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# Managing Migration and Asylum Issues in the European Space: among Multi-level Governance and the Securitization Options

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**Abstract.** This study seeks to monitor and analyze the most prominent European policies related to immigration and asylum issues, as these policies have known over the past two decades many contradictions expressed by these different options at all levels. European space decision-makers have often chosen the multi-level governance path to integrate migrants and refugees into European societies. In contrast, at other times, security policy and selection have led to results effectively reflected in high hatred towards immigrants and refugees.

**Keywords.** Migration, asylum, European space, Multi-level governance, Securitization.

## Introduction

Over the past decade, the globe has witnessed many political and demographic transformations that have led millions of people to attempt safe displacement from their countries, mainly from Africa and the Middle East to European countries, to escape poverty, famine, and war. This process has, in turn, created considerable chaos within European space, opening up a serious debate on the management of migration files and asylum among those who see the need to work under cover of the European Union with continuous coordination between different levels of local, national, and regional, and among those who believe that each country should be singled out by its administration due to the different repercussions of these issues from one country to another.

Many European countries rely on multi-level governance in managing migration and asylum issues to optimize the integration of migrants and refugees in the European space. In recent years, this policy has received tremendous support at the level of the European Union due to its full and absolute compatibility with human rights and various other values advocated by leaders of The union. In contrast, some other countries were isolated at different times while managing the same issues on different policies based primarily on the theory of securitization and aimed primarily at confronting migration flows, especially illegal ones and asylum, by highlighting them as an existential threat to the European entity.

In the face of this apparent disparity in migration and asylum management policies in European space, this study proceeds from a central problem centered on the question: **How do European countries manage migration and asylum issues in light of the disparity between**

**the various policies pursued, particularly those directly related to multi-level governance on the one hand and security on the other?**

In order to address this issue, this study assumes that the primary goal of multi-level governance options is to integrate migrants and refugees into European space flexibly, free from all human rights violations. At the same time, the options for securitization serve to paint a general perception in the European collective imagination of the danger of migrants and refugees, especially on common European values, which contributes to increasing the collective rejection of these people in the European space.

**Methodology**

This research paper theoretically relies on the comparative approach, which is widely used in political science to study political systems, institutions, and processes across different local, regional and international levels, and the comparative approach in this context is based on a range of empirical data and evidence related to the political phenomenon, which is collected and categorized through a restrictive scientific methodology aimed at developing a political understanding of these phenomena under study.<sup>1</sup>

By relying on the comparative approach in this study, we seek to monitor and analyze the various policies of European countries in addressing migration and asylum issues in the European space by subjecting them to a comparison process that enables us to understand and explain the significant disparity between these different policies.

**1. Migration and asylum in European space: backgrounds and history**

The concept of migration refers to the process of individuals moving to live and live in a country other than their country of birth. Migrants can appear as refugees resettled in the host country, as individuals seeking resettlement or political asylum in the host country, or as economic migrants seeking to improve the conditions of squalor and life.<sup>2</sup> A refugee under the 1951 United Nations Convention, as well as the 1967 Protocol, is an individual unwilling or unable to return to his or her home country and cannot be protected in his or her homeland because of justified fear and past persecution based on religion, race, political opinions, nationality or membership in a particular social group.<sup>3</sup>

After the Second World War, Northwest Europe witnessed a tremendous economic boom; industrial production increased by 30% between 1953 - 1958. This directly affected the education and social status of the indigenous workers in this region, and many of them were pushed to move to white-collar jobs; locals are no longer willing to take on unhealthy, poorly paid jobs in farming, cleaning, construction, and mining. As a result, Northwest European governments began hiring labor in peripheral countries. Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland were the central destination countries. Conscripted foreign workers were expected to return home after completing their tenure. So they were given few rights with little or no social support. At the end of this period, most immigrants in northwest Europe came from Algeria, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yugoslavia.<sup>4</sup>

The history of Europe in the 20th century is characterized by many significant social, political, and economic changes, which have crystallized in the building of the common European community manifested in the European Union. This union transformed political focus in the 21st century. This shared space has primarily been made towards non-European migration and its various links to many other political issues, such as unemployment, organized crime,

and terrorism on the one hand, and other social issues such as population aging and the integration of non-Europeans into European culture, customs and institutions.<sup>5</sup>

Migration and asylum patterns in Europe underwent significant changes from 1990. The collapse of the Iron Curtain and the opening of Eastern European borders led to new migration flows. With the end of the cold war and the unveiling of the war in the former Yugoslavia, a new wave of asylum-seeker flows into Western Europe was formed, particularly between 1989 and 1992; for example, the number of asylum applications increased from 320,000 to 695,000. The top five countries of origin during this period were the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (836,000), Romania (400,000), Turkey (356,000), Iraq (211,000), and Afghanistan (155,000). Between 2002 and 2006, asylum applications in the 15 EU countries fell from 393,000 to 180,000. However, since 2006, asylum applications have risen again due to conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and recent Arab Spring events, and by 2010, the EU plus Norway and Switzerland had received 254,180 applications. Humanitarian migration accounted for 6% of new arrivals to the EU. Most applications were made in France (47,800), Germany (41,300), Sweden (31,800), the United Kingdom (22,100), and Belgium (19,900).<sup>6</sup>

The total population of the European Union was 446,946,712 million in 2021, the same year that 123,300 individual crossings between the two shores of the Mediterranean were reported, according to Shabia Mantoo, the EU's refugee commissioner. In 2015, the 27 EU countries received just over 1 million migrants annually.<sup>7</sup>

In 2012, it had received just under 1.2 million migrants from around the world, leaving at the time.

The exact total of 0.6 to 0.7 million non-EU citizens. This led to a net migration rate of approximately 0.75 million in 2009 and 2010, 0.66 million in 2011, and just over 0.5 million in 2012. The EU residing in the EU in 2012 was Turkey (about 2 million people), Morocco (1.4 million), and China (0.7 million). As of 1 Jan. 2013, 20.4 million third-country citizens were living in the EU, representing 4% of the EU's total population.<sup>8</sup>

## **2. Multi-level governance policies for the integration of migrants and refugees.**

Why do we use the term governance in the first place? Why don't we stick to the term government? The answer to these questions may be simple because governance is more inclusive than government in ways that are useful for generalizing political governance, and the reason for this lies directly in the genealogy of the two terms and the implications associated with them. In contrast, the term government in contemporary use refers to the state, institutions, or persons exercising the state.<sup>9</sup> The concept of governance goes to the rule of multi-hatchery overlapping in networks that intersect with organizational and conceptual divisions through which the mechanism of action of the modern state is understood, mainly through discrimination between the state and civil society and discrimination between the public and private sectors.<sup>10</sup>

The EU was not a state, but it exercised power. Today, Europeans do not accept the EU's description as a government because they realize it has not been made to be a substitute for its constituent states. In its most straightforward definitions, it means the exercise of public power within and between States and in public-private partnerships along with public arrangements.<sup>11</sup>

According to Ian Bache and Matthew Flinders, the concept of multi-level governance seeks to explain "the vertical distribution of central government power to actors at other regional levels and, in the horizontal, to non-governmental actors."<sup>12</sup>

### **2.1. Vertical distribution of power:**

Multi-level governance in the context of addressing migration and asylum issues in European space is linked to the Europeanization concept, which refers to the formalization of joint arrangements by EU Member States to address the problem of "asylum-shopping." The 1990 Dublin Convention was the first basic premise of these arrangements before they were. The Maastricht Treaty of 1993 established a broader framework for intergovernmental cooperation in the area of asylum and migration under the so-called "non-binding" cooperation of the third pillar. Perhaps the most crucial step towards the EU's standard policy was taken in 1997 when asylum and migration were transferred to the first pillar, which included a much more vital role for the European Commission and a legal basis for EU activity. This was reinforced by the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, which "normalized" immigration policy as a critical issue in the European Union.<sup>13</sup>

Kaunert and Léonard noted that the Lisbon Treaty had changed EU asylum policies through three essential foundations. First, to increase the powers of the European Union from setting minimum standards as defined in the Amsterdam Treaty to possessing jurisdictions on a wide range of issues, as stated in Article 78 of the European Union Labour Treaty (TFEU). Second: strengthen the role of EU institutions in dealing with asylum and immigration policies by (a) changing decision-making to the ordinary legislative procedure where both the Council and Parliament participate in decision-making. (b) By strengthening the role of the European Court of Justice. Third, the Lisbon Treaty made the Charter of Fundamental Rights, initially adopted in 2000, legally binding on all EU member states.<sup>14</sup>

EU institutions exercise top-down control over European migration policies based on critical steps in European integration, where migration issues have been Europeanized primarily for purely functional reasons. This proposition is in line with the broad literature on the gradual erosion of national border control and migration resulting from globalization and nation-states' economic and political interdependence.<sup>15</sup>

Calls for EU policies on integrating migrants were based on a functional market perspective and concerns about economic performance. The best integration of migrants contributes to higher long-term economic, social and financial gains for the country where they settle. Migrants and refugees can mitigate these effects and contribute positively to the competitiveness of the EU economy.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, the movement of long-term residents within the European space is seen as the most economically feasible measure, given the lack of employment in some Member States and high levels of unemployment in other countries. Thus, the integration of migrants has been accompanied by facilitating the free movement of people to stimulate the relatively limited general levels of labor movement within the European Union, contribute to the strengthening of the domestic market and improve the competitiveness of the economy.<sup>17</sup>

### **2.2. Horizontal distribution of power:**

Multi-level governance policies in the context of integrating migrants and refugees into European space, as well as the vertical distribution of power between EU institutions and national governments, are also based on horizontal distribution, mainly on the involvement of non-governmental actors in the process.

Non-governmental actors, including civil society organizations, private companies, religious institutions, informal groups, and individual citizens, have been crucial in addressing the refugee crisis in Europe. Without their commitment, shelter and food would not have been provided to so many people; many innovative social and integrative avenues could not have been followed, and their results achieved.<sup>18</sup>

Civil society organizations primarily integrate migrants and refugees by providing reception and related needs. However, in the past few years, these organizations have experienced a practical breakthrough, with analysis of interviews with representatives of civil society organizations emphasizing their suitability for many new services such as: <sup>19</sup>

- Organizing language courses
- Cultural mediation
- Identify skills and inclinations
- Volunteerism.
- Training and education (especially middle school certificates)
- Education of workers' rights and duties and characteristics of the labor market (in cooperation with trade unions)
- Training and internships.

All these services seek to create personal paths that work to build a comprehensive approach to the independence of migrant workers, which is effective only achieved by working to acquire personal and professional skills, on the one hand, protecting the worker, on the other, focusing on the safety of work and workers' rights, how to recognize and avoid "the 'black' and 'grey' labor. In other words, it provides the tools to combat exploitation.<sup>20</sup>

### **3. The Securitization policies in the face of migratory and refugee flow**

In contrast to multi-level governance options aimed at integrating migrants and refugees and away from European policies and joint institutional action, European national governments often adopt unilateral policies in managing migration and asylum issues. Mainly in this context, the securitization policies that identify mechanisms that shift the question from a political point of view to a security problem are mainly addressed, as the basic premise of these policies is to try to deny the objective requirement of security and to consider it as the result of a range of practices and speeches.<sup>21</sup>

#### **3.1. What do we mean by securitization?**

Through theoretical discussions in security studies on what makes an issue a security issue in international relations, Ollie Weaver presented a structural view of security through the concept of "securitization." He noted that political elites framed the security issue this way to legitimize exceptional means of solving the problem. Based on Austin, Weaver considers security to be an act of speech, arguing alongside Austin that speeches may have a strong performance power to embody reality.<sup>22</sup>

Rhetorical practices, by using them to promote an existential threat to the core policy of the state and society, allow for the establishment of action to prepare public opinion and the public to tolerate violations that the security process may cause.<sup>23</sup>

The Copenhagen School has created a spectrum on which public issues can be classified - from non-politicized to politicized matters to secure matters; non-politicized issues are those that the state does not deal with and are not part of the public debate. In contrast, politicized issues are dealt with within the political system and are part of the policy calling for specific government actions and security issues at the end of the spectrum; These are issues that require extraordinary/exceptional means.<sup>\*\*</sup> To address it, it goes beyond the usual political actions of the state. According to the Copenhagen School, matters are transferred from the politicized area to the secured area of the spectrum through an "act of securitization." Securitization states, "Security is the movement that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game, framing

the issue as a special kind of politics or as applied above politics, " which is why securitization can be considered a more extreme version of politicization.<sup>24</sup>

The concept of exception was prevalent after 2001 in the context of the so-called post-structural security, which in this context emphasizes the possibility of addressing many issues outside its everyday politics.<sup>25</sup> "Sovereignty decides the exception," and here, Smith knows the exception in terms of decisive sovereignty, where the exception is announced by an individual declaring the exceptional situation. Through this declaration, this individual becomes a sovereign ruler, and according to Smith, it is the risk of exception that requires the intervention of the sovereign who decides whether there is a severe emergency and what needs to be done to eliminate this risk.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.2. How do immigration and asylum turn into a security problem?

There are many links between migration and security, manifested mainly in three primary relationships: the relationship between migration and crime, migration and terrorism, and migration and urban conflict.<sup>27</sup> These relationships and ties have contributed mainly to activating domestic security policies. Political forces have made it secure to manage migration and asylum issues in European space under the pretext of combating crime and terrorism and protecting urban cities and communities.

France's 23rd President Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-2012) is one of France's most prominent security players, spearheading anti-immigration and asylum programs after portraying them as a threat to public safety, which was accepted by most French citizens, especially his supporters, who considered them Migrants coming to France to seek asylum are blights on French society and a significant burden on their economy.<sup>28</sup>

This public acceptance has helped increase anti-immigrant sentiment and racial prejudice during economic downturns, as securitizing actors use the opportunity to blame immigrants and refugees for being the leading cause of joblessness and overcrowding in public schools overburdening social care and health spending, and scarce resources. Additionally, some individuals fear that immigrants undermine their country's cultural identity.<sup>29</sup>

This situation can be explained by the theory of the competitive threat, where security depends on this theory in preparing public opinion and the public to tolerate the violations it may cause. Regardless of whether a competitive threat is a fact or perception, it can also be understood in broad terms as a multidimensional concept that refers to a set of "fears" arising from a "realistic threat" that results from perceived competition for power material resources, and well-being. or a "symbolic threat" resulting from growing concerns about the group's cultural, religious, and/or normative beliefs.<sup>30</sup>

Sarkozy has pushed through rigid new immigration rules, including the controversial deportation of Roma, as well as the ban on Islamic headscarves in France and the opposition to halal Islamic meals in schools, for greater security. The most apparent thing about his rhetorical practice during his campaign in the 2012 elections was when he declared on several propaganda stations that "there are many foreigners in France and their integration system works from bad to worse." He, therefore, wanted more restrictive measures on immigration and illegal immigrants seeking asylum in France.<sup>31</sup>

It seems more apparent that Marine Le Pen, during the presidential election, promised her supporters that she would protect France through border closure policies to protect against the scarcity of jobs and the terrorist threat that immigrants claim to represent, as she also argued that immigrants are draining resources, rejecting French values and affecting their culture, stressing that French identity is deteriorating.<sup>32</sup>

In Spain after 9/11, 2001, immigration policy focused primarily on restricting illegal entry, which was tightened after the horrific attacks on three train stations in Madrid on 11 Mar., 2004, by local cells of Islamic extremists of Moroccan origin - the deadliest attacks in Spain's history (192 dead and 2,057 injured).<sup>33</sup>

There are two prominent cases of security in Spain's recent immigration history: the 1995 Elongolo riots and the 2005 border fence attack; in both cases, the "threat" came from African immigrants, particularly sub-Saharan, who succeeded in entering Ceuta illegally, prompting a security speech. To focus on the need to protect the sovereignty of Spain and the people of Ceuta as part of a series of extraordinary measures demanded by Christian Ceuties at the time in both cases, which focused on closing the border at all costs and expelling migrants from the city to Morocco or their countries of origin. Which has become a routine daily discourse.<sup>34</sup>

We can also cite the events of Melilla 2022, where at least 23 African migrants and asylum seekers were killed and dozens injured after Moroccan security forces used excessive force against them while trying to cross from Moroccan territory into the city. While the Euro-Mediterranean Observatory for Human Rights strongly condemned the tragedy, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez remains. The rhetoric of security is practiced through the defense of the Moroccan authorities and the security personnel who carried out the massacre, which contributes significantly to the security of immigration and asylum issues, turning them into security issues with distinction.

While in Italy, former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini frequently spoke about "cultural warfare," arguing that the values of Islam and Muslims do not fully conform to European values, claiming that immigrants pose a symbolic (cultural) threat to those values.<sup>35</sup>

Although the stated reasons for political expediency are clear in justifying the process of security immigration and asylum issues, mainly organized crime, terrorism, and urban conflict, there are many other hidden reasons that the theorists of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies call the hidden agenda.

Where securitization is ontologically related to societal security, and societal security is closely related to political security; nevertheless, it differs from it; while political security is linked to the organizational stability of states, governance systems, and ideologies that give governments legitimacy, societal security is linked to the identity and self-perception of societies and individuals who define themselves as members in the community.<sup>36</sup>

Identity is, therefore, a significant reason for European policies of security in the management of migration and asylum issues, which, on the other hand, are a convincing reason for public acceptance, especially the kind of public that is not driven by economical aspects, particularly within the affluent social classes. In any case, historical experience proves the implication of the exploitation of culture as a tool for the security of many issues, which has become commonplace in cultural interpretations of international relations.<sup>37</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The wide variation in policies to manage migration and asylum issues in European space has been a significant knowledge debate, particularly regarding causes and implications. Talking of multi-level governance leads us directly to the economic side and the urgent need for labor, particularly technical ones. At the same time, security is linked to more symbolic moments in the search for cultural security and protecting European identity and values from the other.

Similarly, this study argues that the more national identity speech individuals have, the greater their negative attitudes towards migrants and refugees, making them more vulnerable to security effects. Threats explain this association that migrants are perceived to pose to the local population.

In the end, European policies for managing migration and asylum issues differ. However, they meet the goals Europeans want to achieve, particularly ensuring their political, economic, cultural, and social interests are away from human rights slogans and international responsibility.

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