Evaluating the securitized migration policy of the European Union in the context of border security

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ABSTRACT

The securitization theory, formulated by the Copenhagen School, has become one of the most widely used approaches to explain the relationship between migration and security. This study focuses on the reflections of the European Union's (EU) securitized migration policy on the influence of border policies within the framework of securitization theory. In other words, the securitization of migration in the EU has been examined in terms of rising walls and technological developments at the borders of the member states. During the surge in migration flows to the EU, the evolution of border security in countries has been scrutinized. As a result of research, similar practices in border security have been identified in member states. In this study, firstly, it has been revealed that the EU has laid the groundwork for the development of security-focused policies in border security by providing financial and technical assistance, as well as offering training and equipment support to member states. Secondly, the study emphasizes the EU's ability to devise border security strategies that are both productive and enduring. Furthermore, it raises critical questions about the implementation of extraordinary measures under the guise of security and the consequences of securitization on border policies.

Introduction

The securitization of the European Union's (EU) migration policy has increasingly positioned border security at the forefront of geopolitical discourse. This study employs the lens of securitization theory to scrutinize how this policy shift impacts countries' border control strategies amidst escalating migrant inflows into the EU. Our analysis unveils a convergence in the border security approaches of these countries, heavily shaped by EU policy directives, highlighting a critical intersection of regional security concerns and international migration dynamics.

The research provides a critical analysis of the effect of securitization on border policies and offers insight into the long-term security strategies of the EU. To achieve this, the study examines the process of securitizing migration in the EU using the method of critical discourse analysis. The discourse of political elites and the official documents and press releases of the EU Parliament, Council, and Commission, identified as securitizing actors, were investigated. Through discourse analysis, we reveal that the EU has chosen to include migration in its security agenda. Migration policies in the EU have been developed from a security perspective, as the phenomenon of migration is associated with the concept of security. According to our research, the EU favors strengthening border security in member states, with a focus on security. The EU's support for border security has laid the foundation for security-based policies in these countries.

Our research also indicates that the EU's security-focused policies effectively decrease migration to the EU by influencing the border security of member states, especially those forming the EU's external borders, such as Greece. The study demonstrates this decrease in migration flows with numerical data. While various reasons affect migration flow, strict border security measures in member states have proved effective in reducing migration towards the EU. The following sections provide a detailed examination of how this was reached. Firstly, we investigate the securitization process of migration in the EU and its reasons. Then, we explore how security-focused policies have been reflected in border security through support and projects for member states. The developments in the border security of member states provide us with the most concrete reflections of securitization.

Background: The securitization of the EU's migration policy

The impact of associating the phenomenon of migration with security on border security has been examined within the framework of the securitization theory put forth by the Copenhagen School. Embracing a constructivist viewpoint, the Copenhagen School contends that the understanding of security should extend beyond a state-centric and military-oriented framework, acknowledging that any circumstance jeopardizing the well-being of individuals warrants classification as a security issue (Buzan & Waever, 2003). According to the securitization theory, the use of the term "security" for a subject can transform it into a problem and prioritize it on the political agenda. The existence and scope of the threat are constructed through discourse (Buzan *et al*.,1998). Thus, by creating a sense of urgency, all kinds of measures become legitimate to eliminate the so-called threat (Waever, 2003).

Particularly in the 1990s, the concept of international migration emerged as a crucial policy domain for the European Union. During this period, the progressively politicized phenomenon of migration has assumed an intricate structure for the Union, particularly concerning border control. Prior to the 1993 Maastricht Treaty, the Trevi group, which was initially set up for counter-terrorism cooperation, later incorporated border controls, asylum, and irregular migration into its security agenda at the group's meeting in 1986 (Lodge & Bayburtlu, 2002). Especially during this period, irregular migration and refugees fleeing conflict or persecution began to be perceived as a threat to border security (Genç, 2010). After the Schengen Agreement and Maastricht Treaty, this process has continued to the present day, leading to an increased trend towards ensuring border security, preventing migration, and controlling migration through strict security measures. The securitization

process has impacted intergovernmental political discussions on border security, notably during the Dublin, Tampere, and Seville Summits, following the Schengen Agreement's internal border abolition and external border reinforcement (European Council, 1999; Council of the European Union, 2002).

Apart from legal frameworks, the most compelling reflection of the securitization of migration in the institutional field is the establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) in 2004. Establishing funding for FRONTEX, an independent body within the EU created to enhance border security through operational cooperation, serves as a notable example of the development of security-focused policies (Özer, 2011). In this regard, the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) holds significance as it contributes to enhancing physical security measures in border security, aiming to advance the surveillance of the external borders of EU member states (Andersson, 2015). An example of technological developments that have led to the implementation of stricter border security measures is the creation of the Schengen Information System (SIS and SIS II), the Visa Information System (VIS), and the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (EURODAC).

Establishing shared databases in EU border security and forming a collaborative network among members are outcomes of the securitization approach (Dumbrava, 2021). SIS II is the most extensive information system for public security in Europe (European Commission, 2022). VIS is a system that demonstrates the crucial role of technology in enhancing and strengthening external borders. The EU has established the Visa Information System, supporting the implementation of the EU Common Visa Policy to improve external border management (EU-Lisa, 2019a). EURODAC functions as a centralized database, collecting and managing the digitized fingerprints of asylum seekers and irregular migrants. It aims to identify the member state responsible for processing an asylum application. EURODAC is used by national asylum authorities to store new fingerprint records of asylum seekers, facilitating the detection of multiple asylum applications (EU-Lisa, 2019b). While efforts are made to enable migration management through these systems, it is also observed that security measures against migration are being intensified. Data sharing within the EU encompasses details about events occurring at the external land and sea borders, the status and whereabouts of patrols and vessels, analytical reports, and intelligence on evolving migration routes or tactics employed by traffickers (Ceyhan, 2008).

Major EU institutions, including the European Commission, European Council, and European Parliament, influence public perceptions regarding the securitization of migration through official documents, public statements, and media discourses (Huber, 2015). In 2006, the European Parliament called on EU institutions and member states to use the term "irregular/undocumented migrants" instead of the term "illegal" due to its negative connotations (European Council, 2006). However, parliamentary debates have increasingly highlighted migration as a security issue. To cite an example in terms of securitized discourses from the Parliament debates, President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani said on October 18, 2018:

> This has to be explained to citizens, and when propaganda is spread by those seeking to fuel fear and discontent with repeated assertions that Europe has done nothing, a firm stand must be taken against it. We need to stress in our political messages that migration has been reduced as a direct result of EU action and the pooling of our resources. (European Parliament, 2018a)

Parliament President Antonio Tajani has delivered positive messages about security, emphasizing that citizens should not feel worried or afraid due to the measures taken by

the EU. Although Tajani criticized those who engage in propaganda through migration and security issues, his statement acknowledging that migration is perceived as a problem in the EU and that measures will continue to be taken can be cited as an example of securitizing discourse. In 2015, President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz:

> It is clear that many of our citizens are losing trust that their elected governments are able to manage the crisis. This feeling of powerlessness breeds fear, and fear leads them to the doorstep of the populists. We must break this cycle. We will break it by demonstrating that the Union and its Member States are able not only to make sensible proposals on border management, migration, asylum, and security but also to deliver them. (European Parliament, 2016)

In this speech, Schulz emphasizes the fears and concerns of EU citizens regarding migration, creating a positive perception of the legitimacy of the methods to be used in solving the issues in this field. In the continuation of this speech, he announced the preparation of necessary equipment for border security and the rapid deployment of 1500 border and coastal security personnel. Tajani, in another speech on June 28, 2018, said:

> Against that background, the first thing to do is to halt the constant stream of migrants leaving transit countries and the coast of Africa and ensure that only people genuinely entitled to asylum arrive in Europe and do so safely. Our fellow citizens want a Union that shows solidarity towards people fleeing persecution and war but is resolute in turning away those who do not have the right to enter or remain in Europe. (European Parliament, 2018b)

In his speech, he stated that immigration to the EU should be stopped and emphasized that only those who genuinely need asylum should be accepted. Here, the idea of stopping migration is brought to the fore. David Sassoli, who served as the President of the Parliament between 2019 and 2022, emphasized in a 2021 speech that Afghan refugees in the migration wave towards the EU should be distributed equally and fairly among Union members. However, French President Emmanuel Macron emphasized the need for a plan to address the migration flows from Afghanistan, stating that cooperation should be established with transit and host countries such as Pakistan, Türkiye, and Iran for the harmonization of criteria related to the fight against irregular migration, solidarity, and protection (Herszenhorn & Baume, 2021). Although the President of the European Parliament signals a positive and lenient stance on migration policies, some members emphasize the need for solidarity in combating irregular migration and prioritizing the prevention of migration.

The Commission has incorporated migration into the security agenda by employing discourse that underscores urgency, challenges, and issues. Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos's speech on January 27, 2015, "Migration today is part and parcel of our societies. It is an inherent feature of our globalized world. It brings richness and opportunities, but it also comes with challenges" (European Commission, 2015a, p. 1). Describing the problems brought about by migration as challenges can be cited as an example of securitizing discourses. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker expressed the need for urgent measures to control migration towards the EU in 2015 (European Commission, 2015b). In 2016, President Juncker stated, "We will defend our borders. We will be very strict in terms of who can cross our borders, and this is something that we are looking to implement by the end of the year" (Macdonald & Baczynska, 2016). President von der Leyen's speech in December 2023:

> Europe is a strong community and capable of finding great answers to great challenges. I welcome the timely political agreement reached by Parliament and Council on the key elements of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Our goal was to find a fair and pragmatic approach to managing

migration together in the EU. It is a crucial step in making sure that Europe has the tools to manage migration. (European Commission, 2023a)

President von der Leyen calls for unity and solidarity in the face of migration, which she defines as a challenge. European Council President Donald Tusk's speech on November 8, 2018:

> The migration crisis has given an impulse to a debate on the identity of European Christian Democracy. From its very beginning I was warning against two threats. First, the powerlessness regarding the wave of illegal migration to effectively control our external border would provoke a crisis of trust of our citizens in the liberal state and the European Union as a whole. Because people value freedom and openness only as long as they feel safe. The second threat is the emergence of the politicians on the main stage who, by taking advantage of the chaos triggered by the new migration period, started to set security and order against openness and freedom… (European Council, 2018)

Tusk used terms emphasizing internal security, such as insecurity and chaos discourse. Thus, migration has been portrayed as a security threat. In the Council meeting in October 2021, government leaders emphasized that the EU needs to take more restrictive measures to ensure effective control of its external borders (European Council, 2021).

At the same time, the documents and official statements from the European Council and the European Parliament offer concrete examples of securitized narratives, especially concerning irregular migration. These instances illustrate that migration is firmly integrated into the security agenda of the EU's primary political institution. In 2013, the Council underscored the interconnectedness of Europe's internal and external security challenges, urging enhanced synergies between the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and actors in Freedom/Security/Justice to tackle horizontal issues such as illegal migration, organized crime, and terrorism. Migration was depicted as a security threat comparable to the most frequently cited global security problems (European Council, 2013). The CSDP, which constitutes the primary policy pillar of the EU in foreign affairs and security, encompasses issues such as crisis prevention and crisis management within the EU.

Notably, migration is highlighted as a threat element within this policy domain. In brief, due to the perception of migration not merely as human mobility but as a security threat, it has been officially regarded as an area necessitating military measures. Among the committees in the European Parliament, the "Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE) has presented reports to the EU members, indicating that migration has become increasingly complex and challenging to manage. In the reports, the terms "complex" and "challenging" are used in conjunction with migration, emphasizing the perception of the need for urgent measures (European Parliament, 2009). Moreover, LIBE is a committee of the European Parliament responsible for safeguarding civil liberties and human rights listed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (European Parliament, 2014). This committee has started using words related to migration with negative connotations in its reports.

Over the past few years, European Union member states have been reintroducing border controls in the Schengen area, and these measures are frequently prolonged. Intending to maintain unrestricted movement while tackling actual security challenges, the Commission presented a proposition in 2021. While trying to regulate security measures, the Commission used terms such as crisis and challenge regarding migration in this proposal. It emphasizes high-security measures in this proposal with sentences like "… It relies on trust among the Member States, efficient controls of the external borders and alternative measures on the territory of the Member States in order to assure a high level of

security within the Schengen area, in the absence of internal border controls" (European Commission, 2021). Besides these documents, in 2016, Frontex received a 75% budget increase. This, coupled with certain EU member states reintroducing border controls in the Schengen zone, reflected the perception of migration inflows as a "security threat," contributing to the negative stereotyping of refugees as a threat to European society.

In general, when evaluated, border security has been emphasized in the statements of political elites and official institutions in the EU by putting forward the different parameters of the consequences of migration. On the other hand, some scholars engage in a more nuanced analysis of the impact of the securitization of migration on the increasing prominence of far-right parties in European politics. "They contend that this causal relationship has become more conspicuous, particularly in the aftermath of what is commonly referred to as the 2015 refugee crisis "(Eris & Oner, 2021, p. 163). "By conducting a comparative analysis of three far-right political parties—France's National Rally, Italy's League, and Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD)—Eris and Oner (2021, p. 163) illustrate how the anti-immigrant rhetoric employed by these parties played a role in their respective achievements in the 2019 European Parliament elections".

"In 2016, in its party program, the AfD emphasized that Germany should not be a country of immigrants and attempted to garner support with the rhetoric of "you do not belong to our country." In the 2017 election program, it explicitly stated that "AfD's goal is not the self-destruction of our state and nation but its self-preservation" and that "borders need to be closed immediately to prevent unlimited mass migration" (Patton, 2017, p. 164) "As a result, in the German Federal Elections held in September 2017, the AfD emerged as the third-largest party, securing 12.6% of the vote—a feat unprecedented for any far-right political party in Germany in the post-Second World War period" (Çakı & Topbaş, 2018, pp. 64-65). It was exemplified how similar discourses were employed within the framework of security themes by making migration an agenda item in the EU.

The securitization of the EU migration policy and its impact on the border strategies of member states

Increased border controls, new strategies, high-tech tools, barbed wires, and high walls reflect the securitized migration policy when the EU is reassessing its border security policies (Rigby & Crisp, 2021). Within the realm of border security, the extensive adoption of digitization and technology has recently surged in the EU. The oversight of borders is facilitated through advancements in technologies like surveillance cameras, drones, and risk analysis methods. According to Carrera (2007, p. 6), "the EU's operational capacity development is rooted in two primary objectives: firstly, implementing operational measures "to combat illegal immigration," and secondly, collaborating with third parties in the region." Thus, an increasing inclination is observed toward utilizing military apparatus and vehicles in assessing and controlling irregular migration within the EU (Yavaş, 2017).

"Especially after the bomb attacks that occurred in EU countries, the existing fear of migration and immigrants within the Union has intensified even more" (Adamson, 2006, p.166). After the 2004 Madrid and 2005 London attacks, preventing irregular migration through the Mediterranean route became important for the EU (Jordan & Horsburgh, 2006). Irregular migration from east to west has started to be perceived as a direct threat to security (Jandl, 2007). In the historical process, the increase in physical and technological measures

at the borders gained momentum in the 2000s. In the early 1990s, after the dissolution of the USSR, and in the mid-1990s, due to the wars in Yugoslavia, the number of individuals crossing into the EU through legal and illegal means increased. By the 2000s, with the EU's expansion steps, border protection systems and institutional developments in this field came to the forefront. Among the new members, Slovakia's border with Ukraine, which is nearly 100 km, Poland's 1100 km borders with Belarus and Ukraine, and Romania's external borders were considered weak in terms of security compared to other external borders at that time (Beaudouin, 2009). "Already after the 2004 enlargement of the EU, the European Border Agency (FRONTEX) was established to enhance border security" (Neal, 2009, p. 333). In the following years, the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) was established to increase the monitoring of external borders. Another reason for the institutionalization of border management in the EU gaining momentum is the goal of establishing a certain standard for the diverse practices of member states in border management (European Commission, 2018).

Although there are variations in implementation among member states in the EU, since land, sea, and air border units are consolidated into a single unit, and the units responsible for border security are under civilian authority, there are some similarities in certain aspects. For example, in countries like France, Luxembourg, Denmark, Austria, the Czech Republic, Belgium, and Hungary, the units responsible for border security are consolidated under the police organization. In Germany, federal-level police officers are responsible for border security. Countries like Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and Poland have established border guard units, and these units are deployed nationwide (Sunar, 2018). Throughout the EU, border security services are provided under the police organization or similar units. Therefore, especially in managing migration flows, member states maintain close collaboration by receiving support from the EU in this field. Steps such as tracking technological developments at the borders, using the latest systems in member states, or establishing an extensive network for sharing databases are among the impacts of securitization.

After the internal conflicts arising from the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa since 2011, the EU has been faced with a refugee influx since the beginning of 2015 (Eurostat, 2024). While this influx has become a problem for the EU as a whole, it has been perceived as an even greater challenge for the border countries. Therefore, the EU, in addition to legal measures and new technologies, has quickly developed a solution by increasing physical measures in member states. The rising walls and barbed wires at the borders in the EU are considered the most tangible and rapid impact in the field of border security within the securitization tendency. The following sections will discuss how the new security measures supported by the EU continue to be implemented at the borders of the member states.

The border of Greece: The shield of the EU

Only in the 1980s did Greece, which had been a country of emigration, formulate a national policy on migration. Upon becoming a member of the European Community in 1981, Greece rapidly transformed into a country of immigration in tandem with social and economic developments (Papageorgiou, 2013). As a result, Greece has adopted a stringent stance on migration since the 1990s. In the 2000s, due to the increasing flow of migration, migration has once again become a domestic security issue in Greece (Palagiannis, 2016). As per the UNHCR data, the annual figures for sea and land crossings into Greece varied between 2014 and 2021. In 2014, the crossings were comparatively lower, with 2,280 irregular migrants

entering by land and 41,038 by sea. However, in 2015, Greece witnessed an unprecedented surge in new arrivals, with 4,907 irregular crossing by land and 856,723 by sea. This surge led to the implementation of additional security measures to curb irregular crossings. Since then, the numbers have sharply dropped: 177,234 in 2016, 36,310 in 2017, 50,508 in 2018, 74,613 in 2019, 15,696 in 2020, and 9,157 in 2021 (UNCHR, 2022).

Greece's measures to enhance border security against the increasing migration movements towards the EU through Türkiye began in 2012 by erecting a fence along the border (Baczynska & Ledwith, 2016). In the past few years, the borders shared by Greece and Türkiye, especially the Aegean Sea border and the Evros land/river border, have become significant locations for irregular entry into the EU. In reaction to the migration movements through these borders with Türkiye, Greek, and FRONTEX authorities have strengthened their monitoring capabilities (Topak, 2014). Greece's migration management and border security strategies have progressively hardened in the ensuing period. (Kirişçi, 2004).

Subsequently, Greece has consistently reinforced border security measures and enhanced surveillance capabilities, supported financially by the EU External Borders Fund (Berberakis, 2022). Following Türkiye's decision to open its borders to Europe in February/March 2020, Greece decided to construct a steel wall (Kostopoulos & Mylonas, 2022). FRONTEX personnel have been deployed at the border where the wall was constructed, and the advanced technology control devices installed on the wall are also financed by the EU. In addition, eight observation towers, each five meters high, have been built in the Ferres region. (Kokkinidi, 2021). Greece, in violation of the European Parliament's 1999 ban on the use of weapons that directly affect the functioning of the brain, employed a wall along with high-decibel sound bombs and tear gas against migrants (Stickings, 2021; European Parliament, 2000). Following this incident, Commission President Von der Leyen expressed solidarity by characterizing Greece as "Europe's shield" and announced financial support of 700 million euros for Greece's border security expenses (European Commission, 2020a). The EU providing financial support to Greece for such stringent security measures enhances the securitization trend against migration and paves the way for strict measures in border security.

Meanwhile, as maritime crossings increased due to strict measures at the land border, Greece announced a plan to establish floating "sea barriers" that are 1.1 meters high and 2.7 kilometers long (Smith, 2020). Arrivals to Greece by sea have consistently been higher than arrivals by land, according to UNHCR data. For example, before the construction of the wall in 2019, there were 59,726 entries to Greece by sea and 14,887 entries by land. While these numbers vary by year, there were 9,714 entries by sea and 5,982 entries by land in 2020, and in 2021, they were recorded as 4,331 by sea and 4,826 by land. In 2022, there were 12,758 entries by sea and 6,022 by land (UNCHR, 2022). While various factors influence the decrease and increase in these numbers, the construction of the steel wall and the use of deterrent systems are also seen to have a significant impact. Lastly, in the summer of 2022, specifically in August, the Greek government announced that 25,000 migrants were attempting to cross the Turkish border. In response to this situation, Greece reiterated statements indicating that it was still facing challenges due to migration, emphasizing that the measures taken at the border were legitimate and appropriate (The Brussels Times News, 2022).

In its pursuit to safeguard external borders and address irregular migration, the EU has designated Greece with the responsibility of border control in the region. Consequently, the EU perceives Greece to be facing extraordinary pressure in dealing with migration issues and, as a result, has extended the influence of its security-oriented approach through collaboration and proposals for the Greek borders. To enhance technical capabilities and leverage technology in border security, efforts were initiated to curb irregular crossings, exemplified by the Aspida and Xenios Zeus Operations in Greece in 2012 (Booth *et al.*, 2013). The Aspida Operation, jointly financed by the EU Commission and Greece, involved deploying 1881 personnel in the initial phase to reinforce physical patrols along the Greek-Turkish land border (Angeli *et al.*, 2014). Hence, the security-oriented framework implemented in Greece has not only mirrored the process of securitization with the support of the EU but has also fortified it.

The findings of this study suggest a notable increase in implementation, border management, and migration control in Greece during the 2015 period, compared to preceding years. It is observed that the support of the EU encourages Greece to take strict measures in the field of border security. Over time, the securitized approach of the EU's migration policy has impacted Greece's border security measures, contributing to an enhancement in the EU's overall security. The study's findings support the notion that securitization has led to the increased militarization of Greece's borders. When analyzing the securitization process for the protection of both the EU region's and Greece's national borders, it becomes evident that the EU supports Greece based on the perception that it is under extraordinary pressure in dealing with migration while attempting to safeguard the external borders of the EU. Thus, the study revealed that the security-oriented approach has effects that extend to the borders of this country.

Hungary's border with Serbia and Croatia

Regarded more as a stepping stone to reach other EU members rather than being a target country, Hungary began erecting wire fences along its southern border with Serbia in 2015 to prevent the passage of migrants. In addition to these wire fences, it was announced that the border would be protected with thermal cameras, reflectors, night vision, and an alarm system (Euronews, 2017). In the summer of 2015, the initial section of barbed wire along the 175-kilometer border between Hungary and Serbia was completed. The government even declared a state of emergency in border areas, increasing penalties for irregular crossings (Sandford, 2017). Due to the wire fence erected along the Serbian border, when migrants turned towards Croatia, Hungary also enclosed its border with Croatia with wire fences (Kingsley, 2015).

While taking physical measures at their borders in line with national decisions, members like Hungary are considered successful by the EU in reducing irregular crossings through the construction of wire fences or walls. Indeed, the EU has supported Hungary's policies by providing financial and personnel assistance. Moreover, between 2014 and 2020, Hungary has been allocated slightly over €24.1 million from the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) and nearly €61.5 million from the Internal Security Fund (ISF) (Pollet & Mouzourakis, 2015). The support provided by the EU for border security and other security measures of its members indicates that the EU has now embraced such actions, acknowledging the significance of physical measures as a crucial component in the Union's border security.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban stated in 2022, "We are not in a position to manage migration; we need to stop it. We must show them that they cannot cross the borders" (Euronews, 2022a). Thus, Orban is actually emphasizing that migration is a threat to Hungary. Additionally, Orban said that the EU "needs to do its part" for Hungary, just as it did for Italy, Greece, and Bulgaria regarding refugees. However, the spokesperson for the European Commission responded to Orban's statement by saying, "Solidarity is not one-sided." Because Hungary is both requesting support for border security and not implementing the EU's decision to distribute refugees collectively among member states (NTV, 2017), the EU is not inclined to finance the fences on the Hungarian border because Hungary does not comply with the decisions regarding the resettlement of refugees. Apart from these developments, in parallel with the strengthening of borders by the EU, along with other support provided to Hungary, according to monthly data presented by the Hungarian Police in 2015, there has been a significant decrease in the number of irregular migrants since the completion of the fences (Besenyo, 2017).

The support provided by the EU to Hungary has laid the groundwork for stringent measures in border security in Hungary. Indeed, similar to statements in the EU associating migration with security, Orban's statements on migration in Hungary are similar. The study's findings indicate that securitization has led to stringent measures at Hungary's borders. When examining the securitization process aimed at safeguarding both the EU region and Hungary's national borders, Hungary presents itself as if it is making extraordinary efforts in the fight against immigration.

Poland-Belarus border

Migrants from many Middle Eastern countries, such as Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, who aspire to reach the EU prefer Poland via Belarus (Valcarcel, 2022). However, Poland is experiencing disputes over migration with its bordering country, Belarus, and these disagreements are also affecting Poland's border security. Due to Belarus redirecting migrants to Poland, the Polish government has decided to build a fence along the Belarusian border (Euronews, 2022b). Following this decision, both the EU and Poland faced criticism for the strict security measures. However, due to Belarus using migration as a political tool, the Polish government did not withdraw its reaction; instead, it started implementing even harsher measures. In January 2022, the Polish government started to build the border fence and increased personnel along the Belarus border (Tondo, 2022). The 186-kilometer fence, standing at a height of 5.5 meters, built by Poland, cost 350 million euros, and the EU has fully supported implementing these measures (Özdemir, 2022).

On the other hand, Poland, although receiving support from the EU on border security, withdrew EU support during a period when refugees, including children, were pushed towards the Belarus border and lost their lives due to hunger and cold before starting the construction of the border fence (Sierakowski, 2022). However, as border crossings increased, this reaction of the EU decreased significantly. This situation has also been reflected in the statements of the EU, and the EU Council criticized the Polish government in its official statements for refusing to provide essential assistance to refugees. However, even in recent times, it emphasized the need to maintain strict control at the border. For instance, Tusk said that von der Leyen had indicated that Poland "will be able to count on help, significant help, in strengthening the protection of our eastern border, especially with Belarus" (Ptak, 2023).

Another significant development that has recently led Poland to review its border security policies is the Russia-Ukraine War. The intensity created at the Polish border by those fleeing Ukraine due to the attacks initiated by Russia on February 24 has opened a different perspective on associating migration with security in the EU (European Commission, 2023b). The Ukrainian refugees crossing the Polish border without facing any difficulties have raised questions about Poland's decisions regarding migration and border security. While the EU stated that its doors are open to refugees coming from Ukraine, the continued different treatment by Union members towards refugees from outside Ukraine has demonstrated that the association of migration with security is a matter of preference. Family ties, linguistic similarities, and being a neighbor to Ukraine are thought to be reasons for Poland's different approach to Ukrainian refugees. However, the economic challenges, housing issues, and health problems arising from large-scale migrations can also be experienced due to the Ukrainian refugees (Duszczyk & Kaczmarczyk, 2022). In summary, Poland has associated migration with security, particularly concerning those coming from countries other than Ukraine, and has increased border measures. The EU has supported Poland's decision in this regard.

Border of Latvia and Lithuania with Belarus

Poland's physical strengthening of the Belarus border has led migrants to choose Lithuania and Latvia as transit countries. Faced with unexpected density, Latvia and Lithuania have preferred to increase physical measures at their borders (Forti, 2023). In December 2021, the European Commission announced that it would provide the necessary operational support to Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland to ensure security, a decision supportive of these measures (Gulina, 2022).

The EU supporting these countries for better protection of their borders enhances the relationship between the migration phenomenon and security. FRONTEX officials also provide support to Latvia and Lithuania in border surveillance and other border management functions (FRONTEX, 2021a). Subsequently, these countries declared a state of emergency in their border regions and developed new strategies for migration management in the following days. Thus, the protection of borders has seen an increase in the construction of walls and fences, the deployment of personnel, and the use of advanced technological tools (Mills *et al.*, 2021). In short, the EU obviously supported the construction of fences or walls by members at their own discretion.

Bulgaria-Türkiye border

In 2013, Bulgaria started protecting its border with Türkiye by arming border guards and erecting a 30-kilometer barbed wire wall against immigrants. Seismic sensors, night vision cameras, and surveillance drones have all become essential tools for personnel on duty at the border (Lyman, 2015). Meanwhile, Bulgarian government officials have frequently stated that increasing physical measures at the border will significantly reduce irregular crossings. Especially in recent times, pushback incidents of migrants at the Bulgaria-Türkiye border have increased. Bulgaria has argued that it is acting in line with the EU's goals of preventing irregular migration (Brunnersum, 2023). In this context, EU's financial support for combating migration and enhancing border security has directly impacted Bulgaria's border security.

In 2020, the Commission also sanctioned an additional €12.8 million in funding for Bulgaria, providing support for additional border guards involved in operations at its

southern external borders (European Commission, 2020b). Furthermore, the European Commission plans to provide €600 million to significantly aid Member States in enhancing border control and acquiring technological equipment. The primary focus of this funding will be the crucial border between Bulgaria and Türkiye, according to a letter from Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to the European Council (European Commission, 2023c). These aids imply the EU's support to Bulgaria by providing the necessary technological equipment for border surveillance and control, assisting in the training of border security personnel, and supporting infrastructure projects in border areas to enhance physical measures for border security. Therefore, it is among the examples of securitizing migration.

Rising walls on Spain's external borders

The wall erected in 1993 in Ceuta, a territory of Spain in Africa, is known as the first wall on the external borders of the EU. This wall, 8.4 km long, 3 meters high, and consisting of barbed wire fences, had its barbed wires removed in subsequent years after causing the loss of many lives of migrants attempting to cross the border (Carling, 2007). However, in 2005, with the support of €33 million from the EU, the height of the fences was increased to 6 meters, and the length of the wall was extended to 11 km. Additionally, the wall was equipped with cameras and sensors to provide a high level of security (Pinos, 2009). Despite criticisms, the walls in Ceuta and Melilla have become symbols of the EU's border security policies. Strengthening the border due to irregular crossings, unwanted migration, and an increase in asylum applications has turned the walls in Ceuta and Melilla into tangible symbols of the Fortress Europe narrative.

After 2015, the scope of immigration policies in Spain has been expanded, placing greater emphasis on border control. The EU, on the other hand, has continued to shape Spain's border policies through the development of remote-control mechanisms (Jimenez & Caraballo, 2018). With EU funding and infrastructure support, it continues to influence Spain's border security measures throughout the entire migration management process. Particularly, while the EU agency FRONTEX operates in the south of Spain and the Canary Islands, personnel are permanently stationed in Madrid (FRONTEX, 2021b). Although preventive measures with high fences have been in place in Melilla, Ceuta, and the Canary Islands since the 1990s, in recent years, with the support of the EU, borders have been equipped with high-tech systems. Thus, the effects of securitizing migration in the EU have extended to the borders of Spain. In other words, the assistance from the EU encourages Spain, which already implements stringent measures at its borders against migration, to adopt even stricter measures.

Measures taken at the borders of Austria

When the approximately 330-kilometer border between Austria and Slovenia became a transit route for immigrants, Austria began construction of a 4-kilometer-long and 2.5-meter-high wall in this region in 2015 (Murphy, 2015). Although the Austrian Interior Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner stated that the purpose of the wall built on the Slovenian border is not to close the borders, such measures are now deemed necessary by the Austrian government (Ayed, 2019). In fact, in 2016, Austria erected a fence along its border with Italy, particularly to prevent the increasing migration from the African continent. Additionally, despite the Schengen Agreement, Austria has started conducting passport controls at these mentioned borders (Pınar, 2016). Despite the operational and personnel support from the

EU on issues such as irregular migration and migrant smuggling, the rising walls at Austria's borders stem from the perception of migration as a significant threat. The EU, in collaboration with the Austrian Criminal Intelligence Service Joint Operations Office and EUROPOL, provides support in combating irregular migration. Additionally, a 24/7 rapid international information exchange network has been established among the members, personnel numbers have been increased for border controls, and assistance has been provided to Austria for the development of technological infrastructure (Josipovic & Reeger, 2019).

Recently, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said, "It was important to show that Schengen does not work and that stricter rules are needed at the external borders." (Liboreiro, 2023). However, the EU has always hesitated to implement stricter rules, emphasizing the role of FRONTEX, the EU's border patrol agency, which member states can enlist for support. The hesitant stance of the EU towards physical measures for border security does not prevent member states from constructing walls or erecting wire fences at their borders. Even sanctions decisions against these measures do not dissuade members from their chosen course of action. As the EU consistently supports its member states in all possible ways, it also keeps highlighting migration as a significant challenge. Despite the Schengen Area, increasing physical measures are considered the optimum level for securitizing migration in the EU. While controlling the influx of refugees is set as the goal, the decisions member states make about their borders within the framework of national choices are considered a reflection of the concerns arising from migration movements.

Concluding remarks

This study aims to evaluate the impact of the securitization of the EU migration policy on border security measures. Moreover, the impacts of the securitized migration policy on border security have been examined through developments at the borders of some member states. In this context, our findings suggest that the EU's provision of financial support to member states for enhancing border security, organizing joint operations with institutions like FRONTEX and EUROPOL, and strengthening communication networks among member states stem from perceiving migration as a threat.

According to the research, similar effects of securitizing migration in the EU were observed in the member states we examined. While the EU does not finance measures such as walls or fences in these countries, providing support to member states through FRONTEX teams with personnel and training, financing technological equipment, and conducting joint operations, contribute to the EU's own security. These actions stand as concrete examples of the securitization trend. In other words, our findings suggest that the EU has reframed migration from a form of human mobility to a security issue and is augmenting its security by supporting the border security of member states.

The discourse analyses conducted in the initial section provide evidence that the EU is attempting to portray migration as a threat in the eyes of member states. EU representatives and official institutions contribute to the escalation of member states' concerns about migration by framing discourse that associates migration with security. As a result, based on the research findings, member states exhibit similar practices in border security. The study highlights that the EU has initiated the formulation of security-oriented border policies by offering financial and technical aid, along with providing training and equipment support to member states.

As the nature of threats evolves with increased investment in border security, member states may choose to strengthen their borders further in the upcoming period. Furthermore, it is evident that the securitization of migration in the EU leads to continuous renewal and increased control over border security in member states. Despite ongoing efforts in this regard, as long as migration remains at the forefront of security discussions, concerns related to security will persist.

The study reveals how border security in the examined member states is shaped in line with the EU's securitization trend. At the end of the study, it is evident that migration is perceived as a security threat in the EU. It is instrumentalized, and efforts are made to find solutions to these issues through the developments in the border security of member states. Accordingly, considering the similar developments at the borders of member states, it is possible that the EU may adopt a border policy that supports physical measures in the future. Currently, the EU is already assisting member states in establishing a digital barrier at borders through the technological and operational support it provides. In short, the EU justified the implementation of extraordinary measures at the borders of member states by citing security needs and providing support in various forms.

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Disclosure statement