The Securitisation of Illegal Migration in Asia: Implications for the Copenhagen School

by Dr Melissa Curley

This paper draws upon collaborative research conducted between 2002-2005 that applied the Copenhagen School's 'securitization' framework to case studies of human flows (both legal and illegal) in Asia. I briefly comment on the contemporary environment in Asia relating to legal and illegal migration flows, including push and pull factors related to globalization that are commonly argued to be causal factors in increased cross-border human flows. Key aspects of the securitization framework are noted before I discuss results of the case study material (including between China and the Russian Far East, Taiwan and China, and Central Asia). Three aspects of securitization theory are critically examined: the role of the 'speech act'; the dichotomy presented in the framework between 'normal' and 'security' politics; and the criteria for identifying 'successful' cases of securitization. Despite providing analytical insight into the security mindset of elites, I argue that securitizing human flows has a number of analytical and practical pitfalls, including the gulf between elite rhetoric and bureaucratic implementation, and unintended normative consequences. Furthermore, the posing of securitization as a framework that can be potentially de-linked from the state, advanced in the Copenhagen School's more recent work, is problematic, particularly when examined in the Asian context.

→ Thursday 4 October 2007
→ Room N72_-1.18 (Business 2)
→ Nathan campus
→ 12.30-1.50pm

A light lunch will be served on arrival. To RSVP, please contact Jill Moriarty on (07) 3735 7624 or j.moriarty@griffith.edu.au no later than 5.00pm Monday 1 October.