

## Abstract

Abiri, Elisabeth, 2000, *The Securitisation of Migration: Towards and Understanding of Migration Policy Changes in the 1990s. The Case of Sweden*. Published by Department of Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University, Box 700, SE 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. 209 pages. English. ISBN 91-87380-47-1

The thesis provides an analysis of the process through which refugees and asylum applicants and other kinds of irregular migrants have come to be treated as security issues in Sweden's official discourse, i.e. as a phenomena with the potential to threaten national as well as international security. The study analyses the official discourse on cross-border migration as represented in Committee Reports, Government Bills, Members' Bills and the public debate in order to understand how and why this 'securitisation' of cross-border migration developed. Special attention is given to Swedish policy-making and public debate in relation to the two main refugee flows during the 1990s, from Bosnia in 1992-93 and from Kosovo in 1999. It is argued that the changes during the decade is put to the test in relation to the Kosovo refugee situation, where the refugees are treated as a phenomenon that by definition constitutes a threat to presumptive recipient societies and whose movement therefore must be circumscribed to the neighbouring countries.

The securitisation of irregular cross-border migration has to be put in the context of the relativisation of the state brought on by 'globalisation'. Globalisation has led to a relative weakening of the Swedish welfare state and an increased feeling of uncertainty among politicians and society at large. This, in turn, has led to a need to restore faith in the welfare state's capacity to protect its citizens and control development within state borders. While changes in world economy and production are hard for the individual state to influence, the border-crossings of physical human beings are much easier to control. As a consequence the state attaches a disproportionately great importance to the control of cross-border migration, and irregular border-crossings are increasingly understood as a threat to national security.

The study argues that the securitisation of states' official discourses on migration may have wide-ranging effects. Narrowing down the right of asylum and highlighting security concerns over cross-border migration does not only affect presumptive asylum applicants, it will sooner or later affect society's respect for human rights on a more general level. The securitisation may help to legitimate extreme ideologies of those seeking to rationalise their propaganda against immigration and asylum, whatever the underlying reasons linking migration and security may be. Therefore, the connection between migration and security should never be presented as a given. The social practices and political motivations behind every attempt to 'securise' migration must be looked into in every specific case.

**Indexing terms:** Migration, immigration, refugees, asylum, security, securitisation, Sweden, refugee policy, migration policy, globalisation, cosmopolitics, Bosnia, Kosovo, Malawi.