
Essay

"MIGRATION CRISES" AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC¹

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This contribution analyses the migration-crisis nexus in Europe from three, intertwined perspectives. The first part examines the use of the notion of crisis in depicting and interpreting migration in literature. It argues that the discursive framework of migration crisis began to be increasingly employed by scholars between the late 1980s and early 1990s. While it soon became popular in media and political discourses, the crisis rhetoric was more and more criticised in the academic debate, not least because of the hegemony of liberal and pro-human rights tendencies in Western academia. Between the early 1990s and early 2000s, a prevailing trend in literature emerged, which dismissed the crisis narrative as a reprehensible way to prompt or justify more restrictive approaches to migration.

The second part investigates the application of the concept of crisis to the post-war history of migration flows and policies in Europe. This section shows that there were five moments when scholars spoke of migration crisis in post-war Europe; the variables and criteria to define a situation as critical, however, changed over time and across approaches and perspectives. This section also argues that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic could lead to a new disruption of migration patterns in Europe, thus reviving the migration-crisis nexus in media, political and even scientific discourses.

The third and last chapter deals with the relationship between migration crises and the policies developed by the European Community (EC), later the European Union (EU). It contends that Brussels usually adopted reactive approaches to migration, often as a response to situations perceived as critical.

The Migration-Crisis Nexus in Literature

In the last fifty years, the media in Western European countries have often associated the phenomenon of migration with the concept of crisis. On the one hand, this has been due to the growing, general tendency towards sensationalism and dramatization in the information and communication practices of the mass media. On the other, this has been due to the increasing

¹ Dieser Beitrag ist zuerst erschienen in: H-Soz-Kult, 08.08.2020, www.hsozkult.de/debate/id/diskussionen-5042.

difficulty that Western European countries underwent in managing migration flows and integrating foreigners into their respective societies; according to some, in certain cases and moments, the insistence on that association has also been a more or less deliberate strategy to influence the decision-making process and create a routine crisis approach to migration policy.² More recently, the media in former Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe have applied a similar storytelling style to migration.³

The specialised literature has generally been more cautious in using this narrative. That said, starting from the late 1980s, a growing number of European and American scholars have analysed the historical evolution of refugee and migration flows and policies through the lens of the discursive category of crisis.⁴

The Belgian political scientist Aristide Zolberg inaugurated this approach in 1989, when he co-authored with Astri Suhrke and Sergio Aguayo *Escape from Violence. Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World*. The main argument of that pioneering study was that the twentieth century saw three main refugee crises: they took place, respectively, in the inter-war period, the aftermath of the Second World War and the post-war decolonisation. According to the authors, the third crisis was characterised, for the first time in history, by a significant voluntary movement of peoples from the South to the North; this awareness, in their view, should prompt policy-makers to adapt and strengthen the international protection regime for refugees.⁵

Shortly afterwards, in 1995, the American political scientist Myron Weiner elaborated on the notion of refugee and migrant crisis in his *The Global Migration Crisis. Challenge to States and to Human Rights*. The main idea behind his conceptualization of global migration crisis was that the end of the Cold War had affected not only the nature and volume of peoples' movements, but also their image and representation in host societies; once celebrated freedom

² Andrew Simon Gilbert, *The Crisis Paradigm. Description and Prescription in Social and Political Theory*, Basingstoke 2019.

³ Kevin Smets / Koen Leurs / Myrian Georgiou / Saskia Witteborn / Radhika Gajjala, *The SAGE handbooks of media and migration*, Los Angeles 2020.

⁴ Céline Cantat / Hélène Thiollet / Antoine Pécoud, *Migration as crisis. A framework paper*, in: the MAGYC project, URL: <<http://www.themagycproject.com>> (29.07.2020).

⁵ Aristide R. Zolberg / Astri Suhrke / Sergio Aguayo, *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World*, Oxford 1989. A similar approach to the history of refugee policies and flows in twentieth-century Europe was adopted by Matthew Frank and Jessica Reinisch three decades later. Matthew Frank / Jessica Reinisch, *Refugees in twentieth-century Europe: the forty years' crisis*, London 2017.

fighters fleeing the Communist world, refugees were increasingly seen as “unwelcome parasites”.⁶

The emphasis on perceptions contributed to shift the attention of scholars from the structural characteristics of migration crises to the public and political use of this discursive framework. In his 2002 *Creating Fear. News and the Construction of Crisis*, the American sociologist David Altheide argued that the crisis narrative was not developed to describe events but to streak fear; this, in turn, was instrumental in controlling and manipulating the public opinion.⁷

The critical attitude towards the crisis rhetoric, which soon became prevalent in literature, reflected two of the most influential discourses of the time: neoliberalism, which supports freedom of movement for all the factors of production, including labour, and human rights doctrines, which argue that all persons, as human beings, are inherently entitled to fundamental rights. This criticism, meanwhile, went hand in hand with that against the securitisation of migration, a discursive framework developed to describe and often denounce restrictive migration policies and the narratives behind them. The Belgian political scientist Jef Huysmans paved the way to this interpretation between the mid- and late 1990s; according to him, there was a tendency in immigration countries to consider and manage migration as a security issue, which, in turn, was legitimised by the media narratives.⁸ In the early 2000s, the French political scientist Didier Bigo developed the concept of securitisation by bringing together the artificial construction of a sense of insecurity and broader, real challenges facing institutions, societies, and citizens in migrant-receiving countries.⁹

⁶ Myron Weiner, *The Global Migration Crisis. Challenge to States and to Human Rights*, New York 1995.

⁷ David Altheide, *Creating Fear. News and the Construction of Crisis*, Berlin 2002.

⁸ Jef Huysmans, *Migrants as a Security Problem. Dangers of 'Securitizing' Societal Issues*, in: Robert Miles / Dietrich Thränhardt, *Migration and European Integration. The Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, London 1995, pp. 53–72. See also: Jef Huysmans, *The European Union and the securitization of migration*, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies* 5 (2000), pp. 751–777.

⁹ Didier Bigo, *When Two Become One. Internal and External Securitizations in Europe*, in: Morten Kelstrup / Michael Williams, *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration. Power, Security and Community*, London 2000, pp. 171–204.

The discredit of the crisis approach in the international academic community led to a generalized abandonment of this discursive framework in literature¹⁰, apart from significant but very specific cases.¹¹

Scholars' interest in the migration-crisis nexus resurged in the first half of the 2010s. The proliferation of dramatic economic and political events with a direct impact on migration between the late 2000s and early 2010s brought back into fashion the association between crisis and migration in public, political, and academic discourses; as a reaction, it prompted again criticism against it. In 2014, the British political scientist Anna Lindley edited a collective volume, *Crisis and Migration. Critical Perspectives*, which urged a nuanced, cautious and critical approach to associations of crisis and migration; it showed, in particular, the importance of contextualising migration within a long-term perspective and taking into account the evolution of structural dynamics that affect it.¹²

Unsurprisingly, the exceptional increase in peoples arriving from Africa and the Middle East to Europe in the mid-2010s, which took place in the context of a significant growth of peoples' movement worldwide, popularised the use of the migration-crisis nexus even further.¹³

The Migration-Crisis Nexus in the Post-War History of European Migration

After the great displacement of peoples in Europe following the end of the Second World War, European scholars used the concept of refugee crisis every time a specific political-military event caused an exceptional refugee flow to European countries. The most important case during the Cold War period was, by far, the Hungarian refugee crisis in the mid-1950s. The most significant episodes after the end of the Cold War coincided with the Yugoslav Wars

¹⁰ Unlike the crisis rhetoric, the securitisation of migration continued to represent an important subject of analysis and often of criticism even between the early 2000s and mid-2010s. Scott D. Watson, *The Securitization of Humanitarian Migration. Digging Moats and Sinking Boats*, London 2009; Philippe Bourbeau, *The Securitization of Migration. A Study of Movement and Order*, London 2011; Maria Joao Guia / Maartje van der Woude / Joanne van der Leun, *Social Control and Justice. Crimmigration in the Age of Fear*, The Hague, 2013. In Europe, this debate was closely linked to the political and intellectual controversies against the alleged "Fortress Europe". Ayhan Kaya, *Islam, Migration and Integration. The Age of Securitization*, Houndmills 2009; Gabriella Lazaridis / Khursheed Wadia, *The Securitisation of Migration in the EU. Debates since 9/11*, New York 2015; Ariane Chebel d'Appollonia, *Migrant Mobilization and Securitization in the US and Europe. How Does It Feel to Be a Threat?*, Basingstoke 2015.

¹¹ Russell King, Nicola Mai, *Out of Albania. From Crisis Migration to Social Inclusion in Italy*, New York 2008.

¹² Anna Lindley, *Crisis and Migration. Critical Perspectives*, London 2014. In the same year, interestingly, a book with the same title was published by two Swedish scholars. Pieter Bevelander / Bo Petersson, *Crisis and Migration. Implications of the Eurozone for Perceptions, Politics, and Policies of Migration*, Lund 2014.

¹³ Cecilia Menjivar, Marie Ruiz, Immanuel Ness, *The Oxford Handbook of Migration Crises*, Oxford 2019.

between the early 1990s and early 2000s and the Syrian Civil War from the early 2010s until today.

Meanwhile, scholars employed the notion of migration crisis with reference to post-war Europe no less than five times, about once every decade. Significantly, the reasons behind the use of this discursive framework were not always the same. Sometimes, the situation was defined as critical because of a sudden, substantial rise in migrant influx. Such was the case of the migration crises between the late 1980s and early 1990s and in the mid-2010s. Sometimes, the situation was seen as critical because of changes in the public perceptions of the migration phenomena; these changes were often preceded and accompanied by increases in the number of migrant arrivals, but they were not directly caused by them. Such was the case of the migration crises between the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the mid-1980s and between the late 1990s and early 2000s. The concept of crisis, in any case, was always related to the impact on European immigration countries.

The first time that scholars linked the notion of crisis to the issue of migration in Europe was between the late 1960s and early 1970s. In that period, what started as an apparently efficient transfer of labour from poorer countries in the South to richer countries in the North became a political, social, and economic liability for immigration countries in Western Europe. At the time, the number of foreigners in Central and Northern European countries was almost doubled when compared with that in the late 1950s, and the proportions between European and non-European migrants were rapidly reversing in favour of the latter in all migrant-receiving countries in Western Europe. Against this background, anti-immigrant sentiments began to surface within European societies, especially at the lower end of the social scale where the home population was in close contact and in direct competition with the newcomers. Meanwhile, the surprisingly active role played by foreign workers in the protests that were sweeping through Northern European industries shocked and alarmed employers who had benefited from the docility of immigrant employees. The 1973 Oil Shock, finally, led to a drastic decrease in the need for further immigrants in all European countries. As a result, all the labour recruiting countries in Western Europe unilaterally stopped the importation of foreign workers and later began to encourage the voluntary repatriation of immigrants; at the same time, former colonial countries adopted more restrictive definitions of citizenship in order to reduce the influx of migrants from former colonies. In exchange, efforts were stepped up to incorporate foreign nationals already settled in the host societies, not least by expanding family reunification schemes. The concept of crisis was then used to describe the end of an era characterised by: complementary interests between immigration and emigration countries; high degree of immigration countries' control over migration flows; substantial balance between "pull" and

“push” factors; predominance of labour migration; emphasis on recruitment and disregard for integration of migrants; “permissive consensus” towards migration in migrant-receiving countries.¹⁴

A second moment that a large use was made in European literature of the concept of migration crisis happened in the mid-1980s. The suspension of the recruitment of foreign workers and the adoption of more restrictive definitions of citizenship did not produce a decrease in migrant arrivals and stock in Western Europe. Despite worsening economic and social conditions in destination countries, migration flows to Western Europe neither stopped nor slowed; on the contrary, even Southern European states, once emigration countries, gradually became receivers of migrants. What changed were channels of entry and composition of migrant populations. Family reunification, illegal migration and later asylum became the main avenues to gain entry to Western Europe. The growing importance of family reunification led to a substantial increase in migrant women and inactive persons, including those in education or retirement. While the change in the ways of immigration brought into question the myth of the full state control over migration flows, the change in the composition of migrant populations raised new issues and new concerns; migration, then, was not only seen as an economic asset but also as a social burden. At the same time, the rise in racial tensions and terrorist attacks were showing that non-integrated ethnic minorities could represent a serious challenge to Western European societies; the impressive escalation of Arab, Armenian and Iranian terrorist incidents in France, in particular, acted as a warning to all immigration countries in Europe. In this context, conservative parties became less and less favourable to immigration in both rhetoric and policies; more importantly, openly anti-immigration candidates and parties, for the first time in European post-war history, gained popularity and significant electoral consensus, especially in Germany and to a greater extent in France. The concept of crisis was then used to point out two newly emerging political phenomena associated with migration. One was the spreading awareness that all national immigration policies - some more, some less - were failing to achieve their goals: the migrant populations were far from stabilising and being smoothly integrated into the host societies. The other was the increasing politicisation of the migration issue, which, according to many commentators and scholars, had the potential to undermine social order and democratic stability in Western Europe.¹⁵

¹⁴ Sarah Collinson, *Europe and International Migration*, London 1993; James Frank Hollifield, *L'Immigration et l'État-Nation à la Recherche d'un Modèle National*, Paris 1997; Stephan Castles / Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Basingstoke 2003.

¹⁵ Emek M. Uçarer / Donald James Puchala, *Immigration into Western Societies. Problems and Policies*, London 1997; Ariane Chebel d'Appollonia, Simon Reich, *Immigration, Integration, and Security. America and Europe in Comparative Perspective*, Pittsburgh 2008.

The third time when scholars made large use of the concept of migration crisis with reference to Europe was between the late 1980s and early 1990s. The opening of borders during and after the collapse of Communist regimes and the subsequent German reunification led to a sudden increase in the number of people migrating from Central and Eastern European countries to Western Europe. This in turn nourished fears about massive and potentially unmanageable influxes of migrants from former Communist countries. This process came together with important events in the Arab world with a strong impact on migration flows and their perceptions in the European public. While the Gulf War worsened the image of Arab migrants, the Algerian Civil War caused, more concretely, a significant influx of refugees and migrants and, in the mid-1990s, a fresh wave of terrorism in Western Europe, especially in France. The combination of these dynamics was at the origin of an increase in anti-immigrant feelings in migrant-receiving societies. At the same time, the spread of the human rights vision and the demise of the apartheid regime in South Africa galvanised larger and larger sectors of European societies into more intransigent support for migration and migrants' rights. Migration thus became one of the most politicized and polarizing issue within European countries.¹⁶

The fourth moment when the migration-crisis nexus was widely used in Europe concerned the period between the late 1990s and early 2000s. The number of migrants, illegal migrants in particular, was steadily increasing but there was no peak in that period. The more than likely prospect of Central and Eastern European countries joining the EU and the granting of the status of candidate state to Turkey, however, rekindled concerns over potential increases in migration flows to European Union countries. The September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States, meanwhile, reduced tolerance towards migrants, especially those of Islamic faith. In this context, some scholars denounced the alleged centrality of the crisis rhetoric in public and political discourse; in the absence of any evidence of exceptional dynamics or events, according to them, "the widespread talk of a 'crisis' appears as an irrational phenomenon"¹⁷ or as a way to legitimise restrictive policies and "securitarian" approaches to immigration. Other scholars, on the other hand, applied the notion of crisis to migration in a specular sense. Opposition to immigration in increasing sectors of the European electorates was pushing forward far right parties; their increasingly xenophobic discourses, in turn, were fuelling anti-immigration sentiments in the population. Meanwhile, significantly, moderate conservative parties agreed

¹⁶ Peter Andreas / Timothy Snyder, *The Wall around the West. State Borders and Immigration Controls in North America and Europe*, Lanham 2000; Klaus J. Bade, *Migration in European History*, Maldon 2003; Emmanuel Comte, *The History of the European Migration Regime. Germany's Strategic Hegemony*, London 2018.

¹⁷ Aristide Zolberg / Peter Brenda, *Global Migrants, Global Refugees. Problems and Solutions*, New York 2001, p.1.

to collaborate and even ally with anti-immigration right-wing political forces. Between the late 1990s and early 2000s, in Austria, the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, led by governor of Carinthia Jörg Haider, came to power in a coalition government with the *Österreichische Volkspartei*; Austria's partners in the EU imposed sanctions on Vienna after that the government had been formed. Shortly afterwards, in Italy, the *Lega Nord*, led by its founder Umberto Bossi, formed a coalition government with *Forza Italia*, the *Centro Cristiano Democratico* and the *Alleanza Nazionale*, successor to the post-Fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano*. Finally, Jean-Marie Le Pen, founder and leader of the French *Front National*, qualified for the second round of the presidential election, defeating the Socialist candidate and shocking French and European public opinion. Against this background, scholars of liberal persuasion used the migration-crisis nexus to emphasise the risk that unscrupulous political-moral entrepreneurs could fan the flames of xenophobia and take political and electoral advantage from it.¹⁸

The fifth and last time when the concept of crisis was extensively applied to European migrant and refugee flows and policies was in the mid-2010s; this coincided with a period characterised by exceptionally high numbers of people arriving in Europe from Africa and the Middle East. Although the definition of European migration crisis was largely adopted¹⁹, the meaning of such a crisis was hotly disputed both in the public and academic debate.²⁰ First of all, it was not clear whether it was a refugee or a migrant crisis, the response to this question having not only scientific but also political repercussions. Second, there was uncertainty as to the nature of crisis: while some focused on the political crisis of the European Union and its migration policies²¹, others concentrated their attention on the humanitarian crisis and its dramatic implications for migrants and asylum seekers.²² Third, critics of EU policies differed between those who blamed the European Union and its Members States for a lack of efficiency²³, and those who accused them for not showing solidarity between the EU and its

¹⁸ Joao Carvalho, *Impact of Extreme Right Parties on Immigration Policy. Comparing Britain, France and Italy*, London 2014; Wouter van der Brug / Gianni D'Amato / Joost Berkhout / Didier Ruedin, *The Politicisation of Migration*, London 2015.

¹⁹ Melani Barlai / Birte Fähnrich / Christina Griessler / Markus Rhomberg, *The Migrant Crisis. European perspectives and national discourses*, Zürich 2017.

²⁰ Céline Cantat / Hélène Thiollet / Antoine Pécoud, *Migration as Crisis. A Framework Paper*, in: the MAGYC project, URL: <<http://www.themagycproject.com>> (29.07.2020)

²¹ Dan Dungaciu / Ruxandra Iordache, *The Perfect Storm of the European Crisis*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2017; Desmond Dinan / Neill Nugent / William E. Paterson, *The European Union in Crisis*, London 2017; Jaroslaw Janczak, *Immigration Crises, Borders and the European Union*, Berlin 2017.

²² Thanasis Lagios / Vasia Lekka / Grigoris Panoutsopoulos / *Borders, Bodies and Narratives of Crisis in Europe*, Cham 2018.

²³ Cetta Mainwaring, *At Europe's Edge. Migration and Crisis in the Mediterranean*, Oxford 2019.

outside and across Member States themselves; the lack of solidarity between Western and Eastern members and between Northern and Southern ones was particularly explored.²⁴

Currently, the coronavirus pandemic, combined with political-military conflicts, socio-economic imbalances, and environmental degradation, is showing the potential to trigger a new migration crisis in Europe. The pandemic, in particular, is likely to increase political tensions and aggravate socio-economic conditions in the Middle East and North Africa, not to mention the possibility of a further deterioration of the health situation in Asia and Africa. This, in turn, could boost flows of migrants and asylum seekers to Europe, at a time when all European countries are experiencing serious economic and social problems, strong and growing pressures on their health and welfare systems, and understandable fears of imported cases. These developments, moreover, are taking place in the midst of claims by Turkey that the government in Ankara would stop preventing refugees from crossing the country's borders with Europe. The aggravation of the Civil War in Libya, in addition, is expected to reduce that country's willingness and ability to contain flows of illegal migrants trying to enter the European continent. This situation could further strengthen rivalries and mutual suspicions between Western and Eastern members and between Northern and Southern members of the EU; it could also reinforce resistance to intra-European migration and mobility. The pandemic, meanwhile, might increase ethnic tensions within European countries. The recent upsurge of clusters of contagion in refugee camps, centres of reception for asylum seekers, foreigners' buildings and districts, and groups of migrant workers threatens to exacerbate discontent, division and even violence. The association between crisis and migration could soon become popular again in the public and academic discourse.

The Relationship between “Migration Crisis” and the European Union Policy

The British political scientist Andrew Geddes has recently put forward a powerful and intellectually sophisticated argument, which indirectly confirms the importance of crises in the development of the regional migration governance in the EC, later the EU. Geddes argues that crises have historically shaped the European migration regime, though the understanding of what is normal was more important than experiences of crisis; crises, in this sense, were significant as they allowed to substantiate underlying understandings about the causes and

²⁴ Andreas Grimmel / Susanne My Giang, *Solidarity in the European Union. A Fundamental Value in Crisis*, Cham 2017; Andreas Grimmel, *The crisis of the European Union. Challenges, Analyses, Solutions*, London 2018.

effects of international migration, thereby influencing the decision-making process, and assumptions and perceptions behind it.²⁵

This, in our view, was not only true for the post-Cold War era but also for the Cold War period. The early attempts to cooperate on questions of immigration at Community level date back to the late 1960s-early 1970s, at the same time as most Member States of the EC were facing the first migration crisis in the post-war period.²⁶ These efforts culminated in 1974, when the Commission adopted an *Action programme in favour of migrant workers and their families*. This document represented the first attempt ever to establish a comprehensive strategy on migration at Community level: it paved the way for the Council to adopt a *Directive on the education of migrant workers' children*; it also prepared the ground for the Member States of the EC to introduce social protection for migrants in the agreements with Third Mediterranean Countries.²⁷

Regional collaboration on migration issues was relaunched in the mid-1980s, in conjunction with the plan for a *European Single Market* and the second migration crisis. In 1985, France, West Germany and the Benelux countries signed the *Schengen Agreement*, an intergovernmental arrangement which provided for the removal of internal border controls while simultaneously introducing measures to strengthen external border controls and ramp up the fight against drug trafficking, international crime and illegal immigration.²⁸ A desire to prevent Commission initiatives on the abolition of internal border controls combined with mistrust of Southern Europe's porous borders. The latter, in particular, generated anxiety in Central and Northern Member States, which feared that lax controls along the Southern external borders might make the whole of the internally borderless Community vulnerable to criminal trafficking and illegal immigration flows; as a consequence, the sixth founding member of the EC, i.e. Italy, was initially excluded.²⁹ One year later, all the Member States of the Community

²⁵ Andrew Geddes, Crisis, normality and European regional migration governance, in: Andrew Geddes, Marcia Vera Espinoza, Leila Hadj-Abdou, Leiza Brumat, *The Dynamics of Regional Migration Governance*, Cheltenham 2019, pp. 73–90.

²⁶ Marcel Berlinghoff, *Das Ende der "Gastarbeit". Europäische Anwerbestopps 1970–1974*, Paderborn 2013. See also: Marcel Berlinghoff, Labour migration: common market essential or common problem? The EC Committees and European immigration stops in the early 1970s, in Elena Calandri / Simone Paoli / Antonio Varsori, *Peoples and Borders. Seventy Years of Migration in Europe, from Europe, to Europe (1945–2015)*, Baden-Baden 2017, pp. 157–175.

²⁷ Simone Paoli, The European Community and the First Migration Crisis in Post-War Europe. A Missed Opportunity for a Common Approach to Migration?, in: Laura Leonardi / Gemma Scalise, *Social Challenges for Europe. Addressing Failures and Perspectives of the European Project*, Bologna 2019.

²⁸ Ruben Zaiotti, *Cultures of Border Control. Schengen and the Evolution of European frontiers*, Chicago 2011.

²⁹ Simone Paoli, *Frontiera Sud. L'Italia e la nascita dell'Europa di Schengen*, Milano 2018.

mentioned the need to collaborate on migration issues in the *Single European Act* and, shortly afterwards, they established an Ad Hoc Immigration Group.

Another wave of reforms took place on the eve of the implementation of the *European Single Market* and in the midst of the third migration crisis between the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1990, the Member States of the EC signed the *Convention determining the State responsible for examining applications for asylum*. In signing the *Dublin Convention*, the Member States aimed at preventing an applicant from submitting applications in multiple Member States and at reducing the number of “orbiting” asylum seekers, transferred from Member State to Member State. Central and Northern European countries, which received the greatest influx of asylum seekers, also aimed to prevent the practice of what they called “asylum shopping”, whereby asylum seekers applied to a particular state according to the benefits it provided; through the *Dublin Convention*, a share of the financial and political burden of asylum could be placed on the Southern members of the EC, which were closer to the main countries of origin and transit of refugees. In the same year, the *Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement* was signed by the five founding members of the Agreement. Meanwhile, at the *Intergovernmental Conference on Political Union*, charged with drafting the *Treaty on European Union (TEU)*, Germany insisted on strengthening cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs, with a special emphasis on migration and asylum. As a result, the TEU, signed in Maastricht in 1992, identified a series of policy areas as “matters of common interest”: these included asylum, crossing of external borders and immigration. The *Amsterdam Treaty* in 1997 strengthened EU competences in these sectors and integrated the Schengen acquis into the EU framework.³⁰

A further step forward was made between the late 1990s and early 2000s, a juncture that was defined and considered as critical by many migration experts and commentators. In 1999, a special meeting of the European Council took place in Tampere, where the Member States of the EU called for a comprehensive approach to asylum and migration policies. It is on this basis that the EU was given the power to conclude agreements on migration with third countries and established funds on integration of migrants, management of external borders, voluntary return

³⁰ Christina Boswell, *Migration Policies in Flux. Changing Patterns of Inclusion and Exclusion*, Oxford 2003; Anthony M. Messina, *The Logics and Politics of Post-WWII Migration to Western Europe*, Cambridge 2007.

of migrants and protection of refugees; in 2004, a new agency, Frontex, was created to help the Member States in managing external borders.³¹

The last important discussions and initiatives on migration coincided with the fifth and most recent migration crisis. Against the background of migrant shipwrecks and mass arrivals to Europe in the mid-2010s, the peripheral members of the EU blamed the Northern, richer Member States for lacking solidarity; at the same time, the latter accused the Southern members of shirking their responsibilities. Western and Eastern Member States, meanwhile, struggled over the degree of opening towards migrants and refugees. In this context, both the Schengen and the Dublin system were brought into question and proposals were made to reform them. It became widely thought that, under the new conditions, these systems put too much responsibility on peripheral countries, without this effectively protecting Central and Northern European countries. At the same time, the EU agreed to reinforce joint patrolling and search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean. It also strengthened the externalisation of migration controls: the 2016 agreement with Turkey, in particular, aimed at giving Ankara the responsibility to prevent illegal migrants and asylum seekers transiting through its territories from entering the EU. The European Union, too, established an Emergency Trust Fund whose aims were to reduce motives for emigration from Africa and encourage African countries to collaborate with the EU in the fight against illegal immigration.³²

What Can We Learn from This?

In the last thirty years, the crisis narrative, widely used in the media and in political and public discourses, has always been marginal and often criticized in literature; this was due to the scholars' greater awareness of the complexity of the migration phenomena and to the benevolent prejudice towards migration in the Western academic world.

In our view, however, the point is not to simply eliminate or stigmatise the concept of crisis when speaking of migration; that notion, on the contrary, is still useful to understand the historical evolution of migration flows and policies and to periodise it. The challenge for scholars of migration is to avoid and condemn its abuse and to identify clear criteria for defining migration crises. The challenge for the European Union, meanwhile, is to abandon the crisis-based approach to migration and to plan and implement a rational, sustainable and socially

³¹ Andrew Geddes, *Immigration and European Integration. beyond Fortress Europe*, Manchester 2008; Petra Bendel, Andreas Ette, Roderick Parkes, *The Europeanization of control. venues and outcomes of EU justice and home affairs cooperation*, Münster 2011.

³² Andrew Geddes, Leila Hadj-Abdou, Leiza Brumat, *Migration and mobility in the European Union*, London 2020.

acceptable migrant and refugee policy, possibly in concert with origin and transit countries and according to principles of internal solidarity.

Simone Paoli, "Migration Crises" and European Integration from the Second World War to the Covid-19 Pandemic, in: Themenportal Europäische Geschichte, 2020, <www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-94894>.