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# THE EUROPEAN DISCOURSE ON MIGRATION: BETWEEN SECURITIZATION AND DESECURITIZATION (2019-2021)

| Abstract: | *Migration and security are two complex and interconnected concepts, which have become increasingly relevant and discussed in the context of the continuous development of the globalization phenomenon and at the same time, in the current geopolitical context on the international stage, in which the political situation in certain states becomes critical and conflictual. The phenomenon of international migration from the non-EU area has materialized more and more frequently in recent years, in terms of waves of refugees and illegal migrants arriving in the European Union, reaching the highest figures recorded in 2015. In this respect, the issue of migration, refugees and asylum seekers has become in the last decade a topic included on the European security agenda of the European Union and at the same time a main topic of discourses by European leaders and research dealing with the issue of "securitization of migration". Starting from the hypothesis according to which the migration phenomenon known as the "refugee crisis of 2015", by the way it unfolded and by the management proposed by the institutions of the European Union, produced a division at discursive level among European leaders, the purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that migration from the European Union has been catalogued and perceived at a discursive level, in 2019-2021 a threat to European security.* |
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| Keywords: | **Securitization; desecuritization, discourse analysis; refugee crisis, ideological discourses, migration** |
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**Introduction**

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

The migration from the European Union started in 2015, labelled by the European political class and mass media as the refugee crisis of 2015, has brought back to the European security agenda, issues such as refugees, illegal migration, and their integration in the Member States. The migration phenomenon triggered in previous years, but which has materialized in a broader form since 2015, has brought back in discourses 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. The refugee crisis of 2015, a phenomenon that combined both forced migration from conflict areas and political instability, as well as illegal migration from states in the Middle East and North Africa, was perceived due to its scale as a threat to the security of the European Union (in the form of an uncontrolled phenomenon affecting border security) and an insecurity to societal security, in the Member States (in the form of a threat to European identity). This phenomenon was 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. Images of refugees and illegal migrants embarked off the Mediterranean Sea or at the borders of Schengen states soon became central themes in the discourses of European leaders, who began to use migration, refugees, and migrants in power relations as a security issue or humanitarian crisis.

In this respect, we notice in the specialized literature of the field of security studies that research issues on migration, refugees and legal or undocumented immigrants have become one of the most important topics approached in relation to European security and security policies[1]. Referring to the current period and to the events that include migration in the European Union, we will notice that for both the political class and researchers this is a topic of interest, as it represents one of the main points on the European security agenda. Moreover, in the last 8 years the European Union has faced three major events framed at the level of refugee crisis and identified as existential problems for the European Union (Syrian and African refugee crisis in 2015, Afghan refugee crisis in 2021 and Ukrainian refugee crisis in 2022).

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 have been conducted until now, but at a decreasing level. A crucial factor in choosing to study migration from a threat perspective has been the recurrence of the use of the subject over several years. The refugee crisis was a main topic approached both in the media and in the political environment, but presented more from a negative perspective, labelled as a problem, both for destination societies and for the security of the European Union.

Another key 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, 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.

The title of the paper "The European discourse on migration: between securitization and desecuritization, 2019-2021" delimits the subject and the temporal period, clearly framing the research in the topic 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 purpose 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 which continued until the current period (in a continuous decrease) was catalogued and perceived during 2019-2021 as a threat to European security and societal security, by European leaders.

Starting from the current European context and wishing to achieve our goal presented above, we will use the applied discourse analysis on a corpus of nineteen official discourses delivered during 2019-2021 by the official leaders of the European Union institutions and five leaders of Member States (Romania, Hungary, Poland, and Germany), through which we tracked how they relate to migration, immigrants, and refugees. Reporting through discourses allows us at the end of the paper to see if European leaders support the initiatives

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[1] Didier Bigo, *Migration and Security*, in Viginie Guiraudon, Christian Joppke, (Eds.)*, Controlling a New Migration World, Routledge*, London, 2001, pp. 121-122; Jef Huysmans, *The European union and the Securitization of Migration*, "Journal of Common Market Studies"*, Vol. 38, No. 5, pp. 751-777; Rens van Munster, *Logics of Security: The Copenhagen School, Risk Management, and the War on Terror*, "Political Science Publications", No. 10, 2005, pp. 1-18; Thierry Balzacq, *A Theory of Securitization: Origins, Core Assumptions and Variants,* Thierry Balzacq (Ed.), *Securitization Theory: How security problems emerge and dissolve,* Routledge, London, 2011, pp. 1-30; Claudia Anamaria Iov, *Security as a Speech Act – From Theory to Practice. Discourse Construction on Migration in the European Union*, Claudia Anamaria Iov (Ed.), *The European Union in the Age of (In)Security*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2020, pp. 15-38

made by the European Union on migration management through a process of desecuritization or if they carry out a securitization process through their discourses.

The methodology used to answer in an objective way to the research question "How do European leaders position themselves at a discursive level regarding migration in the period 2019-2021?", is a qualitative one, focused on discourse analysis. We considered this qualitative method to be relevant because it allows us, through the study of text and the examination of language, to identify how European leaders construct reality with the help of techniques, fragments, and the structure of interaction, but also how they present their intentions through language and words. By using discourse analysis, focused on the construction of argumentation, we aim to highlight the main themes addressed in the European discursive act by political leaders in the context of migration of the refugee crisis in the European Union, during 2019-2021. This analysis will then allow us to present how the Member States, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Poland position themselves at a discursive level, in relation to migration, by analysing their official speeches during 2019-2021.

In order to achieve the objectives proposed in this paper we consider that this methodology, which combines critical discourse analysis according to the model proposed by Ruth Wodak[2] and Norman Fairclough[3]; together with a socio-communicative analysis (focused on the use of language in relation to the communication situation), allows us to identify from a complex perspective the typologies of discourses and the positioning of leaders through speeches.

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.

As regards the choice of speeches by Member States' leaders, it was done in a logical way, based on the routes used by migrants and refugees in their mobility to destination states. To be able to get a comprehensive look at how European leaders relate to migration, we chose the speeches of the German leader, because he was their main destination country. The other three states whose speeches are part of the corpus were chosen to observe how they deal with migration, starting from the consideration that the leaders of Romania, Hungary and Poland approached in 2015 a critical discourse against the EU's management of the crisis on the one hand, and a discriminatory and rejection of refugees and immigrants (Hungary's leader) on the other.

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.

Furthermore, we consider that this research meets the need to highlight the importance of studying migration and the discourses associated with it in political debates in the European Union. In this respect, the paper not only documents the evolution of the European discourse on migration in a crucial period, but also highlights the continuous relevance of the topic of migration in the context of European security and the 2024 European Parliament elections when the issue of migration, security and inefficient migration management

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[2] Ruth Wodak, Michel Meyer, *Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory and Methodology*, in Ruth Wodak, Michael Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Sage Publication, London, 2009, pp. 1-22

[3] Isabela Fairclough, Norman Fairclough, *Political Discourse Analysis: A Method for Advanced Students*, Routledge, London, 2012

have become central themes again in the nationalist and Eurosceptic political discourse, highlighting and confirming at the same time, that this topic remains of urgent topicality.

**Literature review: security practices, migration, and discourse analysis**
Thus, this article presents a multidisciplinary approach to three main research areas, represented by the theme of security, migration, and discourse analysis. After consulting the literature in the field of international relations and security studies, we notice that the definition process has created among researchers an important debate on extending the field to other threats different from the traditional, military ones, in which the reference object in security analysis is no longer the state. In this sense, Hans Morgenthau defined security from a realistic perspective as the prevention and elimination of threats to the state and political integrity[4], while Arnold Wolfers, in his work "National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol" defines security as the absence of fear about values. In line with the previously stated idea, John Mearsheimer states that the security of states is achieved through "military power and increased armed capabilities"[5]. Following the disappearance of the Soviet Union, which resulted in the transfer of the focus of security analysis from military threats to non-conventional threats. In this regard, the researchers of the Copenhagen School proposed an original approach to security analysis, from a constructivist perspective encompassing the 5 sectors of security[6], thus becoming, according to researcher Job Claudia Anamaria, an umbrella concept, combining both the traditional perspective of security and the one extended through sectors[7].

The reconceptualization of security proposed by researchers Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver and Jaap de Wilde, introduced, besides the diversification of reference objects, a security practice, called securitization, which, as Ole Weaver argues, represents "a social and political construction that involves choosing a threat and presenting it through discourse, as a security issue"[1]. From the perspective of theorist Bigo Didier, securitization is a discursive practice that allows "understanding how problems are moved in security and how threats are created",[9] involving an immediate response. Referring to the works dealing with the practice of securitization, we notice that both in the paper "Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe" and in "Security as a "Speech act" - from Theory to Practice. Discourse Construction on Migration in The European Union" Migration, refugees and immigrants as perceived as insecurity, in the discursive act, to societal security in general, and to identity in particular.

Regarding the topic of migration, in the literature we identify that, viewed from the perspective of researchers Castles Stephen, Alastair Davidson and Mark Miller[12], migration appears increasingly often as a problem caused by the nature of the changes made in relation to globalization. Although, according to them, migration was considered for a long time a social and economic phenomenon, specific to historical and sociological fields, it began to be increasingly present at the centre of researchers in the field of international relations and a topic brought up more and more frequently in political debates. Defined according to researchers in the field of sociology and population studies, migration is considered a "complex phenomenon consisting in the movement of people from one territorial area to another, followed by a change of domicile and/or employment in a form of activity in the area of arrival"[13]. The implications that this phenomenon has

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

[5] John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Norton, New York, 2001, p. 11

[6] Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *Securitatea: un nou cadru de analiză*, CA Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p. 14

[7] Claudia Iov, *Rethinking (In)Security in the European Union the Migration-Identity-Security Nexus*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2020, p. 22

[1] Ole Waver, *Securitization and Desecuritization*, Ronnie, Lipschutz, *On security,* Columbia University Press, 1998, pp. 46-86

[9] Didier Bigo, *The (In)Securitization Practices of the Three Universes of EU Border Control: Military/Navy–Border Guards/Police–Database Analysts*, "Security Dialogue", Vol. 45, No. 3, 2014, pp. 209-225

[12] Stephen Castles, Davidson Alastair, *Citizenship and Migration. Globalization and the Politics of Belonging,* Routledge, New York, *2000;* Stephen Castles, *Towards a Sociology of Forced Migration a Social Transformation*, "Sociology", No. 37, 2003, pp. 13-34; Stephen Castles, Miller Mark, *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*, MacMillan, London, 1993

[13] Alexandra Sarcinschi, *Migraţie şi securitate,* National Defense University "Carol I", Bucureşti, 2008, p. 8

created at European level through irregular flows of refugees and illegal immigrants have labelled migration in Koser Khalid's sense as a security threat[14].

Starting from the connectivity relationship created between security and migration and aiming to identify at a discursive level how it relates to migration in the European Union, the official leaders in 2019-2022, we aim to conduct a literature review in the field of discourse analysis. According to Mrs. Rosca Luminita, expert in the field of communication, discourses are the main theoretical basis on which the analysis and description of texts is based. Seen from a multidisciplinary perspective, discourse analysis, according to researcher Rosca Luminita, allows a courageous and direct proposal of certain theses[15].

In the constructivist conception, discourse is presented and understood from the perspective of two dimensions, as social practice, and as individual practice. Discourse as a social practice involves the use of language, but also other communicative resources "as elements of social life" through established language practices in institutional spheres, organizations, and the media. Discourse is, at[16] the same time, an individual practice, because it involves the use of verbal and nonverbal language mechanisms, by a social actor in relation to his interlocutors, to present and assign a position. This type of discourse, through both dimensions, depending on how it is perceived, can generate new social practices.

The discourse from a conceptual point of view highlights how the social actor uses language, regardless of its form, together with other communication resources, to build an attitude/process regarding what he communicates, relating to his interlocutors. It is also important that the speech is not confused with the text because, through speech, the communication process is conducted and goes beyond the text. Moreover, speech can be perceived as a grid for interpreting a situation or action, when an actor or an institution uses a specific language in a social situation that is characterized by norms and values.

Michel Foucault, one of the most relevant theorists in the field of discourse analysis defined discourse as the result of the existence of a social structure, and discursive practice in the form of a social practice. Considering this approach, theories of discourse are also part of the social sciences and are not limited to linguistics and the sciences of language use. The notion of discourse, according to the theorist, is conceived as a supra-individual reality, in the form of a practice belonging to collectives/groups and less to individuals[17]. According to Foucault's social theory, which contributed to the development of discourse analysis, the production of a speech is conditioned by the formation of a relationship between the transmitter and the content of speech, and the formation, circulation, and reproduction of speech within the framework of power relations. In Foucault's view, the social actor communicates within a framework imposed by the limits of a discursive regime, which implicitly shapes the content of a discourse. First, according to him, the discourse of a social actor is not entirely its product, but rather that of the discursive regime, made up of the totality of social rules and practices[18]. Secondly, the speech must include a group of material elements such as institutions, practices of exposure and justification in the public space and contain or present truthful evidence, because it represents more than a linguistic order[19]. Moreover, a discourse must use rules and practices for producing basic statements, based on a set of rules specific to a certain discursive regime, even discursive norms belonging to another discursive regime, different from the one used in the initial speech. A relevant example is political discourse, which is based on specific rules, but also uses discursive practices belonging to the advertising field.

Discourse, according to the theory developed by Foucault, also creates power relations between actors, who delivers the speech and to whom the speech is addressed. The power relations created are defined by Michel Foucault as "unequal and mobile" and represent "the operation of political technologies" in an entire

[14] Khalid Koser, *When is Migration a Security Issue?,* "Brookings", 2011, https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/when-is-migration-a-security-issue/ (11. 06. 2023)

[15] Luminița Roșca, *Mecanismele ale propagandei în discursul de informare: presa românească în perioada 1985-1995*, Polirom, București, 2006, pp 13-14

[16] Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research,* Routledge, London, 2003, p. 26

[17] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language,* Pantheon, New York, 1972, p. 225

[18] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* Pantheon, New York, 1977, p. 50

[19] *Ibidem*, p. 51

social field. Power means the exercise of a relationship of force, not necessarily violent, but sufficient to coerce, influence or intended to act on an actor, at a given moment, in each society[20].

The major interest in studying and analysing discourses was constituted by the appearance of ideologies in the public space, through discourses. In this sense, speeches are a tool for large-scale transposition of ideologies and ideas[21]. Discourse analysis in the field of international relations also demonstrates that the power of words and discourses creates ideological effects on the international stage using discursive practices. The critical approach to discourse analysis, according to researchers Fairclough Norman and Fairclough Isabela, demonstrates how the language used in discourse creates power relations or ideological effects.[22] The assumptions from which critical discourse analysis starts are about social reality, which is built through discourse, and the main goals are to expose the ideology of discourse and identify the power relations underlying the construction of discourse[23]. According to theorists of the field of critical discourse analysis, any discourse also refers to power relations and when we refer to this concept, we aim to favour certain dominant social categories; Just as no other speech can be considered neutral in a total sense. Discursive neutrality, as well as objectivity are myths belonging to mass media communication, justifying that journalists (not just journalists) cannot be objective and neutral in the process of reporting a given situation.

Ruth Wodak believes that the analysis of discourse that is carried out to observe what is pursued through linguistic constructions, sometimes considered according to the concepts used the construction of social practices, could be extended to the level of all discursive acts. Moreover, Ruth Wodak believes that critical discourse analysis can transmit critical knowledge, allowing individuals to detach themselves from the forms of domination exercised by certain ideologies, through a process of self-reflection. The role of critical discourse analysis is not only to describe and explain certain phenomena or ideologies, but even more so through analysis is intended to highlight the existence of certain types of "illusions"[24]. CDA can help raise awareness among the public about its needs and interests.

**Analysis of the official European discourse delivered by leaders in the context of migration in the European Union**

The concept of discourse is an important notion in creating the theoretical basis on the description and analysis of texts in relation to specific communication situations[25]. Discourse analysis focuses on speech and texts as social practices, but also on the resources that are used to enable these practices. An example is given by discursive analytical studies of racism that have been concerned with how texts in the media, for example, or public discourses are constructed to legitimize blaming a group that is part of a minority[26], and the resources that are available in a special cultural framework for legitimizing racist practices[27].

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) highlights how the language used creates ideological effects, sometimes unequal power relations between interlocutors, through discursive practices. The purpose of the analysis is to understand the relationships that are created between discourse and elements of social life, social relations, ideologies, institutions, and social organizations, but also to create new ways of analysing and researching social relations. As a research model, it includes conceptual-methodological approaches, which aim to identify discourse strategies[28].

The socio-communicative analysis of the discourse analyses the way in which a social actor uses language, in accordance with the communication situation, more specifically analyses the relationship

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[20] Hubert Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, The University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 185

[21] Luminița Roșca, *La sphère publique, la démocratisation de la vie sociale et politique et les médias en Roumanie*, Tritonic Publishing House, București, 2012; Luminița Roșca, *Mechanisms of Propaganda in Information Discourse. Press of the Years 1985-1995,* Polirom, Iasi, 2006

[22] Isabela Fairclough, Norman Fairclough, *Political Discourse Analysis:  A Method for Advanced Students*, Routledge, London, 2012

[23] Ruth Wodak, Michel Meyer, *Op. cit*., pp. 5-6

[24] *Ibidem*, p. 7

[25] Luminița Roșca, *Op.cit.,* pp. 13-15

[26] Jonathan Potter, Margaret Wetherell, *Discourse and Social Psychology,* Sage, London 2020

[27] *Idem*

[28] Isabela Fairclough, Norman Fairclough, *Op. cit.,* p. 78

practices, among which there are themes and arguments, framed in a specific purpose of the situation. The communication situation in this case signifies the instructions for producing and interpreting what is offered through the speech. Through this type of analysis, we follow how social actors position themselves towards the content of communication and how they relate to its topic by assuming their point of view. The socio-communicative perspective highlights the discursive choices in relation to the specifics of the communication situation and implicitly its positioning within the given situation.

The official speeches of the leaders of the European institutions, together with those of the leaders of states, are held during 2019-2021 and present as a main communication situation the phenomenon of migration on the territory of the European Union, which began with the refugee crisis of 2015 and which was ongoing, indeed in a smaller form, also during the period included in our discursive selection. The refugee crisis of 2015, in the form of a migration phenomenon, continues to pose a threat to European security, especially to societal security. Moreover, we can say that these speeches deal with how to address migration, through policies and actions, from the perspective of both the leaders of the European institutions and national leaders. In this respect, the perspective on migration, in this analysis we will consider both the institutional approach and the approach from the perspective of a state actor.

By analysing the speeches made by European Commission President von der Leyen, High Representative of the Union for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Joseph Borell, European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas, former European Commission President Jean-Claude Junker, European Council Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatovic and European Commission Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, we aim to identify the perspective approached by the European institutions on migration, which are the main discursive themes used, but also what are their recommendations to Member States regarding migrant management policies. As regards the analysis of the speeches of the leaders of the European states, I would like to identify how Member States position themselves at a discursive level, in relation to waves of immigrants or in relation to migration. In this regard, I decided to analyse the official speeches of the leaders of Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Poland in 2019-2021.

In the analysis of the European discourse, we use an analysis grid (Table 1) that will allow us to identify the main themes used by leaders through discourse and the ideologies transposed by them. To be easier to follow in interpreting the data, the nineteen speeches were encoded with the letter "D" in the analysis grid. It is scientifically essential to mention that quotations taken from speeches and used in the text and Table 1 have been personally translated[29]. Applying the analysis grid proposed in the previous subchapter on the official speeches of the leaders of the European Union and the European institutions, we identified a set of themes that support and promote, as such, the policies pursued by the European Union for an efficient management of migration flows (Table 1). The main themes identified in the speeches of the official actors of the European Union were cooperation (D1, D2, D7, D8), solidarity (D3, D5), provision of humanitarian protection (D4) and respect for human rights (D6).

The predominant theme in their speech was Member States' cooperation in managing migration, being used to strengthen migration policies, manage, and protect the external borders of the European Union, engage internationally with strategically positioned states, step up efforts by certain states and provide humanitarian aid to migrants at risk.

Solidarity as a dominant theme is used in two speeches in a context where some Member States, also called frontline states, in relation to migration to Europe, need the solidarity of other Member States to manage this situation. By solidarity, European leaders mean providing financial support, relocating migrants to other member states, and sharing responsibilities fairly. Another theme encountered in the official speech of the leaders of the European institutions is represented by providing humanitarian protection to migrants and is used to empower Member States and convince them to get involved in managing this phenomenon. The last theme promoted in speeches by representatives of the EU institutions is respect for human rights, by offering international protection to migrants in difficult situations, and international cooperation to promote migrants' rights.

Compared to the speeches of official EU leaders who promote the policies, directives and actions carried out by the European Union and adopt a common position stating topics aimed at managing migration in Europe as efficiently as possible, we notice that national leaders, officials of the Member States approach

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[29] The table of coded discourses is attached to the article.

discursive themes that support EU policies, but also different themes, some of which are contrary to the lines proposed by the institutions of the European Union. For example, Romania's leaders present through their official speeches the need to strengthen and support European policies (D9), but also the need for cooperation to ensure the security of external borders and coherent management of migrant flows (D10). The speeches of the German leader, Chancellor Angela Merkel, present cooperation as the main theme, being clearly stated and found in all three speeches under our analysis (D14, D15, D19). The theme of cooperation is found in the speeches in the form of cooperation in the implementation and implementation of EU policies.

The speech promoted by the national leader, Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary is positioned differently and in total contradiction to the speeches promoted by the official leaders of the institutions of the European Union and those of the leaders of the member states, Germany, and Romania. The speeches of Hungary's national leader (D11, D12, D13, D16, D17) present themes such as: rejecting cooperation on migration policies and rejecting solidarity towards immigrants, introducing populist nationalist elements against immigrants, by addressing subthemes and discursive narratives highlighting the rejection of multiculturalism, to protect national identity.

On a similar note, Polish President Andrzej Duda's speech (D18) presents a theme of rejecting solidarity towards migrants and actions carried out by the European Union, opposing participation in the implementation of actions proposed by EU leaders, and carried out by them.

Another observation we expose is related to the way in which both the official leaders of the European Union and the leaders of the Member States position themselves at a discursive level in relation to migration, immigrants, and refugees. Following the analysis of the speeches, we identified that the official leaders of the European Union, together with the leaders of Romania and Germany, adopt a positive position on migration, and when I refer to the positive term, we aim to highlight how they relate to migration legislation and policies carried out by the EU.

Instead, the speeches of the Hungarian leader and the speech of the Polish leader promote and present an illiberal position on migration and on immigrants and refugees, by rejecting multiculturalism, a principle promoted by the European Union, adopting a critical position even towards the European institutions, which support migration and refugees.

## European leaders' discourse: between securitisation and desecuritisation

Starting from the research hypothesis that constituted the realization of this article: dividing the 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 consisting of the nineteen official speeches of the leaders of European institutions and Member States, we notice that the group of leaders positions itself differently from the point of view discursive in relation to migration policies and implicitly to 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.

The first group of leaders, identified as pro-European and who support the project of the European Union and implicitly its policies in the field of migration and asylum, including the adopted legislation, consists of leaders of the European institutions – Ursula von der Leyen, Josep Borell, Jean Claude Juncker, Margaritis Schinas, Dunja Mijatovic and Ylva Johansson; and the leaders of the member states Germany, Romania – Angela Merkel, Viorica Dăncila and Klaus Iohannis.

The above leaders recur their official speeches use themes such as solidarity with member states facing large numbers of refugees, member states' cooperation in managing migration flows, promoting EU directives, and providing humanitarian aid to migrants.

| Discourse coding | European leader | Dominant theme |
|---|---|---|
| D1 | Jean Claude Junker | Cooperation of Member States |
| D2 | Ursula von der Leyen (September 2020) | Cooperation of Member States in support of refugee crisis management policies |

| D3 | Margaritis Schinas | Solidarity with migrants and Member States in crisis |
|---|---|---|
| D4 | Dunja Mijatovic | Solidarity/ Providing humanitarian protection |
| D5 | Ursula von der Leyen (November 2020) | Solidarity/Responsibility/ Supporting Member States |
| D6 | Josep Borell (May 2021) | Respect for human rights and migrants/refugees |
| D7 | Ylva Johansson | Cooperation of Member States |
| D8 | Josep Borell (November 2021) | Cooperation to manage the crisis |
| D9 | Klaus Iohannis | Strengthening and supporting migration policies |
| D10 | Viorica Dăncilă | Cooperation of states to manage migration efficiently |
| D11 | Viktor Orban (September 2019) | Rejecting cooperation on migration management policies |
| D12 | Viktor Orban (April 2019) | Rejecting European/supranational policies on migration and integration of migrants |
| D13 | Viktor Orban (July 2019) | Rejecting the European Commission's migration and asylum policies / Promoting Euroscepticism |
| D14 | Angela Merkel (December 2019) | Cooperation of Member States |
| D15 | Angela Merkel (July 2020) | Cooperation to manage migration from the EU |
| D16 | Viktor Orban (September 2020) | Rejecting political cooperation on migration / Introducing a false perception of immigrants |
| D17 | Viktor Orban (June 2021) | Protecting national, European identity / Critique of European elites |
| D18 | Andrzej Duda (September 2021) | Rejecting solidarity with migrants |
| D19 | Angela Merkel (December 2021) | The need for Member States' cooperation in migration management |

*Table of coded discourses*

All these themes, together with the arguments presented in Table no. 1, reinforce the idea that their discourse is a European one, democratically supported in order to make the entire European community responsible and to convince Member States to cooperate in the process of efficient and fair management of migration, which is an issue on the security agenda of the European Union and not only for the Member States at the external borders.

In relation to the political ideology found in the speeches of the above leaders, we notice that they position themselves in the two pro-European ideologies of center-right and center-left. To achieve this ideological classification of their speeches, we have related to the themes they mainly use and to the policies they mainly support/promote. Although within the discourses of our corpus there are no textual elements specific to an ideology, which would allow us to identify a particular ideology by the way it relates to migration, we have managed to identify with the help of secondary sources how center-right and center-left ideologies treat migration and asylum policies.

For example, the center-right ideology emphasizes the cooperation of member states in managing migration flows and the security of the external borders of the European Union, compared to the center-left ideology that emphasizes granting and respecting the rights of immigrants while promoting an effective border management policy. Consequently, we argue that these two ideologies present in the speeches of European leaders are mostly intertwined and support especially the policies that the European Union carries out regarding security and migration. More precisely, discourse analysis does not identify arguments specific to one ideology or another.

In a totally different way from the leaders of the European institutions and the leaders of the Member States Germany and Romania are the official speeches delivered by the leader of Hungary – Viktor Orban; and Poland's leader Andrzej Duda. Although this migration phenomenon represents a security problem for the entire European Union, and its management is necessary to be carried out according to the principle of multilateral collaboration, because the phenomenon is a transnational one, the two leaders adopt a nationalist

position, like the ideology they promote, regarding migration and immigrants and a critical one towards the European Union.

The speeches of the Hungarian and Polish leaders belong ideologically to the nationalist current because the themes they promote at a discursive level are in most cases rejection of the policies and directives of the European Union, criticizing each time the political elites – the leaders of the European institutions. Moreover, the leaders' speeches are nationalist, because besides criticism of the European Union, they contain rhetoric that promotes the idea of respecting sovereignty in decision-making related to migration policies. In addition to his criticism of the European Union, Viktor Orban's speeches aimed at national voters and national elites present immigrants, without distinguishing between immigrants and refugees, as a threat to European Christian identity, while also considering them to be a potential terrorist danger.

**Conclusions**

Starting from the conceptualization of security made by the theorists of the Copenhagen School in the work Security, a new framework for analysis, irregular and illegal migration represents a threat to societal security and, implicitly, to European identity. In this context, the security issue represents a discursive construction, in which it is necessary to convince the audience of the threat that migration poses to the identity and values of European communities.

In this sense, through his speeches, Viktor Orban carries out a process of securitization of 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 built in his speeches according to the model of the theory developed by Carl Schmitt in his work The Concept of the Political in which the distinction between friend and foe is distinguished. This distinction can be found in populist discursive practices such as: "We will not give in to the crisis"[30] and "through these elections we will decide"[31] used mainly by leaders Viktor Orban and Andrzej Duda, aimed at attracting the electorate 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 aimed at reducing the degree of migration threat generated by the Syrian refugee crisis, promoting policies based on cooperation and various reconciliations[32], 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.

Following all this, the discourse analysis conducted on the nineteen speeches demonstrates that migration generated by the refugee crisis is still perceived at a discursive level, a security problem for the European Union and, at the same time, a threat to national security for the Member States.

Seen from the perspective of European security, the management of this phenomenon requires policies and directives to be conducted by the main decision-making institutions of the European Union, aimed at removing the feeling of insecurity created in the European community. At the level of the European discourse, a debate was created based on pros and cons, through which the leaders of the Member States positioned themselves in two groups: pro-European and nationalist.

In conclusion, we find that through public speeches, the leaders of the Member States look at migration differently during the period under analysis, the debate being theoretically between securitization and desecuritization of migration, and in practice between applying policies and actions in a way that meets the needs and interests of citizens, both at national and Community level.

Another finding that the research of this paper argues, by applying the analysis grid to the discourses, is represented by the identification of the securitization process by European leaders, who hold nationalist speeches. Instead, leaders who share through discourses pro-European ideologies of the center right and center

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

[31] 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/ (5.05.2022)

[32] Thierry Balzacq, *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, Routledge, 2011, pp. 116-117

left, conduct a process of desecuritization of migration that is the subject of our research, promoting in a positive way solidarity with immigrants and refugees and encouraging multiculturalism, solidarity, and cooperation in the European Union.

**The limits of the research**

Considering the complexity of the research topic and the elaboration of a multidisciplinary analysis methodology, it was inevitable to register research limits. Looking from a methodological perspective, the limits captured are related to the use of a single research method, the qualitative one. Another empirical limit recorded could be the limited number of speeches that were subjected to analysis. The choice of nineteen speeches being imposed by the context that intervened during the research, more precisely during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which the issue of migration was no longer a main topic in the leaders' speeches, just as migration was no longer considered the main concern for European leaders and the institutions of the European Union, until 2021, when illegal migration from North Africa began to increase in numbers.

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