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Innovative competences in public administration: The path to sustainable development, financial efficiency and strengthening of national security

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Abstract: The article claims that modern transformation processes in the system of international relations have led to the emergence of a new set of security problems threats, challenges, and risks of a non-traditional series, differing from traditional, military-strategic threats in the parameters of their impact on modern states and their transboundary nature. Hybrid dangers have an increasing impact on societal domains. To further their political, ideological, or commercial goals, hybrid actors take advantage of the weaknesses found in intricately interconnected communities. Research makes an attempt to outline innovative competencies of public administration in the domains of national security and sustainable development within this complex environment.

Keywords: *Competence, Financial efficiency, Public administration, Securitization, Security, Sustainable development.*

1. Introduction

The use of hybrid threats against other countries is a part of a bigger plan to acquire power and accomplish advantageous military, political, and economic goals. China's employment of hybrid threats as a component of the Belt and Road plan, an international economic strategy, serves as one example [1]. Importantly, hybrid threats are purposefully created to function below and outside of the conventional reaction and detection thresholds of a state's national security apparatus by stressing the employment of these non-military tools and individuals. Such low-level, persistent hybrid threats are meant to have a cumulative, non-linear effect that amounts to a "death by a thousand cuts" [2]. For example, the cumulative negative impact of academics self-censoring their research on China out of fear of financial retaliation from Beijing against their university has historically been outside (regarding what is monitored) and below (regarding the significance and intensity that are traditionally perceived) the purview of national intelligence services' professional interest. This case highlights a crucial aspect of hybrid threats, which is their capacity to operate covertly while endangering national security by taking advantage of and influencing "gaps" in liberal democratic nations' norms, culture, and legal frameworks.

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It is unquestionably extremely difficult to come to an agreement on a definition of hybrid threats that is acceptable to all parties involved [3]. That being said, it is especially crucial to comprehend a few of their traits. Asymmetry, polymorphism, inequality, unaccountability, adaptability, escalation, multidimensionality, insidiousness, undetectability, gradualism, concealment, offensiveness, secrecy, ambiguity, opportunism, indeterminacy, manipulation, disruption, distortion, misinformation, denial, ungovernability, unlawfulness, usurpation, and amorality are some of the concepts that are central to hybrid threats [4]. This unrestricted list suggests that any activity intended to undermine a particular civilization, whether state-led or non-state-led, qualifies as a hybrid threat.

Several areas of vulnerability have been identified by the European Commission and the Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, including cyberspace, infrastructures, the economy, defense, intelligence, legal, political, and societal domains, space, distributed (dis)information, and public administrations [5].

Agencies in charge of public administration are increasingly being targeted via hybrid techniques. China specifically carefully crafted the hybrid threat to take advantage of legal loopholes in Australia. Due to these loopholes, CCP was able to lawfully carry out a number of nefarious influence operations throughout the community that "fall short of espionage but is intended to harm Australia's national security or influence Australia's political or governmental processes" [6].

Today's hybrid risks impact every aspect of sustainability, including ESG. Climate change poses threats to political and economic stability, as well as to human security, particularly in Germany. It is challenging to identify how climate change is affecting a particular aspect of security or society in isolation due to the intricate interdependencies and feedback loops across various aspects [7]. Climate change and its effects actually exacerbate security issues that already plague the Global North and are caused by a complex interplay of social, political, and economic variables. Thus, domestic security is impacted by climate change, which in turn affects possible operational scenarios. Therefore, environmental issues have the potential to intensify hybrid threats and insecurity by acting as a catalyst.

In response to the emergence of hybrid threats, several nations within the European Union, NATO, and neighboring regions have expeditiously adopted so-called comprehensive security concepts at the national level. Many of the actions taken are obvious and are based on the experiences of nations that already possess significant expertise in the field of comprehensive security, such as Finland and the UK: the efficient coordination of various government institutions; strong ties between the public and private sectors; a well-balanced legal framework; collaboration between the public and military; and ongoing training, education, and preparation. Practitioners of security policy have made this "whole of government" approach their catchphrase [8]. The process of countering hybrid threats is continuous and never-ending, and it is essentially about building national resilience. This is due to the fact that hybrid threats are always changing and evolving, necessitating a continually evolving response from the defenses.

Given the dynamic nature of hybrid threats, it is obvious that public administration competencies must also be continuously developed to reflect their creative nature. As opposed to this, over-securitization is a real threat to democracy, human rights, social resilience, and stability, as well as the road toward sustainable development, as it is ingrained in the public administration systems of many nations [9–17]. Reaching Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) like SDG 10 (Reduce inequality within and across nations) and SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) seems to be seriously jeopardized. Therefore, in the current environment of global uncertainties and emerging dangers, one of the most significant issues in public administration is the design of creative capabilities with reference to the road to sustainable growth, financial efficiency, and reinforcement of national security.

2. Literature Review

The relationships between the development of the securitization discourse and the impact of contemporary security policy must be emphasized. These days, a lot of academic's stresses that securitization theory demonstrates that policymakers and decision-makers actively choose national

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security policies rather than taking them for granted [18]. Securitization theory states that political issues labeled as "dangerous", "menacing", "threatening", "alarming", and so forth by a "securitizing actor" with the institutional and social power to take the issue "beyond politics" are considered extreme security issues that need immediate attention [19]. Therefore, security concerns need to be identified as problems by securitizing actors rather than just being "out there". For example, designating immigration as a "threat to national security" elevates immigration from a low political priority to a high priority problem requiring border security and other actions. Securitization theory questions conventional methods to information security (IR) and contends that problems are not fundamentally dangerous in and of themselves; rather, they only become security difficulties when they are labeled as "security" problems [20].

Five areas were identified by securitization theorists: the political, military, social, economic, and environmental sectors [21]. A particular hazard is described as endangering a referent item in each sector. For instance, the referent object in the sociological sector is identity, whereas the ecosystem and endangered species are the referent objects in the environmental sector. The state continues to be the referent object solely in the military domain. The concept of "sectarianizing" security refers to the idea that existential risks are related to the unique qualities of each referent object rather than being objective. This method also emphasizes how contextual security and threats are. For instance, some people now experience more fear than others due to suicide bomb attacks. However, suicide terrorism is frequently presented as a "global" threat. Securitization demonstrates why it is inaccurate to discuss global concerns like terrorism as though they affect everyone equally. Through discussing referent objects, we might pose the question: Whose security? Protection from what? And who provides the security? [22].

Kurniawan offers a schematic vision of security (see Figure 1):

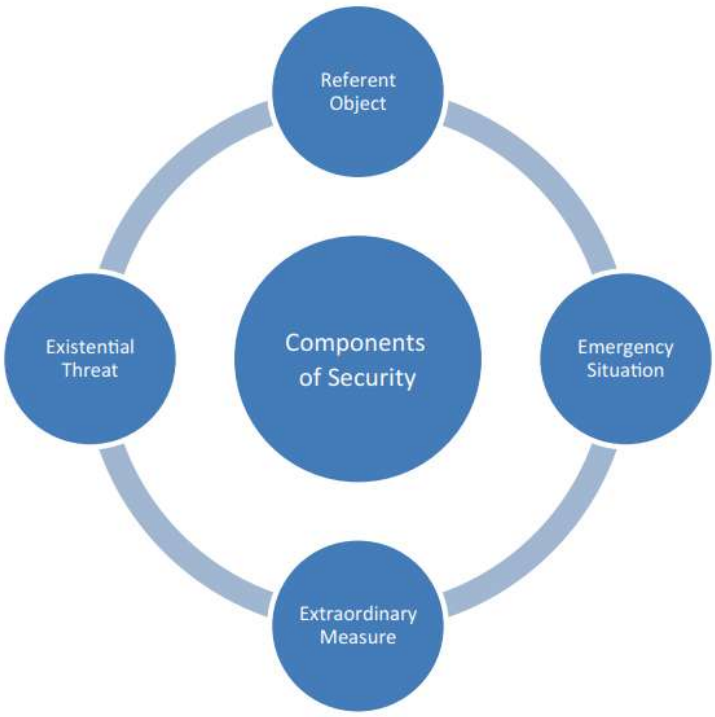

Figure 1.
Components of security [23].

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According to Lazarus [24], SDG 16 covers a variety of elements connected to crime and violence, including the rule of law. SDG 16 reflects a wider trend in this regard toward the securitization of human rights and the rule of law. In this context, "securitization" refers to the creation of ideas that strengthen the state's ability to impose coercion. In his research's conclusion, Lazarus issues a warning on the possibility for increased securitization of development in general.

However, national security paradigms are increasingly faster approach securitization, and here the lack of innovative competences in public administration is evident.

3. Research Methodology

The work uses a combination of methods of modern political and management science. The problem of defining non-traditional aspects of security (threats, challenges, and risks) was considered based on the research material that analyzed the main approaches to the transformation of the concept of "security". The methodology of the work is based on system analysis; the main focus is made on the modern features of the system and environment of international relations that directly affect national public administration and its effectiveness. In addition, logical-intuitive analysis, comparative analysis, and the method of constructing typologies were used to solve the main research problems. It should be especially emphasized that in the process of research the authors consider non-traditional aspects of security, which, along with the internal component, have a transnational constituent.

4. Results and Discussion

When preparing for potential security threats, the concepts of hybrid warfare and climate security are rarely taken into account together and are often disputed on their own. However, there are new risks to national security brought about by climate change, as well as possibilities for those who want to sow discord and doubt in established institutions. While the applied military definitions of climate security tend to focus more on human security and strive to identify areas in which environmental changes influence operational or strategic goals, the academic definitions of climate security frequently center on violent conflict. Although climate change is not considered a primary factor in conflict, it is still crucial to understanding a wide range of logistical and intelligence risks, including those related to infrastructure, search and rescue (SAR), energy supplies, future humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HA/DR) operations, and force protection from extreme heat events and emerging diseases [25].

Essentially, many societies and communities are left vulnerable to impacts that fall under the broader concepts of human, energy, or cyber security when the emphasis is primarily placed on violent conflict and traditional kinetic warfare, while coordinated actions in the gray areas of activity that fall under the military response threshold are ignored. Analysts run the danger of overlooking occurrences that do not fit into the conventional criteria of security, even if these weak spots might be where security is most at risk. Environmental changes brought on by climate change can provide concerns such as severe wildfires, flooding, crop failure, electricity shortages, pandemic illnesses, and heightened tsunami risks. Climate change not only puts security at danger at these deeper levels, but it also affects the locations where entities using hybrid warfare techniques use them as instruments. Environmental shifts also coincide with tactics that might increase the likelihood of insurgency and conflict, such as forced refugee relocation, resource appropriation (including food), infrastructure destruction (urbicide), and other destabilizing acts that compromise communal cohesion and well-being.

There is substantial evidence to support the hypothesis that crime rates are impacted by climate change, and that migration from Central America to the United States is related to both climatic shifts and those who take advantage of the disruption they cause [26]. For instance, there is a connection between local criminal networks' control over land and narco-crime syndicates and the degradation of agricultural land and deforestation. When these non-traditional security dynamics are combined with issues of corruption, external intervention by entities (such as businesses or nation-states), and colonial legacies of economics and power structures, it becomes challenging for nations to establish the

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legitimacy and ability to deal with them [27]. In this view, rather than causing conflict, climate change creates a variety of stresses that may be taken advantage of by those who stand to gain financially from unpredictability and instability either before or during a conflict.

Disinformation efforts against climate change have been connected to intelligence services in Russia and petrostates; the governments of the United States and Canada have not been exempting from these activities. These misinformation campaigns may be parts of hybrid warfare operations if their objectives are to thwart efforts to address dangers associated with climate change and if such efforts have an impact on military readiness or disaster relief. For instance, the White House removed any mention of climate change from the National Security Strategy because to politicization of the issue in the United States.

Beijing pursues its hybrid operations through a variety of party, state, and non-state proxy actors; no one institution inside China's party-state is solely in charge of carrying out its hybrid operations. The many players and organizations involved in the foreign influence operations known as "United Front Work", which is managed by the department named after it, as well as other organizations, all have differing degrees of ties to the People's Republic of China. The United Front's approach to gaining influence is to "seek influence through connections that are difficult to publicly prove and to gain influence that is interwoven with sensitive issues such as ethnic, political, and national identity", according to a U.S. Congressional investigation [28].

Beijing has had several opportunities to influence Australian politics as a result of lax campaign finance laws that let foreign donors to contribute to Australian political campaigns. The biggest political parties in Australia received a warning from Australian intelligence in 2015 that two of the nation's most generous political contributors had close ties to the Communist Party of China (CCP) and that accepting these funds may expose them to undue political influence. One of these contributors, Chinese billionaire Huang Xiangmo, allegedly made threats to revoke a committed contribution of $400,000 in an attempt to sway the Labor Party's stance on the South China Sea in Beijing's favor. Huang served as the chair of the Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China [29]. This organization is affiliated with the United Front Work Department and is heavily influenced by the Chinese embassy in Canberra in terms of both leadership and operations.

Beijing is able to force foreign governments and business actors into policies they would not otherwise accept because of the CCP's power to restrict access to its economy. At the macroeconomic level, this weapon has the ability to endanger significant portions of an economy. This case of Australia is illustrative in supporting the thesis about urgent importance of public administration competence in financial efficiency.

In attempts to address the above-described challenges, governments (public administrations) often apply an approach of over-securitization, manifesting lack of systemic thinking and long-term prospective vision.

Specifically, the EU's stance on foreign politics, especially its objectives and role in the global chaos, has changed as a result of contemporary geopolitical dynamics. This modification consists of several components that collectively represent a securitization dynamic. Since the early 2000s, a number of significant terrorist incidents, the financial crisis, the COVID-19 epidemic, difficulties with migration, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and various crises in the Middle East and Africa have all contributed to the gradual securitization of European politics. Governments have been using the phrase "Europe is facing major existential crises and threats" more frequently in the midst of these quite varied problems and difficulties.

Security and democracy do not necessarily have to be traded off in a zero-sum fashion, but the allocation of resources points to a shifting of the priorities. The primary focus of the EU budget increase for 2024 is on security, migration, and Ukraine's military. A fresh €8 billion security plan is also receiving funding from the European Investment Bank. Government funding for democratic initiatives is a negligible portion of what they spend on the armed forces.

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By looking at how present securitization processes create limiting subjectivities, which in turn have affected how players approach security challenges, post-structural study provides a great beginning point for rethinking security. In his 1998 analysis of US foreign policy, Campbell describes how national security policy is part of an identity-formation process that is based on ideas of patriotism and is sustained by creating danger. This process frequently results in the reinforcement of political order rather than the implementation of policies that aim to bring about social change [30].

Securitization theory aims to elucidate the political processes that lead to the establishment of the security nature of public issues, the fixing of societal commitments that arise from the shared recognition that a phenomenon poses a threat, and the creation of the possibility of a specific strategy. The field of securitization research has expanded dramatically during the past ten years. Upon closer inspection, it can be seen that securitization has given the discipline of Security Studies a unique viewpoint on security-related political issues [31]. Stritzel combined the theoretical elements of securitization into a framework that was suggested back in 2007 (see Fig. 2).

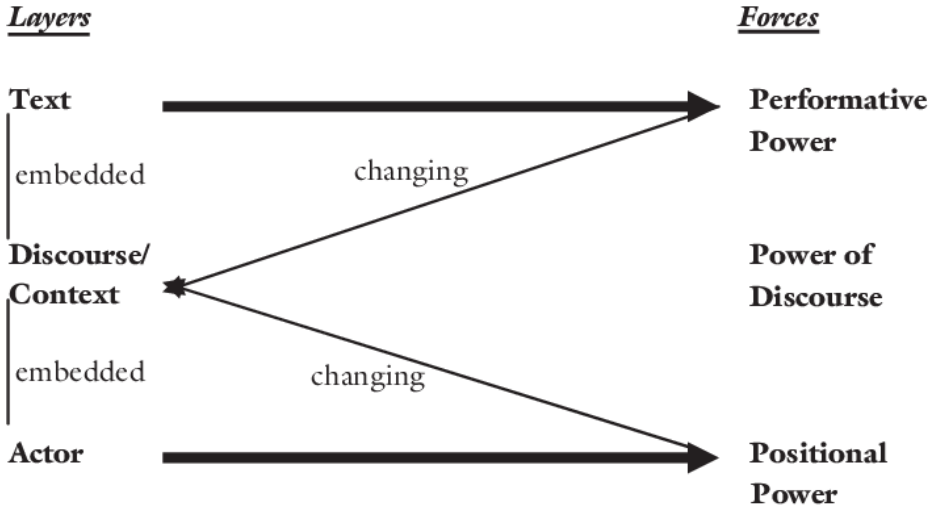

Figure 2.
Framework of securitization [32].

The following key questions are addressed by securitization theory: What qualifies as a security vulnerability? What type of reactions are necessary in this case? What particular repercussions result from acknowledging that something poses a threat? Neo-utilitarian solutions dominated this discussion until recently. To put it simply, neorealism and realism both hold that nations become perpetually wary of one another because they perceive some situations as objectively dangerous and need the use of force. Because of this, anything in any area of social life might be classified as a security concern. As a result, military concerns are not the only ones in the security arena. Although security is predicated on this particular logic, reactions to vulnerability are not limited to the use of force [33]. Put otherwise, there is no set definition for the area of (in)security. It comes from an intersubjective consensus that something is a serious threat to a community, particular to a certain period and environment.

Thus, today innovative competence of public administration should be seen as the ability to balance between avoiding over-securitization and at the same time seeing the whole 'puzzle' of existing and future threats in various domains and agile capability of addressing these threats in ever-changing landscape.

In government, having an agile attitude and strategy is more crucial than ever. Agile adoption is suggested as a possible remedy for many of these problems in a recent paper from the Project

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Management Institute (PMI) and the U.S. National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA). The executive summary of the study, which was published at the end of 2020, claims that "the federal government has no time for ineffectiveness and little tolerance for failure in these challenging times". "We issue this paper as a call to action for the federal government. We hope it inspires agencies to inculcate the key principles of Agile into their daily management and operations" [34]. Agile software development serves as an inspiration for agile government, which is more broadly defined as efficient response to evolving public requirements.

All things considered, agile is a way of thinking that starts a cultural shift within bureaucratic command and control companies. Agile governments are flexible enough to adjust to changing public requirements, values, and the environment [37]. The following outlines its potential to enhance an administration's effectiveness and efficiency:

- Agile views circumstances as dynamic and ever-changing
- Agile values adaptable structure over silos and hierarchies
- Agile prioritizes responsible individual judgment over formal processes
- Agile stresses ongoing self-reflective learning processes
- Agile improves understanding of protocols, guidelines, and specifications for new services and processes.

Agile concepts, ideas, and methodologies have garnered increasing interest in public administrations worldwide in recent years [35]. In addition to increased citizen demands [36] and new types of complex problems (like the climate crisis or Covid-19) that call for innovative approaches to allocating an administration's resources so that it can respond effectively and efficiently, the push by many governments to become more digital is a major factor driving this interest. Mergel [38] defines Agile as "a work management ideology with a set of productivity frameworks that support continuous and iterative progress on work tasks by reviewing one's hypotheses, working in a human-centric way, and encouraging evidence-based learning", which encapsulates the core principles of the methodology. Thus, despite the fact that the concept of Agile public administration is increasingly disseminating, it concerns, in fact, only the domain of organizational behavior, and not the very paradigm of public administration in the face of new threats and uncertainties. Meanwhile, the realities of today require integration of Agile approach into designing competencies of public administration in maintaining sustainable development, strengthening national security, and at the same time ensuring financial efficiency. That is, Agile paradigm should become a foundation of innovative competencies in public administration in current post-structuralism era, challenging the belief in stable or unchanging meanings and identities.

5. Conclusion

The SDGs need to serve as a roadmap for national public administrations, particularly in the area of national security, in an unpredictable global environment. Otherwise, given the rate of change, there is a risk of both over-securitization and, conversely, failing to pay enough attention to newly emerging threats, which could have detrimental effects on society, politics, and security already in the near future. It could also expand and alter threats of an international nature, particularly latent and hybrid threats.

The related but separate analytical concept of complexity is not the same as the idea of uncertainty. In a complex world, the issue is "one of too much information, not too little". The amount of information makes it difficult for decision-makers to fully understand any given situation and to identify appropriate and readily available ways to address it, and this problem is made worse by the ever-increasing number of interdependent actors, problems, and tasks that they must complete. Uncertainties arise in such complex circumstances, for example, regarding the situation as it stands, the pertinent range of options for decision-making, the responses of other players in governance, or the expected future events that will impact the matter at hand. Therefore, in order to filter and deal with the otherwise overwhelming amount of information, public administration actors employ cognitive shortcuts and heuristics, such as belief systems and related biases. This results in the aforementioned errors, which may seem vital for

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maintaining national security. In this context, only balanced aligning of national security goals and processes with the goals and processes in achieving sustainable development, backed by strong competence in financial efficiency can provide effective functioning of public administration.

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