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**Poland's Securitization of Russian Threat: A Case Study from Annexation of
Crimea to the Full-scale invasion of Ukraine**

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Abstract

The study focuses on how the securitization narratives of Polish leadership developed and intensified in response to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, including the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion in 2022. The study employs the Copenhagen School's Securitization theory as its main theoretical framework, combined with Vouri's developed methodology of Five Strands" Framework for analyzing securitization speech acts, to examine the discourse of the Polish Prime Minister and President during the periods of 2014-2015 and 2022-2023. The study shows that the Polish leadership's securitization became more intensified from 2014-2015 to 2022-2023. During the period of annexation of Crimea, Polish leadership discourse securitized Russia as a threat to Ukraine's sovereignty, Poland's regional eastern flank, and ultimately the Euro-Atlantic region, and for these threats, Polish leadership focused on extraordinary measures such as imposing sanctions against Russia and the militarization of NATO and the presence of the NATO forces on the eastern flank. However, after the full-scale invasion, Polish discourse became more intensified and presents that Russia is the greatest threat to the whole civilization and the peace of Europe and the world. Therefore, Europe and the international community should take extreme, extraordinary measures to completely defeat Russia in this war. Among the extraordinary measures, supporting Ukraine to acquire arms, and NATO should call for additional measures such as tough and strong economic sanctions, a permanent presence on the eastern flank, and the NATO border should be extended to the southern part as well.

Keywords: Securitization of Copenhagen School, Poland, Russian Annexation of Crimea 2014, Full-scale Invasion 2022, Vouri's Five Strands Framework

Streszczenie

Niniejsze badanie koncentruje się na sposobach, w jakie narracje sekurytyzacyjne polskiego przywództwa rozwijały się i ulegały intensyfikacji w odpowiedzi na rosyjską agresję wobec Ukrainy, w tym aneksję Krymu w 2014 roku oraz pełnoskalową inwazję w 2022 roku. Jako główne ramy teoretyczne zastosowano teorię sekurytyzacji Szkoły Kopenhaskiej, uzupełnioną o rozwiniętą przez Vuoriego metodologię „Pięciu Wątków” (Five Strands Framework) służącą do analizy aktów mowy sekurytyzacyjnej. Analiza obejmuje dyskurs Prezesa Rady Ministrów oraz Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w okresach 2014–2015 oraz 2022–2023. Wyniki badania wskazują, że proces sekurytyzacji w dyskursie polskiego przywództwa uległ wyraźnej intensyfikacji między latami 2014–2015 a 2022–2023. W okresie aneksji Krymu rosyjskie działania były przedstawiane jako zagrożenie dla suwerenności Ukrainy, wschodniej flanki Polski oraz szerzej – dla regionu euroatlantyckiego. W odpowiedzi na te zagrożenia polskie przywództwo akcentowało konieczność zastosowania nadzwyczajnych środków, takich jak nałożenie sankcji na Rosję, militaryzacja NATO oraz wzmocnienie obecności wojsk Sojuszu na wschodniej flance. Po pełnoskalowej inwazji dyskurs ten uległ dalszej intensyfikacji, a Rosja została przedstawiona jako największe zagrożenie dla całej cywilizacji oraz dla pokoju w Europie i na świecie. W konsekwencji podkreślano potrzebę podjęcia przez Europę oraz społeczność międzynarodową skrajnych i nadzwyczajnych działań w celu całkowitego pokonania Rosji w tej wojnie. Do takich działań zaliczano m.in. wsparcie Ukrainy w pozyskiwaniu uzbrojenia, a także postulowanie przez NATO dodatkowych środków, takich jak surowe i zdecydowane sankcje gospodarcze, stała obecność wojskowa na wschodniej flance oraz rozszerzenie granic NATO również na kierunku południowym.

Kluczowe pojęcia: sekurytyzacja Szkoły Kopenhaskiej, Polska, rosyjska aneksja Krymu 2014, pełnoskalowa inwazja 2022, model Pięciu Wątków Vuorieg

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INTRODUCTION

This European security architecture, which had been relatively stable since the fall of the Cold War, was brutally torn apart in August 2008 in a short-lived war instigated by Moscow and its allies in South Ossetia, and that resulted in a Russian invasion that led to the defeat of Georgian forces (Kopeček et al., 2025, p. 147). This event marked the first instance of major power aggression in Europe since World War II. In its wake, Poland and the Baltic states urgently warned the Euro-Atlantic community about the resurgence of Russian revisionism (Kramer, 2013). Although their alarm elicited initial strong statements of support from allies, the broader Western strategy soon reverted to engagement and normalization with Russia. As exemplified by EU leaders' calls for a ceasefire that favored Russian interests and the new Obama administration in the US pushing for a "reset" in relations with the Kremlin (Dickinson, 2021).

Through the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the European security architecture was further fractured, and in February 2022, Putin's full-scale invasion fundamentally shattered the security architecture of Europe. While Russia's imperialist style of expansionism increased the perception of threat to all of Europe, it constituted a particularly immediate and existential threat to all those European countries that share a border with Russia and Ukraine (Popescu, 2025). Therefore, Russian aggression towards its neighbors posed a security threat. In this regard, Poland, which shares borders with Russia and Ukraine, faces a significant security threat. According to Poland, Russia serves as an imperialist power, and the invasion of Ukraine raises questions about the potential expansion of the country beyond Ukraine (Komarnytskyy, 2024).

Due to these growing threats, Poland started a far-reaching process of military modernization and defense fortification. During the period of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Poland's military

spending was just below 2% of its GDP (approximately \$10 billion), and it reached 4% in 2024 (approximately \$31 billion) (Macrotrends, 2024).

However, even with this unprecedented national effort, the investments in Poland's defense structures are asymmetrical in their essence; Russia has become more invested in military spending than Poland did, as Moscow's military expenditures amounted to between \$ 64.40 billion and \$ 140 billion in 2022 and 2024, respectively (Luzin, 2025). As a result, the security of Poland has been clung to the Euro-Atlantic community, which comprises the political and military infrastructure of NATO and the European Union. National rearmament, indispensable as it is, is not sufficient. This dependence refers to a concomitant political approach towards the maintenance of strong and enduring commitment of allies; Poland needs to be persuasive on the consistency of the perception of threats of the alliance with its perception of threats.

Therefore, a research puzzle within the framework of the Polish security studies leads to a key research question: How did the Polish government frame its securitization narrative, the positioning of Russian aggression as an existential threat to the Euro-Atlantic community, and how it developed between the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022?

To understand the evolution of securitization and how it escalated after Russia's full-scale invasion, it is important to explore the process of securitization - the framing of an issue as an existential threat demanding urgent and extraordinary measures. While there is no doubt that the annexation of Crimea in 2014 caused a greater awareness of the Russian threat in Poland, it did not lead to a securitization of the same level as the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Although the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is quite different in scale and intensity from the annexation of Crimea in 2014, both events did provoke important changes in perceptions of security in the region. The annexation

of Crimea in 2014 was a significant violation of international norms and a clear act of territorial aggression, which created a significant political and strategic shock in Europe.

This study does not equate the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion in 2022, but rather looks into their changes over time to show the development of the securitization discourse in Poland - from a possible initial reaction in 2014 to a comprehensive and urgent representation of Russia as an existential threat in 2022. To be able to analyze the securitization process between 2014 to 2022, the research aims to provide a logical explanation of the dominant securitizing discourses of the Polish leadership from 2014 to 2015 and 2022 to 2023, and how these discourses became stronger and transformed in response to the changing geopolitical environment, which helps understand how Poland's perception of and response to the Russian threat changed over time. Ultimately, this way of thinking reinforces the importance of discursive creation, political context, and immediacy of perceived threats in the determination of agendas outside national security.

To achieve this, the study poses the following research questions:

1. What are the dominant securitizing discourses of the Polish Leadership toward the Euro-Atlantic community that evolved between the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine?
2. How did the Polish state's securitization of Russian aggression evolve and intensify between 2014 and 2022, specifically in its discourse targeted at the Euro-Atlantic community?

While firmly recognizing the objective reality of threats such as the imperialist¹ aggression by Russia, this thesis draws on securitization theory to examine the discourse and political processes by which such a threat is converted into a socially dominant and existential security issue. The theory, as developed by Wæver (1993) and Buzan et al. (1998), is focused on why, how, and under what conditions particular issues become securitized and what strategies securitizing actors use. By drawing on Securitization Theory of Copenhagen School with Vouri's (2011) "Five Strands Framework" as its main analytical instrument to discuss the Polish case, the thesis aims to regulate the understanding of how awareness and a feeling of urgency about this peril have been activated and mobilized in the Euro-Atlantic community and it will translate the national security threat into a common existential threat for the alliance. In addition, this thesis adopts a single case study with an interpretivist research design to examine whether and how the issue of Russian aggression was securitized in Poland following two key events: the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Furthermore, this study is divided into five main chapters, each devoted to a specific research objective. In the Introduction sections, the Research Puzzle and Research Questions, the empirical context of Poland's security response to Russia has been introduced. In Chapter One, it discusses the origins of security studies in International Relations and then examines the main research framework: the Copenhagen School's securitization theory. And finally, it shows how this

¹ The reason why the term imperialist is used as opposed to revisionist, neo-imperialist is that it better reflects the historical and philosophical character of the threat we are analyzing. Imperialist is traditionally used to refer to the intentional extension of political, economic, or military influence by a state outside its sovereign limits, a phenomenon that was over and over again in the securitization theory discussed as an existential threat to other societies. In contrast, revisionist can be understood as internal or lawful confrontation with an existing order (e.g. an alteration in post-Soviet land claims), which is not sufficiently indicative of the externally-oriented military aggression exhibited by Russia in Ukraine. Neo-imperialist implies its modern form, which is less territorial and more economic or ideological dominance, as compared to the direct domination and militarization exhibited in this case. Thus, the imperialist term is in the best accord to both the empirical nature of Russian behavior and the conceptual emphasis upon how this behavior is discursively constructed as an existential security menace.

Copenhagen school of securitization framework is suitable for tracing discursive shifts and accounting for variations over time.

In Chapter Two, a critical review of existing scholarly literature on securitization in Poland, within the context of the Euro-Atlantic and Central and Eastern European regions, is presented. This review identifies a gap in longitudinal studies that trace the discursive evolution.

In Chapter Three, the Methodology and Analytical Tools section discusses the research design in detail. It will explicitly outline how the study employs Vourir's *Five Strands Framework* to systematically analyze Polish political discourse. The chapter will justify the selection of primary texts (key speeches, statements) from two periods: 2014-2015 and 2022-2023. It will define the specific analytical tools to be used, including the identification of securitizing speech acts, the analysis of referent objects, and the uncovering of dominant narratives.

Chapter Four presents the empirical analysis of Polish Securitization Discourse, the core empirical section. It applies the Copenhagen Securitization Theory along with Vourir's *Five Strands Framework* from Chapter 3 to the selected corpus. The analysis is structured chronologically to highlight evolution: the first part examines the discourse following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, while the second part analyses the discursive response to the 2022 full-scale invasion.

Chapter Five presents the Discussion, in which the analytical findings are presented and how securitization intensified, as well as the areas of securitization that emerged newly following the annexation of Crimea to the full-scale invasion. And then, finally, it will compare with the existing literature.

Lastly, the Conclusion will summarize the thesis's main findings and explain how they can be used to answer the research's original puzzle. The paper will reflect on its theoretical and empirical contributions, limitations, and provide future research directions.

CHAPTER I. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

1.1 The Evolution of Security Thinking in International Relations

In International Relations (IR), security is largely seen as an essentially contested concept (Gallie, 1956), and its meaning has changed in parallel with shifts in international order and academic paradigms. Although the history of security can be traced back to Roman and Greek traditions, where it was used to refer to the absence of fear or anxiety (Rothschild, 1995), these classical roots are used mostly as a historical background. The crystallization of the concept of security as the most important analytical element of IR is connected with the rise of the modern state and the establishment of the modern political power, as well.

Early modern political thought, particularly Thomas Hobbes, provided an influential foundation. For Hobbes, security was a precondition for civil life and required political institutions capable of providing protection that individuals could not secure in the state of nature, as “we cannot expect security from others, or assure it to ourselves” (Hobbes 1998 [1651]: 26). Even though Hobbes never conceptualized security according to the modern-day understanding of the concept in IR, he was instrumental in developing the connection between security, sovereignty, authority, and order, which became the core aspects of the realist thought.

In the twentieth century, in particular, post-World War II, the issue of security took the center stage in IR. This is because the Cold War (1947-1991) essentially formed Western conceptions of security making national security a key subject of political and scholarly debate (Krause Williams, 2018). Thinking of security at this time was highly militarized and on the assumptions of realism of anarchy and power competition and survival. The United States was instrumental in the establishment of national security institutions like the National Security Council (Bock &

Berkowitz, 1966). National security became part of political consciousness very fast as noted by Yergin (1978, p. 195).

This realist orientation was present in mainstream security studies which defined security in terms of the security of the state in relation to external military threats. Deterrence, alliances, strategy, and the security dilemma became the subject of scholarly attention (Walt, 1991; Baldwin, 1995). The definition by Walt was so influential, and security studies was defined as a study of the threat, use, and control of military force (Walt, 1991, p. 212). Critics, on the other hand, claimed that this line of thought was too small and too concerned with military issues (Baldwin, 1995).

This was disputed by liberal approaches which insisted on the security of individuals as well as the states. Although it is true that in accepting anarchy, liberal theories claim that insecurity can be minimized by institutions, interdependence and democratic governance. Transnational networks and international institutions are regarded as the ways of limiting the actions of states and enhancing cooperation and collective security (Owen IV, 2010).

Since the conclusion of the Cold War, the study of security has gone beyond the conventional approach. The fall of the bipolar order induced researchers to doubt the possibility of the state-centric and military-oriented strategies to reflect the new threats. The primacy of military solutions was challenged by new issues of security, including environmental degradation, pandemics, terrorism, cyber threats and economic insecurity (Beck, 2002). It is also during this period that security became expanded to non-military sources and consequently intensified by the establishment of several referent objects, such as individuals and societies (Buzan et al., 1998).

Critical scholarship also challenged the practice of traditional security. The 1994 United Nations Human Development Report ushered in the idea of human security that placed the focus on individual vulnerability. Buzan claimed that the state-centric security was intrinsically unsatisfactory (Buzan, 1991, p. 29), whereas Booth viewed security as a survival-plus, associated security with emancipation and human prosperity (Booth, 2007). Opponents of this growth foresaw analytical dilution (Deudney, 1990; Mearsheimer, 1995) but these arguments established with firmness security studies as a diverse and controversial discipline (Buzan and Hansen, 2009; Williams, 2012).

Security is, then, far more than a state of safety; security is an essentially contested and fundamentally political conception. The strength of it does not consist in its possession of a universal definition, but in its employment as a political instrument of domination.

1.2 Copenhagen School of Securitization

One of society's most pressing challenges today is figuring out how to address security threats. These threats are wide-ranging, spanning military affairs, the economy, and environmental issues. A key question, therefore, is how states, societies, and supranational organizations define security and how they should address it.

Buzan (1987) developed a conceptual framework that argues that the security of human collectivities, which is not only states but is also dependent on variables in five major sectors, with each sector having a distinct focal point and a particular prioritization mode. This expanded understanding of security, which adds the military, political, economic, societal, and environmental layers, is grounded in the theoretical underpinnings of the Copenhagen School. The Copenhagen School, led by scholars like Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, developed the concept of "securitization" to explain how influential actors, like governments, political elites, security

agencies, media organizations, and influential interest groups, frame a specific issue as an existential threat, thereby justifying the use of exceptional measures to address it (Buzan et al, 1998). This school of thought provides a tool for understanding exactly how these diverse issues can be elevated to the status of "security threats" through a process it famously termed "securitization."

According to Buzan, Waever, and Wilde, securitization is "the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23). In essence, securitization was conceptualized as "an intersubjective process that is the most extreme or the highest level of politicization in which the issue is presented as an existential threat to the referent object by a securitizing actor through so-called 'speech acts' and requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23).

In short, securitization has been conceptualized as an intersubjective process, which is the most extreme or extreme politicization, whereby an issue is put forth as an existential threat to a referent object by a securitizing actor in the form of so-called speech acts, requiring emergency measures and warranting actions outside the ordinary parameters of a political process (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23). This school of thought has significantly changed the meaning of security as a social process as opposed to security as an objective or fixed state and has broadly been able to increase the scope of security analysis and apply it to politics, economics, society, as well as the environment, and offer a better and more complete way to assess the contemporary security issues. As an example, Buzan, Wæver & Wilde (1998) in their book titled *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, they opined that security is made through the act of speech acts where powerful actors (usually political elites) made public their declaration of an issue an existential threat, and thus at that point it is

justifiable to engage in extraordinary actions that may override the normal operations of politics. The foundation statement set by Wæver (1993) is that the process of securitization of state policy always starts with a 'speech act'. It involves a political leader associating a challenge with an existential threat to a particular referent object, typically a state or an international institution, and trying to make essential audiences accept this label (Sperling & Webber, 2019). The success of securitization can be determined by the fact that an audience has granted a position to the securitizing actor that the problem is an existential threat to the referent object (Kaunert & Wertman, 2021).

Another important attribute of Securitization theory is that it does not require determining whether a threat is objectively real; instead, it focuses on how threats are discursively constructed and socially recognized as security issues, regardless of whether they correspond to an objective threat (Karyotis et al., 2025). Its main focus is a sharp departure from the empirically grounded reality of threats, shifting toward the sociopolitical action of threat construction. In that regard, its most critical question explores how diverse challenges like immigration, disease outbreak, or climate change can be strategically positioned by the influential players as an existential threat by using convincing speech acts and performative politics. The theory thus argues that the essence of a given security concern lies not in its quantifiable empirical reality but in its effective social legitimization as an existential danger.

In addition, the concept of a speech act is rooted in the argument made by John Langshaw Austin, who claims that language is not merely a description but a performative act. Austin argues that the speech is not just a description of the world; it can also cause some changes in it. Indicatively, saying I do during a wedding or giving the name of a ship is a speech act as these utterances undertake the actions with an immediate effect and change in the reality around them (Austin,

2009). The Copenhagen School had also argued that by declaring something an existential threat, it becomes a security concern. As an example, though many more people die of preventable illnesses like heart disease every year than through terrorist activity, the former is typically seen as a normal phenomenon. On the contrary, terrorism, especially after September 11, 2001, has been securitized and positioned as the ultimate threat to most societies. This framing has been used to justify the suspension of civil liberties, mass surveillance programs and the continued employment of military action on the international front.

According to Buzan et al. (1998), the consequential policy outcomes are triggered by the perception of a threat being acceptable by a considerable number of political actors and citizens. The resulting mechanism of collective identification of a threat and following the implementation of exceptional policy measures is the main mechanism of securitization. The rhetorical structure used by decision-makers in stating a problem and in striving to convince the audience to reprioritize, making the issue dominant over standard politics, is one of the main aspects of securitization theory. This is what we term a speech act—‘by saying the words, something is done, like betting, giving a promise, naming a ship’ (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26). The securitizing actor is defined as “those who securitize issues by declaring something, a referent object, to be existentially threatened” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 36). In most cases, these individuals or groups hold positions of power and authority, such as government ministers, political leaders, or the military or economic elite. It is assumed that their claims that a certain phenomenon can be an existential threat can be quite influential and will be implied by the target audience, thus justifying the introduction of emergency actions (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 46).

The referent object refers to “things that are perceived to be existentially threatened and have a legitimate claim to survival” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 36). Typically, the referent object is the state,

including its government, society, and territory, though it can vary across different sectors. In politics, it might be sovereignty, the form of government, or a dominant ideology. In the economic sector, it could be the economy as a whole or a specific industry. In the societal realm, referent objects are often collective identities, such as nations or religious communities. In the environmental sector, the referent object might range from the global climate to local ecosystems or even specific species that are deemed critical to protect from perceived threats.” (Buzan et al.,1998, p. 22-23).

In general, the process of securitization involves the adoption of exceptional measures, as the special nature of security threats justifies extraordinary measures to address them. “The invocation of security has been the key to legitimizing the use of force, but more generally, it has opened the way for the state to mobilize, or to take special powers, to handle existential threats [...] claiming a right to use whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development” (Buzan et al.,1998, p. 21). More specifically, effective securitization involves three phases to prevent 'everything' from becoming a security issue. These are: (1) identifying existential threats, (2) immediate action, and (3) consequences on inter-unit connections by breaking free of rules (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 6). Presenting an issue as an existential threat implies that if it is not addressed, everything else will become meaningless (since we will no longer be able to deal with it in our own way) (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 24).

Security, in this view, is not a fixed list of dangers, but a discursive process – what matters is whether an influential actor can convince an audience that something poses an existential threat requiring urgent action.

As mentioned above, securitization theory revolves around two main players: the one raising the alarm about a threat and the audience that needs to be convinced. While the primary actors in this

role are typically political leaders and governments (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 40), other entities, such as the media (McDonald, 2008), NGOs, and environmental groups (Trombetta, 2011), can also raise an issue as a security threat. The audience component is the figure that needs to be persuaded that the referent object is existentially threatened. According to the CS, an issue is successfully securitized when an audience both (1) agrees with the securitizing actor's claim that the issue is an existential threat to the referent object, and (2) supports the securitizing actor's suggestion to use extraordinary measures to deal with the threat (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 25)

While the Copenhagen School Securitization theory has influenced research across various fields, it has also faced significant criticism. Members of the Copenhagen School expressed criticism of their own framework, arguing that the concept of securitization risked reinforcing a state-centric perspective. They warned that labelling issues as security threats could justify disproportionate and escalating responses that bypass legal and political constraints, potentially leading to unintended and uncontrollable outcomes (Buzan et al, 1998). McDonald (2008) highlights the limitations of the securitization framework, arguing that it is restrictive in three key ways: (1) it narrowly defines security construction by focusing primarily on the speech acts of powerful actors; (2) it examines only the immediate context of securitization, neglecting its historical development over time; and (3) it reduces security acts to mere threat designations without deeper analysis (McDonald, 2008, p. 563). Further critiques address the framework's shortcomings regarding gender perspectives and the role of the audience (Balzacq, 2005; Hansen, 2000a). Balzacq and Guzzini (2015) explore different interpretations of securitization, comparing the Copenhagen School's focus on intersubjectivity and speech acts with alternative approaches. They also discuss the debate over whether language or practices play a more central role in securitization, the

theory's limited social mechanisms, and ongoing disagreements about how contextual factors should be incorporated into securitization analysis (Balzacq et al., 2014, pp. 96–98).

According to scholars of the Paris School, such as Stritzel (2007), the speech-act framework presented by the Copenhagen School is limited. Hansen (2000b) makes a strong argument in support of this opinion by asserting that the model is not working when the subjects of security are not in a position to give voice to their security threat, thus effectively locking out the most vulnerable in the securitization process. Booth (2007, p. 165) criticizes the Copenhagen School's theory for presenting a fragmented picture of reality, arguing that it leaves out critical elements, as it is “based on the fallacy that threats do not exist outside discourse”. For instance, Booth asserts that “the danger posed by global warming to low-lying island states was a physical process long before the discourse of environmental security was invented by its proponents and listened to by their audiences” (Booth, 2007, p. 165).

However, Kaunert & Wertman (2021) have provided a qualified defense of the securitization theory against the accusation of not paying attention to objective risks. They also admit that the framework emphasizes the social acceptance of a threat rather than its objective reality. According to them, this is the primary role of the theory: to examine how issues are socialized to be perceived as existential threats, and the subjective experience of a threat, not its objective existence, is the aspect that needs to be analyzed. In this respect, it is important to explain that threat is a relative concept because it is perceived in different locations differently (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 30).

The Copenhagen School, despite its criticisms, is an influential and fundamental theoretical approach to the study of security. Although its excessive dependence on speech acts and its disregard of non-discursive practices and voiceless groups are criticized by scholars, the main strength of the CS model is that it is parsimonious and analytically clear. It offers an invaluable

instrument in the disaggregation of the political process of threat construction, compelling the researcher to ask who is securitizing, what is at risk, and how the relevant audience is being convinced. Instead of being disproved by the critics of the CS, it is a vital idea type, a generative starting point that remains the anchor and catalyst of fundamental debates on the very concept of security.

Furthermore, the securitization theory of the Copenhagen School is a handy and applicable analytical approach to a case study like the case of the Securitization of Poland in 2014 (when the annexation of Crimea started) to 2022 (when the full-scale invasion began). It is especially pertinent since the Russian threat to Poland is objectively real and serious, a fact that fits right into the essence of the critique Booth is making that security studies need to consider real human suffering. Nevertheless, the proof of the objective threat is not the main analytical question of the given study, but the discussion of the way the awareness and consensus of the threat were created in terms of rhetoric. It was the objective threat that led Poland and its partners to take extraordinary measures, namely, a substantial increase in the presence of NATO, an unprecedented reinforcement of the political and economic actions of the EU, and a sudden militarization of Poland. The usefulness of securitization theory lies in its process-based and orderly method to comprehend the process of how this shared political reality was constructed. It gives a clear pattern in the discourse analysis that enabled such a response. The idea of the securitizing speech act is an inseparable instrument in the study of the Polish Government's speech data. It does not just list statements about Russia as threats but allows a systematic study of how these extraordinary solutions were created within the framework of how Polish political leadership used particular rhetorical frameworks to create the shared understanding that made these extraordinary solutions possible.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Critical Review of the Securitization of Poland: The 2014 Annexation of Crimea up to the 2022 Full-Scale Invasion.

The time frame between the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022 is a pivotal point in the recent history of the formation of national security attitudes in Poland. The literature review critically summarizes academic sources that interpret this evolution, showing that they consist of a key scholarly dilemma between explanations that are based on the various IR theories and those that focus on the identity-driven discursive processes of securitization.

The dominant academic mode of analysis evaluates the current Poland, based on a realist paradigm, as a reaction to shifting power balances in a rationalized, state-centered response. An explanation that is neorealist in nature is the one given by Zajac (2016), whereby the post-Cold War path of Poland, and its shift to the United States unipolarity to the emergence of multipolarity, is driven by the shift towards the emergent multipolarity. However, although this storyline summarizes the structural logic behind Poland's decision to align, it reflects a major escalation of the conflict after 2014. The post-Crimea intensification is a critical juncture in which pre-existing threat perceptions are translated into increased security practices and discourse, suggesting that structural realism cannot be sufficient for explaining Poland's qualitative shift in security posture.

Developing these observations, researchers like Furgacz (2017) and Moldovan (2018) provide a systematic record of the policy expressions of the post-2014 annexation of Crimea. Convincingly, Furgacz (2017) explains how the military stance of Poland has escalated by pointing out a new turn to the 'deterrence by punishment'. In the same vein, Moldovan (2018) through a comparative

analysis of documents shows a fundamental change in the attitude of the National Security Strategy of Poland, which has ceased to be cooperative but an explicitly defense-oriented stance, which places the state in the role of the main securitizing agent, which defines Russia as an existential threat.

However, the literature that is geopolitically orientated has serious deficiencies in terms of analysis. According to Lisiakiewicz (2018), state-centered approaches to Polish-Russian security relations emphasize material power balances, alliance politics, and official perception of threats, which generate accounts that are descriptively deep but analytically shallow. Although such works explain Polish post-2014 security policies, especially its role in supporting the NATO presence in the east and the missile defense programs, they are inclined to believe that the elite threat narratives are objective representations of external reality. This narrows down the importance of domestic political forces and past ingrained understandings of Russia. Consequently, they also under-theorize the causal role of historical memory and identity in the resonance of securitizing moves, effectively theorizing securitization as an automatic reaction to geopolitical pressure, as opposed to a socially and politically mediated process.

A less deterministic body of scholarship challenges the deterministic assumptions of structural realism by combining constructivist and identity-focused variables. This literature holds on the position that the Poland-Russia conflict cannot be categorized as merely a struggle of material interests, but rather a struggle of identity and historical remembrance. Szeptycki (2020) provides a practical input by defining the Ukrainian conflict as a collision between two diametrically opposite visions: the promotion of a Ukrainian vision of a European nation by Poland and the effort of Russia to keep it within the boundaries of the Russian world. The resulting constructivist-

realist synthesis brings forth in a compelling way the essential aspects of the Polish strategy that espouses the ideational nature of its methods which support the concept of Ukrainian statehood and Europeanization as the means of protecting its ontological security and its civilizational identity.

Szynowski and Gil (2025) substantiate this identity-based approach by strategically integrating Ontological Security Theory (OST) within a broader Neoclassical Realist framework. Their analysis begins with a Neoclassical Realist foundation, acknowledging the material imperatives and relative power constraints facing Poland. However, they employ OST to provide the crucial micro-foundation and motivational logic that explains the particular speed and strength of the 2022 Polish response. They argue that Poland's actions were driven not merely by calculated survival, but by an innate desire to stabilize its national self-identity—a historically constructed identity defined against both Russia and Ukraine. In this synthesis, OST does not contradict realism but complements it, suggesting that the material capability to act (a realist premise) was channeled into a specific, vigorous policy as a form of self-affirmation: a performance of Poland as a regional leader and a staunch Atlantic power. This point of view is also complemented by Sus (2025) whose neoclassical realist framework is systematic in the incorporation of domestic-level factors, such as elite perceptions, strategic culture, and societal consensus, to explain the status-seeking behavior of Poland. Sus shows that systemic pressures are not sufficient; domestic reception and refraction of those pressures through the prism of historical vulnerability and a desire to be recognized cannot be done without in understanding the concrete form of the securitization response of Poland.

One of the most important developments in the literature is the explicit discussion of the target audience to securitizing moves, exposing the domestic political logic that the security discourse in

Poland is based on. Giesen (2024) also contributes significantly to the field by implementing an audience-based securitization model to the policy of refugees in Poland. It convincingly maintains that the Law and Justice (PiS) government mobilized its securitizing audience depending on the menace: it securitized the threat of Middle Eastern refugees to an internal audience to boost its political base, but securitized the threat of the hybrid threat of Belarus and Russia to an external one to cement alliances. The analysis is essential because it de-homogenizes the securitization process, demonstrating that it is an adaptable political instrument instead of an a priori state reaction to external threat.

This focus reveals a specific analytical gap in state-centric approaches to Polish security. While scholars like Moldovan (2018) and Komarnytsky (2024) correctly identify the state as the primary securitizing actor, their frameworks often lack a systematic analysis of how domestic partisan agendas actively shape the content and intensity of securitization narratives. Dyduch and Góra's (2024) research on the post-2022 "rally-around-the-flag" effect is instructive, as it demonstrates how this temporary unity obscured a preceding period of intense politicization of security policy and historical memory. To trace the causal path of securitization, it is necessary to examine how this domestic political rivalry and the instrumentalization of history—concepts operationalized by Palczewska (2021) in her analysis of Poland's rejection of the "Yalta principle"—gradually constructed a coherent national security identity. This long-term process, as this paper argues, was a crucial precondition that determined the speed and resolve of Poland's response, which was only fully activated by the exogenous shock of the 2014 invasion.

Likewise, as Stach & Pizzolo (2025) argue, despite intensive political polarization in Poland, between pro-European liberal parties and national-conservative groups, there has been the

remarkable persistence of the policies geared towards modernizing the Polish Armed Forces. Using a qualitative approach, which synthesizes the data of the population and case studies, the authors claim that external security shocks, namely the aggression of Russians in Ukraine in 2014 and 2022, were the initial reason to stimulate modernization, thus forming the cross-party agreement. The paper concludes that political discourses were often virulent, but the strategic need to overcome the Eastern threat led to no change in policies; the main hindrance to modernization was not polarization but systemic lag and the historical lack of strategic perspective in the governmental line of successive regimes (Stach & Pizzolo, 2025).

Conversely, the literature on the post-full-scale invasion of 2022 indicates a climax of the securitization development process in Poland, transforming it into a security consumer into a major regional security provider. Based on recent research, several researchers (Jureńczyk, 2023; Bharti et al., 2024; Laryea & Medza, 2023; Konstantynova & Zymenko, 2024) also believe that the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian war has solidified Poland's geopolitical position. It turned into the key to Western military assistance, a center of humanitarian aid, and an active diplomatic supporter of Ukraine.

The interpretation of this post-2022 role is based on the frames that have been created during the preceding periods. Komarnytskyy (2024) and Sus (2025) consider it to be the rational repercussion of the Polish strategic culture and its status-seeking desires, now given an opportunity to be achieved. Nevertheless, there are also limits and new contradictions of such role that are already pointed to the nascent literature. According to Laryea & Medza (2023) and Konstantynova & Zymenko (2024), the stronger leadership in Poland depends on the successful overcoming of the renewed tension with the EU and the bilateral economic conflict with Ukraine. Moreover, a risk analysis presented by Szeptycki (2023) is critical in that it states that, despite the commitment of

the conventional military attack being deterred, Polish territory remains exposed to hybrid threats and political interference, and thus the securitization process, though very successful in raising the conventional response, now has to evolve to address more diffuse and insidious forms of threats.

The available body of literature offers a strong basis on comprehending the security policy and perception of threats to Poland since the year 2014. This era has been discussed by scholars using various analytical perspectives, such as realist theories of structural balancing, constructivist theories of identity and norms and theories based on domestic political and audience cost. These studies, in combination, show the increased complexity of the research on the reactions of Poland to Russian aggression.

Nevertheless, even in the light of such a fertile contribution, there is a considerable gap concerning how the securitization of the Russian state developed discursively over time, especially in communication to the Euro-Atlantic society. The years between annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the actual full-scale invasion in Ukraine in 2022 can be seen as a pivotal moment in Polish security policy when there has been an incremental increase in threat perceptions, rhetorical framing and policy responses. However, the literature on this period is often disjointed: covering either isolated episodes or analyzing it in terms of distinct theoretical models that are analytically unconnected.

What is interesting missing is a longitudinal, cumulative analysis to track down the development of Polish securitizing discourse throughout this whole time with the help of the same theoretical approach. Specifically, no organized research uses the Copenhagen School of securitization to observe how the Polish leadership gradually developed Russia as a state of existential danger and how this rhetoric was strategically targeted at the Euro-Atlantic audience to gather support in the alliance and justify extreme security practices.

By filling this gap, the current research paper provides a logical explanation of the dominant securitizing discourses of the Polish leadership from 2014 to 2015 and 2022 to 2023, and how these discourses became stronger and transformed in response to the changing geopolitical environment. In so doing, it enriches the literature by going beyond the fragmented explanations and offering a process-oriented, holistic understanding of how Russia is being securitized by Poland towards Euro-Atlantic communities and beyond.

CHAPTER III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Paradigm

This research design is qualitative, interpretive, single-case design, which will analyze the process of securitization in Poland based on the political discourse of two major security crises that happened in 2014 and 2022. This method is selected in particular because it is able to examine the processes and discourse changes over an extended period, and thus examine how a securitizing narrative strengthens and alters instead of making a straightforward and static comparison.

In addition, the interpretivist paradigm has been chosen for this study because it posits that social and political realities are constructed through subjective meanings and discourses (Halperin & Heath, 2020). This paradigm plays a crucial role in securitization studies since it focuses on the explanation of how political actors constantly interpret and frame events to create an existential threat narrative that develops with the geopolitical context.

To structure this analysis, the study's timeframe is divided into two key periods. The first is the "Initial Securitization Phase" (2014–2015), which captures the formation of the securitization discourse immediately following the annexation of Crimea. The second phase, the "Intensification and Culmination Phase" (2022–2023), analyzes how this pre-existing narrative was leveraged and amplified in response to the full-scale invasion. The focus of this phased methodology lies in responding to the main research question about the way the securitization discourse in Poland developed as an emerging narrative into a security paradigm. Finally, this approach would be allowed to answer research question: How did Poland's securitization evolve from a nascent discourse in 2014 to a dominant and actionable security paradigm by 2022?

3.2 Analyzing Securitization Using Vuori's "Five Strands" Framework

In order to operationalize the theory of securitization and trace the development of the discourse, the present study uses the *Five Strands Framework* by Vuori (2011). This methodology Framework provides a systematic way to study securitization by moving beyond the simple question of *if* an issue is securitized to analyze *how* and *for what political purpose*. This method also transforms securitization theory into a precise tool for dissecting the strategic use of security language in politics. In addition, it offers a nuanced typology of securitization's political functions, which a Grammar-based framework allows cross-cultural and historical analysis. It uses clear linguistic criteria, identifying securitization even without the word "security." Furthermore, this method expertly identifies the illocutionary act (the securitization move and its intended function). Its intended function is deduced from its grammatical structure, defined by five distinct "strands":

1. **Agenda-Setting:** (Claim → Warn → Urge). Aims to get an issue prioritized by decision-makers.
2. **Legitimizing Future Acts:** (Claim → Warn → Request). Aims to gain acceptance for proposed extraordinary measures (the original Wæverian model).
3. **Deterrence:** (Claim → Warn → Declare). Aims to intimidate a threat by authoritatively labeling it a security issue.
4. **Control:** (Claim → Warn → Require). Aims to compel obedience from a subordinate audience.
5. **Legitimizing Past Acts:** (Claim → Warn → Explain). Aims to justify actions already taken.

Analyze each text for the sequence of elementary speech acts:

- **Claim:** Asserting an existential threat.
- **Warn:** Outlining the dire consequences of inaction.
- **Directive** (Urge/Request/Require): A call for action, varying in strength.
- **Declare:** An authoritative statement that constitutes the threat.
- **Explain:** Justifying past actions via a security rationale

The strand reveals the speaker's primary political function (e.g., seeking legitimacy, exerting control). This also clarifies the intended audience and the nature of the speaker's authority. These texts will be analyzed in order to identify the latent ideologies, power relations, and political maneuvers that informed the discourse of securitization in Poland in the period between 2014 and 2022. Further, the paper will discuss the framing of identity of Poland and its connection with Russia using specific words, metaphors and historical events.

Comparing the texts between 2014-2015 and 2021-2022, we will be able to trace the development of the image of the Russian threat systematically. Did it change to be a regional security issue and become a civilizational issue? How was the war in Ukraine framed not just as an attack on a neighbor, but as a direct challenge to Poland's own sovereignty and identity? This directly addresses the gap in understanding the dynamic process of securitization.

3.3 Data Collection and Selection

The primary data sources of this study include a collection of official speeches and statements of the key securitizing actors in Poland: President and the Prime Minister. The selection of these specific actors is one of the major methodological decisions that are expected to appeal to the most

authoritative and powerful sphere of discourse about the security of the Polish state. Even though the incumbents in the offices of President and Prime Minister changed in the two periods of analysis (2014-2015 and 2022-2023), the focus on the two institutional roles is critical on a number of reasons especially when it comes to securitization studies. For example, in securitization theory, a "securitizing move"—the act of framing an issue as an existential threat—is most effective when performed by an actor with significant social and political capital. In Poland, the President and the Prime Minister, as the heads of state and government, have the highest institutional authority.

Their speeches are not a subjective opinion, but official speeches which reflect the state opinion. The choice of these actors is precisely due to the fact that, being unwavering holders of institutional power, their communications provide a continuous and formal account of the securitization discourse as it was formulated and developed over the course of the entire period. Their positions give them a special place to outline the threats and invoke extraordinary action, thus making their speech central to the securitization process. These actors were chosen because, as consistent holders of institutional power, their communications provide a continuous and official record of the securitization narrative as it was constructed and evolved over the entire period. Their roles give them a unique platform to define threats and call for extraordinary measures, making their discourse central to the securitization process.

To construct the research corpus, data was systematically collected from official government websites, including the Chancellery of the Prime Minister (<https://www.gov.pl/web/primeminister>), and the Chancellery of the President (<https://www.president.pl/news>). Keyword searches in both Polish and English (e.g., "Russia/Rosja," "Threat/Zagrozenie," "Security/Bezpieczenstwo" which are found in the

theoretical framework and the literature, were used to build a longitudinal collection of relevant texts from the two key phases: March 2014–December 2015 and February 2022–December 2023.

The research justifies this specific timeframe through the "*punctuated equilibrium*" concept. Rather than analyzing discourse continuously, the study focuses on two critical peak crisis phases where discourse is most visible and consequential. The evolution is inferred by comparing the starting and ending points of this punctuated process. The document doesn't explicitly justify the month-level precision. However, the two-year window (March 2014–December 2015) likely captures a complete cycle, as it begins with the immediate crisis reaction to Crimea's annexation and extends long enough to establish whether the initial securitization narrative solidified into a sustained policy discourse. Similarly, the period from February 2022 to December 2023 provides a full two-year window to measure how the discourse intensified and consolidated over time. In addition, this research was initiated at the beginning of 2024. To develop a holistic longitudinal view, the analysis covers the time span of the full-scale invasion beginning in February 2022 to December 2023. Notably, it does not just focus on the first shock of the invasion, but the subsequent prolonged policy reactions, thus depicting how securitization has become part of the continuing political and popular rhetoric.

3.4 Analytical Procedure

The analysis will be conducted in a systematic way in which the development of the subject matter will be clearly traced with the help of qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA) to ensure a systematic and rigorous coding method. All the chosen texts will be uploaded into MAXQDA and organized into document groups that are associated with two phases (2014-2015 and 2022-2023).

Based on the fundamental principles of the securitization theory, a codebook will be developed within MAXQDA in both thematic and conceptual coding. This codebook will subsequently enable a systematic thematic analysis of the corpus including initial codes which are deductive categories based on the theory and inductive codes which are generated based on the data.

Deductive Codes (Theory-Driven):

- Securitizing Actor (Polish Leaderships)
 - Referent Object (with sub-codes for shifts, e.g., Poland, NATO, The West)
 - Existential Threat (with sub-codes for intensifying characterizations, e.g., Aggressor, Existential Threat, Imperialist)
 - Call for Extraordinary Measures (with sub-codes for escalating policies, e.g., Increase Defense Spending, NATO Reinforcement, Urgent Militarization)
- Inductive Codes (Data-Driven): New codes will be created to capture recurring metaphors, rhetorical strategies, and framing devices not fully anticipated by the theory (e.g., Historical Analogy, Civilizational Rhetoric, Vulnerability Frame).

Using the tools offered by MAXQDA, the coded passages will be analyzed to respond to the question of how, thus, identifying which codes appear most often and making discursive connections that are more profound. The lexical choices, structures of argumentation, and

metaphors will be critically read in the coded sections and closely examined to understand how they began to change to be more urgent and starker.

The findings of MAXQDA will be included to outline the path of securitization of Poland. The software will support the establishment of visual representations (e.g., code maps, frequency charts) to support the argument about how the narrative was built upon, intensified, and was ultimately validated by the events of 2022.

3.5 Limitations and Positionality

The validity of qualitative research requires the acknowledgment of limitations. One of the major limitations of the study is that there is a likelihood of subjectivity and researcher bias in selection and analysis of the content to be used in discourse analysis. To overcome this problem, an extensive literature review was conducted to formulate clear conceptual frameworks that are related to securitization. Despite this, there was always a possibility that the researcher might have personal judgment in the choice and interpretation of the data. In response to this, reflexivity and positionality were used during the research process. Reflexivity is the ability of the researcher to recognize the impact that he has on the study and vice versa (Mackieson et al., 2019). Positionality recognizes that the worldview and social background of the researcher influence the research (Holmes, 2020). Instead of attempting to be absolutely neutral, which is unrealistic in qualitative research, the study openly explains the view of the researcher, thus, ensuring methodology rigor (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Fischer, 2009).

The positionality of the researcher who has been in Europe since 2023 and Poland in the last one year might create framing effects in the responses of securitization of Poland. Though it is not

directly related to Russia and Ukraine, being close to the conflict and being exposed to the Polish political discourse might influence the interpretations of security narratives. To counter the possible biases, the study embraces reflexivity, thus, assuring constant consideration of the role of the positionality of the researcher such as geographical and temporal proximity to the events on the selection and analysis of data. Instead of claiming to be neutral, the study openly acknowledges these effects, which strengthens the methodological credibility (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Holmes, 2020). Another limitation arises from the missing years from 2016 to 2021, which may raise methodological concerns. However, this study justifies this by arguing that these two phases (2014-2015) and (2022-2023) represent the most critical "*punctuated equilibrium*" points where discourse is most visible and consequential.

Lastly, there is the limitation of language. Given that the researcher is not fluent in Polish, this research relies solely on the officially translated government statements to carry out the discourse analysis. The official site is available in both English and Polish. This creates the possibility of a selection bias since only state-published materials were reviewed. However, as the governmental communications are bound to influence the political discourse, these sources can also be subjected to a critical analysis.

The study is transparent through the identification of these limitations and the adoption of reflexive practices, which will contribute to the better understanding of the securitization dynamics in Poland in reaction to Russian aggression.

CHAPTER IV. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Initial Securitization Phase (2014–2015)

In February 2014, Russia initiated the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine. Approximately 30,000 Russian soldiers invaded the region, occupying the 27,000-square-kilometer territory by early March (Minicozzi-Wheeland, 2022). This aggression initiated the continuation of war by the Russian forces against Ukraine, and since then, Crimea has been occupied by the Russian military forces. In 2014, the annexation of Crimea was a sudden shock to the Polish leaders, which highlights their constant fear of aggression by a great power (Koziej & Brzozowski 2014). Poland was vehemently against the annexation by Russia, terming it as an illegal action that violates international law and poses a threat to European security. The leaders of Poland were among the first to condemn the activities of Russia in Europe as the process of annexation was seen as a direct threat to the stability of Eastern Europe and ultimately the security of Poland. Polish parliament also held special meetings and the National Security Council held an emergency meeting to discuss the crisis, with the large parties (Civic Platform, Law and Justice) forming a loud protest and condemnation of Russian aggression (Moldovan, 2018)

This high level of political and discursive response provides us with the empirical ground of securitization analysis. With the frame of the Copenhagen School securitization theory and Vouri's (2011) "Five Strands" Framework, I will examine how the Polish political leaders of 2014-2015 conceptualized Russia as an existential security threat and what they were threatening, who was saying it, and who they were addressing.

4.1.1 Securitization Move: Framing Russia as An Existential Threat

The Polish discourse of leadership between 2014 and 2015 remains constant, with Russia identified as the source of the existential threat, but different referent objects are threatened. During this timeframe, Polish securitizing actions are carried out on three levels of referent-object relationships: the sovereignty of Ukraine, the national security of Poland, and the European and post-war international order.

4.1.1.1 The Sovereignty of Ukraine as the Immediate Object of Referent.

The initial thematic analysis demonstrated the prevailing narrative of the Polish leadership discourse in 2014-2015, which found Russia as an existential threat to the sovereignty of Ukraine. President Komorowski characterized the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine as existential when Russia annexed Crimea. He stated:

“Russia’s aggressive actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine violate fundamental principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity” (Komorowski, 2014d).

President Komorowski points out in this narrative that the objects of reference are Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and that the threat actor is Russia. This framing has a very important political purpose: it justifies and gathers the support of a powerful, joint international reaction. In this way, his words make the annexation a geopolitical event more than an existential one, making it an event where a collective, extraordinary response is called upon and justified.

Likewise, Prime Minister Donald Tusk also remarked:

"Russia's annexation of Crimea can't be accepted by the international community, including Poland. In one moment, this changes the country's (Ukraine) borders and the geopolitical situation in this region of the world,"(Tusk, 2014f).

The statement by Donald Tusk in 2014 regarding the annexation of Crimea by Russia is an explicit securitization move. It begins with a definitive claim: "Russia's annexation of Crimea can't be accepted," which establishes an unambiguous violation of international norms. This claim is immediately connected to a warning about the consequence: it "changes the country's borders and the geopolitical situation in this region of the world." This puts the action within a context, not in itself, but as a threat to the very existence of the regional order.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Donald Tusk emphasized that the violation of international law was a direct security threat that was not limited to the borders of Ukraine after Russia annexed Crimea. He said:

"I am deeply convinced that Ukraine has the right to sovereignty and territorial integrity. The actions of the Russian Federation, which led to the annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in eastern Ukraine, constitute a violation of international law and threaten the security of the entire region" (Tusk, 2014a).

This statement carries out an explicit securitizing act; the principle of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, as defined by international law, is the referent object, and Ukraine is its direct embodiment. Prime Minister Donald Tusk turns the violation into an existential crisis by stating that Russia's actions endanger the security of the entire region. His act of securitization speech is specifically informed by the fact that Poland is highly vulnerable in history and geopolitics as the frontline state of the EU. A self-assessment by the Polish government itself, which refers to

geography as the cause of its supposedly profound anxiety (Council of Ministers Report, 2014, p. 4), confirms that what Tusk is doing is not just a far-off violation of international law, but a personal and concrete threat to the security order of Poland itself. In that way, by securitizing the borders and the whole territory of Ukraine, Donald Tusk is securitizing the eastern flank of Poland at the same time and on the same basis.

4.1.1.2 Poland's National Security as a Directly Endangered Referent Object

The securitization of Ukraine's sovereignty to Poland's own securitization quickly extends itself. President Bronisław Komorowski articulates a strategic diplomatic response to a perceived security threat, framing the potential Russian military action in Ukraine not merely as a regional issue but as a direct concern for neighboring states, such as Poland. He stated:

"We can feel threatened by the potential use of Russian armed forces in the territory of Poland's neighbor, Ukraine. I am certain that we will manage to convince other countries that may feel threatened because of the neighborhood, and I know that a decision will be made fast," (Komorowski, 2014a).

This is a direct securitization move by President Komorowski in 2014 to bring the issue to NATO's agenda and justify a speedy collective response. It begins with a warning that Poland feels threatened by the potential deployment of Russian armed forces, making the threats to Poland more personalized and presented as an impending shared threat. It is directed, confidently, at the heart

of the move: I am sure we will be able to convince other countries... and I know we will be able to make a decision quickly. This serves as a call to arms but as well as a declaration of purpose, putting into play the frontline view of Poland to essentially call upon NATO to act at an institutional level swiftly. Komorowski tries to induce an extraordinary and expedited decision-making process in the Alliance by portraying the danger as visceral and the necessity to reach a consensus as urgent.

This framing is supported by the historically informed geopolitical self-understanding of Poland.

As Komorowski later noted:

“Poland's geopolitical location was and is always difficult because we live between East and West” (Komorowski, 2015b).

The strategic culture of Poland, which was formed on the basis of partitions, Soviet domination, and traumas and experiences like the Katyn massacre, is the reason why Russia has always been considered the main existential threat (Lašas, 2012; White Book, 2013; Council of Ministers Report, 2014). In addition, the “Polish Operation” of the NKVD (1937–1938), in which approximately 111,000 ethnic Poles were executed and around 100,000 deported to Gulag labor camps, was a targeted campaign of terror that remains seared into Polish historical consciousness (Petrov & Roginskii, 2003, p. 162). Such historical accounts enhance the feasibility and pathos of securitization of speech acts by domestic and allied audiences.

4.1.1.3 The European and Post-War International Order as the Ultimate Referent Object

In Polish leadership discourse, the European and Post-War International order was securitized as a referent object. The Prime Minister Donald Tusk articulated the referent object as nothing less than the stability of the Euro-Atlantic community itself, framing Russian aggression not as a regional crisis but as a direct assault on the very international system that had guaranteed European peace. At the 2014 NATO Summit, he argued:

“The events in Ukraine have shown that peace and security in Europe are fragile and must be actively defended. Russia’s aggression violates international law and threatens the stability of the entire Euro-Atlantic region” (Tusk, 2014b).

The statement issued by Prime Minister Donald Tusk in 2014 represents one of the key steps at securitization, which is organized within a pattern of claim-warn-directive. First, it states that the aggression of Russia is against international law. Second, it gives a warning that such an act poses a risk to the stability of the whole Euro-Atlantic region, and it builds up an existential threat to a wide referent object such as European peace and security. The sentence ends with the not explicit, but strong message that these values are to be proactively protected. It is this last factor that urges a united, unprecedented action of the EU and NATO.

In the NATO Summit, Donald Tusk securitization of the threat to a specific state but a systematic challenge to European peace itself. This logic was further articulated in the interview where Prime Minister Donald Tusk said in the Financial Times:

“The conflict in Ukraine is not only a regional issue; it is a test of the international order that has preserved peace in Europe since World War II. The aggressive actions by Russia threaten this order and must be met with a firm and united response from the West (Tusk, 2014d).”

The 2014 statement by Donald Tusk is a strong securitization move that seeks to rationalize future collective action. It claims that the conflict is “a test of the international order that has preserved peace in Europe since World War II,” elevating it from a regional dispute to an existential challenge. The statement then issues a clear warning that “aggressive actions by Russia threaten this order,” positioning Russia's actions as a danger to the foundational system of post-war security. This creates the threat as imminent and systemic. Lastly, the demand to unite and take decisive action by the West is a clear guideline, and the message to the Western community (the audience) is to take exceptional, action-oriented steps. The purpose of the move is to position an aggressive, united Western policy not as an escalation, but as a defensive assertion of the international order per se.

4.1.1.4 Analytical Synthesis

In 2014-2015, the highest authorities of Poland indeed vigorously promoted a securitization agenda, framing the aggression of Russia in Ukraine as an existential threat at multiple levels. This entire discussion basically constructs a threat narrative that runs all the way to the very heart of the European security structure, Ukraine's independence as the starting point, and the very safety of Poland at its core. They use the history of the Polish trauma and its front-line location within NATO and the EU, which makes the message sound pressing and convincing. Interestingly, the

securitizing statements do not tend to portray the Polish security as a domestic problem. Rather, Poland is integrated into a broader regional and Euro-Atlantic security structure, demonstrating that the primary audience is external, that is, NATO and EU partners, whose political support is necessary to take a course of action.

4.1.2 Extraordinary Measures

In essence, the Copenhagen School indicates that it is not possible to securitize a nation in isolation from other events taking place. It must be a real crisis. The actions of Russia, particularly the annexation of Crimea and the military incursion in eastern Ukraine, were the type of action that did not adhere to the normal rules and interfered with the European security order off-balance and provided the political environment in which securitization appeared to be right.

As a result, Polish leaders didn't present the extraordinary measures as arbitrary or opportunistic. Rather, they presented them as responsive and required actions to the condition Russia had brought about on its own. Polish leaders justified their action of displaying Russian behavior as something that had never been witnessed before, as a violation of international rules, and that regular diplomacy and political processes could no longer be used to cope with the threats.

This logic was operationalized, as can be seen in the analysis of the statements made by the Polish Prime Minister and President. The aggression of Russians was framed as an existential threat to European and transatlantic security, which explained the actions that explicitly transcended the normal political process. These involved economic sanctions leveled upon Russia which were harsh and sustained, the rallying of a concerted European reaction based on solidarity, the strengthening of NATO unity, and the greatly increased introduction of NATO forward presence

in Eastern Europe. More importantly, these actions were not positioned as escalatory efforts by Poland, but as defensive exceptions, which were required by the Russian previous breach of the principles of normal interstate behavior.

In this sense, extraordinary measures were discursively constructed as restorative rather than revolutionary—aimed at defending and reasserting the existing international order rather than transforming it. The securitizing move therefore transformed the reaction to the Russian actions not to be part of normal politics but part of emergency politics even though the argument was that it was the responsibility of the Russians to begin with to abandon the usual bonds of politics.

4.1.2.1 Sanctioned against Russia

Poland's position as a frontline state in Central Europe, which has historically shaped its foreign policy with a deep-seated sensitivity to territorial aggression and geopolitical revisionism, explains why after the annexation of Crimea, the Polish leadership, in an extraordinary measure, actively shaped the dominant Western narrative, arguing for and successfully securing sanctions against Russia from the EU and its member states. From the immediate aftermath of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, Poland has been one of the strongest and most vocal advocates within the European Union and NATO for imposing tough, comprehensive sanctions on Russia. Its stance was not merely reactive but rooted in a strategic doctrine that viewed deterrence and the integrity of international law as existential to regional security. For example, Polish President Bronisław Komorowski said:

“Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the deployment of Russian troops require the redefinition of strategic conditions and the adaptation of the entire Alliance, while

underscoring the need for NATO and the European Union to support Ukraine through sustained sanctions against Russia” (Komorowski, 2014c).

President Bronisław Komorowski exemplifies a clear securitization move aimed at raising an issue onto the agenda. Komorowski acts as a securitizing actor without unilateral authority, using the speech-act sequence of claim (Russian aggression), implicit warning (threat to European security), and directive urge (for NATO/EU strategic adaptation and sustained sanctions) to persuade his audience of fellow alliance leaders. Furthermore, by defining Russia's actions as an existential threat, the move lays essential narrative groundwork for future securitization to legitimate extraordinary acts, such as NATO deployments and military aid to Ukraine.

As the conflict persisted, Poland’s advocacy evolved from securing initial sanctions to ensuring their strategic escalation and sustainability. President Komorowski advocated maintaining diplomatic and economic pressure as a core element of the EU's strategy. He said:

“The European Union's response should be to deliberately raise the issue of further hardening of sanctions against Russia” (Komorowski, 2015a).

According to Vouri's (2011) framework, this move clearly aligns with the securitization strand for "raising an issue onto the agenda." It functions as a directive speech act (the illocutionary point is to get the EU to *do* something), specifically the elementary act of urging or proposing. The preparatory condition is that the securitizing actor (Komorowski) is in a position to raise such issues, while the audience (EU decision-makers) has the ability to enact the proposed measures. The statement’s force relies on the preceding, established securitization narrative (Russia as an ongoing aggressor), and its aim is to shift the specific policy of further hardening of sanctions

higher on the EU's political agenda. Unlike a request for legitimacy or a requirement for control, this deliberate raising exemplifies how actors use security discourse to steer collective policy, demonstrating the author's point that securitization is a versatile tool for agenda-setting beyond merely legitimizing extraordinary measures.

This forward-looking perspective became particularly salient as the limitations of parallel diplomatic efforts, such as the Minsk Agreements, became apparent. By late 2015, President Andrzej Duda emphasized the direct link between diplomatic failure and the necessity of sustained pressure. Polish President Andrzej Duda believes that the sanctions imposed on Russia should be prolonged, as the Minsk Agreements are unlikely to be implemented on time. He argued that their implementation period would therefore need to be extended, and in such a scenario, the international policy of sanctions would need to be maintained. Duda emphasized that Europe and the world should not abandon this course of action. The President Andrzej Duda said:

"I hope that sanctions will be extended in the near future; Poland's position regarding this matter is unequivocal," the president added and declared support for Ukraine's peace aspirations (Duda, 2015a)

President Duda's 2016 statement serves as a maintenance move within Poland's sustained securitization campaign. The declaration that "Poland's position regarding this matter is unequivocal" functions as a reinforcing claim of national resolve, while his expression of hope that "sanctions will be extended in the near future" operates as a strategic, diplomatic directive aimed at the EU's decision-making agenda. The warning of continued threat remains implicit but activated by the context of the stalled Minsk Agreements. By pairing this with a declarative of support for Ukraine's peace aspirations, Duda frames the call for sustained sanctions not as

escalation, but as a necessary instrument for legitimate peace, thereby reinforcing the established security rationale to secure ongoing policy continuity.

On the same note, the Polish Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz warned that the EU should implement a new policy to isolate Russia through new economic sanctions. She said:

“The EU should be prepared for further sanctions on Russia, stating the proposed sanctions aim to punish Moscow for annexing Crimea and for what Western nations view as its material and military support for rebels in eastern Ukraine” (Kopacz, 2014b).

The statement of the Prime Minister Kopacz is a securitization step of legitimizing future actions. It is clearly explained that the action of Moscow to annex Crimea and support rebels is punishable aggression. This is the ultimate fact of the matter. The implication of the warning is also explicit yet clear: unless more sanctions are imposed, such aggression would go unpunished and would compromise international law and security. The essence of the move is the directive that the EU needs to be ready to take more sanctions. This is a strong appeal to preparedness, demanding of the institutional audience to justify and implement certain extraordinary economic actions as an inevitable result of the given threat. It is a proactive step that attempts to legitimize tangible policy intervention through the prism of sanctions as a reasonable form of punishment.

The leadership of Poland in the period of 2014-2015 actively promoted the idea of strong forceful, and deepening Western response. This policy had its foundations in the complete rejection of the recognition of territorial claims by the sword; a position that was put in terms of a protection of the international legal order. The policy of Poland was two-fold, first, to secure the immediate

imposition of sanctions as a Real demonstration of the decision against aggression, and secondly, to actively insist on their strengthening and prolongation in the long term. This stand was indicative of a long-held view that nothing was enough but an unrelenting and progressive political and economic pressure that would help reverse the actions of Russia and reinforce the principle of territorial integrity. This longstanding advocacy saw Poland influence the reaction of the EU, enhancing its position as a transatlantic vital partner and as a protector of a rules-based order on Eastern Europe.

4.1.2.2 NATO Action and NATO & US troops Presence: From Insurance Policy to Active Toolkit

Polish vulnerability history is one of the main aspects that have determined the strategic identity of Poland. It has suffered centuries of partitions, invasions, and Soviet domination, and its most crucial security task is to ensure that it is never again left unescorted by a powerful aggressor. Thus, the Polish strategic thinking holds that formal NATO security assurances need actual strengthening. This would involve the permanent placement of American or allied NATO forces on Polish territory, which is deemed more effective than a promise of treaties (Koziej, 2014). The logic behind this is that this physical presence would greatly enhance the chances of the U.S. military reaction in case of Russian aggression and would essentially integrate American security with that of Poland (Matlárý, 2014, p. 261). To achieve this goal, the governments of Poland have adopted a coherent policy of trading security dividends with the United States, being actively involved and contributing to American or NATO-led military actions as a tool of cementing the alliance and ensuring this increased defense pledge (Cooper & Erlanger, 2014). Finally, the ultimate achievement of this objective is the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

(NATO), whose Article 5 has turned the defense of Poland into a non-national project, which cannot be undone, being backed, first of all, by the military power of the United States. This group defense assurance is the cornerstone of Polish security, and it offers some form of deterrence that is deemed to be enough to make a large-scale conventional attack on Poland extremely unlikely (Michta, 2016).

But when a re-emerged and aggressive Russia arose, which the 2014 annexation of Crimea only solidified, the Polish leadership became worried that the assurances offered by NATO were still not enough. They responded by urging the Alliance to establish a permanent and significant NATO military presence on the eastern side of the Alliance, which they saw as a necessary step to prevent recurrent aggression and deliver on the promise of collective security. Also, geographically, Poland is an eastern flank state of NATO. It would be a weak buffer zone without NATO. The defense plans of NATO ensure that during a crisis, the US, UK, and other allies would pour into Poland with reinforcements. This makes Poland a possible battlefield into a safe staging ground of defense by the allies, and this changes the strategic calculus of Poland.

This proactive thinking is as a direct result of the frontline geography of Poland. Poland did not passively await allied consensus after the annexation of Crimea but instantly used its position to mobilize the institutional crisis mechanisms of NATO. President Bronisaw Komorowski (2015b) showed by officially asking the urgent meeting of the North Atlantic Council in accordance with Article 4 of the Washington Treaty. He said

"NATO urgently convene the North Atlantic Council under Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, providing for allied consultations in case of threat." He argued the urgency by

stating, "We can feel threatened by the potential use of Russian armed forces in the territory of Poland's neighbour—Ukraine. I am certain that we will manage to convince other countries that may feel threatened because of the neighbourhood, and I know that a decision will be made fast." (Komorowski, 2015b).

Komorowski's statement is a securitization of Agenda-Setting, as he asserts a Russian threat and urgently calls for an Article 4 meeting right before NATO. Its essence is political, and it aims to officially make the region's safety the top of the organization's agenda, in an effort to provoke a shared discourse. This action is aimed at justifying the matter within NATO and establishing a platform for future action.

During the most crucial NATO Summit in Wales in 2014, the rhetoric of Komorowski summarized the strategic demands of Poland. He claimed that the aggression of Russia was a structural threat that needed a fundamental change in the posture of NATO and he directly connected the assistance of Ukraine to the very security of the Alliance itself. In 2014, President Komorowski reiterated the need to have collective defense and support Ukraine in the conflict at the NATO summit in Wales. He mentioned:

“Russia’s aggressive actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine violate fundamental principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, threatening the stability of the entire Euro-Atlantic region. At this critical juncture, NATO must demonstrate its resolve to defend all its members and support partners facing aggression. Poland calls for a robust NATO presence on the eastern flank, enhanced readiness, and increased support for Ukraine’s defense capabilities. We also urge the continuation and strengthening of sanctions against Russia until it complies with international law. Supporting Ukraine is not only a matter of solidarity but a strategic imperative for the security architecture of Europe. The unity and

commitment of NATO allies are indispensable for deterring aggression and maintaining peace on our continent” (Komorowski, 2014d).

This 2014 pronouncement by President Komorowski is a multi-layered securitization initiative meant to sanction a body of future NATO action. It begins with a foundational claim that Russia’s aggression violates international principles, immediately followed by a warning that it threatens the stability of the entire Euro-Atlantic region. This creates an existential danger to the alliance. Komorowski then issues a series of specific directives—including calls for a robust NATO eastern flank presence, enhanced readiness, support for Ukraine, and strengthened sanctions—that function both as requests for legitimacy and as urgent demands for control. The main purpose of the move is to position these unprecedented, long-term actions not as a policy of choice, but as a strategic requirement to protect the European security order *per se*.

For Poland, the security of the eastern flank is crucial. Polish strategic leadership declined the USA President Barack Obama’s request to join a broad international coalition to contribute militarily to combat ISIS in early September 2014, citing the situation in Ukraine as the main impediment (Cooper, 2014). While there is widespread concern of great power (Russian) interference in Poland, strategic decision-makers are comparatively less afraid of terrorist threats against Poland.

In addition, a statement by President Komorowski further supports this interpretation:

“For us, as far as prospective involvement on a greater scale in any other region of the world is concerned, it could simply be easier and more understandable when we feel more secure ourselves on the eastern flank” (Komorowski, 2014d).

Poland's persistent advocacy for a permanent NATO presence on its eastern flank was driven by a fundamental strategic imperative: to transform its geographical vulnerability into lasting security. These objective underscores high-level diplomatic engagements, such as President Komorowski meeting with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. Following their talks, President Komorowski said:

"The situation has changed in character; this is not a temporary worsening of the security environment but clearly a phenomenon which shows signs of permanence. This calls for (...) much more far-going and ambitious steps in the run-up to the (NATO - PAP) summit in Warsaw. Poland upholds its expectations that with joint effort, the rotational presence of allied forces (...) on our territory, which we value highly, will be replaced by a permanent presence" (Komorowski, 2015c).

The Presidential declaration by Komorowski is a securitization action of control, namely to modernize and institutionalize NATO defensive position. It begins with a pivotal claim: that the security deterioration is not "temporary" but a permanent "phenomenon." This redefinition of the nature of the threat is the key assumption. The statement then issues a direct directive, framed as a national expectation: that the valued rotational allied presence must be replaced by a "permanent presence." It is not a demand to be legitimized but a demand to be made on a long-term basis which is fundamental and needs to be fulfilled by NATO allies. In making the threat permanent, Komorowski is attempting to induce a permanent and equally expensive collective security response, shifting the alliance to a permanent deterrent stance.

This redefinition forces a fundamental reassessment of NATO's long-term strategy. A temporary threat necessitates temporary measures, such as short-term military exercises or political condemnations. A permanent threat, however, necessitates a permanent structural change in the Alliance's force posture, military planning, and budget allocation. Building on the diagnosis of a permanent threat, the statement makes a clear and direct policy demand: the rotational presence will be replaced by a permanent presence.

Poland's new Prime Minister, Ewa Kopacz, directly connected the crisis in Ukraine to Poland's core security needs during her inaugural address. She affirmed Poland's commitment to strengthening its relationship with the United States and explicitly stated the government's intent to formally request an increased American military presence in the country, citing the ongoing violence as the primary rationale.

Prime Minister Kopacz (2014a) framed this as a strategic imperative:

“In light to what is happening in Ukraine, closer relations with the United States have become important. That is why my government will take all efforts to have the U.S. increase its military presence in Poland”.

From a strategic perspective, the presence of NATO and US troops in Poland provides Warsaw with assurance that, in the event of a military aggression scenario launched by the Russian Federation, the world's most powerful actor can protect Poland's national security. To boot, American troops on its territory represents the signal of the US long-term military re-engagement in Central and Eastern Europe (Kacprzyk, 2015, p. 7)

For years after the Cold War, NATO had deliberately avoided permanent basing in its eastern flank to avoid escalating tensions with Russia. Poland's statement signals that those old rules of engagement are, from its perspective, null and void due to Russia's actions. Similarly, Lorenz (2016) argued that for strategic leadership, the rotation of NATO forces should be so intense that, in practice, it would be permanent, thus improving NATO's ability to deploy troops to a threatened region. The Polish negotiating strategy, shaped by its strategic culture, was to claim that NATO's eastern flank had been ignored in terms of military resources for years, and that Poland would not contribute to the defense of NATO's southern border, in the fight against ISIS, unless the eastern border was secured first, making it a "give and take" situation (Council of Ministers Report, 2014 p. 3). This strategy was demonstrated in 2014–2015 when the United States repeatedly requested military aid for the anti-ISIS campaign. Poland consistently declined to provide meaningful direct support, limiting its contribution to the shipment of ammunition to Jordan, a move that underscored its prioritization of Eastern flank security over other Alliance demands (Radio Poland, 2015a, 2015b). However, participation in military operations led by the United States or NATO, such as Operation in Afghanistan (2001–2014), Iraqi Freedom (OIF) (March–April 2003) and the subsequent stabilization missions in Iraq (2003–2008), offered opportunities for Poland to modernize (its) territorial defense capabilities and to exchange security benefits with important allies, especially the United States (Doeser, 2016). Poland invested heavily, both politically and economically, in these operations. In Afghanistan, Poland deployed troops to OEF and contributed to ISAF, reaching its peak with 2,500 soldiers and civilian personnel in 2010 (BBC, 2011).

In conclusion, the events of 2014 proved that for Poland, NATO is not a theoretical insurance policy but an active, daily toolkit for crisis management and deterrence. Poland behaves as a state

that believes its security is indivisible from the strength and unity of the Alliance. By proactively triggering Article 4, relentlessly advocating for a permanent allied presence, and strategically linking its contributions to its core security needs, Poland successfully solidified its role as the leading and most consequential advocate for Eastern Flank security within NATO, fundamentally shaping the Alliance's post-2014 adaptation to a renewed era of great-power competition.

4.1.2.3 Convincing other NATO members to raise the Military budget

When Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, the leaders of Poland went beyond the usual budget debate and made a blunt and unanimous call to NATO. They demanded a reconsideration of defense spending on a serious scale in response to a revitalized, revisionist threat. President Bronisaw Komorowski contextualized the request in terms of what Poland was already contributing, 1.95 per cent of GDP on defense, barely short of the 2 per cent target of the Alliance (Komorowski, 2014g). He did not make it an issue of national pride, but the first in a series of arguments to build collective security. He pointed:

"Poland will do its best to keep defense spending at this level or even to increase the outlays. I will discuss this with the government," and "I hope that together we will manage to convince other NATO countries to increase their defense spending, as one should remember that recently Russia spent more on its armed forces while many NATO states reduced their outlays,"(Komorowski, 2014g).

It is a subtle securitization action by President Komorowski in 2014 to bring an issue to the NATO agenda. It combines a national commitment with a diplomatic directive to shape alliance-wide policy. This statement begins with a declarative promise (Poland will do its best...), which is a performative promise, and it is an example of the desired behavior. The core securitizing element is the directive urge, framed as a shared hope: "I hope that together we will manage to convince other NATO countries to increase their defense spending." This dilutes the demand and makes the goal explicit. The move is underpinned by an implicit warning, referenced in the comparative spending trend: the implied threat is that NATO's military edge and deterrence credibility are eroding relative to Russia. Its overall role is to securitize the problem of defense austerity in NATO, leveraging the very promise of sacrifice by Poland to call on a group, extraordinary, financial response to a changing balance of power.

The president's rhetoric grew more pointed as the crisis deepened, explicitly linking allied restraint to Russian provocation:

"We will try to encourage our allies to reconsider lowering their defence spending and raise the outlays where possible", because Russia had doubled its military spending over the past years,"(Komorowski, 2014k).

This is a calculated securitization initiative by President Komorowski in 2014, to ensure the matter of allied defense expenditure is placed on the agenda of NATO. It begins with a factual claim that "Russia had doubled its military spending," establishing a threatening comparative trend. This implicitly functions as a warning that NATO's security edge is being eroded. Komorowski then issues a diplomatic but clear directive urge, stating, "We encourage our allies to reconsider lowering their defense spending and raise the outlays where possible." The purpose of the move is to rebrand national defense budgets as a sovereign fiscal policy decision rather than a collective

security necessity, operationalizing the measured Russian threat to advance an extraordinary, alliance-wide policy change on military expenditure.

In addition to the recommendation of increased total budgets, Komorowski emphasized the quality of expenditures. In 2015, he declared that 25 percent of the Polish defense budget was to be spent on technical modernization, which is more than the 20 percent recommended by NATO. He hoped that other NATO members would also follow this. He said:

"Already in 2015, we will reach the level of 25 percent of the defense budget spent on technical modernization, where NATO had suggested 20 percent as the desirable level of spending on armed forces modernization. This is a very important achievement for Poland; I hope it will encourage other countries,"(Komorowski, 2014k).

This is an example securitization step by President Komorowski (2014) in which he uses his own financial obligations to the poles to put normative pressure on NATO members. It makes a specific claim of surpassing the alliance's modernization target, framing Poland not merely as compliant but as a proactive leader. This factual assertion functions as a subtle directive and warning: if Poland, a frontline state, can exceed the benchmark, then other members have no excuse for lagging in either spending levels or modernization quality. The hope that, thus, will promote other nations is the very essence of the move, whereby allied defense spending is being securitized through the prism of it being a direct quote of trustworthiness and collective determination. In posing itself as some sort of model, Poland was trying to stimulate a larger, more qualitative

rearmament inside NATO, justifying itself in the process and humiliating other states to do the same.

Essentially, the Polish Leadership discourse was an immense diplomatic campaign. The combination of a clear description of the danger with the physical financial commitments of Poland served to rebrand defense spending in the Alliance: as an excessive burden into an essential outlay on plausible deterrence. The arguments presented by Poland were the backbone to the official introduction of the Defense Investment Pledge at the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales, which puts Poland not only as a beneficiary of security, but as an active architect of a more robust Alliance.

4.1.2.4 Poland's Unwavering Stance on Crimea and Support for Ukraine

Although there is sometimes bilateral tension between the two countries, Poland is the nearest strategic ally of Ukraine authorizing its Euro-Atlantic ambitions and striving to offset the influence of Russia in the area (Andriianova et al., 2020). Polish Leadership has a firm position against the illegal annexation of the Russian region of Crimea (since 2014), which it considers as a subset of the wider aggression of the Russian government against Ukraine, requiring full Ukrainian territorial integrity.

After Russia launched its aggression against Ukraine and illegally annexed Crimea, Poland adopted a firm pro-Ukraine stance and refused to recognize the occupation. In this regard, Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski said:

“Under no condition will Poland recognize territorial changes made in violation of international law, we will not recognize Crimea's secession from Ukraine, "A potential aggressor" must be shown that "we are not helpless and we are not going to accept faits accomplis. Russia must assess whether such far-reaching political aggressiveness is worth risking a period of cold relations with the West, economic problems and isolation,”(Komorowski, 2014f).

The Polish strategic outlook is deeply influenced by an interpretation of history where the nation's geopolitical position is the principal cause of its historical tragedies, including its 18th and 20th-century partitions and the imposition of communism (White Book, 2013, pp. 9, 29–31; Council of Ministers Report, 2014). For example, the memory of the partitions (1772, 1793, 1795), when Poland was erased from the map by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, is a foundational trauma in Polish national consciousness. This experience fostered a persistent fear that Poland's fate could again be decided by great power bargains, making vigilance against external threats a core tenet of Polish strategy (Bunevich, 2018; Brudnicka, 2016). From this historical perspective, support for Ukraine transcends solidarity; it is seen as a direct defense of the international order that protects Polish sovereignty.

Therefore, Poland's policy evolved from declarative principle into active, multifaceted support. Komorowski framed this support as both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity, arguing that Ukraine's success served as a direct counter to Russian revisionism. He stated:

"Today it is necessary to respond to the situation by supporting Ukraine's independence, its right to choose a pro-western path. It is also important to support the modernization of Ukraine because in my opinion this is the path to creating (...) a good, suggestive example for the Russian people", (Komorowski, 2014i).

In 2014, a dual-layered securitization step by President Komorowski adds to legitimizing the continued intervention by the West. It begins with a directive claim that supporting Ukraine's sovereignty is a necessary response, framing aid as an urgent defense. It then escalates into a strategic directive to modernize Ukraine, underpinned by an implicit warning that failure would embolden Russian aggression. The very logic of securitization is shown in the ultimate objective which is to establish an exemplary suggestion to the Russian people. This changes the active solidarity into a long-term and psychological retaliation and the success of Ukraine becomes critical in ensuring that future threats are deterred and that the Euro-Atlantic order itself is defended.

This vision was reflected into firm policy advocacy in Euro-Atlantic institutions. Komorowski and later Polish diplomatic leaders said that NATO and the EU must assist Ukraine not merely with sanctions against Russia but also with long-term technical and military aid. He said:

NATO and the EU should support Ukraine..... through technical and military assistance, (Komorowski, 2014i).

This succinct directive issued by President Komorowski represents a deliberate securitisation effort aimed at legitimising subsequent actions. The use of the term should support is another unquestionable directive, which obliges NATO and the EU to implement a particular policy of technical and military support. The directive's potency derives from its reliance on preceding securitisation measures: the assertion of Russian aggression and the caution regarding its threat to regional security have already been established and accepted within the prevailing discourse. As a result, this statement removes the need to reiterate the existence of the threat; it builds upon the existing security logic to support the logical, concrete result, material aid. It is meant to translate the abstract idea of supporting Ukraine into a bona fide, action policy of military supply.

Polish efforts were particularly focused on making this assistance systematic and institutionalized. Following broad discussions at the NATO Warsaw Summit, Poland resolutely advocated for enhancing NATO-Ukraine collaboration in five key areas for Ukraine: critical infrastructure protection, defence sector reform, troop education and training, demining, and the disposal of explosive ordnance (Furgacz, 2017, p. 229). The ultimate goal of this support was integrative, aiming to bring Ukraine closer to NATO standards. As Komorowski reiterated:

"Poland upholds its commitment towards Ukraine. We will support the modernisation process of Ukraine's defence system, in line with the decisions of the Alliance as a whole, as we expect that Polish support will bring Ukraine closer to some standards, to achieving viable ability to cooperate with NATO," (Komorowski, 2014m).

Polish leaders stressed the territorial integrity of Poland and emphasized that the security of the Western world depends on Ukraine's safety and sovereignty. As Ukraine is the front-line state

facing Russian aggression, its protection is essential for the safety of Europe. President Komorowski stressed:

Speaking about the Russian aggression on Ukraine, President Komorowski said the Western world had to understand that "it would be safe when Ukraine was safe. Poland supports all moves designed to solve the (Ukraine-Russia - ed.) conflict, including the Minsk agreement, and hopes that all deals will be observed and implemented," (Komorowski, 2015f)

The above is a securitization act by President Komorowski whereby the agenda was created to legitimize diplomatic frameworks. It brings in one of the most crucial claims that creates a direct reliance on security: it would be safe as long as Ukraine was safe. This places Ukrainian security not only as an abstract humanitarian issue but as a prerequisite to greater Western security, which makes any danger to Ukraine a danger to the community. While expressing support for diplomatic resolutions such as the Minsk agreement, it also functions as an implicit directive urging the West to prioritize and enforce these arrangements. Their proclaimed hope in observing them is a warning on the consequences of failure to do so: in case there is violations of agreements, there will be no security to anyone. The move then securitizes the results of the conflict so that it forces the West to persist in the engagement and vigilance.

4.1.3 Conclusion

The period between 2014 and 2015 became a turning point in the post-Cold War strategy of security in Poland. Annexation of Crimea was no longer an issue of geopolitical crisis to be addressed, but rather of existential disruption that opened a multi-layered and systematic

securitizing process. This can be analytically summarized via the Five Strands Framework by Vuori which demonstrates that indeed securitization took place, but also how the Polish leaders detailed mobilization of the various securitization functions to meet tangible political goals.

To begin with, the agenda-setting strand was quite evident in the first framing of Russian actions as an existential threat. The leaders of Poland constantly stated that the sovereignty of Ukraine was threatened by Russian aggression, that there was a threat to the breakdown of the post-Cold War international legal order and strongly encouraged the domestic and international audiences to see the seriousness of the threat. This turn made Russia more of a central issue in the Polish security discourse rather than a regional one.

Second, the justification of extraordinary actions in the future, which is the second strand of Vuori, had a leading role in the discussion. Polish leaders accused that security threats were no longer temporary, but permanent; claimed existential danger, warned of catastrophic consequences of non-action, and demanded the acceptance of policies that did not follow the pre-2014 political and military assumptions. This was an assertion that legitimized the Polish dominant position in the lobbying of the EU sanctions to Russia and its call to realign the NATO posture radically on the eastern front.

Third, the strands of deterrence came into play when there were authoritative statements and declarations that made Russia a permanent threat to the Euro Atlantic security order. Rhetorically defining Russia as an aggressor whose actions did not correspond to the major norms, the Polish leadership tried to both create an atmosphere of commitment and adherence to the purported enemy and also indicate a decisive nature and a determination to act in accordance with the most basic principles. These declarative speech acts helped to reconfigure NATO as a passive instrument of guaranteeing security to an active tool of strategic purpose.

Fourth, the control strand was largely targeted at the domestic populations. Proposals to increase defense expenditure, speed up modernization of the military and national cohesion were presented as conditions not to be compromised upon in the name of national survival. By invoking threatened existence and aiding the vulnerability of the frontline positioning of Poland, political leaders needed the social unity and political agreement, making the unity the most credible deterrent.

Lastly, the state of legitimation of the past acts came into being with the Polish leaders retrospectively justifying the shifting of policy, which was already being pursued. The decisions concerning the modernization of the military, the level of military spending that exceeded the norms of NATO, and a stronger strategic orientation with NATO and the United States were justified by the security logic based on the historical memory, geopolitical vulnerability, and the Crimea lessons. This strand strengthened the permanence of the securitization process by making extraordinary measures normal as a response that should be done and is needed.

4.2 2022 to 2023 Discourse Analysis

Unlike many Western European nations, Poland did not need to fundamentally alter its security policy in response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. For Warsaw, the event confirmed a long-standing strategic assessment rather than prompting a new one. Since the end of the Cold War, successive Polish governments have consistently identified Russia as the predominant threat to national and European security, framing it as a persistent threat of authoritarian imperialism (Sus, 2025, pp. 1202-3), except for the Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej –

SLD) (Chan, 1995). In accordance with the pattern, this analysis shows that Polish leadership discourse since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine is an intensified and multi-sectoral securitization move. President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki present Russia not only as a military threat but also as an existential threat in the humanitarian, regional, civilizational, and hybrid arenas. This stratified structure is aimed at various audiences to justify an all-inclusive, extraordinary reaction.

4.2.1 Securitizing Move: Framing Russia as a Multi-Dimensional Existential Threat

The invasion of Ukraine on a full scale became a moment of a decisive temporal break in the discourse of securitizing in Poland. After February 2022, the securitization became more intense and greater, in terms of scale and moral urgency. Russia is no longer being discussed as a strategic rival or regional threat, but as a systemic and civilizational threat. In line with the pattern, this analysis shows that the Polish leadership discourse since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine has been a multi-sectoral securitization move that has intensified. The leadership of Poland is not only portraying Russia as a military threat but also as an existential threat in the humanitarian, regional, civilizational, and hybrid spheres. This stratified structure is aimed at a variety of audiences to justify an all-inclusive, extraordinary reaction.

4.2.1.1 Humanitarian and Moral Level: Ukrainian Civilians as the Vulnerable Referent Object

On the humanitarian level, Ukrainian civilians, particularly women and children, are securitized as vulnerable referent objects, as in the frequent mention of war crimes, genocide², and mass suffering. This framing adds an extra layer to the conventional geopolitics and creates a high morality imperative, increasing the illocutionary power of securitization. After a visit to Ukraine by the US Vice President, Kamala Harris, President Andrzej Duda accused the Russian military of war crimes in Ukraine. The repeated focus on the attacks on maternity hospitals, residential areas, and civilians contributes to humanizing the threat and taking it out of the context of conventional warfare. He said:

“The Russian troops are carrying out barbaric aggression there, murdering innocent people, civilians, bombing maternity clinics, where women who are about to give birth are being rushed out on stretchers. These crimes bear signs of genocide, because when someone attacks maternity hospitals full of pregnant women, if someone bombards residential houses, housing estates where there are no military installations, if someone destroys, burns apartment buildings, if someone kills ordinary civilians – these are simply war crimes,” (Duda, 2022b).

President Duda's 2022 statement is a powerful securitization move aimed at legitimizing extraordinary international action and intervention. The statement begins with a graphic, emotive claim that frames Russian actions as barbaric aggression and details specific atrocities, such as the bombing of maternity clinics. This factual statement creates a moral baseline of criminality. This

² The term “genocide” is widely used in official, media, and academic discourse to describe atrocities committed by Russian forces in Ukraine, such as mass killings, deportations, and cultural destruction. See European Parliament, 2022/2660(RSP); and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights’ independent reports.

raises to a point of a direct warning that such actions are indicative of genocide, making the threat not a violation of the concept of sovereignty but a literal assault on humanity.

4.2.1.2 Regional and Institutional Level: Euro-Atlantic Security and the NATO Eastern Flank

On the regional and institutional scales, European peace and security, especially the NATO eastern flank, is constructed as a referent object under direct threat. The President said:

“We met today at a time of an unprecedentedly worsened security environment, caused by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, the gravest threat to Euro–Atlantic security in decades. Russia’s war against Ukraine has shattered peace in Europe and is causing enormous human suffering and destruction” (Duda, 2022h).

The President's statement frames the war as a disruption to the current European order of security, rather than a local or European security order, or a regional or temporary crisis. By framing the situation as unprecedented, the speech shifts securitization from threat recognition to obligation creation, foreclosing political alternatives to collective response. Within Vuori’s framework, this move primarily legitimates extraordinary action by redefining inaction as moral and strategic complicity in the collapse of European peace. At the same time, it erases the difference between Ukrainian and Euro–Atlantic security, symbolically incorporating Ukraine into the Western security community and justifying its continued activity beyond its common policy practices.

In 2010, Russia was listed as a strategic partner of NATO in its security strategy document (NATO, 2010). This was indicative of the expectations of East-West relations that were optimistic in the

post-Cold War era. But, with the development of further international relations, in particular, following the crisis of 2014 in Ukraine, the relations between NATO and Russia experienced a paradigm shift, which turned into a conflict rather than a partnership. Polish President condemned NATO on the basis of viewing Russia as a partner country. President Duda said:

“In 2010, NATO's strategic concept saw Russia as a partner country..... Today, Russia is the biggest threat to NATO countries, most of all for those on the alliance's eastern flank” (Duda, 2022i).

The 2022 statement by President Duda is a securitization maneuver that re-establishes Russia's identity within the NATO system and thus justifies a major change of strategy. The statement begins with a claim of historical fact, referencing the 2010 strategic concept that viewed Russia as a partner, establishing a baseline for change. It then issues a definitive warning by declaring Russia the biggest threat to NATO countries, a status upgrade that frames the danger as existential and alliance-wide. The particular attention given to the eastern flank is used to personalize and ground the threat, thereby making it immediate to some members.

Polish President also stressed that the European values and identity are at risk because of the Russian aggression on Ukraine. He mentioned:

“Today we meet in times of the biggest war since World War II, in which European values and identity are at stake” (Duda,2023g).

The statement by President Duda is a foundational securitization move that makes a definitive claim, stating this is the biggest war since World War II, and frames it as a generational rupture. It

immediately issues a warning that European values and identity are at stake, transforming the war from a territorial struggle into an existential battle for Europe's soul. The implicit directive is that all policy must be subordinated to defending these values, justifying maximal support for Ukraine as a defense of Europe itself.

At the regional and institutional level, from individual states to the security community itself, particularly NATO's eastern flank. The audience here is explicitly NATO and EU political elites, who are discursively interpellated into a shared sense of vulnerability and responsibility.

4.2.1.3 Civilizational and Systemic Level: The Post-1945 International Order

At the highest level of abstraction, Polish discourse constructs Russia as a threat to the post-1945 international order. Both President Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki repeatedly frame the invasion as a civilizational rupture. President Duda said:

“The Russian aggression has produced in effect the greatest security crisis in the world since the end of World War 2” (Duda, 2022d).

President Duda's 2022 statement serves as a maximalist securitization move aimed at legitimizing a global and historic response. The claim that Russia's actions constitute the greatest security crisis in the world since the end of World War 2 is a definitive assertion of unprecedented scale, designed to override any perception of the war as a regional conflict. This functions simultaneously as a warning: by framing the crisis in generational and global terms, it signals that the consequences of inaction would be catastrophic for the entire international system. The implicit directive is for the global community, particularly hesitant Western allies, to recognize the exceptional nature of

the threat and mobilize resources and political will commensurate with a world-historical emergency.

Similarly, Prime Minister Morawiecki said:

“The Russian invasion of Ukraine is not just an attempt to deprive this country of its sovereignty or the tragic fate of its people. It is a violation of the entire order established after World War II. Russia is attempting to destroy the world we know” (Morawiecki, 2022c).

Prime Minister Morawiecki’s 2022 statement begins by acknowledging a specific claim—the invasion aims to deprive Ukraine of sovereignty—but immediately transcends it to issue a far broader warning that the attack is “a violation of the entire order established after World War II.” This shapes the menace to a systemic and civilizational level.

Further, President Duda argues that the Russia-Ukraine war is beyond a regional war. He said:

“This is not a regional conflict: it is not Russia’s war against Ukraine; it is a hotbed of global fire, and this war will bear on our countries and yours. Unless it has already happened” (Duda, 2022k).

The 2022 statement by President Duda is a strategic act of urgency and securitization intended to shatter the remaining illusion of the war as a nationally remote and regionalized conflict. It begins by forcefully rejecting a limiting claim (“This is not a regional conflict”) and replaces it with a

catastrophic warning: the war is a “hotbed of global fire” whose consequences “will bear on our countries and yours.” This framing converts the threat into a bilateral problem to a contagious danger to all countries. The concluding phrase—“Unless it has already happened.”—serves as a potent directive, implying that the damaging effects are already underway and that delayed or insufficient action constitutes a fatal strategic failure.

President Duda also accused Russia of trying to take political and military control of the so-called post-Soviet zone. He said:

“In a broader view, the aim of the Kremlin is to regain control over the so-called post-Soviet zone and destroy the current world order” (Duda, 2023i).

The 2023 statement by President Duda is a strategic securitization that presents the long-term danger posed by Russia, transcending immediate military aggression to reveal a grand strategic plan. The statement makes a definitive claim about the Kremlin's intent: to “regain control over the so-called post-Soviet zone.” This puts the actions of Russia in a new perspective as not reactive or defensive, but as a program of imperial restoration. This claim escalates into a warning that the ultimate aim is to “destroy the current world order,” positioning Russia as a systemic revisionist power bent on dismantling the entire rules-based international system.

These are also a macro-securitization, where the referent object extends to global stability, international law and shared values. Using the historical frame of the World War II as the reference point, the Polish leaders place the conflict in the most radical security discourse possible justifying the extensive involvement of the international community and unprecedented action.

4.2.1.4 Hybrid and Societal Level: Non-Military Sectors as Referent Objects

Polish securitization also extends to non-military sectors, which strengthens the image of Russia as a multidimensional threat. These are Food security, Cyber and information security, and Societal security. In his speech at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), President Duda highlighted:

“The world's food security and sustainable development are being seriously threatened, especially by Russia's criminal aggression against Ukraine, which is driven by imperialist pride. Russia has prevented and then significantly limited the export of food and agricultural products from Ukraine, which was one of the world's leading producers” (Duda, 2022).

The 2022 statement by President Duda amounts to a strategic securitization step through which the threat of Russian aggression is globalized, and its repercussions are now limited not only in Europe but in the whole of fundamental human security. The statement begins with a broad claim that the world's food security and sustainable development are being seriously threatened, immediately framing the issue as one of global, not just regional, concern. This serves as a warning by weaponizing food exports, Russia is destabilizing global markets and endangering vulnerable populations, thereby creating a cascade of humanitarian and political crises. The implicit but powerful directive is for the international community—including non-aligned states in the Global South affected by food insecurity—to recognize that countering Russian aggression is not merely a European geopolitical issue, but a prerequisite for global stability and development.

Polish leadership discourse also emphasized that Russia is a threat to Cyber and information in European countries, and accused Russia of attacking different countries in the EU with cyberattacks. The Prime Minister mentioned:

“Russia has launched a hybrid war – in addition to conventional attacks, we are seeing increasing hacking attacks on critical infrastructure and disinformation and propaganda activities” (Morawiecki, 2022a).

Morawiecki's statement is a securitizing speech that constructs Russia as an existential, multidimensional menace. The speech broadens the scope of security outside the military sphere to the political and societal spheres by referring to cyberattacks and disinformation as a hybrid war. The statement begins with a definitive claim that Russia has launched a hybrid war. It then defines the spheres of this war, not merely conventional attacks, but also hacking attacks on critical infrastructure and disinformation and propaganda operations. This functions as a detailed warning: the threat is not confined to the front lines but penetrates the digital, informational, and psychological foundations of the state and society, targeting resilience and public trust.

President Duda also elaborated on this in a wider context, saying that the social stability and cohesion of Europe are under threat from the Russian hybrid war. He mentioned:

“Russia and other authoritarian actors and strategic competitors, and their proxies, as well as non–state actors, are using hybrid attacks to advance their goals. They seek to exploit our openness, interconnectedness, and digitalization by trying to interfere in our democratic processes and institutions, by promoting disinformation campaigns. Their aim is to undermine trust in our societies, instrumentalizing politically sensitive issues, conducting

malicious activities in cyberspace, or manipulating energy supplies. These malign actors also abuse migratory flows. All these activities have become more aggressive, coordinated, and aimed at undermining our unity, cohesion, security, and stability” (Duda, 2023j).

The statement begins with a sweeping claim, identifying a diverse array of hostile actors--"Russia and other authoritarian actors and strategic competitors, and their proxies, as well as non-state actors"--who are unified in their use of "hybrid attacks." It then issues a detailed warning, cataloguing the methods of this assault: interference in democratic processes, disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, energy manipulation, and the instrumentalization of migration. The explicit directive is embedded in the conclusion that aggressive and coordinated activities are aimed at undermining Euro-Atlantic unity, security, and stability. The shift serves to securitize the whole spectrum of hybrid warfare, which explains an integrated, extraordinary, and enduring defensive stance in terms of political, digital, energy, and social all-encompassing as a precondition that cannot be compromised to make the democratic order survive.

4.2.1.5 Analytical Synthesis

In the securitization of Russia, as this is framed by the Polish leadership, several referent objects are created at the same time, which denotes a layered and extensive securitizing move. Combined, the securitization of Russia in Polish discourse of leadership reveals a multi-level formation of referent objects, or Ukrainian civilians, to the global order. At these tiers, Polish leaders target various overlapping audiences, including NATO and EU elites, Western societies, global institutions, including the UN and FAO and society at home. This is the strategic diversification

of the audiences, and this is where the securitization works exactly, guaranteeing the acceptance of exceptional actions in the political, moral, and institutional fields.

4.2.2 Extraordinary Measures

The discourse of the Polish leadership after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia is an example of a clear transition between the expression of Russia as an existential threat to the direct support of the far-reaching military, economic, and institutional measures. When Russia is positioned as a systemic and morally unacceptable threat, extraordinary measures are no longer being offered as discretionary policy options but as needed actions of self-defense. This part is an empirical study of how Polish political leaders justify extraordinary measures through official speeches and statements. The analysis is then inductive, and the documents are grouped into specific yet overlapping categories of action justification. All the categories embrace a particular discursive process in which exceptional political, military, and economic reactions become necessary and legitimate.

4.2.2.1 Institutionalization of Extraordinary Measures through NATO

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 fundamentally and irreversibly changed the perception of NATO as an important alliance to become an absolute pillar of national existence and security in Poland. Article 5 of the NATO treaty declares that an attack on a member is an attack on all (NATO, 2025). In the case of Poland, which has a long border with the aggressive Russian ally Belarus and the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, this collective defense commitment acts as a deterrent to any possible Russian expansionism. Poland appreciates Article 5 as a critical

insurance policy that safeguards its sovereignty directly after witnessing the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

President Andrzej Duda's pronouncement in Bucharest is a turning point in this development. He said:

“In the face of what has happened in Ukraine, in the face of unprecedented Russian aggression on that free, independent, sovereign state... for us, and for the whole of Europe, it could be said for the world, a new conception of NATO is needed” (Duda, 2022c).

The statement by President Duda in 2022 is a securitizing step towards structural change of NATO. It begins with a strong claim, framing Russia's invasion as an unprecedented aggression against a free, independent, sovereign state, thereby establishing a clear moral and strategic rupture. This is followed by a warning that the consequences extend beyond Ukraine “for us, and for the whole of Europe... for the world,” signalling that NATO's existing strategic posture is no longer adequate. By concluding that the NATO conception requires a new version, Duda secures the alliance's existing structure and justifies an overall doctrinal redesign as an existential need in the post-February 2022 security environment.

The historical experiences of Poland influence its active stance in the regional security, dominant role in Central and Eastern Europe, and arguments in favor of the expansion of NATO and EU to the East (Komarnytsky, 2024). Poland regards the presence of NATO on the Eastern flank as an indicator of its security. President Duda said:

“It was important for NATO to strike a 'tough and strong' stance towards Russia's treatment of Ukraine, and said that in the present situation, Poland wanted the reinforcement of the eastern NATO flank” (Duda, 2022i).

The statement of Polish President Andrzej Duda (2022) highlights that Poland is desperate enough to have a strong NATO reaction to the aggression of Russia on Ukraine. The tough and strong stance of the alliance called by Duda placed the Russian actions in the context of a direct threat to Euro-Atlantic security. The fact that he particularly focuses on strengthening the eastern flank of NATO underscores the role of Poland as a frontline state in need of tangible, collective defense strategies, i.e., changing the strategic posture of the alliance to one that is more oriented towards deterrence rather than forward defense in the face of a new Russian expansionism.

Likewise, Prime Minister Morawiecki encouraged restoring the European security architecture more robustly to protect against aggression from enemies. He told:

“The situation in Ukraine is without precedent over the last several decades. Together with our allies, with the United States, with NATO member countries, we must build an even stronger security architecture in the eastern part of Europe and the European Union,” (Morawiecki, 2022f).

The 2022 Prime Minister Morawiecki statement is a strategic securitizing move that aims at justifying a permanent change in the European security architecture. It is through this characterization of the situation in Ukraine as without precedent that he makes the crisis seem like a historic break, one that makes previous strategic presumptions outdated and implicitly cautions that Europe will continue to be vulnerable without a fundamental change. His directive that “we must build an even stronger security architecture in the eastern part of Europe” transforms this

assessment into a compulsory and geographically specific policy demand. Morawiecki presents this as a shared necessity by appealing to cooperation with the United States and NATO, securitizing the status quo of security as insufficient, and rationalizing a permanent structural strengthening of NATO's eastern flank as an existential need.

The presence of the NATO troops in its territory was also encouraged by the Polish Leadership to ensure its safety against Russian aggression. During the meeting between the leadership of Romania and the Polish president said:

“I believe that the NATO presence in Poland and Romania should change its profile to be a defensive permanent presence of North Atlantic Alliance forces on our soil” (Duda, 2022c).

This statement of 2022 is a direct securitization step to take control, which requires a fundamental and permanent change in the posture of NATO. President Duda makes a clear claim about what is required: the alliance’s presence must change from rotational to “defensive permanent.” This is presented as a necessary adaptation, which carries an implicit warning: the existing, temporary model is insufficient to deter the ongoing existential threat. The core of the move is a precise directive: the presence “should” be permanent. This is an appeal to a binding, structural commitment of NATO allies. This role aims to securitize the security structure of the eastern flank, positioning a permanent, forward-based force as the only plausible insuring mechanism of the security of Poland and Romania, and forcing the alliance to instantiate a new phase of mutual deterrence.

During the Extraordinary Summit of the North Atlantic Alliance in Brussels, where the US President Joe Biden was present, the Polish president stated:

“We do believe that the new strategic concept of NATO must take into account the changes resulting from the Russian aggression in Ukraine. What is needed is even greater engagement of the Alliance in our region, equally in terms of soldiers deployed as well as infrastructure” (Duda, 2022d).

This 2022 statement by President Duda is a strategic securitization move aimed at reorienting NATO’s core doctrine. The statement begins with a firm claim: that Russia’s war has fundamentally changed the security environment, and therefore NATO’s new strategic concept “must” account for it. This serves as both a factual assertion and a directive that alliance strategy cannot remain static. The core directive becomes explicit that this requires a concrete, increased investment in military infrastructure. The implied warning is that a strategy that fails to materially strengthen the eastern flank would be dangerously obsolete. The relocation is a way to securitize the process of strategic planning of NATO; further, permanent militarization of the eastern border of the alliance is not a demand, but a prerequisite of a credible defense in the new era of Russian aggression.

On the same note, similar to the President, the Prime Minister also encouraged the reinforcement of NATO and EU military forces in the eastern region (Morawiecki, 2022a). The President urged, as an example:

“We want more NATO equipment and weapons to be stationed on the alliance's eastern flank in order to make it more accessible for NATO forces if a need arises,” (Duda, 2023e).

This 2023 declaration by President Duda is a pre-emptive securitization exercise and logistical to maximize the operational readiness of NATO. It makes a direct claim about Poland's objective: to have more alliance equipment pre-positioned on the eastern flank. This puts the present situation in the form of inadequacy. The statement's directive is clear: this pre-positioning is necessary to make assets "more accessible for NATO forces if a need arises. It serves to securitize the logistical readiness of the alliance on the basis that deterrence cannot be credible in the absence of the forward deployed material necessary to defend in case of an assault, and therefore justifies the long-term militarization of the eastern border of NATO as a practical requirement.

Polish leadership discourse also emphasizes NATO's new member accession, as that means NATO's broader membership would extend.

"We need to finalize the accession of Finland and Sweden..... We also need to respond to Ukraine's membership aspirations. Now it's high time to give Kyiv answers on how the accession process should look and what steps are required to guarantee the desirable end result. The support for Ukraine needs to be continued" (Duda,2023c).

This 2023 quote by President Duda is a sequential and broadening securitization step that seeks to expand the Euro-Atlantic community in a strategic way, and specifically in direct opposition to the Russian aggression. It begins with an urgent directive to "finalize the accession of Finland and Sweden," framing their membership as an immediate necessity to secure NATO's northern flank. This achieved momentum is then leveraged for a more ambitious directive to provide Ukraine with a clear membership pathway, arguing it is "high time to give Kyiv answers." This dual demand is underpinned by an implicit warning that failing to decisively expand the alliance and commit to Ukraine's future would embolden Russia and leave the West strategically weakened. The concluding call for continued support reinforces the claim that Ukraine's security is inseparable

from that of the alliance. The move aims to securitize NATO's geopolitical borders and political hesitancy, framing the rapid integration of new members and a concrete vision for Ukraine as non-negotiable requirements for the collective defense and future stability of the West.

4.2.2.2 Complete Defeat of Russia as a Security Requirement

For the extraordinary measurement, the Polish leadership emphasized the total defeat of Russia in the Russia-Ukraine War, and the category centers on constructing Russia's defeat as a prerequisite for security at multiple levels. Duda explicitly links Ukraine's success to the safety of Europe as a whole:

“A secure Europe is a Europe where Russia is defeated in political, military, and economic ways. A defeated Russia means safe Ukraine, safe Poland, safe Lithuania, safe Latvia, Romania, and, frankly, also the rest of Europe” (Duda, 2022m).

This 2022 statement by President Duda constitutes a definitive and maximalist securitization move that frames the complete defeat of Russia as the singular condition for European security. It begins with a declarative claim that establishes an absolute prerequisite to defeating Russia in this war by political, military, and economic ways. The powerful, implicit directive is that all policy must be subordinated to and measured by this goal of comprehensive Russian defeat.

From the safety of Ukraine, Poland, Romania, and the Baltic countries, it reached a global scale.

The president argued that for global safety, Russia must be defeated. He said:

“Russia must lose the war in Ukraine for the world to be safe. If it (Russia) won, it would start another one soon” (Duda, 2023a).

This declaration by President Duda is a landmark securitization initiative that introduces the war result as a binary determinant of global future security. It begins with a definitive claim that presents a non-negotiable condition to defeat Russia in this war for safe the world that turns victory into a political goal and a need to exist. This is immediately reinforced by a stark warning that if Russia is not defeated, it would start another war, framing Russia not just as a present aggressor but as an inherently expansionist threat that will escalate if unchecked. The move serves to securitize any alternative outcome, arguing that only Russia's complete strategic failure can guarantee long-term safety, thereby justifying continued and escalated support for Ukraine as the necessary means to secure global stability.

President Duda further extended the security threat beyond Europe to the global order, expanding the scope of justified extraordinary action. He said:

“The Russian mentality is an imperial and colonial mentality that does not recognize any arguments except the argument of force. I believe that the only way to change such a mentality is to lead Russia to a clear defeat. Russians need to feel the bitter taste of defeat so that they stop thinking about the world in this way,” (Duda, 2023).

President Duda’s 2023 statement is a civilizational and psychological securitization move that frames Russia’s defeat as a necessary condition for transforming a perceived innate threat. The statement begins with a sweeping claim that identifies the source of aggression not merely in state policy but in an immutable “imperial and colonial mentality” that only recognizes “the argument of force.” This serves as both an explanation for the current violence and a warning that this mentality will continually regenerate threats unless addressed. Through the statement that Russians

must taste the sourness of defeat, Duda situates the purpose of the conflict not only as defending its territories but also as psychologically and ideologically re-educating a nation. The relocation serves to securitize even the worldview of Russia, and the only way to accomplish permanent change in Russian strategic culture and hence a permanent peace is an all-out and uncompromising military triumph.

4.2.2.3 Sanctions Against Russia

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, along with EU central and Eastern European countries, the Polish Leadership urged the EU and its allies to impose massive and unprecedented sanctions against Russia. These measures include economic sanctions, individual sanctions, diplomatic actions, and visa restrictions. The reasons for this urge of sanction are to force Russia to end the illegal aggression against Ukraine through maximizing pressure on Russia and using all tools available to diminish Russia's ability to wage its illegal war of aggression (Beaumont, 2025). President Duda said:

“As Poland, we have been actively helping our neighbors from day one. We have insisted internationally on the imposition of the toughest possible sanctions against aggressors, and they have now become a reality” (Duda, 2022a).

This 2022 statement is a retrospective securitization move that legitimizes Poland's leadership. Duda makes a declarative claim that Poland led from “day one,” framing it as the architect of the toughest sanctions. This implies a warning that, without such resolve, the response would have failed. The directive is embedded in the validation that sanctions “have now become a reality,” positioning Poland's firm stance as the model for future action. The action secures Poland's foreign

policy, which explains why it has been a forceful advocate in the past and justifies the need for further, unremitting pressure against Russia.

Similarly, the Polish Prime Minister called for avoiding buying from economically pressured Moscow. He added:

“I have called for an embargo on Russian coal, as well as for us to stop buying Russian oil and gas within the next several months. Today, this is the measure through which Putin is able to finance his war machine” (Morawiecki, 2022d).

This statement is a direct economization-securitization act, which directly links the purchase of European energy to the preservation of the war. It begins with a clear directive, calling for a full embargo on Russian coal, oil, and gas. This is justified by a definitive claim that energy revenue is transforming fossil fuels from commodities into weapons for Russia. The implicit warning is that any continued purchase directly funds atrocities and prolongs the conflict. The action serves to securitize Europe's energy relationship with Russia, with the speedy and complete energy decoupling not an economic cost but a necessary step in strategic self-defense to disable the aggressor's military potential (Ababakr, 2022).

Prime Minister after the meeting with the Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria. As he added:

“Russian troops commit regular war crimes; therefore, we have to cut off the oxygen to this war. The money mainly comes from oligarchs, oil, gas and other goods that Russia exports. Therefore, I call for these sanctions to be real, concrete and effective” (Morawiecki, 2022e).

The statement by Prime Minister Morawiecki (2022) is a practical and ethical securitization decision that directly links the atrocities of the war in Russia to the need to impose effective economic sanctions. The statement begins with a definitive claim that Russian troops commit war crimes, establishing a foundation of criminality and moral outrage. This leads to a logical directive to cut off the oxygen to this war. The warning is implicit: failure to effectively sever this oxygen—Russia's financial lifelines from energy and oligarchs—will perpetuate the atrocities. The second sentence sharpens this into a concrete directive: sanctions must be "real, concrete and effective," targeting the specified revenue streams. This action serves to securitize the imposition of sanctions on the ground that any step short of this is complicit in facilitating a war crime, and that only the maximization of economic pressure can be morally and strategically able to suffocate Russian aggression.

The head of the Polish government further appealed to the German public:

“We must stop Putin because we can see another threat of genocide on the horizon. Innocent people are dying – children, women, men, soldiers – you see these images every day. What about your consciences? Let's help them together. The sanctions package must be crushing" (Morawiecki,2022c).

It is a moral and emotional securitization effort by Prime Minister Morawiecki in 2022, aimed at securing immediate, dramatic action by directly addressing the conscience. It begins with an urgent directive must stop Putin. This imperative is justified by a grave warning of another threat of genocide on the horizon, elevating the stakes from war crimes to the most severe crime against humanity. The personalization of the threat is by the appeal to the everyday picture of the dead

children, women, men, soldiers, and then a direct appeal to the consciences: What about your consciences? This turns passive viewers into moral accomplices in the absence of action. The final directive demands that the sanctions package must be crushing, framing economic measures as the necessary tool to fulfil this moral obligation. The rationale behind the move is to securitize international inaction on the basis that anything short of crushing sanctions is a moral failure that facilitates genocide.

4.2.2.4 Support Ukraine for Militarization

As most Western European countries began realigning their foreign policies only in February 2022 (Caulcutt, 2022), Poland had already established itself as one of the central figures in the Western response. Poland, together with the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Baltic States, was quite fast in assisting Ukraine, sending lethal weapons even before the full-scale invasion and encouraging NATO and European allies to take a firm position. By so doing, Poland attempted to, and to a large degree succeeded in, establishing the overriding theme of the global response to the war in Russia (Kujawski, 2024).

When the war began, the Polish leadership argued in favor of military assistance to Ukraine. In this sense, Prime Minister Morawiecki justified:

“It is our duty to be with Ukraine today, in this darkest hour. After all, Ukraine and Ukrainians are also fighting for peace in this part of Europe, and perhaps also in all of Europe. Today, we must all help our Ukrainian neighbors as smartly as possible to ensure that these dark clouds do not come over our territory” (Morawiecki, 2022h).

The statement is the moral and strategic securitization step, which presents the assistance to Ukraine as a moral duty and collective self-defense. The message puts the Ukrainian assistance by Poland in the context of both moral and strategic necessity. It then makes a pivotal claim that Ukraine and Ukrainians are also fighting for peace in this part of Europe, and perhaps also in all of Europe. This reinvigorates Ukraine's struggle and puts its soldiers in the role of protecting European peace itself. This claim seamlessly evolves into a warning that the “dark clouds” of war will threaten “our territory” if Ukraine falls. The final directive—“we must all help our Ukrainian neighbors as smartly as possible”—is a call for maximal, effective aid. The purpose of the move is to securitize European inaction in the claim that failing to offer decisive support to Ukraine would not only indicate a moral failure but a direct security disaster to the whole of Europe, hence justifying unlimited support.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki further remarked on the supply of military equipment and financial support to Ukraine:

“Arms supplies, as well as financial support, are critically important elements - a condition for Ukraine's survival, for its victory. With victory, there is an opportunity to create a better world. - If your neighbor's house is on fire, yours is not safe either - this should not only be the wisdom shared by Central and Eastern Europe, but also by the rest of Europe, the prime minister stressed” (Morawiecki, 2022j).

The declaration of Prime Minister Morawiecki of 2022 is a bright securitization maneuver, which frames support of Ukraine as an existential need with universal moral and strategic interests. The statement begins with a definitive claim, presenting arms and financial aid as a “condition for

Ukraine's survival." This is immediately linked to a visionary warning that only with Ukraine's victory is there "an opportunity to create a better world," implying that a Russian victory would forge a darker, more dangerous global order. The core of the move is the powerful directive encapsulated in the analogy: "If your neighbor's house is on fire, yours is not safe either." This metaphor is a wake-up call to the entire Europe to acknowledge that it is also vulnerable and urgently do something. Morawiecki attempts to securitize European complacency, by presenting inaction as an utter failure of both wisdom and security, as the reason why Ukraine must receive continuous and maximum support not just as a form of solidarity, but as the necessary, self-serving defense of the European home.

In a panel discussion at the World Economic Forum in Davos, President Andrzej Duda and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg participated in the discussion of how security and peace can be restored. Andrzej Duda said

"I fear that Russia was preparing a new offensive, probably in the next few months, and therefore, there was a need to send new military resources and equipment to Ukraine. The number of weapons delivered to Ukraine so far is not enough. Modern tanks and missiles are what Ukraine really needs now to defend itself and stop any Russian offensive" (Duda, 2023b).

President Duda's 2023 statement is a tactical and urgent securitisation move aimed at pre-empting a looming military escalation. The statement begins with a specific claim grounded in apprehension: "I fear that Russia was preparing a new offensive." This serves not as a vague warning but as an intelligence-based prediction, establishing immediate temporal pressure ("in the next few months"). This warning of an imminent attack is directly linked to a diagnosis of failure:

“the number of weapons delivered... is not enough.” The core of the move is a precise directive that follows from this assessment: there is a “need to send new military resources,” specifically “modern tanks and missiles.” Referring to these very systems as that which Ukraine actually needs at present, Duda turns the discussion of the idea of general support into that of urgent and explicit procurement requests. The function is to securitise the coming timeframe and the current level of Western support, framing the immediate provision of advanced weaponry not as an incremental boost but as a critical necessity to prevent a catastrophic Russian breakthrough and secure Ukraine’s survival.

“I call on all leaders of European countries and the North Atlantic Alliance to show solidarity with Ukraine, to provide ongoing support, and to send military aid to Ukraine, so that the defenders of Ukraine have the necessary arms to fight. Do not hesitate! Do not be afraid! There is no more room for „business as usual” with Russia. Where blood is shed, an honest man does not do business. Bloodshed must be stopped at all costs. Today, the only way to stem it is with modern weapons because that is what Ukraine needs” (Duda,2023f).

The 2023 assertion by President Duda is a securitization escalation that is both maximalist and morally-charged in an attempt to get Western leaders to take decisive action. It opens with a direct directive, calling on European and NATO leaders to "show solidarity," "provide ongoing support," and "send military aid." This is not presented as an appeal but as a necessity, which is emphasized by the orders, "Do not hesitate! Do not be afraid!" The statement issues a stark warning that there

is "no more room for 'business as usual' with Russia," morally condemning any form of engagement with the aggressor as complicit ("Where blood is shed, an honest man does not do business."). The final, definitive claim provides the only acceptable solution: "the only way to stem it is with modern weapons." This action serves to securitize indecisiveness and half-actions, in which any delay or inadequate assistance is treated as a moral weakness encouraging bloodshed. It attempts to justify the direct and unrestricted supply of hi-tech weapons as the only, indispensable, way of ending the war.

In this regard, President Duda mentioned:

“The heroic struggle of Ukrainians to defend their own country is also a struggle for the future of Europe. That is why our united support to Ukraine is of crucial importance. We need to commit here to upholding our solidarity with Ukraine as long as it takes” (Duda, 2023g).

The 2023 statement made by President Duda is a consolidating securitization act that unquestionably integrates the defense of Ukraine with the existence of Europe itself. It begins with a pivotal claim, asserting that Ukraine's "heroic struggle" is not solely national but also "a struggle for the future of Europe." This spin changes the narrative of the war, making all Ukrainian soldiers an advocate of the European project. This claim is immediately followed by a directive rooted in necessity: "our united support to Ukraine is of crucial importance," and "We need to commit here to upholding our solidarity with Ukraine as long as it takes." The expression of need and as long as it takes makes the support more than a temporary policy; an open-ended commitment, an existential commitment. The implied warning is that any wavering in this commitment would not only betray Ukraine but also sacrifice Europe's own future. The purpose of the move is to securitize the duration and integrity of the Western support on the grounds that indefinite,

unremitting solidarity is the necessary, non-negotiable price of a future European free of domination by aggression.

This belief became actionable to Poland, which perceived the war against Ukraine in Russia as its war too (Kononczuk, 2023). The country received more than 3.5 million Ukrainian refugees (Tyler, 2022; UNHCR, 2022) and, as other European leaders discussed the possibility of providing lethal aid, Warsaw was the first to deliver defensive weapons to Kyiv as early as January 2022 (Dickinson, 2023). During the first four months of the war, the Polish military commitments were only second to the United States in value (Ptak, 2022), and by October 2023, the bilateral aid expenditure was 0.7 percent of GDP, which is only surpassed by the Baltic states and Denmark (Trebesch et al., 2023, p. 28). The 330-mile border with Ukraine was strategically important, and up to 90 percent of all Western military and humanitarian aid passed through the country, especially through the main NATO logistics center in Rzeszów airport (Michta, 2016; Zerofsky, 2023).

Other than providing logistical support, Warsaw was also actively involved in shaping the international response, actively urging allies to provide more support (Bayer & Barigazzi, 2023) and lobbying to have the EU issue strong sanctions and a military assistance mission to Ukraine (Brzozowski, 2021, 2022; Maurer et al., 2023). This active position essentially changed the geopolitical position of Poland. The war transformed Poland and the Baltics from members embroiled in rule-of-law conflicts with the EU into NATO's new frontline states—a shift that repositioned them within the Union from contentious partners to essential strategic allies (Cienki, 2022). This shift was easily adopted by the Polish governing elites, who promoted the idea of the

center of gravity of the European geopolitical movement to the east and always emphasized the leading role of Poland in the organization of the Western reaction to the invasion (Morawiecki, 2022k; PAP, 2022; Rau, 2022).

4.2.3 Conclusion

Polish security discourse has not changed in the 2022-2023 period, but has consolidated and radicalized a perception of threat originally explained in 2014. The actual invasion of Ukraine did not necessitate a new strategic assessment, but instead confirmed the previous securitizing arguments and institutionalized Russia as a multidimensional existential threat to Ukrainian civilians, Euro-Atlantic security, European values, and the international order established after World War II.

Viewed through Vuori's Five Strands Framework, this stage reveals a shift in the dominant political functions of securitization. Agenda-setting had already been achieved, and the discourse of 2022–2023 focused primarily on legitimizing extraordinary and irreversible action. Claims of existential threat were paired with warnings of systemic collapse and followed by authoritative directives that framed militarization, alliance expansion, and long-term confrontation as conditions of survival rather than policy choices. This strand explains how measures such as permanent NATO deployments, doctrinal transformation, and sustained military support to Ukraine were normalized.

At the same time, the deterrence strand became more pronounced through declarative speech acts that constituted Russia as a civilizational and systemic enemy, signaling resolve to both allies and the adversary. NATO was discursively redefined from a reactive guarantor of last resort into a

permanently deployed instrument of deterrence and defense in a security environment portrayed as irreversibly hostile.

The control strand was primarily directed at domestic and allied audiences. By securitizing humanitarian catastrophe, energy and food insecurity, cyber instability, and democratic cohesion alongside military threats, the Polish leadership expanded the range of referent objects across societal and civilizational sectors. This proliferation heightened moral urgency and constrained political alternatives by framing unity, sacrifice, and long-term commitment as obligations.

Finally, the legitimization of past acts strand stabilized the securitization process by retrospectively justifying decisions taken since 2014, including military modernization, leadership in sanctions policy, and Poland's transformation into a central logistical and strategic hub for Ukraine.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Evolution and Significance of Poland's Securitization Discourse

This chapter develops the empirical results and contextualizes them within broader theoretical and scholarly discussions of securitization, European security, and Polish foreign and security policy. The analysis is based on the securitization theory of the Copenhagen School and the Five Strands Framework of Vuori to show how Polish rhetoric of leadership shifted its approach to securitization beyond a preliminary and selective securitization of Russian aggression after the 2014 annexation of Crimea to a multidimensional and further-secured securitization in response to the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The empirical data show that Poland's securitization of Russia was not a sudden occurrence in 2022; it was a path-dependent process that developed over time. The occupation of Crimea in 2014 marked the beginning of a long-standing discourse of securitizing, according to which Russia was depicted as a threat to the national security of Ukraine and Poland, as well as to the overall Euro-Atlantic order. Nonetheless, this initial stage of securitization was quite limited in terms of scope and intensity. In comparison, the post-2022 discourse was a qualitative change; it has shifted the securitization issue, which has become more of a regional and strategic phenomenon, to the level of a civilizational and systemic discourse, which requires extraordinary action never seen before.

In 2014-2015, the securitization was the primary agenda-setting and legitimizing instrument of the Polish leadership in the Euro-Atlantic community. Russia was termed as a revisionist state that was violating international laws and disrupting the sovereignty of Ukraine thereby threatening the post-Cold War European security order. The referent objects of this phase were very externalized: the territorial integrity of Ukraine, the eastern wing of NATO, and the validity of international

norms. Although Poland emphasized its own vulnerability, the discourse was largely forward-looking and defensive, focusing on deterrence, sanctions, and increased NATO presence as precautionary and corrective measures rather than as instruments of total confrontation.

According to Vuori's framework, the two main strands of securitization that prevailed in this first stage were agenda-setting and legitimizing future acts. Polish leaders cautioned about the long-term implications of Russian aggression and encouraged allies to acknowledge the gravity of the threat and take extraordinary yet still limited actions, including sanctions, reassurance efforts, and a rotating troop presence. Importantly, the discourse remained anchored within the existing institutional and normative framework of NATO and the EU, suggesting a securitization that sought reinforcement of the status quo rather than its transformation.

The full invasion of Ukraine of 2022 was a discursive breakthrough. Although it was based on some previous securitizing narratives, it has fundamentally changed their content, intensity and political role. The empirical evidence indicates that Polish discourse of leadership since 2022 committed securitization in more than two fields at the same time military, humanitarian, political, societal, and civilizational. Russia was not just a regional aggressor or a violator of norms anymore but a threat to the existence of European civilization, democratic values and peace in the world.

This change is especially notable in the securitization theory. The referent objects have multiplied and deepened, the Ukrainian civilians, European societies, the liberal international order, and even the post-1945 moral foundations of Europe became securitized. This expansion of referent objects allowed the Polish leaders to explain not only the deepening of military aid to Ukraine but also extensive economic sanctions, permanent militarization of the eastern wing of NATO, and the need to achieve security by means of Russia's defeat.

Vuori's (2011) Five Strands Framework illustrates that in this later phase, securitization moved beyond agenda-setting toward deterrence, control, and legitimation of past and ongoing extraordinary measures. Polish discourse increasingly adopted declarative and authoritative speech acts, asserting that extraordinary measures were no longer optional policy choices but existential necessities. Calls for permanent NATO presence, expanded alliance borders, and the defeat of Russia were framed as unavoidable responses to an unprecedented threat, effectively normalizing a state of prolonged emergency.

With respect to the available literature, the results not only validate but also expand earlier studies. The motivation of materials and strategy of Poland in its security position, especially being geographically vulnerable and having experienced Russian aggression in the past are properly pointed out by realist and neoclassical realist accounts. Similar approaches to constructivism and identity-based approaches reflect the significance of historical memory and narratives of civilizations. This paper, however, has revealed that these factors cannot be used independently to justify the time of security response, the intensity, and the form in which Poland has responded to the security issue. These structural and ideational factors were converted into actual political results through the process of securitization, or, to be more precise, the discursive creation of existential danger and the mobilization of extraordinary solutions.

By adopting a longitudinal approach, this research addresses a key gap in the literature. Rather than treating 2014 and 2022 as isolated crises, it shows how securitization developed incrementally, with earlier discourses laying the groundwork for later intensification. The annexation of Crimea functioned as a formative moment that established Russia as a legitimate object of securitization, while the full-scale invasion served as a catalytic event that enabled the expansion and radicalization of that discourse.

Theoretically, the results highlight the analytical importance of the Copenhagen School and the framework created by Vuori in the exploration of security discourse across time. The Polish example shows that securitization is not a dichotomous phenomenon but an active process that can intensify, expand, and relocate the role regarding the changing political environments. Simultaneously, the case is also addressed to arguments against the securitization theory, by showing that the discourse was not constructed in an empty space, it has the contact with objective material threats, historical experiences, and even institutional limitations.

Overall, this discussion has demonstrated that the securitization of Russian aggression in Poland underwent a significant shift in form, evolving from a cautious, alliance-focused warning in 2014 to a wide-ranging, urgent call for systemic change after 2022. The years 2014-2015 and 2022-2023 suggest that the continued use of a particular discursive framing approach, supported by the unfolding of events, can alter perceptions of threats at the international level. The Polish example demonstrates that securitization is most effective not only when it responds to a crisis in isolation, but also when it forms a long-term interpretive structure that can help shape how crises are framed when they strike. In this regard, Poland's securitization of Russian aggression is not only a response to war but also a long-term attempt to re-establish security in the Euro-Atlantic community.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation aims to reveal the Polish leadership's securitization of Russian aggression and how the securitization evolved and intensified during the critical period of the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion in 2022. The findings of the study show that compared to Polish leadership discourse after the annexation of Crimea of Ukraine, the discourse during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine is more intense, and even the extraordinary measurement is also very robust in where the Polish leadership call for economic sanctions, NATO present in eastern flank and militarization of NATO members and the present of NATO troops in the soil of Poland eastern flank in 2022 full-scale extra ordinary measurements are very strong Polish leadership call for complete defeat of Russia and help Ukraine by giving arms and give military equipment and more strong tough sanction for Russia. If these extraordinary measures are not taken, peace and calm in the world are not possible. The paper's significant contribution lies in its application of the securitization framework from the Copenhagen School, tracing the securitization process from the annexation of Crimea to the full-scale invasion.

This dissertation also contributes theoretically by demonstrating the analytical usefulness of the Copenhagen School of securitization when combined with Vuori's Five Strands Framework. The framework enabled a nuanced understanding not only of whether securitization occurred, but also of how it functioned politically—through agenda-setting, legitimating extraordinary measures, deterrence, and the normalization of emergency politics. The Polish case shows that securitization can evolve from a primarily preventive and defensive logic into a comprehensive, civilizational narrative that justifies prolonged, systemic, and extraordinary measures.

Empirically, the study highlights Poland's role as an active securitizing actor within the Euro-Atlantic community. Rather than merely reacting to external threats, Polish leadership strategically

framed Russian aggression as a shared existential threat to NATO, Europe, and the post-1945 international order. This framing played a crucial role in mobilizing alliance solidarity, legitimizing NATO's enhanced presence on the eastern flank, and sustaining long-term political, military, and economic support for Ukraine. In this sense, the findings demonstrate how smaller and frontline states can exercise discursive power within international security institutions.

At the same time, the study acknowledges its limitations. The exclusive focus on international audiences—primarily NATO and the European Union—means that domestic political dynamics, public opinion, and internal contestation over security narratives were not systematically analyzed. Additionally, reliance on officially translated speeches may limit access to the linguistic nuances of original-language discourse. These limitations do not undermine the core findings but indicate important directions for further research. Future studies could build on this research by examining how Polish securitization discourse was received and contested within domestic political debates, media narratives, and public opinion. Comparative studies could also be conducted to determine whether comparable securitization paths are also evident among other frontline states in Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, the increase of the time horizon past 2023 may be used to evaluate the fact that the securitization process is still prevailing or the de-securitization processes are already starting due to the further development of the war.

Finally, this work makes a significant contribution in that it conducts a longitudinal and process-oriented study of the development, intensification, and changes of securitization over time instead of treating it as a one-time or fixed event. In doing so, the research fills a notable gap in the existing literature, which has largely examined Poland's security response through isolated case studies or materialist, state-centric explanations.

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