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### THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPEAN IDENTITY Refugees and Europe's Identity Crisis

Martina Caretta  
[mcaretta96@gmail.com](mailto:mcaretta96@gmail.com)

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**The Construction of a European Identity**  
*Refugees and Europe's Identity Crisis*

Martina Caretta

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Department of International Studies  
in partial fulfillment for the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts

University of San Francisco  
May 2021  
Master of Arts in International Studies

Advised by Dr. Keally McBride

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPEAN IDENTITY**  
*Refugees and Europe's Identity Crisis*

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by **Martina Caretta**

March 15, 2021

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:



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Capstone Adviser

Date

Brian Dowd-Uribe

5/3/2021

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MAIS Director

Date

## **Abstract**

The fundamental purpose of my thesis is to consider the ongoing formation of European identity within the context of the contemporary refugee/migrant crisis in Europe. In doing so, I will briefly survey how a European identity has been conceived and constructed through legal documents, treaties, and political speeches. Moreover, I will use different theories such as Anderson's imagined communities to consider whether European identity is post-modern and post-national as it is sometimes celebrated to be. The EU is frequently regarded as a unique experiment in history and the first real post-modern political entity. However, looking deeper into the identity construction process, it does not seem to reflect a post-national construction but rather an identity often constructed on national and primordial resources, making the EU more supranational than a post-national entity. This is particularly true in relation to the refugee crisis which has been framed as a threat to European identity and culture. The role of borders, the Mediterranean Sea, and fortress Europe are critical terms I will analyze to consider the refugee crisis case study. Refugees have become the "other" or the "enemy" in contrast to the "Europeans." Migrants are seen as a threat to one's culture and identity, but if the European identity is still evolving and not clearly defined, how can migrants pose a threat to it? The migrant crisis provides the context that clearly demonstrates the contradictions and paradox inside the idea of a European identity.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the most recurrent questions throughout my thesis is to understand if a European identity can be described as post-national and postmodern or if its construction is similar to the nation-states, making it a supranational form of identity. In the last few years, the question of identity has become more pressing for policymakers and politicians in Europe. The majority of individuals have a strong national identity, considered exclusive and unique; however, as we know, individuals can enjoy multiple identities without any necessary contradictions between them. The European identity question is more ambiguous because it goes beyond national identification, and it presumably coexists with different local, regional, and supranational identities. After the World Wars, Europe developed two main ideas for political integration for the EU. One conceived of a European political entity as a federation similar to the United States of America. The other has focused on a balance of power and identities cooperating within the same political entity, a sort of "confederation option" we can say.

There have been a series of initiatives to promote a European identity, and I will briefly analyze them in my literature review. In 1973, the Nine Members of the EC decided to draft a document specifically focused on European identity with the precise objective of building a stronger united Europe. The Maastricht Treaty (1991) shaped for the first time the idea of European citizenship, giving Europeans a sense of exclusiveness and belonging to something unique. The treaty also highlights the importance of education, culture, youth, and legal powers in citizens' everyday life, assuming that symbols play a vital role in constructing a common identity in Europe. Ironically, these symbols' creation is very similar to a nationalistic way of creating an identity, resembling the nation states' propaganda campaigns during the 19th century.

For this reason, one of the most recurrent questions throughout my thesis is whether a European identity can be described as post-national and postmodern, or if its construction is similar to the nation-states, making it a supranational form of identity.

Author Stefan Höjelijid in his essay “European Integration and the idea of European Identity: Obstacles and Possibilities” divides the literature into two specific categories. Scholars with a pessimistic view, usually nationalists, and scholars with optimistic views toward the integration process in Europe.<sup>1</sup> According to nationalists such as Antony Smith, the nation is the only criteria to analyze a form of identity. A modern society needs a certain level of loyalty and solidarity, and this is only possible when there is a nation with a national identity. National identity remains thus the most important form of identification.

Nevertheless, going back to the discourse of multiple identities, individuals can have more than one identity, making European identity possible. This is the main argument for my thesis; a European identity is possible. It exists on an individual level; however, it falls into an ambiguous category since it encompasses 27 different countries with their own cultures and languages. Some educational programs such as Erasmus and Euro-festivals have been partially successful in unifying European citizens, and Eurobarometer surveys show an attachment to Europe amongst a significant population.

Questions of identity are inextricably related to migration issues because crises such as the refugee one, have made the question of finding a common European identity more pressing and urgent. With the arrival of masses of refugees on European soil, the EU was caught by surprise, incapable of finding and adopting a common policy demonstrating a level of solidarity

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<sup>1</sup> Höjelijid, Stefan. “European integration and the idea of European identity: obstacles and possibilites.” In *ECPR Joint Sessions Grenoble 2001. Workshop*, vol. 19. 2001.



with all member states. The years 2015/2016 are considered the peak of the emergency and the beginning of a European crisis characterized by a deep political instability from the member states. The first response of the EU was a standard agreement in sharing the responsibilities of refugees among member states. The response was a failure both in registering refugees entering the countries and sharing responsibilities for them between nation-states. In the absence of a firm EU policy, governments took national measures to close and tighten borders, often violating the Schengen agreements and laws in Europe. Legal and administrative responsibilities were put in the hands of countries located in southern Europe and the Mediterranean, already financially and economically unstable, to deal with the significant inflow of migrants and refugees. The consequence was the resurgence of populist, nationalist and right-wing parties all around Europe.

Despite praising itself for its borderless policy and free mobility, Europe has become a fortress with a strong reintroduction of borders to avoid immigrants moving from one part of the continent to another. European identity is then showing its exclusive character in which some can enter fortress Europe, and some are inevitably excluded. From here, we can see the paradox of the European identity, which praises itself for its inclusiveness toward different cultures while excluding the migrant, seen as the enemy.

## 2. Literature Review

This thesis will investigate and analyze the dynamics of building and maintaining European identity. I explore the ways it is different from a national identity, since it goes beyond alliances between particular nation-states and presumes a supranational identity that is not supposed to conflict with or contradict single individual national identities. The main question is whether citizens can have two layers of political identity, their national one as well as a European one. In order to do so, I analyze whether the EU builds its political identities on civic and inclusive sources or if it engenders primordial and exclusive forms of identity construction. The meaning and construction of a European identity will be explored within the context of the European Migrant Crisis, considered one of the biggest challenges and threats to European identity and culture.

Since the creation of a European integration process, the existence of a European identity has been one of the most debated topics throughout Europe. Can a genuine European identity exist and is it necessary to support the construction of a political entity like the EU? The idea of a united Europe is not completely new but dates back in history to the Roman Empire; both Napoleon and Charlemagne had ambitions to unify the majority of Europe. The European Union is a very new kind of political entity, created in 1951 with the main idea of a “United States of Europe” to avoid future conflicts after the tragedy of the World Wars. For instance, John Ruggie, Professor and expert in international politics, defined the EU as the first post-modern polity.<sup>2</sup> Scholars and politicians of the time such as Jürgen Habermas or Robert Schuman often seen the EU as a successful experiment that was able to overcome the modern age characterized by an

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<sup>2</sup> Ruggie, John Gerard. "Territoriality and beyond: problematizing modernity in international relations." *International organization* (1993): 139-174.

extremist form of nationalism. After the unification of Europe, one of the most pressing issues has been the development of an identity that can accompany this political institution; more specifically, a European identity that can coexist with the other national identities of every single member state. The EU is currently formed by 27 different member states, each with their own culture, languages, traditions, religions, and different ethnic communities, all united under the same political institution and possible identity. Central to the European Commission has been the development of two layers of political identity with a post-national form of European identity, able to go beyond the Westphalian system. But another question that arises is whether the EU can be considered as a post-modern nation which can coexist within the same territory of existing nations, or is it replacing nationalism and national identities? My thesis addresses these questions; nevertheless, there are no final answers and the process of defining a European identity poses a series of problems.

Scholars are deeply divided when it comes to identity issues. Some of them, such as the founding fathers of the EU, highlight the uniqueness together with the postmodern/post-national character of the EU; while others, such as Antony Smith or Rainer Hüßle, are more reluctant in considering the EU as a post-modern nation since a European identity seems more guided by principles of exclusion of immigrants leading Europe to a more national form of identity or, to better say, to a more supra-national identity rather than post-national.

The starting point to investigate the meaning and existence of a European identity is the concept of collective or social identities. The majority of scholars agree that individuals can have multiple identities in the contemporary world and these identities can either reinforce or diminish a sense of attachment to national identity. Individuals can live with multiple identifications and still enjoy each of them; however, some identities will inevitably be pressured by external

circumstances. Individual identity is usually referred to as how individuals identify themselves and are identified by others in different ways, depending on different situations with an element of the distinctiveness of the individual. Collective identities, on the other side, go beyond individuality and refer to a sense of belonging to a specific social group in which the identity of the group becomes part of the individual identity, for instance, the sense of belonging to the same nation-state. As author Klaus Eder affirms in his essay “A Theory of Collective Identity Making Sense of the Debate on a European Identity”: “Collective identity has been at the center of attention in societies that were formed in the course of the making of the nation-state. The nation, however, has not been an exclusive focus. Collective identity can equally refer to cities, to regions, or to groups such as political parties or even social movements. For some time, collective identity has also been an issue with regard to Europe where public debate is increasingly concerned with the problem of a European identity that is seen as lacking or as necessary.”<sup>3</sup>

The typical elements of a national identity can be found in the importance of territory, sharing the same myths and historical memories, a common culture and a system of legal rights and institutions. British sociologist Anthony Smith in his essay “National Identity and the Idea of European Unity”, defines a nation as: “a named human population sharing a historical territory, common memories and myths of origin, a mass, standardized public culture, a common economy, and territorial mobility, and common legal rights and duties for all members of the collectivity”<sup>4</sup>. Nationalisms start from the premises of exclusive identities to unify the national and have a distinct individuality falling under this category. For this reason, Anthony Smith

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<sup>3</sup> Eder, Klaus. "A theory of collective identity making sense of the debate on a 'European identity'." *European journal of social theory* 12, no. 4 (2009): 428.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, Anthony D. "National identity and the idea of European unity." *International affairs* 68, no. 1 (1992),60.

remains skeptical about whether a European identity can be constructed in the absence of a common history, language, and ethnic bonds and many critics agree with him in affirming there is no basis to a Europe as a cultural community due to the diversity of national culture and the lack of a common language.

On the contrary, other authors agree on how collective identities are constantly challenged and reconstructed rather than fixed and stable. The question that Smith is trying to answer is whether Europe is the dream of political unity without nationalistic trappings or if it is a simple repetition of a national identity formation on a larger scale. More specifically, is a European identity and a political community possible when the nation-state has been assumed as the only unit to support a legitimate government and political community? Or is a unified Europe a sort of supernation? From one side, the European national identity can come into conflict with the national ones, which often happened in foreign policy matters, for instance, with the Yugoslav conflict. On another level, though, I agree with the idea that individuals are today more prone to choose to which nation they belong to, and there are no evident contradictions between these two types of identities.

In Thomas Risse's book, *A Community of Europeans?*, collective identities are seen as the link between the individuals and the social groups; therefore, this identity derives from the sense of belonging to a specific social group together with the feeling of attachment and a sense of obligation to it.<sup>5</sup> The difference between the self and the other is fundamental, as in every type of identity, but individuals do not always express identification to a single group, holding multiple forms of identities depending on the specific situation they find themselves in.

Policymakers in Europe widely assume that national and European identities can coexist without

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<sup>5</sup> Risse, Thomas. *A community of Europeans?: Transnational identities and public spheres*. Cornell University Press, 2015.

any contrast and the same motto of the EU, “unity in diversity”, celebrates the diversity of the EU as an advantage. A concrete example in Europe of this coexistence is the national flag displayed with the European one in public buildings, schools, driver licenses, or even diplomas.

### **Primordial identities vs civic identities**

According to German author Rainer Hüsle, in his essay “Imagine the EU: the metaphorical construction of a supra-nationalist identity”, there are three fundamental aspects connected to identity: the fact that collective identities are social constructions, there is no identity without difference, and there are two different types of collective identities, primordial and civic.<sup>6</sup> These basic assumptions are shared in most studies concerning European identity, but there is often disagreement on the question whether European identity is more primordial or civic. Collective identities are based upon features typical of the collectivity, such as a common language, culture, ethnicity and traditions. As Hüsle says: “Collective identities constructed according to the primordial type are based (more exactly: are imagined to be based) on some inherent characteristics of the collectivity, for example, a common culture, language or ethnicity.”<sup>7</sup> They are imagined identities, based on a deep sense of belonging to a specific territory united by ethnic bonds. Germany is usually considered as an example of primordial identity even if, after World War II, civic elements were introduced in their current form of identity.

On the other side, collective civic identities are not naturally given or imagined but the result of social interaction between people and the sense of belonging to a political entity.

According to Hüsle: “Collective identity constructed according to the civic type, in contrast, is

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<sup>6</sup> Hüsle, Rainer. "Imagine the EU: the metaphorical construction of a supra-nationalist identity." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9, no. 4 (2006): 398.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 399.

not imagined to be a natural given but it results from social interaction within a political entity. Rather than identifying with a nation (defined through a common culture), people identify with a state (Bruter 2005: 12).<sup>8</sup> This type of identity is a politically acquired identity rather than naturally inherited, and France is often taken as an example of civic identity. A way to sum up the difference is thinking of primordial identities as strictly connected to cultural sources of identification and civic identities connected to political sources of identification.

Another distinction made by the author is the mode of differentiation, digital and analog. He says "The second dimension of my identity-model focuses on the 'mode of differentiation' (Ruggie 1993: 168, emphasis added) between the self and other. I take up Iver Neumann's (1998) distinction between a 'digital' and an 'analog' mode, each describing a particular way of organizing the boundary between the self and other (also Wæver 2004: 210)."<sup>9</sup> The digital mode of differentiation constructs the other in opposition to the self in which the other is automatically excluded. In an analog mode of differentiation, the difference between the self and the other is not particularly strong and absolute. As a consequence, a digital mode of differentiation will produce exclusive identities; while an analog mode of differentiation will produce inclusive identities with a wider acceptance of the other. In other words, a digital mode of differentiation can be associated with modernity; while an analog mode of differentiation is typical of post-modernity.

The question is now, in which category does European identity belong? As we said before, European identity falls into a sense of belonging to the same political community rather than a naturally given identity; however, some characteristics such as the importance of

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<sup>8</sup> Hülse, Rainer. "Imagine the EU: the metaphorical construction of a supra-nationalist identity." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9, no. 4 (2006): 399.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

territorial borders, the imposition of recurrent EU symbols and the exclusion of some countries on the European soil, such as Turkey, portray the EU identity in a more digital than analog way. Anderson's concept of imagined communities will be essential to better understand this question. How is Europe imagined?

Hüssle's text on the metaphorical construction of a supra-nationalist identity offers important insights into the metaphors and images used in political speeches and discourses to show how the EU seemed configured in discourse by politicians and statemen. The author argues that identities are imagined as much as they are constructed through metaphors and the use of a specific language. There is a lack of research and literature on the use of European identity through metaphors and political discourses; however, analyzing the language of international politics can be a very powerful instrument to have a better idea of how the European identity was conceived. Metaphors are figures of speech in which a word is used to substitute the correct terms, but they are also more than simple substitutes for the original words and they can help us to understand the political thinking behind the concept of European identity.

For his analysis, Hüssle starts from the EU enlargement to the East as a fundamental political event for Europe in the '90s. After the Cold War, countries belonging to the block under Soviet control expressed their desire to become members of the EU and negotiations started around 1997. Political discourses used at the enlargement process seemed to build European identity in a very specific way. Most of the speeches the author analyzes are focused on German discourses and debates in the parliament that were happening at that time. Germany was one of the biggest supporters of the EU enlargement toward the east. The author finds, for instance, that some metaphors used in political discourses, such as the "family reunion", the "homecoming", the "growing together", belonging to the same "organism" or the "return home" of the east



countries (very popular among German politicians), clearly show a primordial way of constructing identity. The Eastern countries are portrayed as naturally belonging to the EU, as part of the same organism or family whose separation was temporary.

European identity is based here on natural sources as an organism in which every EU country is part of and it is an example of an identity construction based on primordial sources. Therefore, countries that are part of the European organism can not be denied entry to the EU since, as the author says: "Countries that are part of the European organism cannot be denied accession to the EU as their separation from the EU is an unnatural state"<sup>10</sup>.

The only metaphor that seems to construct a more civic form of European identity is, according to him, the metaphor of the enlargement as a common path in which candidates to the EU are seen to be on the same path or on the same way to the EU. There is no natural connection or cultural basis for this identity. The metaphor of "the path" portrays European identity as political cooperation and integration between countries that are on the same path and it is mostly based on civic sources. Another metaphor constructed through civic sources is the one referring to the East enlargement as an "entry into a house", in which the EU members are considered as inside the house and the candidates as waiting outside the house. This metaphor, like the path one, constructs a European identity based on civic sources in which member states are living and interacting in the same house. However, this metaphor also highlights the difference between who is inside and who is outside, and once again the problem of inclusive and exclusive identities emerges. It is important to acknowledge how these metaphors mostly come from a German perspective, and as we know, primordial elements are stronger in German culture compared to other European states. However, they still show how identity was conceived at the

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<sup>10</sup> Hülse, Rainer. "Imagine the EU: the metaphorical construction of a supra-nationalist identity." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9, no. 4 (2006),411.

time through primordial sources using a digital mode of differentiation, dividing certain categories of countries from others.

After analyzing different metaphors used in speeches in German politics, Hülse questions the postmodernity character of the EU and its identity. He states:

The family metaphor, the homecoming metaphor and the metaphor of growing together primordialize European identity and set up a digital mode of differentiation. In this way, European identity looks very similar to German identity. Obviously, there is nothing post-modern about it, it is very much in line with modern, nationalist ways of constructing identity (.....) However, only one of the metaphors discussed actually constructs the European identity in a post-modern/post-national way: the path metaphor not only bases European identity on civic sources but also breaks with the habit of imagining identity exclusively. Here, the other is no longer absolutely different, but only different in degree. The self and other are not separated by a clearcut border, instead they are connected by a transition zone, which can make it difficult to say where the self ends and the other begins.<sup>11</sup>

These metaphors are very much in line with nationalism and a national way of constructing identity. However, the metaphors of the house and the path constructs a European identity as a combination of civic sources and digital mode of differentiation very similar to a French form of identity. This type of identity is less nationalist and the distinction between the self and the other is less underlined since the other can become part of the self. Again, the process of constructing a European identity is ambiguous and both primordial and civic sources are used. Nevertheless, the author seems to lean more toward a nationalistic construction of the EU that leads to a supranational identity.

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<sup>11</sup> Hülse, Rainer. "Imagine the EU: the metaphorical construction of a supra-nationalist identity." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9, no. 4 (2006),414/415.

## Europe as an imagined community in the making

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* is the most influential book on nationalism. According to Anderson:

The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. (...) It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. (...) Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.<sup>12</sup>

Anderson argues that the nation is an imagined political community because it is impossible to know every single other person that belongs to one's nation, therefore he uses the term "imagined"<sup>13</sup>. The same can be said for Europe; citizens of Europe can not meet every other European or know every aspect of Europe. The nation is then limited in scope and sovereign in nature and its border is well defined but changeable at the same time. As we know, the borders of the European Union are flexible and they lack a complete definition; moreover, they have changed over times and they keep changing as we can see with Brexit. The EU expanded to adjacent countries and was able to integrate different borders. Sovereignty is also partially given up by different member states, but the identity and freedom of every single nation-state still matter.

According to Anderson, language is another important factor for the modern nation and a nation's consciousness since it creates a stronger sense of unification. He observes: "Particular languages can die or be wiped out, but there was and is no possibility of humankind's general

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<sup>12</sup>Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso books, 2006,6/7.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2016.

linguistic unification. Yet this mutual incomprehensibility was historically of only slight importance until capitalism and print created monoglot mass reading publics.”<sup>14</sup>

According to him, capitalism and the diffusion of printed documents and books played an important role in the diffusion of a national or standard language. In Europe, there is no national newspaper or tv channel, or a radio broadcast that can reach the majority of Europeans and connect them into an imagined community; therefore, Europeans are not informed of what is happening in the other European countries even if they may be briefly exposed to the news coming from neighboring countries. Media is, without any doubt, an important instrument to diffuse an image of a nation, and Europe lacks in the construction of a media that can reach every single European state, despite several attempts in creating a unified media system. The Internet constitutes a very powerful instrument that would be able to access a large portion of Europeans, but it has not been explored by European politicians in favor of a European identity.

Authors Cirila Toplak & Irena Šumi in their essay “Europe (an Union): Imagined Community in the Making?”, seem to come to the same conclusions as Hüssle. Through the analysis of EU documents and important political speeches, they argue that reinforcement of a European identity is not possible since most EU policies that have been adopted have a counter-productive effect on the creation of a common identity. The authors point out the lack of efforts from EU politicians in creating a strong form of identity through EU policies, despite the increasing awareness that in creating a common identity is an essential element for the integration process. There is a paradox in the way European identity is considered a priority within the EU’s political agenda, but citizens in the EU do not seem to identify with Europe and

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<sup>14</sup> Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2016. 43.

have a strong identity. The main problem is that the idea of European identity that was imposed on EU citizens was more similar to a supranational identity reinforced by the single national identities. As a consequence, this identity is often seen as in contrast to the national ones. The two authors join Hüssle in a shared skepticism that the EU is a unique and unprecedented experiment in history. As Toplak & Šumi say:

EU politicians appear to conceive of European identity as construed similarly to national identities, although a European nation that would have to develop such sense of belonging remains politically highly improbable. In the last two decades in particular we have witnessed adoption and implementation of a whole range of policies seemingly aiming at that objective, such as new symbols of Europe, the emerging common European cultural policy, the European citizenship/passport, the recent attempts at formal unification of European foreign policy and, above all, the European currency.<sup>15</sup>

They analyze the idea of a common identity from the perspective of Anderson's imagined community to find out how the EU policies do not always support the idea of a European integration project. Their analysis shows how this identity is often constructed in a very similar way to national identities. There has been a process of adopting a series of policies aiming at creating a European identity similar to a national one, for instance, the creation of European symbols: European citizenship, passport, same currency, car tags, a national anthem, a common European cultural policy and more. Currency in particular plays a fundamental role in the construction of a common identity since a common currency can highlight the sense of belonging to the same community. Political discourses on European identity can give a better idea of how this identity was primarily conceived from a national point of view. For instance, Robert Schuman, considered as one of the founding fathers of Europe, states in his declaration the need

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<sup>15</sup> Toplak, Cirila, and Irena Šumi. "Europe(an Union): Imagined Community in the Making?" *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2012, pp.12.

for a common economic system in Europe, referring to the need for a “European spirit” as a sense of belonging to the same national consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

Another important contribution to the discussion of European identity comes from German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas who believed in the idea of reinforcing a European identity through the creation of a common constitution: “Why should we pursue the project of a constitution for Europe? Let me address this question from two angles: (i) immediate political goals, and (ii) dilemmas stemming from virtually irreversible decisions of the past. If we consider the first, it is clear that while the original political aims of European integration have lost much of their relevance, they have since been replaced by an even more ambitious political agenda.”<sup>17</sup> Habermas argues that the only way to continue the integration process in Europe is a common constitution able to preserve a sense of consciousness among citizens and to reach fundamental political goals for the union. For him, a common currency is not going to keep Europeans united, and he criticizes the previous treaties elaborated by the EU as ineffective. The idea of a European constitution was not welcomed by countries such as France and Britain and brought a wave of skepticism around Europe. As he says “Let us then start from the question: why should we pursue the project of an ‘ever-closer Union’ any further at all? Recent calls from Rau, Schroeder and Fischer—the German President, Chancellor and Foreign Minister—to move ahead with a European Constitution have met skeptical reactions in Great Britain, France and most of the other member-states.”<sup>18</sup> Habermas was probably conceiving of political identity having Germany in his mind. Germany is often considered as an example of political evolution,

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<sup>16</sup> Schuman , Robert. “The Schuman Declaration – 9 May 1950.” *European Union*, 7 May 2020, [europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration_en).

<sup>17</sup> Habermas, Jürgen. "Why Europe needs a constitution." *Developing a constitution for Europe* 1 (2004), 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*,6.

being the only European democracy based on an imagined community united by a strong ethnic nationalism, able to function as a political community with civic nationalism.

The Maastricht Treaty in 1991 developed by the European Commission aimed at the reinforcement of European identity through European citizenship granted to every EU citizen and a common currency, the euro. We can see here a sense of exclusiveness developed in the idea of sharing the same citizenship. The common citizenship and currency are part of a series of national symbols that were progressively imposed by the EU, such as the common flag and the national anthem. The idea of a “European Federation” or “United States of Europe” probably crossed the minds of EU politicians at the time with the majority of them having the model of the United States in mind.

In the Document on the European Identity elaborated on December 14, 1973, in Copenhagen, the importance of introducing the concept of European identity for foreign relations was clearly stated for the first time. As the document states: “The Nine Member Countries of the European Communities have decided that the time has come to draw up a document on the European Identity. This will enable them to achieve a better definition of their relations with other countries and of their responsibilities and the place which they occupy in world affairs.”<sup>19</sup> Here European identity is defined by salient concepts such as representative democracy, the rule of law, social justice, and respect for human rights together with the importance of a common market. Article 3 states that “The diversity of cultures within the framework of a common European civilization, the attachment to common values and principles, the increasing convergence of attitudes to life, the awareness of having specific interests in common and the determination to take part in the construction of a United Europe, all give the European Identity

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<sup>19</sup> *Document on the European Identity. Published by the Nine Foreign Ministers, Copenhagen, 14 December 1973. European Political Cooperation, Fifth Edition, 1988,2.*

its originality and its own dynamism.”<sup>20</sup> Unity is also strongly stressed through the diversity of cultures together with the attachment to common values and having the same interests. In this document, citizens are mainly united by a common attachment to the same principles, and the European identity is mainly conceived as a political one that complements the national identification to the member state.

These legal documents show how the meaning of a European identity acquires more importance and a clearer purpose through the years. As I mentioned before, the EU enlargement to the East was particularly problematic for the European identity. Conflicts and contradictions surged among politicians on the inclusivity character of the European identity. For some, the enlargement to the East after the fall of the Soviet Union would have threatened a common identity since a too large of a Europe could have failed to find an identity. As authors Toplak and Šumi says: “So while some politicians called for recognition of importance of European identity as a future political project, others already mourned it in the light of a too large Europe. Clearly, political conceptions of what (European) identity was were far from consensual.”<sup>21</sup> For example, the entry of Turkey into the EU has always been a very difficult topic, due to the European attitude toward the Islamic world. A controversial speech was made by Franco Frattini, ex EU Commissioner, in which religion and Christianity are seen as essential aspects of the identity as in contrast to other religions such as Islam: “On one hand, we quite rightly recognize the influence that religious characteristics have on other people’s identities, like Muslims, but on the other, when we speak of our own religion, we keep our distance.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Document on the European Identity. Published by the Nine Foreign Ministers, Copenhagen, 14 December 1973. European Political Cooperation, Fifth Edition, 1988,2.*

<sup>21</sup> Toplak, Cirila, and Irena Šumi. “Europe(an Union): Imagined Community in the Making?” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2012, pp.11.

<sup>22</sup> Admin. “Europe Must Assert Its Religious Identity, Says Frattini.” *Www.euractiv.com*, EURACTIV.com, 27 Jan. 2010, [www.euractiv.com/section/languages-culture/news/europe-must-assert-its-religious-identity-says-frattini/](http://www.euractiv.com/section/languages-culture/news/europe-must-assert-its-religious-identity-says-frattini/).



Similarly, in 2004, the President of the European Union, Hermann Von Rumpuy, declared that the fundamental European values derived from Christianity and that this identity will be threatened with the entry of an Islamic country such as Turkey. He stated: “Turkey is not and never will be part of Europe” (...) the universal values which are in force in Europe, and which are also fundamental values of Christianity, will lose vigor with the entry of a large Islamic country such as Turkey.”<sup>23</sup>

In contrast, other politicians have stressed the strong character of inclusivity of the European identity represented by the sharing of same values and the power of diversity. Austrian politician and ex-minister for Europa and international affairs Michael Spindelegger declared how: “In the interest of a democratic and all aspects well-functioning Europe we must jointly address the complexities of identity issues in our increasingly multiethnic and multicultural societies. Only the collective management of diversity in legal, political, and social terms can lead to ownership in a democratic society and a ‘citizenship of the heart.’”<sup>24</sup>

Inclusivity can also be seen in the speech of ex-president of the Czech Republic Vaclav Havel who states how “Just because I’m a European, it doesn’t mean I cease to be a Czech. On the contrary, as a Czech, I’m also a European.”<sup>25</sup> Finally, authors Gerard Delanty and Christ Rumford in their book *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization* claim: “To be European is neither a matter of culture nor of politics as such. Instead, the condition of being European is expressed more in an orientation to the world and

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<sup>23</sup> Tassier, Manu. “Pers Boos Om 'Anti-Turkse Benoeming'.” *De Standaard*, Standaard.be, 20 Nov. 2009, [www.standaard.be/cnt/6o2il32s?kanaalid=854](http://www.standaard.be/cnt/6o2il32s?kanaalid=854).

<sup>24</sup> Österreich, Außenministerium der Republik. *Opening Speech by H.E. Michael Spindelegger - Symposium "Identity and Participation: Cross Cultural and Muslim Youth in Europe" (Nur in Englisch) – BMEIA, Außenministerium Österreich*, [www.bmeia.gv.at/das-ministerium/presse/reden/2009/opening-speech-by-he-michael-spindelegger-symposium-identity-and-participation-cross-cultural-and-muslim-youth-in-europe-nur-in-englisch/](http://www.bmeia.gv.at/das-ministerium/presse/reden/2009/opening-speech-by-he-michael-spindelegger-symposium-identity-and-participation-cross-cultural-and-muslim-youth-in-europe-nur-in-englisch/).

<sup>25</sup> Havel (2009), <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/122161> (accessed 27 February 2012).

which might be identified with the cosmopolitan spirit.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, being European seem to be part of a general spirit of cosmopolitanism diffused all around Europe, meaning they recognize that today we live in a world of diversity. As the authors say “to be European is not to identify with something called Europe or have a common identity comparable to national identity and for which hyphen is needed. (...) to be European is simply to recognize that one lives in a world that does not belong to a specific people.”<sup>27</sup> However, Delanty and Rumford do not exclude the possibility that certain forms of identification can be considered as specifically European, for instance, the use of the Euro, education, architecture, cityscape, and more that can represent a certain European way of living and European society.

The shared values as the basis for a European identity is also analyzed in a policy document prepared for the European Presidency of the European Union: “The Construction of European Identity” by Manuel Castells. He aims at advancing the construction of European identity, explaining why European identity is important and relevant for the European Union. He claims:

Besides the economic dimension, European Union countries are now intertwined in a web of institutional, social and political relationships which will grow in size and complexity in the coming years, as new countries become associated with the EU, and as the European institutions extend their realm of activity. Thus, we are too far in the process of European integration (with considerable benefits for everybody, to this point) to think the unthinkable: the future breakup of the European Union. And yet, the European ground may be shakier than we believe.<sup>28</sup>

Castells argues that the European Union is not just a political and union economy, but through the years the EU countries seem to be connected through deeper and more complicated

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<sup>26</sup> Delanty, Gerard, and Chris Rumford. *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization*. Routledge, 2005,75.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid,77.

<sup>28</sup> Castells, M. "The construction of European identity. Statement prepared for the European Presidency of the European Union." *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell (2000).

relationships. The economic aspect is without any doubt one of the most important elements to consider, but it is not enough to strengthen European identity. For instance, the global economy has been characterized by a series of crisis such as the Financial Crisis in 2008, the Greek Debt Crisis, the Migrant crisis, and more recently Covid-19 crisis which all affected more or less the process of European integration. Therefore, integrating Europe without a strong European identity can be problematic, especially during a major crisis when member states seem to turn into their nationalist identities. Castells illustrates identity as a set of values with a symbolic meaning for people belonging to a specific community that goes beyond the economic aspect of the EU. This set of values must have a deep meaning for most EU citizens, making it possible for them to feel like they belong to a common European culture under the same institutional system. Castells argues that European identity can not be based on religion, a common history, a common language, or what we usually refer to as Western values. For this reason, he identifies some elements of the European identity project that must have a common consensus through the European countries, besides the connection to political democracy. These are shared feelings in which citizens can agree and that can be the foundation of a European identity. The idea is to create a European civil society in which the development of a European identity is possible with a concrete policy. The main actors to create this form of identity must be the European national governments through the European Union; a form of European identity is possible if European societies reflect and engage themselves in a common project of integration.

### **Inclusive nationalists and Exclusive Nationalists**

German scholar Thomas Risse elucidates how the more we tend to interact inside a social group in a very positive way the more we are likely to identify with this group. Citing American sociologist Neil Fligstein, he claims: “In sum, Fligstein makes an interactionist argument that is

also consistent with social psychological theories of identity: the more people interact transnationally across borders in Europe, the more they identify with Europe.”<sup>29</sup>

If we apply this concept to the European Union and European identity, a good example of the principle in action is the foundation of the Erasmus project in 1987, precisely created to diffuse a sense of European identity through mobility and study abroad exchange programs in European countries. Fligstein offers a very interesting theory according to which higher education can lead to a stronger European identity, following Karl W. Deutsch’s theory of integration. He claims:

Deutsch’s theory helps us make sense of what has and has not happened in Europe in the past fifty years. A European identity is first and foremost going to arise among people who associate with each other across national boundaries. As European economic, social, and political fields develop, they cause the regular interaction of people from different societies. It is the people who are involved in these routine interactions who are most likely to come to see themselves as Europeans and as involved in a European national project. In essence, Europeans are going to be people who have the opportunity and inclination to travel to other countries and frequently interact with people in other societies in the Europe- wide economic, social, and political fields.<sup>30</sup>

European citizens have the opportunity to travel and interact more frequently with other people from different societies inside the Eurozone. Looking at data coming from the European Survey Studies or Eurobarometer, traveling abroad is usually connected to positive attitudes toward the EU. There is an article published in the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* interviewing Umberto Eco about the debt crisis in Europe and the future of Europe in general. The writer praised, among all the EU initiatives, the ERASMUS, underlining how it is not warring, but the culture that forges our identity as European. According to him, Erasmus is rarely mentioned in the business sections

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<sup>29</sup> Risse, Thomas. *A Community of Europeans?: Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Cornell University Press, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Fligstein, Neil. *Euroclash the EU, European Identity, and the Future of Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2011,16.

of newspapers but “It has created the first generation of young Europeans.”<sup>31</sup> He also argued that it should be mandatory and not only for students but for taxi drivers and professionals too; only if we spend time in other European countries, we can deepen the European identity.

People who usually identify with Europe belong to privileged social classes, are more educated, and are more likely to speak several languages. This brings to the basic definition of exclusive nationalist vs inclusive nationalist well explained in Thomas Risse’s book *A Community of Europeans?* It has been argued that elite identities have been crucially important for the evolution of the European integration project. The integration project was possible thanks to European citizens with inclusive national identities, meaning they can identify Europe as a secondary identity after their primarily national identification with the member state. Europeans with inclusive national identities are usually defined as citizens belonging to a higher social class, with better higher education, more likely to travel often in other European countries, and more likely to speak more languages; therefore, more opened to identify themselves with other Europeans and Europe as a whole.

Neil Fligstein argues how education, age, and income are essential factors for a European identity. If you are well educated and belong to the upper-middle classes, you are more likely to see a strong identification with Europe, have more positive attitudes toward immigration, and have more cosmopolitan values. However, a series of events, such as the Financial Crisis in 2008 and more recently the Migration Crisis has brought a large part of citizens to associate exclusively with their national identities. Exclusive nationalists tend to be older, less educated,

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<sup>31</sup> Riotta, Gianni. “Umberto Eco's ‘Shallow’ Europe And Dreams Of A Different Sexual Revolution.” *Lastampa.it*, Lastampa.it, 30 June 2019, [www.lastampa.it/esteri/la-stampa-in-english/2012/01/31/news/umberto-eco-s-shallow-europe-and-dreams-of-a-different-sexual-revolution-1.36509140](http://www.lastampa.it/esteri/la-stampa-in-english/2012/01/31/news/umberto-eco-s-shallow-europe-and-dreams-of-a-different-sexual-revolution-1.36509140).

less likely to travel, or speak more languages and they belong to the worker or lower classes<sup>32</sup>. They usually belong to right-wing political parties with a strong attachment to their nation's values, resulting in attitudes of hostility toward immigrants and people coming from the outside. This part of the population tends to perceive immigrants as a threat to one's national culture, and work against a process of integration in Europe, inspiring the surge of populism and right-wing movements around Europe. Hence, primordial and nationalist identities together with low occupation levels are the main sources of Euroscepticism.

According to Thomas Risse, we can distinguish two groups of people regarding their identification level with Europe:

On the one hand, there are “the Europeans” and even a small group of “Eurostars” who interact transnationally, are highly educated, have high-skilled occupational levels, and hold mostly cosmopolitan values. This group feels very much attached to Europe and the EU. On the other hand, exclusive nationalists who reject Europe and the EU have less transnational interactions, lower education levels, and work mostly in blue-collar jobs. While both groups hold strong feelings—either positive or negative—about Europe and the EU, there is a large group in the middle who identifies with Europe as a secondary identity, the inclusive nationalists.<sup>33</sup>

Identifying these two groups of “Europeans” it is essential to understand how citizens in Europe reacted to the refugee crisis.

This literature review has produced critical concepts that I will continue to develop in relation to the influx of refugees to Europe. As we can see, in recent years, the question of a European identity has produced a lot of materials and research. However, scholars can not still agree on a standard definition of European identity. The majority admit that European identity is in the making; hence a clear definition of what it means is still ambiguous. It is a possibility that, if a strong European identity existed, the EU would have been able to deal with the refugee crisis

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<sup>32</sup> Risse, Thomas. *A Community of Europeans?: Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Cornell University Press, 2010, 49.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 49.

in a very different way. Still today, there is a strong division between the way European identity is conceived through political discourses and the EU's actual policies to strengthen the sense of belonging to a common identity. This does not exclude the fact that the EU is an unprecedented experiment in history; the EU can still be considered a successful project; nevertheless, more vigorous policies are needed to forge a stronger identity among citizens.

### 3. Methodology

In this thesis, I document and analyze as much as possible the meaning of a European identity and apply it to one of the biggest challenges for the EU posed by the Refugee/Migrant crisis. Among all the many difficulties that the EU had to face in the last few years, the Migrant/Refugee Crisis in Europe uniquely challenges the meaning of a European identity and the integration project. The refugee crisis is a perfect illustration of the limitations connected to the European integration project and the paradox and contradictions behind the idea of an inclusive form of identity in Europe. As mentioned in the literature review, Europeans shared the same set of values, such as respect for human rights, freedoms, religious tolerance, democracy, respect for diversity, and more, which makes them "Europeans". However, these values do not extend to refugees and migrants who are excluded continuously from the European society and nearly dehumanized. The Schengen agreement promotes a borderless Europe, and the same EU has praised them as the end of borders; however, the arrival of migrants from outside Europe provoked the reintroduction and reinforcement of the same boundaries. I will focus on borders and Fortress Europe, where the European identity is constructed and the sense of Europeanness is elaborated.

Immigration policies in Europe have become more and more rigid and subject to EU regulations. The year 2015/ 2016 represents the peak of the crisis in Europe, with large waves of migrants, never seen before in the modern history of Europe, arriving in the Mediterranean. Countries located in the South of Europe and especially the island of Lampedusa in the Mediterranean have become the symbol of Fortress Europe, a term used to illustrate the EU's attempt to close its borders to non-EU citizens or from whoever comes from the outside. With free and open borders in Europe, more refugees and migrants were able to pass from one



member country member to another, generating chaos in the EU, incapable of keeping under control the number of refugees entering the country. It seems that the success of the Schengenland leads inevitably to Fortress Europe.

The removal of borders inside Europe led to a stronger sense of identification between Europeans living in the same EU zone and, at the same time, a stronger sense of exclusion from whom comes from the outside. For this reason, I decided to focus on the migrant emergency in Europe to show the fragility and weakness of a European identity and European integration project which claims to be inclusive of cultural diversity. The creation of EU citizenship and identity created a division between "us", those inside the EU, and "them", "the other" often identified as the immigrants. For my refugee case study, I decided to focus on texts that analyze the role of borders, the Mediterranean Sea, and Fortress Europe to better represent European identity in relation to the migrant crisis.

When I started researching this topic, I noticed how discussions and literature investigating European identity lacked clarity and coherence. Theories regarding a European identity seem to fall into ambiguity, without a clear definition of what this identity means and implies. This is particularly true if applied to the case study of the refugee crisis.

Most of the information I have gathered for my thesis comes from academic and scholarly articles focused on European studies and refugee issues. The Internet has been a fundamental instrument, especially Google Scholar's use gave me access to a range of different articles focused on European identity. Together with Google Scholar, the University of San Francisco's library, Gleeson Library, provides me access to most articles and books throughout my thesis.

A limitation I noticed while I was researching is the lack of case studies related to the European identity. The majority of the resources I have found focused on the meaning and existence of a European identity and the different EU policies adopted through times; nevertheless, they do not always apply this identity concept to a specific case study. The Financial Crisis, the Migration Crisis, Brexit, and even Covid-19 are excellent examples of a European identity's fragility and inconsistency. Every time the EU is facing a crisis, there is an inevitable return to nationalist and sometimes extremist identities. I did not find specific case studies focused on European identity applied to a particular event, except Brexit, which is probably the most used case study to show the inefficiency of EU integration policies. The way these events have threatened and put at risk a European identity is hardly explored by scholars, limiting themselves to mention them briefly. This is why I decided to "test" the concept of European identity on a specific case study.

One of the biggest challenges was applying the concept of European identity in the refugee crisis context. I decided to focus on the idea of border imperialism and fortress Europe to elucidate better how borders play a fundamental role in identity construction and how Europe has become a Fortress in which some individuals can enter, while others will inevitably clash with European culture. It is also important to remember that the threat to one's identity and culture is only a small part of the Migration Crisis. The role of media in Europe is probably one of the main reasons for negative attitudes toward immigrants, but this, of course, will not be part of my thesis, and it requires a thesis of its own.

Other critical primary resources used in my thesis are official legal documents issued by the European Parliament. The Treaty of Rome and the Treaty of Paris have some legal backgrounds that can be useful; however, the concept of European identity was first introduced

in the '70s. From then on, it will be considered a priority for the EC agenda. For instance, in 1973, the “Declaration on European Identity” drafted in the Copenhagen European Summit introduced the importance of cooperation among the Nine-member states to face global threats. The Maastricht Treaty in 1993 is another crucial document to understand better the European identity and the concept of European citizenship. Together with treaties, speeches made by influential political figures on European identity issues helped me better understand how they perceive the integration process.

The European Union's official website, [Europa.eu](http://europa.eu), is essential to find a wide range of official documents, publications, data, statistics, policy reviews, and more. It is possible to find the necessary information on how the EU works, its goals, strategies, latest news, and links to other websites. In addition to that, the official website of the research and studies center on Europe, Foundation Robert Schuman, gives access to information on European issues and the meaning of European identity. It is the reference research center developing studies on the European Union, specifically constructed to promote the construction of Europe and its policies promoting its goals everywhere around Europe. It contains beneficial research papers, publications and it organizes conferences on critical European issues.

Also, I use data and surveys from Eurobarometer to illustrate better the attitudes of European toward refugees and their sense of belonging to the same identity. Established in 1974, Eurobarometer is the official European Commission survey system and contains immense resources with interviews and surveys made in every EU country on different topics. It investigates the feelings and reactions of specific social groups selected to analyze a particular subject. In addition to Eurobarometer, Frontex reports on the EU parliament's official website

offer insights into the European Union's migratory situation and the challenges represented by border management and security.

Finally, I am originally from Italy, and back in 2015, I was about to start my first semester as an undergraduate student. At that time, the refugee crisis was at its peak, and it was bombarding every Italian newspaper or tv channel. In my contemporary history class, we often discussed the problems of integration and the threat people felt to their own culture and identity. The Mediterranean Sea and the Island of Lampedusa became the symbol of the crisis and Fortress Europe, and being geographically close to it, made me interested in this topic in the first place. Consequently, some of the information used directly comes from my undergraduate lectures and experiences.

## 4. Case Study: Refugee Crisis in Europe

### 4.1 Background

This thesis uses the current refugee and migrant crisis as an illustrative example to show the challenges the EU faces regarding its integration project and European identity construction. The EU is constantly confronted with the obstacle of finding a coherent political, cultural, and social identity; however, the crisis has shown its fragility and substantial lack of solidarity when it was needed. But if European identity is still not well defined, how can the refugees' crisis threaten European culture?

Author Biedenkopf and his co-authors in the book *What holds Europe Together?* ask:

What is European culture? What is Europe? These are questions that must be constantly posed anew. So long as Europe is of the present, and not simply the past, they can never be conclusively answered. Europe's identity is something that must be negotiated by its peoples and institutions. Europeans can and must adapt themselves and their institutions, so that European values, traditions, and conceptions of life can live on and be effective. At the same time, the Union and its citizens must make their values endure as a basis of a common identity through ever-changing conditions.<sup>34</sup>

The authors explain that the meaning of being European must be constantly negotiated because conditions are always changing in Europe. The cohesion of the EU is possible only through the solidarity of member states. As we said before, the meaning of identity is complicated and ambiguous, implying a component of sameness and distinctiveness at the same time. Collective identities are not stable, fixed, and unique as nationalists often presuppose, but they are subjected to change from external circumstances. Authors Wodak and Boukala state in their “European Identities and the Revival of nationalism in the European Union: “A European identity defined as a collective identity unifies the members of the European Union or the residents of Europe and

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<sup>34</sup> Michalski, Krzysztof, ed. *What Holds Europe Together?* Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2006,97.

excludes the 'Others', those outside of Europe's boundaries.”<sup>35</sup> Consequently, we can conclude that there is a component of inclusiveness and exclusiveness in the same European identity concept that the refugee crisis magnifies. Those coming from outside Europe are identified as "the other" who paradoxically make European identity stronger since identifying the other is almost necessary for identity construction processes. At the same time, a crisis such as the migrant one led to the rise of EU skeptic political ideologies expressed by far-right parties. There has been the adoption of strict immigration measures against outsiders. The rhetoric of exclusion has become part of the discourse on European identity and European culture since clear boundaries between "us" and "them" must be defined.

The refugee crisis in 2015/2016 tested the EU's solidarity to deal with a situation of these dimensions and the existence of a common European identity, showing its fragility and paradox at the same time. Tensions in everyday life started to surge in Europeans lives with the arrival of masses of non-European immigrants. The sudden appearance of asylum seekers and refugees from Arab and African countries, Muslim or non-Muslim, generated panic and confusion in the European governments and populations. In 2015 and 2016, according to Eurostat, more than 1.2 million refugees seek asylum in the EU, nearly as twice more than in previous years, and media and politicians labeled the problem as the Refugee/Migrant Crisis.<sup>36</sup>

This situation was unprecedented in the history of modern Europe. Brexit is often regarded as a direct consequence of migration in Europe. European policies such as the Schengen Agreement that provides for freedom of movement between member states started to collapse, and reveal their inefficiencies were revealed during the crisis. European diplomats were

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<sup>35</sup> Wodak, Ruth, and Salomi Boukala. "European Identities and the Revival of Nationalism in the European Union." *Discourse Analysis, Policy Analysis, and the Borders of EU Identity*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2015, pp.89.

<sup>36</sup> Eurostat,2016.

caught by surprise, struggling to manage compassion, balance, and support for people who chose exile for economic, security, and personal reasons. At the same time, the EU was unable to develop a common migration policy that could work for all member countries.

It is essential to mention that all EU member states have signed the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Still, in practice, their commitment to it has been partial and not always visible. Some national governments have tried to avoid their legal obligations in processing applications for asylum. Other states acted with the mass deportation of refugees and asylum seekers without considering their claims first, violating the Convention's rules. The UK, for instance, introduced tough policies to isolate and marginalize the refugee community who already entered Europe. The problem lies in the fact that European immigration policy is full of contradictions and paradoxes, and the tragic consequence is the loss of human lives. Since 1988, more than 16,000 migrants have died in an attempt to reach the Mediterranean. The majority drowned at sea, and others committed suicide in detention centers when their asylum application was rejected. Female migrants trying to reach Europe have frequently been victims of rape and sexual violence from other migrants or the same police. Refugees have been found themselves in perennial incertitude or limbo, unable to become part of European society.

Between 2015 and 2016, member states agreed on a series of measures to share responsibility for the refugees who already were on European soil and manage possible future flows. The EU spent several billion euros to create a common asylum and migration policy trying to support member states in accommodating migrants and refugees. Referring to the budget and the EU funding on migration inside the Union in 2014-2020<sup>37</sup>, the two main funding

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<sup>37</sup> "Migration and Asylum: EPRS." *European Parliament*, [www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/infographics/migration/public/index.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/infographics/migration/public/index.html).

tools are considered the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Borders and Visa strand of the Internal Security Fund (ISF). According to the EU parliament resources, AMIF has a budget of €6.89 billion and ISF Borders and Visa of €2.76 billion making the total budget of €9.65 billion. The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is involved in national and EU actions to promote and manage in an efficient way the arrival of migrants with the development of a common approach to migration. AMIF funds initiatives aiming at support member states for the integration of migrants. Due to the crisis in 2015 and 2016, the initial budget of €3.14 billion was increased to €6.89 billion at the end of the year 2017. 78% of the AMIF resources were distributed to member states in order to adopt multi-year national programs. The remaining funds are used to support other actions of interest for the EU, transnational actions, emergency assistance or the European Migration Network. The Internal Security Fund Borders and Visa (ISF) has the main objective of contributing to the level of security in the European Union, promoting a strict control and protection of external borders and issuing of Schengen visas. It serves as a way to detect illegal immigration through borders and visas. Its budget ranges among €3.89 billion for the years 2014-2020, and it is used for specific Frontex equipment, coordination, cooperation and administration. 65% of the resources are used for shared management among the member states. All members participated in the increase and improvement of ISF borders and Visa instruments, with the exceptions of Ireland and the United Kingdom. Once again, the emergency represented by the migration crisis pushed for a large increase of the initial budget. Both the ISF and AMIF belong to the area of home affairs which includes another six decentralized agencies with resources of €2.13 billion, later increased to €4.14 billion. In addition to that, the EU parliament and Council has to mobilize a series of



additional resources making the total amount to respond to the crisis and the external borders control more than €20 billion.

Another budget tool that is being used in response to the migration crisis in Europe is the EU Trust Funds: the Madad Trust Fund and the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The Madad Trust Fund was a response to the Syrian crisis and provides aid for Syria's neighbouring countries. It is a fund created to help refugees and their host communities with the largest part of the fund financing actions in Turkey. The Emergency Trust Fund for Africa was created to address irregular immigration and displaced people in Africa, with the main objective of encouraging people to stay in their countries instead of embarking in the Mediterranean to reach Europe. It is important to remember that the majority of these funds come from the EU budget and rarely from contributions from each member state.

In 2020, while the member states in the EU were also facing the threat represented by Covid-19 crisis, they decided the priorities for the Union for the next years by agreeing to a massive recovery fund for the damages represented by the pandemic to the EU's economy. In the month of July 2020, there has been four intense days of negotiations for the EU in which the leaders agreed in a new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and Recovery Fund. The MFF is the European Union's budget that usually covers 7 years. In a few words, the EU migration policy was only a small part of the budget representing 0.93% for the MFF 2014-2020.<sup>38</sup> Considering the next 7 years, 2021-2027, the Commission decided to increase the resources and the budget to support migration and borders policies; in particular the budget would have increased from €10 billion for the years 2014-2020 to €31 billion for the next seven years, 2021-

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<sup>38</sup> "What Does the New EU Budget Have in Store for Migration and Asylum?" *PROTECT The Right to International Protection*, 29 July 2020, [protectproject.w.uib.no/what-does-the-new-eu-budget-have-in-store-for-migration-and-asylum/](https://protectproject.w.uib.no/what-does-the-new-eu-budget-have-in-store-for-migration-and-asylum/).

2027, nearly three times more than the previous one. The main goal is to strengthen border control, Frontex and to develop a common and standard agreement on immigration. As we can see, sharing responsibilities among member states remain one of the priorities of the new framework.

Despite trying to achieve a common policy on refugees, some countries ended up taking in more refugees. Some countries were more welcoming toward refugees and migrants than others; for instance, Germany and Sweden are often considered the most welcoming member states. More specifically, Germany became, since 2012, the number one destination country for asylum seekers in Europe with 442,000 applications just in the year 2015<sup>39</sup>. Sweden has around 1,600 applicants for every 100,000 people, receiving more refugees per capita than any other EU country in 2015. These numbers are huge if compared to France with only 110 applicants per 100,000 people and the UK with 60 asylum seekers per 100,000 people in 2015. Sweden and Germany have been often referred to as the most refugee-friendly countries in Europe overall. These countries tend to have a strong inclusive culture with a more liberal asylum regime. The importance of respecting the Schengen cooperation and giving an overall idea of solidarity in the EU may be what pushed some countries to take a different and more welcoming position, while other member countries have resisted accepting refugees.

The two main routes to arrive in Europe are from Turkey to the Greek islands and from North Africa to the Italian island of Lampedusa in Sicily. Italy and Greece became the “hot spots” for migrants arrivals, and they are considered entry or arrival countries where asylum seekers came first. The majority of refugees arriving in southern Europe had the precise

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<sup>39</sup> “Record 1.3 Million Sought Asylum in Europe in 2015.” *Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project*, Pew Research Center, 20 Aug. 2020, [www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/](http://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/).

objective of reaching countries located in northern Europe such as Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands, considered a better option for economic opportunities and quality of life. However, even if Italy and Greece were not the final destination for the majority of refugees, they were the main point of entry with about 850,000 arrivals in Greece and 153,842 in Italy only in 2015. Most of the administrative and legal responsibilities were put in Greece's and Italy's hands, who were overwhelmed by the system and incapable of dealing with asylum seekers' numbers. Following the Dublin Convention, these countries located in the Mediterranean had the whole responsibility for considering each refugee's and determining whether they were eligible for resettlement or whether they would be repatriated.

As Frontex's report in 2015 states:

As the vast majority of migrants arrive undocumented, screening activities are essential to properly verify their declaration of nationality. False declarations of nationality are common among nationals who are unlikely to obtain asylum in the EU or who are liable to be returned to their country of origin or transit, or who perceive an advantage in speeding up their journey. With large numbers of arrivals remaining essentially doubtful for a variety of reasons, false identification documents, no identification documents, concerns over the validity of claimed nationality, etc., and with no thorough check nor any penalty for those making such false declarations, there is a risk that some persons representing a security threat for the EU will take advantage of this situation.<sup>40</sup>

Consequently, Greece's and Italy's registration process are of fundamental importance for the security of Europe. Nevertheless, the failure to register and process single cases both in Greece and Italy is already a signal of a fragile support system.

The situation pushed the German government to negotiate an agreement with Turkey in 2016, a desperate attempt to control the number of refugees and migrants from Turkey to the Greek islands. It was intended to discourage refugees arriving in Europe. In exchange, the EU

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<sup>40</sup>Frontex (EU body or agency). "Frontex General Report 2015." *Publications Office of the European Union*, Publications Office of the European Union, 21 July 2016, [op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/474bb018-b537-11e6-9e3c-01aa75ed71a1](http://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/474bb018-b537-11e6-9e3c-01aa75ed71a1).

agreed to resettle one Syrian refugee from Turkey for each person who was returned to their facilities. The agreement was primarily meant to help Greece; however, when the number of refugees crossing Turkey to arrive in Greece decreased, the number of refugees arriving in Italy doubled with the EU-Turkey agreement's approval. In fact, at the beginning of 2016, Italy received more than 90,000 migrants and, according to the UNHCR more than 2,500 people lost their lives in the Mediterranean between January and May 2016<sup>41</sup>. At the end of the year 2016, Italy received a total of 181,436 sea arrivals with an estimated 4,578 people who died or went missing.

European migration policies were intended to manage and control the chaos inside the continent; however, their exclusionary character did little to challenge the rise of nationalism and populism in member countries. Protests and acts of racism increased all around Europe, with fascist resurgences undermining the democracy of European governments. From one side, migrants were recognized as a vital part of the job market and economy; from the other side, the governments contributed to the model of fortress Europe by supporting increased border enforcement.

The situation has also been labeled as “the Schengen crisis” since The Schengen Agreement, which abolished internal borders in order to allow free mobility between member states in the EU, became a problem for the first time. Mobility among member states is considered a privilege for European citizens and a way to increase a sense of European belonging due to citizens’ constant interaction from different countries. Nevertheless, the lack of

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<sup>41</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “Mediterranean Death Toll Soars in First 5 Months of 2016.” *UNHCR*, [www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/5/574db9d94/mediterranean-death-toll-soars-first-5-months-2016.html](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/5/574db9d94/mediterranean-death-toll-soars-first-5-months-2016.html).

barriers became a problem in the context of the refugee crisis and the reintroduction or, at least, a clear delineation of boundaries became once again necessary.

The Schengen cooperation started back in 1985, establishing freedom and free mobility of goods, services, capital, and people inside the European community. In 1997 with the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Schengen cooperation became part of the EU project of integration. Only in the future would it reveal its fragility with the incapability of managing immigrants and refugees moving from one member state to another. Most importantly, the Schengen area includes countries with very different legal structures, such as Switzerland or Norway, that are not officially in the EU, making it harder to adhere to EU migration policies. The refugee crisis has demonstrated Schengen's inner fragilities, showing huge differences between states participating in the agreement. The biggest paradox represented by the refugee crisis is probably the need to contain immigrants from one side and the necessity to maintain a borderless territory to respect the values of free mobility from another side.

#### **4.2 Euroscepticism and Rise of Populism**

As mentioned in the literature review, Thomas Risse's distinction between inclusive identity and exclusive national identity in his book *A Community of Europeans?* can provide assistance in understanding citizen's responses to the refugee crisis in Europe and the consequent rise of populism in the EU. Inclusive nationalists are those who identify both with their nation-state and Europe, supporting the European integration project; exclusive nationalists on the other side see their national identity as the only possible identification. Exclusive nationalists, however, are more likely to be Eurosceptic and xenophobic since other types of identities, such as the European one, are excluded. Factors like age, education, income, and social class are fundamental to determine the distinction. People who are young, well educated, and coming

from an upper or middle class have higher chances of connecting to Europe and European identity. It has often been said how European elites founded the European project since they benefit from integration. They are more likely to speak more languages, travel around the world and in Europe, and have more knowledge about the EU institutions. Having more cosmopolitan values could also mean positive attitudes toward immigrants and refugees arriving in Europe.

American sociologist Neil Fligstein sustains that higher education and constant interaction among people can lead to a more potent form of European identity:

Deutsch's theory helps us make sense of what has and has not happened in Europe in the past fifty years. A European identity is first and foremost going to arise among people who associate with each other across national boundaries. As European economic, social, and political fields develop, they cause the regular interaction of people from different societies. It is the people who are involved in these routine interactions who are most likely to come to see themselves as Europeans and as involved in a European national project. In essence, Europeans are going to be people who have the opportunity and inclination to travel to other countries and frequently interact with people in other societies in the Europe- wide economic, social, and political fields.<sup>42</sup>

Traveling abroad is generally considered a fundamental element connected to positive attitudes with the EU. The more people travel, the more they seem to identify with Europe as a whole. An interaction that could be seen from the migration point of view, in which foreigners' arrival is not seen as a possible threat to one's culture and identity. An example to illustrate this concept is represented by Erasmus Programme which has become one of the symbols of the construction of European identity. It was specifically created in 1987 with the main objective of consolidating a common identity among students who have the opportunity to study and live in another European country for a certain time, creating the so-called Erasmus Citizen or Erasmus Generation.

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<sup>42</sup> Fligstein, Neil. *Euroclash the EU, European Identity, and the Future of Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2011,16.

On the other hand, exclusive nationalists tend to be older and less educated. They usually hold very hostile attitudes toward immigrants and refugees or foreigners in general, and everything that comes from the outside is perceived as a threat to their national culture. According to Risse, primordial and strong national identities go together with low skilled jobs and low education levels, and they are a powerful source of Euroscepticism and xenophobia. One example to consider is Brexit. Many case studies found out that Brexit voters were more likely to have lower levels of education. Researchers from the University of Leicester sustained that if more people in the UK went to university, the outcome of the vote would have been different. They sustained that access to higher education has been fundamental in determining how people voted<sup>43</sup>. Age and gender were other important factors, but not as significant as education level. The result was that university educated British people voted to stay in the EU and had a better knowledge of the EU institutions.

Exclusive nationalists are more likely to hold negative views toward migrants coming to the EU and more likely to belong to Eurosceptic political parties. The chaos and confusion the crisis created facilitated the rise of Eurosceptical populist parties and movements that were able to mobilize a large part of the population. Eurosceptic parties did not develop sentiments against the EU and migration; but they took advantage of the present situation to mobilize attitudes and feelings already existing among the minority of Europeans.<sup>44</sup> An example is the Front National of Jean-Marie Le Pen, one of the most extremist right-wing party in Europe, containing anti-Semitic and other racist elements. The party has assumed in the last years very strong anti-immigration, Islamophobic positions and a sense of strong protection of French people and

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<sup>43</sup> Jarvis, Jacob. "Researcher: 'Brexit Vote Would Have Changed If More Went to Uni'." *LeicestershireLive*, 8 Aug. 2017, [www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/research-leicester-academic-says-brexit-293324](http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/research-leicester-academic-says-brexit-293324).

<sup>44</sup> Börzel, Tanja A., and Thomas Risse. "From the Euro to the Schengen Crises: European Integration Theories, Politicization, and Identity Politics." *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2017, pp. 83–108.

French economy against the rest of the world and the same EU. The party has expressed several times its position against the role of the EU, claiming a strong French nationalism, and gaining support from the working class and the unemployed. In Austria, the revival of nationalist tendencies is represented by Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), founded back in 1955. It represents a form of right-wing populist extremism, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim. If it is true that this party has existed for a long time, the crucial years for the immigration crisis, such as 2016, provoked a sharp rise of its popularity with the promotion of anti-EU and anti-immigrant policies. At the same time, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) won 12.6 % in 2017 upsetting the political system in Germany and, in the same year, politician Andrej Babis, strongly anti-immigration, became Czech Republic's Prime Minister.<sup>45</sup> Particularly in Germany, the decision of Angela Merkel to accept more refugees from Syria than other EU countries provoked a crisis in Germany and the rapid rise of AfD.

Another perfect example of the rise of populism in Europe is represented by far-right Lega Nord in Italy. Its leader, Matteo Salvini, was able to obtain nearly 17% of the vote in national elections back in 2018, exceeding the expectations and rising concern about a new possible form of fascism in Italy. Salvini gained most of his support from the norther regions of Italy such as Lombardy, Piedmont and Veneto, with a new form of populism in Italy that was able to capture the attention of a huge number of voters. Historically, La Lega Nord was founded with the precise objective of giving more independence to Italy's norther regions, creating a strong division between South and North. Nevertheless, with the refugees and Euro crisis, Salvini directed his ideas toward a sharp criticism of the EU institutions and of the Euro in

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<sup>45</sup> Galston, William A. "The Rise of European Populism and the Collapse of the Center-Left." *Brookings*, Brookings, 8 Mar. 2018, [www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/03/08/the-rise-of-european-populism-and-the-collapse-of-the-center-left/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/03/08/the-rise-of-european-populism-and-the-collapse-of-the-center-left/).



general, defining the use of Euro as a “Crime against humanity”<sup>46</sup> and asking for an exit of Italy from the EU. With the refugee crisis in 2015, the League took advantage of the anger of Italians toward the large number of migrants arriving in the Mediterranean to focus its ideologies against the arrival of refugees and immigrants in Italy. Salvini became a champion in developing harsh migration rules, trying to stop migrant ship for touching the Italian soil. At the very beginning of 2020, he was accused of abusing power while Minister of Interior when, back in 2019, he prevented and blocked a migrant ship from arriving in Lampedusa. He refused to let 100 migrants land in Italy, leaving them at sea and in terrible conditions, violating international conventions on refugees’ rights. Italy’s senate has voted recently to put Salvini on trial for holding migrants at sea, possible facing at least 15 years in prison.<sup>47</sup>

If it is true that right-wing extremist parties have always existed in Europe, migration contributed hugely to the fortification of populism in Europe. If we look at the agenda of the majority of populist parties, the immigration and refugee issues represent their top priority, used to exploit fear of terrorism and cultural threats. The increased support for the populist right provoked a sharp decline for the center-left and moderate parties, while center-right parties felt the need to shift toward a populist rhetoric in order to gain support and popularity. An example is Silvio Berlusconi, leader of Forza Italia who never really had strong attitudes toward refugees and immigrants but decided to deport more than 600,000 refugees who has arrived in Italy since 2015.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> “Lega, Salvini Contro Euro: 'Crimine Contro L'umanità' - Politica.” *ANSA.it*, [www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/politica/2013/12/15/Lega-Salvini-contro-euro-Crimine-contro-umanita-\\_9781968.html](http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/politica/2013/12/15/Lega-Salvini-contro-euro-Crimine-contro-umanita-_9781968.html).

<sup>47</sup> “Italy Salvini: Senate Votes for Far-Right Leader to Face Trial.” *BBC News*, BBC, 12 Feb. 2020, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51473239](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51473239).

<sup>48</sup> Galston, William A. “The Rise of European Populism and the Collapse of the Center-Left.” *Brookings*, Brookings, 8 Mar. 2018, [www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/03/08/the-rise-of-european-populism-and-the-collapse-of-the-center-left/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/03/08/the-rise-of-european-populism-and-the-collapse-of-the-center-left/).

It is interesting to notice how discourses around preserving a European culture were used against the same EU as incapable of unity and solidarity. There was a process of politicizing<sup>49</sup> the migrant and refugee crisis from these political parties, especially from the identity point of view. Their debates focused on the main difference between them vs. us, or inside vs. outside. They promoted an idea of fortress Europe that must preserve its purity together with the importance of nationalism and national history and culture, which is threatened. The French Front National, the German AfD, the Polish PiS, and the Italian La Lega Nord are examples of nationalistic, right-wing populist parties supporting countries leaving the EU from one side and the exclusion of refugees and migrants in Europe from the other. Not all nationalist parties in Europe supported an exit from the EU, but the majority was clearly against refugees' arrival and welcoming on their soil. Their political discourses were able to cause insecurity among citizens who felt threatened by foreigners, complaining about mobilizing more robust security measures. There is the formation of a "Myth of Invasion",<sup>50</sup> to use the term taken from Hein De Haas's essay on "The Myth of Invasion: the inconvenient realities of Africa migration to Europe". Even if the essay was published years before the migration crisis in 2015, the term is very useful to understand how far-right political parties are exploiting the idea of an invasion coming from African or Middle Eastern countries which can possibly threaten their culture and heritage. More specifically, the role of media is fundamental in creating sensational images, giving the idea of waves of migrants trying desperately to reach Europe. Images of extreme poverty, violence, degradation are common in the media to exploit typical stereotypes of violent or poor migrants.

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<sup>49</sup> Börzel, Tanja A., and Thomas Risse. "From the Euro to the Schengen Crises: European Integration Theories, Politicization, and Identity Politics." *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2017, pp. 83–108.

<sup>50</sup> De Haas, Hein. "The myth of invasion: the inconvenient realities of African migration to Europe." *Third world quarterly* 29, no. 7 (2008): 1305-1322.

Politicians and leaders are the one using terms such as “invasion” which arouse feelings of fear among citizens. If there is also, from one side, the political and economic aspect that migrants could steal jobs from Europeans, the depiction of an invasion of migrants that could put in danger European identity seem to be the most powerful.

These political parties were asking for severe restrictions of refugees in Europe, lamenting the fact that Europe was receiving too many refugees, going against an idea of a multicultural Europe. They were extremely successful in spreading anti-immigration sentiments all around Europe, creating further chaos in the EU.

### **4.3 European Identity in crisis?**

In September 2016, the European Commission president, Jean Claude Juncker, addressed the European parliament with a plan for uniting Europe, stating that the EU faces an existential and unprecedented crisis.<sup>51</sup> Two main events brought him to define the crisis as existential; the first event is the UK leaving the EU in 2016, known as the Brexit effect. The second is the migrant/refugee crisis, expressing the necessity to control and manage the vast numbers of migrants arriving from Africa and the Middle East. The two events are more connected to each other than it might happen since the incapability of managing the refugee crisis is often considered as one of the main reasons for the UK to leave the EU.

At the time, border control and terrorism were the centers of attention, and Europeans asked for more assurance and stability from the EU. In fact, the construction of linkages connecting migrants and refugees to terrorist activities is part of the construction of migration as a threat, frequently abused by media. The EU's incapability of assuring peace and security in the

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<sup>51</sup> Rankin, Jennifer. “EU Is Facing Existential Crisis, Says Jean-Claude Juncker.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 14 Sept. 2016, [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/13/jean-claude-juncker-eu-is-facing-existential-crisis](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/13/jean-claude-juncker-eu-is-facing-existential-crisis).

territory provoked a crisis in its citizens' identity and a decreased satisfaction with the EU. Immigration flows were followed by the closing of borders and the building up of walls leading to violence and abuse of human rights. Author Michalis Bartsidis in his essay focused on the work of the French philosopher Balibar "European Paradoxes of Humanness: Discussing Etienne Balibar's work on Europe"; uses the term "internal exclusion" or "internal closure"<sup>52</sup> to describe how European governments' politics aim at excluding diversities. As soon as refugees cross the European borders, they are confined in deportation centers where they are frequently under surveillance or stocked in a situation of perennial uncertainty. According to Balibar, there is a paradoxical scheme of exclusion and inclusion in which foreigners are welcomed in the country to be later considered outsiders or aliens by the society.

The phenomenon of migration in Europe increased the fear of being exposed to economic, social, political regression and violent attacks. Looking at the Eurobarometer 84 of Autumn 2015, a significant percentage of citizens expressed their concerns toward the EU institutions with a rise in the numbers of people who do not trust the EU.<sup>53</sup> Optimism about the EU's future has been grown since 2013, but in 2015 it decreased with pessimism exceeding 40% for the first time since 2013. Looking at the second section of Standard Eurobarometer 84 about Europeans' main concerns, we can see how immigration is considered the most critical problem the EU faces. Right after immigration, citizens point out terrorism and the lack of protection and safety in the EU as the second main issue. The polls show immigration as the primary concern on a national level, not only on a European one.

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<sup>52</sup> Bartsidis, Michalis. "European Paradoxes of Humanness: Discussing Etienne Balibar's Work on Europe." *Cultural Critique*, vol. 106, no. 1, 2020, pp173.

<sup>53</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 84, December 2015,8.

On another section focused on negative and positive feelings toward immigration; it is interesting to notice how most Europeans have positive feelings toward immigration of people from other EU member states. However, immigration coming from outside the EU, from non-Europeans, evoke perceptions of fear and terrorism. As the results show:

Majorities of the population have a negative feeling about immigration of people from outside the EU in 25 countries (up from 23 in spring 2015), in particular in Slovakia (86%), Latvia (86%), Hungary (82%), the Czech Republic (81%) and Estonia (81%). Conversely, majorities of the population take a positive view of the immigration of people from outside the EU in Sweden (70%), Spain (53%) and Ireland (49%). (...) Compared with spring 2015, negative views have gained ground in 18 countries, most notably in Romania (54%, +20 percentage points) and Slovenia (76%, +19).<sup>54</sup>

Not only Europeans perceived in a negative way immigration from outside Europe, but these feelings have increased in several countries if compared to the same analysis done in Spring 2015.

When asked about measures to fight illegal immigration, nine Europeans out of ten say that the EU needs more decisive steps to fight illegal immigration coming from outside Europe, and these actions should involve the EU on a national level. More than two-thirds of Europeans say they favor a common European policy on migration; however, the results also show how the respondents have changed their minds since Spring 2015 and are unsure about the possibility of finding a joint agreement on migration.

As we can see from the Eurobarometer results, the public perception is that the EU was unprepared to handle the enormous waves of populations entering the territory. Moreover, the phenomenon of migration was later accompanied by a series of terrorist attacks in European's cities for which migration is often unjustly blamed for. A direct consequence of these two dynamics was the feeling of frustration and fear regarding the preservation of European identity

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<sup>54</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 84, December 2015,27.

that seems to be threatened by the massive influx of immigrants who arrived on European soil. As author Ana-Maria Bolborici says in her “The Immigration Crisis-Reflections concerning the crisis of European Identity”: “The core of the refugee issue is that we are facing within the European Union an identity crisis.”<sup>55</sup> An identity that was put into question for the first time with the arrival of the others.

It is also vital to remember that the refugee crisis added up to a series of events happened in previous years, such as the Financial Crisis in 2008 and the Greek Debt Crisis, overwhelming the already fragile European integration project and a sense of a common identity. These crises can be overcome only through a profound question and analysis of the meaning of European identity. Who are the Europeans? and what is European identity? As specified in my literature review, there is an ambiguity and vagueness toward the meaning of European identity with no clear answers. Nevertheless, a European identity can be considered the set of shared values with which citizens can identify. Still, values such as democracy, respect for human rights, religious tolerance, and solidarity, defined as “European” seem to be lost in the time of crises, with a return to individual nationalism.

The refugee crisis has forced the EU to admit its weakness and fragilities inside the European integration process. It seems to have threatened Europe's sense of self and its own deep identity, with the question of who is European and who is not. The crisis brought a series of reactions around Europe, specifically the protection of national and supranational territory and the need to protect European people from non-European.

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<sup>55</sup> Bolborici, Ana-Maria. "The immigration crisis–reflections concerning the crisis of European identity." *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov, Series VII: Social Sciences and Law* 9, no. 1 (2016): 40.

The study elaborated by Jérôme Fourquet for the Fondation Jean Jaurès<sup>56</sup> considers the European reactions to the migrant crisis analyzing more specifically seven European countries: France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Denmark and the UK with about 1000 people for each country. The results have shown how the majority of European public opinion agree on the importance of assisting Mediterranean countries located in the south in order to keep people there. Countries agreed on the support of these countries to assist properly refugees; with the only exception of France in which the top option, 30% of the votes, was the creation of stronger and strict borders to fight illegal immigration. Another observation that can be made is how the majority of Europeans consider a long-term solution as the most useful and effective for the migration problem, consequently a large part of the population sees the problem as continuing in the future and not temporary.

In the section dedicated to the support and acceptance of migrants, we can see a picture of Europe deeply divided. When asked about how migrants should be distributed in Europe, EU countries do not offer a cohesive response. Germany is the number one destination for refugees, while Italy and Greece are the main entry for refugees in Europe with a higher level of support for accepting immigrants in their countries and distributing them equally in the other EU countries. 86% of Germans and 69% of Italians consider their country as the one accepting more migrants compared to other EU countries. On the other side, we have countries that are not so favorable in accepting migrants, such as the UK with 44%, the Netherlands with 48%, and France with 46% people in favor of welcoming refugees. This also explains why a joint agreement among EU member states with an equal distribution of refugees in the countries has

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<sup>56</sup> Fourquet, Jérôme. "European reactions to the migrant crisis." *Fondation Jean Jaures en Foundation for European Progressive Studies* (2015).

been particularly hard. Each member states' reactions intensely depend on the political leaders and parties able to influence most of the population. For instance, this study was published in 2015, which is the beginning of the refugee crisis; later countries such as Italy will adopt more nationalist measures toward the arrival of migrants with the rise of the far-right parties and, consequently, fewer people in favor of accepting migrants. According to the study, the publication of pictures of a Syrian boy, the so-called "Aylan effect" helped increase the support in accepting migrants among the European population. In September 2015, the image of the dead body of a three years old refugee, Aylan Kurdi, started to circulate in the news and newspaper, arousing a series of strong emotions, empathy, and compassion among the public and focusing the attention on the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Different studies have shown how a single image was able to mobilize a series of donations and campaigns for Syrian refugees. Similarly, this study shows how the Aylan effect was more felt in some countries than others and how there was a shift in public opinion.

There is a division among Europeans on the acceptance of migrants in their own countries; however, there is a common consensus on the risk that migration may represent. For instance, 70% and 80% of participants agree that accepting a large portion of migrants may result in many people from Africa or the Middle East moving to Europe. Another biggest fear among citizens is represented by terrorism; 64% and 85%, respectively, in Germany and the Netherlands, think that among the masses of refugees coming here, there are terrorists. The majority of countries seem to agree on possible linkages between terrorists and migrants, not only countries directly affected by terrorism in 2015, but also other countries in which terrorist attacks did not happen. The anxiety toward terrorism remains one of the biggest worries for EU countries, and extremist and right-wing parties have often used it to exploit feelings of fear



among Europeans. Despite the widespread perceptions of anxiety among nations, the study also shows how a significant part of Europeans believe in welcoming migrants. Solidarity is present in countries that already offered a more substantial acceptance of migrants, such as Germany, Italy, and even Spain, with less favorable people in France and the UK.

Another interesting section of the study worth mentioning is dedicated to the main idea that migrants are, in fact, economic migrants and not asylum seekers, which national populist parties and their supporters sustain. The same nationalists often believe or create the idea that their own country is accepting more migrants than others. For instance, Spain and Denmark take a deficient number of asylum seekers. However, a significant part of the population believes that they accept more migrants than other countries in the EU. Studies similar to this one helps us understand the divided opinions; more specifically, these deep divisions and lack of agreement between member states are what brought to define this crisis as an existential one.

The paradox and contradiction inside the idea of a European identity is its element of inclusiveness and exclusiveness. Europe praises itself for its cultural inclusiveness, but this has not been the case for immigrants and non-Europeans. There is the need for multiculturalism, acceptance of other cultures from those inside the boundaries and borders; from another side, there is the necessity to act according to the Westphalian conception of sovereignty toward people coming from outside the borders. Since the European identity is founded on principles of inclusion of different cultures, the rejection and exclusion of immigrants fall into contradiction.

#### **4.4 Borderland Europe**

The question of borders, both figurately or physically, is essential when we talk about identity, European citizenship, or Europeanness in general. The sociology behind the role and meaning of borders is vital to understand how the other's conceptualization is produced in

contrast to a European identity. The role of borders in Europe can help to understand better how the European integration project was conceived and elaborated since they are the place where the idea of Europeanness or Whiteness is elaborated, constructing a specific political space.

The Schengen Agreement, signed in 1985, is the treaty that led most of the European countries to abolish their national borders to create a Europe without borders, the so-called Schengen Area. The Agreement is of historical importance because it ended border control among member states. The concept of free movement among European states is very ambitious, and it was conceived in the past, since the Middle Ages. After World War 2, the idea became more concrete and decisive. However, the concept of free borders created concerns and doubts among member states; there was a part supporting the idea of free Europe with no internal border checks, but another part was strongly against it, considering it as a threat to national borders. In May 1999, with the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Schengen Agreement was included in the legal structure of the European Union.

External and internal borders of Europe have become more and more critical with the migration crisis in which there is a need to define what is Europe and what is not. The new external borders are much more porous and less stable; the case of Brexit represents how countries in the EU can be confined inside the boundary, and they can become irrelevant right after. Author Francesca Romana Ammaturo says: "In this scenario, the abstract concept of the 'European border' becomes one of the fetishes of identity,' a fictitiously real reminder of the importance of insulated belonging against the contaminating effect of migration and transnational flows of individuals"<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ammaturo, Francesca Romana. "Europe and whiteness: Challenges to European identity and European citizenship in light of Brexit and the 'refugees/migrants crisis'." *European Journal of Social Theory* 22, no. 4 (2019): 554.

Borders are central in our discussion because they enable the creation of European identity and European citizenship; they produce knowledge and information regarding Europe and the other's conceptualization, the migrant. French philosopher Etienne Balibar uses the expression "Borderland"<sup>58</sup> to describe the situation in Europe, meaning a continent where borders are displaced from their original places and placed under other rules. The author questions the possibility of a new model of inclusion in Europe able to consider the complexities, political and ethnic, present in the territory. He is looking for a way to eradicate exclusions, inequalities, and differences between citizens and non-citizens. Can Europe establish a real political integration?

Balibar discusses the meaning of European identity and the creation of European citizenship strictly connected to territory. He proposes borders as places of integration of individuals instead of isolation. The others do not become excluded, but they become integrated with differences. Europe is a borderland because there are numerous borders all over the territory; however, Europe can be transformed into an example of integration. According to him: "Borderland is the name of the place where the opposites flow into one another, where 'strangers' can be at the same time stigmatized and indiscernible from 'ourselves', where the notion of citizenship, involving at the same time community and universality, once again confronts its intrinsic antinomies."<sup>59</sup> Borders in the EU have been deprived of their central significance and political/geographical meaning, becoming devices for constructing narratives around Europeanness's idea.

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<sup>58</sup> Balibar, Etienne. "Europe as borderland." *Environment and planning D: Society and space* 27, no. 2 (2009): 190-215.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 210.

Balibar's "Europe as Borderland" is fundamental to illustrate the role of borders in Europe and the meaning of political space. The space of borders represents the relationship that exists between an identity or citizenship and a European nation-state. The image of political space is a potent one. The author cites another influential author, Carlo Galli, to describe the relationship between political power and the control of borders and territorial space in general. Reporting Galli's words, the author says how:

Globalization requires a convenient political space, which is not itself global, in order to fully develop its dynamic potential. To put it shortly, if one wants to avoid at the same time the reactionary reactions to globalization which try to preserve large or small communities, and the tragic nonsense of universalized alienation ... the only possible solution is not necessarily the dream of democratic cosmopolitanism ... . The provisory determinations of our space and time also suggest the European alter- native, a European space which would become a land of differences. Not in the sense of the old political geographies, however, in which Europe was seen as the hegemonic center of the World (the era of Jus publicum Europaeum), or [in Hegelian terms] the region where the Spirit becomes conscious of itself, or the borderland [between the World Camps] which is like a bleeding wound (the era of the Cold War). We are thinking, rather, of Europe recovering after its nihilistic decline... no longer fancying to bring salvation to the World, but `only' to build a singular political space which is not meaningless.<sup>60</sup>

As we can see, the conceptualization of political space is connected to a space of power in which territories can create specific identities and individuals are categorized. Borders and territories are inextricably related to power and sovereignty, in this case, European authority.

The EU has constructed a confederation of independent states without establishing specific limits and the possibility of future expansions. The member states give up part of the sovereignty to be subjected to some supranational identities and authorities while maintaining strong national sovereignty. As Balibar says: "The EU is, therefore, as much permeated or `invaded' by the World through its borders as it is `protected' or `isolated' by them from the rest of the world."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 194.

Political spaces are consequently directly correlated to European borders. The image of political space is compelling to describe the deep connection between politics and territory, spaces and borders. As we said many times now, borders are potent instruments in the government's hands to oppress, exclude, and segregate people from the outside. According to Balibar, there are different types of conflicts happening on borders and political space, such as the clash of civilization, the global network, the center-periphery, and crossover conflicts<sup>62</sup>. For instance, the most evident conflict happening with the refugee crisis is represented by the clash of civilizations, meaning more specifically, religious conflicts happening at the borders. The Islam versus Western world/Christianity is probably the most evident conflict in which refugees' arrival is seen as an Islamic invasion threatening Europe's own culture and religious tradition, transforming borders into competition zones between different civilizations.

Another conflict explained by the author that can be useful for the refugee case study is center-periphery conflict. It refers to the opposition between center and periphery elaborated by Immanuel Wallerstein about capitalism. Borders are a division for the North and South in which underdeveloped countries depend on developed countries. For Balibar, the center-periphery model is constantly applied to the European identity construction with Eurocentrism. Europe is seen as the center of the World with the concentration of powers in a single institution such as the EU. The periphery, in this case, is represented by countries located outside Europe, associated with the continent for economic reasons. The inclusion of these countries in the EU can somehow impede or stop Europeanization or the creation of a European identity. Turkey's admission to the EU is a clear example of how countries outside the center can compromise the

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<sup>62</sup> Balibar, Etienne. "Europe as Borderland." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2009, pp. 190–215.

European integration process, putting at risk a sort of political equilibrium inside the Union. The same goes for the refugee crisis in which migrants coming from outside Europe are seen as a threat to the current European cultures. There is an idea of contamination of culture, even if a common European civilization as we know is not pure. Europe's past and history can not be defined as pure because it contains different identities and cultures. Balibar states:

It is impossible to represent Europe's history as a story of pure identities, running the danger of becoming progressively alienated. Its history can be represented only in terms of constructed identities, dependent on a series of successive encounters between 'civilizations' (if one wants to keep the word), which keep taking place within the European space, enclosing populations and cultural patterns from the whole World. Just as it is necessary to acknowledge that in each of its 'regions' Europe always remains heterogeneous and differs from itself as much as it differs from others (including the 'new Europes' elsewhere in the World)..... In this sense, only a 'federal' vision of Europe, preserving its cultural differences and solidarities, can provide a viable historical project for the 'supranational' public sphere.<sup>63</sup>

The author suggests how borders can have two different meanings; both local and global, separating territories categorized as foreign, reflecting a regime of power and international order:

In another circumstance already reflecting on the example of the European space and its role in the generalization of the institution of the 'border' suggested that every border has a double meaning, local and global: it is a 'line' (more or less accepted, stable, permeable, visible, thick or thin) separating territories which, by virtue of its drawing, become 'foreign'; and it is a 'partition' or 'distribution' of the world space, which reflects the regime of meaning and power under which the World is represented as a 'unity' of different 'parts'.<sup>64</sup>

To illustrate better the role of borders, the author chose the topic of the EU security policies concerning the migrant crisis. Security policies have the precise objective of controlling who is entering the EU or, more generally, European soil. Security is also connected to the right of freedom of mobility inside the EU, making managing the refugee crisis particularly difficult. Liberty of circulation is among Europeans' most valuable rights in which a constant interaction

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<sup>63</sup> Balibar, Etienne. "Europe as borderland." *Environment and planning D: Society and space* 27, no. 2 (2009): 200.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid,201.

between different cultures can forge a common identity. However, from another point of view, this mobility situation has created a violent and brutal exclusion of non-Europeans, identifying the migrant as the political enemy of Europe and a threat to European culture. As we mentioned before, borders have become the place in which different civilizations clashed and in which differences are elaborated, questioning the understanding of a European's identity. At the same time, if borders have become a place of exclusion, for Balibar, they can also be transformed into integration and acceptance of cultures, creating a progressive idea of multicultural and multiethnic Europe.

Author Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, in their essay “Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor” explain how borders have always been the place of violence and brutality since antiquity. Humans have always needed to trace a line of demarcation between what is considered good and evil, producing deaths of immigrants such as in the Mediterranean or the US-Mexico borders. They often refer to the brutality of borders as “Border War”<sup>65</sup> since wars and conflicts are produced at the border, pointing out how mapping and defining borders was a colonial domination tool. This is why they refer to borders as a method used by the government and constantly challenged by the arrival of migrants. Borders are the site of struggles and wars to highlight the increase of deaths and accidents at sea. Security policies have attracted and rejected migrants at the same time, creating a situation of constant instability. It seems that immigrants are very much needed for the capitalist system of labor, but at the same time, they are constantly kept under surveillance. As we mentioned before, borders produce the other's concept, the foreigner who comes from outside Europe. There is the specific social construction of the other, necessary to secure border policies. With European identity and

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<sup>65</sup> Mezzadra, Sandro, and Brett Neilson. *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*. Duke University Press, 2013.

European citizenship, people from different member states are not considered foreigners but belong to the same social group. Borders then determine that whoever comes from outside this specific delineation is a foreigner or an alien. For this reason, author Balibar describes borders as absurd construction:

The idea of a simple definition of what constitutes a border is, by definition, absurd: to mark out a border is precisely, to define a territory, to delimit it, and so to register the identity of that territory, or confer one upon it. Conversely, however, to define or identify in general is nothing other than to trace a border, to assign boundaries or borders (in Greek, *horos*; in Latin, *finis* or *terminus*; in German, *Grenze*; in French, *borne*). The theorist who attempts to define what a border is in danger of going round in circles, as the very representation of the border is the precondition for any definition.<sup>66</sup>

Another concept Balibar introduced is the linguistic borders which have been abused by nation-states. Linguistic differences are another identity marker considered as the basis for collective identities. A common language in Europe was never possible and never enforced due to its rich diversity of languages in which translation from one language to another is celebrated. This is one reason why there should be an inclusion of migrant languages in European society. According to the author, Europe must eliminate some contradictions present in its construction. The main paradox for the author is that: "They arise from the fact that the construction of this supranational entity is taking place in a world where the territorial notions of 'interior' and 'exterior' are no longer completely separable, not even in a legal manner."<sup>67</sup> According to Balibar: "The current difficulty, or incapacity, of Europeans (as it is expressed by their official politics) to accept what they (confusedly) see as 'non-European' (or 'anti-European') is also a symptom of their incapacity to understand, acknowledge, and transform their own 'domestic' multiplicity."<sup>68</sup> This internal diversity in Europe must be celebrated and made

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<sup>66</sup> Balibar, Étienne. "What is a Border?." *Politics and the other scene* (2002): 76.

<sup>67</sup> Balibar, Etienne. "Europe as borderland." *Environment and planning D: Society and space* 27, no. 2 (2009): 210.

<sup>68</sup> Balibar, Etienne. "Europe as borderland." *Environment and planning D: Society and space* 27, no. 2 (2009): 210.



productive from an economic point of view instead of portraying the arrival of diversities in Europe as a threat to security and strangers' invasion.

#### **4.5 Border Imperialism**

The term “Border Imperialism” is borrowed from Harsha Walia's *Undoing Border Imperialism* published in 2013. The South Asian author uses the term imperialism, calling attention to the way borders are utilized and managed, emphasizing the connection between borders and colonialism. She questions the role of borders in our contemporary world and pushes us to rethink their primary functions. Borders are not simple delineations that separate one country from another; they are the place where displacement, racism, and exclusion happens. This is why it is crucial to understand the real function of borders and what they do to people. As a matter of fact, barriers are not natural, but they are artificially constructed by men with the specific objective of control, punish or exclude people. They are instruments of segregation, weapons in the hands of government and, in this case, of the EU.

Walia's concept of Border Imperialism is here fundamental and can be applied to the European Union case. She sees borders as the place of conflicts, violence, and power:

Border imperialism illuminates how colonial anxieties about identity and inclusion within Western borders are linked to the racist justifications for imperialist missions beyond Western borders that generate cycles of mass displacement. We are all, therefore, simultaneously separated by and bound together by the violences of border imperialism.<sup>69</sup>

Walia's discourse illustrates how borders and the reinforcement of borders are the product of colonialism and the imperialist system; borders interrupt what is defined as borderless Europe. The author perceives borders as an obstacle preventing individuals from interacting and exchanging information and knowledge. She is calling into question the actions of government and institutions which have reintroduced borders and enforced them.

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<sup>69</sup> Walia, Harsha. *Undoing border imperialism*. Vol. 6. Ak Press, 2013,6.

In the middle of the European crisis, borders have become the symbol of European identity and the definition of what is not European or what must stay outside Europe. In addition to that, borders are where the image of the other is processed and created. As author Ammaturo sustains in her essay: “Albeit in different ways, the 'refugees/migrants crisis' and Brexit both require the conceptualization of 'the other' in order to function, be it the figure of the 'migrant', the 'terrorist', or the 'European stealing our jobs'.”<sup>70</sup> Every identity construction needs the other's conceptualization to work, and during the refugee crisis, the other was identified with the refugee and the migrant.

Her book analyzes the role of borders to discuss immigration's main issue; according to her, there is a strong colonial logic behind borders since lands do not belong to anyone, but it is more true that men belong to the land. The propriety or belonging of land to a specific category of people is what the rhetoric of colonialism used to invade indigenous lands. She is committed to fighting state-imposed borders and immigration oppression that divided the rich from the poor, the white from black, or, in this case, the Europeans from the non-Europeans. Even if her case study is not specifically focused on Europe, I think her conceptualization of borders can be applied worldwide and to the European case study. In her introduction, she says how:

Border imperialism, which I propose as an alternative analytic framework, disrupts the myth of Western benevolence toward migrants. In fact, it wholly flips the script on borders; as journalist Dawn Paley aptly expresses it, 'Far from preventing violence, the border is in fact the reason it occurs.' Border imperialism depicts the processes by which the violences and precarities of displacement and migration are structurally created as well as maintained.<sup>71</sup>

Border imperialism illustrates how identity and inclusion within western borders are connected to racial justifications for imperialist missions. The violence of border imperialism lies in the fact

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<sup>70</sup> Ammaturo, Francesca Romana. "Europe and whiteness: Challenges to European identity and European citizenship in light of Brexit and the 'refugees/migrants crisis'." *European Journal of Social Theory* 22, no. 4 (2019): 556.

<sup>71</sup> Walia, Harsha. *Undoing border imperialism*. Vol. 6. Ak Press, 2013.

that it is strictly related to colonialism, uniting and separating people at the same time. Walls are a system of oppression, and the author claims a free society in which borders do not restrict people. The author describes border imperialism as “Border imperialism is characterized by the entrenchment and reentrenchment of controls against migrants, who are displaced as a result of the violence of capitalism and empire, and subsequently forced into precarious labor as a result of state illegalization and systemic social hierarchies.”<sup>72</sup> She criticizes Western imperialism's role in displacing communities and people for capitalists and state interests, limiting the inclusion of migrants into westerns state through a process of criminalization and racialization toward immigrants. Western states are then accused of being mainly responsible for determining who should migrate and under what conditions.

People have migrated from one side of the world to another since the existence of humanity. There has always been a need to move and a desire to immigrate; however, today, migration is more complicated, showing the inequality between the rich and the poor, the north or the south. Western imperialism is the most significant cause for displacement and people migration, meaning that western powers have interests in maintaining a sort of western empire, making it possible or impossible for nonwestern communities to migrate. Despite the humanitarian rhetoric used by western countries, countries such as the U.S and Europe have limited their acceptance of refugees in the last few years. As Walia says: “Contrary to popular belief about Western generosity and openness to refugees, over 80 percent of the world's refugees reside in neighboring countries within the global South.”<sup>73</sup> The reality shows how only

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<sup>72</sup> Walia, Harsha. *Undoing border imperialism*. Vol. 6. Ak Press, 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Walia, Harsha, and Andrea Smith. *Undoing Border Imperialism*. AK Press, 2014.

a small minority of the refugee population worldwide is resettled in western countries, while most are welcomed in the global South.

The topic of border control necessitates an investigation of Frontex, founded in 2004 as a substitution for the Italian project Mare Nostrum. Frontex is the central European agency with the task of border control, European Union's external fortification, and security inside the Schengen area. External borders in the EU have become more fragile and inconsistent in the last few years. Since borders are vacillating, control measures such as military aircraft have been employed to detect migrants. As Walia says: “The European network UNITED for Intercultural Action has documented 16,264 refugee deaths across Europe, most due to drowning at sea and suffocation in containers. Like migrant deaths at the US-Mexico border, this number represents the human face of border militarization policies as people are forced to seek out more clandestine and perilous routes.”<sup>74</sup>. The Mediterranean route has been defined by numerous international organizations as one of the most dangerous roads to cross for migrants; according to the United Nations, at least 33,761 people have died at sea or went missing from 2000 to 2017<sup>75</sup>.

Another essential process of border imperialism is, according to the author, the criminalization of migration and the construction of migrants as illegal and aliens. Western governments celebrate their openness and multiculturalism with the image of borderless Europe; however, parallel to this situation, there is the constant dehumanization and criminalization of migrants and refugees who come to Europe. Migrants, mostly undocumented or asylum seekers arriving illegally, are punished and deported or locked up in deportation centers. They are often

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<sup>74</sup> Walia, Harsha. *Undoing border imperialism*. Vol. 6. Ak Press, 2013,23.

<sup>75</sup> Mediterranean Crossing Still World's Deadliest for Migrants – UN Report || UN News.” *United Nations*, United Nations, news.un.org/en/story/2017/11/637162-mediterranean-crossing-still-worlds-deadliest-migrants-un-report.

accused of crimes when in fact, they just crossed borders illegally. Borders automatically transform migrants into criminals or prisoners, creating narratives around migration as an illegal process. Politicians and media significantly contributed to this image of migrants as criminals or as a threat to the state's security. The author condemns practices of incarceration and exclusion often used by the western states to mark those considered undesirable for the country. We can see how borders construct different stories, narratives, and concepts of identities; whoever crossed the borders and come from the outside of Europe is automatically labeled as illegal or a criminal.

The third construction inside border imperialism is the hierarchy of national and imperial identity belonging to the nation-state in which the outsiders are rejected. Whiteness and white supremacy are seen by the author as a dominating structure, deeply implicated in the concept of European identity, being one of the reasons why migrants and refugees are excluded from the system. It is a way to defend a system of exploitation and oppression and support a power system.

The last structuring of border imperialism is the exploitation through media of migrant labor for capitalist interests. Workers without legal citizenship are a distinct category of work concerning border imperialism. Migrant workers are often forced to survive with horrible living and working conditions supported by the state. As Walia says:

The state processes of illegalization of migrant and undocumented workers, through the denial of full legal status that forces a condition of permanent precarity, actually legalizes the trade in their bodies and labor by domestic capital. This strengthens the earlier contention that the state is evolving its structures to protect neoliberal transnational capitalism.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Walia, Harsha. *Undoing border imperialism*. Vol. 6. Ak Press, 2013,31.

As we know, capitalism is trying to gain as much profit as possible from cheap labor and mechanisms to control and oppress them. In this case, migrants are included in the nation-state but in a limited way creating a sort of citizenship hierarchy in which they are positioned at the bottom of society and the economy. They are often paid less than the minimum wage and can not access essential social services: “Subjugation and exploitation are normalized against those marked as racial outsiders, and even more against those legally labelled as foreigners.”<sup>77</sup>

According to her, Western governments support the exploitation of migrant workers to fulfill their capitalists' needs for cheap labor to keep in possession the nation-state's racialized national identity. Border imperialism is creating the conditions for mass displacements and the precarity of the migrant situation. Walls keep who is undesirable out of the nation-state, referring to a sense of exclusive identity as the nation-state's domination. For instance, European powers abolished borders to serve their economic interests but quickly reintroduced borders when migrants threaten their identity and culture.

#### **4.6 The Island of Lampedusa and Frontex**

When we talk about European borders referring to the migrant crisis, the Mediterranean Sea has become the symbol of a broken space. The Mediterranean separates Europe from the non-European countries, and the island of Lampedusa, located in Sicily, represents the conjunction between geography, European identity, and power. It is, in fact, one of the most important ports in Europe and the main route for refugees trying to reach the European shores. Lampedusa has become the symbol of the European refugee crisis and the representation of an identity crisis. Humans crossing the Mediterranean route are automatically dehumanized, opposed to a Europeanness concept, and represented as a threat to the European people. The

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<sup>77</sup> Walia, Harsha. *Undoing border imperialism*. Vol. 6. Ak Press, 2013,32.

Mediterranean borders are of fundamental importance because, from one side, they dehumanize immigrants and refugees coming to seek asylum or protection. From the other side, they produce knowledge on migrants, identifying them as the other, the enemy. As author Ammaturo says:

Lampedusa, Calais, Melilla, Lesvos and Idomeni not only produce the conditions for the dehumanization of migrants and refugees, but they also create crucial forms of knowledge about the migrants' and refugees' 'radical otherness' that find wide recognition and acknowledgement in public discourses and end up feeding dominant narratives about Europeanness throughout the continent.<sup>78</sup>

Lampedusa seems to be a perfect example to illustrate the concept of border imperialism depicted by Walia. Lampedusa has a central role in the construction of European identity and citizenship, but it has become a place of violence and death due to the unprecedented number of refugees crossing its border. The year 2015 is often considered among one of the deadliest years recorded in history by IOM for migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean. According to resources from IOM, more than 5,350 migrants died in 2015 with an increase of refugees' arrival almost five times more than the previous year. April is considered the deadliest month in 2015 with one of the worst tragedies that has ever happened in which a migrant boat sank at sea provoking the death of about 800 hundred migrants.<sup>79</sup> Still today it is one of the most extensive single loss of life in the Mediterranean after decades. Only 28 people were able to survive the tragedy, and this is only the beginning of a series of tragedies that will mark the Mediterranean as a place of death and violence.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ammaturo, Francesca Romana. "Europe and whiteness: Challenges to European identity and European citizenship in light of Brexit and the 'refugees/migrants crisis'." *European Journal of Social Theory* 22, no. 4 (2019): 557.

<sup>79</sup> "IOM Counts 3,771 Migrant Fatalities in Mediterranean in 2015." *International Organization for Migration*, 4 Sept. 2017, [www.iom.int/news/iom-counts-3771-migrant-fatalities-mediterranean-2015](http://www.iom.int/news/iom-counts-3771-migrant-fatalities-mediterranean-2015).

<sup>80</sup> Miglierini, Julian. "Migrant Tragedy: Anatomy of a Shipwreck." *BBC News*, BBC, 23 May 2016, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36278529](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36278529).

At the same time, the island is the place where specific narratives around the role of European identity are developed, attributing negative connotations to the arrival of migrants through a negative press coverage of the migrant crisis. It is not a surprise the fact that European press plays a fundamental role in the refugee crisis and in the way their arrival is seen by the public. The majority of coverage seems to lean toward a negative image of migrants seen as outsiders and as in contrast to Europeans.<sup>81</sup> There is a conflictual representation of refugees depicted as vulnerable people in need of help and often as dangerous outsiders. More specifically, the language used by media acquire a new importance in the crisis; the use of words such as "illegal," "invasion," "border security," "undocumented" contain strong connotations, alarming people and bringing them to think in a specific way than another. An example of a particular narrative created around migrants is identifying refugees with economic migrants coming to Europe looking for better job opportunities. Defining refugees as economic migrants can be very damaging because of refugees' international rights, giving the wrong idea to the general public, incapable of understanding the tragedy refugees have to go through. These narratives are usually used by far-right political parties in Europe to generate a sort of fear of the other among citizens, creating a rhetoric of crisis able to spread all around Europe. From these narratives produced by the media, we can construct a specific image of the migrant. Lampedusa builds a particular representation of immigrants and migration in Europe, but it is also a mirror for the same Europe; it reflects its image and construction. As Ammaturo says: "As the recent vote on the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union in 2016 demonstrates, the border (or lack thereof) acquires a new ideological significance as an essential

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<sup>81</sup> Georgiou, Myria, and Rafal Zaborowski. "Council of Europe report: Media coverage of the "refugee crisis": A cross-European perspective." *Council of Europe*. <https://edoc.coe.int/en/refugees/7367-media-coverage-of-the-refugee-crisis-a-cross-european-perspective.html> (2017).



tool of demarcation or proximity to the European Union.”<sup>82</sup> The absence of a clear line of demarcation in Europe is one reason why a growing number of Schengen member states reintroduced temporary border controls on several occasions back in 2015. The aim was to limit the flow of migrants and refugees and to prevent the possibility of terrorists gaining access to the countries. An example was Austria that reintroduced border controls similar to the pre-Schengen control on their Italian border to prevent refugees from crossing the borders and going outside Italy. According to the Schengen Agreement, borders can be reintroduced only to exceptional circumstances based on the case's commission application. In 2016, borders were introduced in various parts of Europe. Still, if some borders introduction was valid, there are also cases of violation of the EU law, such as the Austrian control of its border with Italy. Once again, crises seem to show the fragility of a solidary spirit, identity, and unity among member states.

In 2005, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency was founded, known today as Frontex, a collaborative project to help coordinate and manage external borders. The main goal was ensuring the safety and well function of external borders, providing security and protection. Frontex represents a critical factor in handling migrants and asylum seekers with increased agency's strict security practices. The link between security and migration has become more pressing in the last few years, and Frontex contributed to the securitization of migration through its methods. European governments have invested a considerable amount of money in strengthening border security, including sophisticated technologies such as aerial systems, camera surveillance systems, computerized databases, and more.<sup>83</sup> New cooperations represented an essential development for the Frontex operations, involving other actors dealing with

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<sup>82</sup> Ammaturo, Francesca Romana. "Europe and whiteness: Challenges to European identity and European citizenship in light of Brexit and the 'refugees/migrants crisis'." *European Journal of Social Theory* 22, no. 4 (2019): 559.

<sup>83</sup> *Frontex*, 5 Mar. 2021, frontex.europa.eu/.

security issues such as the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). NATO ships started to conduct surveillance and monitor Turkey's and Greece's waters, providing information to Frontex. Frontex was also in charge of return those migrants that did not need protection and were taking advantage of the migration crisis to enter Europe. Despite the work Frontex has done, there are numerous limitations regarding its role. For instance, it does not have supranational competencies, and it is strictly connected to European bureaucracy. Moreover, back in 2015, Frontex was not powerful enough. According to author Peter Nedgar in his essay "Borders and the EU legitimacy problem: the 2015–16 European Refugee Crisis":

However, the problems in this regard were the following in 2015–16 (Lehne 2016a, 2016b): 1) Frontex was far from powerful enough, 2) Frontex had insufficient EU funding, 3) the national authorities have not always been particularly cooperative regarding Frontex, and 4) there was a fatal "soft," laissez-faire approach overshadowing the entire EU for the entry of persons into Greece and Italy, contrary to what – according to Schmitt – should characterize a state-like feature like the Schengen cooperation.<sup>84</sup>

Consequently, Frontex lacked enough power to manage the refugee crisis and the border controls properly. Author Peter Nedgar takes a very different position than the other authors, such as Walia, advocating for rigid border control and stringent measures. He concludes his essay by saying: "Well-functioning states require borders. Porous boundaries between countries undermine the rule of law, security and welfare systems, as the few countries offering these things are quickly overrun by people from countries that do not enjoy such good fortune. The countries offering such things would therefore have to abandon them sooner or later."<sup>85</sup>

Nevertheless, a series of reports published by Human Rights Watch shows the complicity of Frontex in human abuses and unlawful actions. Border officers have constantly violated international laws that require the protection of refugees arriving on European soil without

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<sup>84</sup> Nedergaard, Peter. "Borders and the EU legitimacy problem: the 2015–16 European Refugee Crisis." *Policy Studies* 40, no. 1 (2019): 85.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

respecting fundamental human rights. More specifically, Frontex has been accused of human rights abuses at Greece's borders when a media group published, on October 2020, a report investigating the Frontex's operations at the Aegean Sea. According to the report, migrants and refugees were pushed back and forced to stay away from the EU waters. It is not the first time that something like this happened; Frontex has been the center of criticism for a long time from international organizations denouncing its human rights abuses, specifically the constant pushbacks and return of migrant and asylum seekers from Greece to Turkey. Human Rights Watch reports have also pointed out the use of violence against migrants and the confiscation of their belongings. When Human Rights Watch required answers for their actions, Frontex claimed that no abuses were ever recorded, denying the existence of what was evident. Not only Human Rights Watch but also IOM and the UNHCR expressed their concerns over the reports denouncing the constant expulsion of migrants from the European coasts. Despite the concrete evidence of international laws violations reported by several international organizations, Frontex denied that any forms of human rights abuses took place.<sup>86</sup>

#### **4.7 Toward a Fortress Europe?**

The formation of a Fortress Europe was nearly inevitable due to the chaotic response of the EU to the arrival of refugees. Fortress Europe is both a concrete and metaphorical term, giving the idea of physical walls from one side and a metaphor of power and oppression of refugees from the other, closely correlated to Europe's borders' increasing securitization. Different metaphors have been created through the years to describe and powerfully represent the hardening of Europe's external borders against undocumented immigrants and refugees.

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<sup>86</sup> "EU: Probe Frontex Complicity in Border Abuses." *Human Rights Watch*, 9 Nov. 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/09/eu-probe-frontex-complicity-border-abuses](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/09/eu-probe-frontex-complicity-border-abuses).

Sometimes, it is referred to as “The Wall” or “The Golden Curtain”<sup>87</sup> to describe the limitation imposed on certain categories of people's mobility. More recently, the fortress metaphor originated in the Second World War context has been used to represent Europe's new security measures to protect external borders from unwanted immigrants.

“Fortress Europe” is a compelling term used by media and politicians to represent the rigidity of European borders in the last few years. Europe has been depicted as a fortress for immigrants and refugees in which access to its soil has become more and more difficult.

The term is frequently used by writer and journalist Matthew Carr. Using Carr's words taken from his article on “The Trouble with Fortress Europe”:

For more than two decades now, the European Union has been conducting the most extensive, sophisticated and far-reaching border enforcement programme in history, largely in an attempt to prevent 'illegal' immigration – a category that generally refers to undocumented 'economic migrants' and refugees from poor countries and the Third World.<sup>88</sup>

As a matter of fact, thousands and thousands of asylum seekers have been trapped in this new system, unable to become part of Europe or any other society. Others have been confined in a state of limbo or homelessness inside the most important European cities, in the attempt to preserve and maintain a system in which unwanted people are excluded with the justification of a threat of losing European identity. In addition to that, millions of euros have been spent to reinforce border controls with border guards, police, aircraft, agencies, and other measures to reinforce fortress Europe.

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<sup>87</sup> Marino, Sara, and Simon Dawes. "Fortress Europe: Media, Migration and Borders." *Networking Knowledge* 9, no. 4 (2016),1.

<sup>88</sup> Carr, Matthew. “The Trouble with Fortress Europe.” *OpenDemocracy*, 21 Nov. 2012, [www.opendemocracy.net/en/trouble-with-fortress-europe/](http://www.opendemocracy.net/en/trouble-with-fortress-europe/).

The EU's wish to end irregular arrivals of migrants in the Mediterranean posed the basis for a new and intense partnership with the African countries, the countries of origin for migrants that arrive in Europe. It shows how the migration crisis is still the center of European foreign policy and how the EU tries to give a new and coordinated dimension to European immigration policy. In November 2015, the EU invited their African partners to the Valletta Summit to establish a shared responsibility and strong solidarity in managing migration flows with intense cooperation to prevent irregular migration. An example is represented by the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), introduced in 2015 as a temporary emergency response for five years to increase collaboration with African countries and sharing responsibilities for migration issues. Cooperation with countries of origin, transit, and destination has been central to the EU policies on migration in the past few years.

Nevertheless, the Fund has some limitations represented by the fact that is mainly controlled by Europeans who imposed their objectives with little involvement of Africa countries. It seems that Europeans and African countries' interests are different, if not even conflicting. From one side, Europeans want better cooperation with African countries to return illegal immigrants, reinforce fortress Europe, and control irregular migration in general. On the other side, Africa countries wish to develop migration channels to the EU, a sort of regularization of illegal migrants, and new opportunities for legal migration with the risk of further destabilize EU migration policies. Returning illicit migrants has been on the EU's plan for a long time; however, returning immigrants is a more sensitive issue for African countries that are impacted too by the process of return.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> TARDIS, Matthieu, and Laurence NARDON. "European Union Partnerships with African Countries on Migration: A Common Issue with Conflicting Interests." *Afficher La Page D'accueil Du Site*, [www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/european-union-partnerships-african-countries-migration-common-issue](http://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/european-union-partnerships-african-countries-migration-common-issue).

In his book *Fortress Europe: Inside the War Against Immigration*, Carr portrays the repression of immigrants and refugees, criticizing the Common European Asylum policy. He points out the irony behind the idea of borderless Europe, the fact that Europe celebrates its borderless character, still it acts with the hardening of border policy which has increased human trafficking, abuse, assaults, and organized crime. Carr also criticized the powerful and damaging role of media and politicians toward the arrival of immigrants. The hardening of European borders is connected to the problem of undocumented immigration, misuse of laws, and abuse of geographical position, exposing the paradox and contradictions inside the immigration policies in Europe and other countries. Once again, at the center of criticism and paradox, there is the Schengen Agreement, structured to build a continent without internal borders. It is the basis for free borders in Europe, and it came to include countries like Switzerland and Norway, which are not part of the EU. It aims at abolishing border controls on European soil, allowing citizens to move freely from one member state to another. The Schengen Area will operate with external border controls imposed on international travelers from outside Europe but no internal border controls. As authors Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse state in their conclusion to “From the Europe to the Schengen Crises: European Integration theories, politicization, and identity politics”: “To prevent illegal immigration, the EU has built a set of far-reaching border control and enforcement policies. But it doesn't work: today's 'Fortress Europe' is an inefficient, immoral and costly bureaucratic construction that should be urgently reformed.”<sup>90</sup> The Agreement was meant to create a borderless Europe where borders do not matter as they used to in the past, heading to a post-national institution able to go beyond the age of nationalism. Paradoxically,

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<sup>90</sup> Börzel, Tanja A., and Thomas Risse. "From the euro to the Schengen crises: European integration theories, politicization, and identity politics." *Journal of European Public Policy* 25, no. 1 (2018): 102.

this situation of borderless Europe has created the premises for Fortress Europe with the risk of falling into fascism.

Greece, Italy, and the island of Lampedusa, in particular, are the center of fortress Europe. These countries located in the Mediterranean are the most affected by the Dublin Convention. As we mentioned before, the Dublin Convention is a fundamental part of the EU asylum system and established how migrants should be resettled in Europe, putting most responsibilities on migrants in the Southern part of Europe. The Dublin Convention came into force in 1997; however, in the last few years, where the phenomenon of immigration became urgent, changes and modifications were added to it. In substance, every asylum application should be processed by one member state, the member state in which refugees come first. Due to their geographical position near Africa and the Middle East, Greece and Italy are enormously disadvantaged from the Dublin Convention. For instance, Italy has received the third highest asylum requests in the world after the U.S and Germany in both 2016 and 2017 according to the UNHCR. The country has received just in 2015 and 2016 a number of 153,842 and 181,436 sea arrivals with 2,913 people missing or dead in 2015 and 4,578 in 2016.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, Greece received the highest number of refugees in 2015 with 853,723 sea arrivals with a sharp decrease in 2016 with 173,450 people, mostly due to the Turkey-EU agreement in 2016. This situation is critical since it transforms Greece, Italy, and Spain into countries of migration for the first time in their history, after always being considered countries of emigration in which people flew looking for better economic opportunities outside. This may also partially justify their incapability of dealing with the crisis in the first place.

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<sup>91</sup> “Operational Portal.” *Situation Mediterranean Situation*,  
[data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205](http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205).

We said several times how European identity is represented by sharing a common set of values with which citizens can identify. Among these values, Christianity has often been seen as an identity marker of the European Union and a fundamental unity element. The reference to Christianity has been abused by politicians who claim the exclusion of countries such as Turkey from the EU, reflecting European attitudes toward the Islamic world. A perfect example cited, already numerous, times is represented by the case of Turkey and its constant exclusion from Fortress Europe. Politicians and statemen expressed their concern in the idea of Turkey joining the EU, emphasizing the main difference defined by religion. Turkey is one of the most important countries for the European Union due for its geographical position and historical reasons. Relationship between the two are represented by cooperation from one side, and conflicts from the other. Turkey also applied for EU membership back in 1987 and it was rejected by the EU for democratic discrepancies present in the democratic system. As we said before, religion often plays a more important role than it seems when it comes to exclusion of countries from the EU. The EU architects conceived an idea of Europe based on Christianity as the main religion and the accession of Turkey, a country whose population is entirely Muslim, has often been seen as difficult. Europe is today largely secular where different religions coexisting in the same continent; however there seem to be a strong Christian heritage that represents a powerful influence. There has always been a strong opposition to Turkish accession; for the most religious countries its accession is seen as against the idea of Europe as founded on Christian principles; while for the most nonreligious member states it can undermine the free lifestyle of the continent representing a possible threat to European culture and identity.

There are still conflicting views on the possible accession of Turkey in the EU and Turkey seems to remain the perennial other in the integration and identity construction in



Europe. We know how religion is not a valid argument for a European identity since it encompasses different faiths under the same Union; nevertheless, Christianity has been used for quite a long time as an instrument of unity among member states. Turkey's accession to the EU depends on other fundamental reasons beyond religion; however, the high level of anxiety around the idea of Turkey becoming integral part of the EU shows us how European identity is once again more exclusive than inclusive and welcoming toward diversities.

The term Fortress Europe is also used to depict border security and police. The author describes police brutality and guards who embody violent figures, usually making borders challenging to access. Sometimes, they directly or indirectly support human traffickers and are aware of the situation behind the arrival of refugees. Sometimes, they are the reason why refugees and asylum seekers are denied access, not allowing undocumented migrants to enter without any right to do so, abusing the law system for their benefits.

Authors Sara Marino and Simon Dawes, in their essay “Introduction to Fortress Europe: Media, Migration and Borders”, states how the rise of global terrorism and organized crime have been the biggest threat to the European identity, contributing to the development of a generalized sentiment of fear shifting the debate around migration from control to security. In particular, after 9/11, immigration has come to symbolize the dangers of terrorism and the invasion of people coming from the outside, with a diffused feeling of instability and the fear of losing a common type of identity and political cohesion. Most importantly, the majority of citizens see the contamination of Europe's national identity. The feeling of a shared identity threatened, often supported by media and newspapers, provoked the rise of populist rhetoric in public discourses focusing on crimes, acts of violence, and illegality brought by migration, increasing social

insecurity and anxiety among the states and their citizens. Authors Marino and Dawes describe the use of Fortress Europe as:

First, the term refers to a global displacement crisis, with more people than ever before fleeing conflict, violence, and violations of basic human rights, particularly from the Middle East. Second, it calls into question the crisis of EU migration management and the supposed failure of the European project. The chaotic and often tragic consequences of Europe's 'managed migration' policies in Lampedusa in 2013 and more recently in Greece and along the West Balkan route – just to name some of the case studies analyzed by our contributors – have called into question the effectiveness of the European model and its human and political costs.<sup>92</sup>

The term refers to the fact that masses of people flee from their home to other countries due to human rights violations, especially from the Middle East. Second, it refers to how Europe manages the current crisis, exposing the fragility of the European integration project and European identity. Thousands of lives were lost in fortress Europe, shocking the European public opinion together with the increased number of deportation and police brutality at the borders. On the other side, the hardening of European borders is the direct consequence of the inability to manage immigration and a Common European Asylum policy's failure. As most authors agree, such as Carr or Marino and Dawes, Europe's borders represent the system's failure. European migration policies did not stop migrants from entering the EU, but they just made their journey more dangerous with the tragic consequence that thousands of people die at sea. Secondly, Europe was incapable of showing solidarity and unity between member states to coordinate the way refugees can be managed and welcomed. Europe instead demonstrated to the world to be a very divided continent with an incoherent framework. Member states were divided on how the emergency should have been dealt with, disputing which countries should accept more migrants. In the meantime, people were dying trying to reach European shores. Fortress Europe seems to

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<sup>92</sup> Marino, Sara, and Simon Dawes. "Fortress Europe: Media, Migration and Borders." *Networking Knowledge* 9, no. 4 (2016),2.

have created a physical barrier and an emotional one due to Europe's sense of humanity and the number of lives lost. The EU's inability to manage the emergency and accommodate refugees is considered a symbol of the European identity crisis, a crisis deeply felt all around Europe.

The efforts to control migrants and enforce borders are in contrast with values of human rights, solidarity, and inclusion that the EU has defined as the core to its political identity.

The tragic loss of refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean Sea is putting into question the idea of inclusion and solidarity of Europe together with its humanism toward refugees. A more humane immigration policy is necessary to transform refugees into a positive and beneficial element for society.

## 5. Conclusion

Europe has been going through a series of crises in the last decades, culminating with the UK officially leaving the EU with Brexit in 2016. Many scholars have sustained how these emergencies posed a threat for the EU's future with an existential identity crisis and a profound questioning of the European integration project.

The refugee emergency in particular showed the fragility and lack of unity among member states with the migration of such a massive number of people. The migration crisis, also referred to as the Schengen crisis, has been characterized by the constant EU's inability to respond in an efficient and coordinated way to the influx of refugees and migrants, which is unprecedented in the modern history of Europe. The migration phenomenon has generated a crisis in a series of different domains. First of all, it is a humanitarian crisis related to the incapability of respecting the fundamental human rights of migrants who have been constantly dehumanized as objects in national governments' hands. Secondly, it is a public health crisis for the generation of epidemics and other diseases due to the terrible health conditions refugees are obliged to live in refugee camps. It is also a demographic crisis since Europe faces the arrival of vast masses of migrants and residents never seen before. We can also consider the migration crisis as an economic and political crisis. The government struggles to manage the influx of refugees with the direct consequence of the rise of populism and other far-right political parties.

Finally, as we extensively discussed in the chapters above, the Schengen crisis is a security crisis due to the threat represented by crime and a threat for European identity and culture.<sup>93</sup> The problem of a European identity crisis and European integration project has been

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<sup>93</sup> Bolborici, Ana-Maria. "The immigration crisis—reflections concerning the crisis of European identity." *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov, Series VII: Social Sciences and Law* 9, no. 1 (2016),44.

my thesis's primary focus. The EU always has exalted values of inclusiveness and celebration of diverse cultures as the basis for a common identity in Europe and the beginning of a post-national institution able to go beyond single national member states. However, the migration crisis has shown the fragility of an integration project with a lack of solidarity among member states, excluding non-European populations identified as the other or the enemy entering the European soil. The rhetoric of exclusion of migrants was abused by politicians and media who saw the phenomenon as a threat to Western values with a decrease of support from the public opinion to the EU integration project and the rise of Eurosceptic parties. Moreover, standard European integration and identity theories do not explain the EU responses to the Schengen crisis. The majority of treaties and official documents issued by the European Commission exalt values of democracy, religious freedom, human rights protection, multiculturalism, and multilingualism as the basis for citizens to identify with a common integration project. These values were completely forgotten with refugees' arrival, posing the problem of who is inside Europe and who is identified as the other, outside fortress Europe.

The crisis also shows the contradictions around the role of borders, with the Schengen agreement promoting free borders and mobility among citizens and the rapid reintroduction of walls with the arrival of migrants to confine them in a specific geographical area.

As Author Thomas Risse explains in his *A Community of Europeans*, there is a substantial difference between citizens with Europeanized or inclusive identities and citizens with exclusive national identities. For instance, people with exclusive nationalist identities are more likely to be hostile toward migrants and xenophobic. We can see how the small minority of the population more likely to identify with Europe, and a European identity will have more tolerance and positive attitudes toward migrants.

One of my thesis's main conclusions is that a European identity is still in the making and is not clearly developed. Constructing common identities is a very complicated and lengthy process. The European integration project has been in progress since the mid-'60s and became a topic of fundamental importance in the '70s. For this reason, some scholars think it is too early to talk about a European identity entirely and fully developed. National identities took hundreds and hundreds of years to evolve and grow, while Europeans have been interacting with each other for less than a hundred years inside a political entity. Another important factor is represented by the younger population that demonstrates, according to Eurobarometer results, a stronger attachment to the EU and Europe in general. They usually have better education, they travel around Europe and speak more languages. The Erasmus Project, allowing them to live and study in a different country inside the EU, may be one reason why they are more prone to have a Europeanized identity. Consequently, in the future, there is a higher possibility that Europeans will be more united and have a better understating of other cultures with a more vital European spirit. For author Ana-Maria Bolborici, it is too early to refer to a common European identity; however, Europeans will be more interested in traveling and knowing other cultures with the evolving field of education. She cites Jurgen Habermas, a German philosopher who sustained and promoted the idea of a European constitution, to conclude that: “the European identity will become a reality, a reality having as pillars the solidarity focused at widespread sense of belonging to this space, but also at the involvement based on a collective identity explicitly built, this could occur if Europe will wants to speak with one voice at the foreign affairs level and to pursue an active internal politics” (.....) The event's history proves that the different histories and cultures, although are living together, have a limited degree of absorption and acceptance

from each other, terrorist attacks claimed by the Islamic organization ISIS in the last few months being the most recent example in this regard.”<sup>94</sup>

Another main conclusion is that migration issues are strictly connected to identitarian and cultural feelings. The Schengen crisis resulted in a collapse and disintegration of a common asylum and migration policy. The result was an identity crisis in which the distinction between Us vs. the Other became more urgent and pressing to define. Right-wing political parties saw the occasion to mobilize anti-immigration sentiments among exclusive nationalists. The role of borders in Europe and the Mediterranean Sea is of fundamental importance as the place where the idea of Europeanness is generated. For this reason, the principal contradiction that the refugee crisis brought is the idea of an open and multicultural Europe from one side, and a nationalistic, exclusive, and close Europe from the other, which helped produce the concept of Europe as a fortress.

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<sup>94</sup> Bolborici, Ana-Maria. "The immigration crisis—reflections concerning the crisis of European identity." *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov, Series VII: Social Sciences and Law* 9, no. 1 (2016),45.

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