

No. 11 (33), November 2021

Ukrainian migration to Poland through the lens of critical security studies

In this issue of CMR Spotlight, [Marta Jaroszewicz](#) writes about her recent co-authored article with [Jan Grzymski](#) "[Technocracy Revisited: the Polish Security Dispositif and Ukrainian Migration to Poland](#)" investigating security practices undertaken by the Polish state towards migration from Ukraine in Poland. This is the popular science version of that article addressed at the general public. It was originally published in June 2021 by the *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2.



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Marta Jaroszewicz

Migration from Ukraine to Poland represents one of the largest short-term inward mobilities globally (OECD 2019). However, it has not yet been analysed in an EU context within critical security studies, in particular by securitisation theory. The authors' main argument is that a generalised technocratic approach in the Polish migration control system combined with state ignorance led to the specific securitisation of Ukrainian migrants. It placed them in a status of 'semi-compliance', which differed from other securitisations of migrants elsewhere. The status of Ukrainian migrants was a kind of 'grey zone' in which they needed to combine both legal and irregular elements of their position within Polish society. This created the research puzzle - were there any unique features of security practices in Poland, which led to this kind of securitisation?

Security *dispositif*, securitisation and regime of practices

To unravel this empirical puzzle, the authors propose to re-conceptualise research on the security practices towards migration in Poland by drawing upon the notions of a security *dispositif*, securitisation and regime of practices.

Firstly, drawing upon Michel Foucault (1980, 1978), the security *dispositif* was defined as the 'heterogeneous' relationship/ assemblage between public discourses, regulatory decisions, laws and administrative measures practiced by political and security agents, various levels of administration, different kinds of institutions and professionals or experts in many sectors of the Polish state. What is particularly important for the analysed case study, the *dispositif* included the contemporary role of historical discourses and the politics of memory in constituting security practices. In short, the security *dispositif* defined what might have been perceived as security in a particular socio-historical context.

Secondly, securitisation denoted a specific mode of action by the state actors within the security *dispositif*. It was characterised through the contextual mobilisation of different security artefacts conducted by the securitising actor, in order to establish the social perception of threat (Balzacq 2011:3). Finally, within the security *dispositif* and the way securitising actors perform securitisation, particular security practices are understood as various activities 'that convey the idea to those who observe them,

directly or indirectly, that the issue they are tackling is a security threat' (Léonard 2010: 237). These practices were often interlinked within the specific regime of practices, in other words – distinctive ways of thinking and questioning and specific ways of acting (Dean 2010: 33). Moreover, the way security professionals comprehended the world, their professional tasks, and their place in the power structures was crucial for understanding security practices within a specific regime.

Methodology

The article is informed by two research methods by which the research design was operationalised: critical content analysis of political and legal documents, and semi-structured in-depth interviews with migration and security experts, lawyers and civil activists dealing with Ukrainian migration.

The research corpus for the following research is formed by data pertaining to the 'security-migration nexus', with particular emphasis on data related to the operationalisation of security practices. The data were collected through an analysis of available legislation pertaining to foreigners in Poland in 2014-2020 (both already existing and newly established). Other important sources for the analysis were reports by NGOs dealing with the protection of human rights, migration policy and parliamentary interpellations. In some cases, the security practices revealed in the

interviews, were further elaborated and verified by critical content analysis.

Empirical results. Regimes of security practices

The empirical analysis focused on ways of thinking and acting within Poland's security *dispositif*, in particular how given security practices addressed issues like: - how should Ukrainian migration be governed; what aspect of migration should be governed and why it should be governed? Answering these questions exposed three mentalities of government, embedded in many instruments, techniques, vocabularies and procedures existing in Poland's migration control policies.

The overwhelming majority of policy instruments accommodating practically the movement of Ukrainians into Poland had actually been created for other purposes. Therefore, when studying the security practices, the research focused on tracing multiple elements interlinked by the strategic goal of accommodating the Ukrainian migration.

State ignorance

The first regime of security practices is rooted in the mentality of state ignorance (Bosweland Badenhoop 2020), understood as an 'acknowledged discrepancy' between what is known and what might reasonably have been expected to be known by the state authorities.

The Polish security apparatus lacked instruments for effectively managing a large number of Ukrainian migrant arrivals. At the same time, it was legitimate to say that the Polish political elite and security professionals had knowledge of the exceptional character of the Ukrainian migration. Consequently, in the period 2014-2020 the Polish security apparatus might reasonably have been expected to react to the largest arrival of migrants since the end of the Second World War by producing new types of security knowledge and relevant policy instruments.

In fact, neither new institutional nor procedural instruments were adopted to address the extraordinary character of the new migration situation. The consequent absence of preparedness of the administration in coping with migrants, tied to bureaucratic inertia and routine, paved the way for the prolonged admission procedures and generalised feeling of 'unease' on the side of migrants. Framed this way, state ignorance also became a vital element of the securitisation process.

Technocratic governance

Technocratic governance stems from the EU 'internal security' rationale of expanding control at the EU external border and inside the EU with techniques of anticipatory surveillance related to non-EU citizens. A prime example of this type of securitisation towards Ukrainian migration is given by the security practices related to the anti-terror

measures, passed by the Polish Sejm in 2016. The 'Law on Anti-Terror Measures and Changes to Other Laws' was not directed at specific types of migrants but referred to all foreigners in general. This law happened to be in line with the general spirit of 'the politics of fear' and 'enemy politics' towards migrants, which peaked in 2016 when the Polish government refrained from contributing to the EU's relocation programme (Mica et al. 2021; Jaskułowski 2019). This resulted in widening the control and surveillance functions of the various security agencies. The other technocratic governance practice discussed is the practice of authorisation. It was built upon the logic of 'internal security', whereby security professionals were mobilised to deal with different sorts of uncertainties on the assumption that foreigners are distinct in being 'Others' (Bigo 2014).

Neighbourhood

The neighbourhood mentality of government and related regime of security practices was part of a larger and more abstract cultural and political background, with national and ethnic identity as the focal point. In the Polish case, the impact of the neighbourhood mentality has been magnified by the active politics of memory and the way it resonated socially.

This regime of thinking and acting manifested itself in two contradictory ways: in the feeling of cultural and political proximity between Poland and Ukraine,

particularly in terms of shared negative attitudes towards Russian expansionism, but also in Polish perceptions of Ukrainians, with many connected stereotypes and prejudices (Zarycki 2014; Folis 2012). This formed the Polish-Ukrainian neighbourhood through two contrasting processes: political, historical and economic proximity in some aspects, and simultaneous conflicting attitudes in others. If both the Schengen rationale and the politics of memory entailed 'hard' bordering of Ukrainians as 'Others', then the local understating of neighbourhood identity and history, most visible in the political, economic and cultural dimensions, entailed the 'soft' bordering.

Future challenges

The article proposed a novel approach by supplementing securitisation studies on migration to Poland with the notion of state ignorance and the conceptualisation of the impact of national identity on security practices. On the level of theory, to better understand the wider context of the Polish security reaction to Ukrainian migration, the research design was structured by the Foucauldian notion of *dispositif*. Future research is needed to better conceptualise the relations between the three identified regimes of security practices and their impact on the perspective of individual migrants. Moreover, further studies are required to analyse how state ignorance can be defined as part of the securitisation process.

Link to the original article: Jaroszewicz M., Grzymski J. (2021), „Technocracy Revisited: the Polish Security Dispositif and Ukrainian Migration to Poland”, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v17i2.1215>

This research has received funding from the National Science Centre, Poland, under project “Securitisation (de-securitisation) of migration on the example of Ukrainian migration to Poland and internal migration in Ukraine” (Project nr 2018/31/B/HS5/01607)

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Keywords: migration, Poland, Ukraine, securitization

Suggested citation: Jaroszewicz M. (2021) *Ukrainian migration to Poland through the lens of critical security studies*, CMR Spotlight 11(33).

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Editors of CMR Spotlight: Michał Nowosielski, Dominika Pszczołkowska

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