Resilient Evil
New and Old Migration Discourse

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to analyse, first, the genesis of a new kind of pro-migration discourse, which has appeared in the wake of the economic crisis in the European Union and, second, its contradictions *vis-à-vis* the policies of the individual member states and the European Union as a whole. The relative shortage of young people ready to enter the job market owing to an aging population all around Europe, the forecast downturn in the birth rate owing to declining fertility, the resultant shrinking populations, and the competition for highly-qualified workers had already harbingered an imperative need to rethink the treatment of migration. With the economic crisis, migration seems to have swung from being the problem to being the solution. I suggest that this change is in keeping with the new neoliberal discourse which now emphasises the notion of resilience within the conceptual framework of the "risk society". Intra-European mobility has therefore been held out as an "apparent solution", both for (resilient) young people and the governments of the Southern European countries that have been most penalised by austerity policies and for the host countries that are concerned about aging in their populations. This apparent change in political discourse is reflected in the centrality given to mobility by migration managers in their new geopolitical paradigms. In the European case, it would seem to have been taken up by the Horizon 2020 programme and in the pinpointing of "mobility of young people" as a priority aim of the 2015 agenda. Nevertheless, this focus does not vary from the guidelines of migration policy stipulated in the Schengen Agreement, in which the chief objectives were listed as incentivising intra-European mobility, encouraging the migration of well-qualified people as well as regulating extra-European migration with policies of recruitment in the countries of origin and offering only temporary or circular contracts. Whatever the case, the immediate political agenda shows quite a different reality: migration comes under the heading of Security, whether it is a question of economic migrants who, despite the crisis, still want to come to Europe, refugees from the different conflicts following the impossible Arab Spring, or minorities forced into a nomadic existence, shunted from one European country to another.

Introduction: From Prevention to Resilience

In the closing years of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century, even while being formally linked with the needs of the job market, the issue of migration remained firmly bound to the question of security and was mainly presented in negative terms. Looking back over some of the arguments that have underpinned this adverse view of migration, one might retrieve as the more influential among them the views expressed by Samuel P. Huntington in the United States and Jean-Claude Chesnais and Giovanni Sartori in Europe. In the work of Huntington, namely his thesis on *The Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington, 1996), migration is frowned upon as nourishing minorities that might destabilise the governability of states when the "civilisations" to which they belong clash with the values of the host "civilisation". This is not the only way in which demography is portrayed as problematic. The diminishing power of the West, its process of aging and the contrast of this with the youthful populations of the countries of the South – especially Muslim countries – also claim their share of alarmism. Nonetheless, migration remains at the forefront of Huntington's concerns in his more recent ponderings on challenges to national identity and the possible loss thereof in the United States and, in particular, his insistence that the white (protestant) population is turning into a minority, mainly due to the threat of an expanding Hispanic population (Huntington, 2004). These views are shared by demographers like Jean-Claude Chesnais who, in his book *Le crépuscle de l'Occident. Démographie et politique* (1995), extrapolates from the low fertility rates in developed countries – responsible in turn for increasing immigration and acceleration of population aging – to augur their doom in the form of ethnic fragmentation and death by demography (Chesnais, 1995). Justifying his opposition to multiculturalism, Giovanni Sartori blames increasing migration on a lack of birth control in the Third World (Sartori, 2001).

These theses were shelved with the advent of the economic crisis. In essence, the migration policy proposed for the European Union hardly differs from that outlined in the design of the Schengen Agreement: incentivising intra-European migration and containing migration coming from outside Europe, except for a few exceptions. What has changed is the discourse. Migration, nowadays dubbed "internal mobility", namely that of citizens from some or other European Union member state, is not only not viewed negatively but is, rather, encouraged both by countries of origin (for example Spain, which sees this exodus of young people as an escape valve for increasing social pressure and also a way of covering up its inability to maintain an R+D system that guarantees jobs for highly-qualified people) and host countries, for example Germany, which views migration from Southern European countries as a partial solution to its problem of an aging population and also as a way of avoiding extra-community migratory flows. The latter immigrants are seen as more conflictive because of the cultural distances that make them (always depending on their place in the hierarchy) more difficult in terms of assimilation (Domingo and Sabater, 2013).

This interpretation brings us back, first, to the hierarchical and xenophobic stance which, with the economic crisis, has widened the gap dividing the countries of the north and south of the European Union. More than that, however, it has paved the way for the fact that migration itself, now viewed as mobility, has become a valuable tool for

holding out against the economic crisis. This is – with regard to what I call "sacralisation" of migrant policies – what the British-Pakistani geographer Ash Amin (2012) describes as the shift from prevention to resilience in the risk society. It is a change in the neoliberal model, which is now seeking to deepen the crisis since this is, at last, an opportunity for imposing its own disciplinary rhetoric. While the welfare economy – severely eroded since the previous crisis of 1973 and the pressure of market deregulation policies introduced by neoliberal governments – fostered access to economic progress and equitable distribution of its fruits, the new mindset views populations and individuals from the very narrow perspective of their contribution to competition on a worldwide scale and their cost. Now, it is no longer a matter of possible social and individual risks being shared between the individual and the state, as Ulrich Beck, who coined the term "risk society" (1986), once asserted, but of reserving social investment only for those who demonstrate their ability to face and overcome risks, an aptitude that has come to be called resilience. Seen from this standpoint, members of the unemployed population, which is to say surplus population in terms of the market-imposed taxonomy, have no choice but to move if they want to survive (Domingo, 2013). As a result of the evolution of world demography and the fact that the European Union is directly competing with other countries to attract immigration at the same time as it is raising barriers against it, immigrants will progressively become a scarce commodity. This schizophrenic situation has been summed up by Mássimo Livi-Bacci, who notes that Europeans want a closed society while they are being forced to open it up, managing with closed policies a society that presents itself as open (Livi-Bacci, 2012). Again, this viewpoint has the advantage of making the individual responsible for the gulf between his or her subjective aspirations and the available objective opportunities, although the argument is dressed up in terms of meritocracy with a retrospective reading. In other words, if people succeed, it is because they deserve to, and the rest are doomed to fail. This solution has been hailed at the World Economic Forum (2013) as a way of alleviating social tension while also meeting market demands. The prominent role reserved for migration of young people, which comes under the heading of "mobility" in the Europe 2015 agenda, is yet another convincing proof of this way of thinking.

The limits and true nature of the recasting of migration policy may be found in the European response to the flows of human beings set in motion by the Arab Spring. Even at the beginning, in April 2011, it was made very clear that the European Union was not willing to go beyond lip service in its support for insurgent movements struggling for democracy in the neighbouring countries. Accordingly, the arrival of some 25,000 Tunisian refugees not only triggered a state-level redeployment of border control policies but it also meant, where necessary, the suspension of international agreements, as illustrated by France and Italy and their stand against the Schengen Agreement. The Lampedusa tragedy, with the deaths of more than three hundred immigrants, most of them refugees from Syria, when their boat sank off the island's coasts on 3 October 2013 has once again drawn attention to the shortcomings of a migration policy which, with regard to non-EU countries, leaves almost everything to be decided in terms of security discourse. The immediate response to the magnitude of the catastrophe – which was horribly accentuated when yet another boat sank off Lampedusa on 11 October, this time with an approximate death toll of thirty-four – was European politicians wringing their hands at the burial of the victims and at the meeting in Barcelona of the Economic Forum of the Western Mediterranean on 23 October. While predictable, the result has been disappointing: further focus on the problem of control, condemnation of human trafficking without, however, looking a little further to recognise the inadequacy of the

European model as a response to the reality of migration. It was deficient when it was mainly focused on economic migration and is even more so now with the additional factor of the plight of political refugees fleeing from conflicts that the European Union itself has allowed to fester.

Main Aims

The main aims of the paper are:

1) To establish a genealogy of the different kinds of discourse about migration in the new millennium.
2) To relate this discourse with real demographic changes.
3) To demonstrate how this "new" neoliberal discourse about immigration clashes with the "old" paradigm of security.

Methods and Data

The approaches and sources used are:

1) Analysis of scientific discourse from different disciplines about migration with a political impact.
2) Analysis of political discourse that contributes towards the consolidation of a new perspective on migration, now adopting the framework of "resilience".
3) A review of European legislation on migration since the onset of the economic crisis.

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