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The Politics of Free Movement of People in the United Kingdom:

Beyond Securitization and De-Securitization?

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Abstract

In the decade after 2007 eurosceptic actors in the UK successfully deployed securitizing narratives to portray the free movement of people (FMoP) and EU citizens as a threat to the 'ontological security' of national citizens. The ensuing exclusionary policies (up to and beyond the end of FMoP) were normatively problematic, particularly given the absence of evidence in support of those narratives. However, the paper argues that a response aimed at *de*-securitizing the issue—in this case, a return to the *status-quo-ante*—is not without its own normative problems. Indeed, the permissive pre-2007 New Labour government's approach to FMoP was not inclusive of all EU citizens. In valorizing EU citizens as 'independent post-national entrepreneurs', the marginalization of economically vulnerable EU citizens, particularly via tough welfare conditionality, was legitimated. The paper concludes by reflecting on the theoretical and political implications of the argument.

Introduction

The free movement of people (FMoP) was undoubtedly a key factor in the June 2016 vote for Brexit. At that time immigration was a highly salient issue in UK politics; a majority of UK citizens had significant concerns about FMoP; and around a third of the population—more than in any other EU member state—opposed the continuation of the regime in the UK (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020; Ipsos MORI, 2017, p.11; Vasilopoulou and Talving, 2019, p.814). Although far greater numbers of EU citizens than expected had come to live and work in the UK following the 2004 enlargement—and there were further spikes following the 2007 enlargement and following the eurozone crisis (Evans and Mellon, 2019, p. 79)—UK citizens significantly over-estimated the number of EU citizens in the UK in the lead up to the referendum (Ipsos MORI, 2016). Moreover, specific concerns with respect to FMoP were not, for the most part, backed up by evidence. In contrast to widespread perceptions, EU nationals in the UK had consistently been net economic contributors (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014); they had claimed fewer benefits than UK citizens (Portes, 2016); evidence of 'welfare tourism' was scant (European Commission, 2013); and they had, at most, had a negligible impact on (un)employment and wages (MAC, 2018). In the aftermath of the referendum, even an advisor to former Prime Minister David Cameron—a long-time critic of FMoP—had to acknowledge that,

> [W]e failed to find any evidence of communities under pressure … There was *no hard evidence* … [I]t was clear that immigration is *at best* just one of several factors that are putting pressure on public services, along with globalization, deindustrialization, automation and aging populations' (Korski, 2016, emphases added).

This paper's point of departure is then that UK citizens' fears about FMoP were, for the most part, not a function of EU citizens' direct impact on their lived experience or material wellbeing. Rather such concerns were socially constructed. More precisely, it deploys concepts from International Relations (IR) and critical security studies, to show that FMoP/EU citizens in the UK were 'securitized' (Waever, 1996; Huysmans 2000)—in accordance with Squire's (2015, p.14) broad definition, produced as threat—particularly in the period 2007-2016. Throughout that period, various media and elite actors in the UK effectively convinced a growing number of UK citizens that EU citizens—increasingly described as EU 'migrants'—were a threat to their material and psychological security: their everyday (especially work) routines, their biographies of self and their sense of cultural 'home'. In short, EU citizens were portrayed as a threat to UK citizens' individual and collective sense of 'ontological security' (Mitzen, 2006). The first part of the paper draws on a range of primary and secondary sources that capture the narratives of political and media elites, in order to outline the ways in which these securitizing processes unfolded in the UK.

Normatively, such an argument might reasonably lead to the suggestion that we should collectively seek to 'de-securitize' the issue; de-dramatize those threat narratives and return the issue to the realm of an ostensibly 'normal' or 'liberal' politics, as conceived in the terms laid out by a Copenhagen school of security studies (Waever, 1995). As discussed in the second section, in our case this could mean a return to a pre-2007 *status-quo-ante*, when FMoP/EU citizens were generally not conceived or portrayed as threat. The New Labour government's ostensibly permissive discourses and policies on FMoP (between roughly 2003-2007) welcomed post-2004 EU citizens, who were portrayed, not unreasonably, as contributing to a national (and European) prosperity and a collective (ontological) security. And both before the referendum and post-2016, many EU citizens and their advocates

deployed similar de-securitizing narratives in order to legitimise and normalise their continued presence in the UK in the face of growing and widespread hostility.

However, in a decisive step, the paper draws attention to the exclusions entailed in these ostensibly *de*-securitizing moves. While such a politics championed workers and economically independent EU citizens—a virtuous 'post-national entrepreneur'—it at once excluded the economically 'dependent' or 'inactive', particularly through the mobilization of 'activation' social policies that effectively limited access to welfare for some of the most vulnerable citizens, including, disproportionately, those engaged in socially reproductive and caring labour. While both UK and EU citizens were subject to such a regime, nationality served to justify a tougher 'activation-plus' regime—consisting of tougher conditionality (O'Brien, 2017, p. 170)—for non-national EU citizens, which was significantly further toughened under the post-2010 Conservative regime in the context of the widespread securitizing discourses that had, by that time, emerged.

The paper offers two primary contributions. On the one hand, it builds on the empirical literature on the politics of FMoP in the UK, sympathetically deploying the concepts of 'securitisation' and 'ontological security' in order to point, in particular, to the importance of narratives and discourses as drivers of that politics (especially vis-a-vis supposed material drivers). On the other hand, the case study is used to animate a critical engagement with those very concepts. It argues that in conceiving of an alternative *post*-national or *post*-Westphalian 'ontologically secure' subject and a concomitant sense of 'home' (Mitzen, 2018), we should be sensitive to any alternative forms of exclusion that necessarily emerge (Parker and Rosamond, 2013). In our case, we point to the risk of endorsing, explicitly or implicitly, an ostensibly 'normal' or '(neo)-liberal' politics—and an associated 'mobile post-national entrepreneurial' subject—which is not without its own potential for ethically

problematic exclusions in relation to EU citizens in the UK. In so doing we also offer a broader critique of a 'market' EU citizenship.

The 'securitization' of EU citizens and the ontological (in)security of UK citizens

IR scholarship deploying the concept of securitization (Waever, 1995) has long pointed to the ways in which mobile populations have been constructed as migrant 'others' and narrated by elites as existential threats to a national polity and/or to its citizens (Huysmans, 2000; Bigo, 2002, Van Munster, 2009). That literature has emphasized how securitizing moves by elites cast migrants as a threat—often blaming them for negative material outcomes in order to detract from broader structural and policy causes (Bigo, 2002)—and thereby justify their exclusion from the realm of an ostensibly 'normal' or liberal domestic politics. Building on that work, more recent scholarship has explored the mechanisms via which such moves can impact on the psychology, or the 'ontological security' (Mitzen, 2006), of those being described as under threat within securitizing narratives. It has illustrated a range of ways in which the securitization of non-national citizens unsettles national citizens' sense of routine, sense of coherent biographical narrative, and sense of 'home'. Indeed, the securitization of non-national 'others'—often migrants—involves a, usually purposeful, attempt by elites to induce anxiety among citizens, both at an individual level and as an intersubjective collective (a collective that such discourses, of course, also serve to constitute and reify) (for a recent overview, see Kinvall and Mitzen, 2020).

It is not easy to directly measure the causal effects of long-term securitizing narratives on public attitudes and subjective feelings of (in)security and anxiety in the UK. But based on survey-oriented empirical work, we can legitimately claim that public sentiment on FMoP/

EU citizens (and/or migration and the EU in general) was significantly influenced by both 'media coverage and elite rhetoric' (Blinder, 2015, p. 96; see also: Evans and Mellon, 2019; Foos and Bischof, 2021). As such, the securitizing narratives of prominent media and political figures can be taken as a useful proxy for the various subjective views of the substantial percentage of the British public that we know was either concerned about, or outright opposed to, freedom of movement by the time of the 2016 referendum. Moreover, based on earlier survey studies identifying resource competition and cultural difference as the key factors driving broader opposition to migration in Britain (McLaren and Johnson, 2007), it is likely that narratives designed to trigger such concerns—which relate to a broader sense of ontological security—in relation to newly arrived EU citizens would have been effective, at least with certain groups (on this see Vasilopoulou and Talving, 2019).

In the UK press EU nationals were, after 2004, increasingly described as EU 'migrants' rather than 'citizens' (Bruzelius et al., 2014). This established an association between EU nationals in the UK and various other (long-securitized) migrant groups, which would only harden over time. These EU migrants were presented as in competition with UK citizens for supposedly scarce or finite resources, particularly following the 2007 Romania/Bulgaria enlargement, which coincided with the start of the global financial and economic crisis. The upstart anti-EU UK Independence Party (UKIP) was particularly keen to push such a message, realizing its importance in nurturing a broader hard-eurosceptic sentiment in the UK (Evans and Mellon, 2019). In its 2009 European Parliament election manifesto (UKIP, 2009), it stated that: '[o]ur membership of the European Union is already costing jobs in the UK. Major construction projects now hire many of their staff overseas, with British workers *not even having the opportunity to apply*'. Elsewhere, the idea of a competition for space and housing was articulated: the 2010 general election manifesto (UKIP, 2010) made the alarmist

(but highly spurious) claim that, ‘86% of new UK housing - or approximately 260 homes a day - is needed for immigrants. *By controlling immigration, large areas of British countryside will not need to be destroyed* by house building.’ By the time of its 2014 European Parliament election electoral breakthrough, UKIP had warmed to the theme. One campaign poster featured the image of a begging construction worker sitting cross-legged on the pavement, with the caption: ‘EU policy at work. British workers are hit hard by unlimited cheap labour. Take back control of our country.’ Another featured a finger pointing out towards the audience next to the words: ‘26 million people in Europe are looking for work. And whose jobs are they after?’. Unveiling the posters, UKIP’s charismatic and divisive leader, Nigel Farage, claimed that, ‘[they] are a hard-hitting reflection of reality as it is experienced by millions of British people struggling to earn a living outside the Westminster bubble’. Summarizing the message further, a UKIP spokesperson said of the campaign, that: ‘It’s about how the EU impacts on our daily lives’ (Channel 4 News, 2014). UKIP proposed to control net migration, while repeatedly making the point that it would do so—and that any government *could only do so*—by leaving the EU to end FMoP.

UKIP’s electoral success had an important impact on the narratives and policies of other UK parties. Indeed, it is significant that these largely erroneous narratives came to be not only accepted, but actively supported, by political actors across the political spectrum. On taking office in 2010—as lead partner in a coalition with the Liberal Democrats—the Conservatives pledged to limit net migration to, ‘the tens of thousands’ and it reasserted that pledge in 2015. Broadly confirming UKIP’s analysis of resource scarcity and competition, its 2015 manifesto stated that, ‘when immigration is *out of control* it puts pressure on schools, hospitals and transport; and it can cause social pressures if communities find it hard to integrate’ (Conservative Party, 2015).

The main opposition Labour Party also gradually drifted away from its permissive approach to FMoP (described in the following section) to endorse many aspects of the resource competition narrative. Under Ed Miliband's post-2010 leadership, the party was 'constantly apologizing for its [past] policies on migration and free movement' (Geddes 2014, p. 290). Its 2010 manifesto (Labour, 2010) stated that, '[w]e understand people's concerns about immigration – about whether it will undermine their wages or job prospects, or put pressure on public services or housing.' And Miliband's former pollster stated in 2015 that: '[traditional Labour] voters see no reason why citizens of other countries should have entitlements in the UK simply because they move here… They think Labour cannot comprehend these positions, let alone agree with them' (Morris, 2015). Labour's post-2015 leader, Jeremy Corbyn, vacillated on the issue, both before and after the 2016 referendum, but in the aftermath of the vote for Brexit, the 2017 Labour manifesto pledged to end FMoP.

Concerns around resource competition were not the only trigger of ontological insecurity. Attempts were made to point to a less tangible cultural threat to a collective security. In moves which 'transgressed' (Eberle, 2017, pp. 253-4; Browning, 2019, p. 229) broadly economic discourses, the propriety or behaviour of new arrivals—in other words, their ability to *culturally integrate* with national citizens—was also questioned. As Fox et al. (2010, p. 688) highlight, there was a tendency in the eurosceptic tabloid press to portray central and eastern European migrants, especially Romanians after 2007, 'as dangerous criminals and social parasites preying on their well-meaning hosts'. Two separate sensationalist stories of Romanian migrants allegedly cooking and eating swans, stolen from local parks, appeared in tabloid newspapers, *The Daily Mail* (7/8/2007) and *The Sun* (28/2/2008). The long-vilified Roma minority were frequently targeted by such narratives, and Romanians were often

conflated with that minority population. As Fox et al. (2010, p. 689) note, '[l]inking migrants to the unsavoury activities and cultural backwardness associated with the Roma (sometimes replete with allusions to the Roma's purported Indian, or non-European, origins) [called] into question the migrants' *civilizational* credentials.'

In its official communications UKIP was mostly measured in its use of language, apparently as part of a broader strategy to distance itself from the explicitly racist and electorally toxic rhetoric of the far-right, particularly the British Nationalist Party (BNP). For instance, its 2015 manifesto claimed that, 'immigration is *not about race*' (emphasis added), but rather, picking up the aforementioned overcrowding theme, 'about space'. However, Nigel Farage often transgressed into more controversial territory. Particularly following the 2014 ending of transitory measures with Romania and Bulgaria, Farage often emphasized cultural issues. Early that year he claimed in a speech that parts of Britain are, 'like a foreign land' and that, 'in many parts of England you don't hear English spoken any more' (Farage cit. in Sparrow, 2014). In a radio interview later that year he pointed to supposed high levels of criminality among Romanian migrants in order to argue that 'any *normal and fair-minded* person would have a perfect right to be concerned if a group of Romanian people suddenly moved in next door' (The Guardian, 2014, emphasis added).

During the 2016 referendum campaign he was even more forthright in stoking anxieties related to ostensible threats to a particular imaginary of British culture. Under the auspices of the unofficial *Leave.EU* campaign he unveiled the now-notorious 'Breaking Point' poster depicting a crowd of mainly Syrian migrants crossing the Croatia-Slovenia border in 2015. Drawing a problematic link with EU membership, the poster included the statement, '[w]e must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders'. Such messaging was not

about FMoP: the poster purposefully ignored the UK's ability, as an EU member state that was not a party to the Schengen agreement, to 'control' the movements of non-EU so-called 'third party' nationals (including Syrians) into the UK. But by the time of the Brexit vote the link between migration and the EU had been so well established in the public's imagination that the facts of the case hardly mattered. Even more importantly, and more significantly for current purposes, the poster explicitly racialized migrants. It played on anxieties related to cultural and racial diversity, including a long-cultivated fear of Muslims (Croft, 2012). Such fears were also at least implicit in the media and Leave campaign messaging pointing (purposefully, but erroneously) to the imminent prospect of Turkish EU membership and a likely influx, under FMoP rules, of Turkish people into the UK (Morrison, 2019, p. 601).

Over the course of the 2016 referendum campaign, rates of reporting on immigration tripled and that reporting was largely negative, particularly in *The Express*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* (Moore and Ramsay, 2017). Both the aforementioned scarcity and racializing narratives were once again prevalent with reference to Eastern European migrants, leading the Council of Europe's *European Commission against Racism and Intolerance* (ECRI, 2016) to criticize the British tabloid newspapers for their 'offensive, discriminatory and provocative terminology' (Rzepnikoeska, 2019, p. 66). As Virdee and McGeever (2019, p. 1807) have noted:

> regimes of representation that portrayed migrants as the bearers of alien customs and practices were sufficient to place them beyond the boundary of what it meant to be British. In these neo-racisms, culture takes the place of pseudo-biology, but secures the same intended outcome of generating public support for the permanent exclusion of migrants from membership of the imagined national community.

At least some British citizens clearly identified with, and/or were influenced by, these more transgressive 'neo-racist' narratives. In the weeks after June 2016 there was a notable increase in verbal and physical abuse targeted at EU citizens (Corcoran and Smith, 2016).

The foregoing securitizing narratives, whether focused on resource competition or cultural/racial identity, effectively presented EU 'migrants' as a threat to UK citizens' ontological security. EU citizens were portrayed and widely perceived as a threat to various taken-for-granted routines of daily life related to work, pay and access to public services; they thereby also constituted an anxiety-inducing threat to the certitude of future-oriented life plans. Transgressive, 'neo-racist' securitizing narratives at once pointed to a more inchoate threat to a sense of home-as-nation; a national home usually conceived as English-speaking and white-British. Mobilizing these securitizing narratives, political actors were able to redirect the anxiety and anger precipitated by post-2007 economic decline away from underlying structural and policy causes—particularly austerity—and on to easily identifiable targets (Bigo, 2002, p. 69).

The '*de*-securitization' of (some) EU citizens

De-securitization (Waever, 1995) can take various forms, but it usually involves moves to return a securitized issue or group into the realm of an ostensibly 'normal' liberal politics, via a 'reworking of the friend-enemy distinction' (Hansen, 2012, p. 546). And such moves often involve a re-conception of 'home', to restore the ontological security of an ostensibly threatened group (Mitzen, 2018). In our case, a 'normal' politics could mean a return to the *status-quo-ante*, of the more positive narratives deployed by the New Labour government in

relation to FMoP/ EU citizens prior to 2007. In ontological security terms, such discourses sought, in the run up to the 2004 enlargement, to persuade UK citizens to psychologically conceive of their collective national 'home' as open to new EU citizens and perhaps concurrently also conceive of a broader notion of collective 'home' beyond the narrow imaginary of nation-state (Mitzen, 2018). This endeavour aligned with EU principles and laws underpinning FMoP, which (subject to certain conditionality) required non-discrimination of EU citizens by member states. More broadly, it accorded with a post-Westphalian or cosmopolitan conception of EU citizenship, which was prominently championed by the EU itself after the Maastricht Treaty.

Thus, while Tony Blair's New Labour government was not blind to the enduring salience of migration when it took office for the first time, it adopted very different positions in relation to different 'types' of migration (Mulvey 2011). As Flynn (2003, p. 1) noted, 'since the election … in 1997 it has appeared to many that immigration policy has acquired two separate souls - one harshly repressive, the other liberal and progressive.' The repressive aspect related to the figure of the 'bogus asylum seeker': indeed, a securitizing language and exclusive set of policies prevailed in relation to all groups designated as 'illegal' (Mulvey, 2011). Of more significance for current purposes, the government was supposedly 'liberal and progressive' with respect to so-called economic migration and it understood intra-EU FMoP very much in those terms. As the 2004 enlargement approached and the government took the decision not to impose 'transitional restrictions' on citizens of the new member states, it argued that Polish and other migrants from those states would fill important gaps in labour markets and contribute to the UK's economic prosperity. The government's permissive policy towards free movement formed part of its broader 'managed migration' agenda (Home Office, 2002).

A set of broadly pro-market or 'third way' ideas (Giddens, 1998) informed New Labour's presentation of economic migration (Consterdine, 2015; Statham and Geddes, 2006) and these generally cohered with the immediate needs of the UK economy and the pragmatic business interests inhabiting those markets at the turn of the century (Somerville and Goodman, 2010). Thus, from the early 2000s until at least the 2007 global financial crisis, the New Labour government aimed to represent FMoP not as a threat to, but as a source of, British citizens' wellbeing and, implicitly, their ontological security. As Blair put in a speech to the Confederation of British Industry, shortly before the 2004 enlargement, the government's migration strategy, was built on, '[a] recognition of the benefits that controlled migration brings *not just to the economy but to delivering the public and private services on which we rely*' (2004, emphases added). Similarly, after 2004, New Labour was keen to reassure the public that the larger than expected migratory flows from new member states were not a cause for concern; on the contrary they would help to reinforce the country's economic security and thereby improve and 'modernize' the collective 'home' and enhance the individual security of British citizens. In line with such economic arguments, New Labour refused to tie itself to limits on overall net migration, allowing the (labour) market to dictate numbers. In short, EU citizens were considered primarily as labour migrants: mobile, active and independent 'entrepreneurial' subjects contributing to the collective wealth of the (British) nation. And such a view was reflected in at least some of the media coverage immediately after 2004, which, 'focused on the positive work ethics of Polish migrants by emphasizing hard-working-ness, value for money and diligence' (Rzepnikowska, 2019, p. 66).

Following the 2016 referendum, we saw attempts by EU citizens and their advocates to emphasize a similar narrative in order to de-securitize their presence. For instance, many Polish EU citizens in the UK responded to exclusionary securitizing discourses by pointing to their credentials as mobile-entrepreneurial economic subjects. As McGhee et al. (2019, p. 1106) have put it, those EU citizens, 'claim[ed] belonging in an ethical (but not political or national) community based on neoliberal principles of hard work and economic independence.' Such claims understandably sought to delegitimize the prioritization of national citizens—apparent in both the resource competition and racializing narratives—by emphasizing the economic narratives that have typically been invoked to defend FMoP in both the UK and across the broader EU. Moreover, parts of the British press shifted to (re)-conceive of FMoP in economic terms after 2016; prominent economic stakeholders, who had been largely sidelined by a broadly eurosceptic press, were granted the space to express their concern with respect to the economic impact of the loss of flexible EU workers (Morrison 2019: 605). EU workers who had been framed as threat to UK citizens' ontological security were thus increasingly again portrayed as a *source* of economic security.

It is evident in the above examples, that the invocation of an 'entrepreneurial energy' (Kinvall and Mitzen, 2020, p. 247)—rather than an exclusive, even ethnocentric nationalism—can constitute a more 'positive' and inclusive response to the anxiety born out of an ontological insecurity. To the extent that national citizens buy in to the valorization of a post-national, economically self-sufficient, entrepreneurial subjectivity, their anxiety or ontological insecurity vis-à-vis entrepreneurial EU citizens—(re)-conceived as a deserving contributor rather than resource competitor—will be removed. Indeed, an EU liberal government's promotion of transnational markets, and the self-interested mobile individuals

who inhabit them, has certainly supported the overcoming of parochial barriers erected on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, race and sexuality.

The 'other' of a post-national entrepreneur

Viewing both citizens and migrants through a broadly neoliberal lens helps to diffuse many of the distinctions (and associated tension) between them, but it has long had adverse implications for those—whether citizen or migrant—unable to 'successfully' assume or sustain this ideal subjectivity. The definition of 'success' has been an elastic one in migration policy, but for New Labour that definition would include virtually all of those in work. The 'others' of such a discourse were those out of work and therefore regarded as unable to 'contribute' to the collective economic endeavour. In the context of an 'activation' welfare regime—which pre-dated, but endured and developed during the New Labour period—rights were withheld from individuals unable to demonstrate their entrepreneurial credentials, particularly those perceived to not be 'actively' seeking work.

While non-economic criteria and distinctions are officially removed in such a neoliberal narrative—as reflected, for instance, in non-discrimination laws both nationally and at the EU level—they remain practically important. For instance, in elevating the importance of participation in formal labour markets, socially reproductive or caring labour of various kinds was devalued, with disproportionate consequences for women (Macleavy, 2007). New racialized discourses also emerged: for instance, the term 'chav'—derived from the Romani word for child—was deployed pejoratively in the early 2000s with reference to a British white working class, particularly those perceived to be out of work (Shilliam, 2018: 126). In short, it is important to highlight that such narratives do not provide a sense of ontological

security for *all* national citizens. Indeed, they may have provided fertile conditions for the later success of the alternative nationalist narratives—including anti-FMoP—that were increasingly peddled after 2010 (and described in the first section).

Nationality was certainly a less significant distinction in this ostensibly de-securitized and post-national neoliberal political climate, but it was also not entirely expunged. Indeed, it served as the basis for the deployment of an *enhanced* activation regime, or an 'activation plus' regime, targeted at EU citizens. This effectively required EU nationals in the UK to be *better* entrepreneurial subjects than their British counterparts through the imposition of tougher conditionality on access to social rights and welfare (O'Brien, 2017, p. 267). Notably, for instance, the New Labour government's Worker Registration Scheme (WRS), required EU migrants to register and prove 12 months of work before they could claim social security. Moreover, the practice of seeking to remove or deport homeless EU migrants was initiated towards the end of New Labour's period in office and *prior to* the emergence of a widespread nationalist securitizing discourse in the UK (Neilan, 2010; Ciupjus, 2011).

While the legality of British policy towards 'economically inactive' EU citizens has long been debated by EU institutions and legal scholars in terms of its adherence to the EU principle of non-discrimination, in essence it accords with the EU's own conception of a 'market citizenship'. Although the ECJ has vacillated on the question of when discrimination on the basis of nationality should be permissible, it has always permitted some such discrimination, and a post-2010 restrictive turn in ECJ judgements—surely influenced by the fact that, as ECJ president Koen Lenaerts candidly acknowledged in 2015, 'judges read the newspapers, too' (cited in Blauberger, et al., 2018)—made it far easier for member states to limit EU citizens' access to certain kinds of welfare (Barbulescu and Favell, 2019; O'Brien,

2017, pp.34-57). In short, an ostensibly 'normal' or liberal treatment of EU citizens has become increasingly exclusionary with respect to the economically inactive (in the UK and throughout the EU).

The key point for current purposes is that the valorization of an ideal post-national EU citizen-qua-entrepreneur or a market citizenship, has always involved the 'othering' of certain economic subjectivities. Indeed, any *de*-securitizing moves that involve the celebration of an entrepreneurial and economically independent subjectivity will, at least implicitly, cast the economically 'dependent'—including welfare claimants and the homeless—as threat. For economically vulnerable EU citizens in the UK, social class intersected with nationality to place them in a particularly precarious situation, which only worsened post-2007 in the context of the overt securitizing moves discussed in the first section. In other words, many EU citizens faced a 'double othering', whereby they were effectively cast as the 'other' of *both* a post-national entrepreneur *and* a national citizen.

This 'double othering' was manifest in a series of post-2013 reforms by the Conservative-led government, which further delimited the rights available to vulnerable EU citizens through toughening the 'activation plus' regime and pushing ever greater numbers into precarious situations, including destitution (Dwyer et al., 2019; O'Brien, 2017). In 2013 Prime Minister David Cameron stated in a *Financial Times* op-ed that, '[i]t is time for a new settlement which recognizes that free movement is a central principle of the EU, but it cannot be a completely unqualified one' (Cameron, 2013). This led to a host of reforms delimiting the rights of EU citizens, creating ever larger welfare 'gaps' for those deemed economically inactive to fall through (O'Brien, 2017, p. 270). Summarizing the implications of reforms to unemployment benefits in stark, almost vindictive, language, then Work and Pensions

Secretary, Iain Duncan Smith, said: ‘You’ll have to wait three months and you’ll only be able to claim for three months. Then it’s bye-bye’ (cited in O’Brien, 2015). In the aftermath of the economic crisis (Neilan, 2010) and particularly following the Brexit referendum, the government ramped up the practice of deporting homeless EU migrants (Townsend, 2017). In 2016, Cameron’s negotiations with the EU prior to the referendum doubled down on this restrictive agenda, seeking to establish a so-called ‘emergency-brake’ that would also limit access to ‘in-work’ benefits. Having widely propagated the (erroneous) threat narratives linked to resource competition, those in the Conservative government leading the official Remain campaign in 2016 could make only the weakest of arguments in support of FMoP. They were reduced to pointing to the ‘success’ of Cameron’s renegotiation on the issue, while presenting FMoP as a necessary hardship to be endured in order to enjoy the broader economic benefits of EU membership (HM Government, 2016).

A similar logic has prevailed following the end of FMoP in 2020, in the context of the so-called ‘settlement scheme’ for those EU citizens resident in the UK before that time. Numerous issues were raised in relation to that scheme, particularly relating to the future implications of widescale non-registration (which held the potential for a repeat of the so-called ‘Windrush’ scandal) (the 3 Million, 2021; Barnard, 2021). Of particular relevance for current purposes, however, was the British government’s decision to delimit the welfare rights of those economically inactive EU nationals granted the aptly named ‘*pre*-settled’ status; a status that was given to the more than two million EU citizens who were unable to prove that they had resided in the UK for more than five years. This situation caused significant deprivation for many in that group, including disproportionately high levels of homelessness (Bramley et al., 2021). It is notable that, in accordance with its support for this ostensibly *de*-securitized version of EU citizenship, and with its aforementioned restrictive

turn, the EU/ ECJ effectively endorsed many of the 2014 Conservative reforms and thereby supported the erroneous narrative of resource competition that legitimated them. Moreover, following Brexit, the ECJ ruled in support of the UK government's aforementioned welfare restrictions on those with pre-settled status (for a compelling legal critique of that ruling see O'Brien, 2021a, 2021b). Thus, the UK government's treatment of economically inactive EU citizens broadly accorded with the EU's own conception of a 'market citizenship'.

As we have seen, processes of *de*-securitization—conceived in this section as informed by neoliberalism—may allow for the (re)-inclusion and legitimation of certain EU citizens excluded by nationalist securitizing discourses, but they at once cast many citizens—especially the most economically vulnerable—as threat. In that sense, de-securitization may itself constitute another, albeit different, securitizing move (for similar arguments see, among others, Bigo 2002; Van Munster 2009). From a progressive political or normative perspective we ought then to remain sensitive not only to the exclusionary impacts of a prevalent nationalist elite narrative—and its ideal national citizen subject—but also to the exclusionary impacts of a neoliberal cosmopolitan elite narrative—and its ideal post-national entrepreneurial subject—that has long been championed by the EU and by many pro-European national governments. We ought to, at once, remain sensitive to the dynamic relationship between these narratives: the ways in which the exclusions emerging from one narrative can reinvigorate the other (and vice versa).

Conclusion: Beyond national citizens and post-national entrepreneurs?

The foregoing argument debunked the notion that material changes wrought by the arrival of larger-than-expected numbers of EU citizens *inexorably* or *automatically* led to the

politicization of the issue. Rather, widespread securitizing narratives of scarcity and competition—reinforced at times with transgressive racist discourses—were key factors in driving widespread anxiety with respect to the FMoP, particularly after the 2007 economic crisis, when very real material hardship was effectively (but erroneously) linked to the presence of growing numbers of EU citizens in the UK. FMoP was portrayed as a threat to key components of UK citizens' ontological security and, in a general sense, to the integrity of nation-as-home.

The paper at once showed how ostensibly *de*-securitizing narratives, celebrating a *post*-national conception of home and a concomitant mobile, economically independent or 'entrepreneurial' EU citizen—while they may be inclusive of many more EU citizens—are also potentially exclusionary. Such 'market citizenship' narratives were apparent in New Labour's post-2004 discourse; in some post-2016 interventions by and on behalf of EU citizens in the UK; and also in the post-2010 approach of the EU/ECJ to the conditionalities pertaining to EU citizenship. Such narratives permitted the exclusion of economically inactive, often vulnerable, EU citizens, who were rendered (implicitly or explicitly) as the 'other' of the economically independent or entrepreneurial migrant. After 2007, those EU citizens consequently faced a 'double othering'—rendered as the other of *both* post-national entrepreneur and national citizen—which served to legitimate their exclusion from many social rights and aspects of the welfare state.

The case study has pointed to the usefulness of the concept of securitization—broadly defined—and also of an IR literature deploying the concept of ontological security (Mitzen, 2018). The former is useful for conceptualizing the ways in which a particular issue or group—in our case the FMoP and EU citizens—can be erroneously cast as a threat. And the

latter can help us to understand the psychological dynamics via which the supposedly threatened individuals and broader collectivities experience a sense of security and insecurity. Perhaps unsurprisingly for scholarship emerging from the discipline of Inter-*national* Relations, both literatures have tended to focus on the ways in which a sense of security is closely connected to a sense of home, which in turn is often linked to conceptions of nation. Processes of securitization point to threats to home-as-nation in a manner that can lead to anxiety, which, in turn, serves to legitimize the 'othering' of those regarded as non-national or non-citizen.

However, and more important for current purposes, the case also points to the potential ethical and political limits of the two aforementioned literatures. It suggests that any *de*-securitizing move—conceived by the Copenhagen school as a shift to portray a securitized issue within the realm of an ostensibly 'normal' or liberal politics—ought not be conceived as an ethical or political panacea (for similar arguments see, among others, Van Munster, 2009; Aradau, 2004; Parker, 2012). Relatedly, the case points to the limits of a mainstream ontological security IR literature. Responses to ontological insecurity or anxiety which do not invoke the nation in looking to restore a subjective sense of security may also be exclusionary; for instance, if they are rooted in a celebration of an alternative identity, including an 'entrepreneurial energy' (Kinnvall and Mitzen, 2020). Otherwise put, a conception of home (Mitzen, 2018) as a post-national or 'post-Westphalian market', might also create important exclusions. In the case explored, New Labour discourses, recent ECJ judgements on FMoP/EU citizenship, and the UK's post-FMoP 'settled/ pre-settled status' scheme, all contain just such exclusions. In policy terms this means the marginalization of the economically 'inactive' or 'dependent'—in less pejorative terms, the *most vulnerable*—EU citizens in the UK.

The argument has normative implications for the politics of FMoP in the UK, pointing to the need to reject the nationalist-populist securitization of EU citizens in the post-Brexit UK and (whenever politically possible) champion a return to the EU FMoP regime (if not the EU). But it would also mean supporting a version of that regime that is far more inclusive than that promoted by its (neo)liberal advocates in both the UK and the EU, as part of a broader de-securitization that champions a post-national 'social' EU citizenship within a 'social Europe'. An important question for progressives then is, how to begin to shift the political mood in order to legitimate the inclusion not only of EU workers-cum-entrepreneurs, but also of the most vulnerable EU citizens (in the UK and beyond)?

We might start, as Kristeva (1993: 51) has suggested, with 'a thorough investigation of our remarkable relationship with both the other and strangeness within ourselves.' In our case, such an investigation would entail problematizing both the ontologically secure entrepreneurial 'self' and its economically delinquent 'other', pointing to an inherent, *shared*, ontological insecurity (Eberle, 2017). It would point to the fluidity and contingency of self and, therefore, self-other distinctions and associated legal categories such as, in our case, economically 'active' and 'inactive'. Such an investigation might be effectively relayed via what Rorty (1998) has called 'sentimental education'; an education that seeks, particularly through the telling of stories, to expand the reference of 'the self', a 'we', or 'our kind of people'.

In our case, such stories would show us how self-sufficient entrepreneurial citizen-subjects can very quickly be rendered as dependent and delinquent 'others' when navigating the interconnected vagaries of a neoliberal labour market and a welfare system conditional on

prior economic activity. They would reveal how EU citizens can, through no fault of their own, lose their precarious jobs and thereafter fail to meet welfare conditions; show us how those who cannot produce documentation because they worked in informal employment can also fall foul of those conditions; recount how part-time workers and the low-paid (disproportionately women and minorities) have had their work re-classified as 'marginal' such that they are denied welfare; highlight the ways in which the victims of domestic abuse have lost access to welfare after leaving their (economically active) abuser on whose worker status they depended (for a range of these stories, see O'Brien's (2017) vital book); draw attention to the plight of already-vilified groups such as Roma, whose economic strategies render them particularly prone to exclusion from social rights (Nagy, 2018; Brown, 2021); and describe how destitute EU citizens become homeless and subject to deportation (Bramley et al., 2021). Such stories would be clear that, with the end of FMoP, such marginalization remains a reality for those EU citizens in the UK—many of whom were already among the most precarious—granted a 'pre-settled' status. These stories 'educate' us on how precarity, vulnerability and destitution are *produced*—often by political elites for their own gain—and how an economically secure 'self' can all too easily become a marginalized 'other'. It is to be hoped that the widespread publicization of such stories will, as Kristeva (1993: 51) puts it, 'lead people to give up hunting for the scapegoat outside their group' and establish the conditions of possibility for a far more 'social' EU citizenship.

Even that ostensibly progressive or 'social' post-national citizenship is no ethical end-point or panacea. In the present case, to the extent that a social Europe narrates an ontologically secure *European* or *EU* citizen-subject, it at once constitutes and confirms the predicament of a range of 'others', not least of all non-EU 'irregular' migrants present in UK/EU space. But the very problematization of an ontologically secure self and other that is entailed in the

ongoing process of sentimental education, in turn renders increasingly problematic the attempt to exclude migrants from beyond the EU. To paraphrase Rorty (2006, p. 57), while ‘today’s chains are often forged from hammers which struck off yesterday’s ... [those] chains might, with luck, get a little lighter and more breakable each time.’

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