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The spiralling of the securitisation of migration in the EU: from the management of a 'crisis' to a governance of human mobility?

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ABSTRACT
This special issue illustrates that the securitisation of migration is not a linear process but a spiralling phenomenon, which involves different actors, and their policies, practices and narratives, in a spiralling progression that both self-fulfils and reinforces migration-security nexus' dynamics. By proposing a cognitive ontology to understand the social construction of migration as a security threat, the introduction to this special issue proposes a categorisation of cognitions, mandates, constituencies and interests of state and non-state actors. Through a dichotomisation of these categories, it is possible to clarify how and why they either socially construct or deconstruct migration as a threat. In particular, the special issue identifies in prejudicial cognitions one of the main reasons for which a variety of actors enact practices and produce narratives that contribute to both securitising migration and reinforcing its nexus with crime, and the consequent social construction of 'migration crises'. The different contributions to this special issue prove the arguments here exposed with a different analysis of how migration has been dealt with at either governmental or non-governmental levels.

KEYWORDS
Migration; securitisation; state actors; non-state actors; practices; narratives

Introduction

The year 1995 marks the publication of a book, 'Global Migration Crisis: Challenge to States and to Human Rights' (Weiner 1995). Its title alone is emblematic of the reasons for which it has already been argued (Bello 2017a) that the current migration crisis is neither new nor isolated as a phenomenon. It is rather one among a series of scattered inflamed reactions to recurrent massive movements of people. Hence, we understand *global migration crises* as socially constructed scattered inflamed reactions that have been happening since the end of Cold War, as a consequence of forced movements of people that a variety of conflicts and instabilities have produced across the planet.

The first element that we intend to clarify is why we claim that these global migration crises are specific post-Cold War phenomena; a line of reasoning that situates this special issue among studies of the securitisation of migration (Buzan 1991; Bigo 1995). One

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could argue that heated reactions to migration have always happened within the international system of nation-states (Smith 1995; Koser 2007). We consider, however, that post-Cold War reactions to migration hold novel characteristics from those responses that existed during and before the Cold War. This diversity of features is, according to us, the consequence of the securitisation of migration. In addition, we contend that each of these global migration crises has entailed increasingly concerning outcomes but also manifestations of manyfold attempts to deconstruct migration as a security challenge. Our main argument is that several elements indicate that the securitisation of migration is not a linear process but a *spiralling* phenomenon (Bello 2017a; in this special issue see Léonard and Kaunert 2022).

This introduction lays out the ontological and epistemological reasons that have led us to reassess the process through which the securitisation happens. The contributions included in this special issue prove our argument with a collection of studies of the spiralling. This opening work thence proceeds to: firstly clarify the ontology and the epistemology informing the analysis of the research presented in this compendium; secondly, identify those characteristics of reactions to migration that are specific to the post-Cold War period; thirdly, explain those in terms of the spiralling of the securitisation of migration and the role that both state and non-state actors play in it.

In particular, we claim that human mobility has been socially constructed as a threat and a crisis to manage through the activity of both state and non-state actors, who hold a specific cognition of ethnicity and nation that informs a prejudicial narrative of migration. Our interpretation is that the spiralling progression of the securitisation of migration involves an array of actors, discourses, policies and practices embedded in a prejudiced narrative of migration. When prejudiced activities socially construct migration as a threat, their interplay speeds the securitisation process to an extent that human mobility will unlikely be regarded as different from a crisis to manage. Therefore, these pursuits act as driving forces of a spiralling progression that accelerates all those dynamics entailed in the creation of a migration-security nexus.

However, as it is true that some actors, by sharing and spreading a prejudicial narrative through their discourses, policies and practices, contribute to securitising the phenomenon, it is equally true that there are forces that push the process towards an opposite direction. It is indeed possible that alternative actors, who do not hold a discriminatory cognition, with their resistance to securitisation, enact discourses, techniques and practices, and induce policies, which are rather able to de-securitise this issue (in this special issue see Bello 2022; Crepaz 2022). As all socially constructed realities, migration can equally be socially constructed in diverse ways, and, as such, it can also be de-constructed as a threat (Weaver 1993; Balzacq 2015).

The compendium of this special issue examines how situations stemming from the so-called 'migration crisis' in the EU have been dealt with at governmental and non-governmental levels. Additionally, this introduction illustrates how it is possible to identify those circumstances, addressed only by a few studies (Bello 2017a; Della Porta 2018; Mitchell and Sparke 2018), that de-construct migration as a security threat. Actors both treating migration as an ordinary phenomenon rather than a threat and sharing inclusive narratives create the conditions for decelerating and eventually stopping the securitisation, thus pulling the spiralling in a downward direction (in this special issue see Bello 2022; Crepaz 2022). Several works in this special issue provide further insights

of the spiralling of the securitisation of migration, by contemplating increases in terms of both securitisation (in this special issue see Léonard and Kaunert 2022; Martins and Jumbert 2022; McConnon 2022; Panebianco 2022) and those fortunate stances of resistance (in this special issue see Crepaz 2022), or elements able to discern both (in this special issue see Bello 2022). Other analyses highlight how socially constructing migration as a crisis is unprofitable for the EU, particularly in its relations with third countries (in this special issue see Seeberg and Zardo 2022; Webb 2022). The special issue thus proves that there exist plethora of motives for which states and societies would benefit from a change in politics and pass from the current management of a crisis to a more positive governance of human mobility.

We intend to position this special issue as a new window opened in a preexisting building of studies. Collectively, we provide a new angle from which to both interpret how human mobility has been 'managed' across the past three decades and consider the first emerging examples of attempts to more fairly both govern and socially construct migration as an ordinary phenomenon.

A cognitive constructivism for an episteme of the spiralling of the securitisation of migration

Our analysis of the research presented in this special issue is embedded in a constructivist perspective of the securitisation of migration but it actually departs from current analogous interpretations for reasons that have entailed an indispensable *distinguo* for both ontological and epistemological questions: why do there concurrently exist scattered manifestations of the securitisation of migration and resistances to this trend? How can we meaningfully depict this dotted reality in the wider frame of our world's global dynamics?

The starting point of our understanding is utterly adherent to Huysmans and Squire's one:

> Migration emerged as a security issue in a context marked both by the geopolitical dislocation associated with the end of the Cold War and also by wider social and political shifts associated with globalization. As such, current debates surrounding migration and security reflect changes both in the nature of migration, as well as in the nature of thinking about migration. (Huysmans and Squire 2010, 1)

Where our position instead departs from theirs is in the epistemology of how it is possible to disentangle the process that has constructed the migration-security nexus. This episteme is ultimately the consequence of a differently nuanced ontology, according to which the reality of our world is rooted in a cognitive framework that informs its social construction.

In our specific case of the securitisation of migration, it is a specific cognition of nation and ethnicity that, through a prejudicial narrative, informs discourses, policies and practices of both state and non-state actors, contributing to socially constructing migration as a security concern. The contemplation of diverse cognitions involves the possibility of appreciating an entire span of dynamics. This nuanced ontology opens the outlook of the spiralling process of the securitisation of migration. According to Huysmans and Squire: 'security is conceived of as a knowledge, discourse, technology or practice that

mediates the relation between the social processes of human mobility and the search for governmental control and steering capacity over them' (Huysmans and Squire 2010, 2). However, theoretically, the security discourse can be conceived as one of international, regional, national or even human security. Therefore, we have wondered why is the national security discourse the one constituting this mediation between human mobility and political control? Why does this happen also in a post-national political entity, for instance, the EU, whose motto is 'united in diversity'? Is it *always* a national security framework that applies and why? Some scholars (Moreno-Lax 2018; Cusumano 2019) have stressed that the human security discourse has also sometimes been used to legitimise the tightening of borders in the name of migrants' own 'security'. In this special issue, Panebianco investigates the contradictions between the humanitarian dimension and the border controls in the name of the defense of states' frontiers (in this special issue see Panebianco 2022). We assume that the specific discourse of security that applies, when it comes to the governance of migration, depends on the particular cognition of nation hold by the actor promoting the discourse and/or undertaking certain practices. Some contributions to this special issue focus on this research question by looking: at policies (in this special issue see McConnon 2022; Panebianco 2022); at practices (in this special issue see Martins and Jumbert 2022; Seeberg and Zardo 2022; Webb 2022) or at the intersection of both narratives and practices (in this special issue, see Bello 2022; Léonard and Kaunert 2022; Crepaz 2022) of either state or non-state actors.

We share the starting point of most studies of the securitisation of migration and in particular that migration became one of the preferred fields where security has developed a new script after the end of the Cold War (Bigo 1995). Where we depart from other securitisation studies is in the reason that explains the non-linearity of the securitisation process.

After the end of the Cold war with the increasing globalisation of cultural, political, economic and virtual landscapes, people could choose among a wider span of cognitions through which comprehending their reality. The nation is no longer the only viewpoint from which to look at the world. At the very least, the nation is not the only outlook for those who are able to live and imagine their lives through cosmopolitan landscapes. A similar argumentation entails the opportunity of simultaneously factoring in alternative moves, including those attempts of de-constructing migration as a security threat (Weaver 1993; Balzacq 2015). Several extensive works on migration (Hirschman, Kasinitz, and DeWind 1999; Koser 2007), nations and nationalism (Delanty and Kumar 2006) and security (Buzan 1991; Bigo 1995) have noticed an important change after the end of the Cold War. We deem that, in the 'securitisation of migration' debate, Bigo's reply to the crisis of security studies and its ensuing extension of security concerns to new fields as a motive for the post-Cold War securitisation (Bigo 1995), only partly explains the phenomenon. Namely, it does not account for the desecuritising dynamics that also exist and the non-linearity of the process.

The key research question that opened our window and that this introduction replies to, is: how is it possible to explain the concurrent exponential, alternative reactions to migration? We have understood this possibility in the simultaneous existence of different, opposite, or even resistant cognitions of socio-cultural and political belonging to the nation. The ethnonation is no longer the sole socio-political imaginary. Many more persons than those few cosmopolitans who were living when Kant proposed the

'Eternal Peace Congress' or when Spinelli and Rossi wrote the Ventotene Manifesto, can imagine life outside a purely national landscape. Nevertheless, the prejudicial ultra-national logic still exists, and in between the two positions lie several nuances of political stances. One of the innovative aspects of our approach is that the language is not the one of security but the one of prejudice. Huysmans and Squire write:

> Rather than a value or a fact, security becomes a language and/or an interest, knowledge or professional skill linked to particular organizations, that are always shaped in a relation to other languages, actors and practices that contest it. (Huysmans and Squire 2010, 9)

We instead claim that, when the securitisation increases, it is the language not of security but of prejudice -of which security is a specific discourse- that renders migration, among other issues, a 'national' security concern. The phenomenon occurs not only through the governmental control but also through non-governmental activity.

Our approach is grounded in the idea that the nation is not an entity in the world but rather a perspective on the world (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004). One of the possible interpretations of the nation that would explain why migration is often depicted by elites and their dominant discourse as an external threat is the one formulated by Wimmer (2002). Wimmer has regarded the nation-building project as one of the strategies through which elites find allies in individuals of a range of social classes for the control over a territory. In his description, the concept of the nation has been proposed to tie together persons living in a broad territory but not sharing the same interests. In order to be successful, the nation-building project needs a common cause and interest. However, among classes that do not share the same interests, this can only be achieved by fighting together an external threat. This account of the nation as the precondition to any social construction of the outsider - and namely in our case the immigrant- as a threat, would explain why the modern state governs in the name of a people defined along ethnic and national lines (Wimmer 2002). For our approach, this interpretation is relevant because it also attests why the nation can actually be assumed as a *perspective* provided to certain people.

With an increasingly interconnected world, and imaginaries and cultural landscapes that transverse states, the development of universalistic and cosmopolitan awareness trigger more than a transnational egalitarian phenomenon such as the cosmopolitanism of Kantian memory. A larger category of persons has the possibility to challenge the particularistic national discourse framed around the construction of outer threats. For this and an array of other reasons,[1] migration has not always produced the same reactions everywhere and for everybody, and people have also expressed welcoming attitudes and solidarity movements (Bello 2017a; Della Porta 2018; Mitchell and Sparke 2018). Similar alternative movements constitute relevant efforts to deconstruct human mobility as a threat. Hence, it is worth investigating how the securitisation of migration is pushed and pulled through opposite dynamics, with upwarding and downwarding forces spiralling its process (see in this special issue McConnon 2022). In case the upwarding forces that construct migration as a security threat take the lead in the process, then the narratives of migration as an emergence and an exceptional challenge start to spin policies and practices that securitise the issue. The downwarding forces, instead, deconstruct it as a security concern. Therefore, the so-called 'migration crisis' has scattered manifestations and societies have diversely responded to it.

The reason for which a variety of actors either socially construct or help deconstruct the migration-security nexus depends on whether the upholding cognition of the nation is a prejudicial or an inclusive one. If nation is indeed only considered a perspective, and not an ethnical reification of a territory, there is indeed an opportunity 'for conceptualising ethnicity, race and nation as perspectives on the world rather than entities in the world, for treating ethnicity, race, and nationalism together rather than as separate subfields' (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004, 31). The imaginary, and consequent narrative, of a nation as an entity representing 'the pure soul of the state', instead, constitutes a frame of mind that, when accompanied by a prejudicial cognition, socially constructs migration as a threat (Bello 2017a). When and where this prejudicial mindset does not take place, several forces can enact a desecuritisation of migration.

Post-Cold War responses to migration: the spiralling as an epistemic that uphold a cognitive ontology

The other question to which this introduction aims to reply relates to an epistemic concern. As we understand the end of the Cold War as a turning point in reactions to migration, epistemically, in what ways can we comprehend a reality in which the continuity in responses to migration (the linear, normal variations in responses to migration) happens along with its novelty, namely the securitisation of migration?

The starting point in the literature is that after the end of the Cold War, global and more generally post-national dynamics have developed to a point that borders themselves have lost a fair part of importance in finance and economy, in cultural productions, and also in terms of political governance – and possibly within the European Union to a greater extent than in other regions, as national borders are less significant than in other geopolitical areas. In such a light, and in line with the literature on the securitisation of migration, we also grip the related reality by taking into account the latest changes in the international system and particularly the post-Cold War world (Buzan 1991; Heisbourg 1991; Bigo 1995; Huysmans and Squire 2010). In addition, we reckon from the debate both that nation-states have partly changed their constituencies, and the new meanings that these constituencies entail for the national (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Nowicka 2007; Butcher 2009; Bello 2014). On the one hand, post-national citizens who experience beneficial effects of globalisation conceive their state no longer in terms of nations, races, and ethnicities. On the other hand, there are both those who live anchored to the idea of the nation, and those who suffer from globalisation and perceive and anticipate risks to a greater extent (Beck 1992). They become those persons whose frustrations can be exploited to request a revival of nationalism, and with it, its discriminatory politics, exclusionary dynamics and hard, untraversable borders (Bello 2017a).

The changes in reactions to migration have already been recorded in the 'Handbook of International Migration' through an historical perspective (Hirschman, Kasinitz, and DeWind 1999). Each chapter of that collection has compared the decade of the 1990s with previous ones. Perceptions of migration have altered not only in Europe but even in the American society recently, as the same national discourse has changed from 'a nation of immigrants' to 'a nation that becomes great again by fighting immigration', like one of the most popular slogan of the election campaign of the U.S. President

Donald Trump illustrates. We deem similar turns as additional proofs that nations and ethnicities are cognitions on the social world rather than fixed entities in the world. However, it is obvious that, if someone else (Smith 1995) has in mind a world in which nations and ethnicity are true and real entities that ethno-symbolically constitute our reality, then the peculiarity of the post-Cold War era when it comes to migration and, consequently, to nationalism, cannot be regarded as different from 'shallow or misleading' (Smith 1995, 1).

We hold a distinctive ontology. We wish to provide, as previously explained, an outlook 'for treating ethnicity, race, and nationalism together rather than as separate subfields' (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004, 31). Nevertheless, we take into account the criticisms of those colleagues who highlight that 'a cognitive approach underplays the social materiality of the securitising processes – security seems to exist primarily in the mind' (Huysmans and Squire 2010, 9). However, if the social construction would come before the prejudicial cognition and its consequent narrative, how could we explain the diversity of discourses? Only if prejudice comes before the social construction, we can epistemically explain the variety of stances that actually exist without falling into a theoretical loop. In fact, if the prejudicial comes as a consequence of the social construction of a securitised reality, then how can we say that a specific construction of reality creates prejudice without being prejudicial toward that particular social construction? If, instead, specific cognitions, conceptually fixed -such as the ones of prejudice and inclusivity- inform the social construction of alternative realities, then these phenomena (prejudice and inclusivity) can be taken into account and applied in the analysis both *before and after* the securitisation takes place, thus constituting self-reinforcing dynamics, engendering what we identify as a spiralling process of the securitisation of migration (for a case study of an epistemic of self-reinforcing dynamics see in this special issue Bello 2022). Therefore, we can grasp the object of study of the theory of the spiralling of securitisation. The latter happens through both narratives (Bello 2017a) and practices (Léonard 2007) that constitute this non-linear process and thus reflect the cognitions of the actors.

Our approach actually considers prejudice as a cognition that informs the social construction of migration as a threat. Prejudice is consequently the main qualifier of a perspective of the nation that ties a society through the discrimination of specific groups of individuals, whom are thus socially constructed as outer threats (Bello 2017a). The securitisation of migration first happens cognitively in actors' perspectives and then epistemically spirals through practices and narratives (see in this special issue Bello 2022), which are the concrete elements that can be analysed for research purpose. Discourses, policies, strategies and techniques ensue, enacted by both state and non-state actors, who systematise some self-reinforcing dynamics (see in this special issue Martins and Jumbert 2022).

The spiralling of the securitisation of migration

The theory of the spiralling of the securitisation of migration understands the non-linearity of the securitisation of migration as a consequence of both upwarding and downwarding forces that respectively construct or deconstruct migration as a security threat, and find their root causes in alternative cognitions of the nation (see in this special issue McConnon 2022).

As demonstrated in a multilevel analysis of prejudice in European countries, if the narratives that accompany the theme of migration are embedded in an exclusive and discriminatory cognition of the nation in a specific country, then the respective society would *in general* be more prejudiced towards migrants than societies of more inclusive states, and would regard their presence as a worsening factor for their country (Bello 2016). In support of this theory, another study has determined that, even in time of crises, only those individuals not holding intercultural values will negatively view migration (Bello 2017b). It is then not surprising that in Europe those countries presenting more concerning situations in terms of prejudice, Turkey, Greece, Russia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Ukraine, Italy, the United Kingdom and Austria (Bello 2017a), actually coincided with those that have more harshly reacted to the 'migration crisis'. Migration as a crisis to be managed emerges as the main narrative where there is a cognitive framework enabling a prejudicial language that informs discourses, policies, strategies and techniques.

An akin grip of the migration-security nexus provides us with those lenses to identify why disparate actors have diversely responded to migration: the role of a variety of EU institutions have not only had dissimilar but sometimes divergent roles in the securitisation of migration (Bello 2017a). Panebianco has considered this plurality of institutional voices and levels in the EU through an analysis of the border control. Namely, she has investigated how Italy, one of the most relevant countries in terms of arrivals and first reception, and the rest of Europe have coordinated these activities (see in this special issue Panebianco 2022). The need to 'manage the crisis' has also led to policy changes and shifted power dynamics. Seeberg and Zardo argue in this special issue that the EU-led securitisation of migration has contributed to the increasing informalisation of EU-third country agreements. As they have shown with their work, although the securitisation in EU-MENA relations dates back to the end of the Cold War, the crisis has had scattered manifestations also in the EU-Jordan relations. The condition has occurred particularly since 2011, when the pressures on the EU to adapt its policy toolbox in Jordan have substantially intensified (see in this special issue Seeberg and Zardo 2022). Both Webb, and Seeberg and Zardo, analysed the usage of a prejudicial cognition of migration. They both find that the EU has recognised the 'interest of limiting migrants' entry' as more valuable than its crucial consequence; namely, a decreasing power of influence in negotiating with neighbouring (see in this special issue Webb 2022) and third countries (see in this special issue Seeberg and Zardo 2022). Webb shows that the construction of the narratives of the 'migration crisis' and its ensuing securitisation of migration has been used by Macedonia and Serbia to reshape their roles within the EU borders' regime and reduce some conventional power asymmetry between them and the EU (see in this special issue Webb 2022). These analyses hence show how a prejudicial cognition of migration has led to an increase of the spiralling of the securitisation of migration to the extent of reducing EU's power in its external relations with neighbouring countries.[2] In the past, the ability to use migration to achieve power of influence upon other countries has also made some authors contend that there is a coercive use of migration and refugees as non-military weapons (Greenhill 2010). Although, in this case, Macedonia and Serbia have not purposefully created migration, they used the influxes of migrants and refugees to successfully socially construct and depict migration as a crisis at their borders so as to leverage with the EU (see in this special issue Webb

2022). Seeberg and Zardo arrive at a conclusion akin. The relations between the EU and a third country, Jordan, which used the 'migration crisis' to improve its negotiating power with the EU, rendered policies and practices between the two partners increasingly informal (see in this special issue Seeberg and Zardo 2022). These findings and conclusions are also supported by other works in the European studies' debate on 'reverse conditionality'; Tittel-Mosser, for instance, looking at the EU mobility partnership with Morocco, also found that Morocco in particular has used the considerable weight that the theme of migration has in the EU to demand increased funding (Tittel-Mosser 2018).

The necessity to manage what has been identified as 'the migration crisis' has therefore cost the EU an evident change in its bargaining power with third countries but it has also weakened internal relations. However, despite these attempts to manage the crisis, and despite the decreasing number of arrivals, the scattered inflamed reactions to migration have not stopped. They have instead increased in a number of places, and namely in those countries that already presented important prejudicial contexts. McConnon examines how, even in the sector of development policy, the discourse in the UK has shifted from the impact of migration on poorest countries to the risks for UK's national security (see in this special issue McConnon 2022).

The phenomenon of the securitisation of migration self-fulfils its own assumption: if migration is expertly described as a threat, then the arrival of migrants, no matter whether in increasing numbers or not, will always constitute a crisis to manage (Maguire 2015). The securitisation of border controls has been so blatant that the same EU agency Frontex presented a clearly securitised language in its own reports, in which the vocabulary used to depict migrants had become completely dehumanised (Bello 2017a). And yet, by making migration more difficult, governments have not managed to reduce either migration or prejudice. Instead, it is clear that, when migrants are treated as criminals, detained in immigration centres or deported, negative attitudes towards them also increase (Bello 2017a). As prejudice rises, the securitisation also spirals (see in this special issue Bello 2022). Such an origin explains our perspective of the exponential spiralling of the securitising forces. The post-Brexit situation in the UK, or the electoral results in the Czech Republic and in Italy, with a strong increase of far-right, xenophobic and nationalistic parties, are clear examples of these dynamics. Léonard and Kaunert have analysed how Frontex's practices clearly show a spiralling progression of the securitisation since 2015 (see in this special issue Léonard and Kaunert 2022). Martins and Jumbert instead investigate the way by which emerging technologies, like drones, and specific information and surveillance technologies installed on them, shape the security-migration management nexus at the EU borders and self-reinforce the logics of the securitisation (see in this special issue Martins and Jumbert 2022).

In the same Frontex report (FRONTEX 2016), it is evident that the hardening of border policies has not diminished the number of those arriving in Europe through irregular and perilous journeys but has instead increased the market opportunity for smugglers and human traffickers (FRONTEX 2016; Bello 2017a). Situations of this kind have multiplied the numbers of migrants in undocumented or irregular status in several parts of the world (Avdan 2012; Dunn 2009). It has been highlighted that the hardening of border policies and the securitisation of migration concurrently increase the numbers of migrants in detention centres, a fact that is prejudicial because travelling undocumented cannot be considered a crime in itself – eventually only a misdemeanour offense

(Lazaridis and Wadia 2015; Bello 2017a). However, until migrants' claims about their status, if refugees or not, are verified, it is impossible to say whether the act of travelling undocumented or with unproper documents, also constitutes an infringement of the law of the state. As a consequence, the detention of undocumented persons is unlawful and a prejudicial practice of great concern. The European Commission itself has lamented the existence of such a practice, when considering the case of migrants detained in Libya (European Commission 2016). The situation in Europe is not entirely divergent, with almost 130,000 migrants detained, along with 21,000 recorded detained asylum seekers in 2017 (Bello 2017a, 54). The practice of detaining those who have travelled undocumented is another way through which the securitisation of migration renders migrants into criminals and both self-fulfils and reinforces the security threat that it anticipates.

Because there also exist inclusive cognitions of the nation, and state and non-state actors who deconstruct migration as a threat, societies of states start to polarise around these topical debates. The polarisation of the debate is also performatively represented by the very 'ambivalent attempts of concurrently saving the vulnerable migrants and its hardening of both external and internal borders to a point that makes migrants' journeys almost impossible and their stay in Europe often unbearable, such as in the example of the 'Mare Nostrum' operation, at once a rescue mission and a border control operation' (Bello 2017a, 58; Cusumano 2019). A relevant part of the phenomenon that has remained unexplained in previous literature is the plethora of non-state actors that expedited the spiralling of the securitisation of migration, with exponential pulls and pushes of opposite forces.

The role of non-state actors in the securitisation of migration

The interpretation of what is actually a non-state actor could vary – and has varied – depending on the particular perspective employed in a range of disciplinary literatures (Armstrong et al. 2010). With this term, scholars could refer mainly to 'civil society', as, in Locke's terms, a force standing in opposition to oppressive state power, or, as in Held's conception, 'those areas of social life – the domestic world, the economic sphere, cultural activities and political interaction – which are organised by private or voluntary arrangements between individuals and groups outside the direct control of the state' (Held 1993, 6). With the increasing involvement of private corporations and violent non-state actors in the field of international relations, the concept of non-state actors has progressively separated from the one of civil society to become closer to the concept of 'private actors'. In particular, 'in security governance, private actors have become involved with policy surveillance, and even military tasks' (Jakobi and Wolf 2013, 7). Furthermore, defining non-state actors chiefly by their independence from states and state authority would be misleading (Josselin and Wallace 2001).

The role of non-state actors also depends on the particular field under scrutiny and what is the relation between that domain and its global governance (Armstrong et al. 2010). In the field of migration, some domestic actors, which are normally regarded as part of the state, end up assuming a distinct role from the one that states and governments play. Vice versa, some non-state actors can be under the direct control of the state (Josselin and Wallace 2001). In particular, courts of justice, cities' authorities, detention centres' officials and guards, and border guards can exercise a particular power

through activities that are possibly not intended in their relevant state's or government's politics. Similar actors cannot be counted among private non-state actors. However, they cannot either be contemplated as *state* actors. Furthermore, IGOs have been considered non-state actors because they do not always represent States' interests but develop their own bodies that act autonomously from the states that constitute them. An akin interpretation of IGOs as non-state actors has been applied more generally in the field of global governance (Art 2000; Josselin and Wallace 2001).[3] To make justice to their function, this special issue will take these actors into account as public non-state actors.

For a further understanding of the diverse roles that public and private non-state actors play in the securitisation of migration, it has been suggested that it is worth examining the main interests they hold, if collective or individualist (Bello 2017a), as previously suggested for a distinctive field (Bello 2015). Non-state actors' interests can be counted as of *individualist* type if they are framed to only benefit their constituency. A non-state actor that instead views its main interests as beneficial also for individuals and collectivities beyond its actual constituency can be categorised as a non-state actor holding *collective interests*. The proposed non-state actors' characteristics are crucial to grasp the variety of roles they play in the securitisation, because only non-state actors with collective interests will need to publicly clarify their cognitions to perform successfully. They would not be able to effectively show their collective agency if they do not illustrate what the cognitions justifying their goals are. Instead, non-state actors with individualist interests do not need to always manifest their cognitions in order to correctly perform, as their agency is not addressed externally to their constituency (Bello 2017a). In this sense, the individualist non-state actor is much more independent from the audience than a collective non-state actor. For non-state actors holding individualist interests, a further element of differentiation is necessary in order to recognise their role in either securitising or desecuritising human mobility. In the light of the theoretical framework presented here, such an element could be found in the specific cognition that individualist non-state actors hold, in particular if prejudicial or inclusive.

Table 1 provides an overview of the diverse typologies of non-state actors and their nature, interests and cognitions. The dichotomy helps categorise non-state actors according to the elements discussed and whether or not it is possible to identify both those non-state actors that are prejudiced from those that are inclusive towards migrants, and their role in the spiralling of the securitisation of migration.

Through this threefold dichotomisation – and keeping in mind, on the one hand, the role of those agencies that translate narratives and practices into perceptions of threats and, on the other, those deconstructing this nexus – it becomes clear that public non-state actors holding mainly collective interests usually de-securitise migration. As it is evident from the case that Kaunert and Léonard (2012) illustrate, courts of justice, both at regional and national level, play an increasingly important role in improving the fair treatment of migrants. However, this process seems to be not only peculiar of the EU but is certainly more global. Gurowitz, for instance, analyses the impact of international human rights standards in Japan on policies towards migrant workers (Gurowitz 1999). Conversely, actors that here have been identified as public non-state actors with individualist interests, for example, the EU Council, have often been associated with the securitisation of migration (Huysmans 2006; Lazaridis and Wadia 2015; Squire 2015).

Table 1. Categorisation of non-state actors involved in the securitisation of migration and their performative roles.

Type of non-state actors / Type of interests	Public non-state actors	Private non-state actors
Collective interests	Predictable cognitions towards migrants: Mostly inclusive - IGOs (UN; IOM; World Bank IMF;). - National and regional courts of justice. - International agencies (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights -EUFRA-; UN High Commissioner for Refugees; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights-OHCHR) ↓ Desecuritizing role	Predictable cognitions towards migrants: Mostly inclusive - Civil society associations (Churches; Trade Unions; Social movements; Volunteers) - NGOs ↓ Desecuritizing role Prejudiced towards migrants - Extremist groups - Xenophobic or racist movements. ↓ Securitizing role
Individualist interests	Variable cognitions towards migrants - Regional Actors (EU/AU/ASEAN/OIC). ↓ Variable roles	Variable cognitions towards migrants Newcomers Diasporas Established persons Employers Reception centres Detention centres' officials and guards Border guards ↓ Variable roles

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When private non-state actors are taken into account, it is evident that they abound in the securitisation of migration (Bloom 2014). For those with collective interests, their cognitions are mostly predictable and so is their specific contribution to the spiralling. Inclusive civil society associations, volunteers, social movements, all are able to mitigate those practices and narratives that are feeding the intensity of the securitisation process. Those immediately predictable as prejudiced non-state actors -for instance white

supremacist groups and other xenophobic movements and associations, and more generally all extremist groups- they always securitise migration because they exacerbate the negative framing of the phenomenon. They reinforce the upwarding spiralling of the securitisation of migration, by engendering more prejudicial attitudes as in a domino effect (see in this special issue Bello 2022).

The cognitions of private non-state actors with individualist interests cannot be *a priori* determined as prejudiced or inclusive; in addition, some of them could change their cognitions and means from inclusive to prejudiced, and vice versa, at different steps in the process (see in this special issue Léonard and Kaunert 2022). Their role in either securitising or desecuritising migration needs further studies to be clarified. For private non-state actors are of difficult categorisation and it is not possible to establish *a priori* if there are prejudiced or inclusive towards migrants and migrations, it makes them a relevant case study to contemplate the role of cognitions in the securitisation of migration and whether these eventually lead to a spiralling process. In this collection of works, Bello has specifically focused on one of these ambivalent non-state actors, namely reception centres, which could either construct or deconstruct human mobility as a threat, depending on the cognitions and the narratives they reproduce (see in this special issue Bello 2022).

The de-construction of migration as a security threat

Several articles in this special issue have highlighted that there already exist ways in which state and non-state actors strive to socially deconstruct migration as a security threat. Civil society associations, NGOs and other spontaneous social movements, for instances, solidarity movements and volunteers, which are clearly inclusive towards migration, contribute to decelerating the spiralling of the securitisation of migration (see in this special issue Crepaz 2022). As anticipated, it is possible to consider that public non-state actors with collective interests usually help de-securitise the issue, as they do not normally hold prejudicial cognitions; examples of this category are the European Agency for Human Rights or the European Court of Justice. Instead, public non-state actors with individualistic interests, for instance the EU Council, if driven by a prejudicial narrative, as in the case of member states led by xenophobic parties, would act in the opposite direction. For an analysis of regional organisations, like the EU, which are not monoliths with a unitary policy approach towards the issue, a dichotomy of this kind is more than relevant. It is indispensable to distinguish its diverse bodies and their implications for an understanding of its participation in the spiral. The categorisation of institutions according to the mandate and the interests they represent allows to grasp the desecuritising role that the European Court of Justice and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EUFRA) play, in antithesis to the one of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe, where decisions need to be taken unanimously, is disproportionately influenced by some of those EU destination and transit countries, whose societies are strongly prejudiced towards migrants, and in particular Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy and Hungary (Bello 2016; Bello 2017a). As Huysmans (2006) has already highlighted, thanks to the socially constructed situation of emergency, its policymaking often avoids the balancing power of the Parliament, by leaving the decision-making process skewed towards the executive power.

The same effect applies with private non-state actors; when led with prejudicial cognitions, they are conducive to a securitisation of migration through practices and narratives. The role of FRONTEX in criminalising migrants, as well as refugees, is clear when one considers that it comprehended those fleeing war in Syria in the numbers of those called 'illegal border-crossers' (FRONTEX 2016, 18; Bello 2017a), as also pointed out in Martins and Jumbert's contribution (see in this special issue Martins and Jumbert 2022). It also occurs with other prejudicial non-state actors, holding either individualistic or collective interests, such as a variety of extremist groups including, among others, violent guards working in detention centres and violent border guards – as those who, at the border between Macedonia and Greece, were brutally beating women and children, as reported in news on 10 April 2016 (The Guardian 2016a). All actors akin to extremist or violent groups represent further gears in the chain that speeds the spiral of the securitisation of migration. The dehumanising situation of many detention centres is, unfortunately, not only the case in European countries. An article in The Guardian on 19 June 2016 reports the experience of the Australian psychologist (now also politician) Paul Stevenson in the two Australian detention centres of Manu Islands and Nauru, revealing a 'stream of despair and privation' (The Guardian 2016b).

In order to stop the securitising spiral, the intervention of public non-state actors with collective interests (Bello 2017a), and an effective control preventing prejudicial cognitions from intervening in the management of human mobility (see in this special issue Bello 2022) are crucial in order to pull down the forces spiralling the securitisation process. If measures are not taken to decelerate the securitisation, it is likely that private non-state actors holding mainly individualistic interests and prejudicial cognitions will participate in the securitisation of migration through narratives and practices that will spiral the process. In such a light, the inescapability of the migration–crime nexus becomes dependent on its routinised (Maguire 2015) or performative (Bello 2022) self-fulfilment. Martins' and Jumbert's work also provides elements so as to determine how self-reinforcing logics are created and how much they rely upon technological expertise (see in this special issue Martins and Jumbert 2022).

A partnership of inclusive private and public non-state actors could magnify their already critical voices in positively influencing the process. Associations, volunteers, spontaneous social movements, NGOs, along with border agencies and bodies, if holding a humanitarian and non-prejudicial approach, could all positively affect the situation and contribute to stopping the social construction of migration as a threat (see in this special issue Crepaz 2022). When it comes to the desecuritisation, Crepaz's case study explains how the Europeanisation of civil society activism intensifies 'the role of civil society as a desecuritising and humanitarian-focused force' (see in this special issue Crepaz 2022). Her case study of German, Italian, Austrian and Swiss activists networking and activity in a border zone, such as the one of the Brenner, a region at the border between Italy and Austria, exemplifies this fact.

Bello's contribution to this special issue, instead, analyses the effects of both prejudicial and inclusive cognitions in the management of receptions centres in Italy and what are the consequences in terms of both practices and narratives in socially constructing perceptions of migrants as security threats. In her analysis, the self-

reinforcing role of prejudicial and stereotyped narratives confirms that there are elements of discourse that exert a diverse impact from the speech-acts upon which the literature of the securitisation of migration has until now focused. Narratives in fact do not need to be accepted by the audience to securitise an issue, as their performance is automatically legitimised among spectators as 'true knowledge' (Lyotard 1979), if not resisted through alternative cognitions upholding opposite narratives (see in this special issue Bello 2022). The prejudicial cognition is found to be a crucial factor able to enact the spiralling of the securitisation and its self-reinforcing mechanisms through practices and narratives. Conversely, an inclusive cognition help deconstruct migrants as threats to security (see in this special issue Bello 2022). Hence, it also proves the argument that it is the cognition of an actor what effects its role in either constructing or deconstructing migration as a security threat, accelerating or decelerating forces of the spiralling of the securitisation process. More works and research are needed to enlarge the spectrum of this glance and further exploit the potential explanatory power of this approach. Addressing those blind spots that the literature still presents for a lack of a variety of empirical works looking for instance at this historical twist with longitudinal analyses of migration narratives would be a key contribution to the literature. Equally, both looking at ways migration narratives intersect with identity politics and their consequences on migration policies; and studying those positive examples of resistance to securitisation that exist both at governmental and non-governmental levels, would all deserve further attention among scholars. The usage of the dichotomisation of non-state actors proposed, which focuses on their mandates, constituencies, interests and cognitions, could help develop a clear discerning framework of their roles in the securitisation of the field of migration.

Notes

1. The variety of these reasons, which have been identified in different disciplinary fields, from social psychology to sociology and anthropology, and lately political science, cannot be summarised here. For a sociological account, you can read Bello (2017a).
2. For a discussion of the connections with the literature on the externalization of migration controls, please refer to Seeberg and Zardo's contribution in this special issue (2022).
3. For different interpretations, please consult Risse-Kappen.

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