LEGITIMATION STRATEGIES IN EU PARLIAMENTARY DISCOURSE ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Raluca LEVONIAN

Department of Romanian Philology, Classical and Balkan Languages, „Ovidius" University of Constanța, Constanța, Romania

Abstract: *Recent conflicts such as the war in Ukraine and the war between Israel and Hamas have focused attention on the role of the European Union as a global actor in international politics. While critics of the EU's role point to its lack of military capabilities, other scholars argue for an expanded understanding of the EU's role in international security, taking into account the non-military means at its disposal. This paper analyzes how discursive strategies of legitimation are employed by members of the EU Parliament during debates on issues related to international security. The analysis focuses on the debate held in the European Parliament in April 2024 regarding the adoption of measures following Iran's attack on Israel. Drawing on the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (e.g. Van Leeuwen, 2008; Fairclough, 2003), the study examines the speakers' use of discursive evaluation and legitimation in conjunction with modal markers in order to maintain their stance.*

Keywords: *discourse studies; legitimation strategies; European Union; international security*

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of the European Union as a global actor has been examined in recent research on EU integration and development, revealing a diversity of opinions. Critics point out the lack of coordination not only between the member states, but also between the multiple layers of decision and the effect of overlapping institutional roles (e.g. Kirchner, 2006). Besides problems of institutional coherence, the EU also suffers due to "the absence of satisfactory mechanisms for dealing with disputes" not only between the European Council and the Commission, but also within the Commission (Bretherton & Vogel, 2013:383). Another weakness of the EU has been identified in the lack of military capacity, leading to the conclusion that it will become a truly credible international actor when and if it acquires political and military means as well besides the economic and diplomatic ones that she already possesses (Larsen, 2002:285). In other words, the EU has been considered to be a "civilian power", instead of a military one (Larsen, 2002:289).

More nuanced perspectives argue that the EU should not be treated as a single state, but as a specific international actor, a transnational entity or an international organization (e.g. Tonra, 2006). In order to better understand and account for the uniqueness of the EU, different concepts about security need to be applied. According to Kirchner (2006), EU security should not be viewed in terms of a community, but instead as governance. From this perspective, threats are understood as both military and non-military and response to threats can also be given in form of "conflict prevention measures and post-conflict peace-building efforts" (Kirchner, 2006:952). Moreover, the application of the concept of security governance needs to take into account the ideational dimension of the relations between international actors, paying attention to EU's attempts to build local and regional trust (Zwolski, 2014:947). The concept of security itself should not focus on militaristic elements exclusively, but instead encompass the social, economic, political and cultural dimensions as well, and "place humans rather than states at the conceptual core" (Lahiry, 2020:186). A growing interest in humanitarian and moral values is also visible in the discourses on EU legitimation, which have shifted from a functionalist understanding of Europe's role to the narrative of the European identity and later to the narrative of a democratic Europe (Biegoń, 2013).

Taking into account previous research on legitimation strategies and international security discourse, this paper investigates how current security issues are discussed in EU institutions,

focusing on a debate held in the European Parliament regarding the Israel – Hamas war and Iran's attack on Israel on 13 April 2024. The aim is to analyze which discursive strategies are employed by the politicians in order to legitimate the measures proposed and whether and how the existence of a common foreign policy is asserted or challenged at the discursive level.

2. DISCURSIVE LEGITIMATION AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Starting from the observation that „Politics and language are closely intertwined" (Van Der Valk, 2003:314), it is not surprising that research in international politics has shown a growing interest in the field of discourse analysis, examining specific discursive features in order to gain a better insight into the processes of meaning making in politics. Some studies analyze speech acts, such as blaming (e.g. Verbeek, 2024) or shaming (e.g. Every, 2013), while others focus on the use of deixis (e.g. Suleiman *et al.*, 2002) or narrative structures (e.g. Homolar, 2022) in political discourse. The area of discursive legitimation also proves to be a useful tool for the analysis of the (inter)national political sphere.

The importance of the research on legitimation for the field of discourse analysis has been brought into attention by Van Leeuwen's influential work *Discourse and Practice* (2008), within the field of critical discourse studies. According to this perspective, texts are representations of social practices on which they draw on and which they transform (Van Leeuwen, 2008:5). Moreover, texts do not only represent what already exists, but they also evaluate, justify it or set goals for future actions (Van Leeuwen, 2008:6). The discourse about social practices also includes different ways of legitimating them. Van Leeuwen (2008:105-106) identifies four categories of legitimation: authorization, based on the authority of traditions, laws, or institutional roles, moral evaluation, based on value systems, rationalization, through appeals to reason, and mythopoesis, through narratives that enforce the legitimate ways of acting. The categories advanced by van Leeuwen are expanded by Reyes (2011), who identifies five major legitimization strategies in political discourse. The first category is legitimization through emotions, which includes discursive constructions of in- and out-groups. The next categories are: the construction of a hypothetical future, the appeal to rationality, the inclusion of expert voices, and the use of altruistic reasons for action (Reyes, 2011:785-787). Further studies attempt to apply the categories of legitimation strategies, by studying different discursive genres. For example, Van Der Valk (2003) analyzes legitimation together with argumentation and the use of rhetorical figures in parliamentary discourse. Other studies investigate the use of legitimization from a temporal perspective, focusing on the changes produced in the legitimization of the European Communities over an extended period of time (Biegoń, 2013) or on the strategies employed in order to legitimate ongoing policy processes (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2023).

Researching legitimation proves to be fruitful for the study of international relations as this perspective allows the researcher to go beyond mere rhetorical analysis and delve deeper into the construction of power relations in discourse. A recent turn in security studies acknowledges the importance of discourse for the construction of threat. According to this point of view, treats do not exist by themselves, but are constituted through language (e.g. Homolar, 2022; Hama, 2017). More precisely, the selection of words influences what people think and feel about a security issue (Homolar, 2022:328). In a previous work, the concept of securitization is explained as what "specific groups or particular state elites" define as a security problem (Kirchner, 2006:949). Just as threats are discursively constituted, the concept of security and the solutions to security threats need to be constructed and legitimated in discourse in order to be embraced by the audience. However, legitimacy moves beyond the area of discourse and becomes a pervasive tool in the political field, which leads to its definition as "a key resource toward facilitating public compliance, obtaining and sustaining power, achieving social acceptance, increasing trust, and gaining popularity" (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2023:816). A synthesis of the functions of legitimation is provided by Biegoń (2013:196), who considers that legitimation strategies aim to generate support for a particular cause. Such strategies are employed in EU discourse, in connection with the set of European moral values of freedom, democracy and attention to human rights (Kirchner, 2006:956), reinforcing the image of Europe as a cultural and value-based community (Biegoń, 2013:204). The attempt to generate support for a cause or to persuade the audience in regard to a certain stance is particularly important in the case of debates involving representatives of different parties or states, as it happens in the European Parliament. The following analysis examines the ways in which speakers employ legitimation strategies in order to

background or highlight different aspects of real situations and thus obtain support for their cause.

3. METHODOLOGY AND CORPUS

The methodological framework draws on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), especially on Van Leeuwen's (2008) categories of legitimation strategies presented above. The identification of legitimation in discourse is correlated with Fairclough's work (2003) regarding textual analysis. Fairclough (2003) links categories of modality to exchange types and distinguishes between what he calls 'knowledge exchanges', associated with epistemic modality, and 'activity exchanges', associated with deontic modality. Knowledge exchanges involve statements and questions. Statements can be made in form of assertions, modalized statements, and denials, while questions can be either modalized or non-modalized (Fairclough, 2003:167). Activity exchanges include demands and offers. Demands can take the form of prescriptions, modalized statements, or proscription, while offers can be represented through acts of undertaking an act, refusal to act, or modalized statements that express a low commitment to act (Fairclough, 2003:168). Modality can be used in order to claim and assert the speaker's power as an individual or as the representative of a group. In this manner, power in discourse is ultimately linked to discursive self-identification (Fairclough, 2003:172-173).

The corpus is formed by the speeches delivered in the European Parliament in the meeting held on 24 April 2024, when the topic discussed regarded the recent missile attack carried by Iran on Israel and the stance to be taken by the EU. The European Parliament is an important forum for the study of international politics, "a possible transnational space", where the members represent both national interest and supranational perspectives (Krotký, 2023:49). The debate was held with the participation of Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice-President of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP). According to the information available on the official website (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/), the HR/VP has the responsibility of promoting institutional coherence, building consensus between EU members, coordinating EU's external action, representing the EU's position in international negotiations and so forth. However, this complex role does not avoid challenges and "intermittent turf wars between the HR/VP, the Commission President and the President of the Council have remained a feature of

the new policy environment" (Bretherton, Vogel, 2013:384). While the topic debated in the corpus did not directly involve the EU member states, the speeches held by the Members of the Parliament showed that international security had become increasingly a matter of concern for the EU and that some MEPs did not agree with the VP's stance on the issues discussed.

The speeches included in the corpus totalized 22 970 words and were retrieved from the website of the European Parliament (https://www.europarl. europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2024-04-24-ITM-003_EN.html). All the texts were freely available at the time of the research. The corpus is multilingual and comprises speeches held in English, French, German, Spanish, and Italian. The speeches available in other languages than English have been first translated into English by the author, then the translation was verified with Google Translate (Krotký, 2023). For reasons of space, the excerpts presented below will be given in English and the original text will be quoted only in order to highlight particular linguistic features for analysis.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Two main options emerged during the debate. The HR/VP advocated a diplomatic approach, arguing for dialogue with all parties to the conflict, including the Iranian leadership. On the other hand, several politicians opted for a more categorical stance, arguing for the need to impose sanctions on Iran. The debate on the measures to be taken in response to Iran's behavior falls into the category of "peace-enforcement efforts" undertaken by the EU as an international actor with the aim of reducing a conflict or preventing its escalation (Kirchner, 2006:952).

4.1 Legitimation of the diplomatic approach. The diplomatic approach was advocated by the Vice-President of the Commission, Josep Borrell Fontelles, whose intervention opened the meeting. In his speech, Mr. Borrell presented the actions taken by the Commission with regard to the Middle East crisis, presented the solution considered to be the best, and presented the arguments in favor of this solution.

The Vice-President began his speech by announcing the topic ("…we are here to discuss the Iranians' attack on Israel and the need for de-escalation, and our response to these events."). This statement already indicates that the speaker wants to reach a consensus with the audience by using the first-person plural pronoun "we" and the possessive

adjective "our". The noun "need" indicates a deontic modality, implying that the situation requires that a certain course of action be pursued.

The speaker then describes the state of affairs, presenting facts already known to the public. Interestingly, Borrell uses repetition, insisting on the extraordinary nature of Iran's attack on Israel. He says the same thing three times, using different terms: "On 13 April, Iran's attack against Israel was unprecedented. It never happened before. It is the first time that Iran directly attacked Israel from its territory (…)". The statements are made in the form of positive statements - assertions, with a high commitment to truth on behalf of the speaker, and at the same time the speaker avoids the use of moral judgments or evaluations of Iran's actions. The only terms that may carry an embedded negative value are the noun "attack" and the verb "to attack". Immediately after this presentation, Josep Borrell mentions another act that happened earlier, regarding Israel's actions: "All this without forgetting the Israeli attack that preceded it, and we also condemned that when it happened". By adding this statement, the speaker constructs his identity as an objective politician who avoids explicit alignment with one of the parties to the conflict.

The next section of the speech contains more evaluative terms than the previous part, but these terms ("tense", "dangerous", "escalation") regard the events instead of the actors involved. The evaluation is intertwined with intensification:

> This aerial attack represents a major escalation of an already very tense situation in the region, where we have witnessed dangerous games of attacks and retaliations, retaliations and attacks.

The intensifiers are the adjective "major" with a superlative meaning and the superlative "very tense", which conveys the idea of danger. Furthermore, the description of the situation is summarized by a repetition, more precisely an antimetabole, with the order of the terms reversed: "games of attacks and retaliations, retaliations and attacks". In this way, the speaker intensifies his presentation and implies that the events have entered a spiral of violence that is difficult to end. The use of the nouns "attacks" and "retaliations" instead of the corresponding verbs removes the agents from this statement. Thus, the speaker avoids any explicit accusation or criticism of the states involved in the conflict.

Borrell tries to keep his general tone moderate and objective, and an intensely negative assessment of the general situation is introduced through reported speech, first in English, then in Spanish:

> And I want to use the same words that United Nations Secretary-General Guterres used at the Security Council. He said, the region 'is at the edge of an abyss'. Estamos al borde de un abismo, dijo el Secretario General. No son palabras huecas.

The importance of the evaluation is underlined through the repetition in Spanish language, followed by the speaker's own evaluation of the quote ("No son palabras huecas." [These are not empty words]). The use of reported speech indicates an attempt to lower the speaker's commitment to the utterance (Fairclough, 2003:171). The speaker's moderation is also evident later in the use of the Spanish verb "parecer" when describing the current situation: "Ahora, últimamente, parece que nos hemos movido un poco desde el borde del abismo (…)" [Now, lately, it seems we have moved a little back from the edge of the abyss (…)]. The verb functions as a marker of modalization, indicating a low degree of certainty. A similar modalization appears later in Borrell's discourse, through the use of the English verb "might", also indicating a low level of certainty: "The spiral of attacks on counterattacks might have slowed down (…) but the situation remains unstable and dangerous".

In addition to describing the situation in the Middle East, Josep Borrell presents the actions taken so far by the European Union and its positioning as a collective political actor on the international stage. The actions are presented in a series of statements beginning with the pronoun "we", while the last one also includes the indefinite pronoun "all", emphasizing the common stance. Here, Borrell signals that he is speaking on behalf of the entire Union, building a general consensus between the EU as an institution and its member states:

> We the European Union, together with Member states, we have taken a strong stance asking all actors in the region to move away from this abyss (…). We discussed it at the foreign ministers level on Monday. We all clearly condemn the Iranian attack and confirm our commitment to the security of Israel.

Here we can see that all the actions attributed to the community of European states refer to the level of discourse. The verbs used refer to speech acts ("to ask", "to discuss", "to condemn", "to confirm") and not to concrete actions taken. Next, the actions supported by the speaker are presented, again in a series of statements in which agency is deleted:

> There is a political consensus to suspend the existing sanctions against Iran. The foreign affairs ministers in June were meeting together with the defence ministers. It took a political agreement that will be implemented in the next days.

Here, the speaker does not explicitly mention who agreed to suspend the sanctions. The agency is only implied because the next utterance mentions two categories of agents involved: "foreign ministers" and "defense ministers". Through the appeal to background knowledge, the audience can infer that Borrell is referring to the ministers of the EU member states. However, the action directly attributed to these persons is represented by the verb "to meet" ("were meeting together"). The first and last utterances in this excerpt contain no direct reference to the agents involved. In the first utterance the agency is obscured by the noun "consensus" in the subject position, while in the last utterance it is obscured by the use of a verb in the passive voice ("will be implemented") without directly stating who will implement the agreed upon measure. All the utterances in this excerpt are made in the form of assertions and are not modalized, suggesting that the speaker is committed to their truth value.

Josep Borrell uses modalization later in his speech when he tries to present arguments to support his position. He believes that the sanctions adopted against Iran have been ineffective, and this idea is introduced in modalized statements that begin with "I think":

> However, I think that we have to understand that sanctions alone cannot deter Iran. This should be evident after years and years of international sanctions. Iran is, together with North Korea, the most sanctioned country in the world. (…) I think this is a moment for diplomacy, to deploy maximum diplomatic efforts, to act to calm down the situation (…).

He uses intensifiers such as the superlative "the most sanctioned" and the repetition "years and years" to emphasize the futility of the sanctions policy. Borrell's viewpoint is an appeal to diplomacy. In an attempt to soften this idea, the speaker presents it as a subjective statement by using the first person singular pronoun "I".

The use of subjective modalization implies that the speaker does not dare to impose his opinion on the audience. The legitimation strategy in use in this excerpt is that of instrumental rationalization (Van Leeuwen, 2008:113), with the speaker focusing on the best means to achieve a desired outcome.

In the last part of his intervention, the VP employs a different legitimation strategy, through the appeal to moral values (Van Leeuwen, 2008:110-111). The terms used at the end of the speech are loaded with positive values when talking about the purposes of the EU:

> So we have to be able to build peace and stability in the region (…), also taking into account the high human cost of the conflicts which are raging there. The European voice has to be the voice of reason – trying to decrease the many humanitarian sufferings and look for a stable peace (…).

These statements function as a conclusion to the entire speech and are modalized by the use of the verb "must", indicating that the external circumstances lead to only one possible solution, that of making peace. In this excerpt, the terms "peace" and "stability" are contrasted with "conflict". The negative effects of the conflicts are presented through references to the victims: "high human cost", "much humanitarian suffering". Both references are in the form of noun phrases with a quantitative determiner ("high", "many"). Furthermore, the conflicts are presented as "raging", a verb that also reinforces the idea of violence. The choice of lexical items in this fragment emphasizes the idea of a humanitarian tragedy and urges the audience to accept the proposed solution. It is important to note that the speaker frames his position in terms of moral values and does not comment on other economic or political reasons. Throughout his opening speech, the VP tries to construct his identity as an objective diplomat who really cares about European values. He prefers to background the authority of his official position and instead use appeals to reason and then to moral values.

4.2 Legitimation of the sanctions approach. The debate revealed a diversity of opinion in the European Parliament, with many MEPs rejecting the solution proposed by the Vice-President and calling instead for a more forceful response from the European Union. The main demands formulated by these MEPs concerned the adoption of sanctions against Iran and the designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the armed force defending the Iranian regime, as a terrorist organization.

The strategy often employed in order to legitimate this stance was moral evaluation (Van

Leeuwen, 2008:109-110) which was sometimes intertwined with the appeal to emotions (Reyes, 2011:785-786) through the marked opposition between an in-group and an out-group. Sometimes the opposition was even expressed in military terms, suggesting that the differences are irreconcilable. For example, R. Juknevičienė (PPE Group) stated that:

> (…) those who fail to defeat the terrorist Russia, Iran, North Korea and others, even though they had every chance. I still believe that we, the European Union, together with our allies, we can – that our leaders can go down in history as the ones who managed to overcome bloody regimes.

Here, the inclusive pronoun "we" constructs a community of opinions and policies and clearly identifies the in-group formed by the EU and its allies. The out-group is formed not only by Iran, but also by the states that do not respect democracy and humanitarian principles, represented here by a generic categorization ("bloody regimes") loaded with negative values. The conflict frame is reinforced by the use of the verbs "to defeat" and "to overcome", which indicate that a negotiation-based approach is rejected and that the two groups are engaged in a struggle.

The war frame was also used by other politicians who presented Iran as a direct threat not only to the Middle East but also to the whole of Europe. H. Neumann (Verts/ALE Group) used the possessive adjective "our" when talking about Iran's attack, thus including the in-group in the conflict:

> The drones and missiles attacking Israel and our ships in the Red Sea are manufactured in Iran, and we should have sanctioned all those involved in that months ago.

The first part of the utterance is an assertion, with a high degree of certainty, which serves to legitimate the second part, which advocates the introduction of further sanctions.

The term "our" is repeated in the speech of another MEP, L. Mandl (PPE), who emphasizes the idea of immediate danger: "The Iranian regime is also threatening us via financing terrorism and Islamism on our continent, in our cities, in our rural areas". In this excerpt, the use of a verb in the present tense and the enumeration of nouns denoting places suggest that the threat is occurring at the moment of speech and is approaching the speaker. This example illustrates the theory of spatial, temporal, and axiological proximization (Cap, 2013) that is visible in counterterrorism discourse.

The negative actions attributed to the out-group (Reyes, 2011: 785) are often presented through intensification in order to trigger the audience's emotions. Several speakers pointed to the blatant violation of democratic principles in Iran. M. Schirdewan (Fraktion The Left) focused on the actions of the regime, through the use of a series of noun phrases: "Arbitrary arrests, the execution of prisoners, violence against protesting women happen everyday", where the negative meaning of the nouns is placed in contrast with the final term "everyday" (Germ. "Alltag" in the original version), which reinforces the idea of a constant threat. In the following example, the victims of the conflicts in the Middle East are presented through an enumeration in which the speaker selects the most vulnerable categories ("babies", "hostages") in addition to the term "families", which contributes to the emotional involvement of the audience: "babies being born orphans after airstrikes; families living in horror whilst seeking refuge from bombs night after night; tormented hostages unable to hear the voices of their loved ones; and so much more" (H. Neumann, Verts/ALE Group). These attitudes fall into the category of moral evaluation (Van Leeuwen, 2008) or appeals to emotion and altruism (Reyes, 2011) when the speaker shows concern not only for the in-group to which they belong, but also for a third party.

In the corpus, the third party was represented by the Iranian people (as opposed to their leaders), the victims of Hamas, and the victims of Israel's attacks in the Gaza Strip. The speeches show a key feature of the EU's position as a global actor, that is, showing concern not only for territorial defense, but also for security threats outside the EU's territory (Kirchner, 2006:949). The analyzed parliamentary interventions also reveal a comprehensive understanding of security, which is not reduced to the exclusively militaristic perspective (Lahiry, 2020: 185).

Some speakers used the opposition 'us' versus 'them' in order to criticize Josep Borrell's actions as a VP. The criticism took the explicit form of blaming in C. Weimers's intervention, on behalf of the ECR Group: "(…) Mr Borrell, you're a liar. (…) You shamelessly lied to protect the IRGC. We won't miss you, Mr Borrell, but I'm sure the mullahs will". Weimers began his speech with an "exordium ex abrupto" in the form of a negative evaluation of the VP ("liar"). The reasons for this evaluation were then given, while the end of the speech repeated this evaluation with the verb "to lie". The accusation was intensified by the use of the adverb "shamelessly", construing the target of the

criticism as immoral. The last utterance of the speech constructs the two groups involved in the conflict, 'us' against 'them'. The reference of the first-person plural pronoun here is unclear, as it could refer to the MEPs in the audience, but it could also be understood as a general reference to the 'civilized' world. In contrast, the out-group is represented here by the term "mullahs", meaning Islamic religious leaders. Since the figure of the mullah exists in Shiite Islam and not in the Sunni branch of Islam, the speaker ironically associates Vice President Borrell with Iranian rulers.

The opposition 'us' versus 'them' was also employed by the politician G. Verhofstadt (Renew). The pronoun "we" was repeated two times in the beginning of his intervention and placed in opposition with the pronoun "you", addressed to VP Borrell:

> I think this is my fourth debate, Mr Borrell, about Iran with you and every time the conclusion is the same: we don't like your strategy. We want you to change your strategy.

The verb "to like" indicates here an approach based on emotions. However, the legitimation based on emotions is soon replaced with legitimation through rationality, as the speaker states that "Your strategy of diplomacy and appeasement leads to nothing at all; it does nothing at all". The speaker's evaluation of the diplomatic approach as ineffective is reinforced by the repeated negative pronoun "nothing", followed by the phrase "at all", which adds emphasis. Furthermore, the possessive adjective "your" delegitimizes the diplomatic strategy, indicating that it is not supported by the MEPs. The underlying judgment here is that an ineffective approach needs to be changed. The call for a change in strategy is repeated later by the speaker when he replaces the pronoun "we" with the noun phrase "this Parliament": "So this Parliament asks you to change the strategy, based on real sanctions (…)". In this manner, G. Verhofstadt introduces legitimation through authority (Van Leeuwen, 2008) or through expert positions (Reyes, 2011: 786-787), highlighting the official role of the European Parliament. The mention of the European institution as a subject in need of a change is meant to construct discursive power for the speaker who makes the demand. The attempt to maintain the discursive power is also manifested at the end of the intervention, when Verhofstadt uses a proscription, through a negative imperative clause: "And finally, don't continue with diplomacy towards the regime". The demands formulated by this MEP in his speech are situated in the area of deontic modality, showing

the speaker's commitment to obligation (Fairclough, 2003:168).

The opposition between the two sides in conflict also appears intertwined with legitimation through a hypothetical future. The combination of the two strategies was visible in the interventions mentioning a possible threat to the EU in the future: "Nuclear weapons in the hands of these mullahs will sooner or later be directed not only against Israel, but against all of us", said S. Limmer, speaking as an independent MEP. Here, the phrase "sooner or later" places the threat at an unspecified moment in the future, but the statement shows the speaker's high certainty that such an attack is going to happen.

In contrast to Borrell's speech, the MEPs' interventions revealed an attempt to gain power in the discourse through explicit criticism of the VP, moral evaluations marked by intensifiers, and the use of demands addressed to the VP in the form of prescriptions and prohibitions, signaling that the Parliament had not reached a consensus on the response to the security issue.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This analysis focused on a single debate in the European Parliament on April 24, 2024, after Iran attacked Israel on April 13, 2024. The debate concerned the EU's behavior as a global actor and the possible response to the security issue. The analysis of the transcribed interventions revealed two different points of view. A diplomatic approach was proposed by the then VP/HR, Josep Borrell Fontelles, who argued that only diplomacy could lead to a de-escalation of the conflict.

In order to legitimize his proposal, the VP used the legitimation strategy of rationalization, maintained a moderate and objective tone, and avoided explicit alignment with one of the parties to the conflict, although he reaffirmed the EU's support for Israel. Borrell also used the moral evaluation strategy towards the end of his speech, which was intertwined with the instrumental rationalization strategy; he focused on the desired outcome of the EU intervention.

He insisted that Europe's voice must be "a voice of reason" and that the only reasonable solution to the conflict was to stop the armed violence. In addition to the legitimation strategies employed, the VP used the first-person singular pronoun "I" sparingly and avoided imposing his own point of view as a source of authority. Through his opening speech, the VP constructed his identity as an objective and reasonable politician and diplomat who upholds the interests and values of the EU and

tries to reach a general agreement on a common foreign policy.

A different approach was taken by several MEPs who advocated the adoption of sanctions against Iran. The common legitimation strategy in the speeches was moral evaluation and the construction of two sides, an in-group formed by the EU and the states adhering to the same values, and an out-group formed by the dictatorial regimes. Through moral evaluation and proximization, the threat posed by such regimes and terrorist organizations was presented as concrete and imminent, even to the people of Europe. Furthermore, the in-group was aligned with a third-party represented by the civilian population in the conflict areas and in the states run by dictatorships.

This view confirms previous research that the EU is perceived as a community based on values such as democracy, justice and human rights (Biegoń, 2013: 204). Moreover, the diplomatic approach advocated by the VP was rejected by some MEPs, who argued that a policy of appeasement would only weaken the EU's global role. In their speeches, they criticized Borrell for his apparent refusal to sanction Iran and explicitly associated him with the out-group, suggesting that he did not adhere to European values. Thus, the debate analyzed challenged rather than affirmed the existence of a common European foreign policy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Biegoń, D. (2013). Specifying the Arena of Possibilities: Post-Structuralist Narrative Analysis and the European Commission's Legitimation Strategies. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*. 51(2). 194-211.
2. Bretherton, C. & J. Vogler (2013). A global actor past its peak? *International Relations*. 27(3). 375-390.
3. Brusenbauch Meislová, M. (2023). In Quest for Discursive Legitimation of Ongoing Policy Processes: Constructing Brexit as a Success Story. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*. 61(3). 815-833.
4. Cap, P. (2013). *Proximization. The pragmatics of symbolic distance crossing*. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
5. Every, D. (2013). 'Shame on you': The language, practice and consequences of shame and shaming in asylum seeker advocacy. *Discourse & Society*, 24(6): 667-686.
6. Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse. Textual analysis for social research*. London, New York: Routledge.
7. Hama, H.H. (2017). State Security, Societal Security, and Human Security. *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*. 21(1): 1-19.
8. Homolar, A. (2022). A call to arms: Hero-villain narratives in US security discourse. *Security Dialogue*. 53(4). 324-341.
9. Kirchner, E.J. (2006). The Challenge of European Union Security Governance. *JCMS: Journal of Common Markert Studies*. 44(5). 947-968.
10. Krotký, J. (2023). "Fortress Europe is an insult to the values of the EU": The legitimation of migrant acceptance in the human security speech acts of Members of the European Parliament. *European Policy Analysis*, 9(1). 48-68.
11. Lahiry, S. (2020). The Changing Narrative of Security Discourse: From State Security to Human Security in South Asia? *World Affairs*. 183(2). 183-205.
12. Larsen, H. (2002). The EU: A Global Military Actor? *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association*. 37(3). 283-302.
13. Reyes, A. (2011). Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: From words to actions. *Discourse & Society*. 22(6). 781-807.
14. Suleiman, C., D.C.O'Connell, S. Kowal. (2002). „If you and I, if we, in this later day, lose that sacred fire...": Perspective in Political Interviews. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, vol.31, no.3: 269-287.
15. Tonra, B. (2006). Conceptualizing the European Union's global role. In M. Cini, A.K. Bourne, *Palgrave Advances in European Union Studies*. Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 117-130
16. Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and Practice. New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
17. Van Der Valk, I. (2003). Right-Wing Parliamentary Discourse on Immigration in France. *Discourse & Society*, 14(3): 309-348.
18. Verbeek, N. (2024). 'Wolf Warriors' in the UN Security Council? Investigating power shifts through blaming. *Global Policy*. 15(2). 38-50.
19. Zwolski, K. (2012). The EU as an international security actor after Lisbon: Finally a green light for a holistic approach? *Cooperation and Conflict*. 47(1). 68-87.