

## Security in European Union

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### Abstract

The article outlines the main parameters of Europe's immigration issue and dispels some of the myths surrounding it. It presents the immigration policy of the last decade and traces the reasons behind its complete or almost failure. Then, the security threat that has arisen on National level and in whole Union due to the issue's mismanagement is pointed out. Finally, the article provides the best framework for a new immigration policy which, in order to be successful in European Union, must incorporate best international practices and must be compliant with the European law on Immigration and Asylum.

**Keywords:** Security policies, transit migrations, refugees, asylum, irregular migration

### Introduction

This aforementioned situation has resulted in a (self-inflicted!) multifaceted national security threat against European Union. We can say that the most self-evident strand of this threat is that large numbers of people enter and remain in the EU illegally and are of unknown motives and origins. Their motives may range from purely economic (employment, higher salary, new life etc.) to quite sinister (criminality, terrorist acts). In the early '90s the European Union (1990-1994) was not prepared to tackle the increased immigrant inflow and, in spite of mounting some deportation efforts, it reluctantly tolerated it. With the immigrant population steadily increasing and a black market for cheap labor having been created, the centre-left government which followed (1993-2004) in Greece, Italy and Spain decided to do something about it. The EU had already clearly stated that the decision to take in immigrants, to decide on their numbers, race, gender and on their skills lies solely within each Member State of the Union. Furthermore, the EU was – and still is - firmly against large-scale regularizations and favored the repatriation of illegal immigrants. The EU had also emphasized that “wide-scale regularization measures have a long-term effects in reducing the levels of illegal migrants, instead they may serve as an additional pull factor for illegal migrants...”

Specifically, the EU had pointed out that: “Within the context of a managed immigration policy the only coherent approach to dealing with illegal residents is to ensure that they return to their country of origin” (p.19).

### Methods and materials:

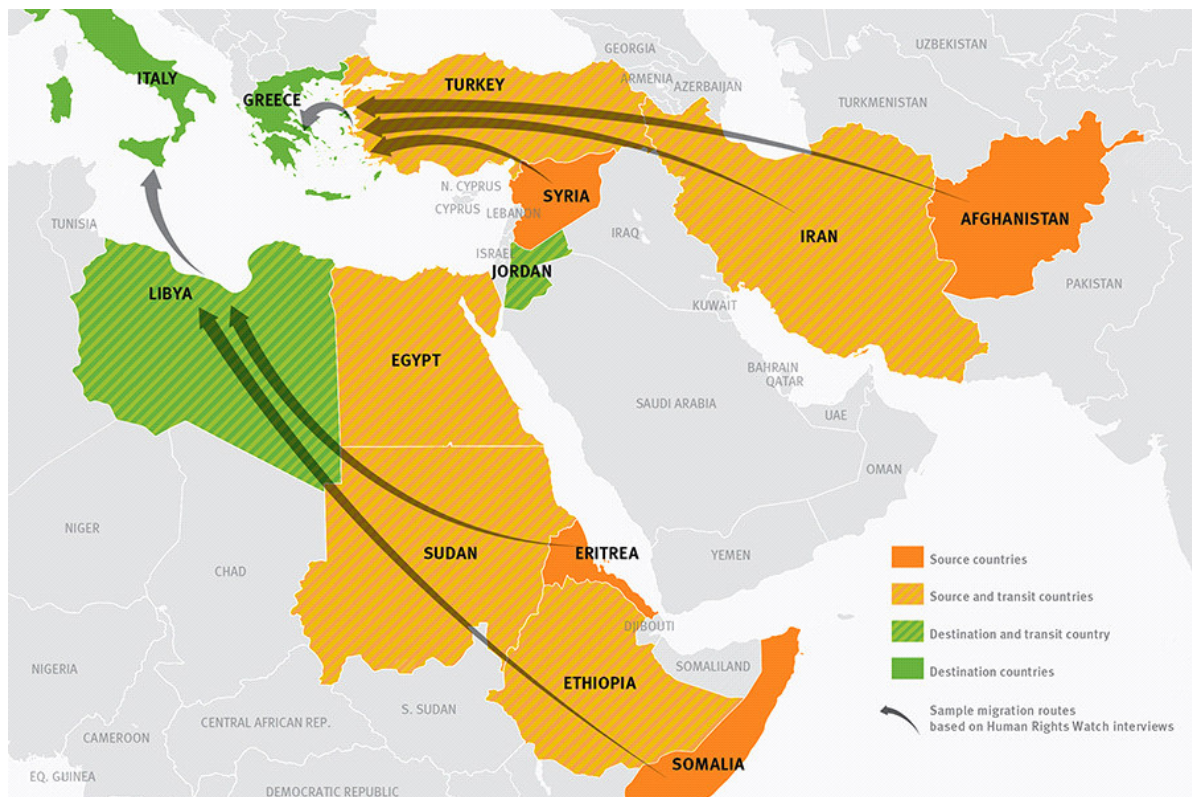
Frontex, in its latest Risk Analysis, notes that “As a corollary to the sharp decreases registered in Italy and Spain, the number of detections of illegal border crossing in Greece rose from 50% of the total EU detections to 75% of the total. In 2009, the Greek land border sections with Albania and Macedonia represented the largest share of the EU total, with 36,600 detections (34% of the EU total), followed by 22,000 detections in the Aegean Sea (21% of the EU total)” (p. 12). Whilst the land borders have been the privileged location for illegal immigration since the 2000's, notably regarding the border countries like Hungary, Bulgaria Greece and Italy – it is now the maritime area which is the focus of a new type of immigration. The strengthening of land borders and checks on specific crossing-points, notably with the Union's aid and that of Frontex, has led illegal immigrants to try and cross the Mediterranean delivering themselves into the hands of traffickers, who are more often than not working for structured, powerful criminal organisations. Nearly 250,000 illegal maritime immigrants were estimated in 2014.

The situation has become so serious that the European Commission's Vice-President Jacques Barrot warned in mid-2009 that “there is a grave danger of destabilization of the Greece due to the completely uncontrollable waves of immigration”

## 2.1 Tables and figures



Pro-migrant flyer. Berlin, 4 April. [Joel Schalit/Flickr]



Over 100,000 migrants and asylum seekers have crossed the Mediterranean since 2015

The EU's response in recent years to boat migration across the Mediterranean has focused largely on trying to prevent or discourage people attempting to make the dangerous crossing. This approach is also reflected in the EU's current focus on anti-smuggling measures, including pre-emptive seizure and destruction of



boats used by smugglers.

In reality, attempts to prevent crossings are likely to fail as this approach overlooks the reasons people are willing to risk their lives to attempt such deadly sea-passage. In many cases there are desperate reasons grounded in forced displacement and human rights abuse for making this desperate journey.

## Results and Discussions

Large numbers of people enter and remain in the EU illegally and are of unknown origin and motives. Their motives may range from purely economic (employment, higher salary, etc.) to quite sinister (criminality, terrorist acts). More specifically, the national security threat takes the following forms:

### 3.1 Criminality and ghettoization

The uncontrollable influx and settlement of very large numbers of illegal immigrants in Greece's major cities has resulted in the creation of "no-go areas" and ghettos, especially in Athens, Madrid, Rome, Paris city centers ! Not surprisingly, criminality is rife and ethnic clashes and riots are commonplace in these areas. Moreover, another symptom of EU flawed immigration policy is the very significant contribution of foreigners in serious crimes such as homicides, robberies, thefts and burglaries and rapes especially in Greece. This "contribution" ranges from 33% for homicides to 51% for thefts and burglaries (data for arrests in 2009). Albanians, being by far the largest ethnic community, are also responsible for a significant part of the imported criminality. According to a recent confidential Police report 42 criminal organizations from Albania operate in Greece. About 3,000 Albanian criminals are active in the transportation and distribution of cannabis and heroin, while 2,500 Albanians are arrested each year in Greece for robberies, thefts and burglaries.

### 3.2 Integration? What integration?

The fact that a large and increasing number of people enter and stay in the country makes their integration more difficult. Moreover, the fact that the vast majority of these people originate from countries outside the EU is a factor that further impedes integration. Finally, bearing in mind the relevant experience of other European countries such as the UK, France and the Netherlands, the fact that the vast majority of these people comes from Muslim countries will hamper any effort for their integration. Integration will not take place also because the vast majority of immigrants in EU entered the Union illegally and have been ex-post facto regularized. Thus, the stance of the native population towards them is very negative. Finally, integration efforts are also offset by the fact that unemployment among foreigners is much higher (and rising) than among native citizens.

- Muslim fundamentalism

Until now EU does not seem to have a particular issue of Islamic fundamentalism. Nevertheless, as aptly described in the latest State Department report on terrorism, "*Greece is increasingly an EU entry point for illegal immigrants coming from the Middle East and South Asia and there was concern that it could be used as a transit route for terrorists traveling to Europe and the United States. The number of illegal immigrants entering Greece, especially through the Aegean Sea, increased dramatically in 2008 and 2009, with more than 100,000 illegal immigrants, nearly half of whom originated from North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, arrested each year*".

Still, with the rise in numbers of illegal immigrants originating from Muslim countries where radical Islam thrives (i.e. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan) the pool of potential recruits for extremist imams is increasing. Moreover, according to sources of "Kathimerini" newspaper, the number of unofficial mosques operating in Greece (excluding Thrace where native Muslims live) is on the rise. There are 75 unofficial mosques (compared to 68 in June 2009), 23 of which have been founded by Pakistani and 15 by Bangladeshi immigrants. According to the same newspaper there are indications that the number of Muslim extremists reaching Greece through illegal immigration is also increasing.

Both the extent of Islamic religious fundamentalism and its correlates – homophobia, antisemitism and "Occidentophobia" – should be serious causes of concern for policy makers as well as Muslim community leaders. Of course, religious fundamentalism should not be equated with the willingness to support, or even to engage in religiously motivated violence. But given its strong relationship to out-group hostility, religious fundamentalism is very likely to provide a nourishing environment for radicalization. Having said that, one should not forget that in Western Europe Muslims make up a relatively small minority of the population. Although relatively speaking levels of fundamentalism and out-group hostility are much higher among Muslims, in absolute numbers there are at least as many Christian as there are Muslim fundamentalists in Western Europe, and the large majority of homophobes and anti-Semites are still natives. As a religious leader respected by both Muslims and Christians once said: "let those who are without sin, cast the first stone."

## Conclusion

European Union does not have many alternatives in order to effectively deal with its immigration issue. Either the country continues the failed policies of half-measures, ex-post facto regularizations, good intentions and wishful thinking or the government becomes realistic and tackles the real dangers that have emerged as a result of the issue's mismanagement in the last 20-30 years. A realistic approach must result in a complete overhaul of current policies and a U-turn on current immigration management:

- Estimate the labor market needs for migrant labor on a regular basis
- Estimate its infrastructure's carrying capacity as far as population is concerned
- Guard its land and sea borders much more effectively
- Improve the repatriation rate of illegal immigrants. This can be achieved through a mix of diplomatic efforts, bilateral agreements, concerted EU efforts and repatriation programs. Special focus must be given on the agreement with Turkey which is one of the main transit countries of illegal immigrants to Greece and, thus, Europe
- Rationalize (i.e. decrease) the number of legalized immigrants by not renewing residence and work permits of non-EU citizens and by introducing voluntary repatriation programs
- Ensure the compliance of employers to labor legislation especially as far as illegal labor is concerned. Enforce harsh penalties to those who employ illegal immigrants
- Refrain from new regularization efforts
- Set national security and community cohesion as its main immigration policymaking criteria

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Relevant article (*Kathimerini*, 3/7/2009) can be read here (in Greek only):  
[http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_world\\_1\\_03/07/2009\\_320831](http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_world_1_03/07/2009_320831)

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[http://www.astynomia.gr/images/stories/2010/310110stats\\_egklh\\_2009.pdf](http://www.astynomia.gr/images/stories/2010/310110stats_egklh_2009.pdf)

A relevant article (To Vima, 20/3/2010) can be found here (in Greek only):

<http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=46&ct=32&artId=295093&dt=20/03/2010>

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2009/140885.htm>

The relevant article (*Kathimerini*, 24/4/2010) can be read here (in Greek only):  
[http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_ell\\_1\\_24/04/2010\\_398765](http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_ell_1_24/04/2010_398765)

The new bilateral agreement regarding the readmission to Turkey of illegal immigrants who make it to Greece through the Turkish borders was signed recently by Greek Minister for Citizen's Protection Mr Michalis Chryssochoides and the Turk Minister of Interior Mr Beşir Atalay. This simply emphasizes the complete failure of the previous agreement and Turkey's unwillingness to deal with the issue effectively. The relevant press release by the Ministry for Citizen's Protection can be read here (in Greek only):  
[http://www.yptp.gr/index.php?option=ozo\\_content&perform=view&id=3211&Itemid=440&lang=](http://www.yptp.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&perform=view&id=3211&Itemid=440&lang=)