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Securitization and desecuritization of the refugee crisis in the European Union. Analysis of the official European discourse on migration 2019-2021

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Keywords: security, securitization, desecuritization, migration, immigrants, refugee crisis, common security policies, discourse analysis, ideological discourse, populism.

Introduction

In contemporary times, the European security agenda encompasses a wide spectrum of threats and issues labelled as problems, which are not part of the category of traditional threats. In studies in the field of international relations, it is highlighted in this regard that with the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of bipolarity from the world international stage, the state is no longer considered to be the main actor and at the same time, the main object of reference in security analyses. In line with the previous statement, the literature in the field of security studies presents us through neorealist and constructivist approaches developed by researchers such as Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wild that nonconventional threats become more relevant and increasingly present in the period after 1989. So, the traditional challenges, highlighted by realists like Hans Morgenthau[1] or Arnold Wolfers[2], which aimed exclusively at status security, are replaced by contemporary threats, classified by Copenhagen School researchers as threats *non-military.*[3]

The research presented by the representatives of the Copenhagen School introduces security analyses into a new framework, after the Cold War period, which treats and identifies new challenges and problems on security, which it addresses in relation to the reference object. Expanding the scope of reference objects, according to the new security agendas we identify in the current period new threats to European security highlighted by threats to societal, economic, political and environmental security; identified by problems caused by changes produced, including on the international stage.[4] Current problems, classified as threats to European security, are represented by: migration and its implications for societies and economy in the destination country; economic crises and fluctuations in certain areas; management of natural resources necessary for sustaining life; climate phenomena, pollution and global warming, but also political instability and the propagation of extremist political currents at Community level. According to the contemporary security approach and by referring to existing threats and risks, we identify that the priority of national security (status) is replaced by the emphasis on the security of societies and

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[1] Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, McGraw-Hill ed., 1948.

[2] Arnold Wolfers, "National Security' as an Ambiguous Symbol." in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 4, 1952, pp. 481–502. Available online: in *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/2145138, accessed 26.03.2023.

[3]See the subchapter "*The evolution of the security concept in the field of international relations*" in this paper.

[4]Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *Securitate: a new framework of analysis*, Cluj-Napoca, Ed. CA Publishing, 2010.

individuals (through the constructivist approach that highlights the need to address societal and human security).

In the context of the emergence of the globalization phenomenon and the implications it has created by the abolition of spatial barriers, in a pejorative sense, but also by the abolition of *existing borders* During the Cold War, migration became an increasingly common mobility process that has undergone a series of transformations and forms, and which, if uncontrolled or unregulated depending on its magnitude, comes to be considered at community leadership or national level as a security problem and a main source of insecurity.

Migration from the European Union started in 2015, labelled by the European political class and media *2015 refugee crisis*, put issues such as refugees, illegal migration, and their integration in Member States back on the European security agenda. The migration phenomenon triggered in previous years, but which has materialized in a broader form since 2015, has brought back in the speeches of European political leaders and on the security agendas of the Member States the relationship between migration and security, seen through the prism of identity mainly.

Purpose and objectives

Referring to the situation created in the European Union by this migration crisis, official political discourses have been highlighted from the very beginning of this phenomenon, using narratives and interpretative statements, different labels of migration, refugees, and immigrants as the main sources of problems in the European Union.

One of the main reasons for choosing this research topic was the novelty of this topic that gained momentum in 2015 and has been continuously carried out until now. The refugee crisis of 2015 was a main topic addressed both in the media and in the political environment, but presented more from a negative perspective, being labelled as a problem, both for destination societies and for the security of the European Union.

Another important factor motivating the choice of this research topic was the identification of gaps in existing research on migration securitization of the refugee crisis, most of the research being based only on assumptions and presenting only certain passages removed from certain press statements, which methodologically disqualified the research. Moreover, by consulting research in the field of migration and security studies on migration securitization, we identified that most

of the papers relate to the period 2015-2018 and do not capture an overall picture analysing a broader body of discourses.

Title of the paper "*Securitization and desecuritization of the refugee crisis in the European Union. Analysis of the official European discourse on migration 2019-2021*" delimits the subject and the temporal period, framing in a clear way the research in the theme of the study of migration by using the theoretical basis on security.

The focus of the paper is on the discursive practices used by the European leaders of the institutions and Member States in the discourses on migration, refugees, and illegal immigrants and, implicitly, on the way they position themselves on the main topic, migration in the European Union.

The present research aims to present both from a theoretical perspective and in a practical and applied way how international migration is considered as a threat to European security, together with the implications it generates at discursive level.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that migration started in 2015 through the event of the refugee crisis in the Middle East and North Africa and has continued until the present period (in a continuous decrease) was also categorized and perceived during 2019-2021 as a threat to European security and societal security by European leaders.

The paper starts from the research hypothesis according to which the migration phenomenon "refugee crisis of 2015" by its amplitude, together with the management proposed by the institutions of the European Union, produced a division at discursive level among the official leaders of the European Union during 2019-2021. It argues through the two analyses carried out, a general one on the context (made on the situation in 2015) and a particular one, on the leaders' speeches, that migration in the European Union including both illegal and forced migration, together with poor management in the first year (2015) and with the implementation of a set of policies officially assumed through the European Agenda on Migration, which included a uniform set of rules for all states (mandatory quotas) created a wave of criticism at the level of speeches.

The objectives we assume and at the same time propose through this paper can be classified into two categories, theoretical and practical. At theoretical level, we aim to provide a clarification of the concepts of security and migration, and then to offer in a constructivist perspective what social construction means and how it is carried out in relation to discourse analysis, according to the specialized literature. Regarding the practical part and at the same time, the originality part of

the paper, through the critical discourse analysis, combined with a socio-communicative analysis, we aim to identify which are the main types of discourse used by European leaders and to highlight later through an analysis grid how they relate, through the main themes used in official speeches, migration from the European Union, between 2019 and 2021.

Methodology

Following the proposal of these objectives, through the analysis of the applied discourse on the corpus of 19 official speeches of the leaders of the European institutions and the leaders of the Member States, we intend that this paper will answer the following questions:

1. What are the main types of speeches and themes used by European leaders in the discourse on migration in 2019-2021?
2. How do European leaders position themselves at a discursive level in 2019-2021?

With the aim of justifying the choice of the theoretical framework of this work, the discourse analysis will provide us and indicate a series of themes and arguments, which will be interpreted in the final section by means of securitization theory and desecuritization, enunciated by researcher Ole Waever. Following this interpretation, we managed to conclude how European leaders relate to migration (refugees, migrants, and immigrants) and how they perceive migration from the European Union in 2019-2021.

The methodology used to achieve our assumed research objectives and to answer in an objective way to research questions was a qualitative one, focused on discourse analysis. We considered this qualitative method to be relevant because it allows us through text study and language examination to identify how European leaders construct reality with techniques, fragments, and structure of interaction, but also how they present their intentions through language and words.

By using discourse analysis, focused mainly on the construction of argumentation, we aim to highlight the main themes addressed in the European discursive act and to identify the main types of discourse approached by political leaders in the context of migration of the refugee crisis in the European Union, in the period 2019-2021.

The corpus is a homogeneous one, containing only speeches held officially, as leaders of European institutions or states. I consider the choice of the corpus to be analysed in this research to be quite important from a temporal perspective (2019-2021) because analysing these discourses

will give us a transparent image of how European leaders perceive and build migration, at a discursive level. Moreover, seen from the perspective of the fact that starting with 2019, the flows of refugees and illegal immigrants are 10 times lower compared to 2015, these speeches will allow us to identify the strategies that European leaders present at discursive level.

The originality of the paper consists primarily in the method of analysis approached in studying discourses, which uses a discourse analysis grid, which contains the dominant theme, actors, context, categories that define the theme, items that support the theme and ideology transposed through discourse, made to highlight how leaders position themselves and report through discourse on migration.

In addition, another element of originality is represented by the period under analysis, which contains speeches from a period considered by some researchers to be a period of closure of the refugee crisis in the European Union. Through this research I aim to contribute to increasing the interest given to this method of analysis on the process of securitization of migration, and to offer through a transparent analysis how European leaders from several Member States and institutions of the European Union position themselves on migration and the refugee crisis in the period 2019-2021.

Chapter summary

This paper, which is divided into six chapters and conclusions, thus presents a multidisciplinary approach to three main research areas, represented by the theme of security, migration, and discourse analysis.

In the context of the transformations highlighted in the field of security studies and international relations after the Cold War, the first chapter aims to present literature on security, highlighting the new security analysis framework introduced by Copenhagen School researchers, which expanded the scope of threats and the reference objects established by realist researchers. In the first part of the theoretical chapter is presented the definition and evolution of the concept of security in a chronological way and in relation to the main schools of thought. The second part of the chapter highlights the reconceptualization offered to security by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde together with the new constructivist model of security analysis realized in the

form of dimensions and sectors.[5] Our attention is held back by the new approach proposed by the exponents of the Copenhagen School who introduced, besides the diversification of reference objects, a security practice, called securitization, which, according to Ole Waever, represents "*a social and political construct that involves choosing a threat and presenting it through discourse as a security issue*".[6]

The second chapter aims mainly at conceptually clarifying the terms in the field of migration (immigrant, refugee, illegal immigrant) to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of migration in the European Union and how the refugee crisis of 2015 was considered a threat to European security. This phenomenon was publicized and presented at EU level in the form of massive flows of refugees and (illegal) immigrants, who were trying to enter the territory of the Member States and cross the internal borders to reach the Western states. In order to provide the context of this paper, we conducted a qualitative analysis of the official documents made available by the institutions of the European Union, through which we presented in an object way the development of forced and illegal migration from the European Union, together with the crisis management policies adopted by the European Union and the way in which the securitization of migration was achieved during 2015-2017, According to the indisputable interconnectivity relationship created between migration and security.

The third chapter aims to frame the research in the constructivist paradigm, presenting how migration is framed as a social phenomenon. In the second part of the chapter we will identify what are the stakes of social constructions, but also how discursive construction is carried out, in Michel Foucault's perspective.[7] In order to understand in the discourse analysis of this research what was the "stake" of the adoption of a certain type of discourse or practices by European leaders, we considered relevant the presentation of Michel Foucault's perspective on the construction of discourse that has as stake the social construction of the enunciator's reality and to create power relations, relative to the transmitter.

Starting from the connectivity relationship created between security and migration and aiming to identify at discursive level how they relate to migration in the European Union, the official leaders in 2019-2022, the fourth chapter aims to carry out the literature review on the field

[5] Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *op cit.* , p. 14.
[6]Ole Waever, *op.cit.*, pp. 46-86.
[7] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language,* New York, Pantheon ed., 1972, p. 225.

of discourse analysis. Viewed from a multidisciplinary perspective, discourse analysis allows a direct proposal of certain theses, the major interest of studying discourses being constituted by the emergence in recent decades of the dissemination of ideologies through them.[8] Within this chapter, emphasis is placed on the critical approach to discourse analysis and theoretical demonstration of how language is used in discourses with the aim of creating power relations, ideological effects, and new practices.[9]

Chapter Five follows the description of the methodology and how the research design of the analysis of European leaders' speeches was organised in 2019-2021. For the analysis of the speeches of European leaders, we chose to use specific elements of critical analysis of discourse and socio-communicative analysis, as presented in the specialized literature by theorists Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, in the case of critical discourse analysis and socio-communication analysis.

In the first part of the speech analysis Present what is the position of the European Union through the analysis of official documents and what are the main discursive lines addressed in the speeches delivered by European officials: the President of the European Commission Von der Leyen, the High Representative of the Union for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Joseph Borell, the Vice-President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas, the former President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Junker, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council European Commissioner Dunja Mijatovic and European Commission Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson, former European Commission President Jean-Claude Junker.

In the second part of the analysis, we present how the Member States, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Poland position themselves at a discursive level, in relation to migration, by analyzing the speeches of Prime Minister Viktor Orban, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, President Andrzej Duda, Prime Minister Viorica Dancila and President Klaus Iohannis.

The sixth chapter represents the originality part of the work, which consisted in applying the two grids to the corpus of official European speeches of the leaders. Following the application of the first grid (through which we aimed to identify the typologies of the speeches and implicitly

[8] Luminița Roșca, *La sphère publique, la démocratisation de la vie sociale et politique et les médias en Roumanie,* Bucharest, Tritonic Publishing House, 2012 ; Luminița Roșca, *Mechanisms of propaganda in information discourse. Press of the years 1985-1995*, Iași, Polirom, 2006.
[9] Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, "Critical Dicourse Analysis" in Teun A. van Dijk (ed.), Discourse *as Social Interaction,* London, Sage ed., pp. 84-258.

the intended purpose) we identified a diversification of their speeches. The European leaders within the institutions of the European Union used speeches that were framed in the persuasive and mixed informative typology (targeting both the informative and the persuasive side). In a similar way, and sometimes broadly taken over, the leaders of Germany and Romania are also enrolled, who use the same typologies. In a different way from the leaders mentioned above, the leaders of Hungary and Poland use seductive and persuasive typologies in their speeches, which contain nationalist arguments and rhetoric opposing the actions carried out by the European Union in the field of migration and towards immigrants and refugees.

Applying the second analysis grid to identify the themes used by European leaders in speeches on migration, immigrants, and refugees, we identified among the leaders of the European Union institutions and in the speeches of the leaders of Romania and Germany themes such as solidarity, cooperation, offering humanitarian protection and respect for human rights. Unlike these leaders who have promoted EU policies through speeches and the adoption of a common position on migration are positioned at a discursive level, leader Viktor Orban and Polish President Andrzej Duda who adopt a position of rejection of immigrants and refugees, but also criticism of the actions carried out by the institutions of the European Union. The two leaders, appreciated as nationalists, used in their speech's themes of rejection of cooperation and rejection of solidarity, accompanied by discursive narratives and populist rhetoric.

Conclusions

Starting from the research hypothesis that constituted the realization of this thesis: *dividing perceptions of European leaders regarding the common and external security policies of the European Union* And using the results obtained from the discourse analysis on the corpus of nineteen official speeches of European leaders, we notice that the group of leaders positions itself differently from a discursive point of view in relation to migration policies and implicitly regarding migrants, both refugees and immigrants.

Following the analysis of the speech carried out, we find that the positioning of European leaders through the speeches of 2019-2021 is different both from the perspective of the themes they use regarding migration caused by the refugee crisis, and from the ideological perspective they translate into the discourse. In this regard, we notice in the analysed corpus of speeches a

division of state leaders regarding the themes they present and the arguments they use in the speech.

Starting from the theory of security realized by the theorists of the Copenhagen School and from the results obtained from the discourse analysis, we estimate that irregular and illegal migration carried out on the territory of the European Union during 2019-2021, represented a threat to societal security and, implicitly, to European identity, a fact that was also observed among the leaders' speeches.

Interpreting the arguments, themes and typologies used in his speeches, we can affirm that: Viktor Orban is carrying out a process of securitizing migration regarding Christian identity, for which immigrants of Muslim religion pose a threat, which would lead to conflicts in society. The image of the immigrant is constructed in his speeches according to the model of the theory developed by Carl Schimitt in his work *The Concept of the Political* distinguishing between *friend and foe.* This distinction is found in populist discursive practices such as: "*We will not give in to the crisis*"[10] and "through this election we will decide"[11] used mainly by leaders Viktor Orban and Andrzej Duda, aimed at attracting voters to their side.

Also seen from the perspective of security theories in the form of discursive practice, the speeches of the leaders of the European institutions and those of the leaders of Romania and Germany present and carry out a process of desecuritization, supported by communication and negotiation practices carried out in order to reduce the degree of migration threat generated by the Syrian refugee crisis, promoting policies based on cooperation and various reconciliations,[12] In this respect, achieving both at discursive and political level a shift of migration from the sphere of European security issues to the sphere of public policies.

[10]Andrzej Duda, *Address to the UN General Assembly,* New York, 20 September 2021, available online: https://www.gov.pl/web/un/speech-by-the-president-andrzej-duda-at-the-76th-session-of-the-un-general-assembly , accessed 9.05.2022.

[11] Viktor Orban, *Speech delivered during the electoral campaign for the European Parliament*, Budapest, 7 April 2019, available online: https://visegradpost.com/en/2019/04/07/viktor-orban-introduces-his-programme-for-the-eu-elections-full-speech/, accessed on 5.05.2022.

[12] Thierry Balzacq, *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, Milton Park Abingdon Oxon: Routledge; 2011, pp. 116-117.

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