Gatekeeper Countries

Key to Stopping Illegal Immigration

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Research question and hypothesis

- US (FY 2022): 2,2 illegal border crossings in SW – EU (2022): 330,000
- Why there is so significant difference? For the EU:
  - more open borders (sea)
  - a prolonged crisis since 2013
  - Huge crises in the direct neighborhood (state collapses, civil wars, food inflation, economic woes)
  - Lack of consensus

- The answer is perhaps not the EU and Europe itself, but its collaboration with other countries: the gatekeepers
A conceptual framework

• Old in practice and policy, new and almost unknown in Migration Studies

• What is not gatekeeping in this context
  • Gatekeeper States in Africa (Frederick Cooper)
  • Operation Gatekeeper (1994)
  • Dana Lusa: Small EU countries as gatekeepers
A conceptual framework

• Geographic approach
  • Countries of origin – transit countries – countries of destination

• Thematic approach
  • Migration critic/realist – stopping/reducing the number of irregular arrivals
  • Externalization - outsourcing
  • Securitization – not only opportunities and humanitarianism – threats and challenges also

• Policy practice
  • EU and European states – but also the US
A conceptual framework

• Gatekeeper countries are entities
  • On transit routes towards countries/regions of destination
  • Relatively close – in most cases, in the direct neighborhood – to the countries/regions of destination (Niger?)
  • With some capacities and intentions to mitigate the flow of illegal mass immigration
  • They can be also countries of origin – but it is not their main characteristics (how can they help to stop third country citizens?)

• Turkey, Morocco, Niger, Libya, Serbia – Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras
Practical considerations

• It is almost impossible to defend a single border
• EU and US: who get in, stay (EU: 80-85% chance) – repatriation, voluntary return, resettlement and deportation are ineffective –
• outsourcing of long and costly asylum procedures
• Lower expenditures for maintenance
• Power of deterrence
• Higher possibility for return (close to their home)
• More familiar cultural, social and historical patterns
Practical considerations

• A wide toolkit – negotiation between states
  • diplomacy; foreign policy; defense policy; development assistance; trade; humanitarian assistance

• Stick and Carrot
  • Migrant Protection Protocols
  • EU-Turkey Statement

• Win-win – Assistance to stop arrivals in the neighboring country
  • Austria – Hungary – Serbia Agreement October 2022
  • UK-France Agreement March 2023
  • Southern Border Plan 2014/5
  • US-Guatemala Cooperation (CBP)
Implementation

• The EU and member states
  • Long historical tradition: invasions from the peripheries of Europe (Huns, Germans, Arabs, Vikings, Hungarians, Mongols, Ottomans; Russians)
  • Colonization
  • Cooperation with the gatekeepers is the part of strategic thinking
  • Libya, Morocco (since the early 2000s); Turkey, Egypt, Niger (2016)
    • In Egypt: at least 9 million immigrants and refugees (three millions more than before COVID-19)
    • Libya: between 660,000 and 1.5 million
    • Turkey: almost 4 million Syrian refugees and 0.7-1.2 million immigrants from other countries (Afghanistan, Iraq) – for 9.5 billion EUR (10.3. billion USD) since 2016
    • Morocco prevented 40,000 illegal crossings in 2022 – for 500 million EUR
Implementation

• And the US?
  • It is a relatively new challenge (1980s)
  • Ocean Shield concept – and limited geopolitical attention towards the South
  • Some efforts and new recognitions (MPP, SBP) – Root causes; Darien-agreement
    – but there is no systematic approach

Long-term solution is unimaginable without gatekeepers
Both the EU and the US should focus on more gatekeepers and win-win situations
Thank you for your attention!