

**Securitization of an Imaginary Threat as an Authoritarian
Legitimation Instrument:
The Cases of Belarus and Uzbekistan.**

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Abstract

This research explores how the securitization of imaginary and exaggerated threats is used as a legitimization instrument in hegemonic authoritarian regimes. Approaching the task through the cases studies, this thesis will situate the securitization practice within the performance mechanism of authoritarian legitimation and apply it in two hegemonic autocratic regimes – Uzbekistan of Islam Karimov and Belarus of Alexander Lukashenko. This dissertation picks qualitative research design. Methodologically, discourse and content analysis will be used to test the theory that will be developed in this project. The arguments presented in the thesis draw upon the primary sources such as speeches, official statements, and memoirs. The dissertation will also refer to the secondary sources in order to synthesise arguments provided by the existing literature related to the issue in question. This research project reveals that because of deeply rooted kleptocracy and corruption in Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov could not offer public goods to the people, thus replacing it with the rhetoric of stability amid the threat of terrorism and instability over the border. He institutionalized the securitization of terrorism and the threat stemming from the West. Lukashenko, on the contrary, relying on the Russian economic support, has performed economically relatively well, which allowed him to provide public goods. Nevertheless, amid critical junctures, such as post-election protests Lukashenko had to resort to the securitization practice showing to the public that in addition to economic performance, the regime is also ensuring stability in the country.

Keywords: Securitization; Copenhagen School; Legitimation; Performance; Uzbekistan; Islam Karimov; Belarus; Alexander Lukashenko; Terrorism; The West; Propaganda; Threat.