EU border security and migration into the European Union: FRONTEX and securitisation through practices

Sarah Léonard

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Sarah Léonard[a,b]*

[a]School of ESPaCH, University of Salford, Crescent House, Salford M5 4WT, UK; [b]Centre d'études européennes, Sciences Po Paris, 27 rue Saint Guillaume, 75337 Paris Cedex 07, France

This article examines the contribution of the activities of FRONTEX, the Agency in charge of managing operational cooperation at the external borders of the European Union (EU), to the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU. It does so by applying a sociological approach to the study of securitisation processes, which, it argues, is particularly well-suited to the study of securitisation processes in the EU. Such an approach privileges the study of securitising practices over securitising 'speech acts' in securitisation processes. After identifying two main types of securitising practices in general, the article systematically examines the activities of FRONTEX and the extent to which they can be seen as securitising practices on the basis of these two (non-mutually exclusive) criteria. The article shows that all the main activities of FRONTEX can be considered to be securitising practices. The article therefore concludes that the activities of FRONTEX contribute to a significant extent to the ongoing securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU. It also highlights that this does not automatically make FRONTEX a significant securitising actor in its own right and that more research is needed on the relations between FRONTEX and the EU institutions, especially in the light of the current negotiations aiming to amend the founding Regulation of FRONTEX.

Keywords: border security; migration; FRONTEX; securitisation; European Union

Introduction

Migration is one of the most contentious issues in Europe. Migratory flows, be the flows of asylum-seekers, labour migrants or irregular migrants, have been associated with various problems, including terrorism, criminality and social unrest (Weiner 1992/93, Lohrmann 2000). As a consequence, migration and asylum issues have become important topics of contemporary security politics in Europe, both in the 'real world' of policies and in the scholarly literature on the subject (Bigo 1998a, 1998b, 2001a, 2002, Huysmans 2000, 2006, Guild 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2009, but see also Kaunert 2009). This trend has often been referred to as 'the securitisation of migration', that is, the extreme politicisation of migration and its presentation as a security threat. There is a widespread view in the existing scholarly literature that this trend has been particularly visible in the EU asylum and migration policy (Huysmans 2000, 2006, Guild 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, Pellerin 2005, Colman 2006,

*Email: s.leonard@salford.ac.uk

Chebel d'Appollonia and Reich 2008, van Munster 2009).[1] In other words, it is generally believed that asylum and migration have been securitised in the EU and that this evolution has had a negative impact on the status of asylum-seekers and migrants, including the protection of their human rights (Brouwer and Catz 2003, Baldaccini and Guild 2007, Chebel d'Appollonia and Reich 2008, Guild 2009).

It is in this specific context of securitisation of asylum and migration that EU Member States decided to establish the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the EU, which is better known under its acronym FRONTEX.[2] It was created by Council Regulation EC 2007/2004 of 26 October 2004 with the main aim of supporting operational cooperation amongst EU Member States with regard to the management of the external borders. One of the most remarkable aspects of FRONTEX is the considerable amount of attention that it has attracted since its operational start in 2005. Its activities have generated much controversy and have been heavily criticised especially by human rights activists and pro-migrant groups. Several blogs and websites that are critical of the actions of European states and the EU towards migrants and asylum-seekers specifically focus on FRONTEX, such as the blog entitled *Frontexwatch*[3] and the website of the Noborder network.[4] Several pro-migrant associations have rallied around a 'Shut down FRONTEX!' slogan, whilst demonstrations have taken place not only in front of the seat of the Agency in Warsaw, but also in other towns and cities where FRONTEX training sessions took place, such as in Lübeck in August 2008.[5] The German non-governmental organisation (NGO) PRO ASYL handed in a petition to the European Parliament in December 2008 that demanded notably the following: 'Stop the deathtrap at the EU borders! FRONTEX activities which violate human rights must cease!' (PRO ASYL 2008). The organisers of the actions in Lübeck denounced the 'standardisation and militarisation' of border politics represented by FRONTEX. Thus, whilst criticisms of the EU asylum and migration policy are certainly not new, it appears that, in the last few years, FRONTEX has become the focal point for the sharp criticisms of pro-migrant and human rights groups.

Given that there is a widespread view in the scholarly literature that asylum and migration have been securitised in the EU, whilst, at the same time, FRONTEX has often been depicted by human rights NGOs as having launched a 'war against migrants' (see, for example, Noborder Network 2006), it is surprising that little attention has been given to the potentially significant contribution of FRONTEX's activities to the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU. This article precisely seeks to address the relative neglect of this issue in the existing scholarship. It is premised on the idea that, as argued by many scholars, asylum and migration had already been securitised in the EU at the time of the establishment of FRONTEX. Thus, the article does not seek to analyse how the activities of FRONTEX securitised asylum and migration in the EU for the first time, for they had already been securitised, but rather examines FRONTEX's contribution to the perpetuation of the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU. It argues that it is necessary to do so for several reasons. First of all, the criticisms levelled at FRONTEX by pro-migrant and human rights NGOs, as well as asylum and migration law experts (see Standing Committee of Experts on International Immigration, Refugee and Criminal Law 2006) suggest that the activities of the Agency may be playing a significant role in the securitisation of asylum and

migration. This role has not been fully comprehended yet, as the few existing academic articles on FRONTEX have focused on other aspects of the Agency than its potential contribution to the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU (see Carrera 2007, Jorry 2007, Pollak and Slominski 2009). Only Neal (2009) has examined FRONTEX through the lenses of securitisation theory, but he has focused on the origins of the Agency, rather than its practices once it was established. Thus, it is necessary to systematically analyse the activities of FRONTEX and assess the extent to and the ways in which they can be viewed as constituting securitising practices. Moreover, it is important to deepen the existing knowledge of the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU. To date, most studies of securitisation processes have tended to consider the EU as a monolithic actor and have not examined the EU internal institutional dynamics of securitisation. An examination of FRONTEX's activities, which are likely to contribute to the securitisation of asylum and migration according to NGOs' reports, constitutes a first step towards opening the 'black box' of the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU. In addition to further developing knowledge on FRONTEX and the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU, the article also contributes to the literature on securitisation, in particular the so-called 'sociological' approach to securitisation (Balzacq 2010) pioneered by Bigo (1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2008, see also Bigo and Tsoukala 2008), which privileges the role of practices over that of discourses in securitisation processes. In particular, it seeks to further refine the idea of securitising practice by developing two criteria to identify securitising practices.

   The article is structured as follows. It opens with a presentation of FRONTEX, which is situated in the context of the development of the EU asylum and migration policy that has been taking place since the mid-1990s. Then, the article presents the theoretical framework that will underpin the analysis, which is embedded in securitisation theory. It explains why a so-called 'sociological' approach to securitisation (Balzacq 2010), which privileges practices over discourses, is the most adequate in this case. The next section of the article applies the theoretical framework to the activities of FRONTEX and examines the ways in and the extent to which FRONTEX has been securitising asylum and migration in the EU. The article offers some conclusions with respect to FRONTEX and the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU, as well as the study of securitisation processes more generally.

FRONTEX and the EU asylum and migration policy

FRONTEX was created by Council Regulation EC 2007/2004 of 26 October 2004[6] with the main objective of coordinating operational cooperation amongst Member States to strengthen security at the external borders of the EU Member States. Whilst EU cooperation on asylum and migration matters started with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, cooperation regarding the control of the external borders of the Member States of the EU originally developed amongst some EU Member States within the Schengen group from 1985 onwards and especially after the entry into force of the Schengen Convention in 1995 (Monar 2006, pp. 74–75). The so-called 'Schengen *acquis*' was finally incorporated into the EU institutional framework with the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999, which also enacted a partial and gradual

shift from intergovernmentalism to a more communitarised approach in this policy area (Kaunert 2005, Peers and Rogers 2006, p. 169).[7] It is also that year that, EU cooperation on migration, asylum and external borders received an important impetus with the adoption of the 'Tampere Programme', a five-year work programme for the development of internal security policies in the EU. It notably called for the EU 'to develop common policies on asylum and immigration, while taking into account the need for a consistent control of external borders to stop illegal immigration and to combat those who organise it and commit related international crimes' (European Council 1999).

The willingness to strengthen cooperation amongst EU Member States with regard to external border controls – which was to ultimately lead to the creation of FRONTEX – was prompted by three main factors (see Léonard 2009). First of all, as already mentioned earlier in this article, migration flows have become an increasingly contentious issue in Europe, especially since the end of the Cold War. This has led European states to take various measures in a bid to curb the number of migrants, including the strengthening of border controls to restrict the access of migrants and asylum-seekers to their territory (Collinson 1993, Joly 1996, Guild 2006, Chebel d'Appollonia and Reich 2008). In addition, in the run-up to the 2004 'big bang' enlargement of the EU, some concerns were voiced about the alleged inability of the future Member States to effectively control the new external borders of the EU. From such a viewpoint, strengthening cooperation amongst EU Member States on border controls was seen as the most effective way to address the perceived lack of border control capabilities of the future EU Member States and their difficulties to meet the Schengen/EU border control standards (Monar 2006, p. 75). Finally, the tightening up of external border controls was also seen as an important contribution to the fight against terrorism in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 (Monar 2005, p. 147, Mitsilegas 2007, p. 362, Léonard 2010). The decision to establish an Agency, i.e. FRONTEX, to increase cooperation on the management of external borders amongst EU Member States came after a few years of intense debates, during which other institutional forms of cooperation were also considered and temporarily implemented in some cases. However, a detailed examination of the evolution of these arrangements is beyond the scope of the present article (see Léonard 2009). It is nevertheless important to highlight that FRONTEX has been given a key-role by the EU Member States in implementing the concept of 'integrated border management' (IBM). This concept has underpinned the development of EU cooperation on border controls since the Tampere programme in 1999 and refers to the idea of joining up all the activities of the public authorities of the Member States relating to border control and surveillance including border checks, the analysis of risks at the borders, and the planning of the personnel and facilities required.[8]

Having briefly outlined the origins of FRONTEX and the broader context of the EU asylum and migration policy in which it operates, it is now possible to consider the theoretical framework that will underpin the subsequent analysis of the activities of FRONTEX. It is embedded in what has often been presented as one of the most promising approaches to the study of 'new' security issues such as migration, namely securitisation theory (Huysmans 1997, Williams 2003).

Securitisation theory

Securitisation theory is an approach to the study of security that was originally developed by Ole Wæver in collaboration with other researchers, who have come to be known as the 'Copenhagen School'.[9] It is premised on the idea that the world, including security threats, is socially constructed, which means that it is impossible to ever fully assess whether threats are 'real' or not. Therefore, what security scholars can and should study is the process through which an issue becomes socially constructed and recognised as a security threat. According to Wæver and his colleagues, security issues come into being through a discursive process that dramatises and prioritises them. More precisely, in a successful securitisation process, a 'speech act' by a securitising actor presents an issue as an existential threat to the survival of a 'referent object' (e.g. a state, national identity, etc.) and is accepted as such by the 'audience' of the speech act (e.g. the government, public opinion, etc.). Moreover, according to the Copenhagen School, the securitisation of an issue allows the successful securitising actor to claim that the issue '[requires] emergency measures and [justifies] actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure' (Buzan *et al.* 1998, p. 25). In other words, by labelling an issue a 'security issue', the securitising actor 'moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it' (Wæver 1995, p. 55). Thus, for Wæver and his colleagues, there are no security issues in themselves, but only issues that have been 'securitised', i.e. constructed as such through securitising *speech acts*. Also, as indicated by the borrowing of the concept of 'speech act' from linguistics, the Copenhagen School's understanding of securitisation is centred on discourse.[10]

The Copenhagen School's work on securitisation has generated an intense debate in security studies in recent years, as various scholars have put forward suggestions for further developing and refining the original version of the securitisation framework. Whereas some scholars have retained the emphasis on the role of discourses in securitisation processes (see, for example, Vuori 2008, Atland and Ven Bruusgaard 2009), other scholars led by Didier Bigo have developed a different approach to the study of securitisation processes, which emphasises the importance of practices, rather than discourses, in such processes. According to Bigo (2000, p. 194), '[i]t is possible to securiti[s]e certain problems without speech or discourse and the military and the police have known that for a long time. The practical work, discipline and expertise are as important as all forms of discourse.' In other words, the acts of the bureaucratic structures or networks linked to security practices and the specific technologies that they use (Huysmans 2004) may play a more active role in securitisation processes than securitising speech acts.[11] Bigo (2002, pp. 65–66) has also made this point precisely with reference to the issue of migration, as he claims that

> [t]he securitization of immigration (...) emerges from the correlation between some successful speech acts of political leaders, the mobilization they create for and against some groups of people, and the specific field of security professionals (...). It comes also from a range of administrative practices such as population profiling, risk assessment, statistical calculation, category creation, proactive preparation, and what may be termed a specific *habitus* of the 'security professional' with its ethos of secrecy and concern for the management of fear or unease.

Thus, in sum, the Copenhagen School's approach to securitisation processes privileges the study of speech acts, whereas the approach pioneered by Bigo highlights the role of practices. Another difference is that the Copenhagen School's framework is based on a relatively precise definition of the securitising speech act, whereas Bigo's work does not offer any precise definition of 'securitising practice'. This is because the securitising speech act is the fixed unit of analysis in the Copenhagen School's analytical framework, whilst they leave open the question of who exactly can be a securitising actor. In contrast, the fixed unit of analysis in Bigo's approach is the security professionals, whose practices he studies without seeking to precisely define what securitising practices are and by which criteria they can be identified.

It has been argued that it is possible to combine insights from the two approaches outlined above to study both the discourses and practices of securitisation (Léonard 2007). As noted by Bigo, such a strategy can reveal interesting differences between everyday practices on the one hand and official discourses and policies on the other hand (Bigo 1998a, 2001b). However, notably because of space constraints, this article will focus on analysing practices, rather than discourses, of securitisation. It is argued that a focus on practices, rather than discourses, is also more adequate when analysing securitisation processes in the EU asylum and migration policy for two main reasons. Firstly, in cases where there is a persistent or recurrent security threat, a new drama establishing securitisation is no longer necessary as securitisation has become institutionalised over time (Buzan *et al.* 1998, pp. 27–28). A focus on discourses is therefore misguided in such cases, as they are not likely to indicate the existence of securitisation dynamics, which can only be revealed through an analysis of the practices of the institutions that have been established to deal with a given issue. This argument is particularly relevant for the case examined in this article, as FRONTEX was created in a context where the EU asylum and migration policy had already been shaped by a securitisation trend for a certain number of years (see Huysmans 2000, 2006). When one considers recent official discourses by the EU institutions on asylum and migration, one is struck by the fact that they tend to frame these issues mainly as humanitarian issues (Léonard 2007, Gammeltoft-Hansen 2008, Hernández-Carretero 2009, p. 1). For this reason, it is therefore necessary to consider the practices of the EU institutions and agencies such as FRONTEX in order to assess the extent to and the ways in which they securitise asylum and migration. Secondly, it is argued that it is also more adequate to focus on practices, rather than discourses, when analysing securitisation processes (regarding not only migration and asylum, but also other issues) in the EU. As even acknowledged by the Copenhagen School itself, there are cases where a logic of security is at play, even though no securitising discourse is uttered in the public sphere to justify it (Buzan *et al.* 1998, p. 28). Actually, this specific situation regularly occurs in the EU context, because of its unique political and institutional features. The EU is evidently not a state; it has no government or president to make the kind of dramatic securitising speech acts that can be identified in national contexts – such as those made by the British Government in 2002 to construct Iraq as a threat to the UK (see Roe 2008). This view is notably shared by Balzacq (2008). Analysing the EU's counter-terrorism policy, he observes that '[on] occasions, securitisation changes in scope and scale – for example, a new threat is identified – in the absence of a discursive articulation' (Balzacq 2008, p. 76). This leads him to suggest a shift in

the study of securitisation processes 'away from discourse and towards the "empirical referents of policy'' – policy tools or instruments – that the EU utilizes to alleviate public problems defined as threats' (*idem*). For these two main reasons, this article will therefore analyse the role of the practices (or activities) of FRONTEX, rather than its discourses, in the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU.

Once it has been decided to focus on the analysis of securitising practices, rather than securitising discourses, it becomes necessary to define what is meant by 'securitising practices' in the context of the EU asylum and migration policy in order to be able to identify these securitising practices empirically. As Bigo's writings do not offer any precise definition of securitising practices, this article will build upon ideas developed by Balzacq (2008). In contrast with Bigo, Balzacq does not use the term 'practice', but rather the concept of 'tool of securitization', which he also uses interchangeably with 'instrument of securitization'. Nevertheless, his use of the concept seems to indicate that it is close to the idea of securitising practice as meant by Bigo – and which will be used in this article as it is more commonly used than securitisation 'tool' or 'instrument'. Balzacq (2008, p. 79) defines a 'tool of securitization' as 'an identifiable social and technical "dispositif'' or device *embodying a specific threat image* through which public action is configured in order to address a security issue' (emphasis added). Thus, the key-idea to retain from this definition is that securitising practices are activities that, by their very intrinsic qualities, convey the idea to those who observe them, directly or indirectly, that the issue they are tackling is a security threat. When this general definition is applied to the case of the EU asylum and migration policy, it means that securitising practices can be defined as activities that, in themselves, convey the idea that asylum-seekers and migrants are a security threat to the EU.

The next necessary step is then to identify criteria for the identification of these securitising practices empirically. If these practices embody a 'specific threat image', to use Balzacq's words, then it means that these practices have characteristics that allow those who become aware of them to know that their deployment aims to tackle a security threat and is therefore justified by the existence of such a threat. This article puts forward the idea that there are two main types of practices which, when they are deployed, strongly suggest that there exists a security threat to be tackled and can therefore be considered 'securitising practices'. The first type of such practices refers to practices that are usually deployed to tackle issues that are widely considered to be security threats, such as a foreign armed attack or terrorism. For example, the deployment of military troops and military equipment such as tanks to tackle an issue conveys the message that this issue is a security threat that needs to be tackled urgently, thereby socially constructing this issue as a security threat.[12] The second type of securitising practices is 'extraordinary' practices. Their exceptional character suggests that the problem they are tackling is also exceptional and cannot be dealt with by 'normal' or 'ordinary' measures. The deployment of such extraordinary measures therefore constructs the issue that they are addressing as a security threat. 'Extraordinary' here is not only understood as 'outside the normal bounds of political procedure' or 'above politics' as suggested by the Copenhagen School (Buzan *et al.* 1998), who appears to have been strongly influenced by Schmitt's ideas on this point (Williams 2003). Rather, 'extraordinary' is understood more broadly as 'out of the ordinary' in order for the analytical framework to be able to capture the fact that not all securitising practices necessary involve emergency,

exceptionalism or illegality, as suggested by Wæver and his colleagues. Also, the extraordinary character of a measure has to be assessed with regard to a specific issue in a certain political context. In other words, for a measure to be identified as 'out of the ordinary', it is not required that it has never been implemented before, but rather that is has not been previously applied to a specific policy issue in a given political context. This broad understanding of 'extraordinary measures' echoes the broad understanding of security underpinning this article, in line with the work of scholars such as Bigo (1998a, 2002) and Abrahamsen (2005, p. 59), who conceptualises security as involving a 'continuum from normalcy to worrisome/troublesome to risk and to existential threat'. As a result of this broad conceptualisation of security, which differs from a narrower definition that would focus on existential threats and exceptionalism, some practices will be interpreted as securitising practices in the subsequent analysis, whereas scholars drawing upon a narrower understanding of security may have seen these practices as merely embodying a 'risk approach' to the policy issue concerned.

In the context of the EU asylum and migration policy, and drawing upon the insights above, securitising practices can therefore be identified as activities concerning asylum and migration that (1) have traditionally been implemented to tackle issues that are largely perceived to be security issues (such as drug-trafficking, terrorism, a foreign invasion, etc.) and/or (2) are extraordinary, not only in the sense of 'exceptional' or 'illegal', but more broadly in the sense of 'out of the ordinary' (i.e. never or rarely applied previously to asylum and migration issues in the EU and its Member States). Although only one of these criteria needs to be fulfilled for a specific activity to be considered a securitising practice in this framework, they are not mutually exclusive, which means that a specific activity can fulfil both criteria at the same time. Having defined the criteria for the identification of securitising practices, one can now apply them to FRONTEX through a systematic and detailed analysis of its activities. Before doing so, it is important to add that this analysis is premised on the understanding that securitisation does not occur at one specific moment in time, but is a more diffuse and long-term process (Abrahamsen 2005). It also requires regular 'positive reinforcements', such as the regular enactment of securitising practices; otherwise, securitisation will likely fade away, as other social constructions of the issue at hand will take priority. Therefore, as previously noted, this article does not seek to analyse how FRONTEX securitised asylum and migration in the EU for the first time, for it did not, but rather examines the extent to and the specific ways in which this Agency contributes to the ongoing securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU.

The activities of FRONTEX: securitising practices?

EU Member States decided to establish FRONTEX in 2004, with the main aim of '[facilitating] the application of existing and future Community measures relating to the management of external borders by ensuring the coordination of Member States' actions in the implementation of those measures' (recital 4 of Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004). The Agency started its work in October 2005 and has its headquarters in Warsaw (Baldaccini 2010, p. 230). Its budget has four strands, the most important of which is by far a Community subsidy, which, incidentally, gives the European Parliament a substantial financial leverage on the Agency (Léonard

2009). According to its founding Regulation, FRONTEX has six 'main tasks': (1) coordinating operational cooperation between Member States regarding the management of external borders; (2) assisting Member States in the training of national border guards, including establishing common training standards; (3) conducting risk analyses; (4) following up on developments in research relevant for the control and surveillance of external borders; (5) assisting Member States when increased technical and operational assistance at external borders is required; and (6) assisting Member States in organising joint return operations. The remainder of this section examines each of these tasks of FRONTEX to assess the ways in and the extent to which the Agency's activities have amounted to securitising practices and have thereby contributed to the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU.

The coordination of operational cooperation between Member States regarding the management of external borders

Amongst all of FRONTEX's tasks, the coordination of joint operations at the external borders of the Member States of the EU is certainly the task that has attracted most attention, especially from pro-migrant NGOs and the media, as well as scholars (Carrera 2007, Wolff 2008, Baldaccini 2010, Rijpma 2010). It is also the type of operational activities on which FRONTEX spends, by far, most of its budget (e.g. about €40 million in 2009) (FRONTEX 2009b, p. 10). FRONTEX has been given competences to coordinate joint operations at the air, land and sea external borders, which can be proposed by Member States or initiated by the Agency itself in agreement with the Member State(s) concerned (Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004). These joint operations bring together border guards and technical equipment from various Member States and Schengen Associated Countries to conduct joint reinforced border controls for a certain period of time. Decisions on launching operations are normally based on the results of the risk analyses conducted by the Agency (see below), although political considerations seem to sometimes prevail (COWI 2009, p. 41). The deployment of the joint operations is facilitated by the existence of the 'Central Record of Available Technical Equipment' (CRATE), which lists items of surveillance and control equipment that Member States are willing to put at the disposal of another Member State for a temporary period of time. At the beginning of 2010, the CRATE comprised 26 helicopters, 113 vessels, 22 fixed-wing aircrafts, and 476 other items, such as vehicles, mobile radar units, thermal cameras and heartbeat detectors (FRONTEX 2010b). Finally, an interesting point to note is that the exact division of responsibilities between the Agency and the EU Member States in the course of such operations has been a very controversial topic, in particular in cases where migrants have drowned at sea during the deployment of a joint operation coordinated by FRONTEX (FRONTEX 2007b). In line with its founding Regulation, FRONTEX's official position has consistently been that the Agency's role is strictly limited to that of a coordinator of the actions of the EU Member States, with which the responsibility for the control of the external borders fully remains. However, some scholars such as Baldaccini (2010, p. 234) have argued that the planning and coordinating role of FRONTEX also gives the Agency a certain degree of responsibility for the events occurring during the joint operations that it coordinates.

Whatever stance one takes over this complex issue, it can be argued that the joint operations coordinated by FRONTEX are securitising practices on two accounts. First of all, such coordinated actions amongst various states, particularly in the case of the sea joint operations, have traditionally been deployed to address more traditional security issues such as a military attack from a third state, piracy or drug-trafficking (Lutterbeck 2006). Given that some of the actors involved in these joint operations have a semi-military status in their country, such as the *Guardia Civil* in Spain or the *Guardia di Finanza* in Italy (Lutterbeck 2006), these joint operations that aim to stem migration flows can be seen as a 'semi-militarisation' of border controls and thereby a securitisation of migration flows given the traditional role of the military in addressing security issues. In addition, the joint operations coordinated by FRONTEX can also be seen as securitising practices because they are extraordinary practices. Let us focus on the joint operations at sea to develop this argument. Firstly, such operations are extraordinary in the broadest sense of the word, i.e. 'out of the ordinary'. Although such operations are not entirely new, as several countries such as Italy, the USA and Australia have already conducted naval operations to stem migration flows (Kneebone 2006, Kneebone 2010, Legomsky 2006, Lutterbeck 2006, di Pascale 2010, Frenzen 2010), the sophistication of the operations coordinated by FRONTEX, notably with respect to the intelligence gathered prior to the operations, the number of states involved on the EU side, the participation of some states of origin and transit through various agreements, the existence of the CRATE and the increasing length of the operations, puts them in a league of their own (despite the difficulties and limitations that have affected some operations, such as linguistic problems (COWI 2009, p. 36)).

Secondly, these joint operations at sea can also be considered extraordinary because the legality of some of their aspects has been called into question. It is impossible in this article to fully do justice to such a complex topic, as these joint operations take place at the intersection of various legal instruments from both the European Community and international legal orders. It suffices to say here that there are several aspects of the joint operations at sea coordinated by FRONTEX that are contentious from a legal point of view (see Gil-Bazo 2006, Commission of the European Communities 2007, Fischer-Lescano *et al.* 2009, Hernández-Carretero 2009, Trevisanut 2009, Baldaccini 2010, den Heijer 2010, Guild and Bigo 2010, Papastavridis 2010). The most problematic aspect of the operations is that their organisation does not seem to ensure respect for the '*non-refoulement*' principle, which is a cornerstone of the international protection regime. As explained by Klug and Howe (2010, p. 70), it 'prohibits States from acting to "expel" or "return" individuals to situations where they may face persecution or where their fundamental human rights may be at risk'. As argued by Papastavridis (2010, p. 75) in relation to the joint operations coordinated by FRONTEX, 'the application of the [principle of *non-refoulement*] appears to be especially problematic in the majority of these operations since it is very likely that the persons onboard the intercepted vessels would be forced to return to their countries of origin, where they may be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment'. All the persons that are intercepted, returned or otherwise prevented to reach the EU's territory as a result of the operations coordinated by FRONTEX are treated as if they were all illegal immigrants. No provision is made for the potential asylum-seekers amongst them,

which can lead to situations where the EU Member States do not fully respect their international obligations.

Thus, in summary, this section has demonstrated that the joint operations coordinated by FRONTEX, which represent its most important activity from a budgetary point of view, can be considered securitising practices on several grounds. They are a type of practices that have traditionally been deployed to deal with security threats, whilst they can also be seen as 'out of the ordinary' and illegal in some respects.

Assistance to the training of national border guards

Another important task of FRONTEX is to assist Member States with the training of national border guards, including the establishment of common training standards. To date, FRONTEX has harmonised basic training for national border guards across the EU through the development of a Common Core Curriculum (CCC) and a Mid-Level Course (MLC). In addition, it has developed targeted specialised courses on a variety of issues such as the detection of falsified documents and stolen cars, joint return operations, dog handling, and air-naval cooperation for pilots performing surveillance operations. The 2008 FRONTEX Annual Report also mentions that 'during [that year] more emphasis was given to training on fundamental rights issues, which were included in training programmes' (FRONTEX 2009a), but no details on the contents of such training have been made publicly available.[13] In addition, FRONTEX also runs regular 'Rapid Border Intervention Team' (RABIT) training events (see below). The aims of these training activities are to enhance the competence of national borders guards in the EU and to develop common standards, which will strengthen operational cooperation during the joint operations coordinated by FRONTEX. With regard to the delivery of the training, the rather small size of the FRONTEX Training Unit has led it to outsource a significant amount of training. It has established a network of training coordinators, which implement common training tools in national contexts, as well as a 'partnership academy system' that is based on the training offers made by the EU Member States.

Evidently, the content of the training activities organised by FRONTEX – in particular the training sessions relating to the detection of false documents and air-naval cooperation in surveillance operations – reinforces the idea that the external borders of the EU Member States are under threat by irregular migration and need to be protected through the use of sophisticated technological means, such as aerial surveillance operations. The harmonisation of the border guards training curriculum through the CCC project and the lead taken by those with the highest level of expertise in the provision of training (i.e. existing training academies already specialising in tackling specific types of threats to the borders) have led to a general increase in the level of perception of the threat to the EU external borders, as well as in the levels of professionalism and expertise amongst border guards. Change has been particularly significant in countries that did not have much experience in dealing with incoming flows of migrants, in particular the new EU Member States. It is also striking to see that, despite the fact that no state has ever asked for the deployment of a RABIT, a significant number of RABIT exercises regularly take place. For example, in 2009, four RABIT training courses took place, involving 19

Member States (FRONTEX 2010a, p. 46). They reinforce the perception and the representation of migration flows as a threat that could become so acute that it would require emergency action. For these reasons, it can be concluded that, although it appears that the issues of human rights and international protection are being slowly and gradually integrated into the curriculum, FRONTEX's activities that aim to assist Member States in the training of their border guards have contributed to the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU.

Conduct of risk analyses

Another of the main tasks of FRONTEX is, in its own words, 'to gather situational pictures based on intelligence and by analysing the situation to assess changes, risks and threats with possible impact on the security of the EU's external borders' (FRONTEX 2009b, p. 29). The Agency often presents itself as an 'intelligence-driven organisation'. The use of the concept of 'intelligence', which is of widespread use in FRONTEX documents, although it was not included in the founding Regulation, is interesting in itself. Given that 'intelligence' has traditionally referred to information concerning threats to (national) security (Gill and Phythian 2006, p. 1), the use of this concept, rather than more neutral concepts such as 'data' or 'information', already contributes to securitising asylum and migration in the EU. This is reinforced by the increasingly sophisticated structures developed by FRONTEX to gather, produce and exchange information on the migration flows towards the EU, which are reminiscent of the structures that have been developed to continuously monitor traditional security threats, such as foreign armed attacks.

Within FRONTEX, risk analysis is carried out by the Risk Analysis Unit (RAU) using the Common Integrated Risk Management Model (CIRAM), which was initially developed by a European Council Expert Group in 2002 before being updated in 2007 (COWI 2009, p. 47). FRONTEX produces various types of reports aiming to assess the extent and evolution of irregular migration flows, as well as the 'risk' that they pose to the security of the EU external borders. In particular, it releases an Annual Risk Assessment (ARA) covering the EU external borders in general, which provides strategic long-term analysis and constitutes the basis for the Agency's annual work plan. This report is circulated within FRONTEX and is also sent to the Management Board and the FRONTEX Risk Analysis Network (FRAN), which consists of the RAUs of the EU Member States ad the Schengen Associated Countries. The ARA reports are complemented and updated by 'Interim Annual Risk Analysis' (I-ARA) reports, as well as operational short-term risk analyses that support the joint operations coordinated by FRONTEX (COWI 2009, p. 46). In addition, the Agency produces tailored risk analyses (TRAs), which focus on a specific country, geographical region or specific phenomenon. For example, in 2007, FRONTEX released TRAs on irregular migration from China to the EU and on the Black Sea as a potential route for irregular migration into the EU (FRONTEX 2008). FRONTEX also prepares joint risk analyses with other organisations. In particular, FRONTEX has developed a close working relationship with Europol. Both agencies contribute to each other's analytical bulletins and have delivered joint reports, such as that on the 'determination of high risk routes regarding illegal migration in the Western Balkan countries' (FRONTEX 2008). In addition, FRONTEX has cooperated with the countries involved in the 'Western

Balkans Risk Analysis Network' that it has helped establish[14] to produce the first FRONTEX-Western Balkans joint illegal migration risk assessment on the Balkans in 2010 (FRONTEX 2010a, p. 25). The Agency is also interested in developing 'data collection plans' with third countries such as Russia, the Ukraine and Moldova (FRONTEX 2009b, pp. 25–26).

Finally, a particularly interesting development from the point of view of securitisation studies has been the establishment of the FRONTEX Situation Centre (FSC), which took up its functions at the beginning of 2009. Its main aim is to provide a 'real time' picture of the situation at the external borders of the EU with regard to irregular migration. It can also initiate a '24/7 emergency response mechanism' 'when a situation is critical and needs a high level of attention' (FRONTEX 2009a, p. 18). This is an interesting development because, until then, existing Situation Centres such as those of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the United Nations in the field of peacekeeping (Peacekeeping Situation Centre) and the EU (Joint Situation Centre) had always been tasked with monitoring and providing intelligence regarding more traditional security threats. For example, the EU Joint Situation Centre, which is located within the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, continuously monitors and provides intelligence on issues that have traditionally been viewed as security threats such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or terrorism to the Council of the EU. It also contributes to early warning and provides facilities for crisis task force. The FRONTEX Joint Situation Centre can therefore be seen as another example of the application of specific practices to migration, which had hitherto only been applied to issues widely considered to be security threats. Thus, this section has demonstrated that FRONTEX has been active in developing increasingly sophisticated structures to gather, produce and disseminate amongst EU Member States what it calls 'intelligence' on irregular migration flows. Given that such intelligence structures have only traditionally been developed to monitor security threats, the activities of FRONTEX in the field of risk analysis can also be seen as securitising practices that contribute to the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU.[15]

Follow up on developments in research relevant for external border controls and surveillance

Research and development is another area where the activities of FRONTEX can be seen as securitisation practices. The Directive establishing FRONTEX gave the Agency the competence to follow up on developments in research that are relevant for external border surveillance and controls and to disseminate such information to the Member States and the European Commission. In practice, a Research and Development Unit has been established, which aims to act as a 'coordinator and facilitator' in border-related research and development activities (FRONTEX 2007a, p. 18). It follows such activities and disseminates research results through the release of studies, such as that on automated border controls, and information bulletins. Moreover, it organises events that bring together representatives of the Member States, the industry, the research community and 'end-users' to discuss the 'operational needs' of the Member States (FRONTEX 2007a, p. 18). For example, in 2009, it organised a conference on the use of biometric technologies in border controls (FRONTEX 2010a, p. 30), whilst it ran a workshop on the use of unmanned

aircraft systems – more commonly known as 'drones' – in border surveillance in 2007 (FRONTEX 2008, p. 53). In developing increasingly close relations with private sector companies specialising in security and surveillance technologies, FRONTEX contributes to the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU by signalling that surveillance and control technologies traditionally used to address security problems are adequate to deal with migrants and asylum-seekers. In addition, FRONTEX also seeks to influence the development of the EU research agenda (FRONTEX 2009b, p. 11), notably to ensure the availability of research funding for research projects on 'border security'. The Head of FRONTEX's Research and Development Unit is a member of the European Research and Innovation Forum (ESRIF), which works as an Advisory Board that influences the development of the EU security research agenda, and chairs its Committee on Border Security, in addition to participating in the evaluation of the proposals submitted for funding from the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) managed by the European Commission (COWI 2009, pp. 49–50). Thus, the Agency is active in ensuring that the issue of migration control is part of the EU security agenda and that funding is available to support border security-related research and development activities, which will further strengthen the linkage between migration and security. This section has therefore demonstrated that the activities of FRONTEX at various stages of the research and development cycle can be identified as securitising practices, which contribute to the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU.

Assistance to Member States in cases where increased technical and operational assistance at external borders is required

FRONTEX has also been tasked with assisting Member States in circumstances when they require increased technical and operational assistance. This specific task is particularly interesting from the point of view of the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU. The founding Regulation foresaw in its Article 8 that 'one or more Member States confronted with circumstances requiring increased technical and operational assistance (...) may request the Agency for assistance'. Such assistance was to take the form of support from the Agency for the organisation of coordination between two or more Member States or the deployment of experts from FRONTEX to help the national authorities of the state making the request. However, in 2007, these provisions were amended by a Regulation establishing the new mechanism of the RABITs. This change was justified on the grounds that '[the] current possibilities for providing efficient practical assistance (...) at European level are not considered sufficient, in particular where Member States are faced with the arrival of large numbers of third-country nationals trying to enter the territory of the Member States illegally' (recital 5 of Regulation (EC) No 863/2007). In other words, according to that perspective, migration flows can be so threatening to some EU Member States that they would not be able to cope with them, even with the help of the cooperation mechanisms already in place. This perception led EU Member States to establish the RABITs, which are teams of 'specially trained experts from other Member States' that can be deployed on the territory of a Member State requiring assistance 'for a limited period of time (...) in exceptional and urgent situations' (Recitals 6 and 7 of Regulation (EC) 863/2007).

The RABITs are particularly remarkable in two respects. First of all, their creation has been presented as a contribution to 'increasing solidarity and mutual assistance between Member States' (recital 6 of Regulation (EC) 863/2007). Secondly, in contrast with the entirely voluntary participation in the joint operations coordinated by FRONTEX, RABITS are based on the principle of 'compulsory solidarity'. EU Member States are required to contribute border guards to the 'Rapid Pool' and are obliged to make them available for deployment at the request of FRONTEX, unless they are themselves faced with an exceptional situation (Article 4, Regulation (EC) 863/2007).

To date, no EU Member State has ever requested the deployment of a RABIT. However, as explained earlier, RABIT training exercises are regularly organised, which perpetuate the idea that, at any time, migration flows could constitute an emergency situation requiring a rapid response. Also, RABITs – the development and activation of which are the responsibility of FRONTEX – embody the application, for the first time to the issue of migration, of a type of mechanism that has traditionally been developed to deal with emergency and acute threats such as foreign armed attacks. The idea of mandatory participation of every Member State to tackle the emergency situation in the name of solidarity is reminiscent of the 'solidarity clause' of the North-Atlantic Treaty. For these reasons it can be argued that FRONTEX's activities in relation to the RABITs can also be seen as securitising practices.

Assistance to Member States for the organisation of joint return operations

The Council Regulation establishing FRONTEX has also given the Agency tasks relating to the so-called 'EU return policy', that is, the policy that aims to send back to their country or origin (or a country through which they have transited) those whose asylum application has been rejected or who have otherwise been found in an illegal situation on the territory of one of the EU Member States. More precisely, the Agency has been tasked with providing assistance in the organisation of joint return operations by the Member States – which, in practice, take place by air in most cases–and identifying best practices concerning the acquisition of travel documents for those to be expelled from the EU territory and the removal of third country nationals in an illegal situation. Article 9 of the Regulation also stipulates that FRONTEX 'may use Community financial means available in the field of return'.

After a rather slow start, especially compared to the area of joint operations at sea, this is an area of activities that has recently become increasingly important for the Agency (FRONTEX 2010a, p. 18). In addition to producing two documents outlining best practices in relation to both the acquisition of travel documents and the removal of illegally present third-country nationals by air, FRONTEX has developed a 'Return Section' on the ICONet – a secure web-based information and coordination network used by the migration management services of the EU Member States – to manage the assistance regarding joint return operations. It can be used by Member States to announce the return flights that they intend to organise so that other EU Member States can also participate in these return operations, by filling in the planes with other persons that they also intended to expel to the same country or region (Guild and Bigo 2010, pp. 271–272). For example, in 2009, Austria organised a joint return operation in which eight other EU Member States and

Schengen Associated Countries (Romania, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland, Germany, Norway and Sweden) participated, which resulted in the deportation of 50 persons back to Nigeria (FRONTEX 2009c). The overall responsibility for the implementation of any given return operation remains with the organising and leading country, and not FRONTEX. However, the Agency plays an increasingly important role in return operations. It uses its experience to assist EU Member States in coordinating them and co-finances some of them. It may also have staff participating in the advance mission sent to the destination country of the return flight or onboard the return flight (COWI 2009, pp. 57–58), whilst it is planned that it will charter aircrafts for joint return flights from 2010 onwards (COWI 2009, p. 58; FRONTEX 2010b). 'Needs and possibilities' for joint return operations are identified by FRONTEX and the so-called 'Core Country Group' (CCG), that has been identified as the 'group of core countries experienced in return operations' (FRONTEX 2010a, p. 18).

Thus, although FRONTEX does not have overall responsibility to organise joint return operations, it plays an increasingly important role in the EU return policy by facilitating the organisation of joint operations on the basis of its expertise and financial means. The activities of FRONTEX in this area can also be seen as securitising practices on the grounds that they are significantly 'out of the ordinary'. Nowhere else in the world, and never before, has there been such a high level of sophistication in the coordination of operations aiming to expel certain groups of migrants amongst such a large group of states. FRONTEX allows the EU Member States to plan and coordinate return operations more easily than before and can even assist them financially and logistically. What is also remarkable is that, in a similar fashion to what has been observed when analysing the joint surveillance and control operations and the training activities coordinated by FRONTEX, the lead is taken by the most experienced EU Member States, which then shares their experience and 'best practices' with the states that are less experienced in expelling migrants. For example, in 2009, all joint operations were organised by 'old' EU Member States that have had significant experience in dealing with migration flows over the last few years (as well as three operations by Switzerland), whilst some of them were joined in by several of the 'new' EU Member States, which have traditionally had little experience of immigration, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Latvia, Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta (FRONTEX 2009c). Consequently, it can be argued that FRONTEX's activities in the field of return operations can also be identified as securitising practices.

Conclusions

This article has demonstrated that all the main activities of FRONTEX can be considered to be securitising practices and have therefore significantly contributed to the ongoing securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU. From a theoretical point of view, this article has further developed the 'sociological' approach to securitisation, which privileges the role of practices over that of 'speech acts' in securitisation processes. It has argued that this approach to securitisation is particularly well-suited to the study of securitisation processes in the EU. The article has also sought to further refine and operationalise 'securitising practices' by identifying two main types of securitising practices, namely activities that have

traditionally been implemented to tackle issues that are largely perceived to be security threats and extraordinary activities.

From an empirical point of view, the article has showed that all the main activities of FRONTEX fall into at least one of the two (non-mutually exclusive) categories of securitising practices identified earlier, i.e. practices that have traditionally been implemented to address issues largely considered to be security threats and extraordinary practices. The activities of FRONTEX relating to the training of national border guards, the conduct of risk analyses and the follow-up on border security-related research fall into the first category of securitising practices. Other important FRONTEX's activities, such as the coordination of joint surveillance and control operations at the external borders and the assistance for the organisation of joint return operations, fulfil both criteria and can therefore be considered securitising practices on these two accounts. Thus, it can be argued that, through the increasing coordination of practices spearheaded by FRONTEX, but with a strong involvement of some of the EU Member States with the most advanced securitising practices of asylum and migration, there has been an overall increase in securitising practices directed at asylum-seekers and migrants in the EU. This is because FRONTEX, through its expertise, its coordination activities and its funding capacities, has facilitated EU Member States' involvement in securitising practices. In particular, it has allowed some states that do not have much experience in or financial means for dealing with migration to participate in securitising practices that they would have found significantly more difficult to develop without FRONTEX's assistance (see COWI 2009, p. 59).

However, it is important to note that the deployment of a wide range of securitising practices does not automatically make FRONTEX an important securitising actor *in itself* with regard to the EU asylum and migration policy. Indeed, FRONTEX has been established by the EU Member States, which have also given the Agency its specific competences. At this stage in its development, it is a rather weak actor, whose autonomy is significantly limited. Despite spectacular growths in both its budget and its staff, the activities of FRONTEX are to a significant extent both controlled by the Member States and dependent upon them for their execution, whilst also depending upon the European Parliament from a financial point of view as FRONTEX is a Community Agency (Léonard 2009). Its role is mostly limited to the coordination of Member States' activities, for which those remain formally responsible. In that respect, it can be argued that the strong criticisms levelled at FRONTEX for the shortcomings of the EU asylum and migration policy, as illustrated at the beginning of this article, are somewhat misguided. It is true that most activities of FRONTEX contribute to the securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU, which can be criticised on human rights grounds. Nevertheless, the extent to which FRONTEX can be seen as a securitising actor in itself should not be overestimated. More research is needed to assess more precisely the extent to which FRONTEX is an autonomous actor in the EU asylum and migration policy, taking both the formal (or legal) and informal autonomy of this Agency into account (Groenleer 2009).

Finally, it will also be important to observe the evolution of FRONTEX, as negotiations to amend the Council Regulation that established FRONTEX are currently under way following the submission of a proposal by the Commission in February 2010 (European Commission 2010, see European Parliament 2008). The

new Regulation, contrary to the founding Regulation, is to be adopted by both the European Parliament and the Council under the co-decision procedure. It could potentially enact significant changes regarding both the tasks attributed to FRONTEX and its relations with the EU institutions. The new FRONTEX Regulation could also reinforce the trend that is still modest, but that has recently developed in FRONTEX's activities, to also consider human rights issues when seeking to strengthen border security, as notably evidenced by the signing of working arrangements with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (June 2008) and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (May 2010).

In conclusion, this article has showed that all the main activities of FRONTEX can be seen as securitising practices. It can therefore be stated that FRONTEX's activities have significantly contributed to the ongoing securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU. Nevertheless, in the context of the strong criticisms levelled at FRONTEX by some pro-migrant groups, it is important not to conclude too hastily that FRONTEX is a significant securitising actor. It is mainly a coordinator of EU Member States' activities and its autonomy is significantly limited at present. However, important changes might be ahead. The outcome of the negotiations on the revised FRONTEX Regulation will therefore have a crucial impact on the contribution of FRONTEX's activities to the ongoing securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU.

Notes

1. A rare exception is Boswell (2007), who argues that there are other institutional dynamics at work in the development of asylum and migration policies in Europe, which can mitigate the securitisation trend. It is important to note that she does not focus on the development of the EU asylum and migration policy in particular, but considers the EU policy alongside national policies.
2. From '*frontières extérieures*' in French, i.e. 'external borders'.
3. Its URL is http://www.frontex.antira.info/frontexwatch [Accessed 1 June 2010].
4. Its URL is http://www.noborder.org/ [Accessed 1 June 2010].
5. More detailed information on these events, including pictures, is available at http://frontexplode.eu/action/ [Accessed 1 June 2010].
6. It was later amended by Regulation EC 863/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 July 2007 establishing a mechanism for the creation of RABITs.
7. Article 62(2)(a), within Title IV of the Treaty on European Community that governs visas, asylum, immigration and other policies related to the free movement of persons, gave the Community the power to adopt measures concerning the 'standards and procedures to be followed by Member States in carrying out checks on persons' at the external borders. It enacted only a partial communitarisation of asylum and migration matters, since it also established a transition period of five years (i.e. until 1 May 2004). During that time, the Commission and the Member States were to share the right of initiative. In addition, decisions had to be taken unanimously in the Council, whereas the European Parliament was only consulted on legislative proposals, rather than being fully involved in the policy-making process through the co-decision procedure (Kaunert 2005, Peers and Rogers 2006).
8. This concept was precisely defined by the Council only in 2006. The Council Conclusions on IBM outlined the five main dimensions of IBM: (1) border control, which includes border checks, border surveillance and relevant risk analysis and crime intelligence; (2) the detection and investigation of cross-border crime; (3) the 'four-tier access control model' (which includes activities in third countries, cooperation with neighbouring third countries, controls at the external border sites and inland border control activities inside the Schengen area); (4) inter-agency cooperation for border management and

international cooperation; and (5) coordination and coherence of the activities of the Member States and institutions, as well as other bodies of the Community and the Union (Council of the European Union, 2006).

9. After the location of the now defunct Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI), where this research programme was initially developed.

10. The Copenhagen School often summarises the securitisation framework as having one 'distinguishing feature', which is 'a specific rhetorical structure (survival, priority of action (...))' (Buzan *et al.* 1998, p. 26).

11. It is interesting to note that, with this emphasis on the practices of bureaucracies in securitisation processes, Bigo's work can be seen as the first attempt to open up the securitisation framework to insights from risk analysis (Aradau and van Munster 2007). From that viewpoint, one can argue that the 'risk approach' and 'securitisation approach' to the study of security may not be so far apart, although they will diverge more or less according to one's definitions of 'risk' and 'security'. There are important debates on how to define 'security' in security studies (Sheehan 2005, Dannreuther 2007), whilst there is no widely accepted definition of 'risk' either. For example, Aradau and van Munster (2007, p. 91) state that their work draws upon a conceptualisation of risk as 'precautionary risk' inspired by Foucault's writings, whereas they interpret Bigo's approach as focusing on 'practices of proactive risk management' (see also Amoore and de Goede 2008).

12. This is not to say that the meaning of security or that of a specific practice is forever fixed. However, meanings evolve slowly.

13. In an interview, Michele Simone, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Liaison Officer with FRONTEX, also indicated that the UNHCR had contributed to training sessions for FRONTEX staff in order to take into account the issue of international protection in the work of the national border guards (UNHCR 2010).

14. This is the first of FRONTEX's regional Risk Analysis Networks, which aims to foster the exchange of intelligence on irregular migration in the Balkans between FRONTEX and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (FRONTEX 2010a, p. 25).

15. It is acknowledged that Neal (2009) has interpreted the importance of 'risk' and risk analysis in the work of FRONTEX differently than this article. In Neal's view (2009, p. 347), the 'risk model' of FRONTEX' can be interpreted as 'the opposite of securitization'. It is argued here that the interpretation of 'risk' in the activities of FRONTEX – as 'securitization' or its opposite – depends on one's definitions of securitisation and security. This article, in line with Bigo (2002), is underpinned by a broad definition of security, which does not limit security to the realm of existential threats and exceptionalism, but understands 'security politics [as being also] concerned with the more mundane management of risk' (Abrahamsen 2005, p. 59). As a result, practices such as the conduct of risk analyses and the establishment of the FRONTEX Situation Centre are interpreted as securitising practices. However, if one operates with a different definition of security, then one might have a different interpretation of the same practices.

Notes on contributor

Sarah Léonard is a Lecturer in International Security at the University of Salford, UK, and has also been a Marie Curie Research Fellow at Sciences Po Paris, Centre d'études européennes, France, since October 2010. Research for this article was conducted whilst the author was a Visiting Research Fellow at the 'Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals' (IBEI) in Spain, during a research stay supported by the Research and Innovation Strategic Fund of the Arts, Media & Social Sciences Faculty at the University of Salford. The author would like to thank the University of Salford for its financial support. She also would like to thank an anonymous reviewer, the participants to the IBEI research seminar, Christian Kaunert and Thierry Balzacq, for their helpful comments and suggestions.

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