The (New) 'Clash of Civilizations': Migration and Terrorism

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When the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington first published 'The Clash of Civilizations' (1993), his hypothesis was based on the assumption that future international conflicts would arise from cultural and religious identities. However, the argument that the eight civilizations – Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African – were morally and politically incompatible, would soon be questioned by scholars all over the world. One of the most famous critics was Edward Said, who replied years later with an essay entitled Clash of Ignorance (2001). This author warned that amplifying an 'us' versus 'them' narrative or a 'west' versus 'Islam' posture is both dangerous and misleading, especially after September 11. In fact, Huntington believes that 'as people define their identity in ethnic and religious terms, they are likely to see an "us" versus "them" relation existing between themselves and people of different ethnicity or religion' (1993, 29). For the author this would ultimately lead to a confrontation (or even war) between civilizations based on 'who you are' in terms of culture and religion. Moreover, Huntington does not hesitate to claim that Islam has 'bloody borders' (1993, 25), for example with the Orthodox Serbs in the Balkans, the Jews in Israel, the Hindus in India, the Buddhists in Burma or the Catholics in the Philippines.

Despite the numerous 'clashes of scholarships', Huntington's most enduring legacy started to be tested at Europe's borders in the 1990s. Historically envisioned as a reconstruction plan after the Second World War, the origins of the European project were inspired by the ideals of peace, human rights, democracy and good governance, both within and beyond its borders. However, with the end of the Cold War and the humanitarian crisis in the Balkans, the European Economic Community (EEC) was compelled to stand up to new challenges and threats.

To tackle this new strategic environment, the 1992 Maastricht Treaty shaped a new identity – the European Union (EU) – based on a three-pillar structure, including the area of freedom, security and justice. Within these pillars, throughout the years, member states tried to implement the best strategies and policies planned to control and manage its population flows at the national level.

However, the disproportionate burden faced by Greece and Italy in the last couple of years caused a huge tension among EU members. In 2015 alone, more than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 10,550 migrants and refugees entered Europe by land and 164,779 by sea through 03 December 2017, around 85% arriving first in Italy and Spain and the remainder in Greece and Bulgaria. In addition, 3,086 people were missing or found dead at the Mediterranean by the beginning of December. Moreover, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were 65.6 million internally displaced persons and 22.5 million refugees worldwide (excluding 5.3 million Palestinians) in 2016. In turn, in the first quarter of 2017, the top three citizenships of asylum seekers in Europe were Syrians (22,500), Afghans (12,500) and Nigerians (11,500 applications). In the same period, according to EUROSTAT, Germany has registered 30% of all applicants in the EU member states, followed by Italy, France, Greece and the United Kingdom.

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Bearing all those numbers and facts in mind and considering the absence of a common migration and asylum policy, the EU stance was threefold: political, security and military. The EU tackled this issue through a holistic and comprehensive approach both in the origin, transit and destination countries, blurring the internal and external security nexus (Eriksson and Rhinard 2009; Pastore 2001; Lutterbeck 2001).

Starting with the first dimension (political) we must mention the adoption of the European Agenda on Security (European Commission 2015a), aimed to set out how the Union can bring added value in ensuring security within and beyond its borders. This agenda also acknowledges that member states can no longer succeed fully on their own faced with cross-border terrorism, organized crimes or cybercrime which require indeed an effective and coordinated response at the European level. Following this document, also in 2015, the European Commission presented the European Agenda on Migration (2015b) that set both short (prevent further losses of migrants' lives at sea) and medium/long term priorities (reducing the incentives for irregular migration; saving lives and securing the external borders; strengthening the common asylum policy; and developing a new policy on legal migration) to better manage the EU's external borders along with its member states.

In terms of security (the second dimension), three facts are worth mentioning. First, the EU-Turkey agreement (March 2016) aiming to restrain the influx of people crossing to Greek islands and to assure that for every Syrian migrant sent back to Turkey, one Syrian already in Turkey will be resettled in the EU. This deal has been strongly criticized because, in return, Turkey might be encouraged to push more political concessions in the future (Hakura 2016) and the EU has apparently resigned on its responsibilities to provide protection and security to those in need (Collett 2016).

Second is the strengthening of the EU's cooperation with Western Balkan countries – the frontline of the Eastern route – by providing them with technical, humanitarian and financial assistance. In fact, on 26 October 2015, a meeting between the leaders of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia agreed on an action plan with the aim of avoiding a possible humanitarian crisis along the transit route. This regional approach also relies on strong coordination and consultation with Turkey as, by land or sea, thousands of migrants have entered Bulgaria or Greece with the aim of reaching the Schengen area.

The third fact also relates to the political dimension and is the implementation of a European Border and Coast Guard to protect and enhance the security and management of the EU's External Borders. This initiative was announced by President Juncker in his State of the Union Speech on 9 September 2015 as part of a comprehensive approach set out by the European Agenda on Migration. The implementation of a European Border and Coast Guard expands the mandate of Frontex (the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the EU) in the fields of external border management. In addition, the EU's rebranding of the latter as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency was meant to give more visibility to its new tasks. In this regard, on 25 January 2017, a new package of four documents on migration and security was approved by the European Commission (European Commission 2017a; 2017b; 2017c; 2017d).

The last dimension is the military. Indeed, another key pillar of the EU institutional approach to cope with the migration and refugee crisis is exemplified by the ability to deploy missions and operations to identify, capture and destroy vessels used by smugglers framed by the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). Thus, following a tragic Libyan migrant shipwreck in April 2015, the EU launched a military operation – European Union Naval Force Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR Med) – with the aim of countering established refugee smuggling routes in the Mediterranean. This was agreed on 18 May 2015 as a three-phase military operation in accordance with the procedures of international law (Tardy 2015): the first phase would focus on the surveillance and assessment of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean; the second and third phases aimed to search, seize and disrupt the assets of smugglers, though it depends on the partnership with Libyan authorities upon a United Nations Security Council resolution. This mission counterparts Operation Triton as a border security operation conducted by Frontex, under Italian command, that began on 1 November 2014 and involved voluntary contributions from Croatia, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Ireland, Portugal, Austria, Switzerland, Romania, Poland, Lithuania and Malta.

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In October 2015, the Council renamed this mission to EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, honoring the rescue of a baby girl born on a vessel on 22 August off the coast of Libya. On 20 June 2016, the Council of the European Union decided to extend Sophia's mandate until the end of July 2017 by adding the training of the Libyan Coastguard and Navy and contributing to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya as supporting tasks. On 25 July 2017, the Council extended once again the EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia up until 31 December 2018 and amended the mandate in order to set up a monitoring mechanism of trainees to ensure the long-term efficiency of the training of the Libyan Coastguard, conduct new surveillance activities and gather information on illegal trafficking of oil exports from Libya in accordance with UNSCR 2146 (2014) and 2362 (2017), and enhance the possibilities for sharing information on human trafficking with member states' law enforcement agencies, FRONTEX and EUROPOL.

Europe's Dilemmas: A Social Constructivist Approach

With the disintegration of the bipolar confrontation of the Cold War and the start of globalization, International Relations research and teaching patterns in the last two decades of the twentieth century shifted to a new 'reflectivist critique of the scientific approach to the study of social sciences' (Behravesh 2011). As a result, the assumption that the fundamental structures of international politics are not only shaped by a neorealist anarchist power politics, but also by ongoing processes of social practice, paved the way for constructivists (Adler 2001; Onuf 1998; Wendt 1992; Zehfuss 2002) to challenge the nature of interactions and, thus, identity. In fact, social constructivist authors tend to acknowledge that 'the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature (Wendt 1999, 1). Moreover, one of the key features of International Relations constructivist approaches is the role that social norms play in states' identities.

This assumption is theoretically useful to help us to explore four practical dilemmas, questions or clashes: (1) the perceptions by EU citizens on the balance between freedom and security; (2) the rise of Far-Right movements and the growth of Islamism and terrorist attacks in Europe; (3) the migration flows in an ageing Europe in need of a more qualified manpower; and (4) the challenges of integration, counter radicalization and deradicalization.

In what concerns the first 'clash' – the perceptions by EU citizens on the balance between freedom and security – the results of the Eurobarometer Standard surveys (Autumn 2015 and Spring 2016) illustrate that Europeans see immigration (48% in 2016, down ten percent from 2015) and terrorism (39%, up 14% from 2015) as the major challenges the EU is facing. Furthermore, 67% of Europeans are in favor of a common European migration policy and 58% have a positive opinion on the migration of people from other EU member states. Moreover, 79% of Europeans are in favor of the free movement of EU citizens who can live, work, study and do business anywhere in the EU. However, almost 60% also have a negative opinion on the immigration of people from outside the EU. In addition, the data also reveals terrorism as a source of growing concern following the terrorist attacks in France (7 January and 13 November 2015 in Paris, 14 July 2016 in Nice), Belgium (22 March 2016) and Germany (July and December 2016).

As a result, two misconceptions emerged: first, that there are no differences between economic migrants and refugees, which is contentious, as asylum seekers are entitled to humanitarian protection and specific rights covered by the United Nations 1951 Geneva Convention, while economic migrants are subject to national laws; second, that these new migratory movements are spreading Islamism in Europe.

This leads to the second 'clash', which is the rise of Far-Right movements and the growth of Islamism and terrorist attacks in Europe. This 'clash' is being politically exposed by some extremist right-wing populist parties and movements (Greven 2016) that helped to foster hostile feelings towards immigrants and refugees. We are referring to political parties such as National Front (France), UKIP (UK), Lega Nord (Italy), Golden Dawn (Greece), Freedom Party (Holland), Jobbik Swedish Democrats (Sweden), Progress Party (Norway), Finns (Finland), Danish People's Party (Denmark), Freedom Party (Austria), Swiss People's Party (Switzerland) and Alternative für Deutschland (Germany), that claim that a series of terrorist incidents were caused by refugees or asylum seekers. For example, between 18 and 24 July 2016, a series of attacks took place in Germany (the EU member state with the highest number of asylum applications) involving an Afghan refugee that injured five people in a train (18th), an Iranian

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refugee that killed nine people in Munich (22nd), a Syrian refugee that killed a woman in Reutlingen (24th) and in Ansbach, a suicide attack of a Syrian refugee (24th). Also, the attack on the Breitscheid Square in Berlin on 19 December 2016 was allegedly headed by Anis Amri, a Tunisian who had seen his asylum application denied and was using 14 different identities to access social benefits and trick the intelligence services. Recent studies (TESAT 2017, 22–25) confirm that DAESH has indeed been, and possibly continues to be, exploiting refugees and migrants' routes to send individuals to Europe to commit acts of terrorism.

Therefore, it is not surprising that some countries have been building walls to control borders and prevent radical Jihadists or other members of terrorist cells from succeeding in reaching Western Europe from the Balkans or Mediterranean route. In this regard, it was widely covered by the European media the impact of the 32km wall between Bulgaria and Turkey, the Evros wall between Greece and Turkey of 12.5km, or the 175km border between Hungary and Serbia.

However, while a Pew Research study estimates that by 2030 Muslims will represent eight per cent of Europe's total population and will reach ten per cent by 2050, exceeding Christians worldwide by 2070 (Yuhas 2015), some authors (Bullard 2016) argue that the youngest generation seems to be disengaged of any religious belief.

Moreover, an ageing Europe needs to attract young people, or it will face major problems in terms of social welfare systems, losing geopolitical competitiveness (ESPAS 2012). This represents the third 'clash' (the migration flows in an ageing Europe in need of a more qualified and sustainable labor force). In fact, according to the Eurostat statistics, the share of the population aged 65 years and over increased 2.4 percentage points between 2006 and 2016 for the EU28, while the share of the population aged less than 15 years in the EU28 population decreased by 0.4 percentage points.

To conclude, the fourth 'clash' concerns the challenges of integration, counter radicalization and deradicalization. Among the 28 member states, the question of cultural and religious identity (the core focus of Huntington's piece) is being tackled in two different ways (Aleksynska and Algan 2010): either through an assimilation (when a minority communities' identity is absorbed by the dominant features of the majority culture), or through an integration perspective (the minority culture is harmoniously accommodated into an intercultural society where all get access to the same opportunities, rights and duties). Although the European Institutions have been striving for an overall integration policy (Berlinghoff 2014; Entzinger and Biezeveld 2003), rising criminality and terrorism along with unprecedented migratory pressure from the Mediterranean and Balkans routes have encouraged more protectionist, isolationist and sovereign approaches all over European states (Lacroix 2015; Malik 2015; Zappi 2003).

What is rather interesting is that, in his book, Huntington lists five factors that have exacerbated the conflictual nature of Islam and Christianity (1996, 211), and one of the factors relates to the fact that Muslim population growth has generated large numbers of unemployed and dissatisfied youth that become recruits to Islamic causes. Should we then accept that a given economic, social and cultural profile might lead to radicalization and terrorism?

Huntington argued that 'for the relevant future, there will be no universal civilization, but instead a world of different civilizations, each of which will have to learn to coexist with the others' (1993, 49). For sure, the main way to address this problem does not lie only in the generic, targeted and indicated prevention measures (European Commission 2017, 20–35) aimed at the integration of the communities of immigrants and refugees, but also in deradicalization (any measures or programs aimed to reintegrate those already radicalized into society or at least dissuade them from extreme and violent religious or political ideologies) and counter radicalization (any preventative effort aimed at preventing radicalization from taking place). In this regard, it is worth mentioning Schmid's (2013) effort in listing several national and local lessons learned, as well as the Council of the European Union initiative to draft revised Guidelines for the EU Strategy for Combating Radicalization and Recruitment to Terrorism (2017). In addition, EU institutions and national governments must be able to deliver and strike a balance between freedom, justice and security, as well as a sustainable welfare state, to fully accommodate all the cultural identities in European member states no matter its nationality or religion.

Conclusion

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Twenty-five years after Huntington's article was published, Europe is struggling with migration and terrorism, which are a top priority for EU citizens and governments. We cannot figure out what would be Huntington's perspective on today's challenges and threats, but as far as this essay is concerned, I believe that the author never meant to encourage a 'clash of civilizations' ('west against the rest'). Instead, Huntington meant to warn that cultural identities, antagonisms and affiliations will play a major role in relations between states and that the shape of interactions between cultural identities might be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world.

Throughout this chapter, I have identified the three dimensions of the EU's institutional approach to this issue (political, security and military) concluding that a new 'border's diplomacy' (Parkes 2016) that addresses the root causes of underdevelopment and conflict, protecting people in need and providing integration through solidarity and mutual awareness is needed. In fact, we assumed that prevention, cooperation and multilateralism are the three key features that can be enhanced to depoliticize, desecuritize and demilitarize the ties between civilization, migration, terrorism and thus, avoid cultural and identity clashes with unpredictable consequences for humankind. For that purpose, the political, security and military measures taken by the European Union since 2015, and that we have mentioned throughout this essay, are interesting to follow in the future as most of their practical implications are still far from being accomplished.

In fact, there is still room for improvement as recognized by the European Commission when launching the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015, namely in what concerns the cooperation with third countries of origin (Syria, Libya, Iraq, the Sahel region, Afghanistan and Yemen) and transit (Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Niger and Mali) within a regional comprehensive approach. Also, the existing bilateral and regional cooperation platforms (Rabat Process, Khartoum Process, the Budapest Process, the EU-Africa Migration and Mobility Dialogue) must be accurately promoted as they represent an important forum for migration and security dialogue. The EU Delegations and UN special representatives in key countries (Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Niger, Senegal, Sudan, Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon and Jordan) must work closely with Immigration Liaison Officers Network, local authorities and community leaders. Border control in North Africa and the Horn of Africa must be enhanced through the implementation of local support centers in coordination with the IOM, the UNHCR and the local authorities. In the destination countries, integration policies must be fostered and deradicalization (as well as counter radicalization) must be developed in cooperation with intelligence services and community religious leaders. Legal and highly qualified migration should be encouraged (a blue card and a fast track procedure is on the way), and a global commons solidarity regime must be negotiated within the framework of the United Nations. This roadmap set in 2015 by the European Commission, following the presentation of the European Agenda on Migration, is still in need of a fruitful implementation.

To conclude, at least one question remains: 25 years after Huntington's article, are we facing or moving to a new 'clash of civilizations'? What seems certain is that dangerous ties are being nourished every day in European society while we witness the growth of populist movements against refugees and migrants claiming a connection between Islam and terrorism.

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