The Other, the mother of all borders: The U.S-Mexico frontier

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Abstract
Securitization of polices and practices have contributed not only to change the concept of international mobility but also to stress discriminatory and exclusionary contexts worldwide. This essay would like to build on constructivist existing literature by shedding light on the topic of population movements exploring how and why population movements have become to be considered a security issue. We concluded that the development of the traditional definition of security towards the concept of population movements' is the result of a construction of the idea of threat and intolerance based on the exchange of fears between actors at several levels.

Keywords: Population Movements, Securitisation

Introduction

The September 11 catastrophe marked the end of the post-Cold War era and inaugurated a new period in the studies of international security studies. Over the last two decades nation-states around the world have been taking measures towards limiting population movements for security reasons. Consequently, population movements have been constrained by the increasing transformation of many border structures into security spaces. In practice, measures such as the construction of walls and surveillance infrastructures, have contributed to changing the role and meaning of borders, the very action of policing and above all the individual perception of the other within and outside the country (Jones, 2012: 30). Migration policies and practices through border enforcement of the US-Mexico is an important example of this tendency (Jones, 2012; Heyman & Ackleson, 2009; Heyman, 2014). The relevance of this analysis is related not only to the US role as a normative actor in the international system, but also to the escalation of a policy of exclusion based on the permanent distinction between "us" and "them". This dichotomy is developed according to the idea of protecting an in-group from a potential security threat identified as the "other", with little regard for what effect this process might have on this "other" or without questioning the very political construction between "us" and "them". Thus, in a contemporary context of over 60 million displaced people worldwide, the US has just stopped to be part of the New York declaration for refugees and migrants, pledging to uphold the rights of refugees, support resettlement and ensure access to education and jobs (USUN, 2017). The study concerning the development of such policies becomes critical for the field of international studies.

The concept of population movements has therefore been influenced by the construction of the notion of other after the event of 9/11. A constructivist theoretical perspective will enable an analysis of the identity construction and the formulation of the concept of "other" complemented by the Copenhagen School framework, which will allow the analysis of the political effects that the process of securitization implies. This essay will first present a context of analysis, by looking at the concepts of population movement for the international security field. Secondly, an analysis of

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official state discourses on the enemy other and border control within the general politics in the period post-September 11 will be done.

Population movements

Today mobility is perceived as being central to development and modernity, thus population movement has played a key role not only for human development but also in shaping the world, as we know it. In the contemporary human history, the development of nation state systems have contributed increasingly to control and restrict the movement of individuals from one state to another. While during the 70's population movements have been considered to have various implications generally linked to "social" security, namely regarding jobs and welfare to the developed countries. After the 90's with the increased politicization of the topic of migration movements, the movement of people started to be considered as a threat to populations and governments of receiving and sending states, as well as to the relation between the former, from the possibility of civil conflicts turning into international conflicts, or by the spread of ethnic and civil strife from one country to another (Bali, 2008: 468). However, over the last two decades population movements have undergone a notable change regarding its significance and the understanding of its effects, mostly due to the increasing perception of migration as a facilitator of terrorist activities.

The study of the relation between the concept of population movement and international security could be done from several analyses, which differently consider: what is security and security for whom. In other words, the definition of security could be perceived from several theoretical perspectives bearing in mind different objects, structures and levels of analysis. A realist eye would define the state survival as the most important referent of analysis, thus its theory of the world of politics could be considered as a theory of security and power politics (Colin, 2008: 17). Critical theorists, on the other hand, added a new level of analysis, putting the individual at the centre of the concept of security, therefore refining security as emancipation (Booth, 1991; Fierke, 2007). For liberal theory advocates, security is considered as the absence of war, in which the liberal democracy model represents and outlines the way to achieve peace. Bearing in mind the objective of this essay, the theory which best represents the significance of security required for the analysis, is the constructivist theory, which considers that security is developed through social interaction between actors, thus not recognizing an exact and universal definition of the concept. Hence security is thought to be the result and mainly the construction of an idea from a particular social and historical context through social interaction. As a consequence, the notion of identity is profoundly linked to the construction of a threat to security in a given context in place and time (Balzacq, 2002). In this specific issue the construction of the notion of other is exceptionally important for the context of population movements. Particularly, what makes constructivist perspective distinctive from other perspectives of the international relations field is the idea that non-material and ideational factors are essential to the construction and practices of security in world politics (Reus-Smit, 2001: 197). Additionally, considered as complementary to the analysis on this essay is the Copenhagen School contribution to the study of how security itself is given meaning through inter subjective processes, namely securitization (Buzan & Wæver, 1997). The term securitization is described as the discursive construction between speakers and audiences in which the speaker occupies a position of control or represents an elite (McDonald, 2008: 59). In other words, it develops as an extreme form of politicization created by speech acts.

Taking an example of US migration policies development, the discourse of global war on terror has contributed to a change in the perception of the individuals regarding the notion of threat, danger and security. Building upon the explanation given by Jones (2012) the description of the adversary as well as the perception of threat has changed, first due to the definition of the adversary/enemy as

an abstract agency that cannot be justified or dealt with. Secondly, the enemy-other is no longer constrained in geography: it represents a threat to anyone at any point in time (Jones, 2012: 12). According to Jones, a third element is added by the discursive illustration of a reality based on fear and vulnerability, through the description of specific countries as ungoverned spaces of violence and instability (Jones, 2012: 12). The construction of such narrative made by key actors vis-à-vis the migrant/other grounded on the perception of fear of the unknown and the ungoverned become transformed when combined with terror generated by terrorist network movements and potential attacks (Jones, 2012: 12). These non-material factors become an essential tool for the construction and practices of security in world politics.

Thus the population movement' phenomenon becomes constrained by not only the anti-migrant policies and increasing border policies but also by the construction of collective perspectives of the notions of us and them, contributing to separateness and discrimination. This reality, from a constructivist perspective, becomes very challenging as identities are considered to inform interests, and in turn, actions (Reus-Smit, 2001: 197). This premise takes us to the question: security for whom? Recognizing the oppression and discrimination often produced by migration control policies and structures, we engage directly with the human security concept, which considers the value of human life as a key referent of analysis for security studies. A broader understanding of human security is traditionally associated to fundamental liberal assumption of basic individual rights, such as the natural rule of law, and the international community's obligation to protect and promote these rights (Peoples & Williams 2010: 127). The literature related to this perspective assumes that global challenges must be studied bearing in mind the individuals as a security referent of analysis not only the state.

The hardening of the borders and the militarization, enforcement, as well as the anti-migrant discourse has repercussions within and outside the state. Specifically, the lack of safe routes for migrants trying to reach certain regions, is often a topic of discussion regarding the respect for the universal right to move. Moreover, within the country there are also the implication of such policies of the "othering" in shaping migrants' health and security. There is an increasing body of literature which has been looking at the role that migration policies play in shaping immigrant health outcomes. Recent research has found for instance that anti-immigrant policies stigmatize both foreign and US-born Latinos by creating a hostile social environment, which affects their experiences of discrimination (Almeida, 2016).

The case US – Mexico
The context of increasing securitization of population movements within the region of US-Mexico border is not new, as well as the limitation at the borders and immigration policies, such arguments and instruments have been developing from a continuing escalation of certain processes dating from the late 70s, with a manifest intensification in the 90's (Ackleson, 2005). However, after 9/11 the concept of population movements gained distinctive relevance not only in the political debate but also in the field of international security studies. Further than the expression of traditional responsibility to the rise of insecurity, crime or the negative impacts of globalization, population movements becomes associated to terror and fear. The transformation of the concept associated with terror has direct implications on the policy-making process, enabling exceptional and additional security measures. The discursive official reaction to the 9/11 attacks in the speeches of the President George W. Bush came to constitute the doctrine of war on terror, the most symbolic illustration of US perspective on the ongoing context and the future foundation for what would come to be known as the Bush Doctrine. These images created by several discourses became very important and have had repercussions on the perceptions of the enemy-other until today.

Expressly George W Bush's speeches became a projection of a new era for security studies, where the enemy-other is identified and characterized. Likewise, the threats to the new era of globalization are acknowledged in merging aspects of internal and external issues. Moreover, it is possible to identify in his discourse a delimitation of the geopolitical world between developed and civilized and the enemy-other terrorist organizations. Specific examples demonstrate how this narrative was based on a dichotomy between good and evil, right and wrong, "we go forward to defend freedom and all that is *good* and *just* in *our world*" (Bush, 2001). As a consequence, we may say that this construction of the enemy allowed for a new terminology regarding the notion of threat. Different from the Cold War period, the enemy is denied legitimacy as it is considered as the irrational uncivilized evil, thus having no place in the modern world of nation states system (Jones, 2012: 12). Moreover, this evil is classified as global, no longer being restricted to a space (Jones, 2012: 12). "There are thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries"[1] (Bush, 2001). Therefore, it becomes critical to prevent the enemy-other from entering the modern state. This premise was used as the base for the changing purpose of hardening migrant policies and changing the purpose of borders to securitized and militarized security spaces. Bush announced the creation of The Department of Homeland Security, exactly following the 9/11 attacks with the purpose of strengthening American security. As stated by Jones, this cabinet had as its first goal to achieve effective control of US borders via reducing the risk of potential terrorists, instruments of terrorism or other activities (Jones, 2012: 27). Moreover, the construction of the object of threat of terrorism coming through U.S- Mexico border was increasingly supported by several speech acts, as considered and indicated by J. Ackleson:

> Attorney General John Ashcroft: ''The menace of terrorism knows no borders, political or geographic'' (2002).
> The Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus: ''The time is right to call for troops on the border in order to protect our national security interests'' (2002).
> Representative Tom Tancredo (R-Colorado): ''The defense of the nation begins with the defense of its borders'' (2001).
> Representative J.D. Hayworth (R-Arizona): ''In these trying times, border security is synonymous with national security'' (2004).
> The U.S. State Department: ''We are faced with a more diffuse and insidious threat.by our open borders'' (Taylor, 2001).

These discourses have profoundly contributed to linking the issue of population movements to terrorist activities. Despite the fact that no evidence was found regarding terrorists coming to enter the U.S. from Mexico, limiting the enemy-other along the border has become both a national-security objective and a justification to continue and expand 1990s-style border security policies that mostly targeted migrants and drugs (Ackleson, 2006). This construction of the idea of threat and security based on issues that merge between internal and external issues have been influencing the social construction since this period.

> This program will add to our security by helping us know who is in our country and why they are here. And by reducing pressure on our border, it will free up our Border Patrol to focus on making sure we stop terrorists, violent criminals, and drug smugglers from entering our country (Bush, 2006).

Moreover, the construction of identity and norms become central in the analysis of security practices, as they contribute to providing legitimate political action. From a constructivist perspective, agents and structures are mutually constituted, thus bearing in mind the context of migration, the notion of who we are and what we consider as threats to those values become essential to the construction of practices of security.

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[1] United States Capitol Washington, D.C. September 20, 2001.

The discourse on the war on terror was successful in this securitization process through the definition of identity and exclusion of the other. In this concept of the other, two sides are explored, on the one hand there is the modern, civilized, and on the other hand, there is the pre-modern, violent, irrational (Jones, 2012: 27).

> This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom (Bush, 2001).

The constructed image for this context was one of modern democracies threatened by a network of global terrorism, attempting to destroy civilization. This notion of the Other together with the idea of ungoverned unstable territories across the border, which may not be able to control terrorist activities and movements' feed fear and legitimate security policies (Jones, 2012: 32). Today, two decades after the 9/11 attacks, we are witnessing the intensification of a discriminatory and exclusionary discourse of the President of the United States Donald Trump, who has been increasingly investing in migration control policies and border enforcement. His speeches, since his campaign, have contributed to feeding fear in the process of making a dangerous society. From his words it can be said that although he makes a focus on the identity as an object of threat related with its external nature, it is the lack of internal control that he is targeting.

> The struggle against radical Islam also takes place in our homeland. There are scores of recent migrants inside our borders charged with terrorism. For every case known to the public, there are dozens and dozens more. We must stop importing extremism through senseless immigration policies. We have no idea where these people are coming from. There's no documentation. There's no paperwork. There's nothing. We have to be smart. We have to be vigilant (Trump, 2016).

How do such speeches and policies contribute to perpetuate this notion of otherness inside and outside the country, which in practice became concrete practices of exclusion? The hardening of borders through various security practices as well as anti-immigrant policies contributes to constructing and reproducing binary categories of inside/outside, self/other, poor/rich, citizen/non-citizen and friend/enemy. Moreover, these anti-migrant political measures operate as an "othering" mechanism; by marginalizing, stigmatizing and excluding those being "othered". In the US-Mexico case, the Latinos (Almeida, 2016). A recent study shows that the prevailing political rhetoric in the US serves to further marginalize (Latino) immigrants, and that the comprehensive immigration reform is likely to construct a hostile social environment for an entire social group. The results of this study explain health patterns among this group and point to possible mechanisms by which anti-immigrant policies affect the health of these people (Almeida, 2016). As a conclusion it can be said that the exclusion inherent to the speech used to support the political practice of securitization are mainly used to reinforce state power within and outside its territory often undermining the very ideals that modern democracies are meant to uphold.

Conclusion

This essay proposed an analysis regarding the concept of population movements based on the timely and challenging context of the post 9/11 period. Going through the security studies literature it was interesting to conclude that the topic of population movements, viewed from a traditional security perspective, was not considered as a main issue for security. However today, it occupies a central place in the security discussion feed by the argument that it might enable terrorist movements and consequently, terrorist attacks.

This work has engaged with the concept of the other through a constructivist perspective, which contributed to the understanding of the ongoing transformations of the process of securitization and problematizes the question: Whose security, from a human security perspective. Building on the

premise that the transformation over the process of securitization of population movements' after 9/11 is not only a result of a traditional response to the rise of global insecurity and international crime, it is considered that the process of securitization has been built on an escalation of fear, a construction of the idea of the threat based on the Other on the other side of the border. The use of security and threat applied to immigrants in the case of the US-Mexico border illustrates the way in which these perceptions of threat give meaning to a security issue enabling emergent and exceptional security responses.

Through an analysis of the US-Mexico border context after the given period, the discourse of war on terror is deconstructed in order to clarify the image of the enemy-other created as a result of this event. Speeches from Bush and Trump were used to support this analysis and clarify the argument that the securitization process is used to enlarge the state control over its territory. The question of what security means is answered through the analysis of a social construction regarding the perception of threat and identity in a given period of time and space.

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