RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Securitization of Frontiers
The European Union's Migration, Refugee, and Asylum Policies in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Filipe GUERRA

University of Aveiro (Portugal)

Teresa CARVALHO

University of Aveiro (Portugal)

Jorge TAVARES DA SILVA

University of Beira Interior (Portugal)

Abstract

There is criticism among Member States and the European Union of the intentions and procedures of the EU's immigration policy, in particular the political management of external borders and support for immigrants. Against the backdrop of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to understand how the EU institutions and Member States have responded politically to immigration flows, refugees and asylum seekers. Was this period an opportunity to strengthen European integration and take measures that materialise the symbolism of European values, or were the accusations and fears of critical voices amplified? Based on a documentary analysis of the EU institutions on immigration, refugee and asylum policies in 2020 and 2021, we analyse the main issues, their agenda and decisions. The results of this research allow us to identify how the securitization of immigration, narratives and policies are used to reinforce the integration process.

Keywords: Migration; Refugees; Asylum; COVID-19; European Integration

Introduction

In the first quarter of 2020, crisis management of the COVID-19 pandemic, to contain infection chains, included the complete or partial closure of the European Union's external borders by Member States (MS), the reintroduction of internal border controls, restrictions on freedom of movement and on asylum policy (Marin, 2020).

Before measures were taken at Community level, unilateral national actions had direct consequences, such as disruption of the internal market and the Schengen Agreement. The unilateralism of national policies led to differences in the protection of immigrants, access to residence permits and healthcare, or even in the procedures for asylum applications. At the same time, despite calls to uphold the right to asylum, the application of the Dublin Regulation system was effectively suspended, as several countries failed to comply with its provisions, partly due to divergent interpretations and implementation of its criteria (European Parliament, 2022).

CONTACT Filipe Guerra, filipe.guerra@ua.pt, at University of Aveiro, Portugal 493

The European Union (EU) and its MS faced significant criticism for failing to fulfil their obligations, with cumbersome political and procedural bureaucracy leaving asylum applicants in a state of protracted uncertainty and heightened risk. This was compounded by severe insecurities within reception camps, such as those in Greece and Turkey, where conditions were characterized by overcrowding and inadequate sanitation. Despite these critiques, the EU demonstrated its capacity for legislative action during the peak of the pandemic, advancing new regulatory frameworks such as the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and reforms like the Blue Card Directive. A renewed understanding of the dynamics between MS and EU institutions across various policy fields is critically needed. This is particularly evident in migration and border management, where EU and national policies have shown a marked tendency towards securitization.

Concurrently, the experience of past crises has exposed profound fissures and a propensity for national unilateralism. Paradoxically, these same crises have often precipitated EU-level political reforms that have further centralized authority in these domains (Jones et al., 2021). This dynamic reflects a complex dialectic, wherein introspective, unilateral impulses coexist with, and at times provoke, a reinforcement of supranational governance. As Van Middelaar (2020) summarizes, crises represent "moments of truth" during which the EU has assumed greater politicization.

This article examines the political management of immigration[1], refugee[2] and asylum-seeker[3] flows by EU institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. It analyses how policy responses and public narratives were strategically deployed, not only to manage the immediate health and mobility crisis, but also to advance the broader project of European integration. Specifically, it asks: how did EU policies during the COVID-19 pandemic reinforce the ongoing trend toward the securitization of borders, and how did this dynamic shape the trajectory of European integration??

To address this question, a systematic analysis was conducted of key strategic documents and public statements issued primarily by the main EU institutions, concerning immigration, refugee, and asylum policies during 2020 and 2021—a period significantly shaped by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the documents were selected, they underwent content analysis (Bardin, 1977).

The article begins with the development of the concept of securitization and establishes a link between this concept in the historical process of European integration and the shaping of Community policies on immigration, refugees and asylum seekers, including the Frontex agency. After outlining the research methodology, which draws on official EU documents on immigration policy, the article presents its findings. It concludes with a reflection on these findings and their implications for the ongoing trend toward securitization within the broader context of European integration.

---

[1] According to UN, "an international migrant is someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status. Generally, a distinction is made between short-term or temporary migration, covering movements with a duration between three and 12 months, and long-term or permanent migration, referring to a change of country of residence for a duration of one year or more".

[2] According to UN "Refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection."

[3] According to UN: "An asylum-seeker is someone who is seeking international protection. Their request for refugee status, or complementary protection status, has yet to be processed, or they may not yet have requested asylum but they intend to do so" (https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/asylum-seekers).

Securitization and Desecuritization on EU migration policies

During the process of European integration, as for the process of political, economic, and legal unification among countries, aimed at fostering cooperation, stability, and shared governance, primarily through the framework of the EU (Peterson, 2001), its institutions developed a common immigration policy involving shared institutional frameworks, cooperation among MS, and even coordination with national security services. This policy was implemented through institutional mechanisms. Notable milestones include the Schengen Agreement, the formal incorporation of migration into intergovernmental regulation as outlined in the EU Treaty, and the establishment of the Frontex agency.

Throughout history, migratory movements have been constant and have varied according to origin, characteristics, and the will, needs and possibilities of the receiving countries. As a result of these factors, a common immigration policy was also introduced in the EU, including the monitoring and control of arrivals (Zaiotti & Abdulhamid, 2021).

In the 1950s and 1960s, immigration was regarded as a necessary labour force. In subsequent decades, this perception changed and immigration became the subject of accusations, particularly due to changes in the labour market and alleged disruptions to public order. From the 1980s onwards, the public debate on immigration increasingly focused on issues of security, integration, the protection of national and cultural identity and the overburdening of the welfare states. This pressure shaped public opinion, informed the priorities articulated in political discourse, and influenced the formulation of national and EU-level policies, thereby contributing to the securitization of EU migration policy (Huysmans, 2000; Lodge, 1993).

Later, In the 1990s, while migrants were still used as a labour force in the EU, more signs of securitization did begin to emerge, such as the Schengen Information System in March 1995, in response to new migratory pressures.

The Securitization theory was developed by the so-called Copenhagen School, by scholars such as Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, Lene Hansen, among others. The term originates from the fact that much of the foundational work was produced during the 1990s at the Conflict and Peace Research Institute in Copenhagen. The concept of securitization is defined as the process by which specific issues are removed from the realm of normal politics in order to legitimize the use of extraordinary measures in response. Conversely, desecuritization refers to the process of reintegrating these issues back into the sphere of normal political discourse (Buzan et al., 1998). In seeking a definition of securitization, attention can also be directed to Balzacq's synthesis (2011, p. 3):

> an articulated collection of practices in which heuristic artifacts (metaphors, political instruments, repertoires of images, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilized by a security actor who works to make the audience build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts and intuitions) about the critical vulnerability of an object of reference that competes with the security actor's justifications for his decisions and actions by endowing the subject of reference with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexity that a tailored policy must be immediately adopted to block its development.

In line with Balzacq, other authors such as Waever (1995) and Neal (2009) view securitization as an attempt to legitimize actions and regulations that would otherwise be unenforceable. Terms such as 'security', 'risk' and 'threat' feature prominently in the discourse surrounding securitization and are strategically employed to shape public opinion and legitimize new forms of authority. If securitization cannot be coercively

enforced, the discursive elements of political leaders, social media, think tanks, institutional representatives and others can contribute to its emergence.

Desecuritization is an inherently polysemic concept, open to multiple interpretations depending on the nature of the phenomenon subjected to desecuritizing dynamics. It may be understood as the missing supplement within securitization processes, insofar as, without moments or mechanisms of desecuritization, the proliferation of social securitization measures risks losing its significance through its normalization (Scheel, 2020).

The simultaneous operationalization of securitization and desecuritization constitutes a natural and essential feature of securitizing practices. These are not mutually exclusive categories but rather interdependent and co-constitutive modalities within the broader dynamics of security construction. This dynamic becomes evident when a particular issue is simultaneously securitized by some actors and desecuritized by others; when, across multiple levels of governance, the same phenomenon circulates through divergent securitizing and desecuritizing logics; or when the routinization of a securitized issue leads to its technical institutionalization, even as the urgency of its framing gradually recedes from the rhetorical domain of everyday discourse (Wæver, 1995; Buzan et al., 1998; Floyd 2011; C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006).

Hansen (2012) further conceptualizes desecuritization as manifesting through four modalities: transformation via stabilization, replacement, rearticulation, and silence. Stabilization, for example, occurs when emergency governance mechanisms persist despite the proclaimed resolution of a perceived threat. In such instances, desecuritization unfolds without a corresponding demobilization of the instruments of power, illustrating the paradoxical coexistence of normalized exceptionality within security practices (Wang & Jin, 2025).

Along the ongoing debate on immigration and security, the common issues concerning the free movement of people and goods and the common market have been extended to include the internal security of the EU and MS. The usual participants in these debates were joined by representatives from professional organizations (e.g., security forces) and social movements. Consequently, the intersection of issues such as immigration, security, integration, and citizenship became inevitable (Huysmans, 2000)

In the last decade, the EU sought to physically remove internal checkpoints for the asylum process and surveillance of immigrants and to progressively impede economic immigration for alleged security reasons (e.g. the 'EU-Turkey deal' signed in March 2016). However, more recently, to cope with the ongoing migratory pressure, these checkpoints have returned within European borders (Zaiotti & Abdulhamid, 2021), with the so-called 'reception and identification centres' (e.g. on Lesbos), where EU agencies (the European Asylum Support Office, Frontex, Europol, and Eurojust) collaborate with the authorities of frontline MS to identify, register, and fingerprint incoming migrants.

In migration policy debates, securitization and desecuritization involve ethical–political choices about societal organization (Scheel, 2020), a tension made visible by recent influxes of refugees. Particularly since the refugee crisis of 2015, migration has increasingly been understood as a threat to security, and thus MS have pursued an increasingly militarized policy and strengthened their security component (Leonard & Kaunert, 2023). Steps have also been taken to transform a framework supposedly anchored in fundamental rights obligations into one that undermines existing binding legal norms and moves towards a progressive codification of means and practises previously considered unlawful (Moreno-Lax, 2023).

This crisis, in 2015, arose not only from the migration flow from North Africa and the Middle East, but also from the lack of coordination in border control between states and

the rivalries generated among them. However, after this period of tension, the restoration of "normality" did not result in a clear increase in the securitization of the borders, but rather reinforced their previous state (Ceccorulli, 2020).

Parallel to these historical debates—and shaped by them—the EU has advanced the communitarization of immigration policy, promoting the coordination of measures and the institutionalization of cooperation between its institutions and MS, including national security forces. Key developments include the Schengen Agreement, the formal inclusion of migration as a subject of intergovernmental regulation in the EU Treaty, and the establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex).

At the same time, recurring concepts in Community institutions, such as the 'European way of life', have contributed to a notion of cultural homogeneity that could destabilise perceptions of immigration. In the politicisation of immigration, for example, public opinion has often confused asylum applications with illegal immigration (Den Boer, 1995). Public concern about the relationship between the integration of immigrant communities, the labour market, the welfare state and cultural identity has contributed significantly to the securitization of the issue (Ireland, 1991).

Traditionally, the EU's policy options, and statements by its leaders, are less publicized and scrutinized than those of their national counterparts. Consequently, when community policies are known only to a more limited extent, among experts, specific interest groups and selected audiences, political securitization tends to be more fluid (Neal, 2009).

Regarding the creation of Frontex, the events of 11 September 2001 significantly reinforced the perceived link between terrorism, security, migration, and border control, as noted by Andrew Neal (2009). However, the rationale for establishing Frontex did not follow a typical process of securitization characterized by the urgency of an imminent threat. Instead, it reflected a more conceptual and risk-based logic. Border control remained primarily a national competence, and the agency's role was to complement inter-state mechanisms with a more supranational framework, thereby contributing to the broader process of European integration. As Neal argues, Frontex "is arguably the opposite of securitization or exceptionalism, as it aims to regulate and harmonize the border practices of individual states" (Neal, 2009, p. 347).

Other authors, however, situate Frontex within the sphere of security policy, the evolution of which aligns with broader security objectives. This is evidenced by the implementation of stricter control measures, including the information system established under the Schengen Agreement, the common list of countries whose nationals require a visa and its associated information system, and the transmission of passenger data, among other initiatives, reflecting an increasing integration of data, systems, and information technologies (Guild, 2006).

If, as Huysmans (2020) suggests, security problems precede security policy, then it is these perceived problems that drive the design and implementation of instruments, institutions, and expectations, ultimately framing immigration as a security issue. The abolition of internal borders in the EU and the free movement of people, goods and services thus represent another axis of the securitization of migration, since the weakening of internal borders corresponds to the strengthening of external borders – with nuances depending on the origin of immigrants, their qualifications and the needs of labour markets (ibid.).

The creation of a common internal space required a strong commitment from MS regarding the reception of refugees (Art. 1 of the Geneva Convention), as non-compliance by a MS with the rules on reception, cooperation, or border opening can lead to a crisis of confidence (Baubock, 2017). According to this logic and the Schengen Agreement, the removal of borders would be absolutely necessary and coordinated with the European Commission and other MS (Wollf et al., 2020).

The political management of EU asylum applications is determined by the application of the Dublin Regulation, even if, in practice, it places greater responsibility on the country of arrival. This results in an accumulation of national and supranational responsibilities, creating the risk of negative competition between states that restricts the requirements for asylum applications and the principles of resettlement, regardless of the links between refugees and their desired destination countries (Baubock, 2017).

There is also the question of solidarity in the integration of refugees, between border states and others. If solidarity with refugees is to be a cornerstone of inter-state relations, it must entail the transfer of resources to the states that host them, ensuring that these states are not penalized for their geographical location (Baubock, 2017). There are, however, fears of preferential national treatment of refugee groups based on their skin colour or religion in host states, as well as suspicions of the risk of abuse or fraud in the determination of financial transfers in host states (Gerver, 2013).

Methodology and Data

The article was written in 2023 and 2024. In the bibliographical research it incorporates diverse academic voices to reflect a range of perspectives drawn from multiple strands of literature—namely securitization theory, European integration, and immigration studies—in order to ensure analytical diversity and theoretical multidisciplinarity, thereby providing complementary insights.

This research engages with securitization by broadly adhering to the core principles of the Copenhagen School (Buzan et al., 1998). A shared ontological foundation across securitization scholarship is a non-essentialist conception of "security." According to the Copenhagen School, the primary drivers of securitization are speech acts that explicitly or implicitly invoke a particular threat. However, Buzan et al. (1998) gave limited attention to institutional developments and practical implementations, which have subsequently become focal points for later securitization scholars. While the Copenhagen School's paradigm has been criticized for its reductionist tendencies, it remains foundational in the field. According to Balzacq et al. (2016, p. 518): "the use of securitisation theory has been less controversial for studying issues such as global pandemics, where discursive occurrences appear to play an important role".

This study adopts a speech-act approach to securitization and posits that EU institutions can function as securitizing actors, as acknowledged by Buzan et al. (1998). While EU institutions may be inclined to engage in existential rhetoric, this analysis does not adhere to such a stringent threshold. It is now widely recognized that, contrary to the original formulation by the Copenhagen School, a securitizing move does not necessarily require the framing of threats as existential or the invocation of emergency or extraordinary measures (Rushton, 2019).

In line with the theoretical framework, this research conducted a systematic analysis of key strategic documents and public statements issued by the main EU institutions concerning immigration, refugee, and asylum policy during 2020 and 2021—a period marked by the significant impact of the COVID -19 pandemic. This research led to the selection of 23 documents in total, namely from the Commission (e.g. official communications, press releases and website information), the European Council (e.g. press releases and European Council conclusions) and the European Parliament (e.g. resolutions, reports and briefings). In addition, important statements by key EU leaders were also analysed.

The various official documents and statements cited, were collected from the official websites of EU institutions, and supplemented with official information from other institutions and agencies, including the United Nations (UN).

Once the documents were selected, they were subjected to content analysis (Bardin, 1977) to extract insights addressing the research question. A thematic-categorical grid was created, based on the most frequent content in the selected documents and their coding into categories (themes) as units of content coverage by meaning, according to the interpretative context of the theoretical framework. These themes, in turn, comprised several sub-themes.

The process was developed with indicators representing the registration units, enabling interpretation of the results in relation to the research questions. Throughout the study, each sub-theme was supplemented with quotations from the analysed documentation. This included both explicit expressions and others that, while not explicit, were included in a theme or sub-theme based on context, general meaning, and conveyed ideas.

This approach stems from the research strategy, which ensures an objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the communication content to identify, describe, and classify the variables required for this study. The application of objective research rules and procedures ensures the production of comparable quantitative results across different contexts, consistent with the initial aim of describing the frequency of their occurrence.

The presentation of the results allows for a critical reflection on the corresponding conclusions, as the themes align with the objectives, decisions, and principles that qualitatively shape the political choices under analysis. Essentially, the aim is to identify the persistence of these themes and to trace their evolution over time.

Re-framing Border Closure as Public Health Policy

Shortly before the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic, in January 2020, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented a document entitled Promoting Our European Way of Life. This document outlined measures aimed at "strong borders, the modernisation of the EU asylum system, and cooperation with partner countries" to "achieve a new start on migration" (European Commission, 2020a). The announcement was widely interpreted as the start of a new phase in developing a more robust and cohesive common immigration policy.

With the first known cases of COVID-19 in Europe, on 4 March 2020, following a joint meeting of the ministers of the Schengen Area member countries and the Council, the EU interior ministers issued a declaration regarding the situation at the EU's external borders with Turkey. According to the declaration, the EU and its MS "remain determined to effectively protect the EU's external borders (…) will take all necessary measures in accordance with EU and international law." The EU thus affirmed its intention to reinforce its external borders to prevent "crossings by land or sea" and to combat "people smuggling." At the same time, financial and operational support for Greece was significantly increased, with up to €350 million allocated and the deployment of Frontex made available (European Commission, 2020b).

A few days later, the Commission formally acknowledged COVID-19 and its potential consequences as a public health crisis, outlining a series of restrictive measures in response. The Commission emphasized that "travel restrictions should focus on drastically reducing the influx of people at the external borders of the Union." It further recommended that the Council "work towards ensuring that the Heads of State or Government of the Schengen States […] take a coordinated decision to apply a temporary restriction on non-essential travel from third countries to the EU+ area." This measure was to be implemented at all borders for an initial period of 30 days, with exceptions only for the return of MS nationals, Schengen nationals, and long-term residents from third countries (European Commission, 2020c).

Only in May 2020 did the Commission issue a Communication on the restoration of free movement and the lifting of internal border controls, proposing that MS fully reopen their internal borders based on three criteria: epidemiological conditions, the capacity of health systems, and adequate surveillance measures. The restoration of free movement was planned to proceed in two phases: an initial aimed at "restoring free movement by partially lifting restrictions and controls at internal borders," followed by a "general lifting of restrictions and controls at internal borders" (European Commission, 2020d).

In these early stages of the pandemic, there was already a clear securitization of health (Fernández, 2024), which corroborates Balzacq et *al*. (2016) assertion that Health must be a central focus within securitization studies. According to Moreno-Lax (2023) the notion of 'crisis' also facilitated the normalization of legal and political developments that may conflict with fundamental principles and international standards.

A Hierarchy of Mobility: Differentiated Rights in a Pandemic

In response to the rapid succession of events that destabilized the MS and triggered national lockdowns, the Commission issued a guidance on 30 March 2020 regarding the restriction of non-essential travel to the EU, developed in collaboration with Frontex and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), following the activation of Articles 2, 6, and 14 of the Schengen Borders Code concerning threats to public order—specifically, diseases with pandemic potential.

This guidance prioritized the repatriation of EU citizens from third countries, the return of EU citizens and their families, the restriction of all non-essential travel by third-country nationals to the EU+ area, the provision of a minimum level of consular services for visa processing, and the management of extended stays resulting from flight cancellations. Only specific categories of third-country nationals were exceptionally permitted to retain freedom of movement and entry into the Schengen Area. These included, among others, healthcare professionals, researchers, diplomats, staff of international organizations, and individuals travelling for compelling family reasons (European Commission, 2020e).

In April 2020, the Commission issued a Communication addressing the implementation of provisions related to asylum, return, and resettlement procedures, acknowledging the significant challenges faced by MS. Regarding asylum procedures, due to the absence of explicit provisions in Directive 2013/32/EU, MS were allowed to adopt derogations in response to the pandemic. However, this flexibility increased the potential for discretionary practices, such as the relaxation of fingerprinting requirements or the acceptance of online application forms (European Commission, 2020f).

Given this increased scope, some MS temporarily closed their asylum authorities and restricted the registration of applications for international protection. This contributed to the notably low number of transfers under the Dublin Regulation, which amounted to approximately 1,000 between late February and April 2020. A further potential consequence of this approach is the liability faced by certain MS that request a transfer but fail to effectuate it to the competent MS within the prescribed time limits. Additionally, according to the Commission, the suspension of resettlement measures has hindered the ability of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to fulfil the heightened resettlement commitments for 2020 (European Commission, 2020f).

Regarding return measures, the Commission emphasized that national authorities should incorporate health protection protocols and all measures should be applied proportionately and without discrimination to third-country nationals in an irregular situation. In this context, the Commission mandated Frontex to assist MS in organizing return operations to third countries and to facilitate both voluntary and mandatory

repatriations (European Commission, 2020e). By the end of 2020, the number of return decisions issued in MS decreased by 19% (compared to 2019), but actual returns to third countries decreased by almost half (European Commission, 2021a).

In this context, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) criticized the implementation of the Dublin Regulation, arguing that the EU failed to fulfil its obligations and left asylum seekers in a state of uncertainty, exposed to potential human rights violations due to protracted, unnecessary, and costly procedures. ECRE also condemned MS for persisting with policy choices aimed at avoiding responsibility for individuals seeking international protection (ECRE, 2020a). Also, the ECDC raised concerns, about the poor conditions in reception and detention centres, namely, overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and general insecurity, which contributed to heightened health vulnerabilities (ECDC, 2020).

Despite ongoing challenges, the number of asylum applications in the EU decreased by 33%, with approximately 390,000 applications submitted by October 2020. However, from June 2020 onwards, when transfer procedures resumed, the number of applications began to rise, although at a slower pace than in previous years (ECRE, 2020a). Irregular arrivals also declined, with 114,300 recorded between January and November 2020—particularly from Turkey—despite a notable increase along the Central Mediterranean route, where 1,754 individuals were reported dead or missing during the same year (European Commission, 2021a).

Also in December 2020, the European Parliament adopted a report on the implementation of the Dublin III Regulation (European Parliament, 2020a). The report's assessment was highly critical, characterizing the regulation and its application as a "failure." Although published in December 2020, the report primarily focused on the 2015–2016 migration crisis, highlighting the profound imbalances in asylum seeker reception and recognizing that the country of first entry criterion places disproportionate burdens on certain MS, underscoring the essential role of Frontex support.

Regarding the COVID-19 health crisis, the report notes that confinement measures significantly disrupted the functioning of the Dublin transfer system, effectively leading to its suspension. Despite directives from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) to uphold the right to asylum, the absence of a pandemic-adapted operational plan resulted in the Dublin system not being applied during this period (European Parliament, 2020a). It is important to note that following border closures, planned transfer agreements were not upheld; for example, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, and Slovenia suspended transfers of third-country nationals (European Parliament, 2022).

Along the so-called "second wave" of the COVID-19 pandemic in November 2020, asylum procedures were once again suspended in several MS. In addition, the introduction of new security and public health measures further complicated the process, restricting access to legal assistance and undermining the quality and fairness of asylum interviews (ECRE, 2020b).

Amid numerous bilateral agreements between MS and third countries aimed at facilitating the transfer or return of asylum seekers, and ongoing resistance and divergence in the application of the Dublin Regulation, the longstanding difficulties in cooperation between national authorities became increasingly evident. This situation contributed to a rise in secondary movements and the shifting of responsibilities among MS (European Parliament, 2020b). The political management of the crisis appeared to prioritize the 'manageability' of asylum applications over more comprehensive solutions. In this context, EU agencies gained prominence in clarifying ambiguities related to the application of Dublin III and mediating apparently conflicting national interests.

The European Parliament also adopted a resolution addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable populations, including immigrants. The resolution highlighted the necessity of adhering to the Geneva Convention and relevant European legislation, while also emphasizing the importance of ensuring adequate sanitary conditions in reception centres (European Parliament, 2020b).

Despite the increasingly restrictive and securitized context of immigration policy, and the differentiated rights during the pandemic, the Commission acknowledged the essential role played by immigrants. Approximately 13% of the key workforce across the EU consisted of immigrants, with this figure exceeding one-third in certain sectors. Many of these workers were employed in low-skilled occupations and were predominantly non-EU nationals. In recognition, several MS adopted measures to facilitate the entry of immigrants into critical sectors such as healthcare, and some granted exemptions from public health measures such as quarantine requirements (European Commission, 2020g; European Commission, 2020h).

Ultimately, EU policies for managing contagion risks exposed fragilities in MS political cohesion and, in particular, in compliance with the measures of the Dublin Regulation. The rights of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers were often neglected, underscoring a critical disconnect between policy rhetoric—which recognized their vital front-line contributions—and policy practice.

Externalizing Risk and Internalizing Crisis

The security measures introduced to strengthen border control had severe consequences for migrants, who increasingly resorted to dangerous routes, often becoming vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers and lacking access to COVID-19 testing (Freedman, 2021). Efforts to externalise asylum processing included the establishment of detention centres in transit countries outside the EU, where refugees were forced to await processing under conditions widely criticised for practices amounting to detention and inhumane treatment (Beirens, 2020).

Meanwhile, the health and safety of detained migrants and staff in detention facilities were at considerable risk. According to the Commission, if MS were unable to provide accommodation in specialized detention centres, they could use alternative appropriate facilities, provided that the safeguards established by the Return Directive were upheld, including the implementation of social distancing, preventive and hygiene measures, as well as health screening, medical care and quarantine protocols (European Commission, 2020f).

In June 2020, when the European Parliament adopted a resolution addressing the situation within the Schengen Area following the COVID-19 outbreak, it highlighted that the reintroduction of internal border controls revealed significant deficiencies in coordination among MS. It expressed regret that several MS abruptly implemented border controls and other restrictions without adequately informing their own populations or neighbouring countries. Furthermore, the Parliament criticized MS for disregarding the Schengen acquis, emphasizing that border controls are intended to be an exceptional measure and a "last resort," to be applied only after all other alternatives have been thoroughly considered (European Parliament, 2020c).

While the Schengen Borders Code (Regulation 2016/399, Articles 2, 6, and 14) explicitly recognizes a threat to public health as a valid ground for refusing entry at external borders, this rationale does not extend to justify the reintroduction of internal border controls, which are only permitted in response to serious threats to public policy or internal security. In this context, it is important to note that the European Parliament's

interpretation of the Schengen Agreement diverges from that of the Commission, as reflected in the Commission's March guidance (European Parliament, 2020c).

In its resolution, the European Parliament reaffirmed the central importance of the Schengen Area to the European integration project and emphasized the significant impact of border closures on citizens of both MS and third countries. The Parliament, therefore, stressed the urgency of restoring a fully operational Schengen Area, advocating the progressive lifting of restrictions on free movement in tandem with the easing of pandemic-related containment measures.

In November 2020, the European Parliament adopted another resolution, addressing the impact of COVID-19 measures on democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights. In light of the renewed restrictions introduced during the "second wave" of the pandemic, the Parliament expressed concern about the potential erosion of the rule of law, the weakening of democratic rights, and the lack of "democratic accountability." It also warned against the possible instrumentalization of pandemic-related measures to alter the balance of powers, particularly through the abuse or unchecked expansion of executive authority (European Parliament, 2020d).

This resolution also acknowledged that exceptional measures—such as lockdowns, border closures, restrictions on the processing of asylum applications, declarations of states of emergency, and other restrictive actions implemented to contain the pandemic—have contributed to the erosion of the right to asylum and the undermining of the principle of free movement. It further underscored the profound impact of border closures on asylum procedures, noting that numerous MS which restricted or suspended Dublin transfers simultaneously, declared their ports unsafe for the disembarkation of migrants rescued during search and rescue operations at sea, effectively leaving them stranded indefinitely. Contrary to the ECDC's assessment, overcrowded camps at the EU's external borders continue to pose a significant risk for COVID-19 outbreaks.

In the same resolution, the European Parliament acknowledged the pandemic's role in exacerbating the stigmatization of migrants, noting a rise in discrimination as well as incidents fuelled by misinformation and hate speech targeting refugees. It also highlighted the dangers posed by "fake news" and other forms of disinformation, which have the potential to influence political decision-making processes and undermine democratic governance (European Parliament, 2020d).

Jacobs and Kabata (2024) argue that MS collectively securitized the Schengen area to manage the uncoordinated reintroduction of border controls in response to refugee inflows. This dynamic intensified anti-immigration sentiments, discursively and practically reinforcing the securitization of migration as a 'risk' and, in turn, legitimizing racist tropes and discrimination (Koinova et al., 2023). Moreover, the exceptional policy measures for contagion control, together with public immigration discourses and their underlying rationale, led Schengen States to adopt restrictive measures that exceeded the provisions of the Schengen Borders Code.

Cementing the "New Normal": Crisis as a Catalyst for Permanent Reform

Amid the ongoing pandemic crisis, which "underlined the need for reform", the Commission presented the long-awaited New Pact on Migration and Asylum on 23 September 2020. Framed as a "fresh start on migration", the Pact aimed to introduce a more coherent and efficient migration framework. Its key objectives included accelerating asylum border procedures, establishing an improved system for migration and border management, strengthening legal safeguards, and introducing a mandatory pre-entry screening mechanism for rapid status determination upon arrival (European Commission, 2021b).

The introduction of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum marked a clear departure from previous policies, such as the Dublin Regulation, as it sought to move beyond their limitations—most notably, the unequal distribution of responsibility among MS. The Pact aimed to address one of the fundamental causes of dysfunction within the EU asylum system: the disproportionate burden placed on certain MS in managing applications.

The primary objective of the New Pact was to enhance the efficiency of the EU's migration and asylum system and to make it "more resilient to migratory pressure." It sought to eliminate so-called "pull factors" and reduce secondary movements, address abuses within the system, and provide greater support to MS most affected by migration flows. Some key measures proposed in the Pact were: the replacement of the Dublin system— while retaining the criterion of first country of entry; the introduction of exceptional measures for crisis situations; the strengthening of the Eurodac Regulation and expansion of its database; the establishment of a EU Asylum Agency; the implementation of a new mandatory pre-entry screening process involving identification and data-sharing with Eurodac; and the replacement of the Asylum Procedures Directive with a directly applicable regulation aimed at harmonizing procedures across MS. Additionally, the Pact proposed replacing the Qualification Directive with a regulation to standardize protection criteria and the rights of asylum seekers, and reforming the Reception Conditions Directive (European Council, 2021a).

Despite the Commission's intentions, the New Pact faced criticism – particularly concerning the persistent disparities in asylum application acceptance rates among MS, which create a system where the outcome of an application may depend more on the country of submission than on the merits of the case (International Rescue Committee, 2023).

In a Communication issued in September 2020, the Commission outlined key challenges and policy directions for strengthening the EU's asylum framework. While acknowledging that implementation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum remained at an early and incomplete stage, the Commission again emphasized the need to reinforce border management capacities, combat human trafficking, reduce irregular migration routes, and improve return procedures (European Commission, 2020f).

In December 2020, the EU approved its multiannual financial framework for 2021–2027, allocating increased funding for migration policy. The anticipated expenditure in this area, including border management, was €22.7 billion, compared to €13.2 billion allocated for security and defence. Strengthening this sector also involved training 10,000 border guards to be deployed by Frontex (European Council, 2020).

In contrast to the prevailing restrictive measures, a provisional agreement between the Council Presidency and the European Parliament on a regulation concerning the recruitment of highly skilled migrant workers was announced in May 2021. Specifically, this related to a draft directive establishing the conditions for the entry and residence of highly qualified third-country nationals living and working in the EU – the "Blue Card Directive" (European Council, 2021b). This directive represented further progress in the ongoing reforms of immigration and asylum policy, alongside enhanced Eurodac security measures designed to monitor unauthorised irregular movements and improve the effectiveness of return procedures. The principal objective of this immigration policy was to ensure safe, regular, and well-managed migration; to address challenges related to irregular immigration and forced relocation; and to harness the benefits of migration by creating an effective system that protects fundamental rights and attracts the skilled talent necessary for the economy.

The European Council also convened to address the situation, of migrants along various migration routes, and resolved to strengthen partnerships and cooperation with countries

of origin and transit. According to its conclusions from 24-25 June 2021, the primary objectives were to prevent loss of life and alleviate pressure on the EU's external borders. This strategy was intended to use all available instruments and incentives, implemented in close collaboration with UNHCR and IOM (European Council, 2021c). Furthermore, the Council urged the Commission, in coordination with MS, to intensify targeted actions with priority countries of origin and transit and to develop comprehensive action plans. It also called for more efficient use of existing financial resources, and reiterated its condemnation of alleged attempts by third countries to instrumentalize migrants for political purposes (European Council, 2021c).

Also in June 2021, representatives of the Council Presidency and the European Parliament announced a provisional agreement on the regulation, establishing a new EU Agency for Asylum (European Council, 2021d), although negotiations likely began before the COVID-19 pandemic. The regulation sought to strengthen the implementation of EU asylum policy by transforming the existing EASO into a fully operational agency. As of January 2022, the newly established agency assumed responsibility for enhancing the functioning of the Common European Asylum System, providing expanded operational and technical assistance to MS to promote greater convergence in the assessment of applications for international protection (European Council, 2021d).

During the period under analysis, the EU exhibited substantial advancement in consolidating its common immigration policy. Through the development of a range of programmes and policy instruments—encompassing enhanced financial mechanisms and the establishment of new agencies—building upon prior negotiations, the EU succeeded in constructing a more coherent yet predominantly restrictive framework. A notable exception to this general restrictiveness was the deliberate effort to promote the admission of highly skilled migrant workers.

Conclusion

This research examined how, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the securitization of the rights of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers has unfolded through a multi-phase process that has also influenced the trajectory of European integration. Following Fernández (2024), it can be argued that on the onset of COVID-19, certain EU institutions intensified their discourse around "health security" as part of an effort to assume a broader and more "mature" role. This shift reflects a move away from a predominantly altruistic approach to global health action, towards one more focused on strategic and security-oriented considerations.

The securitization of public health and immigration has been legitimized by the narratives and policies adopted by both MS and EU institutions, which have resonated with a receptive audience. Concurrently, the claims of Balzacq et *al.* (2016) are reaffirmed, particularly that health concerns have emerged as a significant new axis within the broader securitization framework of public policy.

The patterns observed during previous refugee crises, particularly in 2015–2016, re-emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, notably through the implementation of exceptional measures such as the unilateral suspension of the Schengen Borders Code and the Dublin Regulation. At the same time, safeguards protecting the rights of refugees were relaxed. This represented a normalisation of legal and political developments that conflict with fundamental principles and international standards – measures that, under normal circumstances, would be considered unacceptable or unenforceable. Migration flows were increasingly framed as a public security threat, especially regarding health risks, thereby justifying the adoption of extraordinary policies aimed at containing the perceived danger.

As in previous instances, the securitization of immigration poses significant risks, including the potential to deepen existing social inequalities and further stigmatise and marginalise already vulnerable groups (Elbe, 2006; Sontag, 1998).

In parallel with securitization policies that undermine existing binding legal norms, the "Blue Card Directive" - particularly targeting highly skilled workers—was introduced within the broader framework of a selective immigration policy (Dimitriadi, 2020). This development also supports the argument that processes of securitization and desecuritization occur simultaneously (Austin & Beaulieu-Brossard, 2018).

Concurrently, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum reflects a deepening of European integration in several aspects, including greater harmonization in the evaluation of applications for international protection and more coordinated approaches to the "management" of politically sensitive issues such as asylum procedures. However, this Pact appears insufficient to address longstanding institutional tensions and political disagreements. For example, it maintains the existing responsibility framework established under the Dublin Regulation—widely acknowledged, including by the European Parliament, as ineffective—thereby continuing to place a disproportionate burden on frontline states such as Italy and Greece (Freedman, 2021).

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum exemplifies the increasing supranationalisation of EU immigration governance, a trend further reinforced by the creation of a dedicated EU Asylum Agency. This development is marked by a clear shift from voluntary intergovernmental cooperation to mandatory solidarity mechanisms, top-down harmonisation of legal procedures, and significant centralisation of executive authority, particularly in crisis management.

At the same time, the Pact redefines the role of Frontex, raising it from a supportive body to a central operational actor within the EU's integrated migration framework. This transformation involves a substantial expansion of its mandate, including comprehensive border screening and external border management, strengthened competence in carrying out returns linked to asylum procedures, and a commitment to enhanced operational support for frontline MS. These changes are evident operationally through the direct deployment of personnel and management of return operations, and institutionally through a strengthened legal mandate, robust coordination and reporting mechanisms, and improved crisis preparedness.

These developments reflect a deepening of European integration through the gradual transfer of competencies in border management and security from national authorities to EU institutions. As noted in the existing literature, such Community-level policies are typically known and shaped within more limited circles—primarily among experts and specialized interest groups—thereby enabling more fluid and adaptive securitization dynamics.

Although a detailed analysis falls outside the scope of this manuscript, it is worth noting that the EU's 2024 political reforms in this area simultaneously reinforced both integration and securitization. The reform of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, for example, introduced a more robust solidarity and responsibility mechanism, upgraded Eurodac into a comprehensive asylum and migration database, established mandatory border procedures, and adopted a Common Implementation Plan to coordinate national legislation (European Commission, 2024). In parallel, the recast of the Schengen Borders Code imposed stricter conditions for the reintroduction of internal border controls—limiting them to situations involving serious public policy or security threats—and granted the EU authority to implement temporary travel restrictions during major public health crises (European Council, 2024).

The findings of this research indicate that the legislative reforms introduced in this period represent a consolidation of earlier polices. These reforms reinforce a broader trend toward the political normalization of securitization in both national and EU-level discourse and policymaking. In this context, securitization emerges not only as a security strategy but also as a mechanism facilitating further European integration. This aligns with the argument advanced by Andrione-Moylan et al. (2024), who contend that securitization tends to diminish politicization, thereby facilitating institutional and policy integration.

ORCID

Filipe Guerra 0000-0002-7458-8244

Teresa Carvalho 0000-0002-3368-3990

Jorge Tavares Silva 0000-0002-2526-4745

Transparency on the use of generative Artificial Intelligence
InstaText was used to proofread some sections of the final version. No other generative AI tools have been used.

REFERENCES

Andrione-Moylan, A., de Wilde, P., and Raube, K. (2024). (De-)politicization discourse strategies: the case of trade. *JCMS: journal of common market studies*, *62*(1), 21-37 https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13475

Austin, J. L., & Beaulieu-Brossard, P. (2018). (De)securitisation dilemmas: Theorising the simultaneous enaction of securitisation and desecuritisation. *Review of International Studies*, 44(2), 301-323. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210517000511

Balzacq, T. (2011). *Securitization Theory: How security problems emerge and dissolve.* Routledge.

Balzacq, T., Léonard, S., and Ruzicka, J. (2016). Securitization' revisited: theory and cases. *International relations*, *30*(4), 494-531. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117815596590

Bardin, L. (1977). *Análise de conteúdo* [Content Analysis]. Edições 70.

Baubock, R. (2017). Refugee Protection and Burden-Sharing in the European Union. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*. *56*, 141-156. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12638

Beirens, H. (2020, April). *The COVID-19 Pandemic Suggests the Lessons Learned by European Asylum Policymakers After the 2015 Migration Crisis Are Fading*. Migration Policy Institute. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/pandemic-lessons-learned-europe-asylum-fading

Buzan, B., Wæver, O., and de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Lynne Rienner.

C.A.S.E. COLLECTIVE. (2006). Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto. *Security Dialogue*, *37*(4), 443-487. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26299449

Ceccorulli, M. (2020). Back to Schengen: the collective securitisation of the EU free-border area. In M. Ceccorulli & S. Lucarelli (Eds.), *Collective Securitisation and Security Governance in the European Union* (pp. 76-96). Routledge.

Den Boer, M. G. W. (1995). Moving between Bonafide and Bogus: The policing of Inclusion and Exclusion in Europe. In R. Milles & D. Thranhardt (Eds.), *Migration and the European Integration* (pp. 92-111). Pinter Publishers.

Dimitriadi, A. (2020). *The Future of European migration and asylum policy post Covid-19. FEPS Covid response papers*. Foundation for European Progressive Studies. https://feps-europe.eu/publication/745-the-future-of-european-migration-and-asylum-policy-post-covid19/

Elbe, S. (2006). Should HIV/AIDS Be Securitized? The Ethical Dilemmas of Linking HIV/AIDS and Security. *International Studies Quarterly*, *50*(1), 119-144, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2006.00395.x

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. (2020). *Guidance on infection prevention and control of COVID-19 in migrant and refugee reception and detention centres in the EU/EEA and the UK*. https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/covid-19-guidance-prevention-control-migrant-refugee-centres

European Commission. (2020a). *Promoting our European way of life*. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life_en

European Commission. (2020b). *Statement on the situation at the EU's external borders*. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/03/04/statement-on-the-situation-at-the-eus-external-borders/

European Commission. (2020c). *Communication from the Commission Guidance on the implementation of the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU, on the facilitation of transit arrangements for the repatriation of EU citizens, and on the effects on visa policy*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020XC0330(02)&from=PT

European Commission. (2020d). *Towards a phased and coordinated approach for restoring freedom of movement and lifting internal border controls — COVID-19*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020XC0515(05)&from=PT

European Commission. (2020e). *Communication from the Commission COVID-19: Temporary Restriction on Non-Essential Travel to the EU*. IMMC.COM%282020%29115%20final.ENG.xhtml.1_EN_ACT_part1_v2.docx (europa.eu)

European Commission. (2020f). *Communication from the Commission. COVID-19: Guidance on the implementation of relevant EU provisions in the area of asylum and return procedures and on resettlement*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020XC0417(07)

European Commission. (2020g). *Immigrant Key Workers: Their Contribution to Europe's COVID-19 Response*. https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/immigrant-key-workers-their-contribution-europes-covid-19-response_en

European Commission. (2020h). *Immigrant Key Workers: Their Contribution to Europe's COVID-19 Response*. https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/immigrant-key-workers-their-contribution-europes-covid-19-response_en

European Commission. (2021a). *Migration statistics update: the impact of COVID-19*. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_232

European Commission. (2021b). *New Pact on Migration and Asylum*. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en

European Commission. (2024). *Pact on Migration and Asylum*. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en

European Council. (2020). *Long-term EU budget 2021-2027 and recovery package*. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-long-term-budget/

European Council. (2021a). *EU asylum reform*. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-asylum-reform-pact/

European Council. (2021b). *Legal migration: Council presidency and European Parliament reach provisional agreement on scheme to attract highly qualified workers*. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/17/legal-migration-council-presidency-and-european-parliament-reach-provisional-agreement-on-scheme-to-attract-highly-qualified-workers/

European Council. (2021c). *European Council conclusions, 24-25 June 2021*. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/25/european-council-conclusions-24-25-june-2021/

European Council. (2021d). *EU asylum agency: Council presidency and European Parliament reach provisional agreement*. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/29/eu-asylum-agency-council-presidency-and-european-parliament-reach-provisional-agreement/

European Council. (2024). *Schengen area: Council adopts update of Schengen Borders Code*. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/05/24/schengen-area-council-adopts-update-of-schengen-borders-code/

European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (2020a). *The implementation of the Dublin III Regulation in 2019 and During COVID-19: Different figures, Same Conclusions*. https://ecre.org/the-implementation-of-the-dublin-iii-regulation-in-2019-and-during-covid-19-different-figures-same-conclusions/

European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (2020b). *The Impact of the Second Wave of Lockdowns on the Position of People on the Move*. https://ecre.org/the-impact-of-the-second-wave-of-lockdowns-on-the-position-of-people-on-the-move/

European Parliament. (2020a). *Report on the implementation of the Dublin III Regulation*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2020-0245_EN.html

European Parliament (2020b) *European Parliament resolution of 17 April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0054_EN.html

European Parliament. (2020c). *European Parliament resolution of 19 June 2020 on the situation in the Schengen area following the COVID-19 outbreak*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0175_PT.html

European Parliament. (2020d). *Resolution of 13 November 2020 on the impact of COVID-19 measures on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights (2020/2790(RSP))*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0307_EN.html

European Parliament. (2022). *Impact of Covid-19 on asylum procedures in EU MS*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2022)733629

Fernández, Ó. (2024). The European Union's securitisation of global health: was COVID-19 a *Zeitenwende? European Security*, *33*(3), 449-473. https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2024.2376605

Floyd, R. (2011). Can securitization theory be used in normative analysis? Towards a just securitization theory. *Security Dialogue*, *42*(4-5), 427-439. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611418712

Freedman, J. (2021). Immigration, Refugees and Responses. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, *59*, 92-102. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13258

Gerver, M. (2013). Refugee Quota Trading within the Context of EU-ENP Cooperation: Rational, Bounded Rational and Ethical Critiques. *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, *9*(1), 60-77. https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v9i1.512

Guild, E. (2006). Danger — Borders Under Construction: Assessing The First Five Years Of Border Policy In An Area Of Freedom. In E. Guild & F. Geyer (Eds.), *Security versus justice? Police and judicial cooperation in the European Union* (pp.81-102). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-6704-629-9_6

Hansen, L. (2012). Reconstructing desecuritisation: the normative-political in the Copenhagen School and directions for how to apply it. *Review of International Studies*, *38*(3), 525-546. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000581

Huysmans, J. (2020). The European Union and the Securitization of Migration. *JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies, 38*(5), 751-777 https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00263

International Rescue Committee (2023). "What is the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum?". https://www.rescue.org/eu/article/what-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum

Ireland, P. (1991). Facing the True "Fortress Europe": Immigrants and Politics in the EC. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *29*(5), 457-480. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.1991.tb00403.x

Jacobs, A., & Kabata, M. (2024). Covid-19 and the collective securitisation of schengen: an analysis of EU and national responses to border control. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Advance online publication, 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2024.2314540

Jones, E., Daniel Kelemen, R., & Meunier, S. (2021). Failing forward? Crises and patterns of European integration. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *28*(10), 1519-1536. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1954068

Koinova, M., Düvell, F., Kalantzi, F., de Jong, S., Kaunert, C. & Marchand, M. H. (2023). International politics of migration in times of 'crisis' and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. *Migration Studies*, *11*(1), 242-257, https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnac039

Léonard, S., & Kaunert, C. (2023). The securitisation of migration in the European Union: Frontex and its evolving security practices. In C. Kaunert & S. Léonard (Eds.), *The spiralling of the securitisation of migration in the European Union* (pp. 91-103). Routledge.

Lodge, J. (1993). Internal Security and Judicial Cooperation. *The European Community and the Challenge of the Future* (2nd ed.). Pinter.

Marin, L. (2020). The COVID-19 crisis and the closure of external borders: another stress-test for the challenging construction of solidarity within the EU*?, European papers, 5(3),* 1205-1218. https://hdl.handle.net/1814/69114

Moreno-Lax, V. (2023). The "Crisification" of Migration Law: Insights from the EU External Border. In S. B. Elias, K. Cope, & J. Goldenziel (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of comparative immigration law*. Oxford University Press. https://ssrn.com/abstract=4577364

Neal, A. W. (2009). Securitization and Risk at the EU Border: The Origins of FRONTEX*. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies, 47*(2), 333-356. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2009.00807.x

Peterson, J. (2001). European Integration. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (pp.4923-4925). Pergamon. https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/01261-4

Rushton, S. (2019). *Security and public health*. Polity Press.

Scheel, S. (2020). Reconfiguring Desecuritization: Contesting Expert Knowledge in the Securitization of Migration. *Geopolitics*, *27*(4), 1042-1068. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2020.1774749

Sontag, S. (1988). *AIDS and Its Metaphors*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

United Nations. (2020). *"Mediterranean Sea: 'Cycle of violence' for fleeing migrants must be addressed"*. https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1074592

Van Middelaar, L. (2020). *Alarums and Excursions*. Agenda Publishing.

Wæver, O. (1995). Securitization and desecuritization. In R. D. Lipschutz (Ed.), On *Security* (pp. 46-86). Columbia University Press.

Wang, J., & Jin, J. (2025). From Securitization to Desecuritization: The Dynamics of China's COVID-19 Control Policy Change. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2025.2549106

Wollf, S., Ripoll S. A., and Piquet A. (2020). Framing immobility: Schengen governance in times of pandemics. *Journal of European Integration* *42*(8): 1127-1144. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1853119

Zaiotti, R. & Abdulhamid, A. (2021). Inside Out and Outside In: COVID-19 and the Reconfiguration of Europe's External Border Controls. *Historical Social Research* *46*(3), 106-123. https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.46.2021.3.106-123