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## Securitization of Migration Perceptions of Police and Market Actors in Greece: A Comparative Study in the Islands of Crete and Lesbos<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Migration is a multifaceted issue with a variety of research implications. In the case of Greece, the migration/refugee crisis of 2015 has been the subject of security centered policies since its beginning. Migration practices in Greece in conjunction with official statements (speech acts) from political and generally security actors, such as the police, suggest that migration in Greece has been securitized. The Greek police are a significant security actor that conveys important security messages and exerts significant influence on the public, since their role lies in the maintaining of public order. Yet, their role in the securitization of migration in Greece has been largely unexplored. Market actors are also an important driving force in attitude shaping at the labor market. Thus, the aim of this paper is twofold. First to explore and illustrate the perceptions and attitudes of the Greek police pertaining to migration and its relation to security and second to investigate whether these perceptions do exert influence on Greek market actors in the respective research areas (Crete and Lesbos), thus impeding the migrants'/refugees' integration in the labor market of Greece. In order to do so, a mixed methodology is used, applying both quantitative (structured interviews with police officers) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs) methods, so as to investigate whether police officers' stances reinforce market actors' perceptions on refugees with an emphasis on the economic sector of security as referred to by the Copenhagen School. The research was carried out in the Greek islands of Crete and Lesbos. These diverse geographical areas were chosen due to their different socio-economic conditions as well as due to their different migrant/refugee flows, hence providing fertile ground for optimal research outcomes.

**Keywords:** Security; Securitization; Migration; Police; Market Actors; Crete; Lesbos; Securitization of Migration; Greece.

### Introduction

Migration has always been a multifaceted and contesting issue. In the case of Greece, ever since the migration/refugee crisis started to unfold in 2015, it was placed at the top of the security agenda of

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the Greek state resulting in respective policies to tackle the issue (Dimari, 2020). The securitization two-branch theory defines securitization as the process through which a political issue becomes a security threat, either through speech acts (Copenhagen School) or practices (Paris School) (Buzan et al, 1998; Bigo, 2002). As far as Greece is concerned, despite securitization and its application in the Greek case having been largely explored (Karyotis, 2012; Kalantzi, 2017, Dimari, 2020), the interrelation between security actors and other political elite actors has not been thoroughly explored. Thus, the aim of this paper is twofold. First to explore and illustrate the perceptions and attitudes of the Greek police pertaining to migration as well as its relation to security and second to investigate whether these perceptions do exert influence on Greek market actors in the respective research areas (Crete and Lesvos), thus impeding the migrants'/refugees' integration in the labor market of Greece.

In order to do so, a mixed methodology is used, applying both quantitative (structured interviews with police officers) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs) methods, so as to investigate whether police officers' stances reinforce market actors' perceptions on refugees with an emphasis on the economic sector of security as referred to by the Copenhagen School. The research was carried out in the Greek islands of Crete and Lesvos. These diverse geographical areas were chosen due to their different socio-economic conditions as well due to their different migrant/refugee flows, hence providing fertile ground for optimal research outcomes.

Indeed, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 1 million refugees and migrants sought to enter the EU in 2015 (UNHCR, 2015). By the time this research was conducted, 10,927 refugees resided at the hot spot of Lesvos, with a hosting capacity of 4,187 (Ministry of Digital Telecommunications and Information Policy, 2018).

As far as Crete is concerned, the foreigners with a residence permit valid throughout Crete amounted to 32,535 in 2018 (Directorate of Foreigners and Immigration of the Decentralized Administration of Crete, 2018). With the establishment of a Regional Asylum Office of Crete in July 2017 the island emerged as key location in Greece's reception of refugees and migrants. While UNHCR has successfully accommodated approximately 240 refugees, those arriving irregularly to the island face harsh conditions and risk of deportation. UNHCR expanded its accommodation scheme earlier in the spring with the aim of gradually housing 750 asylum seekers in 125 rented apartments across Crete (ECRE, 2020) Up to 2018, there were more than 800 refugees that benefitted from ESTIA in Crete, with 150 apartments in Heraklion, Chania and Sitia (UNHCR, 2018).

## A two-way to Study Securitization of Migration

The post-cold war era shifted security analyses towards a process of reflections resulting into what is known as the deepening and the widening of the security agenda (Buzan, 2008). An outcome of this process was the emergence of what became to be known as securitization. The term 'securitization' was coined by Ole Wæver during the 1990s. This notion was later on further elaborated by the Copenhagen School of Security according to which securitization is the process of rendering something a threat by simply mentioning it. Who mentions it? The securitizing actor. Why is this so important? Because it has the power to bend normal political practices to safeguard a referent object that could be military, political, economic, societal or even environmental (Buzan et al, 1998). In the case of migration, its study is embedded in the context of the societal sector of security as articulated by the Copenhagen School (Taureck, 2006). The societal sector is, in its turn, studied in the context of identity and biopolitics. Thus, when migration is studied in the securitization framework the focus is on how migrants that enter a country are constructed as a threat to an existing national identity and may therefore erode it and threaten its existence in various ways (Buzan et al, 1998). A crucial aspect of the securitization process, which defines whether it is successful or not, is acceptance by the public audience (Léonard & Kaunertm, 2010).

Another securitization approach was articulated by the Paris School of Security Studies (Collective, C.A.S.E, 2006), arguing that security is often characterized by the delivery of entire security sectors to "professionals of unease" who are in charge of managing existing threats and identifying new ones (Bigo, 2002: 63-65). Specifically, according to Bigo (2002), securitization, as a phenomenon, is observed beyond speech acts, recognizing that the threat can also be created by daily habits and practices and cooperation between security experts (such as police and military). Hence, practical work, disciplinary procedures and expertise are just as important as all forms of speech. In other words, the actions of bureaucratic structures or networks associated with security practices and the specific technologies they use may play a more active role in securitization processes than speech acts (Lenoard, 2011).

The role of the police is particularly important when it comes in carrying out specific security actions, since they are the responsible for maintaining peace and order in the society (UNHCR, 2004). Thus, the reason why migration is securitized can only be clarified when searched in relation to the perceptions and motives of the security actors, namely those actors that by virtue of their position and authority in the public societal structure are the ones who make the security assertions. Thus, a security actor can be any public figure, agent or organization (Bigo, 2002). Market actors, are also

significant political elites as they are in position to exert influence to government or to local administration, especially in small cities and islands.

## Methodology

A mixed methodological strategy is used, applying both quantitative and qualitative methods, so as to investigate whether police officers' stances are in tandem with market actors' perceptions on refugees with an emphasis on the economic sector of security as referred to by the Copenhagen School. The research was carried out in the Greek islands of Crete and Lesbos due to different socio-economic conditions as well due to their different migrant/refugee flows, hence providing fertile ground for contrastable research outcomes.

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with 150 market actors at the islands of Lesbos and Crete during the period of October-December 2018. The questions were divided into: open questions, opinion questions and elaboration probes. There were five sections: introductory part, personal questions, entrepreneurship issues, migration issues and concluding section, with a total of 25 questions. Discourse analysis was conducted for the identification of securitizing speech acts.

In addition, structured questionnaires have been distributed to police officers (32) at the islands of Lesbos and Crete during the period of October 2018. The questions were divided into two parts and the Likert Scale was used: the first part concerned personal information, whereas the second part revolved around migration and security. The first section regarded the military sector, the second the political, the third the economic sector, the fourth the societal and the fifth and last the environmental. In total, there were 25 questions. The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS.

## Findings

The discourse analysis that was conducted in the 150 semi-structured interviews to market actors revealed securitizing speech acts that revolve around the sectors of economy, health, politics, terrorism, national interest and identity. For the purposes of this research, and in order to explore speech acts pertaining to the economic sector as stated by the Copenhagen School, speech acts were extracted from the entrepreneurship issues and concluding remarks of the discourse analysis of the interviews. In the following tables, the key demographic characteristics of the research participants in Crete and Lesbos respectively are provided.

**Table 1: Key demographic characteristics of interviewed businessmen in Crete**

Business Sector:						
Food Service: 9	Retail: 21	Manufacturing: 3	Services: 19	Construction: 10	Tourist: 10	Total: 75
Educational Level:						
Primary education: 1	High school: 7	Secondary: 16	College: 9	Tertiary: 41	Total: 75	
Sex:						
Men: 60			Women: 15			
Employees:						
Total of employees: 889	Average number of employees per company: 11.85	Total migrant workers or refugees: 166		Businesses employing migrants or refugees: 27		

**Table 2: Key demographic characteristics of interviewed businessmen in Lesbos**

Business Sector:						
Food Service: 17	Retail: 36	Manufacturing: 1	Services: 14	Construction: 1	Tourist: 6	Total: 75
Educational Level:						
Primary education: 5	High school: 5	Secondary: 25	College: 9	Tertiary: 31	Total: 75	
Sex:						
Men: 44			Women: 31			
Employees:						
Total of employees: 258	Average number of employees per company: 3.44	Total migrant workers or refugees: 17		Businesses employing migrants or refugees: 5		

### *Analysis of Qualitative Results*

The discourse analysis pertaining to security perceptions of market actors in Lesbos concerning migrants shows that they are perceived as a threat, with a referent object being the economic sector. Specifically, in the question whether migrants are beneficial or harmful for the market (Question 9), a respondent claimed that “*they are a 'risk [for the job market] because they will look for work and many of us will be left out.*” Another respondent also stated that they are “*a risk for the job market*”. On the reasons for that, the respondent stated that “*there will be impoverished people who will be looking for a job, their salaries will fall, they will basically be preferred, because we also have the recent example of some years ago of the pan-Eastern influx when Albanians, Romanians came here,*



*who actually dropped a bit the levels of salaries*". Last, another respondent perceived them as a *"great danger for my children"*.

In the question whether the migration issue has affected the economic situation of the island (Question 10), one of the respondents claimed that *"everything has been negatively affected...because the people who are coming now are at a low level, resulting in delinquent situations on the island and it makes it difficult for both the business and the people working in the area"*.

In addition, when asked on the actions, the participants think that should be taken by governmental agencies in order to integrate refugees into business (Question 18), one of the respondents stated *"let them first do something for the unemployed"*, whereas another participant responded that the first who should be employed are the *"Greeks who have a problem, the unemployed Greeks and then to take the foreigners as well. Here we have twenty percent unemployment in Greeks and we will employ the refugees?"*

The discourse analysis pertaining to security perceptions of market actors in Crete yields different results. In particular, in the case of Crete, respondents have a more positive stance towards migrants. On the question whether migrants constitute a threat or peril for the economy (Question 9) a respondent stated that *"people coming from other places and being active in Greece enrich our culture and this is also helpful for the economy"*. Another participant stated that they constitute an opportunity *"under certain conditions"*, whereas another respondent holds the same view stating that *"when there can be a control then it is definitely an opportunity"*. Last, a participant answered that they are *"a great opportunity for entrepreneurs"*. In addition, some participants have a more negative stance, claiming that *"for the Greek economy they cannot be considered as an opportunity"* or stating that *"It depends on what point of view you look at it. It can be a danger and an opportunity for some jobs that the locals do not go to"*.

Concluding, in the case of Lesbos, it seems that the recurring theme of the discourse analysis regarding the economic sector as a referent object is that migrants pose a threat for the economy, whereas for Crete perceptions are more positive, as on the one hand, the increased workload of companies and on the other hand, the demanding work that accompanies certain sectors such as agriculture, are not covered by the local labor market. Also, many respondents have a tolerant and positive view of the influx of immigrants.

### *Analysis of Quantitative Results*

The analysis that was conducted in the 32 structured questionnaires to police officers revealed a highly securitized stance towards migration in all sectors stated by the Copenhagen School. For the purposes of this research, and in order to explore views pertaining to the economic sector as a referent object, the results from the third section (economic) of the questionnaire alongside with some necessary personal information and a graph from the military (first) section are presented.

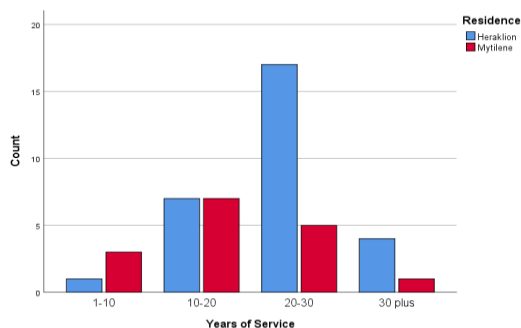
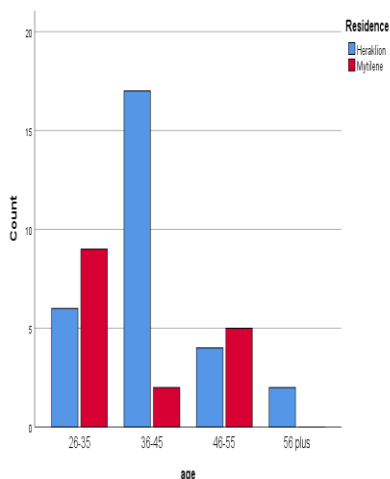
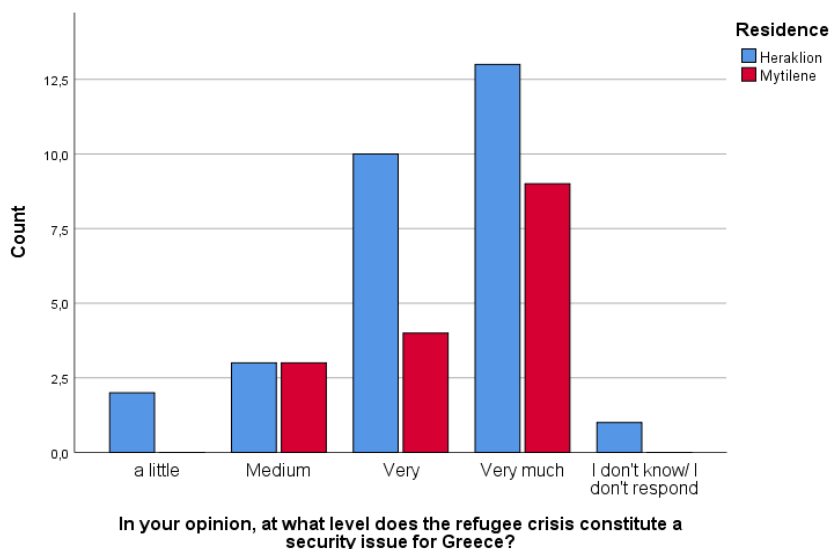
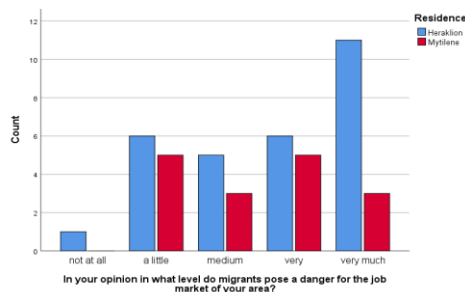
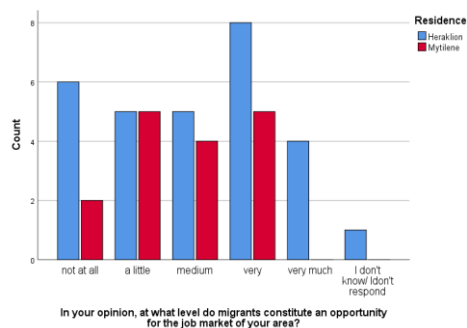
**Table 3: Key demographic characteristics of interviewed police officials in Lesbos**

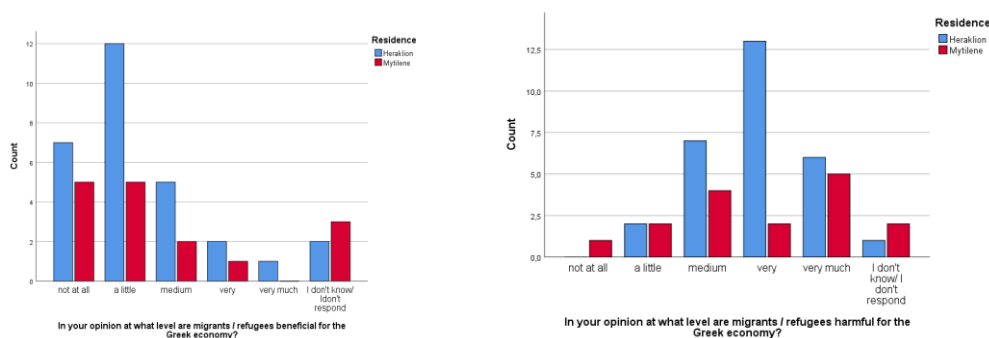
Greek Police Ranking						
Police Captain: 1	Police Sergeant: 4	Police Second Sergeant: 4	Police Officer: 3	Police Warrant Officer: 2	Police Lieutenant: 2	Total: 16
Age:						
26-35: 9	36-45: 2	46-55:	56 and more:	Total: 16		
Sex:						
Men: 14			Women: 2			
Years of Service:						
1-10: 3	10-20: 7	20-30: 5	30 and more: 1			

**Table 4: Key demographic characteristics of interviewed police officials in Crete**

Greek Police Ranking							
Police Captain: 1	Police major : 2	Police Sergeant : 4	Police Second Sergeant: 1	Police Officer: 1	Police Warrant Officer: 4	Police Lieutenant: 3	Total 16
Age:							
26-35: 4		36-45: 10		46-55: 2		56 and more: 1	
Total: 16							
Sex:							
Men: 9				Women: 7			
Years of Service:							
1-10: 1		10-20: 3		20-30: 10		30 and more: 2	



**Tables 5 & 6: Questions 2,4, Part A (Personal Information)**

**Table 7: Question 1, Part B (Migration & Security), Section 1: Military**

**Tables 7 & 8: Question 1, Part B (Migration & Security), Section 3: Economic**


**Table 9: Question 2, Part B (Migration & Security), Section 3: Economic**

The above graphs show that for the military sector for both groups of respondents the migration/refugee crisis poses a threat for national security. As far as the economic sector is concerned, in the case of Lesvos, most respondents view migrants/refugees as an opportunity for their local economy, whereas a limited number of them perceives them as a danger. Despite that, respondents in their overwhelming majority think that migrants/refugees are harmful for the Greek economy and that they lead to economic instability, partially contributing to its productive sector. As far as Crete is concerned, police officers are split regarding whether migrants/refugees are an opportunity or danger for their local economy. Half of them view them as an opportunity whereas half of them as a danger. They also believe that migrants are mostly harmful rather than beneficial for the Greek economy and that they lead to economic instability, adding little to the productive sector of Greece.

## Conclusions

It turns out that both in Lesvos and Crete migration is securitized. Securitization is extended in market actors in Lesvos whereas in Crete there is lucrative ground to cultivate tolerance and integration in the local labour market. Therefore, it is necessary to enforce education and training to securitization actors in order to diminish securitization, increase tolerance and enforce integration procedures to labour market, especially in areas such as Crete, that have more opportunities for integration.

At the same time, it is necessary to ensure evidence-based planning for the relocation of refugees in order to prevent the creation of any form of competition between the most disadvantaged groups in Greek society and refugees (Kotroyannos et al., 2019). Hence, a successful process of integration of refugees is the mechanism that will allow the achievement of important conditions of social welfare both for the refugees themselves and for society and the economy as a whole. From the findings of the research, we conclude that the conditions for the integration of refugees in the socio-economic system exist, especially in certain sectors of the economy but also in certain areas such as Crete, as

others, such as Lesbos, have limited opportunities for integration due to the high levels of securitization.

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