interests and the means for furthering them according to certain ideologies or styles that may persist independently of their efficiency in meeting externally ascribed organizational goals (March and Olsen 1994: 16; Brunsson 1985). These ideologies may be just as much geared to responding to internal requirements – for example legitimising decisions or reducing uncertainty amongst members of the organization – as they are concerned to respond to perceived pressure from the environment. Indeed, in many organizations one can observe a gap between formal structures, developed to respond to pressures from the environment; and the informal rules governing action (Meyer and Rowan 1991). Moreover, even where organizations are sensitive to external pressures, they make sense of their environments through their particular cognitive frames, or filters. While organizations may observe and respond to certain perceived pressures from the organization’s environment through these filters (whether from political authorities, or other administrative agencies) they do not internalise such signals in any systematic or reliable way (Luhmann 2003; Dery 1986).

Now in the case of security agencies, it has been suggested that actors do indeed operate according to a logic of ever-expanding knowledge as a means of control. This motivates such organizations to constantly improve techniques of surveillance, widen the scope of observation, and multiply the opportunities to gather or cross-check information. Didier Bigo vividly describes the self-defined goals of the security elite engaged in such surveillance activities:

This staff’s two main characteristics are discretion and distance. Supposedly in osmosis with the high governmental spheres and the strategic private actors, these individuals have a mission to prevent crime by acting on these conditions in an active way, by anticipating where it will come from and who will perpetrate it. The idea being to draw “prospective” knowledge (from evolutions) and become the center where reflection on the society’s evolutions takes place. To create cells of information containing opened information, knowledge of the social sciences, and a technical and human, operational police information service is thus the ambition of all these professionals... This dream of an epistemic community, common and consensual, haunts the life of these professionals who would pilot at distance – geographic and temporal via the anticipation – society’s evolution (Bigo 2005: 88).

It is, however, a logic that may well be quite specific to agencies concerned rather narrowly with surveillance and intelligence. Their goal is to maximise control through the supply and analysis of information. They need not concern themselves with conflicts with civil liberties, human rights or

market considerations. Such considerations may be perceived as irritations that disrupt certain aspects of their work from the outside; but they are not in any sense internalised in the organization's definition of its interests and goals.

Tellingly, Bigo distinguishes between the motivation of these security professionals, and that of "their executants – the police force, the judges, and the prison guards" (Bigo 2005: 89). There is more to this distinction than Bigo's argument suggests. These agencies – and we can add to the list immigration authorities – must internalise multiple and often contradictory goals. In the case of immigration officials, we can point to two sets of considerations that render organizational interests and goals more complex. First is the problem of delivering on promises. Agencies dealing with questions of entry, control of residence, deportation or asylum must find a way of coping with the considerable gap between publicly articulated expectations, and what may be feasibly achieved. Failure to meet performance indicators with respect to border control or deporting rejected asylum seekers are frequently the object of political and media scrutiny – indeed, these agencies are constantly held to account for their supposed transgressions or ineffectiveness. Second, if we take the sum of agencies involved in immigration and asylum and border control as a collective unit (as is usually the case for European home or interior ministries), such organizations tend to be confronted with a series of often incompatible goals. Migration control must be reconciled with openness towards labour migrants (especially since the shift towards more labour market-oriented policies in many countries), promoting immigrant integration, and ensuring smooth inter-ethnic or race relations. As many scholars have argued, these goals are often contradictory in practice (add refs).

Now agencies faced with meeting unfeasible and often contradictory goals face serious dilemmas, not just in the delivery of their mandate, but also in terms of their internally defined organizational goals. On the one hand, they are likely to be conscious that these expectations cannot be met. But on the other, they are also concerned to generate support and motivation from members of the organization, making it risky to explicitly internalise this gap in their organizational ideology. Under these circumstances, they may prefer to retain the type of "deliberate malintegration" of goals mentioned earlier in the paper. Such malintegration can enhance the viability of an organization exposed to inconsistent demands (Brunsson 2002: 10). Indeed, this fits well with accounts of the British Home Office as being characterised by a passive and reactive approach to events. As David Blunkett described his experiences in running the department:

The Home Office was reactive, an absorber of punishments. All home secretaries whom I have ever seen interviewed talked about things coming out of the blue sky and hitting them.⁴⁵

Elsewhere, the Home Office is described as "a byword for inefficiency and torpor", "a giant mess", and the Immigration and Naturalization Service as "beyond chaotic" (Pollard 2005: 253-5). Certainly, one could attribute this to institutional conservatism or bad management. But it is quite likely that this passive, reactive style reflects an organizational ideology or decision-making style akin to what Olsen describes as "impressionistic" (Olsen 1994). Such a style may in fact help reconcile contradictions

⁴⁵ Interview with Blunkett, cited in Pollard 2005: 258.

between different goals and interests. A self-description of having to constantly react to unforeseeable events may offer a legitimate explanation for an organization's inability to realise its ascribed functions. Thus the comment by one ex-British Home Secretary to the incoming David Blunkett, "Remember, it's events, dear boy, it's events".⁴⁶ Certainly, Blunkett's observations do create the impression of an organization with a rather well-defined ideology and goals.

The people inside the Home Office didn't believe that we would do what we said. And they had a policy of their own. I've never experienced anything quite like the first few months here. We were running parallel policies. There were my policies and there was what officials called 'Home Office policy', and that was what they worked to. I had to say to them over and over again, 'There is only one policy and it's what we say it is.' And at the edges we're still struggling with that

Where an immigration agency adopts such an impressionistic decision-making style, one would expect there to be rather limited incentives to securitize migration and border control. Securitization may simply raise public expectations about meeting certain goals of migration control; and it may publicly legitimise the prioritisation of goals that conflict with other organizational interests. In short, it exposes the organization to more acute dilemmas. Moreover, the availability of more information may serve simply to expose deficiencies in the organization's performance. This will constitute a risk not just for the organization's external legitimacy, but also for the continued loyalty and motivation of staff. The implication is that immigration agencies may well have a keen interest in resisting the colonisation of migration policy by security agencies. It is easy to understand why the latter might want to appropriate data on migration and border-crossing. But it is also clear why immigration officials may operate according to a rather different logic, one that prefers to maintain a degree of intentional incoherence in order to disguise its endemic incapacity to meet public expectations. In this sense, interoperability may not signify either the colonization of migration practices by security professionals, or a merging of agendas between security and migration agencies. Indeed, the improvement of technologies for identifying and controlling populations may serve as an irritation for immigration agencies, possibly even threatening the maintenance of established mechanisms for coping with contradictions.

Conclusion

In contrast to the US case, migration control policies in Europe do not appear to have become securitized as a result of 9/11 or the subsequent terrorist attacks in Madrid and London. This is the case at the level of both political discourse, and policy practice. In the case of discourse, some initial attempts to construct a causal linkage between irregular entry, illegal migration and terrorism proved impossible to sustain. A combination of cognitive constraints and conflicting political interests in the area of migration has served largely to bury initial attempts at securitization, at least in the case of migration control policies.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., 252.

⁴⁷ The situation is somewhat different in the case of discourse on the Muslim community in European countries, and problems of immigrant "integration".

At the level of policy, again we see little indication that migration control practices have been colonized by security professionals, except in the sense that the former are increasingly making use of biometric technologies in identifying and controlling the entry and stay of immigrants. The more significant “traversal” between the areas of migration and security appears to be the appropriation of migration control instruments for the purposes of enhancing surveillance by security agencies. But as I argued, this by no means implies that immigration agencies are adapting their organizational goals or practices to this security agenda.

The analysis has a number of implications for theories of securitization. First, it reinforces the point that the two levels of political discourse (politics) and organizational practice (administration) operate according to distinct dynamics. Politics is concerned with mobilising support through framing and advocating programmatic responses to issues of societal concern, and is dependent in this endeavour on communication through the mass media. The administration is less intensively engaged in reading signals from its environment about public legitimacy, and its interests and goals are to a larger extent defined by internal organizational dynamics, especially the need to generate the commitment of members of the organization. The distinction between discourse and practice is not a new insight for critical security studies. Nonetheless, much of the literature assumes a rather simple one-way flow between politics (which legitimises securitization through public discourse) and policy practice (which is then empowered to introduce security practices). In fact, administrative agencies may adopt securitarian practices without a prior green light from political discourse, as indeed the case of data utilization at EU level implies. Moreover, the discussion in this paper suggests that the direction of causality could also work the other way: a resistance to securitization within parts of the administration could make politics cautious about generating a process of securitization of discourse, as this could create unmanageable public expectations.⁴⁸

The second way in which the paper challenged the theoretical assumptions of the critical security literature was regarding theories of organizational action. If we accept that organizational behaviour is influenced by internally driven concerns about securing the commitment of members, and that the organization picks up signals from its environment depending on its particular cognitive map, then we can expect considerable divergence in the interest definition and practices between different agencies. This renders assumptions about “traversal” between policy areas, or the existence of a “security continuum”, highly problematic. Even where there appears to be evidence of one policy area colonizing another, organizations may display a surprising degree of robustness in resisting change. Practices and technologies that may be considered by one agency to improve efficiency or capacity may be seen by another as opposed to internally defined interests.

⁴⁸ In this sense, one is reminded of Luhmann’s “counter-cycle of power”, according to which the traditional hierarchy of politics deciding on policy is reversed (Luhmann 1981: 49).

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