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## The Crooked Logic of Migration Policies and Their Malthusian Roots<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *European perspectives on recent migration flows are heavily biased towards the Malthusian and evolutionist view of many classical western social thinkers. Although it may serve as a purely descriptive tool to outline the present relations between Europe and the outside world (specifically the Middle East and North Africa), it certainly does not provide any solid base for designing projects which might free human beings from further subjugation, poverty and entrenched inequality – precisely the reasons behind the recent migration crisis to the EU. We argue here that the way the EU perceives and deals with the recent flow of migrants (refugees and others) is based on an outdated perception that does not allow for providing valid solutions to real problems. Therefore we present the undercurrent logic behind the political designs, point out deficiencies, and illustrate a possible new approach by discussing the EU's migration policy and border management, as linked to the EU security and defence policy. The current migration crisis would never have emerged if not for the lack of stability in the Middle East and North Africa, which neither the EU nor UN nor NATO was ready or able to remedy. The beginning of putting together a viable EU migration policy and border regime will depend on rethinking the security policy, decision-making and capacity, and abandoning the Malthusian perception of the world is a start.*

**Keywords:** migration, policy, EU, Malthus, border security, global strategy

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<sup>1</sup> The remuneration for Authors was financed by the Association of Copyright Collective Administration for Authors of Scientific and Technical Works (KOPIPOL), having its seat in Kielce, from fees collected under Article 20 and 20<sup>1</sup> of the Polish Act on Copyright and Neighbouring Rights.

## 1. Work of Thomas Malthus and its heritage

The major work of Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, has been widely acknowledged as the most influential work of its era. Since its publication late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it assumed a key role in shaping scholarly and political views on demography, and it was assumed in the work that poverty, malnutrition, and disease could all be attributed to overpopulation. Due its highly influential nature, Malthus's approach is regarded as pivotal in establishing the field of demography. Malthus claimed that if a population is left to grow unchecked, people will begin to starve and will fight over increasingly scarce resources. He warned that without any checks (e.g. deliberate population control or pandemics), the population would theoretically grow at a geometric rate, rapidly exceeding its ability to produce resources, which tend to grow arithmetically. However he argued that such rampant growth will self-correct itself through war, famine, and disease.<sup>2</sup> Today, advocates of the Malthusian theory, as well as many others, argue that future pressures on food production, combined with threats such as global warming, make overpopulation a major threat in to our collective future.

In the times of Malthus in the England where he lived, the population was rapidly increasing but suitable agricultural land was limited. Moreover, Malthus did not believe in the notion that agricultural improvements could expand without limit. He claimed that if left unrestricted, the human population would continue to grow until it would become too large to be supported by the food grown on available agricultural land. The capacity of ecosystems or societies to support the local population would be outpaced by its volume. One of the proposed solutions to the problem was birth control, in the form of 'moral restraint', forced sterilization, or even criminal punishments for those who had more children than they could support. As controversial a solution as it was even in the times of Malthus, it proved to be very influential and has remained so even until today. For instance the Nobel prize-winning work of Gunnar and Alva Myrdal seems to be very much inspired by the ideas of Malthus. Over the two hundred years following Malthus's projections, famine, poverty and conflicts of all sorts have overtaken numerous individual regions which did not have enough carrying capacity to support its population, and that seems to also be the key to the recent huge migration flows on a global scale.

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<sup>2</sup> Boundless, *Malthus' Theory of Population Growth*, "Boundless Sociology", 12.09.2016, <https://www.boundless.com/sociology/textbooks/boundless-sociology-textbook/population-and-urbanization-17/population-growth-122/malthus-theory-of-population-growth-689-9631/> (last visited 2.11.2016).

## 2. Reception and influence of the Essay

Many works today regarded as milestones of economic thought influenced the ideas of Thomas Malthus. He claimed in his Essay that the 'other writers' included Benjamin Franklin, Robert Wallace, Adam Smith, Richard Price, and David Hume. These authors were almost all contemporaries of Malthus and their views have shaped a plethora of dimensions of social theory (be it economics, demography, or political science) even until today.<sup>3</sup>

As much as Malthus was influenced by the then-contemporary scholarly works, he influenced even more other seminal thinkers and decision makers for decades to come. The references to Malthus's book began almost immediately after its very appearance in 1798. Early after its release it was mentioned by Thomas Carlyle, the most influential English historian of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its 6th edition (1826) was independently cited as a key influence by both Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace in their development of the theory of natural selection. Darwin referred to Malthus as 'that great philosopher' and it was his insight that led Darwin to the idea of natural selection and is a major underpinning of the 'Origin of Species'.<sup>4</sup> John Stuart Mill strongly defended the ideas of Malthus in his 1848 work, *Principles of Political Economy*. Mill considered the criticisms of Malthus that had been made up to that time to have been superficial. David Ricardo and Alfred Marshall also admired Malthus and came under his influence. Early converts to his population theory included William Paley. Despite Malthus's opposition to contraception, his work exercised a strong influence on Francis Place (1771–1854), whose neo-Malthusian movement became the first to advocate contraception. Place published his 'Illustrations and Proofs of the Principles of Population' in 1822.<sup>5</sup> Malthusian social theory influenced Herbert Spencer's idea of the survival of the fittest, and the modern ecological-evolutionary social theory of Gerhard Lenski and Marvin Harris.<sup>6</sup> Malthusian ideas have thus contributed to the canon of socioeconomic theory.

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<sup>3</sup> In particular: Benjamin Franklin, *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc.* (1751), David Hume, *Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations* (1752), Robert Wallace, *A Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind in Ancient and Modern Times* (1753), Adam Smith, *An enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), Richard Price, *Essay on the Population of England from the Revolution to Present Time* (1780), *Evidence for a Future Period in the State of Mankind, with the Means and Duty of Promoting it* (1787).

<sup>4</sup> N. Barlow, *The autobiography of Charles Darwin*, 1958, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> W. Petersen, *Malthus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London 1999, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> G. Lenski, *Ecological-evolutionary theory: Principles and applications*, London 2015.

### **3. Malthus's socioeconomic theory**

Malthus offered an evolutionary social theory of population dynamics as it had developed steadily throughout all previous history. Seven major points regarding population dynamics appear in his 1798 Essay:

1. Subsistence severely limits the population-level; when the means of subsistence increases, the population increases.
2. Population pressures stimulate increases in productivity, and they thus stimulate further population growth.
3. When productivity increases, the potential rate of population growth cannot be maintained.
4. Individual cost/benefit decisions regarding sex, work, and children determine the expansion or contraction of populations and production.
5. The population requires strong checks to keep parity with the carrying-capacity.
6. Checks will come into operation as the population exceeds the subsistence-level.
7. The nature of these checks will have a significant effect on the larger socio-cultural system – Malthus points specifically to misery, vice, and poverty.

As will be demonstrated further, the link between overpopulation, poverty and vice was quite soon supplemented by another factor: namely political violence.

### **4. Malthus' impact on economic and political thought and practice**

It did not take too long to connect Malthus's ideas to issues of migration, as one of the key factors triggering it was poverty and an inability to maintain a livelihood in one's place of residence. However, Malthus himself was not keen on fostering migration as a solution to overpopulation. He believed that natural forces of reproduction would soon fill the demographic gap that would be created after migrants leave their homes. Today however, a causal chain of reasons pushing people out of their residences is motivated by factors unknown in the times of Malthus: more and more arable land is turning into desert; genetic modifications of edible plants may cause unwelcome effects on the food chain; and a massive increase in cultivating monocultures (e.g. for use as biomass) may work to the same effect. The industrial approach to 'animal production' caused the BSE crisis and put a limit (if not the end) to our belief that we can expand food production forever.

The major factor, however, that caused Malthusian ideas to penetrate, albeit saliently, into the present approaches to migration was their connection to demographic policies and in particular to political violence. One immediate impact of Malthus's book was that it triggered a debate about the size of the population in the Kingdom of Great Britain, which led to the passage of the Census Act of 1800. This Act enabled the holding of a national census in England, Wales and Scotland, starting in 1801 and continuing every ten years, up to the present day. The position held by Malthus as professor at the Haileybury training college, which he held to his death in 1834, gave his theories some influence over Britain's administration of India as well. Upon reading the work of Malthus, William Pitt the Younger (Prime Minister from 1783–1801 and again from 1804–1806) withdrew a Bill he had introduced that called for the extension of Poor Relief. Concerns raised by Malthus's theory also helped promote the above-mentioned national population census in the UK. Government official John Rickman became instrumental in the carrying out of the first modern British census in 1801, under Pitt's administration.

The first Director-General of UNESCO, Julian Huxley, wrote in his *Evolutionary Humanism* (1964) about 'the crowded world', calling for a world population policy.<sup>7</sup> Huxley openly criticised communist and Roman Catholic attitudes toward birth control, population control, and overpopulation. The rapid increase in the global population of the past century exemplifies Malthus's predicted population patterns. It also led to the creation of neo-Malthusian modern mathematical models of long-term historical dynamics of population. Malthus made the specific prediction that world population would fall below a line going upward from its then current population of one billion, adding one billion every 25 years. This prediction is at the basis of the current UN data on the world population since 1800 and UN projections for future growth. To date, the world population has remained below Malthus's predicted line. However, the current rate of increase since 1955 is over two billion per 25 years, more than twice the Malthusian predicted maximum rate. At the same time, world hunger has been in decline. The highest UN projection has the population continuing at this rate and surpassing Malthus's predicted line.<sup>8</sup> This high projection supposes today's growth rate will be sustainable to the year 2100 and beyond.

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<sup>7</sup> *Malthus past and present*, J. Dupaquier (ed.), New York 1983.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization database <http://apps.fao.org/>.

Malthusian ideas continue to have considerable influence. This is most prominently visible in the work of Paul R. Ehrlich.<sup>9</sup> In the late 1960s Ehrlich predicted that hundreds of millions would die from an overpopulation-crisis in the 1970s. Other examples of applied Malthusianism include the 1972 book *The Limits to Growth* (published by the Club of Rome), and the Global 2000 report to the then-President of the United States Jimmy Carter.

More recently, a school of 'neo-Malthusian' scholars has begun to link population and economics to a third variable – political change and political violence – and to show how the variables interact. In the early 1980s Jack Goldstone linked population variables to the English Revolution of 1640–1660, and David Lempert devised a model of demographics, economics, and political change in the multi-ethnic country of Mauritius. Goldstone has since modelled other revolutions by looking at demographics and economics. Ted Robert Gurr has also modelled political violence, such as in the Palestinian territories and in Rwanda/Congo (two of the world's regions with the most rapidly growing populations) using similar variables in several comparative cases. These approaches suggest that political ideology follows demographic forces.<sup>10</sup>

## **5. An early case of the evolutionary Malthusian approach to migration**

At the time of the Potato Famine in the West Highlands of Scotland in the late 1840s, the ideas of Robert Malthus loomed large among the politicians who governed the region. Promoting emigration seemed to be a response to the famine and a cure for most of the problems. Landlords and relief administrators were acutely conscious of the danger that the population would exceed the available means of subsistence. Malthus had been reluctant to advocate emigration because, he declared, a gap was created which the consequent reproduction soon would fill up. After the departure of migrants their land and houses would be taken over by the young, who would soon have even more children and thus increase the birth rate. He drew directly on the then-recent examples of Jura and Skye, where population grew rapidly despite vast emigration. Though these cases supported his theses, Malthus also said that

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<sup>9</sup> Paul R. Ehrlich has written several books predicting famine as a result of population increases: *The Population Bomb* (1968); *Population, resources, environment: issues in human ecology* (1970, with Anne Ehrlich); *The end of affluence* (1974, with Anne Ehrlich); *The population explosion* (1990, with Anne Ehrlich).

<sup>10</sup> *Malthus past and present...*, op.cit.

the effect could be delayed by the prevention of re-occupation and the destruction of cottages.

James Loch, commissioner to the famine stricken areas of Scotland, agreed with these views and advised offering assistance to those who were willing to emigrate. Landlords were increasingly keen to encourage emigration, which was regarded by the administration as beneficial to all the parties involved – the landlord in particular. A doctrine taken from Malthus was used to strengthen these arguments: emigration might have the desired effect of limiting population on the condition that the lands left behind by migrants should not be allowed to regenerate population growth. The key concern of decision makers was to prevent the further impoverishment of people and their increasing dependence on their landlords. It was postulated that policies should be designed to break the cycle, which was developed in a truly Malthusian manner. Some relief was to be determined by need, but it was to be combined with the encouragement to emigrate, which was believed to be a more permanent solution to the misery of the affected areas.

Also in a truly Malthusian manner, Loch claimed that the problem of overpopulation was increased by ‘the kindness with which the poverty stricken are treated.’ The relief provided to the starving should not encourage them to depend on the more affluent for their maintenance. In tune with the prevalent evolutionist and Malthusian sentiment, Loch advocated that food prices should not be subsidized because this would undoubtedly ‘paralyse the exertions of the industrious and encourage the less active’.<sup>11</sup> These very words resound in the arguments of many present politician and some members of the media and help shape today’s attitudes toward managing migrants.

One may undoubtedly claim that a famine crisis, especially if coupled with other violent conflicts, loosens people’s ties with the land and thereby promotes migration. The Highland famine history is an early example of a significant acceleration of emigration and a rapid detachment of people from the land. It appeared to be a mechanical Malthusian evacuation, with people fleeing in the face of adversity and deciding that there was no decent future for them in their homeland. This is confirmed that by the fact that The Highland and Island Emigration Society had effectively made emigration to Australia virtually free and organised 5,000 passages to the region.<sup>12</sup> It also shows how the evolutionist and Malthusian views

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<sup>11</sup> E. Richards, *Highland emigration in the age of Malthus: Scourie, 1841–55*, “Northern Scotland”, nr 2/2011, p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 74.

shape our perspectives on migration flows and our attitudes toward migrants.

## **6. The EU approach to migration management**

As Le Gloannec points out in her expert opinion for the European Union Institute for Security Studies, the EU built its migration policy by ‘outsourcing’ the responsibility of keeping the borders intact to a ring of ‘friendly’ surrounding states.<sup>13</sup> The EU developed its neighbourhood and Mediterranean policies with the aim of transferring know-how and funds in order to stabilise the economies of the partner states and achieve a relative political stability. As a result, the EU was cooperating with both a number of states that enjoyed a degree of democracy, as well as with authoritarian regimes like that of Qaddafi. Even though the EU prizes itself for being a supporter of democratic values, working hand in hand with non-democracies might have been justifiable as ‘hard politics’ if the system of ‘outsourced migration management’ was effective. But the Arab Spring demonstrated that democracy or not, the political structures of states in all of North Africa and a large part of the Middle East are contested and political orders can be overturned. The EU, with its standardised approach of dealing with its neighbouring states through its policies and programmes such as the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership, Association Agreements or Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, had until that time paid no particular attention to development of a ‘Plan B’ in case its standardised approach began to fail. As Le Gloannec points out, the EU hence ignored power-politics and – with the Arab Spring sweeping away the governments of those ‘friendly states’, ISIS spreading havoc in the Middle East, and Russia attacking Ukraine – faced two problems at the same time: its broadly understood ‘neighbourhood’ was destabilised, and the EU remained without any effective border control in terms of managing (or filtering) the influx of migrants.

In putting the migration issue – perhaps unintentionally – in the broader perspective of not only developing border management and a migration policy, but also the security situation in the areas surrounding the EU, Le Gloannec hit the nail on the head. While most of the effort put into combating the wave of migration caused by the destabilisation of parts of Africa and Middle East is focused on rethinking the Schengen regime, border patrol programmes, and finding ways of keeping refugees and other migrants away from the EU borders (e.g. the agreements with

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<sup>13</sup> A.-M. Le Gloannec, *EU Global Strategy*, Expert Opinion No. 48, Paris: EU ISS, March 2016.



Turkey and Serbia), the real problem lies in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and especially in its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Or, more precisely, in their lack of any effective means to prevent crises as extensive as the Arab Spring or the collapse of the balance of power in the Middle East. As a popular saying goes in the world of peace and conflict studies' researchers (paraphrasing Benjamin Franklin): 'an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of intervention'. The best possible way of dealing with an influx of massive migration is to prevent it from happening, i.e. in early warning and prevention measures within the scope of the EU's CFSP and CSDP, which would have been the case had the CSDP been developed well enough and made ready for the challenges of preventing political destabilisation on a large scale in the vicinity of the EU. Dealing with migration in the face of ample economic discrepancies like those between the EU states and a large number of neighbouring areas, or trying to keep the border tight with no military force trained to do so, was like patching a net and could not be successful in the face of a deluge, as there were no exhaustive strategies nor designed and elaborated measures to provide the necessary patchwork. Only a comprehensive strategy could make both migration policy and border management effective and sufficiently strong. These two aspects alone, however, could hardly be expected to protect the EU from the influx of refugees and desperate economic migrants that have caused such a political crisis in the EU and challenged the integrity of the Schengen area and the model of the EU open society. The EU decision-makers seem to have been vaguely aware of this when designing policies of economic aid and transfer of political know-how, except that these measures cannot be adequate with no backup tools belonging to hard politics: military procedures and international political strength. The problem the EU faces does not derive from a total lack of tools with which to react, nor a total absence of strategies, but rather their inconsistencies and randomness.

## **7. Border management, migration policy and security strategy**

There are several documents and programmes, as well as funds of the EU, its institutions and member states, which are relevant to the issue of regulating migration. Most of them can be classified into three categories: border management, migration policy, and security issues. Within the first category, the mainstays are composed of the Schengen Information System, the Visa Information System, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (previously Frontex). They aim to protect the area of free movement of people – one of the main aims of the European Communi-

ties' founders – by establishing an effective border regime on the outside of the Schengen area and implementing systems of information-sharing in order to make the cooperation of national border agencies more effective and the pursuit of violators easier and faster. The most recent change regarding border protection is the reform of Frontex by making it part of the European Border and Coast Guard. This was an EU response to the recent waves of refugees and to the disputes over the coherence of the Schengen area. In the words of the president of the EU Donald Tusk: 'To save Schengen, we must regain control of our external borders. A new European Border and Coast Guard Agency is being created'.<sup>14</sup> The task of this newly created Agency is 'to help provide integrated border management at the external borders. It will ensure the effective management of migration flows and provide a high level of security for the EU. At the same time it will help safeguard free movement within the EU and fully respect fundamental rights'.<sup>15</sup> It will be composed of Frontex, armed with new competencies and transformed into the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and national authorities responsible for border management. An operational border management strategy is, however, yet to come from these institutions.

Just as it did regarding border management, the EU intensified its efforts with respect to migration policy. Here, however, the greatest obstacle seems to have come from the reluctant attitudes of the governments of the member states of the EU. Voices can be heard in both the Commission and the European Parliament that the EU needs a comprehensive (and common) immigration policy, as '[i]t is clear that no EU country can or should be left alone to address huge migratory pressures'.<sup>16</sup> In his address to the European Parliament in September 2016, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, stressed that: 'When it comes to managing the refugee crisis, we have started to see solidarity. I am convinced much more solidarity is needed. But I also know that solidarity must be given voluntarily. It must come from the heart. It cannot be forced.' In light of the lack of a common European policy on migration as yet, this call, addressed to the member states of the EU, is both a plea for cooperation as

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<sup>14</sup> Council of the EU, "European Border and Coast Guard: final approval", Press release Home Affairs 510/16, 14.09.2016, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/09/14-european-border-coast-guard/> (last visited 5.01.2017).

<sup>15</sup> Council of the EU, "European Border and Coast Guard: final approval", Press release Home Affairs 510/16, 14.09.2016, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/09/14-european-border-coast-guard/> (last visited 5.01.2017).

<sup>16</sup> The web site of the European Commission – Priorities, [http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/migration\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/migration_en) (last visited 21.12.2016).

well as an admission that without the political will of the member states' governments, the EU institutions alone can do but little.

In May 2015 the Commission introduced its Agenda on migration, with its priorities set out for the next two years. According to its provisions, in the short term both Frontex and relevant EU programmes and operations were assigned extra funds to deal with the immediate necessities arising from human tragedies on the outskirts of the EU. The middle and long-term measures concentrate on four priorities:

- Reducing the incentives for irregular migration (that is, taking actions addressing irregular migration in countries outside the EU as well as human trafficking networks and the development of return policies);
- Saving lives and securing the external borders (which is mainly concentrated on the strengthening of the external borders and encouraging member states to commit to the idea of solidarity);
- Strengthening the common asylum policy (with its pivotal point being the monitoring of member states to ensure they fully implement common rules in this area);
- Developing a new policy on legal migration (with its priority being attracting those qualified foreigners that the EU economies need).<sup>17</sup>

The EU Agenda on migration, although focusing much attention to the crisis caused by the massive influx of migrants (and especially refugees) from war zones, takes an overall stance regarding all types of migration to the EU. While it is not a strategy which targets in much detail the issues of illegal migrants or the large-scale movements of persons endangered by activities of war, it nevertheless does vaguely refer to international politics: 'Migration should be recognised as one of the primary areas where an active and engaged EU external policy is of direct importance to EU citizens. Civil war, persecution, poverty, and climate change all feed directly and immediately into migration, so the prevention and mitigation of these threats is of primary importance for the migration debate'.<sup>18</sup> The Agenda is also linked to border management and states that: 'The EU must continue engaging beyond its borders and strengthen cooperation with its global partners, address root causes, and promote modalities of

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<sup>17</sup> European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A European agenda on migration", 13.05.2015, COM(2015) 240 final.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

legal migration that foster circular growth and development in the countries of origin and destination.’ But it does not refer to a security strategy and places migration issues mainly in the context of border management, combined with the EU labour market (i.e. a plan for selecting migrants useful for the EU economy from those who do not meet the criteria set for the incomers).<sup>19</sup> While it is understandable that the drafters of the EU agenda and EU policy-makers have to keep a broader picture in mind and prepare universal measures fit for a number of eventualities, both at present and in the future, and that hence the Agenda on migration has to be to general in some respects; it is nevertheless hard to comprehend why – for exactly the same reasons of far-sightedness – the Agenda is not rooted in measures of the CSDP.

In recent years the EU has faced a number of challenges related to the problem of instability of regions near its borders, and the large influx of migrants originated precisely as a result of this political instability, which in many cases renders neighbouring regions no longer able to provide for even basic security. European politicians have long been concerned with providing support to the ‘neighbourhood’ and passing on both financial resources and know-how in order to support political and economic balance and stability. Special attention has been paid to economic measures, as though economic assistance and other measures of a mercantile nature could settle the multi-dimensional cohesion problems in such large areas like North Africa and in the Middle East. Today, with the instability of Iraq and Syria and their own actual neighbourhoods turning to ashes, the EU is trying to come up with a way of dealing with the interrelated humanitarian disasters and the flow of refugees moving towards its centre. Thus in these recent years the EU has adopted a number of new documents that are aimed at providing a scaffolding for a firm EU approach. The 2016 new EU security strategy – the Global Strategy – made both internal security and the stability of regions key factors providing a focal point. Together with the announcement of the new strategy, the discussion intensified on the management of the EU’s policy towards its neighbourhood, the Schengen borders, and internal mechanisms of solidarity in case of emergencies. Thus the Global Strategy focuses on the analysis of the current challenges to the security of the EU and its member states. and recommends... well, what exactly does it recommend? The Strategy does not deliver concrete solutions, instead it just recommends that the EU be more active in anticipation of troubles, concentrate more on the stabilisation of fragile areas and ungoverned territories, and consolidates

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<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

its efforts, which so far are scattered throughout a large number of programmes, projects, policies, and funds. Much of the discussion about the way to deal with large flows of migration – most recently from Syria and the Middle East, but on a number of earlier occasions concerning refugees from the Balkans (in early 1990s), or the crisis on the Italian island of Lampedusa – concentrates on the status of the migrants (refugee versus economic migrant), the necessity to initiate the EU mechanism of solidarity, and quotas on the number immigrants that particular member states agree (or are obliged) to take in. On the supra-regional level of EU actions, some improvements are being implemented by the adoption of more measures to secure the external borders and develop a common migration policy. Taken all together, however, these do not address the real problem and – perhaps more importantly – reveal the serious issue of the lack of teamwork among the EU member states, to the extent of turning a discussion about the ways to deal with the massive inflow of migrants into a serious political crisis. It is more and more often not just a pronouncement about the necessity to find an approach to protect the external borders and deal with refugees from conflict zones, but about truly fundamental issues, such as the integrity of the Schengen area.

All these discussions, which currently undermine and even endanger the achievements of the EU and its member states, could be avoided if a different perspective on the events is taken. Such a new perspective could make arguments about the Schengen area irrelevant and would make it possible to address the real problem with migration, rather than focus on patching leaks in a non-existent or ineffective (as it turns out) migration policy. Here we posit that the difficulties arise from the lack of coherent policies and good will on the part of member states, not from the absence of high-level strategies. We also point out that the approach of the political establishment of the EU is too narrow and the problem of massive immigration requires more than just a new security strategy – it requires new security measures. It requires more than migration and border policies – it requires stability through the Common Foreign and Security Policy. It requires more than the dispatching of economic and technical aid – it needs consistent and effective coordination of all available resources directed through and in accordance with concrete regional strategies.

## **8. The EU's Global Strategy**

The freshly adopted Global Strategy of the EU points out that the world in which we now live is much more disorganised than the one of 2003, when the previous EU security strategy was elaborated. This very

statement calls for a reflection on the strength of the EU measures: how much has the EU done to contribute to a more secure world? (which by the way was a leading theme of the 2003 security strategy, entitled ‘A secure Europe in a better world’).<sup>20</sup> The new Global Strategy is divided into three parts, the first of which describes the contemporary world and characterises it as connected, contested, and complex. It reflects on the nature of contemporary international relations, declaring that their structure is variable and on the verge of a major remodelling, with the USA still being the strongest power but with other forces gaining increasing strength (like for instance China or India). The Global Strategy foresees the end of the era of a single dominant superpower. For the first time a finger is pointed so strongly at unstable states that a new term is coined to name them: ‘fragile states and ungoverned spaces,’ which means the places where conflicts have become endemic and cycles of violence and conflict are proving impossible to break. This in turn makes the nature of the threats that today accompany a military conflict (e.g. mass migration of refugees; creating hubs for terrorist activities and training; and development of armed forces capable to challenging any newly-formed authorities) a structural dilemma.

Two issues are key in relation to the problems the new strategy points out: one is that they are all interconnected and support each others’ growth in a vicious circle (i.e. conflicts cause migration, shortages of resources cause conflicts, and migration and climate change cause shortages of resources, which cause conflicts which cause migrations..., etc.). The second key issue is that troubles rooted in the instability of even remote regions influence the security of the states and societies of the EU because they spread to its borders – migration and terrorist activities being the prime examples.

The second part of the Strategy points out the challenges to the EU’s integrity arising from its inability to provide security to its society. The main focus is on the EU’s neighbourhood, where the greatest endeavours should be targeted at: assistance for the Western Balkans – still a key partner in the EU’s enlargement policy; close cooperation with Turkey; support for the consolidation of democracy in the countries east of the EU’s borders; and a dialogue with Russia in restructuring European security. North Africa and the Middle East should be offered solutions for constructive conflict resolution, alongside with the preparation of effective measures to control migration towards the EU. The EU is strongly recom-

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<sup>20</sup> “A secure Europe in a better world. European security strategy”, Brussels, 12.12.2003, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> (last visited 20.12.2016).

mended to deal with all these priority areas in cooperation with the USA, NATO and the United Nations.

The third part of the strategy concentrates on recommendations for the EU institutions and the governments of the EU states. While the contemporary world is complex, connected, contested, and increasingly destabilised, there are also opportunities – for those who can prioritise actions and focus on building up the proper instruments to achieve goals. Hence the EU decision-makers should focus their attention in the first instance to: directions of actions, flexibility, leverage, coordination, and capabilities. Although the CFSP is criticised in the Global Strategy as being incapable, in its current shape, of influencing international relations in a relevant way, the authors of the document place special attention on the need for an integrated approach to the activities of the EU. Thus idea of a ‘comprehensive approach’, or now an ‘integrated approach’, calls for all the programmes, funds, actions, and projects of the EU agencies and the institutions to be better coordinated and – if possible – consolidated in order to achieve a greater impact in terms of their deployment in selected areas.<sup>21</sup> Although the Strategy does not offer precise details about such a reform, it can be understood that a document of an executive nature should follow.

The Global Strategy refers to migration several times in order to call attention to the global connectivity ‘with a surge in human mobility’.<sup>22</sup> Like the strategy on migration, this key security document treats migration more broadly than just with reference to the recent migration crisis. Nevertheless, it points out the most frequent causes of large migration flows: ‘Migration [...] is accelerating as a result of conflict, repression, economic disparity, demographic imbalances and climate change.’ The authors add: ‘Climate change and resource scarcity, coupled with demographic growth, contribute to international conflicts and are expected to do so even more in the future. Climate-induced floods, droughts, desertification and farmland destruction have triggered migration and conflict from Darfur to Mali,’ thus connecting elements of economic and political stability with the migration policy of the EU and its border

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<sup>21</sup> The term ‘comprehensive approach’ first appeared in the European Commission 2013 document “Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU’s comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises”, European Commission, 11.11.2013, JOIN[2013] 30 final, [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131211\\_03\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131211_03_en.pdf) (last visited 20.12.2016).

<sup>22</sup> “The European Union in a changing environment. A more connected, contested and complex world”, [https://eeas.europa.eu/docs/strategic\\_review/eu-strategic-review\\_strategic\\_review\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/docs/strategic_review/eu-strategic-review_strategic_review_en.pdf) (last visited 15.12.2016).

management. Further on the document explains that the strains related to migration, migration policy and border management are negatively influencing the political coherence of the EU and the solidarity of its societies. In order to prevent this, it is recommended that: 'Our diplomatic, economic, migration, asylum and security policies need to account for the deep connections between Europe's southern neighbours and their neighbours in the Gulf and sub-Saharan Africa in order to help put out the fires ravaging the region, from Libya to Syria, and Iraq to Yemen.' Although the Global Strategy does not explicitly call for a remodelling of the EU policies towards greater connectivity, it does strongly suggest it. As the challenges associated with migration mount, the EU is instructed to assign additional resources to better manage threats, to integrate the internal and external dimensions of migration management, and to 'tackle the root causes of the phenomenon in the long-term.' It is true that no precise guidelines are attached, but the abovementioned concept of a 'comprehensive approach' is recalled and it is recommended that this outlook, which was set up within the EU's CSDP ten years ago, should be now duplicated in all EU policies to create an EU model of responses to external challenges, making it possible to achieve synergy of both actions and their effects. This new EU way is called a 'joined-up approach' which means 'establishing closer links between enlargement, neighbourhood, migration, energy, CT and security and defence policies.' And so the Global Strategy enters into fields other than just its classic security domain and ventures to offer recommendations for the further development of the EU instruments, all with view toward strengthening its capacity to remain coherent internally while tackling external security challenges, including migration.

If the connection between border management, migration, and asylum policy and security issues is made, what then is the problem? The main trouble is that the provisions of Global Strategy are so far just wishful thinking (which is partly understandable since they were only published in mid-2016), while the challenges are real and pressing. Before a 'joined-up approach' is in operation, a vast amount of work is needed on a different level of decision-making.

As Global Strategy correctly states, the EU's priority should be to address the root causes of the crises, hence migration policy itself, asylum policy and border management are but signs of the real problem. Although European politicians and civil servants talk about the need for change, few actions follow, so that even though the EU currently has a handful of instruments (e.g. humanitarian aid, development assistance, Neighbourhood Policy, policy of enlargement, and an outline



for a CSDP), there are several key problems with their operation. The first is the lack of coordination of these resources that the EU already uses, as many programmes and activities run parallel and mechanisms for funds' and projects' introduction and implementation are detached from the reality in which these resources operate, rendering them effective only to a limited extent. The second problem is the need for a better coordination of policies and strategies, so that a network of strategies make up a comprehensive framework for actions. The third problem is that all the fragmented policies and strategies should be rooted in broader objectives and goals. The Global Strategy is a good starting point, and its focus on security should be – as it is – a priority. Most of the current challenges that the EU is striving to overcome are connected with the lack of political and economic stability in key regions in the world. What is happening is that the dangers from outside result in internal threats such as terrorism or mass migration, affecting the societies of the EU states, while their governments debate the Schengen area and often choose isolationism, even despite the clear economic logic of coping with dangers together and hence joining forces and splitting the costs. Hence the striving for common planning and actions aimed at stabilising both the Middle East and Africa seems the right choice. Except that here a structural problem arises, this time concerning the CSDP. It is very weakly institutionalised and the most important decisions in the major domains it covers remain with the governments of the member states. Two of the most crucial ones regard the use of military forces, and financing stabilisation operations. While the Global Strategy accurately points out the roots of the problems that need to be addressed (with conflicts and political and economic instability having a prime place on the list), the question remains whether the EU is prepared to tackle them. While its capacities are large (to name just a few of the most obvious ones: considerable and well trained border guard forces, police forces, antiterrorist strategies and scenarios, military forces, and high overall expenditures on defence and security combined with ample opportunities created by the EU and the fact that member States work through its institutions), nevertheless its instruments to tackle them, they are fragmented and do not work together or deliver a comprehensive strategy. While there is a will to link sectoral strategies to the security area, the security policy is amongst the least developed of all the joint ventures of the member states, and at present is not ready to carry the burden it could be expected to bear.

## 9. Closure

Since 2015 over a million migrants and asylum-seekers have crossed European Union borders and the flow has shown no signs of diminishing. This unprecedented movement of people has attracted two main responses. A core issue for both is the Schengen principle of open borders, and public opinion is split between those who believe that the sheer weight of numbers of would-be migrants requires the reintroduction of strictly-controlled frontiers, and those who demand a prompt and sympathetic response to the plight of refugees from war-torn countries. For the latter, including some influential members of the European community, the belief that open borders should be retained whatever the cost is regarded as a matter of principle and an essential foundation of the EU project. For others, including many in Britain, Denmark and the Netherlands, the burdens associated with the unplanned arrival of substantial numbers of refugees – many needing housing, medical care, schools, and welfare benefits – weigh more heavily than the benefits coming from open borders.<sup>23</sup>

The complexity of this debate and its internal paradoxes throw light on some deeply ingrained ideas which can be traced back to the traditions derived from the evolutionist and Malthusian approaches of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In many European countries net migration, which is running at well over hundreds of thousands a year, is simply not sustainable. In addition to that, there are also some additional, less immediately visible, concerns, growing in priority and significance. Among these is the risk that policies originally intended to reach out to help innocent people fleeing unendurable threats to their lives, families, and livelihoods, may also provide uncontrolled access to European countries for others with very different motives.

This is precisely the reason for the current heated debates. Although population growth in Europe is endangered by its decline in fertility and it may be offset by mass migration, unmanaged migration seems to be an even greater danger. We posit here that the roots of these negative feelings can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when population growth first came to be viewed as a threat to human continuity. The above-presented ideas of Malthus, reflected in influential works such as Paul Erlich's *The Population Bomb*, have been adamant in warning of a potential global catastrophe brought about by the sheer weight of human overload.

As Thomas Malthus noted two centuries ago, population size can be reduced as an unintended result of human actions. Malthus identified

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<sup>23</sup> B. Almond, *Border Anxiety: Culture, Identity and Belonging*, "Philosophy", Vol. 91/2016, <http://www.cambridge.org/core/terms> (last visited 16.11.2016).

three such unscheduled (and unwelcomed) developments: war, famine and disease. At the root of Malthus' thesis was the principle that population and territory must be kept in balance, and that if a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its land and resources, nature will intervene to restore the balance. While the forms the threats take may have changed, the Malthusian diagnosis remains disturbingly convincing, for humans still face these most ancient of enemies: war in new and more destructive forms; famine in the shape of shortages of the basic foods needed to sustain life; and sickness and premature death, as overused antibiotics lose their effectiveness and acquire increased resistance to modern medical science. Malthus's analysis reflected his time, but should not to be transferred so effortlessly into the modern world as it is visible in media news, with its gory visual evidence. Malthus did not write about migrants and did not connect poverty with violence. It was done by many later authors but it still continues to influence, albeit implicitly, our attitudes towards mass migration and the policies connected to these processes.

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