FREEDOM VS. SECURITY IN EUROPE: THE PHENOMENON OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION

Gabriela LUCA[1]

ABSTRACT:
THE ANALYSIS CONDUCTED IN THIS ARTICLE IS MEANT TO RAISE THE ISSUE OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE DIVERGENCE BETWEEN FREEDOM AND SECURITY. EU CITIZENS HAVE BEEN FEELING LESS SECURE SINCE THE START OF THE MIGRANT CRISIS IN 2011. THE MAIN CAUSE OF THIS PHENOMENON IS THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE, WAR AND STARVATION THAT PUSHES PEOPLE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST TO VENTURE THROUGH THREE DANGEROUS ROUTES TO COME TO EUROPE SEEKING ASYLUM. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE EU IS FORCED TO FACE BOTH A MORAL AND A PRAGMATIC PROBLEM WHETHER TO TAKE ACTION STRENGTHENING THE SECURITY APPARATUS AT THE COST OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM OR WHETHER TO KEEP THINGS AS THEY ARE AT THE COST OF A POTENTIAL ESCALATION OF TERRORISM. IN THIS SENSE WE HAVE ANALYZED THE BENEFITS AND RISKS OF THE POSSIBLE MEASURES THAT EUROPE COULD UNDERTAKE.

KEY WORDS: SECURITY, FREEDOM, ILLEGAL MIGRATION, EUROPEAN UNION, TERRORISM

INTRODUCTION

The European Union has always been an institution that promised security, freedom and prosperity for all. In a large sense the EU is a functional model of democracy that applies sets of policy granting the common individual freedom in a secure environment. After two devastating and costly world wars the current state of affairs in this geopolitical area is optimistic showing constant economic growth and important advances in social reform. Security is also a priority for the EU together with Nato they have created a well thought out European Security Strategy implementing policies that develop a defensive adaptive response to old and new threats. In this sense, we could consider that the EU is safer than ever.

THE PHENOMENON OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION

Even though security measures have for the most part proven for most part effective there is a trend of insecurity rising in Europe. Due to challenging new problems like the increase of terrorist activity, refugees fleeing to Europe from Syria and the Middle East and the after effects of the financial crisis, the European citizen tends to feel less secure. The most discussed issue in the media is the problem of migrants and how will this affect the well-being of Europe. There has always been a minority of people that views immigrants as a threat to economy, jobs, culture and religion. This niche is growing slowly but constantly and

[1] MA, National Intelligence Academy „Mihai Viteazul", Bucharest, Luca.gabriela1@yahoo.com

represents a category that could divide Europe and cause a serious breach in what we know to be democracy. More and more radical right and left-wing parties are starting to gain ground in elections.

This trend can only be understood and correlated in the context of the European migrant crisis. Since 2015 more than a million individuals have crossed into Europe. According to Eurostat, EU member states received over 1.2 million first time asylum applications last year, a number more than double that of 2014. About two thirds of all EU asylum application target only four states (Germany, Hungary, Sweden, and Austria) with Hungary, Sweden, and Austria being the top recipients of asylum applications per capita. Most migrants come from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq[2]. The flow of migrants hasn't stopped with the 135,711 people reaching Europe by sea since the beginning of 2016, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

Illegal migration is a complex phenomenon that has become an increasing problem in the European Union. According to the Frontex's Annual Risk Analysis of 2015 about 283,532 people have crossed illegally at border crossing points. That is a 264% increase compared to the previous year[3]. There are multiple factors and causes for this ranging from war, terrorism, starvation, poverty, infringement of human rights and socioeconomic distress. Compared to the United States of America where illegal migration is also a problem, Europe seems to be more afraid and conflicted by this situation. According to a Gallup poll, 54% of Europeans want lower immigration levels compared to 34% of U.S citizens[4]. In this regard it is clear that the topic of illegal migration is relevant to the present situation.

From a conceptual point of view human migration can be considered the movement of people from one geographical place to another with the clear intentions of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location. This movement is often over long distances and from one country to another. However, migration is also possible internally within the same country. Migration should not be confused with Nomadic movements. These cannot be considered migrations, as there is no intention of settling and the movement is mostrly seasonal. Illegal immigration is the migration of people across national borders in a way that violates the immigration laws of the destination country.[5]

Migrants coming to Europe risk their lives subjecting themselves to inhumane conditions to relocate from their states. Often the journey proves to be deadly. There are three main routes that migrants take to reach Europe. The most common one is The Central Mediterranean Route, which leads to Italy or Malta. Migrants travel on smugglers' ships (usually small boats) departing from Egypt, Tunisia or Libya. Often this journey ends in tragedy. In 2013 we saw the Lampedusa disaster were a migrant boat shipwrecked causing 600 deaths. Due to increasing tensions in Libya, the use of this route has diminished but still remains a frequented one. The second route, called the Eastern Mediterranean Route, leads to Greece or the Aegean Sea, and was the most traveled route by migrants in 2015. According to estimates, close to 350,000 individuals have crossed from Turkey to Greece. This shift is justified by the change in migration pattern by the Syrians, who find this route easier and safer to travel by. The last important route is through the Western Balkans that leads to

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[2] Eurostat newsrelease 44/2016, March 4, 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/790eba01-381c-4163-bcd2-a54959b99ed6

[3] Frontex Annual Risk Analysis 2015, 16,
http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2015.pdf

[4] Neli Esipova, Anita Pugliese, Julie Ray, "Europeans Most Negative Toward Immigration", October 16, 2015, http://www.gallup.com/poll/186209/europeans-negative-toward-immigration.aspx

[5] Carrie Dann, "By the numbers: How America tallies its 11.1 million undocumented immigrants". NBC News. Aprilie 11, 2013, http://nbcpolitics.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/04/11/17691515-by-the-numbers-how-america-tallies-its-111-million-undocumented-immigrants?lite

Hungary. Close to 160,000 people traveled this route from Serbia in the first 8 months of 2015 and most migrants that reach Greece through the Eastern Mediterranean Route will depart for Central Europe through the Western Balkans route. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), over 3,770 migrants were reported to have died trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2015. On the second route in the same year over 800 died crossing from Turkey to Greece.

It is imperative at this point to take in consideration the basic factors and causes of illegal migration in the current geopolitical context. For example, the arrival of refugees from Syria to Europe started when the civil war erupted in March 2011. There has been a significant escalation in the number of Syrian citizens seeking protection in Europe since the outburst of the Syrian war. These arrivals uncovered the sever inconstancies and flaws in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which almost failed in the summer of 2015 due to the inability of policymakers and the public to respond appropriately. The sudden growth of migrants in 2015 can only be explained by analyzing a series of push-and-pull factors.

Firstly, the dramatic increase of violence, instability and lack of personal security in the migrants' home countries has made a return to their homes in the near future unlikely. Secondly, there is a lack of alternative destinations since Libya is no longer an option. Of course we must also consider the increased brutality and violence of terrorist and militant groups towards civilians. Another factor is the lack of economic possibilities, poverty and starvation. Europe has always been an attractive environment for migrants seeking work in order to sustain their families back home.

From another point of view illegal migration is not just a European problem, it is an international crisis. According to The UNHCR the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide reached 59.5 million at the end of 2014, the highest level since World War II, with a 40% increase taking place since 2011. Of these 59.5 million, 19.5 million were refugees (14.4 million under UNHCR's mandate, plus 5.1 million Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate), and 1.8 million were asylum-seekers. The rest were persons displaced within their own countries (internally displaced persons).[6] At this point we could assume that people in trouble areas have lost faith in the potential of conflict resolution and are afraid of possible outcomes. According to A. Maslow, Security and sustainability are fundamental psychological needs so migration is an understandable worldwide phenomenon.

For the average European citizen giving asylum and aid to migrants and refuges is a problem between the ideology of freedom and rights for everyone and the ideology of keeping society secured. This is not a new debate; security versus freedom has been analyzed as a paradigm at the highest level for centuries. Among the first to question this paradigm was Thomas Hobbes, who believed that security is above freedom, imagining what it would be like to live without government, laws, or society. In this 'State of Nature' you would have plenty of freedom; but you'd live in constant fear. So objectively there is a correlation between the two, when a society adopts norms that strengthen security the individual will feel less free. When a society adopts norms that strengthen personal freedom, the individual will feel a lack of security.

This paradigm is not just a well thought out hypothesis, it is the reality of present day Europe. People adopt either a tolerant view towards migrants or quite a radical opposite. Polls show that the average European citizen feels insecure and threatened by the potential of terrorists disguised as migrants from Syria fleeing to Europe to commit abominable acts. This fear has led unexpectedly to a new rise of xenophobia, racism, extreme-nationalism and

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[6] Patrick Boehler, Sergio Peçanh, "The Global Refugee Crisis, Region by Region". The New York Times, updated August 26, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/09/world/migrants-global-refugee-crisis-mediterranean-ukraine-syria-rohingya-malaysia-iraq.html?_r=0

radical political parties that have won elections in European states previously known for a balanced political climate. Ironically, the fear of aggression and intolerance from radical Muslims has led to the same social reactions from European citizens.

From another point of view we could draw a parallel between the insecurity that Europeans are starting to feel demanding and that of the migrants. In Europe, this insecurity has led people to demand tougher security measures against the migrants whose own insecurity has led them to leave their countries, where they are threatened by war, death, and tyrannical regimes. Both Europeans and migrants that have fled their countries are searching for the same principles. They are looking for a secure medium in which they can prosper and have a good degree of personal freedom. There are three problems that arise from our point of view in this context first, it seems that there is a trend of intolerance towards migrants which could lead to severe conflict. Secondly we do not know if Europe can afford economically a higher number of migrants. Lastly, we do not know to which degree the migrants will be able to adapt to western culture or to what degree western culture can assimilate theirs.

When discussing the issue of freedom and security, we should take into consideration cultural fear. Most of the illegal migrants that flee to Europe are part of a very different culture than ours. This is a valid point of concern considering the fact that their beliefs have generated the biggest threats to security against terrorism. It is a common concern that among the helpless refuges, there could also be sleeper agents and members of dangerous terrorist cells. This fact poses a serious problem to the security apparatus of the EU. From another perspective Europe has its own ideological system being which has been shaped for over a thousand years by Europe's mainly Christian faith. Thus it has woven a completely different social fabric than that of the migrants. The individual that come from the Middle East are Muslim and belong to a culture that is opposed to its European counterpart. We value freedom and equality above security while the Muslims value doctrine and security more than freedom. It is evident that we cannot fully know what to expect do not know what can be expected from the high number of Muslim migrants coming to Europe. In this sense the feeling of insecurity is justified.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the European Union is facing an existential crisis having to confront violent acts of terrorism like the Brussels Bombing, a high number of migrants and a crippling economical debt. This situation is complicated even more, taking into consideration the fact that the only viable solution is to enforce more drastic security measures. This enforcement goes against the idea of freedom above everything else and has split Europe in two distinct groups. On one side are those who are skeptic of the continuation of a European Union and on the other are those who want to compromise for a more secure future.

Illegal migration in Europe could represent either a problem that will cause severe unbalances on all levels, including the basic social structure, or it could be a model for transformation. The migrant's desire and actions to flee a home that is dominated by war, violence and terrorism for a home that is described by freedom, opportunity progress and sustainability would be seen as a model that could transform the Middle East. We believe that if we can find solutions to integrate and assimilate the migrants in our culture and offer them what they lack (namely security, opportunity for progress and adequate living conditions), we will give birth to a precedent that could change world politics.

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