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Others as Security Threats: Securitizing Discourses, Social Magic, and the Bureaucratic Field

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ABSTRACT

For over 20 years, there has been an ongoing debate about what is primary in the process of securitization—discourses or practices. Traditional research on securitization tends to analyze discourses and practices separately, which can be seen even in studies that attempt to combine these two approaches. In this context, the concept “discourses” refers to a wide range of public political statements, while the concept “practices” mainly refers to the strategies of security professionals. I argue that, in order to gain a better understanding of securitization processes, the research focus should be narrowed to first-order securitizing performatives and the related securitizing practices. This approach will highlight political statements that can genuinely alter social reality, bridge the gap between discourses and practices, facilitate the analysis of institutional mechanisms of securitization, and help obtain much new relevant empirical material. The potential benefits of the proposed approach are illustrated through the analysis of two cases: the Italian case and the Russian case. For the Italian case, the analysis includes declarations of states of emergency related to the exacerbation of the “nomad issue.” For the Russian case, it examines legal acts stipulating the official recognition of migrants as prone to terrorism.

KEYWORDS

securitization, Pierre Bourdieu, symbolic power, performative speech acts, securitizing practices

In the theory of securitization, two basic approaches are distinguished: the Copenhagen¹ and the Paris² approaches. Despite the assertion of Didier Bigo and Emma McCluskey that this division is rather conditional, greatly exaggerated, and tending toward essentialism (Bigo & McCluskey, 2018), it is evident that there is a certain tension between the adherents of these two schools, which is reflected in the works of the originators of these orientations³ and in the publications of young scholars⁴. The principal question in this discussion, which has been going on for more than 20 years, refers to which comes first in the process of securitization: discourses or practices? In the past, attempts have been made to reconcile the two orientations (for example, Bourbeau, 2014; Trombetta, 2014), although in empirical research the border between discourses and practices remains insurmountable⁵. The snag probably lies partly in the fact that discourses are usually understood as the public statements of political actors reflected in the media, social networks, policy statements, etc., while practices almost always refer to the routine activities of “security professionals.” As a result of these established traditions in the empirical research of securitization, there are few points of contact between discourses and practices. They “belong” to different actors, are implemented in different social fields, and follow different logics, which Bourbeau (2014) aptly characterizes as “the logic of exception” and “the logic of routine.”

However, this is just a part of the problem. Another bottleneck is associated with the understanding of the performative, the theoretical construct underlying the concept of securitization developed by the Copenhagen School. According to Ole Wæver (1995), securitization itself is a performative speech act, which, in fact, explains the priority of discourses over practices.

Disputes Over Performativity

Wæver’s focus on the performativity of securitizing speech acts has been repeatedly criticized. In particular, Thierry Balzacq, Holger Stritzel, and Matt McDonald have argued that performativity conflicts with the intersubjective nature of securitizing discourse also postulated by the Copenhagen School. To eliminate this contradiction, it has been proposed to abandon one of the postulates or at least to give preference to one or the other. Moreover, according to these authors, insistence on the performativity of a securitizing speech act obscures the importance of the influence of the historical and social context in which securitization unfolds (Balzacq, 2005; McDonald, 2008; Stritzel, 2007). While such criticism is fair to some extent, these difficulties seem to

¹ The best-known representatives of the Copenhagen School are Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver.

² The leading researcher of the Paris School is Didier Bigo. The Aberystwyth School is usually mentioned as well, but the main controversy is between the two approaches above.

³ In particular, Bigo (2002) writes that “authors like Buzan have little sense of the routines, the day-to-day practices, of the bureaucracies that are necessary to understand how discourses work in practice” (p. 73).

⁴ For example, Bourbeau (2014) notes ironically: “many graduate students cut their theoretical teeth on these debates” (p. 187).

⁵ Even in those works where an attempt is made to combine the analysis of discourses and practices (for example, Dimari, 2020; Karyotis, 2012).

arise not from the emphasis on the performativity of securitizing discourse, but from the specific interpretation of the performative that dominates in these debates.

Wæver himself has repeatedly pointed out that he relied on John Austin's theory of speech acts in developing the concept of securitization. It is from Austin's work (1962) that Wæver borrowed his examples of performative speech acts (naming a ship, apologizing, wedding ceremony) and the idea of "conditions of felicity" that must be met in order for a securitizing performative to be successful. On the other hand, Stritzel, in his criticism of the approach advocated by the Copenhagen School, argues that in addition to Austin, Wæver was influenced by the later concepts of Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler (Stritzel, 2007, p. 361). This perspective enables Stritzel to argue that the Copenhagen School overlooks the social context of securitization and focuses excessively on the semantic aspects of a speech act. Thus, the discussion occurs within the postmodern and poststructural linguistic paradigm, where, to paraphrase Derrida's famous expression, it is improper to look for anything beyond the text.

However, the theory of performativity is not limited to the works of Austin, Derrida, and Butler. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the symbolic power of language resolved the issue of the performative's rootedness in social power relations long before Stritzel addressed it (Stritzel, 2007, p. 361). Bourdieu also explained the "magical effectiveness" of performative utterances, countering Balzacq's reservations (Balzacq, 2005, p. 177). Bourdieu's approach helps resolve most of the contradictions pointed out by critics of the Copenhagen School, without abandoning the concept of the performative that underlies their approach.

The Performative in Bourdieu's Interpretation

Analyzing the concept of the performative, Bourdieu rightly notes that "Austin's account of performative utterances cannot be restricted to the sphere of linguistics ... [I]locutionary acts ... are acts of an institution that cannot be sanctioned unless they have, in some way, the whole social order behind them" (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 73–74). As a result, it makes no sense "to search ... in language for something that is actually inscribed in the social relations" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 38).

Pointing out the falseness of the illusion of "linguistic communism" haunting linguistic theory, Bourdieu emphasizes that language is socially heterogeneous. This is especially noticeable in the case of performative utterances, which always signify a pretension to transform the world with the help of words, i.e., using social magic. Such pretension only to a small extent depends on the grammatical correctness of the statement itself, and its insanity or rationality is mainly determined by the extent to which it is based on an objective (historically settled) social reality. A vivid illustration of this is a legal act that exerts its magical effect only when it is performed by a subject who has the right to do so, i.e., acting on behalf of a whole social group, which allows him to substitute action with speech.

The power of words, therefore, does not derive from the grammatical structure of language, but is based on the possession of a symbolic capital, that is, on the recognition, constituted or not, which agents receive from the group. In this context,

the contradiction between intersubjectivity and performativity is completely overcome, since the former is, in fact, recognized as a precondition of the latter.

Bourdieu also points out that the symbolic capital that performativity feeds on is not evenly distributed in society. Symbolic power is concentrated in the field of politics in the hands of a relatively small group of professionals with exclusive access to the tools of political production. Although non-professionals have some influence on the functioning of the political field, intraprofessional competition for the preservation or transformation of the social world by preserving or transforming the principles of its legitimate vision has a much greater impact on the development of the political process. At the same time, professionals do not act arbitrarily, being in turn limited by the current state of the political game, which is a product of the entire prior history of the political field.

Bourdieu's indication of the decisive importance, both in the field of politics and in society as a whole, of the historically embedded social structures and rules of the game, which limit the strategies of the actors who create performatives, resolves the problem of the dichotomy between performativity and socio-historical context, which in this interpretation turns out to be false. At the same time, Bourdieu's key thesis of the symbolic power underlying the creation of performatives highlights the fundamental connection between legitimate language and strategies aimed at the transformation of the social world.

The Paris School and Bourdieu's Theory

Despite its reliance on Bourdieu's concepts of social fields and habitus, the Paris School has largely ignored his understanding of the performative. Believing that Bourdieu exaggerated the significance of the political field as the "field of fields" (Balzacq et al., 2010, p. 3), adherents of the practice-oriented approach overlook one of Bourdieu's fundamental concepts, that is symbolic power. They argue that security professionals and their day-to-day practices play a central role in securitization processes, viewing the speech acts of political professionals as largely decorative and secondary to what is "actually" happening in the field of security. This perspective may hold some truth if we consider the established tradition of studying securitizing discourses, where a wide variety of political statements in the media are analyzed, many of which do not have a significant impact and are not performatives in the full sense of the word. However, this does not mean that national political professionals have lost their symbolic power or that they have fallen under the influence of transnational security professionals who monopolize specialized issues (Bigo, 2008). It simply means that the focus of research, influenced by the established scientific practice of discourse analysis, has shifted from first-order performatives to secondary political statements that, at best, have a weak and indirect impact on social reality.

First-Order Performatives: Legal Acts

Bourdieu (1991) calls the legal act the limiting case of the performative statement (p. 75). When adopted by an authorized person, such an act establishes a new principle of legitimate vision, thereby transforming the social world. It should be remembered

that legal acts are not only laws, but also bylaws encompassing a universe of general, local, departmental, regional, and other regulations that create hundreds of thousands of new institutional rules of the game, legalized meanings, visions, and links. These are truly magical speech acts, possessed by political professionals⁶ and the bureaucratic circle (which includes, but is not limited to, security professionals⁷), and they are of key importance in securitization processes. At the same time, securitizing legal acts are inextricably linked with routine securitization practices, being both a condition for them and a result of them. Being limited by the entire prior history of securitization—a complex of techniques, practices, discourses, and acts that recognize certain events, groups, and phenomena as dangerous—securitizing legal acts (re)create security threats and algorithms for securitizing practices and establish their circle of executors and the rules of interaction among them.

Surprisingly, legal acts usually remain outside the scope of studies of the Copenhagen School representatives, and at the same time, they often come into the focus of the Paris School followers. A good example is the work of Tugba Basaran, who states that the law is a fundamental tool “used to create legal borders and restrict the fundamental rights of particular populations” (Basaran, 2008, p. 340). Tracing the process of forming so-called “border zones,” where the usual norms of a liberal state do not apply, Basaran demonstrates how, by means of legal acts, a new social reality is created that does not correspond to “normal politics.” Relying on her analysis, the author argues that the logic of routine prevails in securitization processes, rather than the logic of exception, and illiberal security practices are in fact embedded in ordinary politics of a liberal state. Without dwelling in detail on this controversial idea⁸, it should be mentioned that the linguistic nature of legal acts remains unnoticed by Basaran, who considers them legal practices. As a result, the boundary between discourse and practices is erased, and the former just turn into a variety of the latter, which makes it impossible to observe how performatives work. This interpretation overlooks the crucial role of performative utterances by actors with significant symbolic capital in securitization processes, which Wæver rightly emphasizes. The processes of producing and reproducing such utterances also remain behind the scenes.

Without claiming any radical rethinking of securitization theory, I propose a shift in perspective regarding performative speech acts. Drawing from Bourdieu's insights, I suggest categorizing legal acts as first-order performatives and positioning them, along with related securitizing practices, in the center of research. This approach, first, will allow the focus to be placed on those speech acts that really have the ability to

⁶ In this case, these are, of course, the politicians who are members of executive and legislative bodies.

⁷ With the exception of those security professionals who are employed by non-state structures.

⁸ A decision about what to consider as an exception or routine depends largely on the author's perspective. On the one hand, the fact that exceptional border zones are created through the use of customary law can be considered as an argument that there is no radical gap in relation to “normal politics.” On the other hand, the exclusivity of border zone rules clearly indicates that they do not conform to what is perceived as “normal” in liberal states, i.e., they demonstrate a gap in relation to “normal politics.” This use of the law was well defined by Rebecca Sanders and Lisa M. Austin, who called it “plausible legality” and “lawful illegality,” respectively (Austin, 2014; Sanders, 2018).

change social reality⁹. Second, it will solve the problem of the gap between discourses and securitization practices by overcoming the established tradition of separate analysis of them. Third, it will enable the establishment of the main circle of actors implementing securitizing practices and empirical testing of the doubts of the validity of Paris School adherents' assertion of the dominant role of security professionals (for example, Bourbeau, 2014, p. 192; Buzan et al., 1998, pp. 31–32). Fourthly, it will shed light on the institutional mechanisms responsible for implementing securitization.

The thematic study of the two cases presented below, which are declarations of states of emergency due to the presence of nomadic communities in Italy and the official recognition of migrants as terrorist-prone in Russia, aims to illustrate the potential benefits of the proposed approach.

Empirical Basis of Research

The empirical basis of the case study comprises 221 documentary sources. For the Italian case, these are 17 national legal acts, two provincial security pacts, three regulations for managing nomad camps, a description of the “nomad plan” drawn up by the Delegated Commissioner in Lazio Province, two requests to the Ministry of the Interior for the reconstruction of La Barbuta nomad camp, a notification posted on the official website of Ciampino, a press release from the Delegated Commissioner in Lazio Province, a report by the Italian Red Cross, a transcript of a Senate meeting, and two court orders on the illegitimacy of the declaration of a state of emergency.

For the Russian case, the sources include eight federal legal acts including *Kompleksnyi plan protivodeistviia ideologii terrorizma v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [Comprehensive Plans for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism] for 2013–2018 and 2019–2023, 140 regional and municipal legal acts from 55 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, and 42 reporting documents from 20 Russian regions.

Italian Case: “Emergenza Nomadi”

As has been highlighted in many studies, exacerbation of the nomad issue (or “Gypsies,” referring mostly to Roma and Sinti) is an integral part of the broader international migration problem (Colacicchi, 2008; Di Noia, 2016; Sigona, 2005). The most recent major waves of migration of Roma to Italy came in the 1960s (from the former Yugoslavia), the late 1990s (mainly from Kosovo), and the early 2000s (from Romania).

In the 1980s, “nomad camps”¹⁰ inhabited by Roma and Sinti appeared on the outskirts of many major Italian cities. Some settlements existed semi-legally, while others were governed by local administrations. The establishment of the camps was encouraged by Italian legislation aimed at protecting “nomadic culture” and obliging local authorities to erect temporary camps for the “nomadic population.” An

⁹ This proposal, of course, does not preclude the possibility of exploring other political discourses involved in the securitization process. The point is only that first-order performatives should be prioritized.

¹⁰ The first government-sanctioned nomad camps near cities began to appear in the 1970s (Picker, 2015).

unintended consequence of the categorization of Roma and Sinti as nomads was their de facto segregation in Italy (Picker, 2015; Sigona, 2005). The nomad camps themselves, several decades after their construction, began to be seen as one of the main problems of urban security (Picker, 2015, p. 78). The situation escalated in 2007 after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU, which raised concerns in Italy of a possible “invasion of migrants” from these countries, including Roma. Tensions increased amid vigorous media coverage of several crimes allegedly committed by Romanian Roma.

Following the decree of May 21, 2008 issued by Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, a state of emergency “due to the presence of numerous non-registered and nomadic citizens” was declared in the territories of Lombardy, Lazio, and Campania¹¹. It was argued that the settlement of “nomads” in the regions mentioned had caused “serious social anxiety,” could have “severe consequences in terms of public order and the safety of the local population” and required urgent and exceptional measures, since the situation “could not be resolved through the tools offered by customary law” (President of the Council of Ministers, 2008; Trans. by Kseniya Grigor'eva—K. G.). Thus, here we are dealing with a classic securitizing performative where securitizing actors, by emphasizing the priority and urgency of the existential threat (in this case, the perceived threat to the well-being of the local population from nomadic communities), are excused from the usual rules and procedures that would otherwise restrict them.

The initiators of the decision included the Minister of the Interior, who submitted a request to the Council of Ministers a few days earlier asking it to take urgent “measures of an exceptional nature,” as well as the prefect of Milan and the mayor of Milan, who signed a security pact on March 18, 2007, in which, among other things, they pledged to formulate a proposal for the government to declare a state of emergency. Additionally, the preamble to the emergency decree referred to the 2007 pact for a safe Rome signed by the prefect of Rome, the president of Lazio region, the president of the province of Rome, and the mayor of Rome, where nomadic settlements were viewed as requiring increased control by law enforcement.

Looking back a little, an earlier precedent can be observed in which nomads were officially called a threat to public safety: in 2003, by a decree of the prime minister, a state of emergency was declared with respect to nomadic settlements in the municipality of Caivano. At that time, similar to the case under consideration, the initiative came “from the grassroots”—the prefect of Naples—and was supported by the Head of the Civil Defense Department under the Prime Minister. Although there are no earlier analogies in the databases of Italian national legislation, these securitizing legal acts are undoubtedly associated with a long history of official perception of “nomads,” “gypsies” and “vagrants” as troublemakers in Italy and in Europe in general¹².

¹¹ It should be noted that Italy presents a very fruitful case for the study of securitization: the government's use of declarations of states of emergency for a variety of reasons (including seismic and hydrogeological threats, environmental pollution, threats to public health, transport problems) is so widespread in the country that some analysts speak of the creation of a system of “parallel legislation” (Duilio, 2010, p. 3).

¹² For more detail, see Di Noia (2016).

The group of securitizing actors in 2008 (as, indeed, in 2003) had a mixed composition, including territorial governmental bodies (prefects), local, provincial, and regional political professionals (mayors, presidents of provinces and regions), and a security professional (the Minister of the Interior). Prefects can be considered security professionals because they report directly to the Ministry of the Interior and are responsible for public safety and civil defense. However, it is important to note that prefects are also the highest representatives of the Italian government in the provinces, performing significant civil administration functions. Therefore, prefects should be seen not as “pure” security professionals but as multidisciplinary professionals who combine security duties with ongoing civil administration responsibilities.

The securitizing moves were addressed to the Council of Ministers, which originally served as the audience. Its agreement with the proposed vision led to the issuance of a state of emergency decree. However, it is too early to draw the line at this point, since the securitization process does not end here, but only moves into a new, more active phase. At the same time, the role of the Council of Ministers changes from that of audience to that of the main securitizing actor, thereby causing an intensified dynamic of securitization, now manifesting itself at the highest state level.

In light of the above, several important points should be considered. First, only a limited number of actors from the political-bureaucratic field, possessing sufficient symbolic capital to make their arguments heard, had access to the production of performative utterances. Second, the analyzed performative did not emerge spontaneously; it was firmly rooted in the socio-historical context, previous first-order performatives, and a long-standing habit of viewing gypsies as a “security threat.” From this perspective, it merely reinforced the existing vision rather than created it anew. Third, despite this, the securitizing performative marked a significant shift from previous policies toward gypsies. It officially excluded this group from other population categories, establishing a new emergency regime that allowed for previously inadmissible measures, such as forced relocation to zones under increased surveillance, reminiscent of the monitoring of criminals, and mass expulsion from the country.

Reproduction of Securitizing Performative in a Self-Referential System of Legal Acts

A characteristic feature of an in-force legal act is its ability to generate derivative legal acts, which, in turn, generate other derivative legal acts, and so on, as long as the primary legal act remains in force and relevant. If we focus just on the tip of the iceberg, the national legal acts generated by the 2008 state of emergency decree, we find that ten derivative acts were adopted by the Italian Council of Ministers between 2008 and 2010. This process is visualized in Figure 1.

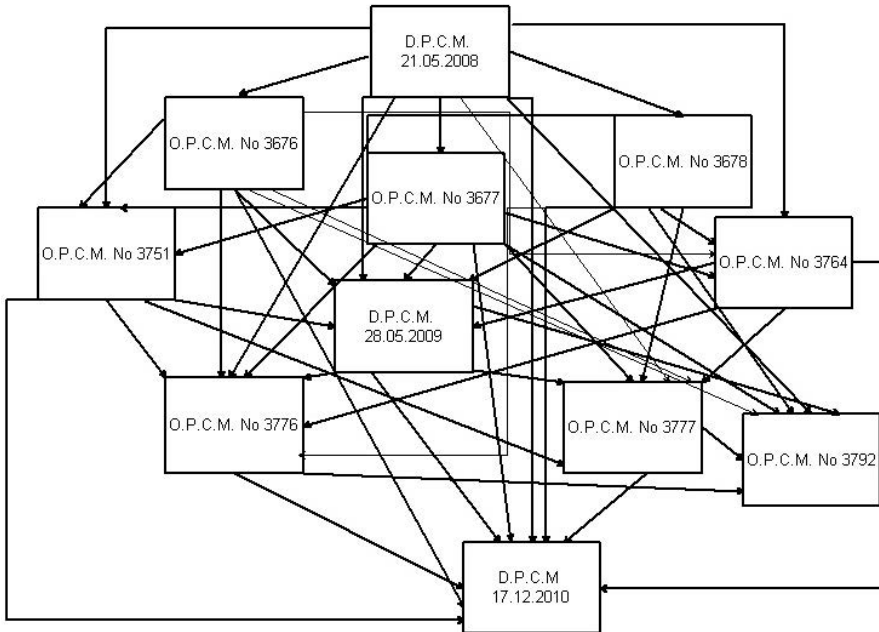
Further development of lawmaking in this case was interrupted by a decision of the Council of State¹³, dated November 16, 2011, which recognized the initial state of emergency decree as illegal (Il Consiglio di Stato, 2011).

Each of the derivative legal acts shown in Figure 1 includes a performative targeting nomadic communities as a threat and providing for measures to combat that

¹³ Supreme Administrative Court of Italy.

Figure 1

Acts Adopted by the Italian Council of Ministers Between 2008 and 2010



threat. Specifically, O.P.C.M.¹⁴ Nos. 3676, 3677, and 3678 delegate to the prefects of Rome, Milan, and Naples extraordinary powers to detect, identify, and monitor nomadic settlements, eliminate those that are not officially allowed, expel illegal nomads, place the remainder under increased supervision, and carry out integration measures aimed at reducing the danger they pose to public order and healthcare. O.P.C.M. Nos. 3751 and 3764 additionally expand the powers of prefects and the list of resources they can use in their activities (including the technical offices of municipalities, provinces, regions and other official institutions located in the respective territories). D.P.C.M.¹⁵, dated May 28, 2009, extends the state of emergency for another year, simultaneously extending it to Piedmont and Veneto (on the initiative of the Minister of the Interior and the prefects of Turin and Venice). O.P.C.M. Nos. 3776 and 3777 delegate to the prefects of Turin and Venice powers similar to those given to their counterparts in Rome, Milan and Naples. O.P.C.M. No. 3792 allows prefects to deviate from certain rules regarding public contracts for work and procurement (initiated by the prefect of Rome). Finally, D.P.C.M., dated December 17, 2010, extends the state of emergency until the end of 2011.

The magical power of these legal acts, therefore, lies in the transformation of nomads into a threat, of prefects into delegated commissioners who can change some generally accepted rules at their own discretion, and of the employees of official institutions located in the five provinces affected by the state of emergency into

¹⁴ L'ordinanza del Presidente del Consiglio dei ministri [Order of the President of the Council of Ministers].

¹⁵ Il decreto del Presidente del Consiglio dei ministri [Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers].

subordinate delegated commissioners. Additionally, these acts contain approximate scenarios for commissioners to play their roles and a short list of the executors of securitizing practices. In addition to the prefects of Milan, Rome, Naples, Turin, and Venice themselves, this list includes regional and municipal authorities, employees of public organizations (including civilian and military personnel), consultants selected from among public lawyers or administrative magistrates, local heads of the state police, the Italian Red Cross, and, if necessary, the prefects of neighboring provinces.

Clarification of the List of Executors and Securitizing Activities at the Regional and Municipal Levels

National securitizing performatives are deliberately abstract, providing a general framework for the game. They leave the prefects who have been made commissioners much room for maneuver. Endowed with, among other things, the ability to issue their own securitizing performatives in their jurisdictions, the commissioners concretize the lists of executors and create new, detailed scenarios for them.

Thus, the Regulation for the Management of Settlements for Nomadic Communities of Lazio Region, approved by the Delegated Commissioner of Lazio, contains a long list of executors of securitizing activities, including the heads of municipalities; the directors of departments of social, education, and school policies; local health officials; departments for the coordination of security policies; local fire brigades; the state police; the carabinieri; and even these same nomadic communities, which, according to the scenario, should contribute to the expulsion of some of their members and promote increased supervision over themselves (Il commissario delegato, 2009a).

Simultaneously, the “nomad plan,” devised by the commissioner of Lazio with support from the mayor of Rome and the advisor for social policies, involves participation in securitizing activities from various stakeholders. These include the police, construction companies, the archaeological heritage administration, which verifies the absence of protected artifacts, departments of social policies, education and school policies, local health departments, regional agencies for environmental protection, and the Italian Red Cross (Piano nomadi, 2009).

Each of these executors is charged with one or another securitizing function: from various forms of control over the inhabitants of nomadic camps, to the expulsion of some of them and the elimination of some settlements, the clearing of the resulting debris, the beautification of the territories, and the building of new camps in other locations.

Securitizing Practices

Unfortunately, in the Italian case, I was able to find only two detailed reporting documents that could be used to assess the conformity of the actual securitizing practices described in the above scenarios: a transcript of hearings of the Delegated Commissioner of Lazio province in the Senate (Senato della Repubblica, 2010) and a report from the Italian Red Cross (Croce Rossa Italiana, 2010). Nevertheless, the destructive power of securitizing performatives is clearly visible even in these isolated examples, supplemented by information from other sources.

According to the report of the Delegated Commissioner in the province of Lazio, various entities actively participated in the implementation of the “nomad plan.” These included the police, the municipality, the archaeological heritage administration (which verified the absence of protected artifacts), authorities from the province of Rome and the Lazio region, construction companies, and the Italian Red Cross. In the course of plan implementation, a census of nomads was carried out, accompanied by photographs and the collection of fingerprints. The deportation of undocumented persons and the placement of the documented under special control ensued. “Numerous illegal camps were closed and liquidated”¹⁶, and measures were initiated to integrate the residents of the remaining settlements. The maximum allowed period of residence in camps, previously unlimited, was reduced to four years.

The involvement of the Red Cross in the securitizing activities, which is mentioned in the commissioner’s speech, is detailed in a report from the humanitarian organization. In particular, as stated in the introduction, the Italian Red Cross was tasked with conducting a census of the population living in illegal, tolerable, and permitted nomad camps in the Lazio region. Apart from the census itself, Italian Red Cross volunteers carried out reconnaissance missions to locate settlements, mapped their locations (using different colors to indicate the degree of legality), took photographs, and provided detailed descriptions of the settlements. All collected materials were then delivered to the prefecture. Additionally, the report describes the cooperation between the Red Cross and the International Agency for Social Services in Italy (SSI-AI), which aimed at expelling adult and juvenile nomads from the country (Croce Rossa Italiana, 2010).

Thus, the actual securitizing practices generally followed the scenarios outlined by the securitizing legal acts. It is important to note that these practices were not created *ex nihilo* by the securitizing performatives. Many of them, such as document verification, information collection, and the expulsion of undocumented gypsies, had existed previously. The new official vision simply recreated and intensified these practices within a changed political context. However, there were also several innovations, including mass censuses and fingerprinting (even of underage gypsies), enclosing nomad camps with barbed wire, and introducing stricter rules for staying in them. The main result of the securitizing performatives was the establishment of a new legalized exceptional regime for the entire Romani population living in the five regions under consideration.

The transformation of state and non-state organizations, officials and individuals into the executors of securitizing activities, as far as can be judged from the available sources, generally proceeded without complications. Active resistance actually took place only once, when the mayor of Ciampino, hoping to close a nomad camp located in his jurisdiction, took an openly oppositional position when it became clear that, according to the “nomad plan,” the camp was, on the contrary, slated for expansion. Other addressees of the securitizing performatives readily assumed their assigned

¹⁶ In total, four of the nine “tolerable” camps were ultimately closed and, according to assessments by the Italian Association on July 21, more than 400 small unauthorized camps had been closed (Associazione 21 luglio, 2012a), accompanied by the forced evictions of hundreds of people in distress (Amnesty International, 2011; Associazione 21 luglio, 2012b).

roles, as evidenced, in particular, by the commendations given by the delegated commissioner of the province of Lazio to the police, the Red Cross (Senato della Repubblica, 2010, p. 6), the management of the fire brigade, the department of public rescue and civil defense, and the municipality of Rome for their full availability and effective cooperation (Il Commissario Delegato, 2009b).

It should also be emphasized that the ability to produce first-order performatives was virtually monopolized by professionals in the political-bureaucratic field. The primary performative speech act, delivered by the President of the Council of Ministers, was the most powerful because it was backed by the full symbolic power of the state. This act had the most arbitrary character, reflecting the decision of the top leader, while the derivative performatives merely echoed it and created tools for implementing the new legal vision.

Although Silvio Berlusconi's decree would have remained mere words without the diligent work of the entire bureaucratic hierarchy, it is clear that the performative speech of the key political figure, symbolically representing the will of the Italian people, had a binding effect on all other actors involved in the securitization process, including security professionals. The difficulty in challenging this speech was also tied to the social order that supported it.

Desecuritization

Though relevant NGOs and individual Roma families immediately responded to the declaration of the state of emergency by filing lawsuits and complaints with courts, national and international organizations, they only managed to get it lifted after three years. During that period, significant damage was done to the gypsy communities. At the same time, the fact that Berlusconi's decree and the resulting securitizing legal acts eventually lost the status as a new legal vision—due to the Council of State and the Superior Court of Cassation declaring the state of emergency illegal—shows the fragility of social magic and the competitive nature of performative utterances.

Importantly, the struggle took place in a discursive arena. The trials became a battleground for the securitizing and desecuritizing performative speeches of the involved actors. On one side were the President of the Council of Ministers, the Head of the Civil Protection Department, the Minister of the Interior, the prefects of Rome, Milan, and Naples, the authorities of the Campania region, the provinces of Rome and Naples, the cities of Rome, Milan, and Naples, the regions of Lazio and Lombardy, and the leaders of the Red Cross, all represented by authorized lawyers. On the other side was the European Roma and Roma Families Rights Center, symbolically representing the interests of the entire Romani population.

The main arguments of those opposing securitization were that it was unreasonable to impose the state of emergency, the measures taken were inconsistent with normal political rules, and officials deliberately misapplied Italian laws. Meanwhile, those supporting securitization pointed out formal procedural errors made by their opponents.

The audiences for the unfolding events were represented by judicial panels, which also authored the first-order performatives based on the outcomes of the legal battles. Despite their weaker social position compared to their opponents, the plaintiffs

succeeded with the support of various courts that found their arguments more convincing than those of the defendants. Empowered to issue performative verdicts that took precedence over the performative utterances of the executive authorities, the courts dismantled the symbolic power of Berlusconi's decree and its derivative legal acts, rendering them an illegitimate set of words with no further social effect.

The Russian Case: Migrants as Persons Prone to the Ideology of Terrorism

The idea that migration poses a security threat came to Russia somewhat later than to the Western countries. While the politicization of migration in the USA and Europe is usually attributed to the 1970s (for example, Huysmans, 2000; Karyotis, 2007), and sometimes to an earlier period (Rudolph, 2003), this process became noticeable in Russia only in the second half of the 1990s¹⁷. The increase in terrorist attacks in the 1990s, due to heightened political instability following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the armed conflict in the Chechen Republic, was quickly linked to migration. This included both internal migration from the republics of the North Caucasus and external migration from the countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia, and other predominantly Muslim regions. Currently, there are several hundred securitizing legal acts in publicly accessible Russian legal databases¹⁸ that target migrants as a source of terrorist threat.

As far as can be judged from these documents, similarly to the Italian case, Russian securitizing performatives were originally created at the local and regional levels (by regional, municipal, and local authorities). The federal center took a decisive turn towards the securitization of migration only in the early 2000s, which was expressed, in particular, by the subordination of the Federal Migration Service to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2002¹⁹ and the adoption in 2003 of *Kontseptsiiia regulirovaniia migratsionnykh protsessov v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [Concept for the Regulation of Migration Processes in Russian Federation], which directly linked migration with the deterioration of the crime situation (Ob odobrenii Kontseptsii, 2003). As time went on, the trend continued to strengthen.

On December 28, 2018, the President of the Russian Federation approved *Kompleksnyi plan protivodeistviia ideologii terrorizma v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [Comprehensive Plan for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism in the Russian Federation] for 2019–2023, where foreign citizens arriving in Russia from countries with increased terrorist activities²⁰ were named persons susceptible to the ideology of terrorism, as

¹⁷ This is due to the fact that the USSR was, in fact, closed to mass international migration. The first waves of migration after the collapse of the Soviet Union consisted of Russian-speaking repatriates warmly received by the new Russian government, whose initial migration policy was more than generous by all international standards. See Light (2017), Mukomel (2005).

¹⁸ It can be assumed that a significant fraction of such orders is issued for internal use.

¹⁹ This process came to its logical conclusion in 2016, when the Federal Migration Service was abolished and its functions were transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

²⁰ The list of these countries must be provided annually by the staff of the National Anti-Terrorism Committee and is not available to the public. However, most of the analyzed documents mentioning countries with increased terrorist activity referred to the Central Asian states. Additionally, references were made to countries such as Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Libya.

well as falling under its influence (Kompleksnyi plan protivodeistviia, 2018, p. 4) This categorization was consistent with the previous Comprehensive Plan for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism for 2013–2018 (Kompleksnyi plan protivodeistviia, 2013). Although migrants are not directly assigned to the category in the basic text of this document, foreign students (clause 7.1.) and labor migrants from Muslim countries (clause 7.3.) are mentioned in Appendix 2, which contains a list of the data required for the report, in the section dedicated to the number of events involving citizens most susceptible to the ideology of terrorism (Kompleksnyi plan protivodeistviia, 2013).

It is important to mention that both Comprehensive Plans were prepared in an official bureaucratic style, did not contain a declaration of the state of emergency, referred to current Russian legislation (including the Constitution of the Russian Federation), and did not announce any exceptional measures, i.e., they imitated an ordinary legal act conforming to the rules of normal politics. Given this, one could conclude that the logic of routine rather than the logic of exception was applied here. In reality, however, this case is a good example of a well-veiled gap in relation to normal politics (lawful illegality or plausible legality). The categorization of migrants from certain countries as persons susceptible to the ideology of terrorism and therefore deserving special treatment is obviously discriminatory, and discrimination based on nationality is prohibited by Russian legislation, including Article 19 of the Constitution. As a consequence, the claim that the Constitution serves as the basis for developing and implementing the Comprehensive Plan for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism is misleading. The Plan itself violates existing legal norms, representing a break from normal politics rather than its continuation. Comprehensive plans were developed under the auspices of the National Anti-Terrorism Committee (NAC). According to its chairman, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, Ministry for Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media, Roskomnadzor [Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology, and Mass Media], Rosmolodezh [Federal Agency for Youth Affairs] and other departments took an active part in this work (Direktor FSB, 2021).

Thus, the securitizing performative was (re)produced at the national level following the emergence of similar securitizing performatives at the local and regional levels, mirroring the process in Italy. The group of creators of the national securitizing performative was quite diverse. In the Russian case, it consisted mainly of bureaucratic professionals, specializing in security issues and also in areas unrelated to security.

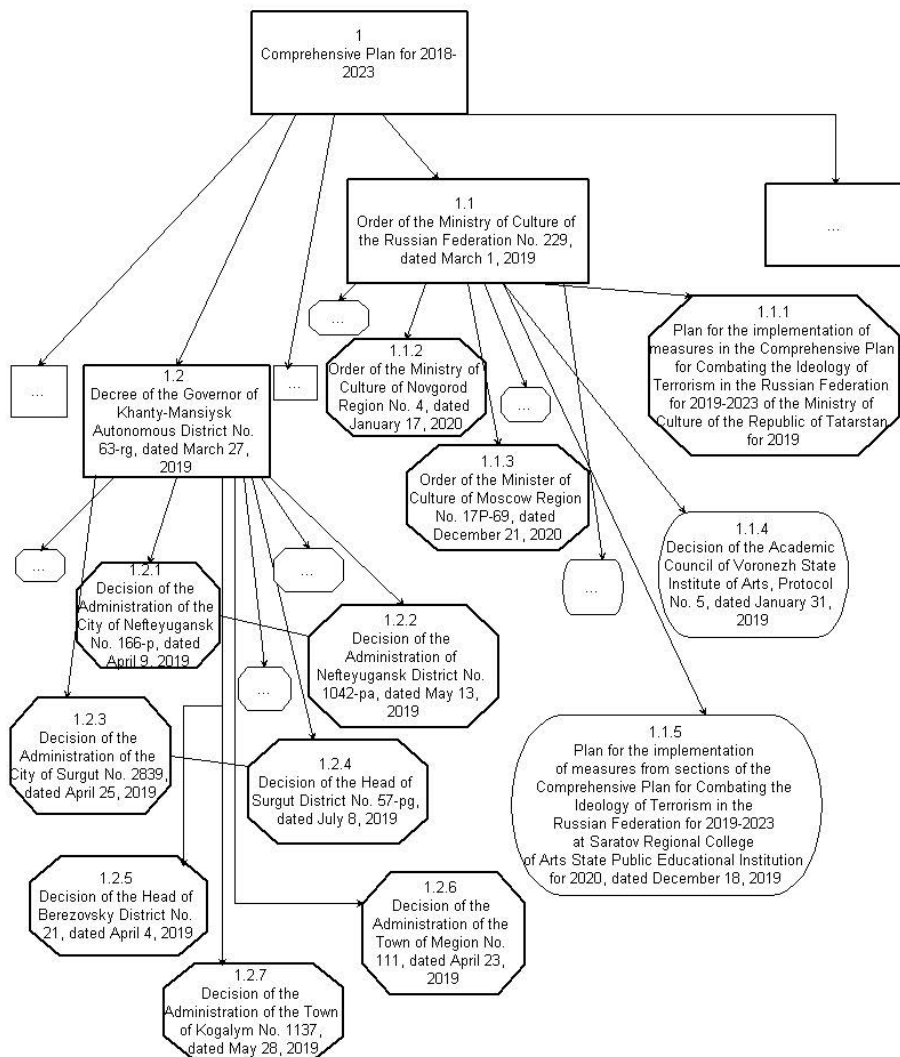
Only agents within the political-bureaucratic field had access to the production of securitizing first-order performatives. The performative approved by the key political actor—the President of the Russian Federation—held the highest power, while the derivative performatives served as tools to implement a new official vision.

Bureaucratic Structure as a Signaling Path for Securitizing Performatives

The example of the Russian Comprehensive Plans for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism clearly shows the fundamental importance of the bureaucratic structure for the (re)production of securitizing legal acts. Descending “from top to bottom,” from

the federal center to the regions along numerous bureaucratic chains, they generate a landslide of derivative securitizing legal acts at each new point of arrival: at the level of responsible ministries and departments, of regional and local authorities, of their subordinate organizations, and so on. This hierarchical spread is nonlinear and takes the form of an intensively branching graph, where the initial node constitutes the primary legal act with subsequent related legal acts forming multiple new nodes, which in turn generate new legal acts (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Graph of the Primary Legal Act With Subsequent Related Legal Acts



Each of the documents in Figure 2 (re)produces a securitizing performative, portraying individuals who come to Russia from certain countries for work or study as susceptible to the ideology of terrorism. Similar to the Italian case, these legal acts include algorithms for securitizing practices and specify the executors responsible for carrying out these practices.

In accordance with the logic of the bureaucratic field, the initiators of derivative securitizing performatives are professionals or bureaucratic organizations responsible for implementing scenarios launched by higher-level authorities. Most of the derivative legal acts analyzed were adopted on the initiative of regional heads and governments, regional ministries (often of culture, science, and education), regional anti-terrorist commissions (ATCs), or city and municipal administrations.

Of the 140 regional and local securitizing legal acts investigated, only 13 were initiated by an ATC, an organization specializing in security issues. It is important to note, however, that the heads of Russian regional governments also serve as ATC chairpersons. This dual role places them, like the Italian prefects, in the hybrid category of multidisciplinary professionals.

Executors of Securitizing Activities

The list of executors of securitizing activities is elaborated with each new securitizing legal act. Initially, these executors are only hinted at in federal plans, with basic references to the ministries and departments involved. However, as derivative legal acts are developed, these executors become more defined. They are first identified at the level of specific divisions, then individual positions, and finally, by name. Additionally, as the plans extend to local levels, the number of executors typically expands.

For instance, the Comprehensive Plan for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism for 2013–2018 initially mentioned only a few entities such as the Federal Migration Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Regional Development, and antiterrorist commissions in Russian regions. However, subsequent legal acts specified additional executors from regional and local departments including education, youth, and culture agencies, departments of housing and communal services, transportation departments, and educational institutions under regional administrations.

Likewise, the Comprehensive Plan for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism for the subsequent years (2019–2023) initially designated the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, the Ministry of Science, and the Ministry of Education, along with other relevant governmental bodies overseeing educational institutions. Additionally, regional executive authorities responsible for education, culture, youth, national policies, and sports were included as executors.

Subsequent legal acts related to securitization expanded the list of executors to include regional ministries and departments dealing with internal policies, health, information policies, public relations, labor, social protection, economics, social development, employment centers, and various other state and non-state organizations²¹.

²¹ The latter include mass media, religious, and other organizations which are “friendly” to regional and local authorities.

Meanwhile, in contrast to the primarily security-focused executors established by the Comprehensive Plan for 2013–2018 and its derivative documents (53 executors in this category compared to 20 non-security-related executors), the executors established by the Comprehensive Plan for 2019–2023 and its subsequent legal acts show a clear numerical advantage for professionals less involved in security matters (244 versus 91).

Algorithms for Securitizing Practices

Derivative legal acts related to securitization typically extensively reference their original sources, often quoting them verbatim. However, as can be seen from the Italian case, these derivative acts go further by providing detailed explanations and contexts to the initially general and vague scenarios from their sources. This elaboration ultimately results in specific securitization activities.

These activities can generally be categorized into three main groups, albeit with a certain degree of conditionality: the gathering and sharing of information concerning labor migrants and foreign students arriving from countries with heightened terrorist activity; verification measures concerning such foreign individuals, ranging from routine document checks to special operations and apprehensions; and preventive actions, such as lectures, discussions, cultural events, and dissemination of materials emphasizing the impermissibility of terrorist activities. These measures target both the foreign individuals themselves and various associated parties, including their employers, landlords, representatives of their diasporas, and heads of educational institutions.

As a rule, verification measures are entrusted to executors from among the security professionals, while preventive measures are assigned to specialists far from the security agenda who are responsible for issues of culture, education, sports, youth policies, the social sphere, employment, and other areas. As to the collection and exchange of information concerning targeted groups of foreigners, participation in this activity is prescribed for a wide variety of executors, from law enforcement officers to the management or individual employees of educational institutions providing training to foreign students. For example, one document obliges teachers to conduct monitoring of first-year students in order to identify persons who arrived from regions with increased terrorist activity (Saratovskii oblastnoi kolledzh iskusstv, 2020, p. 16) Another securitizing legal act requires police officers to request information from employers about the locations where Muslim migrants practice their prayer ceremonies (O reshenii, 2021, clause 1.4)

(Non)Performance of Roles, Cooperation, and Resistance by Executors

In general, as in the Italian case, Russian securitizing practices objectify the scenarios contained in securitizing legal acts. Reports cover all three types of securitization measures concerning specific groups of foreigners, including information gathering, verification procedures, and preventive actions. They specifically mention

interdepartmental information exchange and ongoing surveillance of incoming foreign citizens. Additionally, periodic interviews are conducted to ascertain the purpose of their arrival and identify both formal and informal leaders among them (Otchet o deiatel'nosti, n.d., p. 2). Regular document checks are reported to occur in places of mass gathering of migrants (Monitoring situatsii, n.d., p. 15). Law enforcement officials visit foreigners at their residences or workplaces, conduct inspections of mosques and prayer rooms, and engage in operational activities named *Nelegalnyi migrant* [Illegal Migrant], *Nelegal* [Illegal], *Siriiskii konflikt* [Syrian Conflict], and *Naemnik* [Mercenary]. Additionally, raids are carried out to identify extremist symbols and literature, particularly in Arabic (Rassokhin, n.d., p. 11). Finally, there are mentions of conversations with foreigners about the inadmissibility of violations of Russian legislation, about the arrangement of cultural, educational and social events, about the distribution of memos, about showings of anti-terrorist videos, and so on.

However, the scenarios do not always run smoothly. 10 out of 42 reports claim that no activities involving migrants were carried out. In seven cases, there were just no foreigners of the necessary category in the locality. In the remaining three, there were foreigners, but securitizing activities were ignored by the executors. As reflected in reports on the Comprehensive Plan for 2013–2018, no preventive work was carried out with labor migrants in six cases out of 15, and no work was carried out in one case out of 12 according to reports on the plan for 2019–2023²². In addition, two reports indicate that no preventive measures were taken in relation to foreign students.

In contrast to the Italian case, Russia had no incidents whatsoever of active resistance to the assignment of the role of executor. This suggests that the transformation of officials (less often private individuals) and organizations into executors of securitizing activities, as a rule, was successful. However, there is some evidence of passive resistance: apart from the already mentioned open disregard of the prescribed scenarios, more-or-less formal replies were observed, as well as the use of deliberately vague, general words. For example, one report included only official statistics on foreigners in the jurisdiction with a breakdown by country of origin and purpose of arrival. It additionally reported that “their presence does not have any significant impact on stability in the region” (Informatsiia po realizatsii, n.d., p. 3; Trans. by K. G.). In another, the entire report on work with foreigners was reduced to a single sentence: “The current situation associated with the residence of foreign citizens in the territory is stable and does not affect the crime situation in the area” (Otchet o rezul'tatakh, n.d., p. 1; Trans. by K. G.).

In contrast, some reports were highly detailed, with a long list of activities carried out with targeted foreigners, which likely indicates a proactive demonstration of diligence and a keen embrace of the executor's responsibilities. Thus, the strategies pursued by executors, as well as the degree of their enthusiasm towards the assigned scenarios, vary widely.

It should be kept in mind that a significant fraction of the securitizing practices targeting foreigners from certain regions (especially Central Asia and the Caucasus)

²² Only reports containing statistical information about the events held, and reporting about the presence of foreigners in the territory under their jurisdiction were taken into account.

existed even before the adoption of the Comprehensive Plans and was associated with the previous securitizing legal acts of the 1990s and 2000s. Consequently, some executors simply continued to do what they had been doing before, describing their ongoing activities in new forms of reporting. Nevertheless, the adoption of the Comprehensive Plans marked the approval of a new all-Russian official vision of natives of some countries as “persons susceptible to the ideology of terrorism” and led to the creation of an all-Russian exceptional regime for such a category of population.

Importantly, the securitizing performative and related securitizing practices met virtually no resistance from the affected group or external audiences, thus prompting no efforts towards desecuritization.

Russian and Italian Cases: Similarities and Differences

Analysis of the Russian and Italian cases reveals many similarities in the securitization processes in the two countries, despite the significant differences in their political systems and administrative structure, the composition of the groups affected by securitization, and the socio-historical contexts. In both cases, national securitization appears to have been preceded by regional securitization. The groups behind the initiation of securitizing legal acts and those responsible for executing securitization activities comprise a blend of political professionals, security experts, other bureaucratic professionals, and to a lesser extent, non-governmental actors. Securitizing legal acts demonstrated a remarkable capacity to (re)define security issues, such as those involving nomads in Italy and migrants from Muslim countries in Russia. These acts outline the measures aimed at addressing these perceived security challenges, along with the scenarios for their implementation by the designated executors.

The primary securitizing legal acts belonging to the key players in the political field necessarily generated derivative securitizing legal acts, which in turn generated new derivative securitizing legal acts, etc., constantly reproducing the same securitizing performative. While the performative moved from the center to the periphery, the range of executors was specified and expanded, and securitizing activities were clarified and contextualized.

Securitizing discourses and practices existed in close symbiosis. While objectifying the scenarios created by discourses, the actual practices did not always precisely reflect these scenarios. Instead, they relied on the capabilities, preparedness, and willingness of the executors to fulfill their assigned roles.

On the one hand, securitizing discourses and practices did not emerge *ex nihilo*, reproducing previous discourses and practices in varying degrees. On the other hand, they marked a visible gap in relation to the previous policy towards the affected groups, significantly deepening their exclusion from the general Italian and Russian populations. In Italy, nomads (gypsies), were officially declared a threat to public order and well-being and were subjected to a new exceptional regime affecting the entire Romani population of five Italian regions. As a result, many of them lost their homes, were relocated to the zones under increased surveillance that resembled detention centers for suspected criminals, or were expelled from the country. In Russia, migrants

from Central Asia, officially called “persons susceptible to the ideology of terrorism and influenced by it”, have been placed under increased surveillance all over the country and face various checks and suspicions of terrorist activity more often. Apart from the obvious similarities, there are important differences between the Italian and Russian cases. Setting aside the differences stemming from the socio-historical contexts of the two countries, it is necessary to consider variations in the evolution of the securitization processes under discussion. These differences are attributed to the awareness and responses of various audiences, including national and foreign non-profits, the judiciary, and the international political establishment.

In Italy, the securitizing discourse was constructed according to the classical model, including arguments about the existential threat to the reference object, the need for emergency measures, and the deviation from normal politics. With a focus on the external audience, it attracted significant media attention and sparked extensive social and political debates. Throughout these discussions, counterarguments from opponents of securitization were presented. Following the declaration of the state of emergency, it faced strong opposition from several human rights organizations, certain Roma families, and condemnation from pan-European institutions, reflecting Italy’s status as a member of the European Union. Litigation was initiated that ultimately led to the recognition of the primary securitizing legal act and its derivative acts as illegal.

The Russian securitizing performative was designed as a routine bureaucratic circular not intended for public discussion. Imitating an ordinary bylaw created according to the rules of normal politics, this is a good example of what is called lawful illegality or plausible legality.

In contrast to Berlusconi’s decree, the Comprehensive Plans for Countering the Ideology of Terrorism were not covered much by the media and remained largely unknown to the broader audience. The lack of objection led to the smooth operation of the nationwide securitizing performatives, which continue to be (re)produced to this day.

Final Comments

As this paper demonstrates, the examination of first-order securitizing performatives offers several significant benefits. These include the opportunity to rediscover and delve into the transformative effects of particular speech acts, the observation and analysis of the interdependent relationship between securitizing performatives and practices, the identification of institutional mechanisms underlying the functioning of performatives, and the accumulation of substantial empirical evidence regarding the composition of securitizers, the executors of securitizing activities, the diverse forms of securitizing practices, and more.

The proposed approach is effective for studying securitization processes in countries with different political regimes, including hybrid and non-democratic ones, which opens up opportunities for comparative cross-country studies beyond Western democracies. The approach involves shifting focus from the entire spectrum of political discourses on security and the vast array of securitizing practices to narrowing the research scope to key securitizing performatives and their associated practices. Its

strength lies in its ability to deepen our understanding of securitization processes. While this paper does not undertake a full-fledged comparative analysis, other projects, especially those conducted jointly by scholars from various countries, may enable detailed empirical cross-regional and cross-country comparisons. Additionally, this approach facilitates the acquisition of a more substantial and pertinent body of empirical data.

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