Migration as an International and Domestic Security Issue

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23.1 Introduction

In the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001 immigration related to Islam has been discussed as a security issue. It has been linked with terrorism and entry controls at the borders, at airports, and in the streets were tightened. But in the past both in the United States and in many European countries (e.g. in Germany, France and the United Kingdom) most terrorists have hardly been related with this specific security issue, because most of them were tourists or students with a legal residence status, and they were only marginally connected with immigration. If immigration policy cannot prevent terrorism because it aims to facilitate the entry of desired foreigners and to deter the entry of unwanted ones (illegal with few networks, asylum seekers with few chances to obtain a refugee status and poor people who can only offer their manual labour). Immigration policy may also intensify the controls in close international cooperation. However, economic interests may conflict with security issues. Thus most security concerns related to immigration are confined to the local level, while immigration policies are implemented at the national level and focus on illegal border crossing, thus stretching security in another respect (Heisler 1998-1999).

Compared with the United States, in Europe the Schengen agreements have been conceived primarily as an internal security regime, not in a military sense, but as an internal and transnational security issue (e.g. ethnicity of urban territories or uncontrolled transnational networks managed from abroad). In security discourses, migrants have often been referred to as ‘threats’ and ‘challenges’ and illegal stay was linked with delinquency and radical Islamism.

But if the patterns of immigration have changed, the inclusion of migration in academic areas dealing with security and conflicts is a rather new issue. Twenty years ago, migration debates were more confined to the labour market and social issues, both including economic, sociological and cultural approaches. Political scientists and specialists of international relations have joined the migration field much later (Miller 1981; Wihtol de Wenden 1988, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2001; Hollifield 2000). Three recent trends in research may be distinguished:

- The first trend linked migration with globalisation and dealt with international topics, e.g. refugees, transnational networks, human rights, demographic and labour force shortages, regional migration policies in the Americas and Europe, with Islam (Zolberg 1985; Sassen 1995; Leveau 1988, 1992-1993; Kepel 1987), the nation state and sovereignty (as challenges to national public policies: Badie/Wihtol de Wenden 1994; Baubock 1998).
- In the 1990’s a shift occurred in security studies from East-West to South-North issues, stressing internal affairs over strategic studies. In this context, migration was considered a future strategic issue. Such discourses have often taken place in the defence policy community (e.g. in NATO, in foreign affairs and defence departments) where immigration has recently emerged as a topical issue by extending strategic and security issues to the social and environmental texture of international relations. The main topics are migration flows (the fear of invasion) and Islamist terrorism.
- The third research trend focusing on extremist expressions of Islam including urban violence and terrorism, namely in Europe, has led to some amalgamation of migration with Islam and with Islam as a new threat. It has raised the question of immigration as an internal security issue. Scientific analyses of popular Islam have difficulties to propose other images of a more diversified reality (Cesari 1997).

From an ethical perspective, such an evolution may be dangerous, because it may reinforce the ‘securitisation’ of immigration by emphasising border control policies, illegal, transnational networks, dubious alle-
giances, challenges brought to states, and sovereignty issues instead of other central topics like new mobilities of flows, living together, citizenship and multiple identities. From a geopolitical view, the evolving concept of security related to migration implies a new definition of risk in western countries, such as human trafficking, illegal networks and criminal activities. This causes strong concern because such a definition does not exist in Eastern countries. In the South, in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue of the Barcelona process, immigration has become a major issue between the Northern and Southern shores. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians contributes to the dramatisation of this question and to the stagnation of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

However, the internationalisation and securitisation of immigration have raised several new questions in political science such as multiple allegiances, plural citizenship, multicultural political communities, transnational networks, and border controls in nation states, influence of external factors on the domestic political order (with topics such as terrorism, refugees, harmonisation of immigration policies and regional stakes in the global context, co-development policies, ethnicity in public policies) and, reciprocally, on the impact of internal factors on international issues (weight of minority groups on voting behaviour and definition of external policies, especially on the relations between host countries and the countries of origin).

Migration is not only an international issue - though not necessarily a security problem - it is also a domestic issue with implications for those living together under new terms of citizenship, of loyalty with multiple references and choices, of the intrusion of external and transnational factors into the internal political order. All these topics are on the move, shaping the internalisation of international relations as well as the internationalisation of internal order.

23.2 Migration Trends in the Mediterranean (1960-2000)

23.2.1 Colonial Times: North-South Migration

For a long time, the Mediterranean has been a zone of both gaps and passages between the North and the South rim. During the colonial period, North-South migration has been predominant: colonisers, merchants, missionaries, military troops have invaded the Southern territories: France in Algeria since 1830, then in Tunisia and Morocco in the middle of the 19th century, Italy in Eritrea (1890) and Somaliland since 1892, Spain in Morocco (enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta, Spanish Morocco of Southern Sahara), the United Kingdom in the Middle East (Egypt, Palestine namely), Syria and Lebanon by France after World War I as a 'mandate' of the League of Nations. At the end of the colonial period, since the beginning of the 20th century, a South-North migration occurred, notably from Algeria (Kabyles) to France, during and after World War I and II as soldiers and workers. As Algeria was a French 'department', this circulation was first limited to the needs of the labour market and became progressively free at independence, a freedom that was maintained by the Evian agreements of 1962 and later stopped by the Algerian government in 1973, after racist attacks in Marseilles. This period also experienced return flows of Europeans after 1962 (in France the so-called 'pieds-noirs') and of around 180,000 harkis (Muslim troops serving the French side during the war). These population movements were rather small between Mediterranean and other European countries that did not develop, like in France, a colonisation of settlement.

23.2.2 Post-colonial Period: South-North Migration

The 1960’s were a period of high intensity of South-North migration between the Maghreb and Europe. In France the control of flows by the state, envisaged in 1945, was rapidly challenged by the management of employers which hired workers in villages of Morocco, followed by the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany which also began to employ Turkish people at the end of the 1950’s as well as Yugoslavs and Greeks.

During this period of easy mobility, most migrants came and returned and remained one to three months in their countries of origin where their families lived, and then came back to the firms, mines, and housing. They represented a cheap labour force of men only, living near coffee shops, hotels or sleep merchants and trade unions, with a private practice of Islam and a high degree of secularisation. Apart from the period of the Algerian war (1954-1962), and some years later (fear of clashes between FLN and harkis), and during the period of MTA (Mouvement des Travailleurs Arabes) in the early 1970’s when the Arabs were called to react to the Israeli-Palestinian war, the securitisation of migration and of Islam was not an issue.