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EU Internal Security from the Perspective of International Migrations and Multiculturalism Dilemmas

*(A digest of a Polish version 'Unijny wymiar bezpieczeństwa z perspektywy
migracji międzynarodowych i dylematów wielokulturowości')*

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It has become intellectually fashionable in recent years to proclaim the diminishing importance of borders and territorial controls. The conventional wisdom has been that growing economic integration and interdependence necessarily leads to a retreat of state, more open borders, and more harmonious cross-border relations. Prophets of globalization have optimistically argued that territory is passé and have been popularizing the notion of an emergent 'borderless world'. That was before September 11th 2001. Borders are now back with a vengeance.

In the world after September 11th and in Europe after March 11th, 2004 international migration has stopped being mainly a subject of demographic or social discussions that were trying to balance problems of economic growth and cultural integration with problems of social welfare and good self-consciousness of voters. The relation between internal security and immigrants seems to take much more importance and new quality these days.

The relationship between migration and security is one facet of these deliberations that has become increasingly critical for policy makers in the wake of September 11, 2001. Given the cross-border dimensions of international terrorism, it is clear that this form of security threat is also a migration issue. Various policy measures have been and continue to be introduced by governments all over the world. Migration policy is just one area where national and international law enforcement can act against transnational crime.

After-September 11th, governments across the globe are instituting various measures to tackle increased security threats in a number of broad areas. These measures are e.g.: enhanced border control, tighter internal migration controls, biometrics and increased collection and exchange of data on regional level.

Although the utility of the measures described above is not in question, they focus solely on migration control, and may therefore not be sufficient without consideration of such broader aspects as the socio-economic conditions favoring criminality and extremism. An immigrant population that is successfully integrated

into the host community and local labor market may offer a less promising recruitment ground for transnational criminal networks. To this end, various governments are pursuing programs aimed at combating xenophobia and discrimination, alongside efforts to tighten immigration controls.

Migration and integration policies vary from country to country and are closely connected to specific national traditions. Nevertheless, each national policy has to provide answers to certain key questions. In the field of immigration, some of these questions are: how many immigrants should come? Who should come, from where, with what characteristics (for instance in terms of age, sex, qualifications, and ethnic origin)? As for integration, the question might be: what should be the relationship between the groups who come and the receiving society? Should there be a policy to form a multi-ethnic (multicultural) society, or should there be a policy of assimilation or integration?

Hitherto existing developments of the inexperienced Polish migration policy have been focused on creation of migratory legislative acts mainly. The law has been concentrated on regulations concerning entry into Poland, stay in the country, exit and also settlement procedures. Furthermore some institutional base has been formed. However, so far, the integration component of the Polish migration policy has been completely neglected.

As it was already mentioned, the differing responses to immigration are linked to varying historical experiences of nation-state formation. A central issue is the way in which nation-states regulate admission to the community of the nation (that is the rules for access to citizenship). Equally important are the varying rights and obligations connected with membership of the nation.

In Central and Eastern European nations the dominant criteria for belonging to a nation are based on membership of an ethnic group or a cultural community. The official aim in such countries is to maintain 'ethnic purity' and 'cultural homogeneity', although both are myths, for modern nations are almost invariably the product of past migrations and amalgamations of ethnic groups. For countries which have been at the historical cross-roads of invasions, migrations, and the rises and falls of empires,

the long history of border struggles helps to explain – though not to justify - present attitudes towards minorities.

Majority of the EU countries and traditional immigration countries such as USA, Canada or Australia prove that a character of an ethnic group is determined, to a large extent, at the early stage of immigration, by the immigration policy of a receiving country. Policy favoring illegal stay or work helps to form a gray sphere of migration and leads to social marginalization and exclusion and as a result to blooming of xenophobic and racist attitudes in a receiving society.

At the end of the 1980s, the transformation of the political and economic structure of the Central and Eastern European region disturbed what had been stable migration trends. After the collapse of the communist regime in 1989, the Central European countries and Poland on the first place unexpectedly encountered a number of previously unknown (or seldom experienced) population phenomena. Among these were the massive spatial mobility of citizens of the former USSR, growing waves of asylum seekers, labor migration, from both the East and the West, permanent immigration (mainly from the East), formation of new immigrant communities and the return migration of former émigrés.

Isolated for much of the post-Second World War period, the Central European countries are now in the preliminary stage of the inflow of immigrants from outside the region itself, which leads in many cases to the formation of 'exotic' diasporas in this part of Europe. The arrival of completely new and exotic for this region groups of e.g. Vietnamese, Chinese and Armenians takes all forms of inflow - from illegal, through temporary stay, arranged marriages, to setting up a business and permanent settlement. As yet, it is hard to draw any broad conclusions regarding either the future feature of immigration or the reactions of local governments and local communities or political parties to this phenomenon.

In the 1990s Central European region also became one of the major transit regions in Europe for hundred of thousands of trafficked in mainly from India, Sri Lanka or Bangladesh. A serious challenge for Polish internal security system may be created by the lack of readmission agreements between Poland and Russia and Poland and Belarus.

In the direct Polish neighborhood there are countries, which have serious economic difficulties and a big migratory potential. Countries, that have been the biggest exporters of migrants into Poland so far.

Indeed, from the perspective of the relation between the receiving society and immigrants the challenges for the Polish migration policy are quite intense. Needless to say that within a brief span of time i.e. since the beginning of 1990s, policy makers in Poland let completely carelessly marginalize some immigrants' groups as e.g. refugees and create a quite big gray sphere of labor immigrant-workers in Poland.

For the whole European Union in the next few years the challenging problem will have to be resolved of how to combine a new migration policy resulting from the demographic situation with the fear of immigrants and terrorism. The internal security of the EU has become a particularly important value in the past few years. This should not be surprising. As a result of the single market formation, the removal of internal frontiers, the inhabitants of the different member states of the Union wish to be sure that the new situation will not cause any increase of the threats posed, e.g. by the rise of criminality. Therefore, enormous importance is attached to the protection of the external EU borders. They must be impermeable for illegal immigrants and for organized crime.

In the era of growing concerns about security, Western democracies have been challenged by the dilemma between the human rights and economic' demands on the one hand and political and security pressures on the other. Thus, the key issue seems to be how far the liberal state can move in order to protect its internal security and whether there is any solution to this dilemma?

Ethnic questions have always been a significant issue for Western democracies, which means that the EU enlargement will result in the situation that the issue of minorities and immigrants living in the new member states will not only be a local CEE question but also a European issue.

Center for International Relations

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The founder and president of the Center for International Relations is Mr Janusz Reiter.

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