



THE 'COLLATERAL DAMAGE' OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION



Dimitrios Aspasios
Police Captain in the Hellenic Police
Greece

Keywords: irregular migration; security; external borders; European Union.

Abstract: Modern migration has become a timeless and volatile global phenomenon. Migration in Europe and more specifically the irregular movement of immigrants is high on the common European agenda, highlighting the importance of the phenomenon for the Member States of the European Union. Individual migration aspects such as the recent migration flows to Europe, national security and the efforts to protect the external borders of the European Union comprise the harsh picture of irregular migration that results in the loss of thousands of lives annually.

INTRODUCTION

Modern immigration has become a dominant topic of interest in the scientific community because it constantly acquires new features, which require timely and thorough scientific study. One very important but poorly studied aspect of the migration phenomenon deals with the human casualties caused during the migration process. Death of immigrants as a result of their efforts to reach the 'promised land' is one aspect of the phenomenon that shows how the general framework within modern movement of populations evolves and highlights the risks posed by irregular border crossing.

Behind every immigrant that manages to enter a new country of destination, there are hundreds of others that were not able to see their dream become reality due to apprehension by law authorities or even the loss of their lives during their effort to enter the destination country and avoid police arrest. The importance of involvement with this admittedly ghoulish issue of human losses, as a result of irregular migration, mainly arises within the overall dipole, which on the one hand requires the adoption and implementation of strict rules on the movement of people by modern states and on the other hand the need to efficiently manage the migration flows triggered by political, economic, cultural or geopolitical reasons.

MODERN MIGRATION FLOWS

Europe is one of the main geographic areas significantly affected by changes brought about by the evolution of migratory flows in the last decade. Member states of the European Union became basic migration destinations for under-developed Balkan, African and Asian countries, giving rise to serious problems, due to the regular but mainly irregular migration flows that they were forced to manage.

This new migration environment accelerated the process for the adoption and implementation of common rules for the management of the situation, while upgrading the degree of cooperation between all Member States. Management problems that modern migration flows continue to cause since then are high on the political agenda of the Member States of the European Union, in order to deal with the impacts of massive population movement. One of the most important aspects of the migration process and its consequences, for both the migrants and the internal security of the European countries, is irregular migration. The imperative need to address irregular migration is due to the size of recent migration flows and the individual characteristics of those that may variously affect host and residence states.



The acknowledgement that immigration and especially irregular movements cannot be solved unilaterally, but require solutions at a supra-national level, soon became accepted by all Member States of the European Union and all efforts took serious notice of this fact, challenging their coherent cooperation (Bauer, Lofstrom, & Zimmermann, 2000; Geddes, 2003).

IMMIGRATION AND SECURITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Until recently, migration was mainly studied in the social and economic sciences, because the effects at the socio-economic level were particularly pronounced for the majority of European citizens. The fatal terrorist attacks of 9/11 radically changed the existing environment of freedom and security, bringing forth a different dimension to the migration phenomenon that was not widely known until recently. Changes caused by the above-mentioned terrorist attack across the world led to the study of migration flows in a completely different light, that of national security and sovereignty.

Changes in the 20th century and especially wars and radical ideological orientations considerably transformed the image of the known world and as a result many groups of people were forced to abandon their homeland and seek refuge in another country. Some of the foreign immigrants, due to their particular political, religious or cultural beliefs, could become a threat to national security and these threats should be addressed at all costs (Koser, 2005).

It was widely understood that among people who migrate seeking asylum, and use the legally protected characterisation of refugee, there may be individuals who act fraudulently by effectively hiding their real identity and act under a regime of complete secrecy, repeatedly performing unlawful actions. For these reasons, the modus operandi of the competent authorities for the protection of national sovereignty and security had to be adapted to the new asymmetric threats imposed by globalisation (Moses & Letnes, 2004).

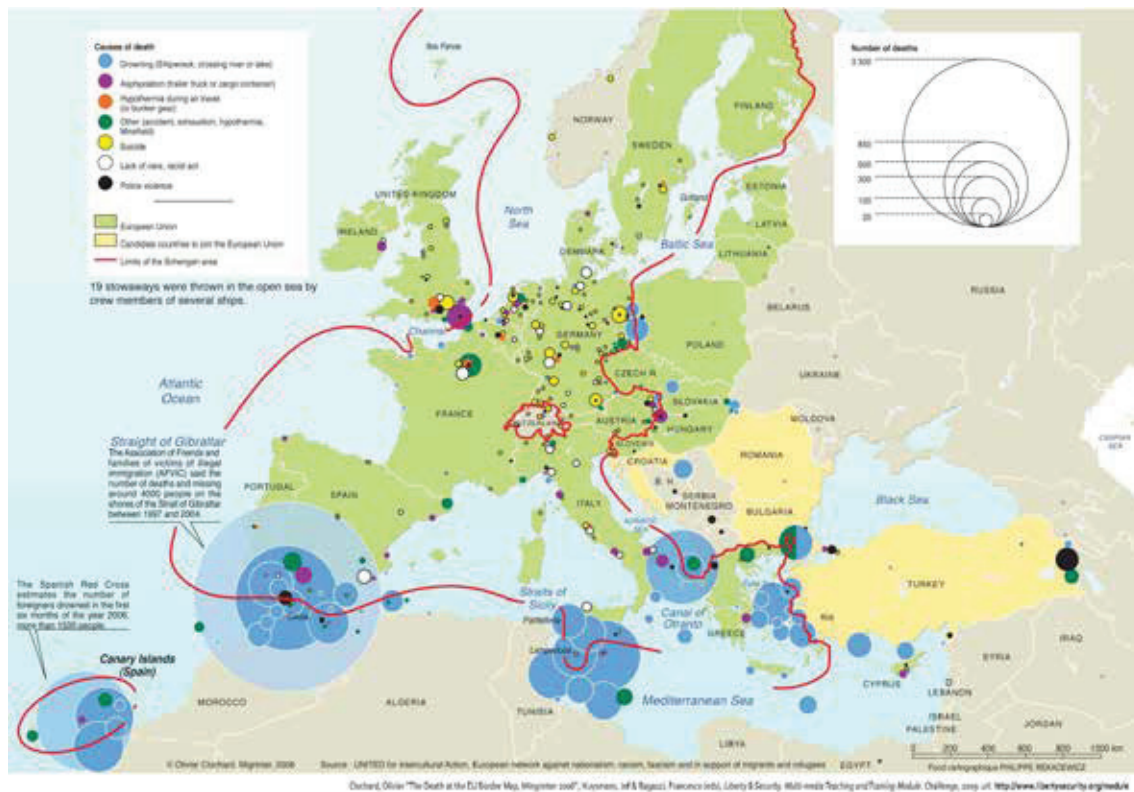
IRREGULAR MIGRATION TRENDS IN EUROPE

The main objective of the European Union, and more specifically the Schengen Agreement, was the creation of an area, geographically defined by the individual Member State's territory, which would be characterised by the absence of internal border controls (Kunz & Leinonen, 2007). The abolition of internal border controls and the strengthening of external border controls led to harsh consequences for both the States, which were forced to spend very large amounts of money and human resources, and for migrants themselves, because a large number of them died when trying to enter a country irregularly and avoid detection by the law enforcement authorities. An example of the numbers of lives lost during the migration process is the fact that every day an immigrant dies at the borders of the United States of America and Mexico because of hypothermia, physical exhaustion or drowning (Pecoud & De Guchteneire, 2007).

Evaluating the data collected by the organisation UNITED for Intercultural Action, which is a European network of non-governmental organisations and other actors with the main object of combatting the phenomena of nationalism, racism, fascism against migrants and refugees, it is understood that thousands of immigrants fail to arrive safely in Europe (UNITED for Interculture Action). Based upon an investigation that resulted in gathering data from 1993 until the end of 2012, there were 17 306 deaths of migrants recorded in Europe alone. The majority of these fatal incidents (11 000 deaths) were caused by the immigrant's efforts to enter European territory. More specifically nearly 10 000 migrants were drowned, as a result of weather conditions or through the inefficient means of transport used for crossing the European border (UNITED for Intercultural Action, 2012).

The majority of migrant deaths were observed in the southern part of Europe, proving that this specific geographical area is the main gateway for immigrants. Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal are the countries with the highest number of fatal incidents (Figure 1) but it is worth mentioning that despite the fact that most deaths were recorded in southern Europe, fatal incidents occurred in almost all European countries.

Figure 1 — Map Representing Immigrant Deaths per Thousand at European Borders.



Source: Chochard, 2009.

The life-threatening efforts of immigrants to bypass border controls drives many of them to find particularly dangerous ways to cross the external European borders, in many cases resulting in their death (Manach, 2011).

CONCLUSION

It is commonly accepted that the number of irregular immigrants tends to increase rather

than decrease over time. This trend should be seriously taken into account by all European Member States and for that reason specific policies should be promoted targeting reduction in the number of irregular immigrants. The liberal principles and human rights that characterise modern European states should be guaranteed and protected at any cost and any measures for tightening controls at external border crossing points should not impose serious consequences to the lives of individual immigrants.

REFERENCES

- Bauer, T., Lofstrom, M., & Zimmermann, K. F. (2000). *Immigration Policy, Assimilation of Immigrants, and Natives' Sentiments Towards Immigrants: Evidence from 12 OECD Countries*. Mobility and Flexibility of Labor Markets. Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA).
- Chochard, O. (2009). *The Death at the EU Border Map, Mingrinter 2006*. (J. Huysmans, & F. Ragazzi, Eds.) Retrieved 10 February 2014, from Liberty & Security. Multi-media Teaching and Training Module: <http://www.libertysecurity.org/module>
- Geddes, A. (2003). *The Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe*. London: Sage Publications.



Koser, K. (2005). *Irregular Migration, State Security and Human Security*. Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM).

Kunz, J., & Leinonen, M. (2007). Europe Without Borders: Rhetoric, Reality or Utopia? In A. Pecoud, & P. De Guchteneire (Eds.), *Migration Without Borders. Essays on the Free Movement of People* (pp. 137-160). New York: Unesco Publishing/Berghahn Books.

Manach, J. M. (2011, March 4). *Fortress Europe: A Deadly Exodus*. Retrieved 10 February 2014, from OWNl.eu (Object Web non Identifie): <http://ownieu.6x9.fr/2011/03/04/app-fortress-europe-a-deadly-exodus/index.html>

Moses, J. W., & Letnes, B. (2004). The Economic Costs to International Labor Restrictions: Revisiting the Empirical Discussion. *World Development*, 32 (10).

Pecoud, A., & De Guchteneire, P. (2007). Introduction: The Migration Without Borders Scenario. In A. Pecoud, & P. De Guchteneire (Eds.), *Migration Without Borders. Essays on the Free Movement of People* (pp. 1-30). New York: Unesco Publishing/Berghahn Books.

UNITED for Intercultural Action. (2012, November 01). *The Fatal Realities of Fortress Europe*. Retrived 15 February 2014, from UNITED for Intercultural Action. *European Network Against Nationalism, Racism, Fasism and in Support of Migrants and Refugees*: <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/campaigns/the-fatal-realities-of-fortress-europe/>.