

Adrianna Czarnecka*

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1879-4924>

MIGRATION CRISIS IN 2013 AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE LACK OF POLITICAL COHESION OF EU COUNTRIES

ABSTRACT

The Arab Spring of Nations affected not only the Middle East countries. Frustrated citizens decided to flee their own country. Most started heading for Europe. Having done so, they did not expect any predicament while crossing a dangerous road. The migration crisis overwhelmed EU countries by exposing their lack of coherent foreign and asylum policies. Due to the lack of unity and crisis management procedures, the neighbouring states were exposed to great danger. The lack of a rapid joint decision led to the outbreak of one of the largest humanitarian crises. The following text aims to prove the thesis that the migration crisis was an example of the lack of a common EU policy towards the above-mentioned problem.

Keywords: Arab Spring of Nations, migration crisis, channels of migrations

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the work is to investigate the impact of the migration crisis on the policies of these countries through which, via the Balkan route, the illegal migration has been rolling. An unexpected wave of people fleeing conflict and war in Syria surprised the ruling European countries. They were forced to compromise the rights of migrants and national minorities to openness and aid. The closure of some borders led to chaos. People were forced to camp under tragic conditions without being sure of their fate. The situation of such countries as Hungary, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Germany and Turkey shall be forthwith analyzed (UNHCR, 2015). Difficult living conditions and disappointment with stagnation have pushed the people of

* Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland, e-mail: adrianna.czarnecka93@gmail.com

North Africa and the Middle East to escape their countries. After the announced Arab Spring of Nations and the fall of dictators in some countries, the situation became catastrophic. The lack of a decisive reaction of the international environment caused frustration. Looking at the situation, even in Syria, it was known that people would not be able to stay and live there. Europe seemed to them a „promised land”, a place where they could start life „from scratch”. Unfortunately, the escape route and related problems turned out to be very difficult.

This topic is important from the point of view of security of Europe. Chaos at the borders led to conflicts both between migrants themselves as well as between migrants and civilians in the areas concerned. The governments of the countries along the trail in their desperation have decided to use troops to stabilize the situation. Frustration led to the use of violent methods against migrants.

Problems related to the migration crisis have been analyzed in many respects. Many scientific and journalistic studies were created in which the anti-migration tendency prevailed. This topic was scrutinized from legal, sociological and political angles side (Council on Foreign Relations, 2015).

2. CAUSES AND COURSE OF THE MIGRATION CRISIS

The first waves of migration were already noticeable in 2011. Some people fleeing Tunisia were not only guided by poor living conditions and chaos but were also connected to the overthrown regime. Escape was the only chance for them to find a place where they could live. Everyone wanted to get into the European Union, which seemed like the fitting place. Tunisians were the first newcomers to reach Italy due to the a relatively short distance between Tunisia and Italy, being the destination here. It was a sea route. Not long or uncomfortable. In the first half of February 2011, on a small island between Tunisia and Malta, about 5,000 illegal immigrants were registered who chose pontoons as a means of transport (Reuters, 2011). After arriving ashore they were detained and placed in special centers. They kept coming on a daily basis. After some time, the island administration issued a statement that the situation had become critical. They were unable to cope with the huge wave of immigrants causing the crisis. The Italian government was forced to react. It was decided to establish special units to carry out humanitarian aid. Migration centers in Sicily were prepared to watch for which sort people get transported. It was at this point that the newcomers were obligated to undergo identification procedures. Some of the refugees did not have identity documents with them, which caused many problems for the Italian administration. The Italian Prime Minister appealed to the European Union for placing additional Frontex branches at the sea borders. It is an independent agency of the European Union established on the basis of the regulation of the EU Council of October 26, 2004 (Frontex, 2015). The Italian government has proposed to the Tunisian party that the latter should establish patrols designed to prevent Tunisian from illegally crossing the latter's border. This proposal was received negatively. The situation was still critical. The wave of illegal immigrants spread to other nations, and the Libyan citizens joined the Tunisians. Everyone came to the island of Lampedusa to create a large-scale crisis. Italy has applied to the EU for financial assistance. The solution to the situation required financial resources. At the end of March, the arrival of over 19,000 illegal immigrants was reported (BBC News, 2011). After a month, the number increased to 25,000. Such high numbers triggered a humanitarian crisis. Some immigrants were placed in

centers inside the country due to major difficulties in everyday life of the island's inhabitants. Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders published reports on the precarious situation of the residents of the Middle East. The Italian authorities were accused of not being interested in the fate of these people. It was claimed that they were placed in camps in which poor living and sanitary conditions prevail (Amnestyusa, 2011). Tunisia and Italy have begun negotiations to end the crisis. It was agreed that persons already residing in Italy would be allowed to stay for six months, but newcomers will be automatically deported to Tunisia. The agreement turned out to be problematic for other EU member states. 20,000 people with a temporary residence permit were allowed to move freely within the Schengen area. France has recorded the influx of the largest number of immigrants to this country. The French government did not hide its indignation. The authorities decided to take drastic measures. Persons with Italian licenses were refused entry and the possibility of staying in France. It was decided to restore temporary border controls to prevent the influx of immigrants.

Tunisia faced a challenge. The new government had to deal with the wave of those leaving, but also with the influx of immigrants from Libya. The country ruled by Kadaffi was overwhelmed by chaos during the Arab Spring of Nations. A civil war broke out between the dictator's opponents and his supporters. The civilian population sought for escape, heading for the Tunisian-Libyan border. The UNCHR office announced that the number reached around 50,000 illegal immigrants. On the border were expected returning citizens of Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. The number of people escaping grew daily. A humanitarian emergency condition has been announced. Help came from UNCHR in the form of a special program. People were placed in tents and provided with food and water. The President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, appealed to the international community for help. France, the United Kingdom and the United States have helped transport the Egyptians by sea and air to their native lands. However, a large part of them still remained at the border.

3. SITUATION OF THE STATES ALONG THE ROUTE – CHANGE OF MIGRATION POLICY

2014 was a breakthrough year for the migration policy of the European Union. The deteriorating situation in Syria, the humanitarian crisis and the collapse of the country have caused a crisis in Europe. Taught by experience, the citizens of the countries overwhelmed by chaos knew that the sea route might constitute their last resort. It was this year that an increased inflow of illegal immigrants to Greece was recorded. It all started on small tourist islets. In the Middle East, there were gangs that for large sums of money offered to the countries harrowed by conflicts in helping to help them escape to Europe. Men, women and children were placed in pontoons, having been thus set out on a hazardous journey. Unaware of the forthcoming dangers and due to the lack of preparation on the part of the people who would help them, their journeys oftentimes proved fatal. This year, the Central Mediterranean route was used to cross the border illegally. Following Turkey, they chose such islands as: Chios, Lesbos and Kos. Initially, the numbers of arrivals were acceptable, but over time some conflicts began to flare up.

Map 1. Immigrants channel



Source: owner public domestic in internet

People who managed to get to land did not know what steps they should take. Most often they did not know a foreign language that they could avail of to communicate. The Greeks had to face a new challenge (Nelly, 2015). Oftentimes, help was still “on water”. The means of transport of immigrants were in a bad technical condition, and the number of people traveling too large and therefore very often it came to a tragedy in waters belonging to Greece. It is widely known that this country makes a living from tourism. Immigrants camping in the streets of tourist cities discouraged Europeans from going on holiday there. It caused an increase in feelings of resentment and frustration on the part of the native inhabitants of the islands. The authorities were at a loss of how to deal with the situation. The decision was made to create provisional temporary camps for asylum seekers. However, they were in a very bad condition and did not allow to expect the applications to be recognized as valid. It was already at this moment that the upcoming problems were fully appreciated. The European Union understood that Greece was not a destination country for these people, but only the

beginning of a journey inside Europe. The growing nervous atmosphere caused many clashes of islanders with illegal immigrants disturbing peace and leading to chaos.

They have often complained about the thefts made by newcomers. Unfortunately, the lack of international reaction and lack of help forced these people to commit crimes, even from hunger. The next ships reached the Greek ports. The President of Greece, Prokopis Pavlopoulos, appealed to the leaders of the European Union to raise the issue of the crisis that the country was struggling with. This was an additional burden for this country due to the already ongoing economic crisis, which echoed among other EU member states. Leaving Greece with a new problem could have consequences all over Europe.

Immigrants noticing that in Greece they could not count on help decided to go to other European countries by choosing the so-called Balkan route through Serbia and Macedonia (Szpala, 2015). This road led to Austria, from which it was easy to get to Germany. The first country they reached was Turkey, which constitutes a link with Europe. When it turned out that the sea route was very dangerous and many people were killed, a wave of refugees chose a longer land route. From Turkey they reached Bulgaria (Krasimirov, 2015). The first wave reached this country in 2013. The Bulgarian government reacted very quickly and this autumn decided to put an additional 1000 officers on the border with Turkey. They were to prevent the illegal inflow of immigrants. At first, they decided to build permanent fences to ensure the country's security. A monitored wall has been set up. In 2014, additional kilometers were added due to the fact that immigrants found new routes that crossed the border. As expected, crime related to illegal smuggling of people has spread in Bulgaria. Criminal groups involved in drug trafficking spotted the opportunity to make extra profits. Bulgaria has prepared some centers in which these people could wait to have their asylum applications properly considered. Unfortunately, due to the poor financial situation, Bulgaria was unable to prepare and implement good integration programs. The lack of such a process caused tensions between citizens and refugees. The country and the government tried to prevent the influx of large waves of inhabitants of Africa and the Middle East. However, the frustration of these people was enormous and therefore they sought other methods of getting to Bulgaria. It was an instance of the proverbial tilting at windmills.

The next route was leading through Serbia and Macedonia to Hungary, from which it was easy to get to Austria. Macedonia is in a difficult situation, which was somehow triggered by the new policy pursued by Greece. In 2015, the Greeks stated that they are not able to cope with such a large number of immigrants in the country and that the following measures are to be taken: sending them back to Turkey, and secondly, acquiring new financial resources. Unofficially, they facilitated the movement of refugees across the Macedonian-Greek border. They did not carry out such a strong and intensified control as at the beginning of the crisis, which is why other countries were caught in an insuperable predicament. On August 20, 2015, Macedonia declared the state of emergency in the border areas. It was decided to close the border with Greece, and in order to normalize the situation, the army was sent to the area. The effect turned out to be the just the opposite. In the areas controlled by the army there occurred riots in which refugees were injured (OSW, 2015).

Map 2: The new channel of migrations



Source: Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich [Center for Eastern Studies], <https://www.osw.waw.pl>

Due to the pressure accusingly exerted by the humanitarian organizations on Macedonia for the latter apparently violating human rights, it was ultimately decided that the newcomers be admitted across the country's border.

Why was the situation of Serbia and Macedonia difficult to solve? In addition to Greece's changing policy, the challenge in Hungary was to amend the then binding asylum law. They spoke of the automatic return of illegal immigrants to so-called safe third countries, namely Serbia and Macedonia. Moreover, the Hungarian government decided to build a wall on the borders of these countries. Press reports on the change of Hungarian law reached also immigrants, who, fearing to be arrested in third countries, went to the border with Hungary en masse. In this situation, Macedonia was subjected to pressure from the European Union. It was demanded to provide assistance to people crossing the border illegally, and also focused on the control and protection of its borders. Macedonia decided to implement a new strategy for immigration activities and policies. It introduced changes in the internal asylum law. Migrants can apply for temporary protection, which would allow them to stay in this country for 72 hours. It had its positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, it allowed for better control of border areas and influx of people, and on the other hand it facilitated the flow of migrant people, thus making the Balkan route a more attractive way of escape.

The migration crisis in the Balkans got exacerbated. In 2015, Hungary decided to close the border with Serbia and build a fence. Its Prime Minister, Victor Orban, announced that the same steps will be taken at the borders with other neighboring through which illegal immigrants get to Hungary. The tightening of the asylum regulations also gave a positive effect and the number of people entering the country decreased. Why were such drastic measures taken? From the beginning of 2015, the Hungarian police detained 67,000 illegal immigrants. During the week, on average, approximately 1,000 immigrants came to Hungary.

The numbers are very high. In addition, the fear of neighboring countries and the loss of border controls did not allow Hungary's authorities to behave differently. The crisis incited a self-preservation instinct in many countries. Fearing their own destiny and the situation inside the countries, people were let out in the hope of solving their problem without taking heed of the general situation in Europe. It should also be clearly stated that immigrants or refugees were heading for Germany, in which they were promised help. Its chancellor, Angela Merkel, often "invited" them to her country by offering social benefits. At the beginning of September 2015, Hungary began the step of transporting refugees from its territory to Austria. This caused another humanitarian crisis because everyone waiting in the border areas or in the centers began to camp in the center of Budapest at the railway station. This caused a tension between those waiting for transport and the inhabitants of the city. Immigrants complained about the conditions in which they had to stay. The authorities of the country were not interested in their fate. The government did not come out with a humanitarian aid initiative such as providing food or drinking water. One can get the impression that the whole action was carried out on the principle of getting rid of the "problem" as quickly as possible. It should be noted, however, that whole families, also with small children, were waiting at railway stations. This action was criticized by EU member states, the head of French diplomacy called the actions of Hungary "scandalous" and said that "the country does not respect the value of the European Union" (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2015).

Germany was the only country that was positively influenced by migration since the beginning of the crisis. After the catastrophic situation in Hungary, Austria agreed to the policy adopted by its neighbors and opened its borders. Therefore, the immigrants had the opportunity to leave Budapest and go to Vienna and the surrounding area (Gaddes, 2016). After the talks between Austria and Hungary, besides the trains provided to the newcomers, there buses were supplied which transported people to the border with Austria. According to the findings, they had to cross the border on foot. The attitude of the inhabitants of this country was astonishing. It is because before that the refugees met with reluctance or indifference at best. This time, the arriving guests were greeted warmly at the stations and in designated places. Citizens themselves demonstrated their charitability by providing clothes, food and drinking water. A similar situation occurred in Germany, which decided to admit a large number of fugitives.

Two illegal routes operating since 2011 were supposed to be the way to a better life. They turned out to be a struggle for living under unenviable conditions. The situation that Europe had to face and must face is completely new. No one was ready for the influx of so many citizens from „third" countries and nobody foresaw the consequences. The Balkan route, although closed in 2016, is still chosen as one of the options to cross the border and get to the middle of Europe. The East Mediterranean route claimed many victims (UNHCR, 2016). The sea route is very dangerous because of the means of transport. The consequence of this was an increase in human trafficking. The European Union could not be indifferent to the situation within its borders. Lack of solidarity of the member states, relinquishing responsibility and lack of consistency forced the EU authorities to take legal steps. On 13 May 2015, the European Commission issued a communication on the „European agenda on migration". In addition to the general advice and tasks of migration policy, the idea of creating „hot-spots" appeared „under which the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Frontex and Europol will work in the field with first-line Member States to quickly identify and register

incoming migrants and getting fingerprints from them. The activities of individual agencies will complement each other.” A controversial idea was also created in March 2015. The European Union decided on a policy of distributing immigrants over its member states. 40,000 people waiting for asylum were subject to the said distribution, and the quotas were to be proportional to their respective GDPs and the number of their citizens (Frontex, 2015). The main reason for this was to relieve Greece and Italy, which took numbers that exceeded their capabilities. The implementation of the plan encountered many problems. A large number of the EU member states did not hide their indignation towards the numbers of immigrants imposed on them. Poland and Hungary were in favour of voluntary admission. In addition, Victor Orban called Hungary the specific numbers „madness”. The Baltic states, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria also criticized this idea (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

As could be expected, the representatives of German diplomacy expressed their positive opinion about the idea of relocation. They called for solidarity, which the other member states should aptly demonstrate. So far, this problem has not been solved, and the European Union is clueless about any possible solution to the crisis. In addition, refugees who are already in EU borders are struggling with asylum procedures and a low standard of living (Al Jazeera, 2016).

4. EU-TURKEY AGREEMENT – THE OUTBREAK OF HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

One of the ideas to solve the migration crisis was to reduce to signing the agreement between the European Union and Turkey. The largest wave of immigrants chose their escape route via Turkey. They wondered how to stop this process. This situation was also decided by the Turkish government. The agreement involved sending people who reached Greece back to Turkey as well as giving the government, at the first stage of talks, EUR 3 billion to help Syrians living in the country. In exchange for signing the agreement, they promised to speed up the accession process to the European Union, as well as to abolish visas for Turkish citizens. The prepared document was criticized by the member states’ politicians. One cannot help admitting that it was the Union that negotiated conditions having a relatively weaker bargaining power. The government in Ankara was the only real idea to stop the influx of a new wave of refugees from countries plunged into chaos. The government led by Erdogan took advantage of the moment to do business. Admittedly, the agreement brought desirable effects because, since it took into effect, the flow of immigrants to the Greek islands has been almost completely stopped. At the beginning of 2017, however, the impatience of Turkish diplomacy was clearly noticeable. Despite the assurances of financial aid, the Turkish side did not receive any money. In addition, the visa waiver process is very slow. The Prime Minister, Binali Yildirim, accused the EU of failing to deliver its promise since he was quoted as saying: “Europe accepted only 1000 Syrians, while it should have received 100,000. We were promised 3 billion euros, but we do not hear anything about this money. In the same vein as we cannot hear about the visa exemption. “The EU fears the introduction of a visa-free regime and a coup d’état failed in July 2016. This gave the authorities a reason and opportunity for abuse. The EU thus embarked on these circumstances and took advantage of them to submit a reason for the said delayed delivery of its promises. Turkey’s impatience, however, is growing and we are

increasingly hearing about the possibility of suspending or terminating the agreement at the will of the government in Ankara, which could lead to the flooding of EU countries with immigrants currently in Turkey (the Australian, 2016).

The entire agreement was negatively assessed by organizations dealing with humanitarian aid. They stated that it violates international law stating that the applicant for refugee status cannot be deported. International law clearly emphasizes the need to protect such people in the event of a threat to their life and health. UNHCR, after the announcement of the contract, withdrew from its actions, arguing there was no consent to take the steps. It was also reported that the situation in the camps on the Greek islands deteriorated dramatically. It was said that they turned into forced arrests. It was feared that the immigrants would run away due to the fact of deportation. The refugees did not hide their indignation. Many a time they risked their lives to get to Europe, and now they were to be sent away. They emphasized that the trip cost their property, they left their families and everything they had for the chance of reaching EU countries. The citizens of Turkey did not hide their dissatisfaction either. Some of them did not agree with the migration policy of their country. As you know, there are still a lot of ethnic minorities in Turkey (*European Commission, 2016*).

Amnesty International expressed concerns about this situation. It accused the Turkish government of sending immigrants back to Syria, a country harassed by civil war. "Among them are women and children. The AI report says, for example, about a woman in the eighth month of pregnancy and three young children without parental care". In addition, UNHCR has declared itself as an institution that will monitor the fate of those sent back. They want to be sure that they have dignified living conditions in Turkey and, most importantly, they are not sent back to the failed state (Amnesty International, 2016).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing the information, I can say that the migration crisis that followed the „Arab Spring of Nations” is not finished, although some countries have attempted to implement recovery plans. Syria is an example of a state overwhelmed by civil war. In Tunisia and Egypt, the plan for the future is to stabilize the political arena and fight terrorism. Both countries must work on rebuilding international trust as well as on the development of their respective economies. Syria is dependent on external entities. We have here an example of a humanitarian crisis that the world must deal with. The best scenario would be to end the internal conflict and rebuild the country. However, this does not seem to be realistic in the foreseeable future.

The failure to prepare management processes for such a large crisis precipitated the changes in the law of European countries. It can easily be said that the reaction of European states and international organizations was incoherent and inefficient. It showed the lack of conformity with the constitution, or with the norms of the protection of the EU borders as well as of individual members. An appropriate policy from the beginning of the crisis would allow to control the border situation, would allow to avoid a humanitarian crisis but, above all, would allow for the security of citizens and migrants.

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