

## **Media and Securitisation**

**Bharat Bhushan**

Securitisation is linked to public perception of an issue or phenomenon. An issue becomes a security issue when the public perceives it as such. Only with this perception in place, can political actors find the legitimacy to address an issue and use the policy tools they present as adequate.

Media through the language and framing it uses, influences public perception of issues so that the public thinks of them as existential threats to public security – whether it is political security, economic security, cultural homogeneity or social stability.

This paper will deal with the link between the perception of an issue, the role of mass media in creating the perception, the exploitation of the issue by political actors by securitising it and then presenting themselves as the only ones capable of resolving the issue.

If the media had not helped in securitising the issue, the political actors or state might find it difficult to securitise a particular issue. Media helps them shape the interpretation of public issues and reduces a complex problem into a simple one of security or existential threat.

Security is no longer limited to issues such as military security or securing borders or issues that affect the state. Today it has been widened to include issues that include the people such as human security (food, water, shelter), climate change, cultural security and ‘national’ identity – things that are threatened and need to be protected.

The widening of securitisation, for which the media’s assistance is of vital importance, has several consequences. In Europe the “othering” of the immigrants from Syria for example, turned “migration” into a security issue, linking it with “terrorism” and has had disastrous consequences in the rise and acceptance of extreme right-wing anti-migrant political parties.

The more political rights-based approach (let us say, to the availability of food, water and shelter) is replaced by a securitisation of these basic needs and citizens becoming objects of charity and state largesse (“freebies” in terms of food, water and shelter). The complex structural issues that create inequality are ignored in favour of easily understandable and ostensibly “adequate” responses to the securitised issue.

What securitisation does, therefore, is to reduce complex political issues to one of following the “right” policy prescription and solution. The media through its positive framing of these issues and the proffered solutions, therefore, helps the political actors or the state in pushing under the carpet the issues of inequality in society.

\*\*\*