SECURITY CRISES AS A FACTOR OF MIGRATION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract: Security crises around the world as generators of migration are not a phenomenon of modern times, but the issue of migrant integration is becoming increasingly urgent due to the large number of migrants who have entered Europe over the past two decades. The recent surge has been driven by the growing number of regional conflicts, leading to migration of Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, Libyans, Afghans, and Eritreans who are fleeing war, ethnic conflict, or economic hardship, risking their lives in attempts to reach Europe. In recent times, transit countries like Hungary and Croatia have recorded a significant influx, while Germany has seen the largest absolute increase in first-time asylum applicants due to its favorable policies towards migration and asylum seekers, as well as its relatively stable economy and high standard of living. In 2023, the political debate in the European Union focused on the major challenges facing the EU and its member states, particularly the development of the security situation in Ukraine and the management of migration, promoting integration policies that could have social, economic, and political impacts on the European Union. This paper aims to analyze the reports of international organizations to highlight the key security crises as factors driving migration to the European Union.

Keywords: migration, societal security, risks, factors, crises.

INTRODUCTION

Internal and external migrations in the period following World War II significantly impacted the spatial distribution of the population in Europe. During the era of rapid modernization and economic development, the most

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intense migrations occurred from rural areas to cities, then from smaller to larger urban settlements, and finally, migrations toward major regional and industrial centers in Europe. Within the European Union, between 1991 and 1996, forced migrations and the influx of refugees from the former Yugoslavia and their integration into European society had a notable impact (Кокотовић & Филиповић, 2017).

These migration flows within the European Union led to population concentrations in relatively small areas (the aforementioned large urban centers), while rural parts of the European Union experienced depopulation. The consequences of long-term fertility decline in the most recent inter-census period have become evident across the entire European Union. Population emigration, driven by crises in home countries and socio-political circumstances, has resulted in a constant negative migration balance throughout the observed period (Војковић & Глигоријевић, 2016: 87).

In European security doctrines, illegal migrations are recognized as a significant security risk. The National Security Strategy highlights uncontrolled migrations in the context of demographic development issues in the Republic of Serbia. These are manifested through low birth rates, unsatisfactory health and mortality indicators, a low average lifespan, and quality of life, as well as uncontrolled migrations and the emigration of educated, scientific and cultural potential abroad. Worsening difficulties in economic development could further contribute to a decline in birth rates, an aging population, and ultimately, a threat to the very foundations of the biological survival of the population in the Republic of Serbia.[2]

The analysis of migration and societal security should include the work of Radomir and Srđan Milašinović as an analytical framework. These authors outline key attributes of social conflicts that can be correlated with internal migrations. According to their definition, social conflicts are states of social interactions characterized by open antagonisms, with confrontation and struggle as the primary orientations. These conflicts are a constitutive element of every social system and form the basis of its progressive and desirable dynamics. The core content and essence of such a defined social conflict consist of intra-group and inter-group struggles to achieve mutually opposing interests, values, and limited but significant resources. This struggle can be a "war without rules," but it is almost always constrained, to varying degrees, by broader social, legal, moral, religious, technical, or other norms and rules (Милашиновић & Милашиновић, 2007: 45). This interaction falls within the domain of national security issues and represents asymmetric security threats (such as social instability, economic problems, and migration-related issues).

38

Factors that disrupt societal security include personal factors (illness, old age, diminished work capacity), technological factors (job losses, the obsolescence of certain professions), macroeconomic, social, and political factors (de-

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2 Стратегија националне безбедности Републике Србије [National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia], Службени гласник Републике Србије, 94/2019.

velopmental insecurity, changes in the social system), as well as microeconomic and social reasons (the condition of enterprises, income distribution). Due to their impact, social security emerges as both a goal and a result of overall social development (Пјанић, Стојановић, & Јакшић, 1994: 1443). Societal security is inextricably linked to the concept of human security. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms—the freedoms that are the essence of life. It involves protecting people from critical (serious) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. This entails using processes rooted in human strength and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military, and cultural systems that together provide the building blocks for survival, human sustenance, and a life of dignity (Суботички, 2015).

The dimensions of the concept of human security can be outlined as follows (Center for Research on Human Security, 2016): **Economic Security**: This includes the security of personal property, job insecurity, poor working conditions, and income inequality. It also involves ensuring access to hygiene and safe food. **Health Security**: Threats to health and life from infectious and parasitic diseases, HIV and other viruses, and inadequate access to healthcare services. **Personal Security**: Threats of physical violence from the state and criminal organizations. **Population Security**: Issues related to overpopulation, ethnic tensions, and violent conflicts. **Political Security**: Threats to use state repression and other threats that jeopardize human rights. Each of these sources of social insecurity can be rooted in discrimination deeply embedded in the social environment caused by migrations. Cultures of intolerance, antagonism, and apathy, increasing intolerance, and rising numbers of conflicts are seen as everyday threats. These are recognized as major drivers of hatred and violence based on ethnic, sexual, or political grounds, with migrations being a primary cause (Литавски, Костић-Дићић, & Ђорђевић, 2013).

There are numerous motivating factors that influence migration. Apart from life-threatening armed conflicts, common reasons include undemocratic living conditions where human rights are egregiously violated, economic poverty, and natural disasters. On the other hand, better living conditions in democratically organized, war-free, and economically richer countries attract migrants.

Population migration is one of the significant consequences. Unlike voluntary migrations, which are primarily labor migrations, there are also forced migrations. These often parallel labor migrations but stem from entirely different motives. Individuals seeking asylum, refugees, and internally displaced persons may migrate not only because of war in their immediate surroundings but also due to other pressing factors.

In his work *The Laws of Migration*, which was published in the late 19th century, Ravenstein proposed several laws that can be considered generalizations (Ravenstein, 1889):

– Most migrants move only a short distance: As the distance from a place increases, the number of immigrants moving from that place decreases.

- Migration from places near large cities occurs during periods of economic expansion, followed by migration from more distant areas. As a result of the expansion of the city, there is an increasing influence on the broader periphery.
- Each migration flow produces a compensating counter-flow.
- Natives of towns are less migratory than those from rural areas.
- Females are more migratory than males.

One specific form of migration is the movement from rural areas to cities in search of new opportunities (Gidens, 1998). Depending on whether the place of settlement (immigration) or departure (emigration) belongs to the observed country, migrations can be classified as internal or external. Migrations where both the origin and destination are within the same territory are called internal migrations. From a psychological perspective, two types of migration are identified: voluntary and involuntary. There is also a classification into permanent and semipermanent migrations (Bell & Ward, 2000). In terms of factors that contribute to migration, we can identify push factors—such as unsafe living conditions, war, political persecution, violence, discrimination, poverty, unemployment, and climate conditions—and pull factors, such as good living conditions, employment opportunities, education, and safety, which largely overlap with the general factors that stimulate migration (Марковић & Марковић, 2015). From the perspective of societal security, the study of illegal migration is particularly important. As anthropologist Nicholas De Genova noted, while the term "illegal" migrant provides a "broad legal or descriptive category," it encompasses a vast heterogeneity: "illegality" must be understood as an epistemological, methodological, and political problem (De Genova, 2002). "Illegal" migrants leave their countries for the same reasons as all other migrants. The increase in illegal migration is largely due to intensified state control over mobility (Kyle & Koslowski, 2011).

CAUSES OF MIGRATION IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

During the 1990s, liberal development theories were called into question, particularly regarding how privileged elites across much of the Arab world and Africa largely benefited from economic growth, while relative poverty persisted. The development schemes designed by the IMF, World Bank, or European Union often imposed strict market and trade liberalization measures, which frequently rendered local producers uncompetitive and led to the collapse of significant portions of domestic businesses and industries, only to be replaced by foreign investors.

With continuous demographic growth in countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Syria, and other states along the Eastern Mediterranean and East African migration routes, the lack of new job opportunities for young peo-

ple entering the workforce, increasing disconnection from the political elites, and the ongoing rise in education levels and communication means have intensified internal pressure on repressive regimes. As Western governments continued to cooperate with authoritarian regimes for economic and strategic reasons, young Africans and Arabs found their economic and non-material aspirations stifled and suppressed. With limited prospects in rural areas, migration to urban centers increased. Some people headed north towards Europe, oil-rich Gulf countries, or economic boom zones in southern or western Africa.

Countries like South Africa, the Gulf states or the European Union symbolized values of economic wealth, freedom from persecution, or a clearer hope for a better life. Continuous political oppression, ethnic conflicts, racial discrimination, or the outbreak of wars forced further waves of migration towards the southern and southeastern borders of Europe. Conflicts and wars not only produced political, ethnic, religious, or social refugees but also rendered economic production unfeasible for years. While some migrants became internally displaced, others fled to border countries where there is relative peace (Easterly, 2003; Morrissey, 2004).

Although the cultural and social backgrounds and specific reasons for migration vary greatly depending on the country of origin, states plagued by prolonged civil war produce different types of migrants than those where political persecution forces activists, students, and minority groups to flee (Hofmeier & Mehler, 2004). These forced migrants constitute a significant portion of those "trapped" in countries like Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Egypt, or Libya, with little hope for permanent status solutions in their host countries. A particular security risk is posed by the fact that paramilitary, terrorist, and criminal organizations often infiltrate migrant groups with the aim of reaching the European continent.

Long-lasting civil wars (Sudan, Somalia, Iraq)

Long-lasting civil wars in Sudan since the 1980s, Somalia since the 1990s, and Iraq since the early 2000s have led to significant migrations in the region, and still continue with varying degrees of intensity. These civil wars triggered the first major waves of migration towards Europe. The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the subsequent war, along with terrorist attacks and targeted persecution of ethnic, religious, and minority groups, forced approximately 2 million Iraqis to flee the country. Most of these refugees sought asylum in neighboring countries such as Syria (1 million in 2010; 480,000 in 2013), Jordan (450,000 in 2013), and Egypt (150,000). Acknowledging its responsibility for the refugee crisis, the United States, through the Kennedy Law of 2007, provided direct resettlement opportunities for Iraqis who worked in U.S. institutions or U.S.-funded organizations. This, along with resettlement and regular asylum requests, resulted in about 82,000 Iraqis finding asylum in the U.S. (MPI DATA HUB, 2011). Sweden has been the European country that has received the most

Iraqi refugees, with an estimated total of 79,000, some of whom had already arrived in the 1990s (Workpermit, 2007). Other significant recipients of Iraqi refugees include Australia and Canada. Despite the relatively peaceful security situation in northern Iraq, ongoing civil unrest, political conflicts, and terrorist attacks, coupled with detailed country-of-origin information provided by immigration agencies in Europe and North America, suggest that large parts of Iraq are still unsuitable for the repatriation of Iraqi forced migrants living in the region (UK Border Agency, 2011). Nevertheless, some Iraqi refugees have returned from Syria and Egypt since 2011.

From May 2013 onwards, renewed fighting in Iraq resulted in the deaths of 45,000 people and forced thousands of Iraqis to flee across the Jordanian border. The reasons for fleeing included religious, political, and social persecution, along with generally high levels of insecurity in areas affected by repeated terrorist attacks and civil conflicts. The uprising in neighboring Syria, which quickly escalated into a civil war, reignited sectarian conflict among the Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish populations in Iraq . Iraq's national unity remains fragile, and further violence is likely if the ongoing lack of a clear path forward persists, coupled with shifts in the regional balance of power.

The civil war in Somalia has been raging since the early 1990s, internally displacing approximately 1.5 million Somalis and causing over a million to flee to neighboring countries, across Africa, and around the world. Somalia is divided into numerous majority and minority clans, some of which have distinct social roles, such as pastoralists, livestock breeders, leather producers, spiritualists, or traders, while others form the political elite. The clan system extends beyond Somali national borders, with complex forms of loyalty and conflict resolution mechanisms, sharply contrasting with the military dictatorship of Siad Barre from 1961 to 1991, which attempted to impose a hierarchical, centralized form of governance.

Inter-clan conflicts since the early 2000s have been complicated by the Islamist insurgency of Al-Shabaab, which has ties to Al-Qaeda and recruits partly from youths orphaned by the civil war or captured by Al-Shabaab fighters. U.S., Ethiopian, and Kenyan interventions add another layer to the conflict. The largest regional recipients of Somali refugees, since 2011, include Kenya (495,000), Yemen (230,000), Ethiopia (240,000), Djibouti (18,000), and Egypt (8,000) (UNHCR Information Sharing Portal, 2013). Since 2005, there have also been 10,000 Somali refugees in the United Kingdom and 34,000 in the United States (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2005). An indeterminate number of Somalis lived in Libya during Gaddafi's rule. Despite recent talks between the Kenyan and Somali governments about repatriating Somali refugees (AllAfrica, 2013), a lasting pacification of the Somali conflict seems distant (Economist, 2013). With a birth rate of seven children per woman, frequent droughts, and ongoing wars, Somalia is likely to remain a country from which people feel compelled to leave in the foreseeable future (IMI Policy Briefing, 2012). While most refugees will continue to reside in nearby countries,

42

allowing them to return home when relative calm is restored, those who are more mobile or at greater risk will seek a better and safer life further afield, in South Africa or the Global North.

Sudan has one of the longest and most diverse histories of forcing its citizens to emigrate. Following the conflicts over the Ottoman, Egyptian, and British legacies of colonial domination, the First Sudanese Civil War (1955-1972) and the Second Sudanese Civil War, fought between the predominantly Arab-Muslim north and the African-animist-Christian south, caused the death of around 2 million people and the exodus of 4 million by 2001(U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2001). Between the second half of 2011 and mid-2013, reports indicate that 180,000 Northern Sudanese fled to South Sudan (Reuters, 2013. Since 2003, the western Sudanese region of Darfur has experienced another bloody war. Historically regarded as a region independent of Sudan's core, African tribes demanded more autonomous rights and less interference from the Arab-dominated central government, which culminated in the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) entering into war against central government troops and Arab tribes in northern Darfur in 2003. The Sudanese government, under Omar al-Bashir, responded with open warfare against Darfuri people, arming the Janjaweed, Arab horseback tribes living in northern Darfur, to fight the rebels. Official figures indicate that between 2003 and 2008, approximately 300,000 people were killed, with 2 million Darfuri people displaced from the region to central and southern Sudan, Chad, Libya, Egypt, and beyond (Amnesty International, 2009).

The conflict in Darfur has a clear regional and international component, with the involvement of the Chadian and Libyan governments supporting various warring factions. An international campaign accusing the Sudanese government of genocide, along with the International Criminal Court's indictment of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in 2009, increased pressure on the central government. Qatar hosted several rounds of negotiations between the opposing parties, leading to the Doha Peace Agreement in Darfur in 2011 and a temporary lull in the conflict (UNAMID, 2011). Several European and Gulf countries, as well as China, are pursuing economic interests in resource-rich Sudan, with little visible benefit for the general population. Despite the peace agreement, fighting continues, and as of January 2013, 300,000 Darfuri people had been displaced, with an additional 50,000 fleeing to Chad since April 2013 (IRIN, 2012).

Repressive Regimes in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudan

The persecution of political opponents and the discrimination against ethnic or religious groups by repressive regimes in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudan have led to increased migration to the European Union. Sudanese activists outside Sudan challenge the narrative of ethnic and religious conflict, emphasizing the political aspects of the Sudanese crisis. This narrative suggests that vari-

43

ous factions are opposing Omar al-Bashir's regime and that the separation of the South was merely a phase in the broader opposition movement aimed at overthrowing the authoritarian regime, which has relied on its secret police to torture, intimidate, and systematically persecute political opponents, journalists, and students. The regime has also built alliances with predominantly Arab tribes. Alliances between the Government of South Sudan, previously the SPLM/A, SLA, and JEM, as well as with activists outside the country, were established with the goal of dismantling the Sudanese regime (Guardian, 2012). In addition to war refugees and ethnic persecution, many educated activists have been forced to flee Sudan due to their actual or implied political opposition to Omar al-Bashir's regime.

The number of Sudanese refugees in neighboring countries is a subject of dispute. In Egypt, the figures range from the UNHCR-recognized Sudanese refugee population of 25,000 (Daily News Egypt, 2012) to a more realistic estimate of long-term forced and economic migrants between 500,000 and 3 million, many of whom have not approached the UNHCR (Fahamu Refugee Legal Aid Newsletter, 2013). Libya has been a significant recipient of Sudanese migrants since the 1980s; however, due to the Jamahiriya's policy of being a country for all Africans, the lack of international observers, and the absence of Libyan migration documentation, accurate numbers are difficult to determine. Other countries that have received significant numbers of Sudanese migrants include Chad (100,000), Ethiopia (90,000), the United States (35,000), and Israel (7,000).

After the Eritrean War of Independence against Ethiopia ended in 1994, resulting in over 60,000 military and 40,000 civilian casualties, the regime of Isaias Afwerki gradually intensified repression and curtailed personal freedoms. Freedom of speech was severely restricted, and political opponents faced torture and abuse. The regime adopted a policy of mass military conscription in 2002, effectively utilizing conscripts as forced labor. Specifically, Christians of the Tigrinya ethnic group faced persecution, and the state severely undermined religious freedoms for all religious denominations. Approximately 20,000 Eritreans are held in detention based on their beliefs. Over the last decade, this has led to a mass exodus of Eritreans, despite the government's policy of shooting those who attempt to cross its borders. The UNHCR estimates that 100,000 Eritrean refugees reside in northern Sudan, with around 60,000 living in camps (IRIN, 2011). Many Eritreans who leave their country are relatively young and well-educated, viewing Sudan, with its limited integration opportunities, as a transit country on their way to Egypt, Israel, and Europe. Since emigration from Eritrea is illegal, repatriation to the country results in automatic detention and potential abuse, even preventing non-political migrants from re-entering. In addition to Sudan as a major host for Eritrean refugees, Egypt also hosts thousands of Eritreans, as does Libya, and recently Ethiopia (Connell, 2013). It is estimated that 35,000 Eritreans have made their way through Sinai to Israel (Jewish Daily Forward, 2013).

44

Ethiopia, one of the few African countries without a long colonial history (1935-1941), has been involved in numerous military conflicts throughout the 20th century and continues to grapple with its multi-ethnic and diverse religious composition, a legacy of its own imperial past. The largest population group, the Oromo, does not identify as Ethiopians. The central government led by Meles Zenawi with the support of the Tigray minority marginalized the Oromo, Amhara, and other southern minority groups. Specifically, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) has been engaged in both peaceful and armed opposition to the regime since the 1970s. Approximately 20,000 Oromo people have been detained on accusations of being OLF members, and there have been frequent arrests of journalists, students, and opposition activists (Aljazeera, 2013). Repeated droughts leading to mass famine and ongoing structural adjustments under the guidance of the IMF and World Bank have made the country aid-dependent, with aid often mismanaged and filling the pockets of those close to the ruling regime. The death of Meles Zenawi in August 2012 has not yet led to political changes, with fabricated charges against political opponents and social activists persisting. The construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, with significant financial support from China, could potentially improve agricultural productivity and generate the electricity needed for more sustainable industrial development (Berliner Afrikakreis, 2013). However, without fundamental political changes, which analysts do not foresee, the benefits of this mega-project are likely to accrue only to a select few and foreign investors. The UNHCR reports around 120,000 refugees and asylum seekers outside Ethiopia, with the central government forcibly displacing thousands more within the country through its 'settlement' program. Approximately 30,000 Ethiopians have been forced to flee to Sudan, 52,000 to Yemen, and thousands more to Israel, the United States, South Africa, and several thousand since 2012 to Mozambique (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2013).

The Arab Spring: A Catalyst for New Waves of Migration

The Arab Spring triggered numerous security implications, leading to a surge in migration. The resulting instability led to a halt in foreign investments, disruptions in trade, a decline in economic growth, and an increase in food prices. Migrants, who often worked in the informal economy, lost their sources of income. During periods of acute unrest, with UNHCR and international NGOs reducing their operations, refugees who were dependent on financial aid and with little or no savings had to bridge financial gaps, often resulting in food shortages. Female refugees frequently lost their jobs as domestic workers for international staff of foreign companies. In Tunisia and Egypt, where the Ministry of the Interior was heavily targeted, police presence in refugee settlements diminished following the revolution, further jeopardizing refugee safety. Fearing arrest during demonstrations or riots and being labeled as foreign agents, migrants often preferred to stay at home rather than seek employment. As se-

curity agencies weakened, systematic surveillance of political refugees temporarily decreased, but as the Mukhabarat regrouped, old forms of surveillance were soon reinstated. The security vacuum allowed the intelligence services of the countries of origin to pursue refugees, as numerous African and other refugees have claimed.

The Arab Spring led to an increase in organized human trafficking as law enforcement agencies ceased to effectively deter traffickers, who began to pursue refugees even within urban areas. Reports of illegal organ extraction from migrants also surged. As media attention shifted to the refugee crisis stemming from the Arab Spring, UN member states allocated additional funds to UNHCR, which were primarily directed towards managing activities at the Libyan borders and later towards accommodating Syrian refugees. African and other long-term refugees have expressed concerns that the crises in Libya and Syria have overshadowed their own plight. This issue is also reflected in the EU-funded START program, which has been implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) since 2012. The program aims to assist "vulnerable communities" in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia but has largely concentrated on the immediate Libyan migration crisis, with insufficient emphasis on long-term security and migration perspectives (International Organization for Migration, 2012).

In Jordan, Iraqi refugees have been largely overlooked as the budget has been redirected to better accommodate Syrian refugees. Although Jordanian King Abdullah received significant financial support from the EU (Jordan Times, 2013), the refugee situation in Jordan remains tense. As a Jordanian refugee worker recently observed, "In short, it's chaos; Jordanians are increasingly angry and frustrated with the refugees, there are many problems, and the government lacks planning skills." This situation is similarly reflective of the refugee crises in Egypt and Libya, which have contributed to the wave of migration to the European Union.

Syria and the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring and subsequent developments in international security have transformed several migrant-receiving and transit countries along North Africa into refugee-producing nations, particularly Syria and Libya. The rise of nationalism and declining economic productivity in countries like Tunisia and Egypt have further complicated and often endangered the lives of long-term refugees from conflict zones located further south or east. This led to short- to medium-term surges in migration across the Mediterranean, as seen in the case of Libya, which by the summer of 2011 had generated hundreds of thousands of migrants

Millions of Syrians have so far sought refuge across the Jordanian and Turkish borders, with both countries recently experiencing an increasing influx of refugees at their borders. Initially intended as temporary, the refugee ar-

rangements and camps have recently begun to take on more permanent structures (Economist, 2013b). Despite the ongoing unstable situations in South Sudan and Iraq, some economic migrants and refugees have started returning to their countries of origin, as their host countries along the Mediterranean no longer appear safer than the states they left, and migration to Europe or Israel has become too dangerous.

SOCIETAL SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Migration poses a significant security challenge to the European Union, not only due to the heightened risk of terrorism but also because of the potential for regional conflicts. One of the greatest anomalies is that the poorest countries in Europe, due to their relative economic underdevelopment and high unemployment rates, have no economic or other incentive to retain a certain number of migrants on their soil or to bear the costs of migration transit, yet they would fundamentally bear the greatest burden of migration.

The unresolved status and difficult conditions of refugees and displaced persons from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Gambia, and Mali could lead to the following security threats: organized crime, robberies, unrest and expressions of dissatisfaction towards government authorities, individual incidents, human trafficking, illegal migration and border violations, disputes with neighboring countries, the importation of terrorism, illegal arms trade and smuggling, a rise in right-wing extremism, and challenges to economic development and economic threats.

Considering that a portion of migrants has directly participated in military conflicts and is trained to conduct combat operations in both rural and urban environments, there is a real possibility of individual terrorist actions targeting high-value objects and targets with the aim of instilling fear and panic among the population. If such actions were to occur, the impact on security would be significant (Jevtić & Miljković, 2021: 67). From the perspective of assessing the terrorist threat, a major challenge is the lack of adequate information about migrants. Many migrants have partial or no identifying information, including their identity, origin, potential criminal or terrorist background, and health or psychological condition. Given that their identification is rarely based on personal documents, with most migrants being identified based on their own statements, the structure of the migrant population remains largely unknown. In assessing the terrorist threat, one must not overlook the influence of radical Islamist ideology on extremist groups in the region and their connection with extremist and terrorist organizations in regional countries (Jevtić & Miljković, 2021: 68).

The situation is further complicated by the fact that a significant number of radical Islamists from regional countries have participated in the activities

of "Islamic State." Their return from conflict zones to their countries of origin creates a potential nucleus of individuals capable of carrying out terrorist activities and connecting with like-minded individuals among the migrant population. Considering that some migrants have directly participated in combat and are trained for conducting military actions in both rural and urban environments, there is a real possibility of isolated terrorist actions targeting critical infrastructure and high-value targets. Such actions could occur in response to dissatisfaction with their status, prolonged detention at EU borders, forced returns to their countries of origin, or upon orders from radical terrorist organizations. The implications of disrupted social security at the national, regional, and global levels have significantly influenced migration as a factor contributing to terrorism (Jevtić & Miljković, 2021: 68).

Social and Economic Implications of Migration for the European Union

The recent surge in asylum seekers entering Europe has undoubtedly raised significant interest and concern regarding migration, prompting questions about the EU's capacity to swiftly integrate migrants into its economy and society. Forced and economic migration flows are expected to continue, driven by conflicts in neighboring regions, particularly Ukraine, and by the increasing frequency and scale of natural disasters resulting from climate change and rising global poverty (International Monetary Fund, 2016).

Migration impacts many different aspects of society, both in countries of origin and destination. Migrants often come from regions with lower labor productivity and tend to achieve higher productivity levels in their new environments. As such, migration generates economic gains and can be a decisive factor in helping Europe addresses its challenges, including an aging population, prosperity, and security (Ilo, 2015). From an economic perspective, migrants represent a valuable workforce that can support EU countries in recovering their economies in the long term. In the short term, however, the reception and support of asylum seekers—through the provision of services such as housing, food, healthcare, and education—require additional public investments and expenditures. This effect is particularly concentrated in the primary destination countries, such as Austria, Germany, and Sweden (Perco, 2004).

The fiscal impact of refugees is particularly significant for countries facing budgetary constraints. The impact of migrants in the medium to long term depends on how quickly and effectively they are integrated into the labor market, "to what extent the skills of newcomers complement or substitute the skills of the domestic workforce, and their impact on resource allocation, product mix, and production technology." Labor market integration is crucial to reducing the net fiscal costs associated with the current influx of migrants. The sooner they find employment, the more they will contribute to public finances through income taxes and social security contributions. Their successful integration into the labor market will also help counteract some of the negative fiscal effects of

48

an aging population. Conversely, slow integration processes reflect the presence of factors and barriers that hinder migrants from finding jobs: lack of language skills and qualifications, legal restrictions on working during the asylum application period, and labor market rigidity.

The Rise of Xenophobia in the European Union

The sudden influx of refugees and migrants in 2015 overwhelmed many EU member states' capacity to accommodate newcomers and threatened to create divisions within the European Union. Member states struggled to reach an agreement and implement effective, long-term measures to properly receive and host the people arriving in Europe. For instance, a relocation plan was adopted to transfer around 160,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece to other European countries. However, only a third of this number was actually relocated.

As the EU struggles to reform its common asylum system, tensions against refugees and migrants are flaring across the continent. In Italy, Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini, the leader of the far-right party "Lega," has ramped up his rhetoric against migrants. Salvini's xenophobic rhetoric and policies have resonated in other countries as well. For example, Croatia has been accused of collective expulsion of migrants and asylum seekers and of using police brutality. Hungary has enacted a law to sanction NGOs that assist migrants and asylum seekers, while Denmark announced in December that it plans to send rejected asylum seekers and criminal refugees to an isolated island starting in 2024.

Some of these policies may even risk undermining the fundamental rights and values of the European Union. This danger was highlighted by the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency in a report on the violation of basic rights of migrants and refugees, which was published last February. These risks were also acknowledged by the European Commission, which has initiated infringement proceedings against Bulgaria and Hungary for violating EU asylum rules.

In addition to these changes in legislation and policy, there has also been a rise in anti-migrant activities and demonstrations. Violent protests in Germany were organized in August 2023 by the Pegida movement and the AfD, a rising far-right party, leading to verbal and physical attacks on foreigners. Recently, an openly xenophobic man drove his car into a crowd of Syrians and Afghans on New Year's Eve, injuring several of them.

In Belgium, several thousand people protested last December in the "March against Marrakesh" against the Global Compact for Migration signed in Marrakesh the same month. This was accompanied by rhetoric and slogans such as "Our people first" and "We've had enough, close the borders." Xenophobia is on the rise, and the inability of member states to agree on asylum and immigration

policy or to reform the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) casts a dark shadow over the Union's common policy.

The European Commission has launched a major reform of the CEAS. However, negotiations have been difficult and progress has been slow. This is particularly true for the planned revision of the Dublin Regulation, which continues to divide European states. One of the main aspects of this reform is the creation of a "distribution mechanism" for asylum seekers across the Union to reduce the pressure on countries along the southern border. However, the Visegrad Group (Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Poland) has categorically rejected any redistribution and opposes the views of the Mediterranean states (Italy, Greece, Malta, Spain, and Cyprus), which are calling for a mechanism that can help share the responsibility for migrants.

CONCLUSION

In many EU countries, the political landscape has been dominated by growing anti-migrant sentiments that view migration as a threat to cultural identities and welfare systems.

Migrants face a higher risk of social exclusion compared to the native population, particularly in terms of access to employment, education, healthcare, and social services. Within the migrant population, some groups are especially vulnerable and therefore require tailored integration measures. This is particularly true for third-country nationals, refugees, and beneficiaries of international protection, low-skilled migrants, women, unaccompanied minors, migrants with disabilities, and irregular migrants.

In this highly complex context, nonprofit social service providers and civil society organizations are engaged in providing both short-term and long-term solutions to build cohesive societies and foster the integration of migrants and refugees into host countries. They also work on the integration of other disadvantaged groups within their own countries, such as the homeless and other socially vulnerable categories. There are four potential barriers to migrant integration in the European Union: discrimination against migrants, difficulties in finding employment, limited interactions between migrants and citizens, and negative media portrayals of migrants.

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53

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