THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SECURITISATION OF MIGRATION AND MOBILITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Ronald Byaruhanga[i]
School of Global Studies,
University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg
Konstepidemins väg 2,
41314, Gothenburg,
Sweden

Abstract:

This article examines transformations in migration and security, arising from COVID-19 prevention measures. It utilises the Copenhagen school to theorise and illuminate the changes in the securitisation of migration and mobility in the United States. The focus on the United States was based on the fact that the country has, on top of being the world's most securitised, been the most severely affected by the pandemic, considering numerical statistics of infected and affected persons, deaths, and socio-economic impact. In doing so, the paper utilised relevant information sourced from online publications such as newspaper articles and other relevant institutional websites of the key agencies in the fight of the COVID-19 pandemic, chiefly the World Health Organisation, Centre for Disease Control, and the United States federal and state governments and academic journal articles. The main argument of the paper is that the COVID-19 pandemic will produce similar effects on migration and security as the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. The lessons gleaned from the current pandemic will most likely be a significant factor in shaping future politics and policies on the securitisation of migration and human mobility. The pandemic's portrayal as a security threat to human health has resulted in significant changes like travel embargoes, suspension of issuance of specific visa categories, and internal mobility controls, and now many countries are demanding for negative test results before allowing in any foreign arrivals into their territories. The paper concludes that the pandemic has ushered in alternative securitisation measures that would cause a shift in migration and security discourse from human-to-human aggression, notably terrorism, to the contagion of the pathogens like the coronavirus.

Keywords: COVID-19; Coronavirus; travel restrictions; migration and security; securitisation; mobility; Copenhagen School

---

[i] Correspondence: email ronaldbya@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19), which causes acute respiratory disease broke out in China in late 2019 (Dagens et al., 2020). The virus has since spread worldwide and was consequently declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). It has also become one of the world's severest pandemics in history, in terms of geographical coverage and impact on socio-economic life. As of today (July 06, 2020), 216 countries, areas or territories have been affected, whereby a total of 11,301,850 confirmed cases and approximately 531,806 deaths had been registered (WHO, 2020). The United States of America is, so far, the most severely affected country in the world, in terms of numbers of confirmed cases, with approximately 2,841,906 cases and about 129,576 fatalities (Centre for Disease Control, 2020), and socio-economic retardation signified by a sharp rise in unemployment rates with over 36 million people who had lost their jobs as of May 14 2020 (Smialek, 2020). Human mobility and social contact have been highlighted as the primary conduits through which the virus spreads. The transmission occurs either through direct human contact or touching surfaces contaminated by an infected person (WHO, 2020). Moreover, Centre for Disease Control (2020) reports that one can contract the virus from sick persons at airports, or on airplanes, ships, trains, or buses while travelling. As a result, one of the primary measures adopted by national governments to deter further spread has been the imposition of sanctions on migrations, movements, and social contact (WHO, 2020). Therefore, based on the impact of the virus on the country (US) coupled with its position as the world's most securitised country — especially in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks (Amoore, 2006; de Haas et al., 2019), the article seeks to examine the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on migration and human mobility in the United States.

1.1 Securitisation of migration

The last two decades have experienced increased securitisation of migration (Huysmans, 2000; Karyotis, 2012). Practices such as "*law enforcement budgets for border controls, new legislation targeted at unauthorised entries and mobilities, the deployment of sophisticated surveillance and information technology, stricter visa controls and the augmented role of military personnel, methods and hardware*" (Andreas, 2003, p. 79) have been on the rise, in a view to enhance the capacity of different actors in controlling and regulating of the flow of people – most especially cross-border movements (Amoore, 2006; Walters, 2006). Such actions have been more profound in developed economies like the United States and the European Union (Andreas, 2003). However, although securitisation of migration pre-dates the September 11, 2001 (9/11) terror attacks that brought down the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre—killing thousands of civilians (Collyer, 2005), several commentators opine that the tragedy was a significant stimulant for the increased regulation of immigrants (Amoore, 2006; Andreas, 2003; Karyotis, 2012). These terror attacks redefined "*the significance of migration as a security issue*" (Faist, 2002, cf. Collyer 2006, p. 257). As part of the securitisation strategies, there has been an increase in innovations, such as usage of biometrics in border controls in recent times (Amoore,

2006). The anxiety regarding terrorism has exacerbated securitisation of not only spaces/places of transit such as airports, and other border spaces (Ullah et al., 2020), but also people from countries deemed 'risky' by the security actors. Other securitising actors claim that migration poses a threat to the economic stability of the host country (Boswell, 2007; Huysmans, 2000; Karyotis, 2012; Thompson, 2016) to legitimise securitising moves.

Nevertheless, following the outbreak of a deadly (coronavirus), security priorities in many countries have changed from such aspects as the war on terror to the COVID-19 pandemic. In so doing, "… *the espionage systems [earlier] used to trace terrorists are now being deployed by the governments to combat COVID-19*" (Talha, 2020, p. 1). Hence, this article moves away from common claims, such as national security, previously used in the securitisation of migration to depicting the COVID-19 global pandemic as the new threat motivating the present-day securitisation of migration and human mobility. The article utilised the security studies' perspective. Ontologically, the article used a critical perspective that hinges on a social construction approach of security (Huysmans & Huysmans, 2006) as opposed to the traditionalist ontology that conceptualises security as "*a value to be achieved*" (Huysmans & Squire, 2009, p. 3). Although migration and human mobility are different concepts that are usually applied distinctively, the twin concepts are conjointly used in this article since the COVID-19 prevention confinement measures stretched beyond migration to affect general human mobility. The measures included among others, closing of border points including international airports (migration), as well as the restriction of internal movements through the limiting of transport options, the institution of curfew hours (mobility), and operationalisation of standard operating procedures like wearing masks whenever one is in public spaces.

1.2 Copenhagen school

The Copenhagen school of securitisation is associated with the work of Barry Buzan, and his book titled: *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations.* The school is rooted in non-military aspects of security and embraces a critical approach to security. It calls for an expansion in our understanding of security from the narrow view of traditional security studies that emphasise war and violence (Thompson, 2016) to a social constructivist approach. The school argues that security threats emerge out of intersubjective processes (Buzan et al.,1998). In this sense, securitisation is a process in which securitising actors frame issues/subjects as potential threats to a referent object (Buzan, Wæver, & Wilde, 1998, p. 31). Regular domestic issues usually become subject of securitisation through speech acts (Wæver, 2015)—where the securitising actor (usually politicians) present an issue as an existential threat via an oral speech and/or issuance of an official statement. It is through this process that the 'securitising actor', declares the object as an 'existential threat' that calls for an emergency and urgent response (ibid). In other words, the securitisation process begins with a verbal statement or a reference to a specific object as a potential threat. Subsequently, the potential is specified as a real threat that requires immediate countermeasures, and finally the successful cultivation of fear and/or acceptance by the audience, in both the existence of the threat and the need to respond (Léonard 2010, p. 235).

Nonetheless, declaration of an issue as an existential threat is not enough for an object to be securitised (Buzan et al., 1998), but rather the securitising move needs to appease the targeted audience (usually the public) for them to accept it as a potential threat (ibid). Hence, security is "*a self-referential practice because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such*" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 24). Hence, for securitisation to be successful, it requires the presence of three components, namely, "*existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules*" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26). A fully-fledged securitisation toolbox, therefore, contains the securitising actor, "*a referent object, and acceptance of the object as an existential threat by the audience*" (Wæver, 1998 cited in Themistocleous, 2013, p. 2).

In light of the Copenhagen school, "*[t]he global response to COVID-19 contains all the critical elements of securitisation: referent object(s), threat, audiences, securitising acts and actors, and emergency measures*" (Sears, 2020, p. 1). Therefore, this paper sought to discuss how the COVID-19 global pandemic has impacted on the securitisation of migration in the United States by employing the Copenhagen school as a theoretical lens. As earlier noted, cross border movements of people are one of the most critical issues that have dominated securitisation discourse (Huysmans & Squire, 2009) for a long time. Even though the article has its roots in international migration, to a small extent, it mirrors internal movements (within the United States). The first section of the paper is dedicated to the application of the Copenhagen school to understanding the interplay between COVID-19 prevention measures and securitisation of migration, while the second section examines how COVID-19 prevention actions have impacted on migration/human mobility.

2. Methods

This review article is based on secondary data. The data was collected and collated using online sources, including academic journals, official websites of different organisations and online news outlets. The author developed an inclusion criterion; whereby, only documents or websites that were deemed relevant for the current study were visited or reviewed. The criterion was purposively informed by the author's prior knowledge and engagements with the subject. Here, the author utilised sources that were specific to COVID-19, using keys words such as COVID-19, Coronavirus, travel restrictions, migration, security, securitisation, and mobility. The author placed the focus on information published between January and June 2020 – the period when COVID-19 was at its peak in the United States and across the world. Newspapers were deemed relevant because they were the most readily available sources. The study also gleaned official information from agencies in the fight of the COVID-19 pandemic, chiefly the World Health Organisation (WHO), Centre for Disease Control (CDC) and the United States federal and state governments' websites. This was because these institutions are visibly playing a leading role in informing COVID-19 related decisions in the move to combat the virus in the United States and worldwide. Additional published academic materials

were accessed via google scholar. The literature on the COVID-19 pandemic was reviewed considering the literature on securitisation theories and discourse, chiefly the Copenhagen school of securitisation.

2.1 Limitations

One major limitation about relying on the newspapers – moreover, in the United States, where 'fake news' is rampant – is that the information may carry low credibility. The data garnered from newspapers was, hence, corroborated by the information from the trusted sources of information such Centre for Disease Control and World Health Organisation (Statista., 2020) to affirm its authenticity. According to Statista (2020), newspapers like the New York Times ranks among the most trusted sources for COVID-19 information.

3. Migration and Security

Today's increased globalisation has resulted in the upsurge of tremendous global interconnectedness where "*societies and countries have become increasingly embedded in global social, economic and political exchanges and networks such as transport and communication*" (Triandafyllidou, 2016, p.1). People migrate for various reasons, including such as economic (economic migrants), fleeing from persecution or wars/conflicts (refugees or asylum seekers), studies, military missions, and research, among others (de Haas et al., 2019; Sheller & Urry, 2016). North America and the European Union are the two world's most prominent destinations for global immigrants (Andreas, 2003). The two continents harbour 16 per cent and 11 per cent of the total population of the global international migrants, respectively (*World Migration Report, 2020*). Nonetheless, contemporary immigration has been depicted as a security threat, with a claim that it produces adverse effects on political and socio-economic stability (Huysmans & Squire, 2009; Karyotis, 2012; Themistocleous, 2013). Hence, migration, which was formerly a concern of socio-economic, historical sociology and anthropology, has today dominated the discourse on security (ibid), and political studies, especially in Europe and North America (Squire, 2009). In other words, migration has become a phenomenon of security concern both in political spheres and academia (Huysmans and Squire, 2009). Continuous framing of migration as a security concern has resulted in its construction as a 'threat' (Huysmans & Huysmans, 2006). "*The geopolitical dislocation associated with the end of the Cold War and by broader social and political shifts associated with globalisation is the critical attribute commonly associated with the framing of migration as a security threat*" (Huysmans & Squire, 2009, p. 15).

Hence, the primary motive for portraying it as a threat is to legitimise the moves targeting increased control and surveillance of cross-border human movements (Huysmans, 2000) under the pretext that sovereign states are "obliged" to protect the citizens from external threats (Bigo, 2002). Securitisation of migration is often associated with socio-economic factors such as unemployment caused by unfair competition against domestic labour force, given that immigrants offer a cheap workforce alternative (Themistocleous, 2013); alongside causing societal challenges (Huysmans & Squire,

2009). Threats are usually constructed through speech acts (Wæver, 2015)—which makes the securitisation process not only a contested subject but also highly intersubjective (Buzan et al., 1998). According to Léonard, (2010), the portrayal of immigrants as a security threat by politicians allows them to accord it a political priority and legitimise application of extraordinary policing, legal and policy measures to regulate it. Thus, the portrayal of immigrants as threats allows security actors to apply measures used to respond to risks (Humphrey, 2013).

3.1 Before the September, 11 terror attacks

For many years, migration has been linked to security (Faist, 2002). Before the 20th century, securitisation of migration was predominantly associated with the protection of culture, whereby foreigners and immigrants were historically perceived as a threat to cultural identity (ibid). Citing examples, from anti-Chinese legislation in North America and Australia in the nineteenth century, Faist noted that anti-immigration policies do not emerge "*as a result of material threats but also as fears about the cultural fabric of societies*" (Faist, 2002, p. 11). Kicinger (2004) links the immigration and (in)security nexus to the threat immigrants pose to the welfare system of the host country, social security, cultural heritage, and demographic stability. The immigrants become a responsibility of the host country and create increased pressure on welfare systems as soon they are formally registered in the country (Karyotis, 2007). There are claims that the influx of migrants not only culminates in increased unemployment, slowing down of economic growth but also increased housing costs and other goods. In the same vein, Huysmans (2000a) believes immigrants were usually portrayed as aliens with no entitlement on the welfare state's services meant for nationals (welfare chauvinism). Karyotis states that immigration is associated with the likelihood of increased rates of crimes such as drug trafficking and other organised crime which portrays them as a threat to the public order in the host communities. Migrants are also perceived as a source of political threats to the government of the host state (ibid). He argues that their political ties back home could have significant consequences on both the receiving and the sending countries (Weiner, 1992).

3.2 Post-September, 11 terror attacks

The terrorist attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre escalated the framing of migration as detrimental to the national security, and pushed it higher on the security agenda of many countries, especially in the western world (Humphrey, 2013). Faist (2002) states that the 9/11 events amplified the linking of international migration to the threatening of national security. The attacks led to the intensification of border scrutiny and surveillance and control of alien immigrants in many western countries (ibid).

At national borders, immigration services no longer merely scrutinise the validity of documents and grant permission to enter but provide "*border protection' by assessing the risk of passengers as potential criminals, terrorists [...] based on their documents, security profiling, biometrics and matrix of databanks*" (Humphrey, 2013, p. 179).

Inventions and innovation, such as usage of biometrics in border control, have increased since these terror attacks (Amoore, 2006). The security arm of different states has since expanded and stretched beyond national concern to incorporate the protection of all nationals, using sophisticated technologies and sophisticated surveillance (Humphrey, 2013). Thus, both *"internal and external control of immigrants has increased"* (Faist 2002, p. 12). Collyer (2006) attributes the current fret regarding the securitisation of immigrants to the fact that the 9/11 terror attacks were blamed on the sloppiness in the security and intelligence organs to detect such kind of attacks in beforehand. This has had a significant impact on the contemporary techniques used in securitising and controlling migrants, most especially undocumented migrants. These techniques range from practices such as *"the reinforcement of the US–Mexico border fence, to the establishment of European Union 'extra-territorial processing centres' in North Africa"* (Collyer, 2006, p. 257).

The above discussion demonstrates that previous scholarly work on migration and security nexus has focused on the association of migration and socio-economic, political, national security and cultural instability. Until to date, scholarly and political debates on the subject have emphasised the immigration and terrorism nexus as the main factor behind intensified securitisation of immigration, especially in the western countries. However, the present work focuses on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nexus of migration and security. Many states have mainly used as the pandemic as a pretext to restrict migration from and to different countries and territories—which is a new phenomenon in the migration and security discourse. The main argument here is that COVID-19 is likely to have the same impact on global migration as the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

3.3 During COVID-19 times

"The global response to COVID-19 contains all the critical elements of securitisation: referent object(s), threat, audiences, securitising acts and actors, and emergency measures" (Sears, 2020, p. 1). However, in these times of COVID-19, the referent objects behind securitisation of migration have changed from the commonly known—such safeguarding the economy, cultural and national security. The need to protect people's lives and normal functioning of societies from the threat of COVID-19 pandemic has been highly used in the securitisation in the past ten months (Nunes, 2020). There has been securitisation of social contact and human mobility embedded in the adoption of non-pharmaceutical-confinement measures such as social distancing in many countries (ibid). According to Nunes, such emergency declarations have culminated in the use of extraordinary power, including the use of military services in some countries. Nonetheless, the measures have been largely accepted and adhered to by the public (ibid). Hence, just like 9/11 terrorist attacks resulted in the intensification of control and regulation of international migration (Andreas, 2003), the COVID-19 has resulted in increased control of human mobility as it has been equally portrayed as a threat to public health and other societal aspects (Nunes, 2020). The spread of the virus has been primarily linked to the increased mobility, both in the United States and many other countries; where many governments *"are*

implementing travel restrictions and mandatory quarantines, closing borders, and prohibiting non-citizens" (CDC 2020, top page).

4. Securitisation and COVID-19 in the United States

The COVID-19 pandemic has been conspicuously linked with increased securitisation of migration in the United States. Migration has been labelled an existential threat to public health and economic stability (Nunes, 2020). As Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1998) contend, an object needs to be declared as an existential threat to be elevated from ordinary politics. In a bid to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in the country, the Federal and State governments in the United States have imposed travel sanctions on visits to and from countries considered risky (with high numbers of COVID-19 infected persons); the restrictions also have included internal controls on mobility (within the United States). This was, in addition, to a temporary suspension of the issuance of Green Cards. Hence, the novel coronavirus "*epitomises the act of securitisation as it contains referent actor, threat, securitising actor, and emergency measures*" (Talha 2020, p. 1). According to Talha, "*[t]he specific rhetorical structure employed against the [pandemic] has elevated it to the level of existential risk and raised the issue from 'normal politics' to 'panic politics.'*" (p. 1). It can thus be observed that COVID-19 is a huge mediating factor that has vastly contributed to increased securitisation of migration since its outbreak.

Moreover, the securitisation of migration amid COVID-19 crisis took place through utterances. President Trump used executive orders and/or press conferences to declare 'radical' prevention measures such as travel restrictions. In other words, the COVID-19 induced securitisation was enacted through speech acts. The main securitising actors have been the US President and State governors. The President has mainly acted on the securitisation of international migration, whereas the state governors have been mostly involved in implementing social distancing, stay home orders and other aspects *regarding* internal mobility. The primary role of these actors—as visualised through their public statements, declarations, and directives—has been to identify the objects perceived as threats, and to persuade the public to accept their narrative (Buzan et al.,1998). In this case, migration and human mobility have been portrayed as critical existential threats to human health and economic stability—due to their contribution to the spreading of the virus and the culminating impact on the economy. The confinement prevention measures, including lockdowns, curfews, closure of borders, social distancing have resulted in devastating effects for the US economy (Baldwin et al., 2020). For example, according to President Trump, limiting migration amidst the COVID-19 crisis is aimed at safeguarding jobs for the millions of United States citizens and permanent residents that have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Smialek, 2020).

4.1 Cross border movements
The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the tightening of migration restrictions; a measure adopted to combat the importation of COVID-19 cases into the United States. Despite already having the strictest migration policies in the world (De Haas et al., 2019),

the United States further declared temporally embargoes on international migration during COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, in March 2020, President Trump imposed a travel ban on (16) sixteen European countries which included Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland (CDC, 2020). The ban was intended to slow-down the spread of COVID-19 in the United States since Europe was the most affected continent after China—by then. In such a scenario, a Copenhagen school thinker would posit that migration from the named countries had been declared an existential threat to the health of the Americans (Buzan et al., 1998). Imperative to note is that the European travel restrictions were limited to the countries that subscribe to the Schengen visa-free border establishment[ii] (BBC, 2020), which is indicative of the fact that the Trump administration regarded free and unlimited cross-border movements as a high risk for the transmission of COVID-19. This is not surprising as some securitising actors have associated migration with "*potential for the spread of diseases among the local populations*" (Themistocleous, 2013, p. 6) in their securitising moves. Moreover, the ban on the sixteen European countries was a result of subjective reasons that eschewed objective logic to prove that the Schengen visa-free establishment was linked to increased spread of COVID-19. Hence, as Bigo (2002) states, securitisation of immigration...

> "*emerges from the correlation between some successful speech acts of political leaders, the mobilisation they create for and against some groups of people. It also comes from a range of administrative practices such as population profiling, risk assessment, statistical calculation, category creation, proactive preparation, and what may be termed a specific habitus of the 'security professional' with its ethos of secrecy and concern for the management of fear or unease.*"(pp.65-66).

The restrictions were announced through presidential proclamations [2]; hence confirming the assertion that securitisation of issues is a product of speech acts (Wæver 1988 in Buzan et al., 1998). The use of press addresses by President Trump affirms Léonard's (2010), assertion that securitisation is spoken into existence—whereby "*a securitising actor presents an issue as an existential threat to the survival of a 'referent object' […] and is accepted as such by the 'audience' of the speech act*" (p.235).

The mode of action employed by the securitising actors in the United States fits into the criteria of extraordinary measures, given that the measures adopted were mainly issued through executive orders, presidential pronouncements and/or form of directives—disregarding the democratic political processes. Both the US Federal and State governments were successful in the implementation of their security moves. This was because the public (US citizens) accepted the referent subject (migration and mobility) as an existential threat that "*required emergency measures; hence justifying the*

[ii] The Schengen Agreement is a treaty creating Europe's Schengen Area, which encompasses 26 European countries, where internal border checks have been mainly abolished for short-term tourism, a business trip, or transit to a non-Schengen destination.

actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 25). According to Wæver (1995) cited Léonard's (2010), "*securitising actors move issues out of ordinary politics to assume an exclusive right to apply whatever possible means to block it*" (p. 235). By accepting that increased and/or continued movements were likely to escalate the spread of the virus—a segment of Americans responded by restricting their own movements. This affirmed the notion that presenting a referent object as an existential threat to does not by itself create securitisation, but rather the issue becomes successfully securitised "*only if and when the audience accepts it as such*" (Buzan and Wæver, 1998, p. 26).

In the same vein, President Trump signed an executive order to suspend long-term immigration into the United States temporarily. By this executive order, green card issuance was temporarily halted in order to protect and secure jobs for American citizens (Serwer, 2020).

Historically, wage differentiation has been one of the primary causes of international migration—especially South to North migration (Mahendru et al., 2019). As a result, economic migration from low wage economies to high wage ones has been depicted as a threat to the economic stability of the host countries—in that immigrants not only cause a rise in unemployment levels but are also willing usually to accept low wages (Themistocleous, 2013). These two circumstances pose a risk of lowering general living standards in the host countries. One can, therefore, claim aside from being a threat, the pandemic has exacerbated the previous threats.

4.2 Internal mobility

Different State governments in the United States instituted substantial restrictions on internal movements and social contact in a bid to deter the further spread of COVID-19. In the process, schools, restaurants, bars, sports arenas, and shopping malls have all been shut down, alongside the declaration of curfew hours. Residents in those states were either beseeched or advised to stay in their homes. In the quest to ensure adherence to these restrictions, several states in the US—including New York, Maryland, Colorado and West Virginia called upon their National Guard to ensure effective implementation of these sanctions on movements and social contacts (Cancian, 2020). This is affirming Buzan's and Wæver's observation that once an issue has been successfully securitised and accepted by the audience as an existential threat, the securitising actor (usually with the political agency), gains the power to override the 'legal' procedures by applying extraordinary measures (Buzan and Wæver 1998, p. 24). There have been, nonetheless, uproars in various states against the lockdown where the masses were demanding the government to reopen the society for everyday business. These protests have occurred in the States of Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Washington (Gabbatt, 2020). Such protests, and the use of the military to suppress them confirm the assertion by Buzan and Wæver (1998) that accepting the issue an existential threat *"[d]oes not necessarily mean in civilised, dominance-free discussion; it only means that order always rests on coercion as well as on consent*" (p.25).

4.3 Bordering practices

Another important phenomenon that emerged among COVID-19 control measures revolved around alterations in bordering and border practices. Borders are essential elements in the securitisation of human mobility (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Indeed, the COVID-19 measures that have been predominantly implemented through restrictions on movements/migration and mobility have caused significant transformations in bordering practices. For example, although typical securitisation of "*borders have long been dedicated to the sorting, dividing, and separating of mobilities*" (Walters 2006, p. 198), COVID-19 related securitisation involved total shutdown of borders—whereby all the people from particular geographical localities were declared risky immigrants without applying any sorting procedures. A case in point was the barring of all the Chinese and the European travellers from entering the United States (BBC, 2020). The latter actions correspond with the view held by Bosworth and Guild (2008) that the right to mobility may be granted based on citizenship status since the ban only applied to foreign nationals and returning citizens were allowed in. Other critical transformations concerning border practices included the shifting of borderlines to people's courtyards or doorsteps. This is where people from certain localities were requested or in some instances, forced to stay home and avoid any unnecessary movements (Cancian, 2020). Thus, affirming the notion that 'bordering' and de-bordering are not limited to the lines on the territorial boundaries but can also be "*performative of particular socio-economic and political realities and subject-positions*" (Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 729). It can, therefore, be argued that as, Salazar (2011) postulates, borders "*do not exist naturally but are (re)produced through practices such as media coverage, public discourses*" (p.582) and are "*dynamic, social procedures of spatial and social differentiation*" (Brambilla, 2015, p. 15).

5. Conclusions

The paper examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the securitisation of migration, and how the Copenhagen School's securitisation theory could be used as a tool illuminate this nexus. The overarching insight brought up in the current article is that the Copenhagen School plays a notably useful role in shaping our understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with increased intensity in control and regulation of human mobility. The school helps us to draw lines between different power centres at the helm of securitisation, define the security' threats', and the actions taken in securitising them. By applying the school, we see that migration and human mobility have been declared critical existential threats during the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide and more so in the United States. The United States President's declaration of immigration from particular parts of the world (especially China and Europe) as a threat to the public health and the economic stability of the United States and restricted their access to the US territory. Additionally, the US federal government and various States successfully imposed limitations to human movements through instituting lockdowns and restrictions on inter and intra-national border movements. Moreover, these actions

could be perceived as extraordinary measures as the President, and the governors overrode the normal democratic processes (Buzan and Wæver, 1998).

Interestingly, unlike other conventional studies in the migration and security arena that often approach the migration and security nexus from the immigration point of view, this article shows that securitisation of migration induced by COVID-19 pandemic in the United States involved temporary restriction on nationals from travelling (emigrating) outside the country as a measure to prevent any possible importation of coronavirus cases into the country or endangering themselves. The implication of this is that emigrants could also pose a threat to the state or endanger their own lives. Hence, the lingering question is whether the "immigrants as a threat" assertion attached to immigration could also apply to emigration. Worth noting also is that security measures around migration put in place were temporal and could, in principle, last until a specified period or until the pandemic obliterates. Hence, one may wonder whether all the measures will be relaxed or permanentised as new policy changes in caution of future reoccurrence of similar pandemics. Such measures may include the state power to declare curfews, lockdowns, closure of inter and intranational borders through bypassing of the ordinary political procedures.

The study observes that the focus of securitisation of migration and human mobility has, in general, changed from human-to-human aggression, notably terrorism, to the contagion of the pathogenic coronavirus in the past ten months. The portrayal of the coronavirus as a security threat, coupled with public acceptance of the same has provided avenues for disregarding democratic processes, thereby resulting in emergency measures like travel embargoes and internal mobility controls. The study concludes that it is possible that, just like the 9/11 attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic will become a longer-term aspect upon which future securitisation of migration and mobility will be constructed. We are already seeing many countries putting the mandatory requirement for all foreign arrivals to present COVID-19 test results or take an obligatory test at the border checkpoint to be allowed into the country.

Conflict of Interest
The author reported no potential conflicts of interest regarding this research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

About the Author
Email address: ronaldbya@gmail.com
LinkedIn profile: linkedin.com/in/ronald-byaruhanga-b53516120

Research gate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ronald_Byaruhanga2
Academia.edu: https://independent.academia.edu/ronaldb4
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7100-0409

References

Baldwin, R., Weder, B., & Mauro, D. (2020). *Economics in the Time of COVID-19*. www.cepr.org.

BBC. (2020). *Coronavirus: Trump suspends travel from Europe to US - BBC News*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-51846923

Bigo, D. (2002). Security and immigration: Toward a critique of the governmentality of unease. In *Alternatives* (Vol. 27, Issue SUPPL. 1, pp. 63–92). Lynne Rienner Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1177/03043754020270s105.

Bosworth, M., & Guild, M. (2008). Governing through migration control: Security and citizenship in Britain. In *British Journal of Criminology* (Vol. 48, Issue 6, pp. 703–719). Oxford Academic. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azn059.

Brambilla, C. (2015). Exploring the critical potential of the borderscapes concept. *Geopolitics*, *20*(1), 14–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2014.884561.

Buzan, B., Wæver, O., Wæver, O., & Wilde, J. De. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*.

Cancian, M. (2020). *Use of Military Forces in the COVID-19 Emergency | Center for Strategic and International Studies*. https://www.csis.org/analysis/use-military-forces-covid-19-emergency. Accessed 20 July 2020.

de Haas, H., Czaika, M., Flahaux, M. L., Mahendra, E., Natter, K., Vezzoli, S., & Villares-Varela, M. (2019). International Migration: Trends, Determinants, and Policy Effects. In *Population and Development Review* (Vol. 45, Issue 4, pp. 885–922). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12291.

Faist, T. (2002). "Extension du domaine de la lutte": International migration and security before and after September 11, 2001. *International Migration Review*, *36*(1), 7–14. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2002.tb00065.

Gabbatt, A. (2020). *US anti-lockdown rallies could cause surge in Covid-19 cases, experts warn*. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/20/us-protests-lockdown-coronavirus-cases-surge-warning. Accessed 15 June 2020.

Humphrey, M. (2013). Migration, Security and Insecurity. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *34*(2), 178–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2013.781982.

Huysmans, J. (2000). The European Union and the Securitization of Migration. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *38*.

Huysmans, J., & Huysmans, J. (2006). *The Politics of Insecurity*. Taylor & Francis Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203008690-15.

Huysmans, J., & Squire, V. (2009). *Migration and Security*.

Karyotis, G. (2012). Securitization of Migration in Greece: Process, Motives, and Implications. *International Political Sociology*, *6*(4), 390–408. https://doi.org/10.1111/ips.12002.

Kicinger, A. (2004). International Migration as A Non-Traditional Security Threat And The Eu Responses To This Phenomenon Central European Forum for Migration Research (CEFMR) is a research partnership of the Foundation for Population, *Migration and Environment, Institute of* . www.cefmr.pan.pl.

Léonard, S. (2010). EU border security and migration into the European Union: FRONTEX and securitisation through practices. *European Security*, *19*(2), 231–254. https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2010.526937.

Mahendru, V., Sachdeva, G., & Neha. (2019). Migration and Refugee Issues. In *Challenges in Europe* (pp. 253–270). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1636-4_13.

Nunes, J. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic: Securitization, neoliberal crisis, and global vulnerabilization. *Cadernos de Saude Publica*, *36*(5), 63120. https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-311X00063120.

Parker, N., & Vaughan-Williams, N. (2012). Critical border studies: Broadening and deepening the "Lines in the Sand" Agenda. In *Geopolitics* (Vol. 17, Issue 4, pp. 727–733). Taylor & Francis Group . https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2012.706111.

Salazar, N. B. (2011). The Power of Imagination in Transnational Mobilities. *Identities*, *18*(6), 576–598. https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2011.672859.

Sears, N. (2020). *The Securitization of COVID-19: Three Political Dilemmas*.

Serwer, A. (2020). *Trump's Immigration 'Ban' Has Nothing to Do With Jobs - The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/trump-order-immigration/610822/. Accessed 20 June 2020.

Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2016). *Mobilizing the New Mobilities Paradigm.'Applied Mobilities 1 (1): 10-25*.

Squire, V. (2009). The Exclusionary Politics of Asylum. In *The Exclusionary Politics of Asylum*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230233614.

Statista. (2020). *Most trusted coronavirus news sources in the U.S. 2020 | Statista*. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1104557/coronavirus-trusted-news-sources-by-us/. Accessed 15 August 2020.

Themistocleous, A. (2013). *Securitizing Migration: Aspects and Critiques*. http://www20.gencat.cat/docs/icip/Continguts/Publi.

Triandafyllidou, A. (2016). Irregular Migration in Europe. In *Irregular Migration in Europe* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315589848.

Wæver, O. (2015). The theory act: Responsibility and exactitude as seen from securitization. *International Relations*, *29*(1), 121–127. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117814526606d.

Weiner, M. (1992). Security, Stability, and International Migration. *International Security*, *17*(3), 91. https://doi.org/10.2307/2539131.

World Migration Report 2020 - | IOM Online Bookstore. (n.d.). Retrieved September 10, 2020, from https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020.