

Member States 'Perception of Threat' to Migration Crises as a Determinant Factor of Change in Cooperation: A Comparison between the Yugoslav Migration Crisis and the Syrian Refugees' Crisis

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Abstract : In 1997 the Schengen Convention was incorporated in the mainstream of EU law by the Amsterdam Treaty. It came into effect in 1999 with the abolition of internal border controls in the EU, a milestone in the European integration project. In the meantime, due to the Yugoslav wars, nearly 700,000 asylum applications were filed in the European countries provoking a major refugee crisis. During this period, the opening of Eastern Europe fostered more cooperation and policy-making at the EU level in migration issues. Currently, a similar migratory crisis is taking place in Europe. The Syrian war has caused the most massive influx of immigrants in Europe since World War II. Nevertheless, the EU is adopting different migration policies from those implemented during the Yugoslav migration crisis. The current crisis has not led to a common European position but national responses have been offered on migration policies and responsibility for border security and asylum-seekers. A lot of factors can explain this change from a cooperation scenario to a no cooperation one, such as the economic crisis, but this research is focused on the premise that 'threat perception' lies at the core of some states grand strategies towards migration and it also influences in multilateral or unilateral responses. Migration rests at the nexus of three dimensions of security, including geopolitical interests, material production, and internal security. According to some scholars, migration policy is an 'integral instrument' of state grand strategy in that context. Political integration at the EU might be altered with the emergence of existential threats. In other words, some areas of the European cooperation can be transformed when a 'critical juncture' occurs, for instance a migration crisis. In that instance, Member states could see migration as a matter of threat that modifies their national interests and willingness to embrace international cooperation. This research will focus on EU Member states' perceptions of the 90's migration crisis and the current one. The goal is to evaluate to what extent the perceptions of threat are one of the main factors for explaining the transition from a cooperation scenario to a no-cooperation one in European asylum and security policies. To analyze threat perception in both migration crisis, some relevant Member states are treated as cases of study and a comparative analysis is carried out based on public opinion polls, public and policy discourse in migration, voting practices and deconstruction of the migration policies themselves both at EU level and a national one.

Keywords : cooperation, migration crisis, national responses, threat perception

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