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(Article begins on next page)

How Does the European Union Talk about Migrant Women and Religion? A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Agenda on Migration of the European Union and the Case Study of Nigerian Women

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Abstract: Women with different identity and migration origins represent one of the most significant groups in the migration flows of the Mediterranean in recent years and the intersection of their religious identity and gender has been often neglected in migration policies. The paper applies the method of Critical Frame Analysis (CFA) to analyze the ways in which European policy documents address the intersection between gender and religious diversity. Through the CFA, the article examines the European Agenda on Migration and the priorities identified in the text. The analysis of the document is based on recent case studies of trafficked Nigerian women, which provide examples of the dangerous invisibility of ethnic and religious women in the priorities highlighted in the policy document of the European Commission. The CFA results show that the European Agenda on Migration, in responding to the increased number of arriving migrants from Africa and in designing a new approach towards mixed migration flows, lacks any reference to the gender perspective of migration and gender mainstreaming is missing from the text. The neutrality of the document and the securitization frame applied does not take into perspective the importance of recognizing a gender and intersectional dimension of migration flows, which impacts primarily women coming from African countries beholding strong religious beliefs.

Keywords: Public policy on Migration; Nigerian Women; Juju; Critical Frame Analysis; Migration Agenda; Gender; Intersectionality; African Traditional Religions

1. Introduction

The scope of this paper is to examine whether the discourses advanced by the institutions of the European Union reflect an interest in the intersectional dimension of migrant women's condition due to their belonging to multiple levels of discrimination, namely: gender, ethnicity, and religion. Migrant women are an interesting research subject when it comes to intersectionality, as their condition intertwines various kinds of constructed narratives and unequal power relations.

The European Agenda on Migration presented on 13 May 2015 by the European Commission is a political document devoted to improve the situation in the Mediterranean and its severe and tragic

implications. The response of the European Commission to the "refugee crisis" started with the publication of the European Agenda on Migration on 13 May 2015. In other words, this document provides a blueprint to address the situation by outlining an overview of the various feasible measures. For the first time, the EU Commission supported some structural reforms on the Agenda that involve a large spectrum of measures, based on different aims. It is important to note that this situation, which is already a humanitarian disaster of extreme proportions, clearly demonstrates political inability to agree on a coordinated global—or at the very least European—response. Considering that many countries of the EU today are entering directly into contact with a humanitarian crisis instead of a conventional migratory phenomenon, the general political discourse contained in the EU Agenda on Migration based on a securitarian approach portrays migrations as a burden or as a threat rather than one of the major challenges of the globalized world in which we live, from the perspective of human rights (Goeman 2012). It is clear that Europe needs a balanced and geographically comprehensive approach to migration, but the solution proposed in the EU Agenda on Migration should be oriented towards all human and political dimensions for a comprehensive and systemic approach.

Furthermore, the EU's approach to migration seems to not be taking into account an important perspective of analysis, which is the gender perspective. As this paper will later show with the Critical Frame Analysis (CFA) of the European Agenda on Migration of 2015, gender references and the issue of intersectionality are almost completely absent from the policy text and this may put migrant women in a position of invisibility. The case of Nigerian women forced towards prostitution by voodoo practices and rituals is a clear example of this invisibility and it will be examined in this paper as a case study to support our argument regarding the need to use a gender perspective when drafting migration policies such as the Agenda.

There is copious existing literature focusing on the importance of analyzing migration's push and pull factors from a gender perspective (Pfeiffer et al. 2008; De Silva de Alwis 2014; Baudassé and Bazillier 2014; Staiano 2016; Labadie-Jackson 2008; Lyon 2006; Haider 2008; Facchi 1998; Agustin 2007; Zimmerman et al. 2006; Palriwala and Uberoi 2008; Satterthwaite 2004). This paper will briefly address some of this literature before moving on to discuss the issue of policy making in the field of migration. Women comprise approximately half of the migrating population of the world (Zlotnick 2003) and scholars have, for years now, addressed the increased "feminization" of migration (Chant and Radcliffe 1992; Bakewell et al. 2009). According to the United Nations Population Division (UNPD), an estimate of the percentage of women in migration flows is 49% of all international migration. The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development presented by the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session shows that women seem to migrate often as dependents of other migrants and in order to reunite with family members who have themselves migrated (Martin 2004; Ghosh 2009; National Sample Survey Organisation 2005; National Sample Survey Office 2010). In other scenarios, women migrate to marry in other countries, as mail order brides (Bakewell et al. 2009; Wang and Chang 2002) or as prime wage earners of their families, sending money back to their relatives in the country of origin. In most cases, migrant women move voluntarily but there are various occasions in which women are forced to migrate due to different pushing causes, such as trafficking, smuggling, war, environmental disasters, persecution, and other phenomena affecting their safety (Ferrant and Tuccio 2015). It is, therefore, important to understand the causes and consequences of migration flows from a gender perspective (Petrozziello 2011)as the experiences lived by men and women on the move are shaped by power relations and, therefore, may be significantly different. Until recently, the gender perspective was almost completely ignored in the analysis of migration flows, but there is an undeniable need to understand whether gender disparities are a cause of migration flows or are reinforced by migratory processes.

The gender dimension of the decision-making process behind migration can be extremely influential. In many parts of the world, where patriarchy still plays a big role in family decisions, migration can be a consequence of power relations that are not controlled by women. Women and girls still have very little agency and voice over the decision to migrate. In many cases religion, as well as status, traditions, and culture, play a big role on the decision to migrate and women are not

in charge of such decisions. However, more recently there has been a change in the migration dynamic and women seem to be more likely in charge of the migration process rather than dependent on someone else. Women are, therefore, more involved in sending remittances and supporting their families from abroad, which in turn is altering social and familial dynamics and decision-making.

When looking at the drivers for migration of women, scholars noticed that social class is one of the causes and poorer women are more likely to migrate, while women owning a land, a home, or a business are less likely to get on the move (Donato 1993; Cerrutti and Massey 2001; Kanaiaupuni 2000; Richter and Taylor 2008). Women from poorer countries are more likely to be sent by their household to migrate from rural areas to the cities to support the family (Lauby and Stark 1988; Curran and Saguy 2001). Women from poorer backgrounds in Bangladesh, for instance, are more likely to end up in domestic or care work, as well as garnet workers, which leads to higher levels of poverty for migrant women (Afsar 2011).

Employment and education, on the other hand, are also drivers for female migration. Women with a high education level or better expectation of employment are more likely to actively put themselves on the move (Heering et al. 2004; Kanaiaupuni 2000; Richter and Taylor 2008). However, women remain more likely to migrate to help their families rather than themselves, according to Chant and Radcliffe's research (1992). This is due to the importance played by remittances to families in poor countries (Knodel et al. 2000; De Jong 2000; Curran and Saguy 2001).

Furthermore, women may migrate for reasons related to gender-based inequalities and discrimination in their country of origin. Women may migrate to escape forced marriage for instance (Lam and Hoang 2010; IOM 2012; IOM 2014; Erulkar et al. 2006). Just like the case of forced marriage, other forms of discrimination bring women to the move, such as female genitalia mutilation (FGM), child marriage, gender stigmas, and gender-biased violence (Ferrant and Tuccio 2015; Jolly and Reeves 2005).

The reasons for women to move are various and largely highlighted by scholars, but female migration is unfortunately still largely forced migration and in the case of current mixed migration flows the process of migrating may start as voluntary but bring women into a condition of trafficking later in their journey. The case of Nigerian women forced into prostitution and smuggled with the use of religious indoctrinations, such as that of Voodoo practices, is one of the most compelling ones in modern mixed migration flows and shows the need to implement a strong gender perspective when drafting migration policies such as the European Agenda on Migration (Della Rocca 2018; Be Free 2016; GRETA 2016; IOM 2016; IOM 2017).

Scholars have recently started to direct their attention to the framing of gender issues in different policy fields at the European Union level. [1] With a particular interest on the question of intersectionality and the way in which it is narrated or omitted from political discourses and documents, researchers in the field of gender equality and women's rights have looked at how the intersection of gender and ethnicity, or gender and religion, is framed and institutionalized in the gender equality architecture of the EU (Agustín 2013; Agustin and Siim 2016; Lombardo 2013; Lombardo and Del Giorgio 2013; Lombardo and Forest 2015; Lombardo et al. 2009, 2017; Lombardo and Rolandsen Agustín 2016; Van der Haar and Verloo 2013). Issuing and becoming in a space feminism(s), social movement and academy intersectionality provides and represents not only an analytical tool but also a political project to underline and amplify discriminations within a social justice orientation (Mügge et al. 2018). More recently, much attention is given by scholars to the way in which intersecting inequalities become an issue for public policies too. However, very little research has been conducted on the way in which gender is problematized in policy documents which are not specifically addressing gender equality such as, in this case, the European Agenda on Migration.

Current research projects and scholars have focused on policy documents which fall under the category of gender equality documents and which, by definition, include a gender perspective in their discourse. European policy documents addressing directly migration flows and the integration

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[1]   For instance, see the recent work of scholars like Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier, Mieke Verloo, Maria Bustelo, and Lise Rolandsen Agustin.

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of Third Country Nationals (TNC) are less likely to be gendered and to make clear references to religious or ethnic identity. This shows not only a de-gendering in the EU political actions and a lack of implementation of gender mainstreaming, but also very little understanding of the intersectional dimension of discrimination and challenges faced by women with strong religious beliefs in migratory processes. This paper will begin by providing an overview of some of the most critical issues scholars have noticed in the evolution of the gender equality architecture of the European Union, especially in the aftermath of the most recent economic crisis and the relocation of gender equality to soft law measures as well as the impact of austerity on the financial resources previously allocated to women's rights in different policy areas. In a second phase, the paper will discuss the current European Agenda on Migration from a gender perspective. Through the methodology of Critical Frame Analysis (CFA), which will be briefly explained later, the paper will look at the discourses and frames applied by the Commission in the writing of the Agenda and the omission of references to the critical condition in which migrant women travel across borders, as well as the various challenges faced at different stages of their journey. Furthermore, the Analysis will look at the way religious identity is omitted or barely mentioned in the policy, considering its intersection with other dimensions of discrimination as well. To conclude, the paper will discuss the results of the CFA in reference to the recent case studies of Nigerian women trafficked for prostitution through the use of Juju practices, typical of African Traditional Religions (ATR). This link is made in order to show one of the many possible cases in which an intersectional approach to migration regulation could shed light on a very invisible and often ignored issue which targets primarily women at the intersection between gender, class, religion, and ethnicity.

2. A Little about the Issues with the Gender Equality Architecture of the EU Today

Before looking at the Migration Agenda of the European Union from an intersectional perspective between gender and religion, it is important to discuss the gender regime of the European Union and the transformation it has undergone in the last decade.

According to Jacquot (2015), the EU gender regime changed three times since its appearance in the European Union agenda. The initial model has been described as the "exceptional model", a structure of gender equality which progressed into an "anti-discrimination regime" with time. The final step of transformation is the "rights model".

The period which saw the passage from the "anti-discrimination model" to the "right model" is the phase subsequent to the Lisbon Treaty in 2007 and it coincides with the period of the financial crises. During this phase, the three pillars of the gender equality architecture, equal treatment, gender mainstreaming, and equal opportunity started to be put into question by the budgetary cuts, which primarily hit tools to implement gender mainstreaming and coordination between different institutions. Gender equality architecture was therefore forced to rely more on legal instruments. The crises and the austerity approach that came with it touched gender equality at its core in the European Union. Not only secondary law measures which targeted women's rights started to be questioned and blocked more and more due to the austerity in place, but budgetary resources which were allocated to gender equality policies reduced drastically in the period going from 2007 to 2013.

The change to the so-called "rights approach", corresponding to the latest model described by Jacquot (2015) in the three steps which characterized the evolution of the gender equality architecture of the EU, led to an alleged "dismantling" of the gender equality pillars (positive action, gender mainstreaming, and anti-discrimination) in favor of mere dialectic human rights proclamation (Bauer and Knill 2012). The first recognition of the need to advance equality between women and men came with the Treaty of Rome in 1957, where equality in the area of employment was officially legalized. In the 1980s and 1990s, EU soft law instruments began to introduce positive action (Hoskyn 1996; Kantola 2010; Lombardo 2003; Stratigaki 2005)**,** while from the 1990s onwards, gender mainstreaming became the prime tool to enhance gender equality in all policy fields, bringing equality between men and women outside the predominant narrative of gender equality in the labor market (Squires 2007). Gender equality, however, continued to be primarily segregated in the realm of productivity and economic competitiveness (Rees 2006). The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, through article 13, is officially

the first legal document to prohibit discrimination on multiple grounds, namely sex, racial, or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation (Agustin and Siim 2016). This was the first time the EU law addressed plural grounds of discrimination, opening up the debate regarding intersectionality and the ways in which it differs from the approach of multiple discrimination.

The Gender equality structure of the EU therefore follows a three-dimensional approach in which policies of hard law, especially addressing anti-discrimination in the realm of human rights, are accompanied by soft law measures to prompt positive action and gender mainstreaming. In the aftermath of the financial crises, however, positive action and gender mainstreaming started to lose their strength and financial support, in favor of mere anti-discrimination policies.

Furthermore, the European Union has privileged a multi-discrimination approach and therefore has instituted different equality bodies for different grounds of inequalities. These bodies tend to have a mixed record in addressing intersectionality and still remain incapable of efficient collaboration. In addition, the European Commission established a series of civil society organizations meant to address and monitor the EU policies on various inequality grounds. These agencies, as well, remain focused on separate grounds even if in recent years we have seen a growth in civil society organizations addressing intersectional cases of discrimination.

To continue, scholars have noticed a pattern of budgetary reduction for gender equality aims in the European Union machinery since the most recent economic crises. First of all, while both the Council of Europe and the European Commission have drafted soft law documents aimed at enhancing equality between men and women, these documents lack real objectives and funding programs. The Council's second "European pact for equality between men and women" has been envisioned for the period 2011–2020. The "Women's Charter" of 2010, the "Roadmap for Equality between Men and Women (2006–2010)", the "Strategy for equality between women and men (2010–2015)", and the "Strategic engagement for gender equality (2016–2019)", on the other hand, are all Commission documents which, due to their detachment from any funding program, can be considered rhetorical only (Jacquot 2015). In the financial plan for 2014–2020, the EU underlines the need for "simplification and rationalization" through the creation of a single program encompassing several programs, such as the famous DAPHNE and the "gender equality" section of the PROGRESS program. This scenario of budget reduction and reshaping of existing funding programs pushes civil society organizations representing different inequality grounds to high- level competition in order to gain funding to support their initiatives. Now that gender equality has blended into the agenda of human rights and has been mixed with various other inequality grounds, in addition to the decrease of resources and financing programs, gender issues are struggling more and more to gain access to funds and resources at the EU level.

In this context of financial reduction and institutional changes, scholars have noticed a process of de-gendering and deregulation of the equality machinery in Europe. Gender issues were almost ignored in the drafting of Europe 2020, despite a few mentions regarding women in the labor market and women in poverty. Even the target for the employment rate does not provide gender desegregated data but only aims at achieving a 75% rate of employment of people between 20 and 64 years of age. We can therefore assume that gender issues are ignored both in the evaluation of member states policies and in the EU policies recommendations.

Furthermore, it is a clear pattern of the European Union to de-gender issues strictly related to women's human rights by integrating the directives which address these issues under different frames, such as a criminality frame or one of healthcare. Two examples are the issue of human trafficking and victims' protection, addressed under Directives 2011/36/EU and 2012/29/EU (the first one on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims and the second on establishing minimum standards on the rights, support, and protection of victims of crime, including victims of intimate violence), which are both framed under a criminal prevention discourse and illegal immigration discourse rather than a gender and women's rights frame (Askola 2007; Goodey 2003). As this paper will later discuss, this narrative and framing of the trafficking issue is similarly addressed in the Agenda on Migration and through a total de-gendering of the problem women's condition is omitted from the discussion.

3. Methodology

This paper follows the methodology of Critical Frame Analysis or CFA. It is necessary, therefore, to explain the methodological choice regarding the use of Frame Analysis (Goffman 1974), specifically Critical Frame Analysis (Rein and Schön 1996), as a policy analysis approach.

Within the field of discourse analysis, there are multiple methods and theories which, despite their ontological differences, belong to the realm of social constructionism as the analysis of discourse is based on the belief that truth is relative, knowledge is historically and culturally variable and is created through social interactions, and based on our constructed understanding of reality, certain social actions become acceptable while others will not. Scholars have recently applied the methodology of discursive analysis in policy studies (Bacchi 1999; Ferree 2003; Fischer 2003; Hajer et al. 2003; Lombardo et al. 2009; Verloo and Lombardo 2007).

The term "Critical" in Critical Frame Analysis indicates the desire to be politically committed to social change by highlighting the attempts of social actors to preserve unequal power relations through symbols hidden in the narratives, frames, and language artefacts used in their discursive practices. This method of discourse analysis has been increasingly applied to the analysis of public policies and political discourse due to its critical nature.

In the book "The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality" edited by Lombardo et al. (2009), gender equality policies and feminist narratives are deconstructed in order to highlight hegemonic narratives preserving unequal power relations. Lombardo states that, through the social constructionist perspective adopted by those aiming to unpack the discourse in a policy document, every discourse becomes just one among many reflections of reality. The discursive approach to policy analysis, both for feminist and non-feminist agendas, is, therefore, suited to expose the ways in which power moves through discourses and to contest hegemonic narratives aiming at preserving the constructed understanding of a certain issue. Discursive processes shape each step of policy formation from its conceptualization to its implementation and then evaluation and should, therefore, be a fundamental part of policy analysis, especially when it comes to policy design evaluation rather than evaluation of results or implementation. As discussed in the section of the QUING Project Report on the chosen methodology (Dombos et al. 2009), the assumptions taken before the application of CFA as a methodological tool are the following: The frames available to actors at the meso and micro level are "characteristic of the environment in which they operate", but can then be used intentionally to achieve a certain purpose, technically called "strategic framing". Therefore, at a macro level we can find discourses that are soaked in "deep cultural meanings" (Bacchi 1999), but these understandings of reality based on values and cultural norms at a societal level are then used at the meso and micro level as part of the "discursive opportunity structure" (Ferree et al. 2002) in order to achieve a certain goal. Based on these assumptions, the methodology of CFA most applied in the field of gender studies works on three levels of frame analysis. First, there is the analysis of specific issue frames, the frames through which actors discuss specific policy issues and through which they conduct both a diagnosis and prognosis of a certain problem. Secondly, CFA analyses the document frames, or better the "assemblage" or frames brought forward by specific actors in the complex and conflictual process of policy making. Document frames may overlap with specific issue frames or may present sections of different issue frames simultaneously. Lastly, the analysis looks at the meta-frames, or better encompassing frames that portray the larger understanding of reality though which all policy issues may be understood, and, therefore, represent the normative aspect of frames.

Having addressed the theoretical foundations of the methodology used in this article, we can now explain in practice the ways in which this methodological tool was applied in the research to analyze the EU Agenda on Migration. In order to analyze the document, we constructed a list of sensitizing questions from which we derived a series of subtexts used for coding, through both an open-coding (data-driven) method and closed coding (concept-driven) (Gibbs 2008), the relevant sentences the policy document. In order to analyze in systematic mode the different documents through the method of open coding we used syntactic coding which, according Franzosi (1989), is a coding method that allows researchers to code entire statements within a number of smaller codes

through a matrix called story grammar. Secondly, the codes collected need to be classified into hierarchies of codes. The documents may, for instance, indicate as target groups "women", "girls", "migrant women", and so on. By creating a hierarchy of codes, we can deduct the more general code that can be applied for all documents and some codes may belong to different higher categories, as for the case of migrant women which belong to both "gender" and "ethnicity". After having standardized the codes of the various documents, we applied the creation of frames from the codes we derived from the texts. Working with different policy issues, a typical case for integration policy documents that often touch on a different number of policy fields from education to health and so on, we needed to identify the issue frames applied to each issue. After having deducted the specific issue frames and the document frames, we categorized them within pre-existing meta-frames identified in existing literature, both to discuss the issue of migration/integration and to frame gender equality.

The analysis proposed here will deconstruct the narrative used in regard to the issue of migration, in order to expose the different frames applied to the matter and the hierarchy in which they are ordered, and the way in which the intersection between the various diversity grounds, in the specific gender, ethnicity, and religious identity, are addressed. These questions are necessary in order to understand the political context and constructed narrative referring to migrant women in the migration discourse (Kofman et al. 2015).

4. Results of the CFA of the Agenda on Migration

4.1. The Agenda

As a response to the refugee crisis, the EU adopted the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015.[2] Following criticism for not receiving an equal volume of migrants compared to the pressure of thousands of people being displaced, the EU established the Agenda to formulate and improve a common European migration policy combining internal and external policies (COM 2015). The European Agenda on Migration, which represents the most recent and consolidated attempt to build a coherent and comprehensive approach able to address the challenges and the advantages deriving from migration, is a roadmap for all following communitarian migration polices.

Therefore, this paper analyzed this document due to its symbolic and material impact dedicated to managing mixed migration flows in this current phase of crises.

The Agenda was presented by the European Commission in May 2015 and it defines a global approach to the management of the migration flows. This new approach is based on four main pillars; the reduction of incentives for irregular migration, the saving of men, women, and children in the sea, and the securitization of the external frontiers, a common asylum policy and a new migration policy. The Agenda's aim is to provide Member States with tools to manage migration in the medium and long term (European Commission 2015) and does not set the right as a priority. Too much focus is placed on combating networks of smugglers and working with third countries to contain immigration rather than to consider human rights implications linked to mixed migration flows. The Agenda embraces short-term priorities. To sum, the Agenda identifies six areas for immediate action:

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[2] The EU Agenda on Migration of 2015 and the Valletta Summit of the same year indicate a radical change in the EU politics on the matter. More specifically, the Agenda, which is considered a political manifesto to control migration in cooperation with Third Countries, has a strong securitarian approach to the management of external borders. It focuses in fact on discouraging irregular migration, which became an important component of the common political missions of security and defense.

Together with the Agenda, the Rome Declaration 2015–2017 (Rabat Process) started a new policy of border control which identified the fight against irregular migration as one of the four main priorities.

Still in 2015, the European Trust Fund of the EU Commission follows two main objectives: on one hand, the traditional help towards development and, on the other, the managing of the migration flows, security, and border control.

In September 2017, with a mid-term review of the Agenda (COM (2017) 669 final of 15.11.2017), the Commission made an overall assessment of the progress made in responding to the crisis and in rolling out the actions foreseen by the Agenda (COM (2017) 558 final of 27.9.2017).

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(1) Saving lives at sea, (2) Targeting criminal smuggling networks, (3) Relocation, (4) Resettlement, (5) Partnerships with third countries, and (6) Hotspots to help frontline states, such as Greece, Italy, Hungary (COM 2015). In the medium and long term, the Agenda outlines four pillars to "manage migration better": (1) 'Reducing the incentives for irregular migration', by addressing root causes, fighting smugglers and traffickers, and by addressing return; (2) 'Border management, saving lives and securing external borders'; (3) 'Europe's duty to protect: a strong common asylum policy', by ensuring a coherent implementation and reforming Dublin; and (4) 'A new policy on legal migration' (COM 2015). Some of the immediate actions taken were increasing funding of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and creating so-called hotspots in Greece and Italy, centers where migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees were registered and their applications for international protection are processed. When the Commission proposed the Agenda, many Member States reacted to it at first with caution. The Agenda presents without a doubt a basis of different kinds of actions: proposals for border control, asylum regime, legal migration, irregular migration, and integration (Vimont 2016). However, migration is framed as a phenomenon that needs to be controlled, indicating a negative perception of these flows of migrants, while the EU is represented with an active role in changing the effects of the course of the refugee crisis.

Despite the fact that the Agenda focuses also on relocation of asylum seekers, some of the EU Member States have refused acceptance. Furthermore, several countries in the Balkans and East Europe reacted to the refugee crisis with severe measures, by building fences to stop asylum seekers from entering their territory, hence forcing people to find new routes to enter Europe and increasing pressure in Greece, Italy, and Spain. This has led to significant tension between the European countries on how to handle the consistent number of arrivals.

4.2. The Critical Frame Analysis

The Critical Frame Analysis conducted on the document deducted a strong securitarian frame and narrative throughout the text, with a few references to humanitarian frames. As Goeman (2012) shows, the EU often talks about migration and integration of Third Country National with a mix of three large meta-frames, namely the Securitarian meta-frame, which portrays migration as an issue which threatens the security of the EU borders, a Humanitarian frame, through which the EU is more likely to problematize migration as a historic and unstoppable phenomenon which should be managed in the best of ways in order to preserve migrants' human rights and dignity, and finally an Economic meta-frame, which problematizes migration as an economic opportunity to increase the capital and productivity of EU member states. No one of the actions/aims considered in the document makes any reference to the existence of a gender-specific dimension or to women, in particular, conditions of vulnerability and/or specificity. Through the Critical Frame Analysis and the sensitizing questions used to analyze the document, we noticed that women were not mentioned in the document as a whole, not even in sections discussing "vulnerable categories" (such as children, which were on the other hand mentioned), nor in sections addressing smuggling and trafficking. We expected women to be at least mentioned in linkage with care, domestic violence, sexual violence, health, and human trafficking with a particular emphasis on sexual exploitation (Walby et al. 2016), as these are usually the main policy fields the EU is likely to present from a gender perspective, as other scholars have previously noticed (Agustín 2013; Lombardo and Rolandsen Agustín 2016). However, mentions of migrant women are completely missing from the text as a whole, which makes it impossible to speak about a "gender perspective" of the policy document, forcing us to determine that this document is primarily gender neutral and lacking gender mainstreaming. The whole document and the subtended discourse are written with a (false) neutral approach that implicitly denies the commitment of the EU institution to decline public policy following a gender mainstreaming approach, coherently with a process of de-gendering of equality public policies in these last years. Moreover, this false neutrality does not recognize the role, the quantitative relevance, and the differences among the national groups played by women in these flows.

To continue, the Agenda omits any reference to the religious identity of migrants, including the intersection between religion and gender. This lack of interest in the religiosity of migrants seems to

be in opposition to the securitarian frame, as one would expect policy makers with a strong securitarian frame of thought to discuss the issues and threats brought by new religious beliefs imported through mixed migration flows. The omission of an intersectional approach to different diversity grounds, especially gender and religious identity, poses women of certain religious beliefs in great danger and in a status of invisibility. This passage will be later demonstrated through the example of the many trafficked Nigerian women who have been forced into prostitution with the use of religious oaths and Voodoo rituals.

4.3. Problematizing the Results in the Context of Current Mixed Migration Flows

The lack of attention on women's specificity in the EU Agenda on Migration clearly demonstrates the absence at this stage of a real commitment to integrating gender perspective in policies managing a phenomenon, that of the most recent immigration flows, strongly characterized by a significant numerical presence of women of different origins and profiles. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)data, the number of people who arrived by sea in Europe were 1,015,078 in 2015, 362,753 in 2016, and 172,301 in 2017. It is evident that the mixed migration flows expose refugee and migrant women and girls on the move in Europe to grave risks of sexual and, more in general, gender-based violence, also in the forms of forced marriage, and to severe forms of exploitation. The UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) in a joint report (UNCHR et al. 2016) give evidence to the political need of prioritizing the mainstreaming and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence into all humanitarian activities across the Mediterranean and western Balkan routes, recognizing that the capacity to prevent, identify, and respond adequately depends largely on individual states and European Union (EU) agencies assuming responsibility and taking appropriate actions. Despite the stresses given by numerous intergovernmental agencies together with several recommendations and the dramatic situations that women tell once they arrive in the destination or first arrival countries, the silence of the EU Commission's Agenda on gender implications of this humanitarian crisis raises clear questions about the concrete and real penetration in the political arenas of the perspective of intersectionality in issuing and framing the different circumstances in which the discriminations and violations of human women's human rights are reproduced.

The absence of reference to women's condition in migration processes in the EU Agenda is particularly arduous for the very common and recognized situation of violation of human rights they experience in relation to the widespread reality of sexual violence and the phenomenon of human trafficking. According to the International Office of Migration (IOM), the first six months of 2017 confirm the concerning trend of 2014–2016—a sharp estimated increase of 600% in the number of potential victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation arriving in Italy through the Central Mediterranean route. Nigeria remains the main non-EU country of origin, and the IOM estimates that around 80% of the 11,009 Nigerian women and girls who arrived in Italy in 2016 were victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

EU statistical data available on human trafficking does not capture the full prevalence of the phenomenon. However, it does indicate clear trends and tendencies, and these are consistent with data from international organizations and other bodies. According to the EU's First Report in 2016 on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (THB) (COM 2016), 15,846 victims of THB were registered between 2013 and 2014, with two-thirds being EU citizens, but considering the complexity of the phenomenon, there are solid grounds to believe that the actual numbers of victims of trafficking in the EU are substantially higher. Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, in particular for forced prostitution, is still by far the most highly reported form of trafficking in the EU (67% of registered victims), with 95% of the victims being women and girls. This is followed by trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation (21%) and trafficking for other forms of exploitation (12%), including for the purpose of criminal activities, forced begging, and organ removal. According to the opinion of several professionals involved at different levels in

combating the severe forms of exploitation, in these environments, women's presence is underestimated.

It is evident that, in the current migration and refugee crisis, there is a great number of women and young girls who have been exploited by criminal networks involved in trafficking of human beings. Trafficking in human beings is not a migration-related phenomenon per se, but the linkage with migration should be recovered in the restrictions to legal movements.

Nevertheless, the first progress report highlighted, among other things, that traffickers are taking advantage of the migration routes to bring their victims to the EU, targeting the most vulnerable groups, in particular Nigerian women.

The EU Treaty framework establishes the Union's regulations for mobility and migration. It was only after the adoption of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999 that migration from outside Europe was inserted in the EU's main legal and political framework. In 2009, it was replaced by the Lisbon Treaty that further developed common migration policies, that in a very short time had become a fundamental area of public policies and of the EU's actions.

Trafficking in human beings is specifically prohibited by Article 5 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The political commitment at the EU level to address issues related to trafficking in human beings is reflected in a large number of initiatives, measures, and funding programs established in the area both within the EU and third countries as early as in the 1990s. More in detail, the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016 defines the policy framework and identifies the priorities the EU should focus on in highlighting a number of actions which the European Commission proposes to implement during 2012–2016 together with other actors, including Member States, the European External Action Service, EU institutions, EU agencies, international organizations, third countries, civil society, and the private sector. The priorities identify are related to the identification, protection, and assistance of victims of trafficking, the prevention of trafficking in human beings, the necessity to increase the number of prosecutions of traffickers, the coordination and cooperation among key actors and policy coherence and the knowledge of and effective response to emerging concerns related to all forms of trafficking in human beings.

In the EU Agenda on Migration, trafficking in persons represents an argument diluted in different parts of the document used to reinforce the need to dismantle the smuggling criminal networks. Framing human trafficking in this way, through a strong securitarian frame rather than humanitarian, allows the EU Commission to avoid analyzing the real nature of these mixed flows and the expansion of the reasons to migrate (Castles and Miller 2009). The mixed flows today represent a reality for different populations on the move including refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants, victims of trafficking, smuggled migrants, unaccompanied minors, and others. Migration has always been a multidimensional and articulated phenomenon, involving a variety of different people with several different reasons to migrate using different ways and services. Irregular flows and migrants in mixed flows present particular challenges and are exposed to situations of vulnerabilities. Their individual condition, in fact, can change during the journey—sur place—determining different statuses in countries of origin, including the connection between internal and external migration, the movement itself. An individual may, for example, start his or her journey as an asylum seeker, but then become an irregular subject leaving the country of first asylum, sometimes through a smuggling network risking to fall into an exploitative situation. This complexity in the framework of African-Central Mediterranean routes is particularly critical for the intersections between the processes of smuggling of migrants and the situations of trafficking affecting migrants who arrive in countries such as Italy raises important human rights implications (removed for peer review).

5. The Importance to Address the Intersection between Gender and Religion/ethnicity—The Case of Nigerian Women

Migration today has a strong female characterization that cannot be neglected; tackling a phenomenon like this without a gender approach not only leaves millions of women and girls who

are already in a difficult state behind, denying their reality, but also prevents the opportunity for individual and social empowerment that the migration project could imply.

From 9 to 13 April 2018, the 51st session of the Commission for Population and Development took place in New York at the UN Headquarters. The theme of this year's Commission was that of Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration. It is estimated that one billion people in the world are migrants: one in every seven people (UNPD 2018). While politicians try to understand how these mass movements influence society, economics, security, and sustainability, the specific needs of women and girls are being lost in the meshes of the complexity of the issue. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has identified five key points that call international attention to objective number five of Agenda 2030: gender equality and women's empowerment as a specific goal to be achieved for the entire planet but also as a cross-cutting if you really want a world that will start, in the coming years, towards sustainable development.

The five fundamental points identified by UNFPA provide a picture of the situation:

1. almost half of the migrants are women and girls: the latter migrate more and more by themselves or as heads of households;
2. migrant women are exposed to serious risks, including sexual exploitation, trafficking, and violence;
3. migrant women face intersectional discrimination: as women and as migrants;
4. women do not stop being pregnant when they are on the move;
5. migrant women and girls are more likely to face health problems, both in transit and in the countries of arrival.

These basic elements denounced by many intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in discussing women's condition in migration, such as religions, do not find attention in the EU Agenda on Migration. In particular issues related to trafficking and other severe forms of exploitation that appear to be a great reality for Nigerian women and girls, according to international reports (European Asylum Support Office (EASO) 2015), the most diffused national group often involved situations of subjugation due to forced prostitution.

The Case of the Edo State in Nigeria and the Role of Juju in Mixed Migration Flows

Nigeria is one of the leading African countries in human trafficking with cross-border and internal trafficking. Trafficking of persons is the third largest crime after economic fraud and the drug trade (Olagbegi et al. 2006).

Decades of military regimes in Nigeria have led to the institutionalized violation of human rights and severe political, social, and economic crises that has negatively improved the development of community participation, especially of women and children. In addition, the oil boom in the 1970s created opportunities for migration both inside and outside of the country, but also avenues for exploitation, for international trafficking in women and children, for forced labor and for prostitution. Nigeria is a country of origin, transit, and destination for human trafficking. Destinations for trafficked Nigerians include the neighboring West African countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Gabon, and Guinea), European countries (Italy, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom), North Africa (Libya, Algeria, and Morocco), and Middle Eastern countries (Saudi Arabia).

The Western European prostitution market has become increasingly globalized during the past 15 years. The largest group of prostitutes from Sub-Saharan Africa comes from Nigeria, and they are usually recruited through a specific type of trafficking network.

Trafficking for prostitution into Europe by Nigerians has reached a critical level. For the number of women engaged into sex slavery networks in Europe and for the main characters that define this target of migrant prostitution, the situation of arrival of these women is absolutely unprecedented. The most important European destination for Nigerian trafficking victims is Italy, where they started to arrive at the end of 1980. Other significant destinations include the Netherlands and Spain, and, to

a lesser degree, Germany, Belgium, Austria, France, and the United Kingdom. Italy is the only European country where a clear majority of legally resident Nigerians are women.

When Nigerians began migrating to Italy in the 1980s, they were one of many migrant groups from developing countries fascinated by Italy's demand for low-skilled labor in agriculture and services.

The first Nigerian women who worked as prostitutes in Italy usually did so independently and were not trafficking victims. In the early 1990s, however, the rising difficulties of travelling to and settling in Europe meant that prospective emigrants were increasingly dependent on large loans and debts coupled with the prospect of a large amount of income on the Italian sex market; this provided an opportunity for traffickers. Young women were persuaded with promises of good jobs, and subsequently coerced into prostitution in order to repay their debt.

The phenomenon of trafficking of Nigerian women for the purpose of prostitution has a series of family economy-related causes. Many poor families in Nigeria rely primarily on the income made by daughters sent, and encouraged, to prostitute themselves in Europe and in the United States. The decision is often, therefore, a family decision and women feel the pressure to support their family through sexual activities. They begin their journey often unaware of the dangers and consequences of their decision, due to illiteracy and un-education (EASO 2015).

The magic–religious tie is a fundamental aspect of the traffic of girls and women from Nigeria which characterizes it in a peculiar manner: it is the element which on a symbolic and psychological level strongly subdues the women and ties their destiny to the pledge undertaken, the debt incurred and therefore to the wishes of the traffickers. The contractual bonds of a moral pledge, of a ritual magic type, or of a legal nature, have a strong hold on the conscience of the same victims.

Juju has been defined as a popular term used to indicate traditional medicine and black magic (Plambech 2014). Generally referred to as Voodoo, Juju is an expression of local traditional African Religion in Western Africa, where people of all classes and education levels often still believe in a universal order of spirits and gods which govern human existence.

Juju is often mentioned as one of the root causes of trafficking of Nigerian women in the European prostitution market. Carling (2005)**,** however, states that Juju and traditional religious beliefs should not be considered always as the causes inducing women to undertake these journeys. Women are not always starting their migratory process under domination, it is often a conscious and voluntary decision. Juju comes to play a fundamental role when women are forced to stay in a condition of prostitution due to the oaths undertaken during the ritual. Voodoo or Juju practices are therefore seen as "secondary" forms of coercion (Cherti et al. 2013). Nearly always, despite being aware of the injustice of the situation in which they find themselves living, women keep faith with the pledge undertaken and only after having extinguished the debt do they eventually decide to lodge a complaint.

Together with the two newly arrived religions, Christianity and Islam, Nigeria still feels the strong influence of this ancient form of witchcraft. The practice is conducted by a priest who allegedly has the power to interfere with people's lives through magic spells. The priest may be a member of the community or a certified practitioner of religious services (Chiluwa 2008). From the 1980s, studies noticed an increasing connection between Voodoo or Juju rituals and the role of human traffickers, especially in forced prostitution (Baarda 2016). Traffickers and sponsors exploit religion to ensure that trafficked persons honor agreements and pay their debts.

According to social workers and law enforcement agencies, Juju plays a fundamental role in aiding traffickers to make their victims loyal to them. Normally Juju is used as a means of control over the victims. The ritual is normally constructed with a box containing the trafficked person's body parts such as fingernails or pubic hair, along with underwear and photographs to a traditional Nigerian (Juju) priest and forcing the victim to repeat statements such as "if I don't pay (the debt agreed with traffickers) I will go crazy or I will be killed", so women are forced by the spirit to remain in a condition of prostitution. According to Adams (2011)**,** this ritual represents an agreement which infuses panic in the victims who believe that the ritual can produce effects on them and their families, and in this way is used as a means of bondage by traffickers. In fact, during the ritual, the woman is

made to declare and maintain a promise to repay her debt, never to report to the police, and never to talk about the nature of the journey with anyone. The information available makes different scenarios, in which various types of *Voodoo* emerge, practiced in special places of cult, with organic substances which must be swallowed by those sealing the pact, cuts made on the body of those who swear and collection of skin, hair, nails, liquids of the person undergoing the rite to bind them through the possession of parts of their body (Carchedi 2012).

Despite the widespread nature of the phenomenon, research on human trafficking is concentrated on southern Nigeria with Delta, Edo, and Cross Rivers States being the main focal points.

For decades, Benin City, the capital of Edo State in southern Nigeria, has been tied to trafficking to Europe. Here, a fundamental mix of poverty and spiritualism drives thousands of young women to make the dangerous journey. Trafficking trade is flowing through Libya and across the Mediterranean where, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM 2017), over the past three years there has been a 600 percent rise in the number of potential sex trafficking victims arriving into Italy by sea.

It is evident that an increasing number of irregular migrants needs protection as a consequence of movement. Irregular migration is a dynamic and dangerous process and people's circumstances can change dramatically during their transit between the country of origin and destination. The barriers to movement created by states to control migration, and the increasing relevance of smugglers and traffickers, has contributed to making irregular migration unreliable. Regardless of the reasons at the basis of individual migration projects, a person may face threats to her human rights that emerge during the process of movement. Trafficked persons may face vulnerabilities that stem from being forcibly moved for purposes of exploitation and suffer trauma and violence in their transit and host states. Forcibly expelled migrants may face violence and human rights abuses in the country of origin and the risk of re-victimization for victims of trafficking is very high.

Many factors have been facilitating human trafficking including the socioeconomic impact of the Structural Adjustment Programs, the early physical and sexual abuse of teenage girls, the collapse of family values and family honor, owing to prevalent polygamy, polyandry, adultery, and prostitution to satisfy the inordinate ambition for affluence in the society. Others are the absence of parental role models and the appeal that remittances continue to have. In any case, the Nigerian society is systematically organized on male supremacy and female subordination. Patriarchy in this context represents perfectly the system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political, and economic institutions.

Benin people have been described as a typical example of a patriarchal society (Ebohon 1996; Egharevba 1949). Girls are generally perceived as less important to the male children and women do not have a significant portion in the family's estate and are considered less-preferred beneficiaries of Western education when a choice is to be made as a result of scarce economic resources.

Other difficulties in curbing sex trafficking in Edo State, such as governmental corruption, and unemployment are increased by religions. Both Islam and Christianity have in fact contributed to the problem (Braimah 2013). Before the advent of Islam and Christianity, prostitution was considered an abomination and strongly rejected by African traditional religion and Edo culture (Awolalu 2005) that is more conservative than others if compared with the attitudes and the behaviors of different groups in Africa. In Edo State, prostitution is severely forbidden (Kara 2017).

Therefore, in Edo State, culture and Traditional African Religion have been eroded to some extent by the introduction of religions such as Islam and Christianity (Braimah 2013) but there is still a strong hold and belief in certain aspects of its traditional practices. In the current state, under the prevalent dominance of these two religions, there are no moral checks and balances for "immoral behavior", such as adultery or prostitution. For example, if a married woman commits adultery, there is no enforceable punishment for this act in Edo State except for the presence of Islam religion.

Consequently, many people are not afraid to indulge in behavior such as prostitution in contrast with the African traditional religion which held that sex before or outside marriage was considered a taboo (Braimah 2013).

Moreover, the economic recession and crisis has accelerated the cultural decadence and the subversion of values such as morality and sexual discipline.

Traffickers of women operate boldly across international borders, using modern means of communication and trade. They seduce victims who often lack adequate information on Europe with advertisements and false promises of jobs as nannies, servers, sales clerks, and models. This modern slavery frequently involves force, deception, and coercion (Olaniyi 2011).

An interesting comment on the issue of trafficking from Nigeria has been made by Europol, which states as follows:

"After being recruited in their home countries, the victims are trafficked to Europe and sent to work in brothels or in the street with forged identity documents. The continuous shifting of exploited victims within the EU is commonly noticed. Traffickers use voodoo rituals, which are commonly practiced in West Africa, as an effective mean of exerting pressure on their victims, to intimidate them, and ensure obedience; this practice enables the perpetrators to make the exploited women paying off their debts (which can be up to 60.000 Euros) incurred as a result of their trafficking to Europe. In this context, increased police checks continue to play an important role in the identification of victims of human trafficking and the associated shedding of light on previously undetected crime." (EUROPOL 2016)

Interestingly, as the EASO (European Asylum Support Office) has stated, the case of Nigerian prostitution remains unique due to the high number of women involved in the business and in the violation of human rights. The traffickers themselves, or sponsors, are often Nigerian madams from the Edo state, all with similar ethnic origins and social network (EASO 2015).

However, authorities in the Edo state have recently began to recognize the issue and take actions and measures to solve the problem. The following statement has been published on Facebook in 2017 by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP):

"It is no secret that one of the control mechanisms employed by traffickers over their victims is the use of voodoo and oath-taking, usually at Ayelala shrines in Edo State. This voodoo is meant to instill fear into them and keep them loyal at all costs. In light of the above, NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command felt the need to sensitize the priests at the shrines, with the aim of enlisting their support to stop this menace. This effort is already yielding fruits as some of the chief priests have turned to anti human trafficking ambassadors." (Gänsler 2017).

Furthermore, in March 2018, the Oba ("king") Ewuare II, the highest religious authority of the Edo people living in Nigeria and in the Delta area of Niger, formulated an edict prohibiting all the rites of oath binding trafficked girls with curses. The Oba ("king") Ewuare II, convened all the priests of the traditional juju religion. In a solemn ceremony, he formulated an edict revoking all the rites of oath that bind women, forcing the juju priests to no longer practice such rituals. Since its inception in 2016, King Ewuare II has worked closely with the governor of the Edo State and with the local agency against trafficking in persons.

The trafficking of Nigerian women is not only an account of situations of serious exploitation in the current migratory flows, but also of the "inevitability" of people's desire and need to leave their own country for various reasons in search of better existential conditions. It is also a clear example of the link between migration, the status of women, belonging to an ethnic group and religion, issues in relation to which the European Agenda does not seem to pay the necessary attention in accordance with this paper's Critical Frame Analysis of the document. While the document focuses primarily on the persecutors, the traffickers, and the smugglers in mixed migration flows, it never refers specifically to the victims themselves in order to maintain a securitarian frame and not a human rights approach. The omission of the condition of the victims from the text of the document results in the generalization of trafficked and smuggled subjects. Therefore, trafficked victims with specific intersectional levels of discrimination and/or suffering, such as women of religious beliefs, remain invisible in the official policy document for Migration in the European Union.

6. Conclusions

It is evident that trafficking in persons must be contextualized in the context of today's mixed migration flows. Religion and identity are relevant aspects of women's conditions during their migration, which confirms their intersectional dimension and their conditions of vulnerability. The complete omission of gender references, and of its intersection with religious identity, in the European Agenda on Migration shows that not only intersectionality is still missing from the European approach to gender equality, but rather that the European de-gendering process has become so drastic that women are no longer mentioned as a vulnerable category. The securitarian meta-frame through which the Agenda discusses not only migration as a whole, but particularly trafficking in persons, leaves the human rights framework out of the picture and it allows the Commission to focus on the persecutor rather than the victim. This way, the victim is less likely to receive the attention required and to be addressed, not only as a person in a condition of vulnerability, but also as a person at the intersection of various vulnerable groups, particularly religion, gender, and ethnicity. Policies addressing the issue of migration should, therefore, adopt a gender perspective and an intersectional approach. Policy makers should consider including gender equality experts, such as women's rights advocates and scholars, in the framing of the policies and in the evaluation process in order to gain insights on the particular conditions faced by women in migration flows.

The case of Nigerian women trafficked through mainstream migration flows under oaths, using their religious beliefs as a means of abduction and domination, provides a clear example of the importance of taking an intersectional approach to migration and rethinking European migration policies and priority actions with a gender + diversity lens.[3]

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[3]   Gender + is a term used in gender studies to refer to the intersection between gender and other forms of diversity such as religion, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation.

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