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## Tangled Connections between Migration and Security in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings: A European Perspective

by Tamirace Fakhoury



### ABSTRACT

In the wake of the Arab uprisings, the EU has been confronted with governance and humanitarian dilemmas stemming from the need to control migration flows from its southern neighbours. Focusing on the EU approach to migration governance, this paper explores some of the policies and discursive practices that have recently reinforced the complex interdependence between security and migration. It also discusses some of the triggers that have recently prompted an increased securitisation of the migration question in European policy-making. The last section explores whether migration governance strategies inspired by the human security paradigm could contribute to more resilient and rights-based approaches to migrant crises.

*European Union | Migration | Refugees | Border management*

keywords

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by Tamirace Fakhoury\*

## Introduction

Five years after the onset of the Arab uprisings, a dominating question is whether the so-called Arab Spring has degenerated into a winter carrying heavy socio-political consequences for the Mediterranean region.<sup>1</sup> The ascent of the Islamic State (IS), the “unravelling of the state” in former autocracies and forced displacements have emerged as adverse outcomes of the uprisings that had originally left the world spellbound. Against this backdrop, human flows to the EU from southern Mediterranean countries either *in transition* or *in distress* have brought the uneasy relationship between migration, state borders and security to the fore.

Focusing on EU’s approach to migration in the wake of the Arab uprisings, the paper looks at the current migration-security nexus in the Euro-Mediterranean zone. The aim is not to carry out a cursory analysis of EU’s migration and refugee policies. Rather, the paper seeks to illuminate an understanding of how the EU’s response to migrant crises in the wake of the Arab uprisings has been securitised or has developed within a security-orientated framework.

The nexus between migration and security has been consolidated through a dual dynamic combining policy and discursive dimensions. First, the EU and European governments have adopted policy instruments tying migration governance to border management. In addition to tightening border controls, the EU has drawn on its instruments of cooperation with its southern neighbours to manage the migrant crises from afar. Second, public and policy “discursive acts” within

<sup>1</sup> Vidya Venkat interview with Gilbert Achcar, “Arab spring has now turned into a winter”, in *The Hindu*, 23 December 2014, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/article6716540.ece>.

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the wider European public sphere have reinforced the question of migration as a *national* and *societal* security threat. In the light of joint policy and discursive practices, the nexus between migration and security has been tightened, deviating attention from migrants' protection to states' interests.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section discusses some internal and external policy instruments that the EU and EU governments have adopted to deal with and pre-empt migratory pressures. Second, I explore some prevalent policy and sociocultural discourses that have entrenched what Huysmans calls a "security knowledge,"<sup>2</sup> one that represents migration as a threat to national security and societal cohesiveness. Third, I debate why recent displacement crises have posed new challenges to the EU. Mapping these challenges, I argue, is key to accounting for the tangled relationships between migration and security. The last section explores whether alternative practices inspired from the human security paradigm could contribute to a rights-based response to migratory movements.

## 1. EU migration governance strategy and the paradigm of securitisation

The securitisation of migration or its deliberate transformation into a security issue through the lens of policies and speech acts is nothing new.<sup>3</sup> Policy and public discourses have been divided on the externalities of migration. A contentious debate is whether migration constitutes an asset or a liability to host societies and a threat to their cohesion. The 9/11 watershed was a turning point for migration governance; after this event the question of migration, linked to the global war on terror, has been represented as a non-traditional security threat.

In regard to Europe, a plethora of writings has explored how the EU and EU governments have constructed the issue of migration into a security threat,<sup>4</sup> and linked migration control to "region-building" in the Mediterranean.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the Securitization of Migration", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 5 (December 2000), p. 757.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Seeberg, "The Arab Uprisings and the EU. EU Migration Policies towards the Mediterranean: Learning to Cope with 'a Changing Neighbourhood'", in *Center for Mellemøststudier Analyses*, December 2011, <http://static.sdu.dk/mediafiles//4/C/9/%7B4C9C235E-D187-4287-AF65-64DCB709BCA6%7D1211PSx2.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Christina Boswell, "The Securitisation of Migration: A Risky Strategy for European States", in *DIIS Policy Briefs*, April 2007, <http://diis.dk/en/node/2267>; Peter Seeberg, "The Arab Uprisings and the EU", cit.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Collyer, "Geopolitics as a Migration Governance Strategy: European Union Bilateral Relations with Southern Mediterranean countries", in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (2016), p. 606-624.

Most works agree that the process of securitising migration in the EU is a result of multiple strategies. The control of migration flows through restrictive border policies is coupled with an effort to govern migration from a distance.<sup>6</sup> Central to externalising migration control is the EU's politics of conditionality. Prior to the Arab uprisings, key instruments that the EU has developed to regulate its ties with its neighbours were the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP, 2004) and the Global Approach to Migration (GAM, 2005). Both promote a trade-off logic for the benefit of migration management. Such initiatives link, for instance, development aid and mobility incentives with cooperation around readmission and irregular migration.

The discursive representation of migration into a security issue plays an equally important role in the logic of securitisation. In the last years populist discourses have depicted migration as a threat to jobs, welfare and cohesiveness. Such discourses have entrenched a binary perspective separating the citizen from the migrant or the other.<sup>7</sup>

Though the migration-security nexus has been at core of the EU's agenda in the Mediterranean, recent upheavals in the Middle East, alongside mass migration from Syria, have constituted critical junctures for EU institutions and governments. Against this backdrop, how has the EU recast its approach to migration governance, and are there new dimensions to the migration-security nexus in the context of the recent migrant crises?

## 2. Instruments securitising migration

In 2011, the revolts in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya generated new migration trends and flows to Europe.<sup>8</sup> Such flows, which have mainly targeted Malta and Italy, remained limited in scope and magnitude.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, they posed a challenge to the EU. European Commission communications, for instance, applauded transitions from authoritarian rule while stressing the priority to develop a coherent EU migration policy.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the EU's attempt to disentangle migration governance

<sup>6</sup> Eleanor Taylor-Nicholson, *Cutting off the Flow: Extraterritorial Controls to Prevent Migration*, Berkeley, Berkeley Law School, July 2011, [http://eucenter.berkeley.edu/files/Issue\\_Brief\\_2011\\_Final.pdf](http://eucenter.berkeley.edu/files/Issue_Brief_2011_Final.pdf); Andrew Geddes, "Governing Migration from a Distance: Interactions between Climate, Migration, and Security in the South Mediterranean", in *European Security*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (2015), p. 473-490, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2015.1028191>.

<sup>7</sup> Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the Securitization of Migration", cit.; Peter Seeberg, "The Arab Uprisings and the EU", cit.

<sup>8</sup> Philippe Fargues and Christine Fandrich, "Migration after the Arab Spring", in *MPC Research Reports*, No. 2012/09 (2012), <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/23504>.

<sup>9</sup> Sergio Carrera, Leonhard den Hertog and Joanna Parkin, "EU Migration Policy in the Wake of the Arab Spring, What Prospects for EU-Southern Mediterranean Relations?", in *MEDPRO Technical Reports*, No. 15 (August 2012), <https://www.ceps.eu/node/7215>.

<sup>10</sup> Gemma Pinyol-Jiménez, "The Migration-Security Nexus in Short: Instruments and Actions in the European Union", in *Amsterdam Law Forum*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter 2012), p. 52, <http://>

in the Mediterranean zone from the security lens is worth noting. In its attempt to revamp the European Neighbourhood Policy, for instance, the EU reframed its former politics of conditionality into the “more for more” principle and emphasised a rhetoric of partnership with the Arab region. The revamped Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) emphasises the importance of cross-regional dialogue on migration.

In practice, notwithstanding the rhetorical shift, the EU’s regional approach to migration has emphasised in the last three years key security considerations such as combating irregular migration and cross-border terrorism.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the strategy of coupling regional cooperation with extra-territorial migration control was left unaltered. The GAMM establishes cross-sectoral links between development aid, mobility and better coordination on asylum policies and curbing irregular migration.<sup>12</sup> Its key instrument or the mobility partnership that the EU offers some of its southern partners fails to desecuritize the “renewed” migration approach. Benefits such as visa facilitation and circular migration schemes require compliance with readmission agreements, cooperation with Frontex and border management.<sup>13</sup> The mobility partnerships signed with Tunisia and Morocco have been criticised on such grounds.<sup>14</sup> Such observations have spurred analysts to argue whether the EU should renounce its normative ambitions in the region and formulate its policy goals in practical terms.<sup>15</sup>

Since 2014, forced displacements, primarily from Syria but also from Afghanistan, Libya, Eritrea, Somalia and Iraq, have taken the issue of EU migration governance and its securitisation to an unprecedented level of complexity. The refugee crisis resulting from Syria’s lethal conflict has emerged in this regard as a particularly daunting challenge. Around 4,200,000 Syrians have been displaced outside their country. While neighbouring countries, namely Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, host about 3.8 million Syrians, Europe received some 897,645 asylum applications between 2011 and December 2015.<sup>16</sup> Since 2014, the question as to how to manage forcibly displaced flows into Europe has triggered acute securitised governmental

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[amsterdamlawforum.org/article/view/255](http://amsterdamlawforum.org/article/view/255).

<sup>11</sup> Assem Dandashly, “The EU Response to Regime Change in the Wake of the Arab Revolt: Differential Implementation”, in *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2015), p. 37-56.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Seeberg, “The Arab Uprisings and the EU’s Migration Policies: The Cases of Egypt, Libya, and Syria”, in *Democracy and Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1-2 (2013), p. 157-176, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2013.747909>.

<sup>13</sup> Sergio Carrera, Leonhard den Hertog and Joanna Parkin, “EU Migration Policy in the Wake of the Arab Spring...”, cit.

<sup>14</sup> Mohamed Limam and Raffaella A. Del Sarto, “Periphery under Pressure: Morocco, Tunisia and the European Union’s Mobility Partnership on Migration”, in *EUI Working Papers RSCAS*, No. 2015/75 (October 2015), <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/37521>.

<sup>15</sup> Roundtable discussion at the international conference “New Challenges for the EU in the Arab Mediterranean and the Revision of the European Neighborhood Policy”, held in Amman on 2-3 November 2015.

<sup>16</sup> See UNHCR website: *Europe: Syrian Asylum Applications* (from April 2011 to December 2015), <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/asylum.php>.

responses and has conjured the thorny debate of fair responsibility-sharing.

### *2.1 Restrictive border controls, rifts over refugee distribution and reactive policies*

In the last two years the influx of migrants into Europe has led to the adoption of a wide array of restrictive measures that have buttressed the linkages between migration governance and security. Forms of migration management have emphasised tightened border controls, patrolling and surveillance. The EU has, for instance, reinforced the Frontex mandate. States bordering the Mediterranean, namely Greece and Italy, dubbed “frontliners,” established hotspots to improve the EU’s management of its external borders as well as to identify and fingerprint incomers. In February 2016, NATO’s fleet was deployed to intercept boats of irregular migrants in the Aegean Sea and push them back to Turkey. Cross-border migrant flows have prompted Sweden, Germany, France, Denmark and Austria to temporarily suspend Schengen. Some countries such as Slovenia and Austria have sought to block migration flows through building metal fences.

The Mediterranean “migrant crises” and the Syrian refugee influx into Europe have furthermore triggered a divisive debate on refugee-sharing among EU member states.<sup>17</sup> Salient divergences have emerged between governments that have agreed to take in a more generous refugee quota either through resettlement or granting asylum, those that have accepted only a limited number, and those that have criticised refugee distribution plans for impinging on sovereignty and citizen welfare. With regard to Syrian refugee resettlement, for example, stark differences have been noted. As the 2015 UNHCR resettlement data reveals, Germany and Sweden admitted the largest number of resettled Syrians refugees in the EU between January 2012 and September 2014, while the UK has only resettled 2 percent, preferring instead to donate humanitarian aid.<sup>18</sup>

As the EU has pushed for a refugee distribution system among the 28 member states, rifts have brought the tension between national and supranational governance to the fore.<sup>19</sup> In May 2015, for instance, the UK criticised the EU relocation plan over the Mediterranean migrant crisis for its “non-voluntary” character. In the framework of the second implementation package (September 2015),<sup>20</sup> the Czech Republic,

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Ian Traynor, “Pressure to resolve migration crisis could tear EU apart”, in *The Guardian*, 20 January 2016, <http://gu.com/p/4gxyt/stw>. See also “Value shoppers”, in *The Economist*, 30 January 2016, <http://econ.st/20xCQzk>.

<sup>18</sup> Nicole Ostrand, “The Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Comparison of Responses by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States”, in *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2015), p. 266-267, <http://dx.doi.org/10.14240/jmhs.v3i3.51>.

<sup>19</sup> Ian Traynor, “Pressure to resolve migration crisis could tear EU apart”, cit.

<sup>20</sup> See the website of the European Commission DG Migration and Home Affairs: *European Agenda on Migration – Legislative documents*: <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package>.

Hungary, Romania and Slovakia voted against the EU proposal to relocate 120,000 refugees.

The EU relocation and resettlement plans that the European Agenda on Migration (May 2015)<sup>21</sup> devises as the two key common responses to granting refugee protection have so far not reached their declared numerical target. They are unlikely to provide a viable solution due to their extremely slow pace.

In addition to tightened border controls and rifts over refugee-sharing, a cascade of reactive policies over the refugee issue has swept through Europe. While Denmark has pushed for a tougher refugee policy, governments such as Germany and Sweden have toned down their initial politics of hospitality. A case in a point is Germany's "partial" reversal of its initial "welcome culture" that pro-refugee social movements enthusiastically welcomed in late summer 2015. At the time, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced the decision to take around 800,000 asylum seekers that year. In the wake of strident criticism against her handling of the refugee issue, a more restrictive approach to the refugee crisis has been gradually introduced. Examples range from introducing measures that shy away from granting asylum (e.g. subsidiary protection), declaring Northern African countries as safe zones, or halting family reunification in the Asylum package II. Some Central and Eastern European states such as Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have practised bolder and more confrontational anti-refugee politics.<sup>22</sup>

National rifts over the refugee question have shifted attention to the individual actions of EU member states, stressing states' interests rather than migrants' vulnerabilities, and stirring controversies over whether European asylum rules should be applied or not amid what has become Europe's "migrant crisis." Deterrence measures, such as sealing migratory routes and border detention, have furthermore entrenched the perception that the influx of migrants into Europe has evolved into a threat to national borders.

## 2.2 The inter-regional perspective: Externalising migration governance and cloaking it in "human security"

The migration-security nexus cannot be fully understood without accounting for the inter-regional perspective, and more specifically for the foreign policy and cooperative instruments that have enabled the EU to ensure a control of migratory flows from a distance.<sup>23</sup> Widespread strategies range from enhancing regional

<sup>21</sup> European Commission, *A European Agenda on Migration* (COM/2015/240), 13 May 2015, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/wn/TXT/?uri=celex:52015DC0240>.

<sup>22</sup> For an account of anti-refugee stances and policies see, for instance, Nick Hallett, "Orban: If we cannot protect our border, the Schengen Agreement will fall", in *Breitbart*, 26 September 2015, <http://bit.ly/1G97p2K>. See also AFP, "Czech president: migrants should be fighting ISIS, not 'invading' Europe", in *The Guardian*, 27 December 2015, <http://gu.com/p/4fcfg/stw>.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Geddes, "Governing Migration from a Distance...", cit.

dialogue on the question of migration, delegating border control to southern neighbours, and increasing humanitarian and refugee facilities to keep migrants at bay.

Renegotiated ENP plans with countries shouldering the main burden of the Syrian refugee crisis, namely Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, stress the importance of better cooperation and information-sharing on migration flows. The EU-Turkey action plan arises as a key illustrative example of migration governance through outsourcing.<sup>24</sup> In return for incentives such as speeding up the process to Turkey's membership and visa-free travel, Turkey would cooperate with the EU to stem the flow of refugees.

In yet another perspective, the EU and some of its member states, namely the UK and Germany, have increased humanitarian and development aid so that "first asylum" or third countries become better equipped to deal with refugee challenges. By donating aid and declaring its intent to "tackle migration upstream" through partnerships with third countries,<sup>25</sup> the EU adopts elements derived from the human security model while catering for its security interests – that is, controlling migration from a distance. In this view, building neighbouring states' resilience and capacity to deal with migratory pressures arises as a preventive strategy to stem mass displacements into Europe.

### 3. The discursive nexus between migration and security

In addition to the policy path, public and policy discourses have been paramount to the production of securitised knowledge on migration in the broader EU sphere. It is worth noting here that anti-immigrant feelings in Europe are not novel trends. On the rise, they have contributed to a renationalised conception of citizenship, one that is at odds with "wider EU instruments."<sup>26</sup>

Amid the refugee surge crisis, policy platforms and social movements have represented the migrant as an external threat to welfare, cultural homogeneity and national security. Media accounts reflecting such discursive trends are countless. In the context of the IS threat, for example, debates and protests linking refugee arrivals with transnational terrorism have gained ground.<sup>27</sup> In Germany, following

<sup>24</sup> See "Value shoppers", cit.

<sup>25</sup> European Commission, *A European Agenda on Migration*, cit., p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Saskia Sassen, "Anti-Immigrant Politics Along with Institutional Incorporation?", in Margaret Walton-Roberts and Jenna Henneby (eds.), *Territoriality and Migration in the E.U. Neighbourhood. Spilling over the Wall*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2014, p. 13-14.

<sup>27</sup> For an account of such debates, see Daniel L. Byman, "Do Syrian refugees pose a terrorism threat?", *Brookings Markaz Blog*, 27 October 2015, <http://brook.gs/1RH9qdX>. See also Julian Robinson, "ISIS are using sophisticated fake Syrian and Iraqi passports to smuggle jihadists into Europe amid the migrant crisis, warn British intelligence", in *The Daily Mail*, 27 January 2016, <http://dailym.ai/1KEwm8B>. Kashmira Gander, "'Today refugees, tomorrow terrorists': Eastern

the January 2016 Cologne episode, public and media debates have shifted focus from the “*Willkommenskultur*” rhetoric in Germany to one that questions the extent to which incomers threaten societal security.<sup>28</sup>

Anti-liberal refugee discourses provide a powerful vector to dramatize migration as a security threat. On the one hand, they embed the security discourse in the wider public sphere, turning the question into a pervasive societal concern. On the other, they provide an enabling terrain for policy agendas inimical to migrants’ interests to gain legitimacy. Against this backdrop, policy and public discourses calling for curbing migration become mutually reinforcing. In the UK, for example, the government has pledged to reduce the numbers of migrants to the “tens of thousands.”<sup>29</sup> Though this “quantifiable” target is hard to achieve, it has had a profound impact on debating immigration.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4. Triggers for securitisation: Geopolitical insecurities and the costs of “transferring sovereignty” in times of crisis

Central to our analysis is the question as to why migrant crises have triggered in the last years an “intense security focus”<sup>31</sup> and fuelled tensions between European states’ and migrants’ interests. In other words, why has the influx of migrants and refugees evolved into a dramatic European crisis?

As underscored, EU’s security politics in migration affairs has exhibited traits of continuity in the Mediterranean. Still, recent migrant crises have introduced unfamiliar challenges because of their connections with broader geopolitical and governance crises.

The EU has never been exposed to the kind of uncertain upheavals that its southern neighbourhood has experienced. For many years, authoritarian resilience has been considered the norm in the Arab region. Moreover, the patterns of change that post-2011 Arab countries have gone through are not identical to the transitions that took place in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>32</sup>

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Europeans chant anti-Islam slogans in demonstrations against refugees”, in *The Independent*, 14 September 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/-10499352.html>.

<sup>28</sup> See “Refugees in Germany, Cologne’s aftershocks”, in *The Economist*, 16 January 2016, <http://econ.st/1OQRttH>.

<sup>29</sup> UK Govt Home Office, *Immigration: Home Secretary’s speech of 5 November 2010*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/immigration-home-secretarys-speech-of-5-november-2010>.

<sup>30</sup> Christina Boswell, “The net migration target may have failed, but it has shifted the way we debate immigration”, in *Politics, Knowledge & Migration Blog*, 26 November 2015, <http://wp.me/p3YHYt-6J>.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Seeberg, “The Arab Uprisings and the EU’s Migration Policies”, cit., p. 172.

<sup>32</sup> Muriel Asseburg’s intervention at the conference “Arab Revolutions, Five Years On”, held in Beirut on 21-23 January 2016.

Displacement flows have occurred in the context of dismantled state structures and ethno-political conflicts playing out in the EU's vicinity. They have conjured fears of transnationalised conflict and terrorism. The EU as a global and foreign policy actor emerges as ill-prepared to deal with conflict-induced migratory movements.

Recent migrant crises have furthermore overlapped with intra-EU governance dilemmas. In the wake of the 2008 economic crisis and its aftershocks, EU policy convergence has been put to the test. For instance, European governments have displayed divergent policy preferences over the Greek debt crisis, and Eurosceptic platforms have stressed the disadvantages of supranational governance.

A question which merits further study is whether the influx of migrants into Europe, rather than constituting a watershed crisis, unlocks and overlaps with underlying dilemmas within the EU.<sup>33</sup> In this view, the question of temporality plays an important role in explaining EU's securitised response.<sup>34</sup> The contested refugee relocation scheme has spurred renewed doubts over the costs of "transferring sovereignty."<sup>35</sup> States reluctant to complying with the quota system have drawn on the lexicon of security and cultural incompatibility to justify national responses.<sup>36</sup>

Policy decisions over refugee arrivals and governance have further fuelled debates about the quality of democracy in European states. Some have for instance questioned the extent to which policy leaders' handling of the refugee crisis in the EU has taken place in a deliberative fashion.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Europe has witnessed in the last decade the emergence of anti-immigrant platforms, which have facilitated today's securitisation of the migration question.

In yet another perspective, the EU's security politics vis-à-vis the migrant crises have to be contextualised in the broader international system. While states in the Gulf and Asia have not accepted refugees, the United States has only welcomed a modest number. In the absence of international "burden-sharing," the EU has lacked a supportive context that a global cooperation on refugee protection could have provided.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, Hannover, 1 February 2016.

<sup>34</sup> For an account on the importance of temporality in explaining EU policy see Andreas Boogaerts, Clara Portela and Edith Drieskens, "One Swallow Does Not Make Spring: A Critical Juncture Perspective on the EU Sanctions in Response to the Arab Spring", in *Mediterranean Politics*, online 18 January 2016.

<sup>35</sup> This expression is inspired by Alexander Cooley's and Hendrik Spruyt's work, *Contracting States. Sovereignty Transfers in International Relations*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> For instance, the Slovak PM Robert Fico posits: "If, based on temporary or permanent quotas, someone forces us to import 50,000 people with completely different habits and religions – and these are mostly young men – I can't imagine how we could integrate them. We can't." Quoted in Julian Robinson, "The European Union is committing 'ritual suicide' with its migration policy", in *The Daily Mail*, 26 January 2016, <http://daily.m.ai/1KBWbWO>.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Stuttaford, "Counter-Narratives from a Crisis", in *National Review Online*, 9 September 2015, <http://www.nationalreview.com/node/423731>.

In this view, a reading of EU's securitised migration politics requires an understanding of broader dilemmas arising from geopolitical risks and failing supranational and global governance.

## 5. Desecuritising migration?

This paper has shown that restrictive policies and security-oriented discourses have consolidated the migration question into a national and societal threat, one that has high priority in agenda-setting and public debates. The construction of the migration question into a security threat not only bodes ill for refugee protection but also for the stability of hosting states. In several European states, the "security-laden" migration question has fuelled domestic tensions between parties and platforms, encouraging solidarity with refugees and those calling for prioritising states' obligations towards its own citizens and closing its borders. These tensions are likely not only to spell trouble for societal cohesion within European states but also to be instrumentalised by right-wing agendas, posing a challenge to the stability and quality of European liberal democracies. These tensions are also likely to exacerbate hostilities between refugee and host communities, making the potential of integration a daunting task.<sup>38</sup>

In this context, desecuritising responses to migratory movements and finding sustainable ways for refugee and host communities to "coexist" arise as a necessity. Given that these mass displacements have arisen as complex transnational outcomes of intra-state conflicts in the EU's neighbourhood, how probable is an untangling of the connection between human flows and security? Does the human security approach, which shifts focus from state to individual protection, offer insights?

In the wake of the 1994 UNDP report *New Dimensions of Human Security*,<sup>39</sup> migration analysts have sought ways to reconcile migration governance with the protection of individuals. Tackling forced migration, for instance, from a human security perspective requires addressing the drivers that have led to mass displacements and creating socio-political conditions under which communities prosper in their countries of origin.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> For an account of internal tensions and polarisation in the public debate, see for instance the case of Germany in the wake of the Cologne attacks. See "Refugees in Germany, Cologne's aftershocks", cit.

<sup>39</sup> UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*, New York, United Nations, 1994, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-1994>.

<sup>40</sup> Francesca Vietti and Todd Scribner, "Human Insecurity: Understanding International Migration from a Human Security Perspective", in *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2013), p. 17-31, <http://dx.doi.org/10.14240/jmhs.v1i1.6>.

Yet this policy prescription may be criticised for its rather utopian character. On a more specific note, the attempt to address the root causes of political unrest that have triggered mass migration from Syria has so far not bred any unified international response. Against the backdrop of the Iraqi (2003) and Libyan (2011) interventions, human security models, based for instance on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), have come under severe scrutiny.<sup>41</sup>

Notwithstanding such observations, insights derived from the human security perspective provide a useful entry point to informing EU's discursive and policy approach to the recent migrant crises.

### 5.1 Debates on migration

As this paper has argued, discursive practices are crucial to thematising migration as a security concern at both policy and public levels. In this regard, analysts have stressed Europe's need for a more accepting debate on migrants and migration.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout the recent migrant crises, civil society organisations, religious actors, local communities and academics have rallied for alternative discursive approaches in the European public sphere. Yet their initiatives remain fragmented and have so far not had any consequential policy effect. It is not clear whether, and if so how, European policy-making has dedicated due attention to such alternative framings and has taken stock of initiatives advanced by civic and academic platforms.

One potential avenue to desecuritize migration or uncouple it from threat perceptions is to strengthen deliberative processes on the migration question in European states and in the wider public sphere. EU institutions and governments can encourage cross-societal, inter-European debates and cross-regional debates as to why migration cannot be drastically limited,<sup>43</sup> and whether and if so how it can be beneficial to a Euro-Mediterranean zone built on similar values. Such debates could, for instance, disseminate a better understanding of post-2011 migratory movements and their complex causes while shedding light on migrants' narratives and journeys. Such debates can also spur reflections on what fair solidarity might look like in the Euro-Mediterranean space rather than strictly within the European continent.

<sup>41</sup> David Chandler, "Resilience and Human Security: The Post-Interventionist Paradigm", in *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (June 2012), p. 213-229.

<sup>42</sup> Margaret Walton-Roberts and Jenna Henneby (eds.), *Territoriality and Migration in the E.U. Neighbourhood. Spilling over the Wall*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2014.

<sup>43</sup> See for instance Christina Boswell's argument in "Time for a frank debate on opportunities and constraints in immigration policy", in *The Herald Scotland*, 16 December 2015, <http://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/14147345.display>.

While deliberative processes can help to reframe security-centred perspectives, they provide democratic means to channel public opinion pressure in the context of divisive policy items.

## 5.2 Knowledge production on migration

Central to fostering more accepting debates is reassessing knowledge production on the migrant crises and its impact on policy and public perceptions. Geddes and Scholten have for instance argued how “mobilizing specific types of research” can reinforce certain policy objectives, reifying certain issues as “European challenges.”<sup>44</sup> An analysis of mainstream policy and media accounts reveals that predominant trends have framed the influx of migrants into Europe as a European migrant crisis, overlooking broader humanitarian and geopolitical implications.

In a yet broader perspective, a plethora of research has lately questioned the security prism through which the migration question has been interpreted in the West.<sup>45</sup> Works have for instance discussed refugees’ right to seek safer zones and how the deprivation from finding safety zones produces alienation especially among children. Others have posited a link between human agency and the migratory act. In the context of political upheavals, migration is an attempt to regain control over one’s political destiny.<sup>46</sup>

EU schemes could seek to advance research agendas that shift the conception of migration governance from border to human security, stressing the themes of refugees’ perceptions, empowerment and protection. In the context of recent migratory movements, analysts have for instance attracted attention to the urgency of dispelling the myth of refugee as a transnational terrorist or one that is not fit enough to integrate in European societies.

An additional avenue is to encourage cross-regional “experience-sharing,” and more specifically how different host states across both shores of the Mediterranean have dealt with the refugee surge and whether there is potential for social and policy learning on human security practices.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew Geddes and Peter Scholten, “Policy Analysis and Europeanization: An Analysis of EU Migrant Integration Policymaking”, in *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2015), p. 41 and 56, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2013.849849>.

<sup>45</sup> Sarah Wolff, “Migration and Refugees in the Mediterranean: Rethinking Geopolitical Constraints. Western-centric Policies and Mobility’s Precariousness”, in *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2015), p. 439-444.

<sup>46</sup> See Wolff’s review article in which she reviews the books by A.K.M. Ahsan Ullah (2014) and Martina Tazzioli (2015).

### 5.3 Global responses

The human security model advocates the importance of sustainable solutions capable of alleviating the primary threats that spur mass migration and those that confront migrants throughout their journey. The EU's handling of the Syrian refugee crisis has so far suggested that the "Europeanisation" model – outsourcing border protection, donating aid to build the resilience of third countries, and devising refugee distribution quotas – are not longstanding solutions. These measures have not provided a viable and coherent policy path to significantly alleviate the migrant crises either in Europe or in third countries. Further, there is scholarly consensus that they have fallen short of striking a balance between states' security and migrants' rights.

While humanitarian funding and EU schemes seeking to grant protection on European soil remain vital, it becomes imperative to supplement them with responses that go beyond temporary human relief and EU-based quotas. In this regard, a more assertive shift from purely regional to global responses needs to be explored.<sup>47</sup> The EU can speed up consultative processes with global state and non-state actors on the prospects for an improved global "responsibility-sharing" mechanism in the areas of resettlement, humanitarian funding and structures offering legal protection.

While the plea for a global refugee-sharing regime remains contested and underexplored,<sup>48</sup> a shift in this direction has manifold benefits. One of them is mitigating the security focus that EU's regional migration governance requires because of geopolitical challenges arising from territorial proximity.

The current migrant crises arise as an opportunity to address what a fairer global migration regime might look like, one that not only perceives migrants through the lens of labour or development but also addresses the highly delicate balance between states' obligations and migrants' interests in the context of acute refugee flows.

*Updated 2 March 2016*

<sup>47</sup> Nicole Ostrand, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Comparison of Responses by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States", cit.

<sup>48</sup> Alexander Betts, "The Normative Terrain of the Global Refugee Regime", in *Ethics & International Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter 2015), <http://www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/2015/the-normative-terrain-of-the-global-refugee-regime>.

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