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THE INSTRUMENTALISATION OF MIGRATION IN EUROPEAN UNION'S POLICY

Instrumentalizacja migracji w polityce Unii Europejskiej

This article examines the instrumentalization of migration as both a security challenge and a political tool, focusing on the EU's response to migration crises at its borders with Türkiye and Belarus since 2015. Applying a deconstructive method, the article examines how weaponized migration is framed as a hybrid threat or a coercive instrument by authoritarian regimes. Using a constructivist approach, it analyzes EU securitization discourses that cast migration as a security issue, shaping public opinion and EU asylum governance. The study argues that "weaponized migration" is co-produced: authoritarian actors instrumentalize mobility, while EU securitization discourses render it legible as a hybrid threat, transforming people into perceived 'weapons'. This framing normalizes externalization and militarization of migration governance, which can create openings for authoritarian leverage. The article concludes that, while migration entails demographic and economic change, its discursive weaponization risks undermining democratic norms, intensifies polarization, and strains humanitarian obligations. These dynamics create opportunities for Russia to exploit geopolitical tensions and test European cohesion.

Keywords: instrumentalization of migration, European Union, securitization, externalization

Artykuł analizuje instrumentalizację migracji jako wyzwania bezpieczeństwa i narzędzia politycznego, koncentrując się na reakcji UE na kryzysy migracyjne na jej granicach z Turcją i Białorusią od 2015 roku. Stosując metodę dekonstrukcyjną artykuł bada, jak zinstrumentalizowana migracja jest przedstawiana jako zagrożenie hybrydowe lub instrument przymusu przez reżimy autorytarne. Podejście konstruktywistyczne służy do analizy dyskursów sekurytyzacyjnych UE, które przedstawiają migrację jako kwestię bezpieczeństwa, kształtując opinię publiczną i zarządzanie azylowe UE. Badanie argumentuje, że „zinstrumentalizowana migracja” jest współprodukowana: aktorzy autorytarni wykorzystują mobilność, podczas gdy dyskursy sekurytyzacyjne UE czynią ją czytelną

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jako zagrożenie hybrydowe, przekształcając ludzi w postrzegane „narzędzia”. To przedstawienie normalizuje eksternalizację i militaryzację zarządzania migracją, co może stwarzać możliwości wykorzystania przez reżimy autorytarne. Artykuł konkluduje, że choć migracja wiąże się ze zmianami demograficznymi i ekonomicznymi, jej dyskursywna instrumentalizacja zagraża normom demokratycznym, nasila polaryzację i obciąża zobowiązania humanitarne. Te dynamiki stwarzają okazję dla Rosji do wykorzystania napięć geopolitycznych i testowania spójności europejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Unia Europejska, instrumentalizacja migracji, sekurytyzacja, eksternalizacja

Introduction

Against the backdrop of Russia's war on Ukraine, concerns about spillover along NATO's eastern flank, and a more assertive China in a wider context of great power competition, security logics increasingly shape EU debates and practice. Security often eclipses priorities such as free trade, globalization, liberal democracy, and human rights. Protecting citizens and borders is a core state responsibility. Yet when a security-first lens predominates, biopolitical sorting¹ intensifies, framing some lives as less grievable and thus less protectable², and those pushed outside membership lose what Hannah Arendt called the right to have rights³.

In EU law, the right to asylum is recognized in Article 18 of the Charter⁴, and the Qualification Directive sets common standards for refugee and subsidiary protection status and the rights attached to them, irrespective of mode of entry⁵.

When public discourse renders mobility “weaponized”, the boundary of membership and protection is socially redrawn, and access to these rights can narrow despite their formal recognition.

This article examines how asylum seeking⁶ and irregular mobility at the EU's external borders are rendered legible as “weaponized” and how this framing enters EU policy and law.

Applying a constructivist and critical security framework, I trace EU securitization discourse from elite statements through media uptake to legal and policy effects. I employ a deconstructive method⁷ to track how classificatory moves in EU discourse shape protection, with particular attention to the slippage between “refugee” and “economic

¹ M. Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France*, New York 2003.

² J. Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, London–New York 2009.

³ H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York 1973, pp. 296–297.

⁴ *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, art. 18, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf [19.09.2025].

⁵ *Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 (recast)*, [2011] OJ L 337/9, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2011/95/oj/eng> [19.09.2025].

⁶ “Asylum seeking” denotes the lodging of an application for international protection; the applicant is an asylum seeker pending determination: *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, Geneva, 28 July 1951, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-relating-status-refugees> [19.09.2025].

⁷ D. Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, Minneapolis 1992.

migrant.” For clarity, “refugee” is used in the legal sense, while “economic migrant” refers to persons moving primarily for work or living conditions who do not meet international protection criteria.

Weaponization hinges on reclassification: labeling asylum seekers “illegal” or “economic migrants” recasts protection claims as security risks and widens the space for exceptional measures.

The analysis uses episodes at the EU’s borders with Türkiye and Belarus as illustrative cases to track discursive moves rather than as a full comparison. The empirical base includes EU speeches and press materials, legal texts and proposals on instrumentalization, Council conclusions, selected national statements, and media coverage.

There is a growing literature on the instrumentalization of migration. Kelly M. Greenhill, in *Weapons of Mass Migration*, examines over fifty cases of coercive engineered migration and shows that authoritarian states often use cross-border mobility for political leverage⁸. She also notes that liberal democracies are particularly vulnerable to such tactics because polarization amplifies their effects. Greenhill’s findings suggest that focusing solely on a sender’s hostile actions does not fully explain instrumentalization; it is also necessary to trace how migration debates interact with social polarization and the rise of populist actors. Building on this insight, this article argues that “weaponized migration” is co-produced: authoritarian actors instrumentalize mobility, while EU securitization discourses render it legible as a hybrid threat, transforming people into perceived “weapons”.

The securitization process: building up the discourse

Ole Wæver, who introduced the concept of securitization, defines security as a speech act⁹. Security here takes on the character of a social and intersubjective construction. The key point is that security *largely depends on power and capabilities, and thus on the means of socially and politically constructing a threat*¹⁰. In this perspective, Buzan and Wæver observe, *security becomes what actors make of it*¹¹.

The instrumentalization of migration is, above all, a discourse that shapes reality for certain groups, such as asylum seekers. According to Wæver, the concept of security derives its meaning from the traditional idea that, in extreme situations, the state has the right to invoke necessity and *raison d’état*. The understanding of security has inherited much of this thinking, where radical challenges justify the use of extreme measures by the state to ensure its survival. This may facilitate action but also increases the risk that an actor, freed from constraints, could become a greater threat, not only to those perceived as a danger.

⁸ K.M. Greenhill, *Weapons of Mass Migration*, Ithaca and London 2010, p. 65.

⁹ O. Wæver, *Securitization and Desecuritization*, [in:] R.D. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security*, New York 1995, p. 56.

¹⁰ Ł. Fijałkowski, *Teoria sekurytyzacji a realistyczne ujęcie bezpieczeństwa*, [in:] E. Halizak, J. Czaputowicz (eds.), *Teoria realizmu w nauce o stosunkach międzynarodowych*, Warszawa 2014.

¹¹ Ibid.

In 2015, the European Union member states registered about 1.35 million first-time asylum applications. Over a million people moved toward the EU via the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans routes, with large sea arrivals in Greece and Italy, and were mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Syria was the top nationality among applicants, reflecting the civil war ongoing since 2011¹².

The issue of migration quickly became a tool for political mobilization in EU member states, and was instrumentalized in electoral politics and coincided with gains for Eurosceptic and anti-immigration figures and parties such as Marine Le Pen and the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Even countries that experienced minimal migration inflows, such as Poland and the Czech Republic, opposed participation in the 2015 EU relocation decisions despite requests from Greece and Italy, as some political leaders linked migration to terrorism and the spread of epidemics¹³.

The instrumentalization of migration as a discourse entered EU public debate prominently during the 2015 migration crisis. In a speech to the European Parliament, Donald Tusk, then-President of the European Council, described refugees as individuals deserving assistance, contrasting this with groups exploiting migration for profit or political leverage. He warned of “a new form of political pressure” in which migration waves are weaponized against neighboring countries, a tactic that some described as a new form of “hybrid war”¹⁴.

Since then, key EU politicians have increasingly described the instrumentalization of migration as a hybrid weapon. With the Belarus–EU border events in summer 2021, both European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the political leadership in Lithuania and Poland framed the situation as a *hybrid attack intended to destabilize Europe*¹⁵.

This discourse risks reducing people to mere “weapons”, “instruments”, or “security threats”, stripping them of agency and identity. It also aligns EU practice with an authoritarian logic that treats human beings as tools. In response to perceived threats, there have been reports of pushbacks at external borders, contradicting the non-refoulement principle under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

In December 2021, the European Commission released a regulation proposal to address the instrumentalization of migration and asylum, defining it as *situations where a third country instigates irregular migratory flows to destabilize the EU or a Member State*¹⁶. The

¹² *Latest asylum trends – 2015 overview*, <https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/LatestAsylumTrends20151.pdf> [09.09.2024].

¹³ *Kaczyński: Pasożyty i pierwotniaki w organizmach uchodźców groźne dla Polaków*, <https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/jaroslaw-kaczynski-o-uchodzcach/89mwbx3> [18.09.2024].

¹⁴ *Address by President Donald Tusk to the European Parliament*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/10/06/tusk-address-european-parliament-informal-euco-september/> [09.09.2024].

¹⁵ *2021 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen*, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_21_4701 [09.09.2024].

¹⁶ *Proposal for a Regulation on situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum*, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2021%3A890%3AFIN&qid=1639757068345> [09.09.2024].

proposal suggests that such actions threaten essential state functions, including territorial integrity and public order¹⁷. However, concerns arise from the proposal's broad language and lack of specific criteria for identifying security threats or the scale of migration that could justify derogations, which could negatively impact asylum rights.

In October 2024, the Polish government adopted its migration strategy for 2025–2030, titled *Regain Control. Ensure Security*¹⁸. Legislators argue that the current asylum framework, developed over the past 70 years, no longer aligns with the contemporary security landscape¹⁹. A core tenet of the strategy states that, in the context of hybrid threats, the state should be able to suspend aspects of the asylum procedure.

While both the EU's proposal and Poland's strategy seek to bolster national security, this shift toward prioritizing state sovereignty raises concerns about potential erosion of long-standing international protections. The label "hybrid war" is increasingly invoked to justify derogations from asylum rights and therefore warrants critical examination.

Scholars Ofer Fridman²⁰ and Mark Galeotti²¹ argue that while the term "hybrid war" gained prominence after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, its analytical novelty is contested and may be limited. They note that journalists and politicians often use the label as an umbrella for disparate issues, including cyber operations and migration crises.

Frank Hoffman, who first introduced the term, applied it to asymmetric conflicts like the 2006 clashes between Israel and Hezbollah. He defined hybrid warfare as *the simultaneous use of military, non-military, and propaganda tools at strategic, operational, and tactical levels*²². In practice, across the EU context, the "hybrid" label has been invoked for combinations of non-military and military-adjacent actions, including information operations, border pressure, and incidents along NATO's eastern flank, which blurs its analytical boundaries.

Rather than creating pro-Russian movements in the West, the Kremlin exploits existing trends and targets receptive politicians. From a policy perspective, this suggests that the EU should focus on addressing systemic vulnerabilities rather than exaggerating Moscow's capabilities or folding diverse activities into a single "hybrid war" narrative.

Externalization of migration: EU-Türkiye Statement

The perception of migration as a security threat has led the European Union to form agreements with neighboring non-EU countries to restrict the movement of people, primarily from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, across its borders. This approach is referred to in the literature as the externalization of migration. The EU cooperates in

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Odzyskać kontrolę. Zapewnić bezpieczeństwo. Kompleksowa i odpowiedzialna strategia migracyjna Polski na lata 2025–2030*, <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/b11fd6eb-dc4c-446f-af8b-5b15a59884fe> [25.10.2024].

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ O. Fridman, *Russian "Hybrid Warfare": Resurgence and Politicization*, Oxford 2022.

²¹ M. Galeotti, *Russian Political War Moving Beyond the Hybrid*, London 2019.

²² F.G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Arlington 2007.

this regard with over 30 countries, including Türkiye, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Niger, Serbia, Albania²³. Many of these partners have limited democratic oversight. Despite these governance concerns, the European Union supports security and border authorities through training and the provision of equipment. Funding for such cooperation comes from EU instruments such as the Facility for Refugees in Türkiye, the European Neighborhood instruments, pre-accession assistance, and Frontex operational support²⁴.

One significant example of the externalization and securitization of migration is the EU-Türkiye Statement. Since late 2014, there had been an increasing number of tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea due to the sinking of migrant boats. On April 19, 2015, another maritime disaster occurred when approximately 800 people died while attempting to reach Italy²⁵.

By spring 2015, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was publicly criticizing Western responses as inhumane, highlighting Türkiye's expenditures on refugees, and calling for shared responsibility, warning that Europe could not ensure peace and security without cooperative solutions and economic assistance to Türkiye²⁶. During autumn 2015 negotiations on a joint action plan with the EU, Erdoğan demanded visa liberalization and a revival of accession talks, warning that *We can open the doors to Greece and Bulgaria at any moment and put the refugees on buses*²⁷.

The EU-Türkiye Statement, signed on March 18, 2016, aimed to end irregular migration from Türkiye to the EU²⁸. It required Türkiye to prevent new migration routes and return migrants whose asylum applications were unfounded or inadmissible. In exchange, for each Syrian returned from Greece to Türkiye, the EU agreed to resettle another Syrian from Türkiye²⁹. The EU also committed to providing €6 billion in refugee aid, visa liberalization, and revitalizing EU accession talks.

One of the consequences of closing the Western Balkan route was the redirection of refugees to other pathways, particularly across the Central and Western Mediterranean. As a result, the number of migrant deaths due to maritime disasters began to rise again³⁰. Additionally, several countries that had previously experienced relatively few arrivals reported increased pressure³¹. By 2021, a new Eastern European route had emerged.

²³ M. Akkerman, *Expanding the fortress*, Amsterdam 2018.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ E. Livingstone, L. Cerulus, *Migration summits: a timeline of failures*, <https://www.politico.eu/interactive/migration-summits-timeline-of-failures-european-council-meetings-migration/> [09.09.2024].

²⁶ *Erdoğan Avrupa'ya Suçladı*, <https://haberkibris.com/erdogan-avrupayi-sucladi-2015-05-05.html> [10.09.2024].

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *EU-Turkey statement*, 18 March 2016, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/> [10.09.2024].

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ On April 16, 2016, a large ship sank between Libya and Italy, claiming the lives of 500 people. See: UNHCR, *Massive loss of life reported in latest Mediterranean tragedy*, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news/massive-loss-life-reported-latest-mediterranean-tragedy> [10.09.2024].

³¹ For example, in 2017, Spain saw a 60% increase in migrant arrivals, while Cyprus recorded an approximately eightfold increase in arrivals between 2016 and 2017. See: N. Gutteridge, *EU's migrant night-*

The threat to *open the gates* was acted on February 28, 2020, the day after 36 Turkish soldiers were killed in Idlib, Syria³². The Turkish government announced that it would no longer prevent asylum seekers and migrants from crossing into Europe. Erdoğan justified this decision by claiming that the EU had failed to fulfill its promises under the 2016 EU-Türkiye Statement and that a new wave of asylum seekers was emerging due to the escalating conflict in Idlib³³. Following this, around 10,000 migrants gathered at the border between Türkiye and Greece³⁴.

The Greek government reinforced its border with police, military, and special forces, using tear gas and rubber bullets to repel migrants at the crossing³⁵. Human Rights Watch reported that Turkish police transported migrants to border villages and directed them toward Greece³⁶. As Turkish authorities were reported to encourage crossings, Greek forces returned migrants to Türkiye, escalating the situation into a humanitarian crisis. EU leaders publicly backed Greece's actions, with the President of the European Commission calling Greece *a shield* protecting Europe and pledging financial, material, and Frontex support for border enforcement³⁷.

The EU's reliance on third-country partners like Türkiye, North African states, and Western Balkan countries for migration control can lead to a short-term focus, diverting funds from development aid and support for civil society toward immediate migration management. At the same time, China and Russia have expanded their engagement in parts of Africa, which can complicate EU objectives on climate, and foreign policy.

EU-Belarus border crisis

Read through the constructivist and critical security lens used here, the Belarus episode is not reducible to irregular entry and border control. It is a discursive and institutional sequence in which mobility is named a "hybrid threat" and then governed through exceptional measures.

In 2021, as EU sanctions and isolation deepened, Minsk enabled a new route into the European Union via Belarus, with arrivals channeled on tourist visas through Baghdad,

mare: Arrivals in Spain rocket as smugglers slash crossing price to £800, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/826766/Migrant-crisis-EU-new-challenge-arrivals-Spain> [10.09.2024]; *Europe – Migration Flows to Europe, Quarterly Overview (September 2017)*, <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/europe-%E2%80%94-migration-flows-europe-quarterly-overview-september-2017> [10.09.2024].

³² 33 Turkish soldiers killed in Syrian air raid in Idlib, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/28/33-turkish-soldiers-killed-in-syrian-air-raid-in-idlib> [10.09.2024].

³³ L.I. Oztig, *The Turkish-Greek Border Crisis and COVID-19*, "Borders in Globalization Review" 2020, vol. 2(1), pp. 78–81.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ *Greece: Violence Against Asylum Seekers at Border*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/17/greece-violence-against-asylum-seekers-border> [10.09.2024].

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ *The situation at Greece's borders*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/greece-turkey-refugees-explainer/> [10.09.2024].

Beirut, Damascus, Amman, Istanbul, Dubai, and Moscow. The profile of those arriving broadly overlapped with the nationalities seen on the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans routes discussed earlier. Although media narratives often present them as economic migrants, many came from countries living with the terror of armed conflict, and from places where climate change is increasingly tightening socioeconomic pressures on livelihoods and safety³⁸.

Across his public messaging, Lukashenka portrays as criminals the very people who sought a chance to escape hardships in their native lands and whom his authorities directed to the border: Today they whine that Belarusians aren't defending them. They demand our protection from smuggling, from drugs ... Have you lost your mind? You have unleashed a hybrid war against us, and now you demand that we defend you, as we have done until now?³⁹

Frontline member states increasingly read events through the same prism; people on the move were reframed as instruments in a hostile operation. Pushbacks were normalized, and policing shifted from registering claims to repelling entry. At EU level, senior officials framed the episode as a hybrid attack⁴⁰, expressed solidarity with affected member states, and announced work on provisional emergency measures under Article 78(3) TFEU⁴¹.

At the fence, exceptional practices consolidated into routine. Restricted access zones, barrier construction, and operational pushbacks narrowed access to procedures and reduced transparency for NGOs and media. In March 2025, Polish legislation authorized the government to temporarily and territorially limit the lodging of applications for international protection by regulation, immediately applied at the Belarus border⁴².

³⁸ On composition and routes, the EUAA notes that most people facilitated via Belarus in 2021 were Iraqi nationals, with Syrians and others also present, and that inflows rose sharply from June 2021. On drivers, UNHCR reports that forced displacement is primarily linked to persecution, conflict, and violence. Regarding climate pressures, the IPCC concludes that climate and weather extremes are increasingly driving displacement in all regions; see also IOM's synthesis on environmental and climate factors as interacting migration drivers. See: European Union Agency for Asylum. "4.1.1. Situation on the Eastern Borders." In *Asylum Report 2022: Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022. <https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-report-2022/411-situation-eastern-borders> [10.09.2024].

³⁹ *Wojna hybrydowa? Najważniejsze fakty o gwałtownym wzroście nielegalnej migracji z Białorusi*, <https://belsat.eu/pl/news/02-07-2021-wojna-hybrydowa-najwazniejsze-fakty-o-gwaltownym-wzroscie-nielegalnej-migracji-z-bialorusi> [12.05.2024].

⁴⁰ *Belarus: Declaration by the EU High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the situation at the European Union border*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/11/10/belarus-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-situation-at-the-european-union-border/> [12.05.2024].

⁴¹ Article 78(3) TFEU permits provisional measures in emergencies involving a sudden inflow of third-country nationals; see *Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, art. 78(3); and European Commission, *Proposal for a Council Decision on provisional emergency measures for the benefit of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland*, COM (2021) 752 final, 1 December 2021.

⁴² *Zawieszenie prawa do azylu „na granicy białoruskiej”, czyli gdzie?*, <https://interwencjaprawna.pl/zawieszenie-prawa-do-azylu-na-granicy-bialoruskiej-czyli-gdzie/> [19.09.2024].

Civil society monitoring documented refusals to register asylum claims, returns to Belarus (including persons recently discharged from hospitals), and heightened risks for vulnerable groups⁴³. These practices collide with Article 18 of the Charter, the non-refoulement principle, and the prohibition of collective expulsions.

In Poland, people who cross the border irregularly are placed in detention centers (Strzeżone Ośrodki dla Cudzoziemców). These facilities draw on penitentiary and militarized infrastructure, often located in former military barracks⁴⁴. The design removes people from public space and places them inside a dense web of security technologies and practices, including perimeter fences, window bars and barbed wire, under regimes administered by Border Guard officers. Inside, electronic surveillance and detailed house rules maintain immobility and channel people into administrative procedures that typically end in voluntary departure or forced return. In effect, a protection question is converted into a public order problem.

Analytically, the case confirms the article's central claim of co-production. Orchestration by Minsk mattered, but EU securitizing discourse turned it into a security regime that narrowed access to protection. By July 2024, at least 130 people had died at the EU and Belarus border⁴⁵. As security becomes the organizing lens, the boundary of who is treated as protectable narrows, and those pushed outside the circle of membership are no longer recognized as effective rights holders or as lives of equal value. As Judith Butler notes: Some lives are grievable, and others are not⁴⁶. The denial of grievability shows how dehumanization takes hold. Such dehumanization corrodes democracy: it normalizes unequal protection, licenses exceptionalism, and undermines the right to have rights for a growing share of people.

Conclusion

This article asked how asylum seeking and irregular mobility come to be understood as a security problem, how that framing becomes institutionalized in law and operational practice, and what follows for rights and political cohesion. It advanced one thesis: so-called weaponized migration is co-produced. Authoritarian actors orchestrate cross-border movement, and EU securitization discourse classifies that movement as threat. When these two elements meet, practice shifts toward rights derogations, externalization instead of taking the responsibility for accepting forcibly displaced persons, and hiding them from public view through detention once they have crossed the border irregularly.

⁴³ *Skarga do ETPC – zawrócenie uchodźców na Białoruś na przejściu granicznym w Terespolu*, <https://interwencjaprawna.pl/skarga-do-etpc-zawrocenie-uchodzcow-na-bialorus-na-przejsciu-granicznym-w-terespolu/> [25.09.2024].

⁴⁴ *Securytyzacja migracji na przykładzie polskich strzeżonych ośrodków dla cudzoziemców*, <https://interwencjaprawna.pl/securytyzacja-migracji-na-przykladzie-polskich-strzezonych-osrodkow-dla-cudzoziemcow/> [25.09.2024].

⁴⁵ *Już 130 migrantów i migrantek zginęło na granicy UE z Białorusią*, <https://oko.press/130-migrantow-i-migrantek-zginelo-na-granicy-ue-z-bialorusia/> [25.09.2024].

⁴⁶ J. Butler, *Frames of War...*

The analysis demonstrated the dynamic from speech to practice. In both the Türkiye and Belarus episodes, EU and national authorities framed mobility as leverage and as a hybrid threat. That language was taken up by institutions and converted into operational repertoires at the border. Pushbacks, restricted zones, and the expansion of detention moved from exception to routine, while access to procedures narrowed.

Three conclusions follow. First, classification is causal: the relabeling of the “international protection seeker” as an “economic migrant,” an “illegal migrant,” or “an instrument of hybrid war” widens the space for emergency governance. Second, authoritarian orchestration produces leverage only when EU and national authorities adopt the threat frame and possess administrative and operational tools ready to implement it. Third, the resulting practices shrink effective access to protection, entrench unequal treatment, and strain democratic legitimacy and European cohesion.

When the security frame hardens, people are sorted into lives to be protected and lives to be managed, which results in the dehumanization of certain groups of people. A politics that normalizes rights derogations draws European Union member states toward the logic of authoritarian regimes they confront and makes the Union easier to pressure from outside. Confronted with Russian military threats and domestic anxiety, authorities construct a sense of security by concentrating action at the border, a space inaccessible to the public. Drone attacks over EU airspace invite reflection on whether territorial integrity can be defended solely through border militarization.

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