

## An Empirical Analysis of Securitization Discourse in the European Union

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyse the empirical background of securitisation in the European Union (EU). Using panel data, this research covers the period between 2006 and 2018 and analyses 24 EU countries. Copenhagen School claims that securitisation is a speech act of powerful actors. In the case of the EU, politicians and media are the main actors in the securitisation of immigration. In this respect, immigration has been labelled by these actors as a potential threat to the welfare state, European identity, and internal security. Various literature discusses that the securitisation of immigration in the EU has accelerated especially after 9/11. Contrary to the existing literature, this study focuses on the EU to analyse whether the securitisation of immigration has an empirical base. This study's key finding is that there is no solid empirical result to support the securitisation discourse in the EU to the extent that immigration strongly threatens national security.*

**Keywords:** European Union; Copenhagen School; securitisation; immigration; national security threat

### Introduction

This study dwells on the issue of securitisation in the European Union (EU) and aims to elaborate on how the discourse of securitisation and national security threats in the EU are related. This quest derives from the fact that national security threats are the main function in the discourse of securitisation which politicians and media created. In this context, immigration is a good example of securitisation. Therefore, the effect of immigration on national security threats could be a useful tool to test the validity of securitisation discourse. In this respect, three reasons have triggered us to conduct this study. First is the scarcity of quantitative studies focusing on securitisation. Second is the increasing potential of the political discourse of securitisation by politicians and mass media. Finally, to the best of our knowledge, there has been no such study focusing on a regional scale (EU in this study) to empirically test the securitisation discourse.

Migration has been a source of labour for European economies for centuries. During the 1960s, economic immigration was a trend in European countries (Huysmans, 2000: 753). Since immigrants were a cheap labour force, they became an essential part of European economic development (Huysmans, 2006b: 65; Rinus, 2016: 19). At the same time, European security has been an important agenda item/topic for several centuries. Buzan and Wæver

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(2003: 345) note that the idea of integrated European security traces back to the Roman Empire, then reflected on the EU with the Treaty of Rome.

According to Huysmans (2000: 752), migration has been securitised in the EU because it has been considered to be a threat to public order, identity, culture, and the economy. Since the post-Cold War era, European countries have had anxiety about possible chaos and disorder. As Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002: 22) argue, this anxiety is related to the commonly accepted fear of migration. The securitisation of migration started in the mid-1970s and has been a continuous process. Since then, viewing migration as a threat to the EU, which can destabilise EU countries in means of social and economic aspects (Karyotis, 2007, pp. 1, 2), migration, borders, and security, has been one of the core issues in the EU policies (Benam, 2011, pp. 191, 192; Léonard, 2010: 231). In this regard, Huysmans (2000: 758) asserts that the securitisation of migration in the EU is based on three dimensions, namely internal security, cultural security, and security of the welfare state.

To form this study, we have used a panel data analysis approach and applied the Fixed Effect and the Random Effect Model to analyse the national security threat and immigration relationship covering the period of 2006-2018 in 24 EU countries. Our results contribute to two strands of literature: migration and securitisation.

Against this background, while considering the political and media discourses of securitisation, this study focuses mainly on the internal (or national) security threats in the EU. Moreover, this study's argument is primarily based on Copenhagen School (CS) to understand the securitisation discourse in the EU, and then it tests its empirical validity of it. The motivation behind securitisation is fear of immigration. Particularly, two incidents: the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the Syrian refugee crisis- have triggered the securitising discourse against immigration because of perceived threats to national security. The assumption is that immigrants or refugees create a threat to culture, economic welfare, and national security. Yet, linking terrorism to immigration as a proxy of national security should not be just a speech act as the CS provided. An empirical explanation of securitisation is needed. Accordingly, whether or not securitisation of immigration has become a prominent agenda item for the EU and migration studies has been discussed (Baele and Sterck, 2015).

The sense of fear, which is the fear and anxiety against immigrants or refugees, could be linked to the anxiety against refugees in the European countries and the propaganda of far-right parties. Especially after 2014, Eurobarometer results pose an irrational fear against immigration related to the so-called terrorism link (Kinnvall et al., 2018). More recently, Brexit has also been built upon anger and anxiety toward immigration and anti-immigrant sentiments (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019; Riberio and Schwarzenegger, 2022). Furthermore, elections in EU countries such as Hungary have been opportunities where anti-immigration sentiment and sense of cultural and economic fears have become more and more visible (Bíró-Nagy, 2021). Therefore, it is not hard to say that negative attitudes toward immigrants have been caused by a sense of fear that links terrorism to immigration

Two proxies such as crime and terrorism can be used to evaluate national security threats (Campbell, 2014; Crelinsten, 1989). Therefore, our study uses terrorism as a proxy to measure national security threat. Measuring terrorism is a challenge as Yaya (2009) argues there might be different proxies for different countries. Polyzos et al. (2021) have suggested that the number of incidents, number of casualties, and number of injuries could be used as proxies



to measure terrorism. Additionally, Dragičević (2019) has also implied that the number of terrorist incidents could be utilised as a proxy. Therefore, we have employed the number of terrorist incidents per year in a country as a proxy for national security threats. Given that the studies looking at this empirical relationship are relatively few, this research differs from the existing literature regarding its aim and scope. It contributes to the current literature through a region-specific analysis and sheds light on the securitisation of migration in the EU.

The rest of the study is outlined as a theoretical framework in Section 1, relevant literature review in Section 2, methodology in Section 3, and empirical results and discussion in Section 4. Then we conclude our findings and policy recommendations in the conclusion portion of this paper.

## Theoretical Framework

The securitisation concept, which is often attributed to Ole Wæver (Floyd, 2007: 41; Hansen, 2000: 288), has been a controversial issue among scholars due to the various approaches to the perceptions of security and threat. There are three different primary schools related to securitisation theory. These three primary schools are the Aberystwyth School, the CS, and the Paris School. Since CS is the European School for security studies (Huysmans, 1998: 483), briefly looking at it is useful to understand Europe's securitisation issues and the securitisation of migration (Benam, 2011: 193). Generally, according to Balzacq et al. (2016: 496), securitisation theory has three main questions:

- What makes something a security issue?
- What kind of responses does this call for?
- What are the specific consequences of agreeing to that something is a threat?

The CS conceptualises securitisation as a speech act, which means labelling something as a security threat through a discourse or uttering (Taureck, 2006: 54). Thus, security is a designated issue by the securitising actor (Wæver, 2006: 251). This makes the CS a constructivist school (Karyotis, 2007: 2). Therefore, claiming that something is a threat by a powerful actor, namely a securitising actor, creates a social effect on that something as a security issue for the referent object. Securitising actors and referent objects are two essential components of securitisation (Stritzel, 2007: 360). Accordingly, something might be announced as a security issue because it is referred to as an existential threat to the referent object (Diskaya, 2013: 2). The referent object can be the state or other related units in political, economic, societal, or environmental sectors as long as they face an existential threat (Wilkinson, 2007: 9).

The articulation of security creates a sense of fear among the audience for securitising that issue to protect the referent object. Thus, the securitising actor claims a right to take extraordinary measures over everyday politics, which makes the actor the most potent figure (Stritzel, 2007: 360). According to Buzan et al. (1998: 24), “security is thus a self-referential practice because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue—not necessarily because a real existential threat exists, but because the issue is presented as such a threat.” Therefore, the securitising actor obtains the right to take extraordinary measures to protect the referent object from the existential threat that it has created and labelled. “A security issue is posited (by a securitising actor) as a threat to the survival of some referent object (nation, state, the liberal international economic order, the rain forests), which is claimed to have a

right to survive” (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 71). Thus, security becomes a socially constructed and intersubjective concept (Taureck, 2006, pp. 54, 55). According to Wæver (1995: 6), “in naming a certain development a security problem, the ‘state’ can claim a special right, one that will, in the final instance, always be defined by the state and its elites.” Thus, “a problem would become a security issue whenever so defined by the power holders” (Wæver, 1995: 53). Buzan et al. (1998: 36) define the referent objects as “things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival” and the securitising actors as “actors who securitise issues by declaring something —a referent object— existentially threatened.” Therefore, securitising actors are mostly politicians, bureaucrats, governments, or pressure groups (Buzan et al., 1998: 40).

Galantino (2020) asserts that there are a number of theoretical and empirical pieces of great work that suggest the securitisation of immigration has increased in the EU by politicians and media, which may influence discourse and public policy (Anderson, 2013; Bigo, 2002, 2006; Bourbeau, 2011; Ceccorulli and Labanca, 2014; Huysmans, 2006b; Palidda, 2016; van Munster, 2009). In this respect, there are two primary steps of securitisation of immigration. The first step is putting immigrants at the centre of national security threats (Galantino, 2020: 5). Accordingly, the increasing number of immigrants into EU countries has been interpreted as a possible threat for three reasons. First, immigrants threaten the European identity as they represent different cultures and religions. Second, immigrants threaten the European economy as they may replace or displace citizens in the job market. Lastly, they create a threat to national security due to Europeans’ fear of terrorism related to immigrants. Given that, the securitisation and migration-security nexus has been predominantly challenged after 9/11 to link national security threats to immigration explicitly (Boswell, 2007: 589; Gabrielli, 2014: 312; Karyotis, 2007; Neal, 2009: 338). As Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002: 22) state, “introduced in public debates as a political hot-button topic, migration is thus transformed into a threat not only to the state but also to the security and the identity of the host society.” Therefore, the migrants were not just aliens to the society but also a threat (Huysmans, 2000: 758).

The second step is related to the actors and uttering of securitisation discourse. The CS suggests the idea that securitisation is rendered by powerful actors who have authority and sufficient power to influence the audience, that is, society. In this regard, the main actors of securitisation in the EU have been politicians and the media. Accordingly, Messia (2014: 535) notes that political elites have securitised immigration in recent years. On the other side, according to Buonfino (2004: 28), the role of media has caused Europeans to consider immigration as a social and economic threat. Moreover, enhanced by the media’s xenophobic arguments, elections also trigger politicians to support anti-immigration discourse to gain public support. (Huysmans, 2006a: 164).

As mentioned before, Galantino (2020) also emphasises that immigration has been increasingly securitised in the EU. He (Galantino, 2020) then elaborates that news which frames migration with national security has become widespread, and several studies confirm this (Galantino, 2017; Innes, 2010; Rudolph, 2003). Hence, securitisation discourse has been crystallised in the EU predominantly concerning immigration, which the politicians and the media have done. In the context of CS, politicians or media stand for the powerful actors, whose effect on the audience -the citizens- is hierarchically dominant. As a consequence of increasing right-wing nationalism in Europe, politicians and the mass media have taken the stage to securitise immigration: they basically utter that immigrants are the causes of the



national security deficit. In addition, if politicians possess sufficient authority and persuasive ability over an audience, they thus securitise immigration.

## Related Literature

Previous studies provide evidence that little attention has been paid to the effect of immigration on national security threats. Given that terrorism is the most significant indicator of national security, this section focuses on studies dealing with the terrorism-immigration nexus. Thus, as Forrester et al. (2019) argued, this field is scarce in terms of empirical analysis.

Helbling and Meierrieks (2020) assert that terrorism is not directly related to immigration in a mechanical way. Although immigration could promote favourable conditions and an environment for terrorism, it is not per se the root cause behind it. Similarly, Choi (2021) indicates that there is no relationship between terrorist threats and restrictive immigration policies. Thus, one could not easily link immigration to terrorism. Analysing 20 OECD host countries and 183 countries of origin over the period 1980-2010 and employing OLS and 2SLS, Dreher et al. (2020) confirm a positive relationship between the probability of a terrorist attack and a large number of immigrants in a country. There also might be mixed results for the terrorism-immigration nexus. Using spatial-econometric analysis covering 145 countries over the period 1970-2000, Bove and Böhmelt (2016) document a positive relationship between immigration and the spread of terrorism. Yet their findings also show that immigration does not correlate in a positive relationship with terrorist attacks. In a recent study, McAlexander (2020) examines the relationship between terrorism and immigration in Western European countries using data from 1980 to 2004. The study employs a negative binomial model and shows that immigration increases right-wing terrorism, but does not affect left-wing and other types of terrorism. Focusing on the refugees-terrorism nexus and using time-series data over the period 1970-2007 for 154 countries, Choi and Saleyhan (2013) report a positive relationship between refugees and domestic and international terrorism. Using the instrumental variables approach in their model covering 170 countries for the period 1990-2015, Forrester et al. (2019) investigate immigration-terrorism nexus and find that there is no significant empirical evidence supporting a positive relationship between immigration and terrorism. Taking 152 countries as a case study and using a dynamic panel approach over the period of 1976 to 2000, Dreher et al. (2011) document that terrorism positively affects highly educated emigrants.

## Methodology

This study uses a panel data approach to estimate the effect of immigration on national security threats in EU countries to test the discourse of securitisation. To this end, we have estimated two different models, namely, Random Effects (RE) Model, and Fixed Effects (FE) Model. Our base model as follows:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta x'_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

In this equation,  $Y_{it}$  represents the dependent variable,  $\alpha_i$  denotes the intercept,  $x_{it}$  (K times of) a set of explanatory variables,  $\varepsilon_{it}$  is the vector of error terms,  $i$  is the number of units in the model (individual, group, country) ( $i=1, \dots, N$ ), and finally  $t$  shows the time of each group ( $t=1, \dots, T$ ).

Panel data contains different intercept coefficients for each unit. The FE Model can be used only if the intercept coefficient is constant for each unit. The RE model is a model where there are no constant multipliers but independent random variables.

To use the panel data approach, several tests must be conducted to assess the model. First of all, the F test (Fischer test) is conducted to determine whether the FE model or OLS model will be used. Breusch and Pagan (1980) proposed the Lagrange Multiplier (LM) to determine whether the OLS or RE models should be used. Regarding RE model, the Hausman (1978) test is conducted to determine the approach between FE or RE (Dimitrios and Hall, 2011: 420).

## Data and Model

To estimate the terrorism and immigration nexus, choosing the explanatory variables is a challenging issue. Indeed, it is controversial to determine factors that can cause terrorism, given that driving factors could differ from region to region. Hence, one of the problems of this study is to determine the drivers of terror in the EU as it is a relatively homogenous group of countries. Generally, empirical studies on immigration and terrorism have used cross-country analysis; thus, they have not been examined as a homogenous group.

Given the limited studies on this topic, we could not follow a specific model that has been used and tested. Therefore, we have used the relevant literature to determine the explanatory variables below to formulate and estimate the model. (*immig*) represents immigration and is our main independent variable. Immigration has been included in the model following Adamson (2006) and McAlexander (2020), and either the positive or negative effect of immigration on national security threats is expected. The second variable (*gdp*) stands for real GDP per capita and has been added to the model following Fearon and Laitin (2003), Freytag et al. (2011), Ismail and Amjad (2014), and Lai (2007). Existing literature documents mixed results on the GDP-terrorism relationship. Blomberg et al. (2004) and Ismail and Amjad (2014) find a positive effect, Caruso and Schneider (2011), Lai (2007), and Nasir et al. (2011) find a negative effect, and finally, Boehmer and Daube (2013), Enders et al. (2016), Enders and Hoover (2012), and Freytag et al. (2011) find a U-shaped effect. Lastly, (*milex*) is military expenditures and has been used in the model in accordance with Asongu and Amankwah-Amoah (2016), Feridun and Shahbaz (2010), Tahir (2020), and Tahir et al. (2019). The empirical literature provides mixed results. Tahir et al. (2019) document a positive relationship, while Asongu et al. (2017) and Okafor and Piesse (2018) show a negative relationship.

In this study, we have used the data from 24 EU countries covering the period between 2006 and 2018. Due to the lack of data, we have excluded four EU countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Malta, and Romania) and included the United Kingdom as an EU country since Brexit was not concluded within the period covered in this study. The choice of the period was determined by data availability. Hence, the model aims to analyse the relationship between national security threats and immigration in the EU. The model we have estimated is as follows:

$$natsec_{it} = a_{it} + \beta_1(immig)_{it} + \beta_2(milex)_{it} + \beta_3(gdp)_{it} + \beta_4(gdp^2)_{it} \quad (2)$$

In this study, our dependent variable is the national security threat, and independent variables are immigration, military expenditures, and real GDP per capita. Global Terrorism Database



(GTD) has widely been used in the literature to evaluate whether there is a correlation between immigration and terrorism incidents. According to the GTD, a terrorist attack is “threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation” (LaFree, 2010: 25). This data provides the number of terrorist attacks per year in a country. The dataset includes the location, date, weapons, target, casualties, and group or person responsible. GTD dataset is coded through analysing media articles related the terrorist incidents (START, 2021b).

Immigration, on the other hand, has been defined as “the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country” (“International Migration Statistics”, 2020). Military expenditures consist of the expenditures of the “armed forces, including peacekeeping forces; defense ministries and other government agencies engaged in defense projects; paramilitary forces, when judged to be trained and equipped for military operations; and military space activities” (“Sources and methods”, 2020). Real GDP per capita is “the ratio of real GDP to the average population of a specific year” (“Real GDP per capita”, 2020).

In the present study, the data for the dependent variable  $(natsec)_{it}$  is collected from GTD.  $(immig)_{it}$  and  $(gdp)_{it}$  data are obtained from Eurostat. The unit of measure for the  $(gdp)_{it}$  is “chain linked volumes (2010) in EUR.” For the  $(mlex)_{it}$  we have used the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) data. The military expenditures values are constant 2018 prices in the US \$m currency. The detailed information regarding variables is found in Table 1.

Regarding aforementioned studies, we do not expect any insignificant results. Turning to the expected signs of the explanatory variables, the sign of immigration and GDP are expected to be ambiguous since their effect on national security threats is not clear cut. On the other hand, based on the empirical literature we expect a negative association between military expenditures and national security threats. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix related to the variables is given in Table 2.

## Empirical Results and Discussion

Table 3 reports our empirical results. To verify the appropriate model, F, LM, and Hausman Tests are conducted, and results show that RE is appropriate for Model (1). For the Models (2), (3), and (4), FE is appropriate.

All of the explanatory variables have a statistically significant effect on national security threats. Our key finding confirms a positive but weak association between immigration and national security threats. This finding is in line with previous studies (Dreher et al., 2020). This result suggests that increased immigration might make it harder to implement tighter security controls. As a result, terrorist organisations could find more space for mobility, recruitment, and preparation. This study’s theoretical framework suggests that immigration in the EU has been securitised over the discourse of national security threats. Given that the impact of immigration on national security threats is weak, this result indicates that there is no such pronounced effect of immigration on national security threat, which can provide a solid basis for the discourse of securitisation.

**Table 1.** Variables in this study

Code	Variable	Value	Data Source	Definition	Expected Sign
<i>natsec</i>	National Security Threat	Number of terrorist incidents per year in a country	Global Terrorism Database (GTD)	“Threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation” (LaFree, 2010: 25).	Dependent Variable
<i>immig</i>	Immigration	Number of immigrants per year in a country	Eurostat, Data Code: MIGR_IMM8	The action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country”	?
<i>milex</i>	Military Expenditures	Constant 2018 prices in the US \$m currency.	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)	Military expenditures consist of the expenditures of the “armed forces, including peacekeeping forces; defence ministries and other government agencies engaged in defence projects; paramilitary forces, when judged to be trained and equipped for military operations; and military space activities.”	-
<i>gdp</i>	Real Gross Domestic Product per capita	Chain linked volumes (2010) in EUR.	Eurostat, Data Code: SDG_08_10.	“The ratio of real GDP to the average population of a specific year.”	?

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

	<i>natsec</i>	<i>immig</i>	<i>milex</i>	<i>gdp</i>	<i>gdp</i> <sup>2</sup>
<b>Mean</b>	8.067308	146025.3	10461.47	26213.84	9.66E+08
<b>Maximum</b>	137	1571047	59766.46	84420	7.13E+09
<b>Minimum</b>	0	2234	219.15	7980	63680400
<b>Std. Dev.</b>	20.04942	217508.2	16106.3	16174.45	1.31E+09
<b>Observations</b>	312	312	312	312	312
<b>CORRELATIONS</b>	<i>natsec</i>	<i>immig</i>	<i>milex</i>	<i>gdp</i>	<i>gdp</i> <sup>2</sup>
<i>natsec</i>	1				
<i>immig</i>	0.4943	1			
<i>milex</i>	0.5491	0.8200	1		
<i>gdp</i>	0.0769	0.1287	0.1229	1	
<i>gdp</i> <sup>2</sup>	-0.0094	-0.0041	-0.0188	0.9478	1





**Table 3.** The Results of Estimations on Terrorism and Immigration Relation

	Model (1) RE	Model (2) FE	Model (3) FE	Model (4) FE
<b>Constant</b>	1.383487 (0.46)	32.68462 (5.93)	15.79247 (1.59)	-5.114604 (-0.33)
<b>immig</b>	4.58E-05 (6.41) <sup>a</sup>	5.12E-05 (6.46) <sup>a</sup>	4.80E-05 (5.97) <sup>a</sup>	4.60E-05 (5.69) <sup>a</sup>
<b>milex</b>		-0.003068 (-5.85) <sup>a</sup>	-0.003193 (-6.08) <sup>a</sup>	-0.003356 (-6.32) <sup>a</sup>
<b>gdp</b>			0.000703 (2.05) <sup>b</sup>	0.002245 (2.41) <sup>b</sup>
<b>gdp<sup>2</sup></b>				-1.87E-08 (-1.78) <sup>c</sup>
<b>R-squared</b>	0.1176	0.7079	0.7122	0.7154
<b>Adjusted R-squared</b>	0.1148	0.6824	0.6859	0.6883
<b>F-statistic</b>	41.33	27.73	27.13	26.44
<b>Cross-section F Test</b>	16.35 [0,000]	17.05 [0,000]	17.43 [0,000]	17.68 [0,000]
<b>LM Test</b>	528.31 [0,0000]	362.52 [0,0000]	362.60 [0,0000]	362.19 [0,0000]
<b>Hausman Test</b>	0.000465 [0.9828]	41.70 [0,0000]	45.40 [0,0000]	47.46 [0,0000]

*Note.* (1) The values between parentheses show t-statistics, and between brackets indicate the significance. (2) a refers to the statistical significance of 1%, b refers to 5%, and c refers to 10%.

Military expenditures have a statistically significant, weak and negative effect on national security threats in line with the literature (Asongu et al., 2017; Okafor and Piesse, 2018). Based on these two results, one can conclude that while immigration may slightly increase the degree of national security threats, military expenditures can decrease through prevention, increased military capacity, security technologies, and investments. Furthermore, when military expenditures are added to the model, the R<sup>2</sup> value rises substantially. This result emphasises that military expenditures have a prominent explanatory effect on national security threats.

Finally, GDP is positively associated with national security threats, and this result complies with existing literature (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Ismail and Amjad, 2014; Kurrild-Klitgaard et al., 2006). This result suggests that higher GDP per capita countries could be target countries to spread fear and terror, thus affecting the stability of those countries. Given that EU countries are prosperous and higher GDP countries, these results can be explained with such an argument.

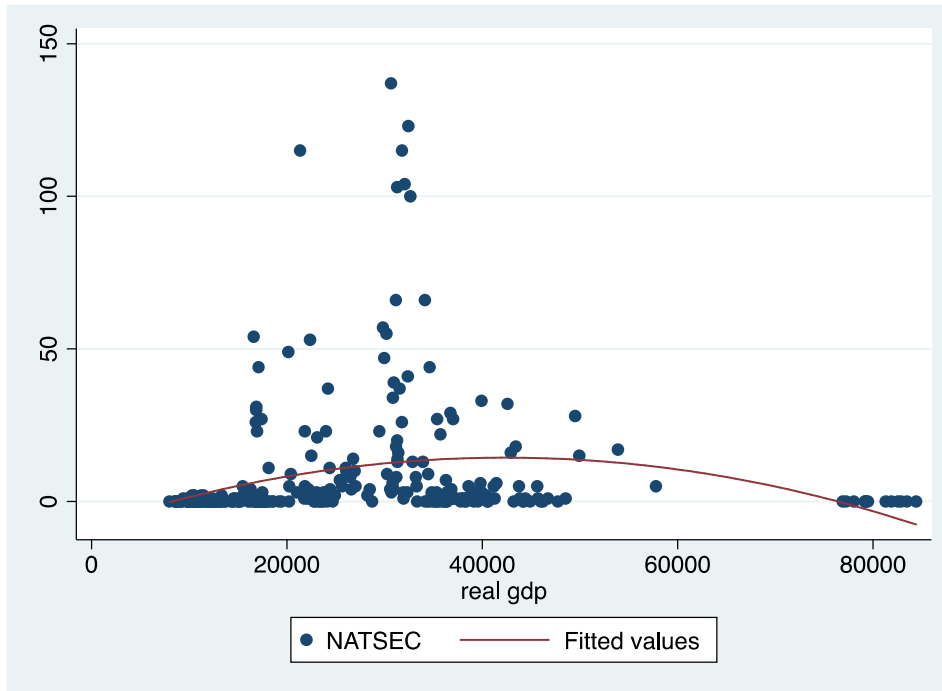
As Freytag et al. (2011), Enders et al. (2016), Enders and Hoover (2012), and Boehmer and Daube (2013) have documented a non-linear (U-shaped) relationship between GDP and terrorism, we also test the nonlinearity. We can infer an inverted U-shaped relationship between GDP and national security threats if  $\beta_3 > 0$  and  $\beta_4 < 0$ . However, if  $\beta_3 < 0$  and  $\beta_4 > 0$  there would be a U-shaped relationship between these two variables. Once a U-shaped relationship is established, a threshold can be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\partial(\text{natsec})}{\partial(\text{gdp})} = \beta_3 - 2\beta_4\text{gdp} = 0 \quad \rightarrow \quad \frac{\beta_3}{2\beta_4} = \text{gdp}_{\text{max}} \quad (3)$$

Figure 1 suggests an inverted U-shaped relationship between GDP and national security threat. Therefore, we include the square of GDP into the model and the results reported in

the last column of Table 2. Our results show that there is a non-linear (inverted U-shaped) relationship between national security threats and GDP. The threshold for is 60.026 EUR. Initially, GDP increases national security threats. After the threshold level, it decreases.

**Figure 1.** Scatter Plot



## Conclusion

This study investigates the effect of immigration on national security threats to understand the background of the political and media discourse of the securitisation of immigration. To this end, using panel data over the period 2006-2018 and employing the FE Model, we found a weak positive effect of immigration on the national security threat in the EU countries. It is also found that military expenditure negatively affects national security threats, and GDP has an inverted U-shaped relationship with the national security threat.

Our study is a preliminary analysis for understanding the securitisation argument of the EU against immigration in terms of national security. Given our key results, one can conclude that military expenditures are way more efficient in eliminating or preventing national security threats than securitising immigration. Accordingly, countries having larger immigrant stocks could increase their military spending to eliminate national security threats. Therefore, linking national security threats to immigrants and blaming immigration as the only source for increasing threats to national security is baseless. Since there is no strong evidence that can support a solid argument for the securitisation of migration to the extent that immigration dominantly affects national security threats, securitisation arguments in the EU should be reconsidered. Furthermore, due to the negative effect of military expenditures on national security threats, rather than securitising immigration through criminalising immigrants, the EU should focus on military spending to reduce national security threats.



Additionally, due to the data limitations, the results must be interpreted carefully, considering that the analysis does not directly show the migration-related terrorism incidents. The slightly increasing national security threats due to immigration could also be anti-immigrant attacks. Therefore, a cautious approach to the results is needed.

This study has its limitations regarding period, sample, and data. Firstly, our study is limited to the period of 2006–2018 and it covers only 24 EU countries. Due to the lack of data, we excluded Belgium, Bulgaria, Malta, and Romania from the analysis. Secondly, there might be other alternative proxies that measure national security threats such as crime. Given the limitations and results of this study, future research may investigate the crime and immigration relationships using different estimation techniques.

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