"MIGRANTS IN EUROPE:
a debate on the move"

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Abstract: *The most difficult journey in the progression of international migration is that of its protagonists: those women and men who migrate, workers, family members, refugees: all people who seek asylum for disparate reasons. But the debates, studies and research regarding international migration have also experienced their own progression as marked as the related norms and policies.*

Along with this movement of people, a heightened cultural and social sensitivity towards international migration was developing; there were also repeated attempts at new political, institutional and regulatory arrangements. This was followed by a shift from the policies of rotation of immigrants to those of integration; from approaches that were nearly exclusively economic to more structural programs; from policies of blockage, closure and regulation to ones which were more current with respect to understanding and international cooperation as well as decentralized, transnational cooperation. This long, difficult, complex and incomplete process was ultimately accompanied by institutional events, such as large national and international conferences on emigration, immigration and the population.

1. Introduction

The most difficult journey in the progression of international migration is that of its protagonists: those women and men who migrate, workers, family members, refugees: all people who seek asylum for disparate reasons.

But the debates, studies and research regarding international migration have also experienced their own progression as marked as the related norms and policies. In the Italian case this progression has been, as with other aspects in the life of the country, rapid, important and profound.

In the period following the Second World War the resumption of important migratory flows abroad originating from Italy reinforced Italy's image as an exporter of labour; in numerical terms as well as in terms of corollary problems. The prolonged solidification of an Italian migratory

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movement towards other countries has grown and fortified Italian communities abroad; reinforcing pre-existing communities and creating new ones.

The profound changes of the Sixties and Seventies modified this fabric at its core; reinforcing processes which reunite families, integrate qualified contingents, and lead to reductions of compatriots overseas; meanwhile initiating a migratory flow of foreign workers towards Italy.

In the Eighties, this flow, with its demographic and economic elements, became noticeable to the point of formalizing a new image of Italy as a destination country for migratory flows: by then defined as non-EC as a result of the consolidation of the bonds between Italy and the other European States.

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2. Migrations in International Relations

On the demographic and economic levels, immigration policies cannot be – and it is for the better that they are not – a substitute for demographic policies (for example, policies concerning birthrate), also because demographic policies in the traditional sense do not hold much of a future today, whereas population policies do.

The re-balancing mechanisms of the market, like that in which lacking populations are substituted by exuberant populations in order to maintain the stability, at least structurally, of the labour market, seem like quite simplistic hypotheses because they do not discuss the actual structure of the labour market. For this reason it is necessary to consider more sophisticated hypotheses to explain the current demographic phenomenon.

Until 20 years ago the debate on migration was limited only to economic and social analysis, even though the multidisciplinary approaches included economic social and cultural aspects. More recently, a renewed interest has been seen in political science and international relations.

The events of 11 September have placed emphasis on the migration question from the point of view of security, the war on terrorism, border control, and conflict between populations, religions and ethnicities.

In particular, there is a noticeable, "shift of the topic of security from East-West to South-North issues, stressing more on internal affairs than on strategic studies, while considering migration as one of the future strategic issues. Such a discourse is frequently used in defence policy making areas (NATO, Foreign Affairs and Defence Departments) where immigration has recently emerged as an up-to-date topic extending strategic and security issues to the social and environmental texture of international relations. The main topics are flows (the fear of invasion) and Islamic terrorism," (C. Wihtol de Wenden, 2005).

From an ethics perspective, the recent approach to international migration appears to be risky inasmuch as it reinforces the attention on policing and controls while placing vital considerations such as identity, integration and citizenship in the background.

On the other hand, it is impossible to imagine a society without conflict. Migrations transpire in societies (of departure as well as of arrival) that are conflicted by nature; even over time. For this reason, it is necessary to study such conflicted societies so that instruments may be found to settle and, if possible, prevent conflicts; taking for granted that there were, are, and will be these types of conflicts.

Reasoning out the prevention of conflicts in Europe from a demographic point of view means reasoning on an experimental basis and not on a political or legal basis. This means identifying a territory in which migration is present and conflict (in the traditional sense of the word) is contemporaneously absent. In the modern era, an area with many of these characteristics has been that of the European Community: "Compared with the United States, Europe of Shengen is more clearly a security community, not in the military sense, but in an internal and transnational one (ethnicisation of urban territories, transnational uncontrolled networks managed from abroad)," (*ibidem*).

There are three considerations related to the reasons for which there have not been conflicted states in Europe during migrations, even though there has been contrast, starting from the birth of the Common Market up to the institutionalisation of the European Union.

The first motivation is the definitive choice of the democratic system and of that which it brings in terms of constitutional and institutional tools. The second is the adoption of economic integration. The third is the idea of cultural subsidisation, the reciprocal acceptance of the other culture, or at least the attempt to do so.

In the system of the European Union democracy is no longer a result, as it was right after the Second World War. Among the ambitions of the founding fathers of the European Community, democracy constituted a prerequisite. Today, those who do not respect the democratic principles of sovereignty of rights, of basic liberty, and of the centrality of institutions are not admitted into the community or into the other international European assemblies, such as the Council of Europe.

This raises the question of how democratic principles may be applied to migration, thus referring to cultural subsidisation, a means of bringing the process of cultural integration into the discourse on migration.

The degree of integration reached at the European level does not necessarily refer to identity or equality; even less does it mean an arithmetic cultural mean, as much as it means mediation and compatibility of differences, or better yet, wealth of differences. So, how transferable to society is conflict prevention from a demographic standpoint?

On this point, it should be stated that democracy can only be reached, in the societal sector as well as the demographic one, if it is able to avoid placing various parts of the population against one another. There will be democracy in society, therefore, if the youth is not *versus* the elderly, if the employed are not *versus* the unemployed, if the well-educated are not *versus* those who are not, if those who live in the mountains are not *versus* those who live by the sea, and if those who enter a house of worship looking at a bell tower are not *versus* those who enter observing a minaret. Analogously, social democracy in migratory policies consists of not placing the populations of different countries in contrast with one another *a priori*.

3. Poles of Globalization

There are different focal points in the world. Many populations consider the United States, which augments by two million people a year, to be their focal point. There are some countries in

Asia, the so-called "Asian Tigers," which represent an Asia that is on the move and developing, making it a focal point for the Indonesians. There is a part of the Arab world that receives Iranian and Pakistani workers. But there are other states, on the other hand, which are hostile or skeptical towards the integration of immigrants. For example, an ancient Japanese behavior causes an aversion to allowing entrance to "peaceful invaders."

Regarding Europe, it is necessary to point out that there are zones that have not yet been included in the development of the European Community, but who aspire to enter, including many of the nations in the Mediterranean area, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and North Africa. These are the countries in which the migratory process largely has its origins, and whose conflicts could be prevented with the tools implemented by the European Union. Among these tools, European democracy, which does *not* place populations against one another, occupies the top spot. It is necessary to realize that Morocco, as an example, cannot help but look to Europe, where many of its citizens have already found dignified living arrangements; or that Egypt and Turkey could look elsewhere but instead fix their attention on Europe. The process of social democracy consists of the integration between the economy and the society. Today, there are two dominant models: the American model and the European model, each of which are characterised by the varying emphasis placed on the economy and the society, respectively. Regarding migration, there are two fronts which clash intellectually, politically and economically depending on whether we attribute them with a solely economic value or whether we also recognize the value of social opportunities. How to render profit an economic issue is well known since profit, in itself, is no more than a dimension of an economic system, but it is not yet so well known how to render society economically having already seen how unproductive society is, and how it absorbs resources. In Europe, it is understood that society is not an optional, it is not possible to renounce it, it is part of the economy and it is among the primary objectives of communal democracy.

In other words, migrations take part in the economic system inasmuch as regards handovers, transactions and exchanges of goods and services, and they must be understood to be an integral part of the movement not only of goods and services, but also of human capital. An economic cooperation carries on not only in helping the development and the mobility of goods and services, but also in the reception of immigrants; not only with financial incentives but also with the promotion of family reunifications.

4. Prevention of New Conflicts

In addition, the principle of cultural subsidisation cannot be denied since it constitutes an essential tool for the resolution of social conflicts deriving from migrant flows, through the acceptance of other cultures. Cohabitation between different cultures – multiculturalism – means an objective comparison between different lifestyles and different existential conceptualisations, which restrains if not halts the development of fear and insecurity. This approach facilitates the process of governance in the ever-more-pressing current phase of globalisation.

These two terms are often used improperly, with meanings that differ from their actual definitions. For this reason it is opportune to clarify that the concept of globalisation does not coincide with that which is global in the same way that the concept of governance does not coincide with that which can be governed. The term, "globalisation," stands for that which is not against anyone, not that which is on a global level. Similarly, the term, "governance," represents the potential to be governed, not the fact of having a determined government policy.

Inside this system, cultural and social subsidiarity are specified in the procedure recognised by European culture in its theories (the theme of subsidiarity, for example, is present in the philosophy of personalism), but not applied. When considering conflict, the reason behind the tension should be considered before the actors in the conflict.

Today, the protagonists of conflicts are still given primacy in thought, and are acted upon because they regulate the governance of the situation, even if this is intellectually mistaken. Instead, the reasons behind the tension should be examined first, and only after this should the protagonists be taken into consideration.

In this context, if the community is willing to share the burden of setup, cultural and economic subsidisation applied to migration implies that attention should not be placed on either the destination countries or the migrants themselves from the point at which it is demonstrated that neither represents the cause of the tension. They are simply actors in the tension and are at times susceptible to criminality, exploitation of labour, ignorance, and the distorted and distorting use of means of communication which spread false hopes. Subsidisation means seeing compatibility as a way to resolve conflicts. A Muslim will remain as such just like a Christian will remain as such until there is a process of comparison and of exchange through which elements of compatibility are recognized and are superimposed over the motives for incompatibility. This search for compatibility is what defined the framework which led first to the Common Market, then to the European

Community, and in the end to the European Union. This transition is also possible and enforceable in the societal scope. It is not illusory to affirm the role of migrants as actors in this process; actors who could bring with them social and cultural compatibility.

The discussion is one of apparently long processes, which involve member-states of the European Union, but which responsibly call on those who intend to enter to do so diligently. Above and beyond being economic in nature, this cultural integration has ushered in unprecedented development, towards which numerous peoples who had been set against each other in bloody conflicts for centuries have collaborated. In sum, migrations are an important growth phase in the process of subsidisation between different cultures and economies, some of which are already fundamental in the European community while some others have entered in constructive dialog with these.

An Example: The Case of Italy

The flow of immigrant workers into the Italian territory is limited by entrance quotas which are fixed annually by one or more decrees, taking into account employment data and prior agreements with the interested institutions and the social partners. In the year 2000, the maximum quota of non-EC foreigners admitted into Italy was initially fixed at 63,000 people, and was subsequently raised to 83,000. In 2001 the quota reached 89,400, while between 2002 and 2005 it was certified at 79,500 people yearly. In 2006 the Italian government authorized 520,000 entrances with two different decrees, providing for 170,000 and 350,000 non-EC foreigners respectively.

Until now the planning of entrance flows has not taken place in a satisfactory manner; the quotas have been reduced excessively and, most of all, stipulated seriously late during the course of the reference year; all of which has led to an increase in illegal entrances and, consequently, illegal workers.

Recent debate has been primarily centered on the possible ways of facilitating the "regular" congruence between job application and job offer, as well as on the necessity of rationalising the regulatory procedures for entrance. The "Amato-Ferrero" bill, approved on the 24th of April 2007, takes a step in this direction. Passed after a long and complex parliamentary debate, the bill seeks to enhance the channels of legal entrance as an antidote to the all-too-frequent clandestine immigration. The new bill provides the reactivation of sponsorship, even institutional; a greater correspondence between the permit to stay and the work permit with a lengthened duration of three years

(corresponding to the planning period of the entrance quotas) attained – with convenient procedures – also in the country of origin, and most of all an extension to the initial or successive phase in which one seeks occupation. The bill also provides for excess entrances above and beyond the quotas for pre-determined categories of workers who are particularly sought after in the Italian labour market; including maids and caretakers, but also researchers and specialised personnel; and confirms electoral rights (both active and passive) in administrative elections after five years of legal residence. Further, it safeguards, with special arrangements, family reunifications; particularly in the case of non-accompanied minors; it levels the playing field for foreign citizens in legal standing to that of European citizens; and it proposes to institute alternatives to the procedures at the initial reception centers, confirming the expulsion procedure in the flagrantly illegal cases.

Through regulation of the migratory phenomenon, the reform aims to promote the integration of foreigners in Italy, with respect given to the rights and duties of every individual.

Among the recent initiatives relating to integration, the actions taken by the Ministry of the Interior starting in the second half of 2006 are significant because they have brought about the realisation of a "Charter on the values of citizenship and integration," presented in April 2007. The charter, which draws inspiration from the Italian Constitution and the European and international charters on human rights, is built around the principles of the centrality of the human being and his or her dignity, of equal rights between men and women and of the right to freedom of religion. The objective of the initiative is the enunciation of values and principles which are desired to reside stably in Italy, independent from the affiliation to a cultural, ethnic or religious community.

Finally, between the inherent problems of immigration, asylum and border control, it should be remembered that the text of the Treaty for the new European Constitution, signed in October 2004, provided that such questions would fall under the jurisdiction of the European Parliament, which is able to legislate along with the Council. The European Constitution will also ratify the principle of "solidarity in border control," granting a much more solid legal framework for acting on this field at a supranational level.