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## **THE NEW POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF MIGRATION IN EUROPE BETWEEN EXTERNAL BORDERS AND INTERNAL FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT**

**Abstract:** The creation of the Schengen area has modified the political geography of migration with important implications from a variety of perspectives, all of which affect the migration management policies of EU member States as well as those of third countries. On the one hand, the Schengen area established the first supranational border in the history of Europe; on the other hand, it obliged a small group of countries (those bordering non-EU States) to monitor the new border, manage refugee flows and repatriate illegal migrants from third countries, despite often being unprepared to tackle the migration phenomenon. The policies implemented in both the Mediterranean and continental countries have revealed a lack of long-term vision in dealing with several migration related issues. Currently, the absence of a single EU migration policy, the egocentric approach of some non-Mediterranean European countries and the re-emergence of border walls characterize the context. Nevertheless, migration flows and terrorism in Europe represent significant opportunities to strengthen the common European area, rather than weakening it. Moreover, evidence suggests that such global phenomena are better addressed at a supranational level rather than on a national basis.

**Key words:** Schengen, border, mobility, migration policies, Frontex

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## **Introduction: between opportunities for European integration and the challenges of the border**

The inseparable link between integration and the border has been evident ever since the foundations of the European project were laid. Indeed, the Preamble to the Treaty of Rome declares the intention to "eliminate the barriers which divide Europe"<sup>2</sup> and the will to achieve ever closer union between Member States. This objective required an essential rethinking of the border concept that may still be necessary today; rather than representing an element of opposition and division between European actors, the border must be intended as a shared common area and an element of solidarity between States in defence of a single external frontier<sup>3</sup>.

A generic "Europe" has come to be identified by many as "the Mother of all sins" in the light of the structural difficulties faced under today's prevailing economic crisis. However, the benefits acquired through the process of European integration are many and although often forgotten as soon as they have been obtained, they serve the whole continent, single States and common citizens alike. Take by way of example the huge yet incredibly underestimated and mistakenly internalised benefit of peace, that has lasted over sixty years in an historically belligerent continent, theatre to two world wars; the freedom of movement without border costs for goods and citizens throughout the whole of the Union; the Erasmus program that has allowed thousands of young people to have their qualifications recognised and study in different European countries, getting to know a range of diverse realities and breaking down prejudices; the introduction of hundreds of European guidelines and measures regarding the protection of citizens and the environment, as well as greater liberalisation and competition leading to the reduction of costs. The whole list would be far too long to reproduce here and would still not include any of the indirect advantages that this historic project has produced. Naturally, costs have also been incurred, but these cannot all be attributed to the European Union as we are popularly led to believe on a regular basis. Objectively, the benefits still far outweigh the disadvantages.

Recent international events however, above all in terms of migration, have badly shaken the vision of a unified European area and the protection of its borders, bringing the European Union to an impasse, stuck half way between the responsibilities of its respective member States and those of the European institutions themselves. A complex tangle has ensured that has produced serious consequences for national and pan-European security concerning two fundamental aspects: the management of Europe's external borders – illegal trafficking, irregular migration flows and terrorism – and reception procedures for those seeking international protection.

Two contrasting and opposing visions and needs have thus arisen: the safeguard of the European area and the protection of national interests. On the one hand, European integration has led to the elimination of internal barriers within the European Union,

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<sup>2</sup> EUR-Lex. Treaty Establishing the Common Economic Community – EEC Treaty. Retrieved from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=URISERV:xy0023&from=IT>

<sup>3</sup> In Political Geography, the concepts of border and frontier are notorious for having two different meanings. For the purposes of this article however, they will be used as synonyms, as is often the case in much contemporary debate.

transcending political, social and economic borders. Freedom of movement is fundamental to the vision of a Europe without barriers and the construction of a European community and identity. On the other hand, from an intergovernmental perspective, territorial security necessarily prevails on the freedom of movement; States have the right and the duty to exercise their territorial sovereignty through control of their borders and management of migration flows and it is this control that has recently led to the creation of both tangible and intangible barriers.

We are thus compelled to ask what will happen to the future of the European project if national individualism triumphs to the detriment of pan-European unity and solidarity. There are four main critical factors that may have a susceptible influence in one way or another on the future of the common European area: the Schengen Agreement for the Freedom of Movement, the Frontex Agency for Border Management, the Common Asylum Policy and cooperation with Third Countries.

### **Schengen: from the creation of the European area to endangered border permeability**

The creation of the Schengen area – material embodiment of the abstract concept of a European space – represents one of the most important and tangible results of the project for European integration, whose final objective is the realisation of an area of freedom, security and justice (European Communities, 1997). The Schengen Agreement focuses specifically on a pact of mutual trust and solidarity between member States that has led to the abolition of barriers and controls along its internal borders; for all intents and purposes external borders have been "moved" to coincide almost entirely with those of the whole Schengen area. This implies that every single country, particularly those situated along the area's external frontier, assumes responsibility for the control of the Schengen borders in the interests of the other member States to ensure the highest levels of internal security. This fundamental commitment implies the ability - and the trust of the other countries – to control borders (airport borders, land borders and maritime borders) and to cooperate with all relative State and supranational actors.

The explicit and implicit implications of the Schengen Agreement comprise a variety of positive elements, but also and above all many weaknesses. By allowing the free movement of people within its member States, Schengen has radically changed the political geography of mobility and individual State migration policies have acquired a previously unheard of supranational dimension. The security and management of Schengen borders in airports is relatively straightforward, as for example in Austria; land and maritime borders under significant migratory pressure are, however, much harder to control, as is the case with Poland and Italy respectively. At the same time, checks at internal national borders have gradually been abolished, providing foreign immigrants with the same advantages as EU citizens, whether they be regular or illegal (Morehouse & Blomfield, 2011).

Essentially, the Schengen Agreement has given rise to a contradiction in terms that lies at the heart of Europe: on the one hand the Agreement claimed to establish a supranational border for the first time in the history of Europe; on the other, it handed the onus of managing that border to a limited number of States, those bordering with extra-EU countries who also had to assume responsibility for the identification and

repatriation of irregular migrants from Third Countries. This difficult situation has been further complicated by the fact that the initial five signatory States<sup>4</sup> of the Schengen Agreement have become twenty-six today, twenty-two of which are part of the European Union and four of which are non-members<sup>5</sup>. The EU members not part of the Schengen Agreement include Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia and Romania<sup>6</sup>, for whom the Treaty has not yet taken effect and Ireland and the United Kingdom<sup>7</sup> who did not adhere to the Agreement by exercising the opt-out clause.

The extension of the borders of the Schengen area has produced particularly ambiguous results. Freedom of movement has increased to our advantage with a significant economic impact – tourist flows and economic actors have been facilitated – yet there has also been a rise in the level of risk to internal security and the onus and responsibility on States that border with extra-Schengen countries has increased, while perhaps the most worrying result has been the weakening of mutual trust and solidarity between member States. Evidently, the "original sin" inherent in the Schengen Agreement from the very beginning –by which (it is worth repeating) only a limited number of States has been given the onus of controlling a supranational European border – has had serious political, social and juridical consequences, not just for EU nations and those that border third countries in the Mediterranean particularly, but indirectly for the whole of the rest of the Union (Giordano, 2015).

The recent migratory emergency has thus created a profound crisis in the already complex equilibrium between the need to safeguard freedom of movement within the area and the need of each single State to protect its own territorial borders from transborder dangers. The latter principle is indeed protected by the Schengen Border Code that expressly declares the right to reinstate border controls in the exceptional event of serious risks to public order and national security<sup>8</sup>. Although this exception can only be applied for a maximum of thirty days – provided the other EU countries and European institutions<sup>9</sup> have been informed – it sanctions the right for every State to unilaterally reinstate internal borders, defaulting on the Schengen *acquis* at their own discretion.

Obvious examples include the actions undertaken by countries such as Hungary, Germany, Austria and France who, by reinstating checks along their common borders, have created an authentic domino effect, calling into question everything that has been achieved so far. Hungary for example, recently become an important entry point for migration flows from Africa and the Middle East due to its border with the extra-Schengen Serbia, has adopted a series of measures that totally violate the principles of

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<sup>4</sup> Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

<sup>5</sup> Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland

<sup>6</sup> Several member States, among them Germany, Holland and Finland, have expressed doubts over the membership of Romania and Bulgaria, justified by concerns raised about these two countries and their ability to control their external borders, particularly regarding Romania and the borders along the Black Sea.

<sup>7</sup> The specific consequences of Brexit will be the object of discussion for many years to come.

<sup>8</sup> EC regulation, N. 562/3006 of the European Parliament and the Council, 15th March 2006.

<sup>9</sup> According to the Code: "EU countries and the Commission should consult, at least 10 days before the date for the reintroduction of border controls, with a view to organising, where appropriate, mutual cooperation between the Member States and to examining the proportionality of the measures to the events giving rise to the reintroduction of border control and the threats to public policy or internal security. The decision to reintroduce border control at internal borders shall be taken in a transparent manner and the public informed in full thereof, unless there are overriding security reasons for not doing so".

"responsibility" and "solidarity" on which the Schengen Agreement is based. Over recent years, unable to contrast the mass arrival of migrants along its external borders, it first adopted penal measures against irregular and illegal immigrants, such as prison detention and deportation – clearly violating the Common Asylum Policy and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union – and has since erected a fence along the whole of the border with Serbia to check the flow of migrants coming across the Balkans, one of today's most well-trodden migration routes (Šantić, 2015), thus breeding feelings of profound mistrust in other EU member countries.

Moreover, despite Germany's initial reception of non-registered asylum seekers, in June 2015 it decided to reinstate controls along the border with the Czech Republic, Poland and Austria, thus initiating reciprocal actions in those countries who also reintroduced controls along their own borders, as did Holland shortly after. In a chain reaction, other European countries reintroduced checks along their borders within the European area: Germany with Austria, Austria with Italy and Hungary, Slovakia with Austria and Hungary, the Czech Republic with Austria, and Denmark with Germany. This trend is almost certainly destined to increase given current migration flows and, not least, the tragic episodes of terrorism that have led to the intensification of nationalist movements.

Truth be told, EU States have always considered immigration an exclusively national responsibility and have therefore failed to put the provisions of the Schengen Agreement into practice in the application of the Convention. This same legislation did not stop at the straightforward abolition of borders, instead it stipulated a set of compensatory measures to stop the freedom of movement from transforming itself into an open invitation for illegal trafficking of goods or people. In fact, in this case article 17 of the Schengen Agreement (Eur-Lex, 2000) speaks clearly: "with regard to the movement of persons, the Parties shall endeavour to abolish checks at common borders and transfer them to their external borders. To that end they shall endeavour first to harmonise, where necessary, the laws, regulations and administrative provisions concerning the prohibitions and restrictions on which the checks are based and to take complementary measures to safeguard internal security and prevent illegal immigration by nationals of States that are not members of the European Communities".

In other words, the Schengen Agreement should not be intended solely as a guarantee for the freedom of movement, rather its ratification foresees a commitment to achieve uniformity in sectors fundamental to security such as the visa system, cooperation between police forces and the sharing of important information and responsibilities. Although some level of uniformity exists today in certain areas of the Schengen acquis, there is still a lack of consistency in the protection of external borders that represents a weakness in the system, as well as threatening the security of its internal borders. This has produced an increase in mistrust between member States and therefore the reinstatement of controls within the area. It will thus be necessary to work effectively on coordination between competent institutions and, as a last case hypothesis, plan a reform of the Schengen system that introduces real sanctions against those States who contravene the obligations of the Agreement.

Even more worrying than the escalation of border controls within the Schengen area is the construction of walls, barriers and fences along borders between EU countries, an authentic step back in time that was not thought possible after the decades of free

movement that have brought so many benefits to European States. The Eighties ended with a Europe proud to have dismantled the Berlin Wall, yet this barrier was an exit border designed to stop Eastern Germans from emigrating to the West; the government of East Germany forced citizens to remain within its own territory, restricting their freedom of movement. Today's walls are entry borders, that is, they are intended to stop unwanted people from entering the country, such as those born in unfortunately poor countries or persecuted in various ways by their governments. This is particularly true in Eastern Europe where more and more anti-immigration barriers are being erected. For the first time since before the Second World War, an area once known as "the time bomb of Europe" is again marked by militarised borders. Hungary has recently finished building a wall along the border with Serbia, while both Bulgaria and Greece have erected analogous barriers along their respective borders with Turkey and Macedonia has done the same along the border with Greece. The one objective that all these States share is to stop illegal immigrants from entering their own national territories.

The European crisis has not only affected territories on the external borders of the continent. One example is the dreaded idea of a wall between Austria and Italy. Construction at Brennero has been blocked for now, yet Austrian military controls have greatly increased. The Austrians believe that the Italians are not capable of properly managing migratory traffic and it is difficult to contradict them. The point is that the border with the blue of the sea cannot be barricaded with trench barriers<sup>10</sup>. Another new wall is also being studied by the British government to stop the transit of migrants from France across the Calais pass. A barbed wire fence has already been erected with a view to transforming it into a more solid barrier; indeed, London has announced that work will shortly begin on a reinforced concrete wall.

At this point, we need to ask ourselves what motivates States to build barriers, returning to times of closure and opposition that have historically led to tragedy. As transit countries that do not represent the final destination of those migrating, governments often claim they are not able to sustain the cost of reception procedures. In each of these countries however, it is evident that the pressure exercised by anti-immigration movements represented in parliaments have become the thorn in the side of governments who are thus forced to respond. Clearly, statistics tell us that walls help prevent migrants trying to cross borders at specific points, sometimes reducing their number drastically. However, rather than stopping migration waves, they simply deviate them towards other less controlled or harder to control borders. Recent research shows that the construction or strengthening of walls will not change or interrupt the flows. What counts are the reasons that lie behind the decision to depart: new wars, revolts, famine (Giordano, 2013) and the worsening of unfavourable climactic conditions (Giordano & Pagano, 2013) determine the scale of migration.

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<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, it is important to recall that Italy assumed responsibility for the noble task of rescuing tens of thousands of refugees from the risk of drowning and death with the Operation Mare Nostrum, while many European countries preferred to stand back and look the other way, ignoring the tragedies being consumed in the Mediterranean, as if they were a solely an Italian problem. It is also true that Italy failed to respect the rules of the Dublin Regulation by allowing some migrants to pass through without carrying out checks, although everyone now agrees that the Dublin Regulation has produced some grotesque results – as will be further explained in the rest of this article. It is likewise true that the issue regarding the Brennero wall was raised by Austria at the same time as a large migration flow – although it was much reduced at the time – and the approaching presidential elections in the country.

Migration flows cannot be managed through the erection of barriers as routes change continuously in response to conditions. When one entrance is closed another one is sought and in the meantime, no solution has been found that addresses either the ethical issues that lie behind the departure of migrants, nor the practical problems of managing a border to protect one's territory. This is exactly what has been observed at Europe's borders over recent years. Migrants, and above all traffickers, have shown that they can adapt to the changes introduced by the physical or legal barriers erected by individual States. What emerges from most studies and research and that weighs more heavily than any other consideration, is the European Union's basic evasion of the issue. Let it be clear: this is due to the existence of twenty-eight different and in some cases contrasting national policies, as well as the national resistance of European States guided by governments afraid of antagonising their electorates. It is also clear that no single European electorate sharing the same objectives exists and that nation States respond to the requests of their own populations, thus creating walls, trenches and barriers between their territories. The question becomes even more complex when we are dealing with the sea.

### **Frontex: bordering on chaos?**

While Schengen was meant to facilitate freedom of movement within European territory, the second link in the chain of a single European migration policy should have been the Frontex Agency and the guarantee of external border management. The Agency was created with the aim of setting up a transnational body for the management of borders in collaboration with the member States of the EU, the Associated members of the Schengen area and Third Country partners, yet the Agency has still not fully achieved its operational objectives. For exquisitely geographical reasons, as well as the habitual fondness for national sovereignty, not all member States were interested in the creation and above all funding of a supranational border control authority. Once established, Frontex thus remained in the shadows at length for the same reasons that delayed its creation. Aside from its deficiencies in personnel and budget, the Agency was localised in Warsaw, Poland, far from what have turned out to be today's "hottest" immigration routes based in the Mediterranean<sup>11</sup>.

Today, the Mediterranean has become a "migratory region" (Schmoll et al., 2015). Nearly all the main migration routes towards the EU involve the Mediterranean region. First is the Central Mediterranean route starting in North Africa, particularly Libya, used by those escaping from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East towards Italy. Second is the Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey towards Greece and Bulgaria, crossing the Balkans. Third is the Western Mediterranean route from North Africa to Spain.

In this context, protracted migration flows towards Europe have made efforts to improve Frontex even more urgent. One attempt in this direction is a proposal advanced

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<sup>11</sup> It is not surprising then that between 2005 and 2010, due to stringent statutory indications, Frontex was mostly limited to carrying out intelligence operations, collecting shared information on migration flows and training customs officials. In parallel, Frontex began to coordinate transnational missions for patrolling European borders, along with the assistance of third States, although the leadership of these was always entrusted exclusively to authorities in the host country.

by the European Commission to create a European Border and Coast Guard<sup>12</sup> that ensures the reinforced and shared management of the Union's external borders. The Commission intends the new system to take on a decisive role in the control of Europe's external frontiers, allowing it to surpass the structural limits of Frontex, which aside from those already cited, include the impossibility of autonomously carrying out repatriation operations or managing the border, both of which still require explicit intervention requests from the member States concerned (Franko & Gundhus, 2015).

The newly improved version of the Agency should thus be able to monitor borders through periodic risk and vulnerability assessments. Current deficiencies should be overcome by equipping the Agency with a Rapid European Border Guard Team, a technical pool and the doubling of available staff. The operational deficit would thus seem to have been resolved by allowing for direct and indirect interventions conceded by the new system. In fact, where deficiencies in national asylum systems are revealed, Frontex would be invested with the power to make member States intervene in a timely and appropriate manner. In the case of emergency situations, potentially dangerous to the integrity of the Schengen area, the Agency would have the authority to intervene to ensure the implementation of actions on the ground.

Although the new system apparently presents possible solutions for the management of external borders, it has at least two weak points: operational autonomy and management of procedures for asylum application. One of the main criticisms made against Frontex was its lack of operational staff and its lack of autonomy in operations due to its dependence on support from member countries. Over the years, particularly during migration emergencies, Frontex Agency has benefitted from an increase in terms of budget, however this cannot be used to consolidate operational tools, nor increase personnel. For example, 775 border guards were requested from Frontex in 2015 but only 447 were despatched, many of which were temporary (Carrera & den Hertog, 2016).

The new Agency intends to overcome previous difficulties thanks to the contributions of individual member States. This would mean a renewed dependence on the support of member countries both in terms of staff and resources, because the new provisions of the European proposal do not involve the creation of a truly supranational border guard team under the direct control of either the new Agency or Frontex. In fact, operational personnel would remain under the authority of the contributing Member State, coordinated by the Agency.

In this sense, the new proposal will not resolve the most significant structural impediment of today's Frontex system, that of operating under a constant state of emergency. The new proposal does not foresee the creation of a completely autonomous border control unit that can support and improve security along the external borders of the area. One of the motivations that lies at the basis of this incomplete reform is once again member States' lack of interest in conceding a part of their national sovereignty. The constitution of an entirely European unit would mean sending citizens from other member countries to control one's own national borders and this does not fit well with the territorial jealousies of national political authorities.

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<sup>12</sup> The European Border and Coast Guard will bring together the Coast Guard and European Border Agency created by Frontex and the authorities responsible for border management of the single member States.

Another aspect that appears revolutionary on a first reading is the possibility for Frontex or the new Agency to intervene directly in the territory of a member State without a direct invitation from the latter. On careful examination, however, it emerges that the two European agencies are obliged to agree a shared action plan with national authorities. Added to this, there is currently no coercive mechanism that makes the Member State collaborate with the Agencies. In light of the above, the proposal is far from representing an efficient and autonomous system for the security of external borders that moves beyond the emergency based action of Frontex or the future Coast Guard and European Border Agency.

The above situation is even more evident regarding the management of the flow of refugees; greater provisions in terms of budget, personnel and technical tools remain inefficient when introduced into a flawed context where European asylum standards are not respected within all member States, thus deepening the current climate of mistrust and lack of solidarity. For this reason, the European Asylum Support Office could play a focal role in supporting those States that provide primary assistance to asylum seekers throughout all necessary recognition and relocation procedures. Furthermore, the EASO could represent a useful tool for improving the quality and skills of national personnel, raising the standard of local reception and protection systems for asylum seekers and contrasting the unbridled wave of intolerance that has recently characterised the whole of the Schengen area.

### **Dublin: a short-lived nationalist game**

This brings us to the third critical factor listed in the introduction to this article: the EU Common Asylum Policy. It is worth remembering that with the Dublin Regulation, signed on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1990 in the Irish capital, the fifteen Member States of the then European Community agreed to establish a common set of rules for the processing of asylum applications within the European area. The objectives it set were essentially two: to reduce the number of "refugees in orbit", when asylum seekers are sent from one State to another due to repeated refusals to assume responsibility on the part of the governments involved and to reduce the phenomenon of "asylum shopping", when asylum seekers present applications for asylum in more than one State. The ways in which the Dublin Regulation was to have achieved these objectives were: specific criteria for the identification of one State that is responsible for the examination of the asylum application; the obligation of individual States to process the applications they are responsible for and the reciprocal exchange of information.

To place this issue within its wider context it is essential to recall that the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999 changed asylum legislation within the EU, transferring it to Community Law through a regulation of the Council on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2003, applied as of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2003. This regulation, the so-called Dublin II, substitutes the Dublin Regulation of 1990 with the aim of improving, strengthening and systematising cooperation between member States in this delicate field. Specifically, the regulation is based on the principle that the first member State the asylum seeker enters is responsible for examining his/her application (so-called "one stop, one shop").

Facts demonstrate that over the last decade the rules set by the Dublin Regulation for a common asylum policy in the EU exist on a purely formal level as the basis for an

informal and tacit compromise between Mediterranean and Northern European states. Despite restrictions established by Dublin, the Mediterranean European States are substantially alone in having taken on the costly onus of receiving and guaranteeing initial assistance to asylum seekers, while maintaining a lax approach to those who refuse to register themselves because they wish to formally apply for asylum in Northern Europe. This is the only way to explain, with Eurostat and UNHCR statistics at hand, why Sweden is the EU country that hosts the highest number of refugees per-head. While in absolute terms in 2014 the European queen of reception of refugees was Germany who received more than 202 thousand asylum applications, a third of the 625 thousand registered in the whole of the EU (Mautz, 2015).

This game of *do ut des* holds few advantages for either side and only persists because it is unanimously considered the lesser evil in comparison to the only possible alternative: a real common asylum policy. In brief, the EU states have preferred to adopt an inefficient, badly performing system, rather than concede their respective national competences in this field. This evidently defective system puts the existence of a common good such as the freedom of movement at serious risk. Guaranteed by the Schengen agreement, this system was feasible as long as the number of new arrivals to Europe remained at least manageable if not low (Terranova, 2015). It began to show dangerous shortcomings after 2011, under the gusts of the perfect storm sparked by the Arab Spring (Giordano, 2011) and the break out of war in Syria that has upset the entire geopolitical equilibrium of the Southern shores of the Mediterranean, unleashing the most serious refugee crisis in Europe since the post war period of the Second World War (Tsourdi & De Bruycker, 2015).

Whatever the political-institutional outcome of these years of ferment, today's geopolitical changes and conflicts evidently hold serious consequences for Europe and its southern shores. This necessitates a rethinking of the relationship between the two areas and a change of feeling towards the Euro-Mediterranean question on the part of individual countries, particularly within the context of a holistic European vision. Over the years the European Community (and the later European Union), has attempted to establish different forms of relationship and cooperation with the so-called Third Mediterranean Countries (TMCs), often dictated by internal European circumstances or international political conditions that have variously influenced the area – most pointedly American. After the first generation of post-colonial "Association Agreements", the Barcelona Declaration gave birth to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which at least in its intentions, represented the first real multilevel and multisector agreement. Next came the Union for the Mediterranean, after which various political initiatives followed, each trying to provide a stabilising setting for the Euro-Mediterranean area yet often lacking in any real fundamental strategy. The marked failure of these policies is clear to all, be they experts or simple observers.

To talk about the Mediterranean, or rather the Euro-Mediterranean Area, intended as those countries that border the shores of *Mare Nostrum*, we must try and moderate our idyllic visions of true harmony, while also moving beyond those infernal images that admit nothing more than increasingly embittered conflict. The Euro-Mediterranean area must be understood as a highly complex place whose different elements continuously evolve and influence each other. These elements must be carefully understood and interpreted to formulate the best and most feasible policies for the area.

The difficulties the EU has encountered in trying to manage migration flows from Syria and Africa has pushed the Union into looking for new solutions that contemplate support from Third Countries. It is within this context that the EU-Turkey Action Plan has been developed, as well as an Italian proposal known as Migration Compact.

### **Beyond the border, the need for cooperation with Third Countries**

When faced with manifold and manifest issues it is easy to imagine that their origins begin in other parts of the world and that their relative solutions must lie with someone else, the United States for example. The supranational nature of these issues suggests that this is clearly not the case; solutions must be found in supranational approaches between European States and possible Third Countries. In truth, some early European projects represented potentially good ideas that floundered in the resurgent nationalism of the beginning of the century.

The EU-Turkey Action Plan came out of a long consultation period that culminated in the extraordinary meeting between representatives of the Council of Europe and Turkey on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2015. On paper, the agreement was an attempt to readdress the inadequate European response to migration flows by developing a program with Turkey, a transit country for many of the Syrian refugees headed for Europe. Through cooperation with the Erdogan government, the EU aimed to contain the flows of hopeful refugees headed to European States, in exchange for concessions regarding financial support for the realisation of projects for Syrian refugees in Turkey, commitment to speeding up procedures for the recognition of visas for the free movement of Turkish citizens within the Schengen area, and the renewal of negotiations for Turkish membership of the EU. Thus, the Ankara government agreed to provide support to the Union.

The Action Plan runs along two main lines: on the one hand the provision of support to Syrians in Turkey, creating an environment that favours their integration within Turkish society through technical and financial assistance and reduces the so-called push factors; on the other hand, the strengthening of controls to stop the flow of irregular immigrants towards Europe. The EU recognised the important efforts of the Turkish government, which hosts up to two million refugees in a population of approximately seventy-four million inhabitants, by approving funding for three billion euro to sustain the partner country in the improvement of socio-economic conditions for Syrian refugees, to facilitate their inclusion within Turkish society and favour their access to the job market and public services (De Marcilly & Garde, 2016).

The EU-Turkey plan also provided for improved cooperation and faster procedures for the resettlement of those irregular migrants who do not fulfil the conditions necessary for recognition of refugee status. According to the provisions of the agreement, on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2016 all irregular migrants that had arrived in Greece were transferred to Turkey. Furthermore, on the basis of this temporary "one-for-one"<sup>13</sup> mechanism, for every Syrian resettled in Turkey from Greece, a citizen of the same nationality will be resettled in the EU. In this case, the agreement reached by the EU does not seem to be a particularly strong or definitive response to such a complex situation. Although the efforts undertaken

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<sup>13</sup> According to the terms of the agreement, it is a temporary mechanism that will be suspended once 72,000 people have been resettled.

to improve the capacity of the Turkish asylum system are necessary, they cannot substitute the responsibilities of European governments.

The package of proposals commonly known as Migration Compact and presented to European institutions by the Italian government on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016 is more wide reaching. Its objective is to resolve today's migration crisis through the definition of collaborative strategies with Third Countries, particularly in Africa, many of which are the home countries or transit countries of the migrants in arrival on the coasts of Southern Europe. Due to its geographical position, Italy is one of the countries most exposed to the arrival of migrants escaping across the Mediterranean (Giordano, 2016a). Over the years, several attempts have been made to combat and resolve irregular migration in the Mediterranean Sea through the conclusion of a series of bilateral agreements with departure countries and lobbying in Brussels for the establishment of an efficient and concrete European migration policy.

The new Italian proposal is part of this framework; however, clarification is necessary in that the definitive text adopted by the Commission and approved by the Council is the product of a compromise between EU States. In fact, the most ambitious and interesting aspect of the proposal has disappeared from the final document: a sort of maxi regional investment plan that aimed at creating ways of facilitating the access of African countries to capital markets through the issuing of European debt, the so-called EU-Africa bonds, under the supervision of the European Investment Bank and other international institutions. This innovative aspect of the Italian proposal was devalued by a series of "do ut des"<sup>14</sup> between Member States until it was essentially deleted from the final document. Evidence lies in the fact that the new European strategy for dealing with the migratory phenomenon has been downgraded from the status of "policy" to that of "approach". This apparently terminological detail, put down in black and white by bureaucrats in Brussels, has completely transformed the initial proposal. At the end of the day, the approach "essentially consists in a more coordinated and focused use of pre-existing tools and resources" (Fortuna, 2016), that fixes the need to establish and strengthen bilateral partnerships between the EU and third countries based on a non-innovative principle that ties the security of external borders to cooperation and development mechanisms.

In any case, by taking the EU-Turkey agreement as an example for the management of migration flows from the Eastern Mediterranean route and reaffirming the need for a concrete and coherent external European commitment, the Italian government's project aims at redrawing European policies on relationships with Third Countries and identifying common solutions to stop or reduce the flow of migrants towards the northern shores of the Mediterranean. The proposal for collaboration with Third Countries is structured in four points: greater border controls, the reduction of migration flows, cooperation regarding repatriation and readmission, and the strengthening of work to contrast human trafficking (Rubio Grubel, 2015). A focal point remains the development of a model for Third Countries in which financial and operational support from the EU corresponds to precise commitments from extra-EU countries, as for example participation in search and rescue missions in collaboration with the European border and coast guard. The Union would thus offer resources and means in the form of capacity building and technological support for the fulfilment of commitments. Lastly, to speed up

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<sup>14</sup> Italian expression for "Tit for tat"

repatriation operations or the concession of visas the EU is willing to create screening systems within Third Countries through which it will be possible to make an initial distinction between economic migrants and asylum seekers, thus streamlining the asylum application process.

The geopolitical situation has however considerably worsened over recent years. The southeastern shore of the Mediterranean leaves us few reasons to be cheerful. While Tunisia guides its own democratic experiment among fears and shocks, Libya is in a state of total disintegration. Egypt is resigned to the repressions of Al Sisi, while Syria has sunk into another year of civil war. Post-coup Turkey seems to be in decisive disagreement with the United States and the EU, while Lebanon flounders under the weight of all its refugees. The Mediterranean is burning and there is no partner on the horizon to bring down the temperature. All this is the result of a continued, short-sighted refusal to formulate an effective single policy for immigration which approaches the issue as a structural problem, rather than an emergency, that we will be dealing with for many years to come.

## **Conclusions**

Today's migratory movements at the frontiers of Europe are unlikely to stop in the near future. It is also evident that the management of these movements and their political, social and economic consequences must necessarily be European. Given Europe's ageing population and the increasing costs of social security (Giordano, 2016b), European countries need to insert people of working age into their economic systems; immigration can provide this contribution, but it cannot represent the only solution.

Likewise, the migratory phenomenon, as old as man himself, cannot only be tackled as a problem nor as simple tragedy, as often happens today; nothing will be achieved by putting up walls, except for an exacerbation of the problem itself. A cultural shift is necessary: migrations are inevitable, useful to a certain extent and in some cases, even indispensable. It is only by facing up to reality that we will be able to adopt the right measures for keeping migration within acceptable limits, regulating it with humanity, managing it without confusion, making it beneficial for reception countries and countries of origin alike and definitively protecting our borders.

It is therefore clear that there will be no progress beyond today's chronic instability unless Europe – or better, the European States – get back on their feet and provide a mature and informed policy for the management of the Mediterranean area and the governing of relationships with the southeast shores of what should be considered a common sea. As can evidently be seen from recent events, the Mediterranean must likewise return to being one of the main priorities for all Europeans, restoring balance to a Europe that is all too often busy looking elsewhere, both geographically speaking and to satisfy short term national interests.

In conclusion, greater awareness is necessary on the part of all European states to overcome national egocentricities and guarantee the existence of those values acquired thanks to the European integration process, such as peace, democracy, the rights of man, the state of law, freedom and mobility. These are the values that drive migrants to cross European borders and integrate within European society, those very same values that, one hopes, are undeniable for Europeans themselves.

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## НОВА ПОЛИТИЧКА ГЕОГРАФИЈА МИГРАЦИЈА У ЕВРОПИ: ИЗМЕЂУ СПОЉНИХ ГРАНИЦА И УНУТРАШЊЕГ СЛОБОДНОГ КРЕТАЊА

**Резиме:** Креирање Шенгенске зоне, која представља прву наднационалну границу у историји Европе, условило је промену политичке географије миграција са значајним импликацијама сагледаваним из различитих перспектива, а које су утицале на управљање миграцијама, како у државама чланицама Европске уније, тако и у трећим земљама. Данас се европски континент налази између шансе за интеграцију и изазова поновног успостављања граница, а што је још комплексније питање, подизања баријера на њима. Као три критична фактора миграционе политике ЕУ наводе се: Шенгенска зона, чије креирање представља најважнији резултат пројекта европске интеграције, а чији је финални допринос реализација слободе (кретања), безбедност и правда; Фронтекс, која представља организацију ЕУ задужену за управљање спољним границама уније; Даблинска регулатива, која представља јединствену политику ЕУ према питањима азила. Међутим, са масовним миграционим токовима од 2015. године, дошло је до суспендовања Шенгенског споразума и Даблинске регулативе (и/или њихове модификације), а уместо Фронеткса је успостављена нова агенција за мониторинг граница. То ствара обавезу државама на спољним границама Шенгенске зоне, али и државама које нису чланице Европске уније да надгледају границе, да управљају ирегуларним миграционим токовима, а пре свега токовима избеглог становништва, иако су често неприпремљене да се баве миграционим феноменима. Недостатак јединствене миграционе политике Европске уније, егоцентрични приступ појединих не-Медитеранских држава и поновно појављивање зидова на границама карактерише савремену Европу. Ипак, миграциони процеси и тероризам у Европи представљају значајну могућност да се ојача, заједничка европска територија.

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