Between unity and plurality: the politicization and securitization of the discourse of immigration in Europe

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Published online: 04 Aug 2006.

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Between Unity and Plurality: The Politicization and Securitization of the Discourse of Immigration in Europe[1]

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Abstract *Immigration has always been at the heart of controversy in the history of human societies and, most recently, in the history of nation-states. The aim of this article is, first, to help get to the heart of the "problem" of mass migration in Europe by investigating how the "politicization" of migration is created at the national level and discussing the mutually conditioning relationships between public opinion, mass media, identity politics and fear in the evolution of immigration policy discourse in the Member States of the European Union (emphasis on the UK and Italy). Secondly, the article questions how and why the conceptualization of migration as a security concern has become dominant in European countries and whether there has been a shift between the way immigration is addressed in Member States' policies and the way the European Union is now confronting the issue (post-Amsterdam treaty). Is the European Union approaching immigration with a "new vision"? Adopting a discourse-theoretical approach, the article argues that the inevitability of the politicization of immigration derives from the inescapable contradiction between democratic equality and plurality and that the discourse type of securitization of migration has emerged as the hegemonic discourse in the Member States, produced by the interplay of publics, media and governments and aimed at the preservation of existing power structures and socio-political boundaries. The article then concludes that the national discourse on immigration as a security concern is reflected and re-adopted (but carefully re-articulated) by the European Union.*

Introduction

Didier Bigo once argued that the "proliferation of border controls, the repression of foreigners and so on, has less to do with protection than with a political attempt to reassure certain segments of the electorate longing for evidence of concrete measures taken to ensure safety."[2] Although Bigo was referring to post-September 11th terrorist threat and security concerns, his observation can be easily applied to the realm of immigration policy as, today, the border between security, terrorism, immigration and social fear has become very thin. Immigration has turned into one of the greatest security concerns of 21st century

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[1] An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the UACES 33rd annual conference in Newcastle, UK, September 2–4, 2003. For thoughtful and insightful comments on earlier versions of this article, I wish to thank Rachel Murphy, Thomas Diez, Jef Huysmans, Joe Peschek and two anonymous referees.

[2] Didier Bigo, "To Reassure and Protect after September 11th," *Social Science Research Council Essays* (2002), p. 2, available online at: http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/bigo.htm.

Europe. The interplay between public opinion, mass media and national governments, coupled with an increasing number of migrants crossing the world's borders, has resulted in the production of immigration as a security concern.

The politicization of immigration has always been inevitable as immigration loudly reawakens the unsolvable contradiction between the discourses of unity and plurality that democracy poses and that governments are irremediably faced with. But amongst the innumerable, antagonistic discourse types on immigration (immigration as an economic benefit, immigration as a security concern, liberalization of immigration *inter alia*), only one could have become hegemonic at any one point in time. In order to investigate the mechanism through which an interplay of actors produces and maintains a hegemonic discourse type, this paper identifies the two most reoccurring discourse types on immigration: the *economization* and the *securitization* discourse types. The emergence of the *securitization* discourse type as the dominant one is motivated by the need for national governments to control influxes, placate media pressures and comfort public opinion against the fear of being "swamped" by foreigners. As the British Home Secretary, David Blunkett, has recently observed, "such is the febrile nature of our society at the moment that people will look for scapegoats,"[3] which are, in this case, immigrants. If national policies on immigration have increasingly and unilaterally reflected societies' fears and identity politics, restricting immigration and transforming it into a security issue, the increased competence of the European Union on nation-states' affairs was meant to develop immigration into an area of "Freedom, Security and Justice." The question, however, is: did it really?

Adopting a discourse-theoretical approach inspired by the writings of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, this paper argues that, first, through the effect of the mass media on society and on the relations of power and resistance, immigration as a threat and a security concern has become the hegemonic discourse type in government policy. The argument will be illustrated and supported by the analysis of empirical data, mainly excerpts from mainstream national newspapers, policy documents and speeches by political leaders. By deconstructing the discourse on migration, I aim to show that securitization of migration is a construction which derives from the creation of boundaries. By creating boundaries between us and others, between Inside and Outside, issues of solidarity, ethics and human rights become secondary to issues of security, thus endangering the livelihoods of newly arrived and undocumented migrants while stigmatizing already settled migrants. As a strategy for maintaining the harmony of the "community," in fact, *securitization* threatens human rights, peaceful coexistence, freedom and justice.

Secondly, this paper suggests that the nature of the immigration debate has become even more politicized at the European Union level as it reflects and magnifies the problems and concerns that nation-states have already internally confronted.[4] Despite the purported European "new vision" ("creating an area of *freedom, security and justice*") and the declared need to substitute national

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[3] David Blunkett, "NS Interview: David Bunkett," *New Statesman*, January 27, 2003, pp. 22–25.

[4] Also in Gallya Lahav, "Ideological and Party Constraints on Immigration Attitudes in Europe," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 35:3 (1997), pp. 377–406.

fragmented approaches with intergovernmental dialogue and cooperation, the discourse on immigration has not changed so dramatically—it has instead responded to immigration with the same *securitization* discourse type adopted and produced by nation-states. The innovation, however, lies in the way such "non-novel" security discourse has been articulated in EU policies: it can be read in a "humanitarian" key, expressed through a deep concern with human rights, cooperation and humanitarian intervention. Such re-invention and re-articulation of the existing national discourse are parts of the process of manufacturing the new identity of the European Union, an identity which aims to present the Union to the world as a novel, moral and supranational global actor. The European Union perspective on immigration provides us with no "new" vision but with the emergence of a "shared" vision between the Member States and the EU, a vision that is based on security and control and on the politicization of immigration in between unity and plurality.

Politics and Hegemony in Immigration Discourse

Similarly to Michel Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse-theoretical approach is based on the assumption that every aspect of social life is governed by power. They argue that the *political* has full primacy over the *social*.[5] Politics therefore becomes an "all-pervading dimension of the social fabric." Going a step further from Foucault's conceptualization of power and social relations, Laclau and Mouffe reconsider the Gramscian concept of "hegemony,"[6] a concept that is central to my discussion of immigration policy in today's Europe and that emphasizes the construction of collective identity and conceives values as integral parts of such an identity (constructed, maintained and transformed in and through political struggles— *social antagonism*). The prevailing ideology or political force that is hegemonic at one time will produce a hegemonic political discourse through which it will construct and reproduce power relations aimed at the preservation of its hegemony within society. Deriving from this is the innovative concept of *hegemonic discourse*, which refers to the construction of a predominant discursive formation: one discourse produced by the hegemonic force at one time will never be the only possible discourse. Also, the identities defined by that discourse are "constructed within a terrain of un-fixity."[7] In this paper, the coexistence of hegemonic and antagonistic discourses comes to light when the political production of immigration policy discourse is analyzed. In the case of immigration, the interaction between different actors (mass media, government, public opinion) contributes to the formation of a policy based on a certain hegemonic *discourse type* (immigration as security concern) rather than another (immigration as economic opportunity) and, in so doing, sustains and reproduces existing power relations within society. The consideration that at one time there is not just *one* single discourse in society but that there are as many discourses as there are political forces in a continuous political struggle for

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[5] See Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe, and Zizek* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 66.

[6] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Social Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985).

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 91–92.

power adds a level of complexity to the social and political reality that we, researchers, analyze. By deconstructing reality, one can grasp part of the complexity and dynamicity of the real. In this case, the main deconstructible product of discourse that is available for analysis is language. Political differences, for instance, have always been constituted as differences in language, political struggles have always been partly struggles over the dominant language and both the theory and practice of political rhetoric go back to ancient times.[8] An analysis of the language through which the political discourse on immigration is articulated at the national and the supranational levels will hopefully uncover the complexity of the real and will lead to a more thorough understanding of "what lies beneath" immigration policy in Europe, of the mechanisms and the political struggles that shape it.

The Social and Political Construction of Immigration

Democracy requires unity but it is only thinkable through diversity.[9]

Having established that, beyond the surface of reality and power, there is a dynamic struggle between discourses competing for hegemony, a fundamental question to be asked is: where can we trace the origins of dominant immigration policy discourse? The dominant tendency of the current immigration discourse in European governments finds its origins in the development of what Laclau and Mouffe call a "discourse type." The hegemony of one discourse type over another usually occurs because of the beneficial effects that the chosen discourse type can have (or is perceived to have) on the preservation and strengthening of existing power relations within society. The presence of such an extensive space for the coexistence of multiple, antagonistic discourse types can be explained by the everlasting ambiguity and contradiction inherent to the democratic tradition, that is, the ambiguity of democratic unity versus democratic plurality.[10] On the one hand, democracy was designed as the attempt to organize the political space around the *universality* of the community, one without hierarchies and distinctions. On the other hand, democracy was also envisaged as the expansion of the logic of plurality to increasingly wider spheres of social relations—social and economic equality, racial equality, etc.—constitutively involving respect for differences.[11] This leads to the formation of the inescapable paradox that characterizes democracy or, as Laclau himself writes, "Democracy requires unity but it is only thinkable through diversity."[12] The space that is created by the paradox and ambiguity of democracy is such that it will *always* be "occupied" and filled in by multiple, competing voices and discourses with the result that there will never be a total fixation of the discursive. The mere presence of an unfixed center, the impossibility of one universal discourse and the gap created by the contradiction between the two faces of democracy explain the human necessity of creating boundaries for the definition of identity (the boundaries are however dynamic ones—and ever changing throughout history). Boundary-set-

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[8] Norman Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 2.

[9] Ernesto Laclau, "Democracy and the Question of Power," *Constellations* 8:1 (2001), pp. 3–14.

[10] See Laclau, *op. cit.* and Torfig, *op. cit.*

[11] Laclau, "Democracy and the Question of Power," *op. cit.*

[12] *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

ting is in fact an essential practice for the definition of identity. As Connolly[13] argued in 1991, before defining "us," we need to define "them." Immigrants therefore come to represent what Simmel has called "the Stranger," somebody "whose position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning."[14] Because of their status of outsiders, strangers are "those who actually should be excluded."[15] The adversary/Other/ stranger/migrant is therefore an *articulation* that is particularly appropriate to democratic politics.[16] The existence and production of boundaries within society is the *only* way to make sense of a world that is characterized by an unfixed center and by everlasting contradiction of unity and plurality.

This very contradiction is created because the two discourses of unity and plurality are *always dominant* as long as democracy exists but, if immigration is considered (thus becoming a "floating signifier" and assuming different socio-political meanings according to which of the two discourses is adopted), they become antagonistic and can lead to the annihilation of democracy. As Laclau argues,[17] if either dimension or discourse (unity and diversity/plurality) prevails beyond a certain point, democracy becomes impossible. Immigration is, for this reason, a very interesting policy arena to observe. The fragile democratic order[18] could be easily turned upside-down by the pressing existence and forcefulness of the immigration phenomenon (the Other). The politicization of immigration, which follows the establishment of boundaries, becomes therefore the frantic attempt to find a balance, solve the antagonism and ease the production of powerful, coexisting and competing discourse types (e.g. the economization of migration, migration as security concern, liberalization of migration, etc.), which are nourished and encouraged by the strength of the discourses of Unity and Plurality that characterize democracy. Multiple immigration discourse types are therefore created by an *inductive* social reality—itself characterized by a dynamic interplay of power forces shaping and producing the conditions for an intense power struggle. The aim is to create a "democracy without enemies"[19] by, on the one hand, excluding the enemy ("who has entered a harmonious world and, just by having entered it, has disturbed the harmony"[20]) and thus overcoming the

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[13] William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of the Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

[14] George Simmel, "The Stranger," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950).

[15] Ulrich Beck, *Democracy without Enemies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 125.

[16] Aletta Norval, "Future Research in Discourse Theory," in David Howarth, Aletta Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis, *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

[17] Laclau, *op. cit.*

[18] The order has become even more fragile after the events of September 11th which have brought to the fore the imperative need to resolve the contradiction between security and liberty. However, as governments around the world have stressed security over liberty (in many ways restricting individual freedoms for the sake of the unity of the nation), the balance between unity and plurality and the essence of democracy deriving from it has been endangered, thus increasing the necessity to securitize migration even further.

[19] Beck, 1998, *op. cit.*

[20] Jef Huysmans, "Migrants as a Security Problem: Dangers of "Securitizing" Societal Issues," in Robert Miles and Dietrich Tharhardt (eds), *Migration and European Integration: The Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion* (London: Pinter, 1995), p. 59.

threat that immigration is posing to European democracy while, on the other hand, respecting human rights and democratic principles. As a result, today's policies and discourses on immigration in national governments reflect the paradox created by the duality of the discourses of *plurality* and *unity*. The question is now, how is this paradox reproduced and transmitted to social strata? How does immigration become a political issue within society? And how do hegemonic discourses strengthen and become embodied and accepted?

Immigration: Threat or Opportunity?

In Western society, hegemonic power is sustained by many actors, not just by governments but also by political parties, mass media and international organizations. Both dominant and *subaltern* discourses are extended to individuals through various means that reach them in more or less powerful ways. In Europe, today, policies are the result of a compromise between the Member States and the European Union, as well as a government's answer to public concerns about an issue. In order to analyze how publics and policy-makers are responding to the new immigration situation in European countries and why a focus on security dominates their policy response, it is important to understand the mutually conditioning relationships between public opinion, identity politics and fear in the evolution and sustenance of a hegemonic immigration policy discourse aimed at the preservation of existing power relations.

This section therefore explores the societal dynamics that produce migration as a politicized phenomenon: *not a threat for what it is, but a threat for what it represents*. In so doing, it implicitly adopts the idea of "constitutive externality" proposed by Mouffe,[21] the necessity to find a "constitutive outside" as a condition for the definition of self-identity. Immigration is politicized because the Other is defined for what it is not (and what it is makes it the Other!). This section suggests that, as a result of media portrayal of immigration, economic and social fears have been strengthened amongst citizens of European countries, creating a political imperative for European governments to take action and adopt reductionist policies towards immigration. In order to do so, the section will first take a closer look at the role of the mass media in shaping public opinion, focusing on the way mass media exploit elements of public fear about contentious issues (such as immigration which cuts across discourses of unity and plurality) and transform them into powerful messages. Secondly, I will identify the two main types of fears that mass media draw upon, economic and social fears. These types of fear derive from the different positioning of individuals on national economic scales; they are motivated by class differentiation. Once these types of fear (originating at the individual level but persistently brought in the public sphere by the mass media) have been identified, I will then look at the ways in which the mass media reproduce such fears within a particular discourse— *securitization* in this case[22]—and redirect them to the

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[21] In Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 2.
[22] Securitization is the practice whereby an issue becomes a security one, not necessarily because of the nature or the objective importance of the threat, but because the issue is presented as such.

public in enhanced form. Pressure to "act" will thus be created[23] and the interaction between public opinion, mass media and decision-makers will be such that, between the two main discourses of immigration (economization and securitization), only the discourse that will be better able to respond to public fears and preserve the unity of the community will become hegemonic. This mechanism explains the choice of a policy "discourse type" over another: in particular, it explains the national political choice of stressing the threat of immigration over and above the economic need for it. The hegemonic policy discourse choice focuses on strengthening national identity (through the adoption of *nodal points*[24] such as security, belonging, etc.), controlling the threat posed by increasing flows of migrants and, ultimately, comforting society. I will now take a closer look at the way this dynamics unravels.

Public opinion has usually two faces. The first is one of sympathy for the individual cases and for the general principle of protecting refugees, particularly where the horrors of conflict can be seen on television in every home. The other is a feeling that immigrants are already too numerous, too costly to taxpayers and dangerous. The latter vision of immigration is often provoked and supported by the extensive media portrayal of immigration as a threat. A prime example of this would be Anthony Browne's article "how the government *endangers* British lives" by promoting mass migration from the Third World[25] and by the prominence given to immigrant crimes and illegal status. Dal Lago[26] argues that public opinion's fears (e.g. *foreigners are a threat for citizens*, *we are scared*) are reflected by the media (e.g. in headlines like *foreigners are a threat*, *danger is tolerated by an inefficient government*) which in turn affect the type of measures a government will put in place (e.g. faster expulsion process for clandestines, securitization of migration).[27] The media has become—in recent years—the main form of public-ness in Western societies, substituting face-to-face social interaction with new ways of communication across time and space. As a result of this, mass media have contributed (either as a cause or as a key

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[23] Also Waever recognizes security as a "speech act." He writes that "the word security is the act pronounced as such by elites in order to produce hierarchical conditions in which security issues are dramatized and presented as supreme priorities of the state or the actor in question" (p. 54). In this paper, the dynamics of politicization of migration goes deeper than that and argues that the mechanism for the production of the hegemonic discourse (securitization in this case) does not come directly from the level of the elites but comes from below, "comes, so to speak, from the masses" (Doty, p. 73). See Ole Waever, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in Ronnie D. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Immigration and the Politics of Security," *Security Studies* 8:2–3 (1999–2000), pp. 71–93.

[24] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe call "nodal points" (Lacan's *points de capiton*) the privileged discursive points that partially fix meaning within signifying chains.

[25] Anthony Browne, "The Secret Threat to British Lives," *The Spectator*, January 25, 2003, pp. 12–14.

[26] In Alessandro dal Lago, *Non-persone* (Milano: Interzone, 1999).

[27] Livingston and Riley however argue that there may be cases whereby politicians themselves are personally affected by media news reports causing them to be inclined to take certain decisions. See Steven Livingston and John Riley (1999) in Piers Robinson, "Operation Restore Hope and the Illusion of a News Media Driven Intervention," *Political Studies* 49:5 (2001), pp. 941–956.

symptom) to a restructuring of public and private spheres in which the boundaries between "public" and "private" have become increasingly blurred.[28]

The world is made of relations of power and resistance and mass media occupy a powerful role in having been able to successfully become the filter through which millions of people interpret the world around them. As Street[29] illustrates, in Western democracies, the mass media have claimed the right to represent the people and to uphold democracy, and the consumers of newspapers and television have come to treat media sources as the basis on which to think and act in the world. Deriving from this, I can argue that public opinion is often exploited by the media (through what Habermas calls "opinion-management"), its fears orchestrated in order to make demands to governments and change the system. In the case of immigration, for example, it is not the actual fears and demands of the public opinion which so forcefully institute a particular hegemonic discourse type. Dal Lago[30] writes that public fears about immigration are *reflected* by the media. I would go further than that and argue that media messages not only reflect these fears, they *channel* and *strengthen* them and transform them into a powerful message/discourse for authorities. The discourse will then become hegemonic if (and only if) political authorities will transform it into the dominant policy discourse and into actual political action. The hegemonic discourse type is therefore the result of the representation and orchestration of public opinion demands by the mass media which produce change and, in the case of immigration discourse, form the basis for the establishment of the hegemony of the *securitization* discourse type.

Over the last two decades, many studies have recognized the influential role of the mass media in shaping people's attitudes about social and political issues. However, the difficulty in determining and drawing conclusions about the media's impact on the attitudes of individuals and on politics is undeniable. It is complex, for example, to precisely determine the influence of the interaction between news reporters, spin doctors or government officials on the formation of "key meanings" or categories of meanings.[31] Arguing that the relation between media and politics is one of power, Street[32] suggests that there are two main directions in the relation between media and politics: there is the power *over* the media—what gets shown or reported—and there is the power *of* the media. Public opinion is therefore called into existence through the rhetoric of communication. The media constitute "public spaces" in which social and political discourses take place, in which "public opinion" is formed and "public interest" articulated. However, both the meaning of the messages and the

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[28] Jurgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

[29] John Street, *Mass Media, Politics and Democracy* (London: Palgrave, 2001).

[30] Dal Lago, *op. cit.*

[31] Meaning is produced, according to Meyer, through what he calls "media democracy"—a concept which features a "triangle consisting of the media public, political actors with high media profiles and permanent opinion polling, all of which reciprocally influence one another and in which the consequences of the symbiotic relationship between media and politics become imbedded." See Thomas Meyer and Lew Hinchman, *Media Democracy: How the Media Colonize Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p. xiii.

[32] Street, *op. cit.*

identity of media actors are discursively constructed in and through discursive strategies of power and resistance.

My view of the role and influence of the media in politics shares with Robinson,[33] who has previously referred to the power of the media as the "strong CNN effect." By "CNN effect," he means the powerful influence that the media exerts on policy by forcing officials to pursue particular courses of action and by creating a political imperative for policy-makers to act.[34] The mass media interact with the social and political spheres to form what I call a "public discourse"[35] defined as the sum of social (media and public opinions') accounts of an issue which then, if pressing, proceeds to be adopted by governments and is transformed into a "policy" discourse (hegemonic). It would be wrong to argue that the mass media simply act as a "magic bullet" on society, converting the opinions of a passive audience.[36] Rather, the mass media have their most powerful effect when they are used in a manner that *reinforces* and *channels* pre-existing attitudes and opinions (in this case, fears) and that are consistent with the psychological make-up of the person and social structure of the groups with which he or she identifies.[37] In so doing, the mass media reproduce an active, powerful political discourse that acts as a pervasive tool[38] for political action. Thus, differently from what Dal Lago suggests, public opinion and private discourses based on fears ("Migrants might take jobs away"; "Migrants may cause disruption") are transformed into reinforced discourses articulated with strong words, myths and symbols around potent nodal points ("Migrants take jobs away"; "Migrants increase criminality"). Such discourses are then redirected to the public, strengthening the discourse on immigration even further. The discourse of the public sphere will become dominant and hegemonic only when it results in political action (in the realm of immigration, when public and media discourse influences political choices).

In the case of immigration, a certain kind of policy discourse buttresses a certain form of identity politics. By constituting a discourse on immigration, one produces the object of which it speaks, immigration as a social subject and as a bounded identity. The transformation of "public discourse" into a hegemonic "policy discourse" (rather than *political* discourse as every discourse is essen-

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[33] Robinson, *op. cit.*

[34] "End Asylum Soft Touch Says Hain," *The Guardian*, May 13, 2002, headline, first page.

[35] The term "public discourse" therefore adopts here a different meaning from that put forward by Schmidt (2000). She defines public discourse as the "sum of political actors' public accounts of the polity's purposes, goals and ideals which serve to explain political events, to justify political actions, to develop political identities (...) to frame the national political discussion." See Vivienne Schmidt, "Democracy and Discourse in an Integrating Europe and a Globalizing World," *European Journal of Law* 6.3 (2000), pp. 277–300, at p. 279.

[36] What Canclini calls a deductive approach: all aspects of popular life singularly derive from micro-social powers. See N. G. Canclini., "Culture and Power: The State of Research," in Paddy Scannel, Philip Schlesinger and Colin Sparks (Eds), *Culture and Power: A Media, Culture and Society Reader* (London: Sage, 1992).

[37] Clint Wilson II and Felix Gutierrez, *Race, Multiculturalism and the Media*, 2nd edn (London: Sage, 1995), p. 44.

[38] See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1972); Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor and Simeon J. Yates, *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader* (London: Sage, 2001).

tially a *political* discourse) is not, however, straightforward. As Robinson argues, in order to produce an effect strong enough for politicians to feel compelled to act or else face a public relations crisis and political damage, there must be sufficient coverage of a particular form.[39] This is an interesting point when one considers the coverage of immigration by national press, radio and news.

The persistence with which immigration and asylum-seeking are portrayed in the Italian and British mass media has created a common sense view (or "collective will") of immigration as danger to internal security. As Maneri and Dal Lago[40] have also argued, the collective and predominant construction of immigration as a security concern, provoked by the existence of boundaries and by the deriving public fear (as "fear is related to difference"[41]), is due to the agenda-setting powers of the mass media.[42] Mass media see immigration and insecurity as the "real" concerns of the public—concerns which need to be addressed and reflected by news reports if newspapers (as one *medium*) is to sell copies and appeal to the readers. It is therefore in the interest of the mass media to produce a construction of immigration which will appeal to individuals' concerns while at the same time promoting the idea of the "community," one to defend against the outsider.

Such common sense views—and the bombarding of press reports—act as a demand for the government to "do something about it." Robinson also observes that media influence will occur mainly when the executive has no policy on an issue or when policy-makers are divided over the appropriate course of action to take. This latter point applies particularly to immigration policy. The current, gradual transition from national to transnational competence on immigration matters has raised enormous doubts amongst national policy-makers and elites about the ability of the European Union to agree on effective and practical solutions to the challenges posed by immigration. Political insecurity and public concern on immigration matters are elements that sustain media influence.

Considering public opinion as a homogeneous unit, however, can be misleading. Public opinion is not homogeneous and public fears raised by the media concerning immigration can be divided in two types: *economic* and *social*. "Upper and middle class citizens" (social grades A, B and C1)[43] will not be affected by the same fears and concerns as "lower level" and "working class citizens" (social grades C2, D and E) and, for this reason, media leverages on both categories in different ways, raising different kinds of issues in order to target the diverse concerns of their readership and audience.[44] A recent article in the *New Statesman*

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[39] Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 942.

[40] Marcello Maneri, "Lo straniero consensuale: la devianza degli immigrati come circolarita di pratiche e discorsi," in Alessandro dal Lago (ed.), *Lo straniero e il nemico: Materiali per l'etnografia contemporanea* (Genova: Costa & Nolan, 1998) and dal Lago, *op. cit.*

[41] Huysmans, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

[42] Here issues such as media ownership apply but addressing them would be the subject of an altogether different paper.

[43] I use the terms "upper, middle, working class and lower level" in reference to the system for social grading (based upon the occupation of the head of household) developed for the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising. Such a generalized categorization is mainly adopted as a working tool.

[44] In this paper, economic position and class are taken into account as one of many bases for identity construction and discourse formation (Ernesto Laclau and Chantal

argues exactly that: "opinion polls consistently show that hostility to immigration is greatest among those most immediately affected—the native poor and low-skilled. This reflects an uncomfortable truth—that immigration is good for the wealthier classes and bad for the poorer".[45]

Economic Threat

The arrival of migrants into a country and the way this is reported in the media produce fears among working class citizens over such issues as competition for jobs, access to education and housing benefits. Their economic position within society is such that their articulation of the immigration discourse will be revolved around concepts that are seen as endangered by immigration. Their identity (in terms of their status) is perceived as "threatened" by the arrival of migrants—it is also through this perception of the Us/Them division that their identity is defined in the first place. Many scholars have noted that European workers reveal the most hostility toward immigrants.[46] Mass media play on people's sense of economic insecurity by transmitting messages that resonate with the insecurities of working class and unprivileged citizens, those that would be more affected by migrants' competition for the already limited resources. This aspect of people's behavior can be explained by Foster's idea of "limited good." People (peasants for Foster—but this is by no means unique to peasants) "view their social, economic and natural universes—their total environment—as one in which all of their desired things in life (…) exist in *finite* quality and are always in short supply."[47] By channeling private discourses on the limited good together with other types of supporting discourses (such as "social threat"), the mass media produce a more unified discourse based on supposed "collective will." In the production of immigration discourse both collectivism (in the sense of the formation of a hegemonic discourse against immigration) and individualism (in the sense that the "us" creates more demarcated boundaries with the "them," who are also competing for the limited good) take place.[48] One main way in which fear is created by the media is through the much-cited argument that a lion's share of taxpayers' money contributes to sustaining refugees' livelihoods:

> Mr. Ahmadi, 33, his wife Feriba, 24, and their two young children were flown back to Germany in a specially chartered jet *at a cost to the taxpayer of an estimated £30,000.*[49]

Emphasis on the threat of competition and on the cost incurred by a country

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(Footnote continued)

Mouffe, 1985) and in no circumstances is class adopted as a basis for collective political agency or as the only form of power struggle.

[45] John Lloyd, "Is the Daily Mail Right about Immigrants?" *The New Statesman*, January 3, 2003, pp. 18–20, at p. 18.

[46] See Teun Van Dijk, *Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1987); John Cole, *The New Racism in Europe: A Sicilian Ethnography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[47] George Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," *American Anthropologist* 67 (1965), pp. 293–315, at p. 296, my emphasis.

[48] See Foster, *op. cit.*

[49] News Digest, *Financial Times*, August 24–25, 2002, emphasis added.

as a result of the presence of *unwelcome* migrants creates the background to social prejudice against immigrants.[50]

Fear of losing national identity usually follows the fear of economic competition (above all amongst the working classes). The link between identity and employment recalls the argument made by the journalist Angus Roxburgh, who, describing the new wave of support to far right parties across Europe, argued that "this is just an appalling reminder of how easily populism can turn into fascism."[51] If one looks at the emergence of far right parties in Europe, one can draw from rightwinged propaganda the same interesting links between employment and immigration that can be drawn in media texts: as Roxburgh suggests, "three million unemployed French people equals three million foreigners in the country."[52] The reason why this is so is that both far right parties and the mass media understand that the most convenient way to appeal to the masses is to produce fear for one's own well-being. As the individual's economic position in the capitalist society is one of the bases of identity formation, a discourse that leverages on and is articulated around threat to the already "limited good" will lead to the gradual production of a discourse based on strengthened collective will and a more "common voice." Opposition to immigration arises from economic deprivation and from the fear of further financial decline.[53]

Social Threat

Increasing crime, threat and danger for national security are another concern raised by the mass media, a concern that tends to provoke insecurity and fear in most groups in society (but in particular, to the upper/middle classes). In Italy, for example, great emphasis on crimes, rapes and homicides committed by Albanian immigrants in middle/upper class households has contributed to the

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[50] Many studies have been conducted to establish whether or not economic fears of migrants' competition are justified. Gavosto et al. (1999) argue, for example, that in the highly segmented Italian labor economy, competition will mainly exist between irregular immigrant workers and illegal native workers in the informal sector. The results of this study also show that the inflow of immigrants actually raises the wages of native manual workers mainly in small firms and in the north of the country. Differently from studies from other countries that would show competition between native and immigrant workers, the lack of competition and the actual positive results of immigration inflow on native wages demonstrate, first, that the numbers of immigrants in Italy have not yet reached a "saturation" level and, second, that there is still room in the Italian economy for foreign workers (Gavosto et al., 1999). On a more general line, Carillo et al. (1999) argue that the quality of skill of immigrants plays a crucial role in assessing whether and when immigration will have negative or positive effects on the welfare of the receiving economy. A flow of lower-skilled immigrants will generally lead to lower average human capital forcing the host economy towards a lower welfare level. The reverse is also valid. See Andrea Gavosto, Alessandra Venturini and Claudia Villosio, "Do Immigrants Compete with Natives?" *Labour* 13:3 (1999), pp. 603–621; Maria Rosaria Carillo, Beniamino Quintieri and Concetto Paolo Vinci, "Causes and Economic Effects of Migration Flows: An Overview," *Labour* 13:3 (1999), pp. 587–602.

[51] Angus Roxburgh, *Preachers of Hate: The Rise of the Far Right* (London: Gibson Square Books, 2002), p. 15.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Also in Joel Fetzer, *Public Attitudes Toward Immigration in the United States, France and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

label of Albanians as criminals.[54] In this case, the discourse on immigration is articulated around the *nodal points* of crime and danger in order to become the discourse with which a certain group (characterized by economic stability, which is only one of many loci of identity formation) identifies. The reason why a certain immigration discourse dominates at any one point in history depends on the efficiency with which such discourse protects and legitimates the existing or desired identity politics.[55] As also Huysmans argues, "threat definition creates a self and an other in a process in which the definition of the self depends on the definition of the other."[56]

In the past, the incoming "Other" has always produced collective fear within the receiving society. Today, this fear is re-created as an increasing and intensive public worry for threats to safety and health and is often expressed in what we may call a *criminalization* of the foreigner. The role of the media in reproducing social fears within society is fundamental. During the 1990s, media coverage of immigration has dramatically increased compared to the past. It usually assumes negative overtones and generally portrays immigration as a serious problem. Referring to the Italian mass media, for example, Dal Lago reports that in 824 articles on immigrants published in seven Italian national newspapers in 1992–1993, 47% reported news of crimes committed by immigrants while only 8% reported episodes of racism or xenophobia.[57] A recent British example of media attention to immigration can be found in the *Spectator*.[58] The journalist, Anthony Browne, refers to immigration as the "real threat to British lives: New Labour has been importing killer diseases." The article is a vivid example of how media texts can successfully play on society's fears and attempt to, "subtly," pressurize governments to modify policies:

> From exotic cuisines to driving entrepreneurialism, Third World immigration brings many good things to this country (UK). But it also brings the epidemics that blight the poorer countries: HIV infection, tuberculosis and hepatitis … The thousands of infected immigrants who are arriving in Britain each year are doubling the rate of HIV, trebling the rate of TB and increasing twenty-fold the rate of hepatitis B … Britain's new epidemics are the direct result of Labour policy. The government is not only importing epidemics, but it is also failing to tackle them and is indeed trying to hide what is happening from the British public.[59]

Browne's article clearly and dramatically communicates what, according to the author, the country ignores but should instead be fully aware of, that immigration brings deadly disease and that the government with its "liberal" but

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[54] *Il Resto del Carlino*, July 29, 2000, "Albanese uccide a calci e pugni un operaio Italiano" (Albanian kills an Italian worker by beating him to death). Emphasis added to the words Albanian and Italian placed almost in opposition with each other.

[55] It is therefore based on a political strategy. By strategy I mean "a more or less accurate plan adopted to achieve political, psychological or other kind of objective" (Wodak et al., p. 31) and to reproduce and preserve existing power relations. See Wodak et al., *op. cit.*

[56] Huysmans, 1995, *op. cit.*

[57] Dal Lago, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

[58] Anthony Browne, "The Secret Threat to British Lives," *The Spectator*, January 25, 2003, pp. 12–14.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

"life-threatening" policies is directly responsible for it. The journalist continues in the attempt to further produce a fear not just of migrants but also of the actual institutions that are so precious to a citizen's life: hospitals. The "plague" of immigration and mistaken government policies are such that leave no safe haven to taxpaying citizens.

> The government is further accelerating the epidemic by going on a massive recruitment drive for nurses from sub-Saharan Africa where as many as one in three adults is HIV positive. As a result, 700 HIV-positive nurses are entering the country each year. Each of them is allowed to bring in an HIV-positive spouse, and both will receive NHS treatment costing £11,000 a year for the rest of their lives, a potential total cost to the NHS of £1 million … About 200 people acquired HIV from immigrants last year, the same number as were killed in the Bali bombing.[60]

This article is written with the clear attempt to provoke both social and economic fears. To do so, it focuses on two main aspects, jobs and diseases. First, it implicitly argues that precious jobs that could benefit the indigenous population are unfairly given to foreigners (who live on the system and on taxpayers' money and who, at the same time, infect the natives). Second, "parasitic" immigration and the inefficiency and damaging choices of the government are presented as the bases upon which to argue for the need of a fortress Britain and a shift in power and political decisions (so, immigration becomes, again, a politicized phenomenon and an excuse to argue for a change in the system). On top of these two aspects, the author also adds the dimension of terrorism to his narrative. Since September 11th and the events following the tragedy, terrorism and immigration have increasingly been associated by press and political figures, if not at times equaled. Here, however, the simile ("immigration is causing more victims than the Bali bombing") is utilized to give the idea of the dimension of the tragedy that immigration is provoking in Western societies. The choice of the object of comparison (i.e. the Bali bombing) is an interesting one.

The production of fear for one's own safety has created a general mistrust of immigration[61] and has required governments and policy-makers to introduce security measures for containing threat (and public fear) and, consequently, immigration. The problem of the public "alarm" thus becomes a political issue that authorities cannot ignore.

Impronte digitali per gli immigrati (Digital Imprints for Immigrants)[62]

Security measures have become the *leitmotif* of immigration policies both at the national and transnational levels; they are put into place by authorities to provide an answer to the needs and concerns of their citizens.

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[60] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[61] The dimension of "illegality" of immigration is also expressed by stressing the abusiveness of migrants. Headlines such as "Plan to Expel 30,000 Bogus Immigrants" (*Daily Telegraph*, May 31, 2002, emphasis added) draw the reader's attention to the illegality and deception behind the status of migrants in the UK. It also brings to the generalization that most migrants are bogus.

[62] *Corriere della Sera*, May 30, 2002, first page, main headline.

Thus, through symbolic forms, the media are able to increase certain concerns within society (*economic* and *social*) reproducing relations of power and constructing boundaries.[63] By producing such powerful discourses, public opinion can create a political imperative which influences the way governments operate and the "discourse type" they choose to adopt. This mechanism is relevant when thinking about the dynamics of political decision-making on immigration.

There are many existing discourses on immigration that draw different frontiers between "friends" and "enemies" and between "us" and "them"; some of these discourses are ignored by policy-makers while others enter into dynamic dialogues with one another and shape the way policies are structured and negotiated. Fears and concerns within the public sphere influence the choices that elected governments take and, as a consequence, governing parties and policy-makers will prefer adopting one discourse type (e.g. *securitization* of migration) over another (e.g. *liberalization* of migration) in order to comfort and match their electorate's expectations. This is significant when two main—but not necessarily mutually exclusive—discourse types are considered: the *economization* of migration and the *securitization* of migration. The effect that these two discourse types have on (by way of comforting and matching the expectations of) the public determines which one of them or what kind of combination between the two has ultimately influenced political action.

The Economization of Migration

The argument on the *economization* of migration (need for skilled workers to fill in gaps in national economies and increase national competitiveness—OECD) has been introduced by many business/governmental organizations that recognize the urgent need to rejuvenate national economies in stagnation. *Business Week* has argued, for example, that the "ability of societies to absorb foreigners could well determine which economies will grow for the rest of this century—and which will fade into the twilight."[64] Immigration has become an important asset for the 21st century business world, "yet politicians want to close the door."[65] Shortages of skilled, unskilled and seasonal workers are growing in many European countries while government policies are rendering entry to migrant workers increasingly more difficult.

In April 2003, for example, the UK government (with the highest level of employment recorded and unemployment at its lowest rate for nearly a generation), suggested that labor deficits were occurring in both the public (health services and schools and local government) and the private (construction, restaurants, retail trade, agriculture, etc.) sectors. In some of these activities, the rising average age of the workforce, promising high rates of retirement in the short term, indicates the failure to recruit adequate numbers of new entrants despite rising relative wage levels. Similar shortages are also reported in France,

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[63] Ernesto Laclau, cited in Torfig, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
[64] "The Coming Battle for Immigrants," *Business Week*, August 26, 2002, p. 80.
[65] Pieper, a former Royal Philips electronics and Compaq Comp. Corp. executive, *ibid.*

Germany and other EU members, albeit with higher levels of open unemployment.[66] As a result migrant workers of "all skills" are needed in Europe.

However, the recognized need to import foreign workers to reawaken European competitiveness (OECD) and to rejuvenate European populations (UN Population Division) has not received widespread public acceptance, nor has it entered the dominant discourses in government policies. As also Jordan and Duvell observe, despite European need for skilled and unskilled workers, the term "immigration" has come to mobilize

> the resentment of those made insecure by their vulnerability to global competition; it taps into rivalries between excluded groups; it links the fate of immobile and impoverished ethnic minority communities with the threat of mobile and resourceful newcomers, seem as further subverting the protections of citizenship (…) It exposes the fragility of liberal democratic institutions.[67]

For this reasons, the development of policy discourses on the *securitization* of migration is often presented as an inevitable policy response to the challenges for public order and domestic stability arising from increases in immigrants and asylum-seekers. The reason for the success of the *securitization* discourse type as opposed to the discourse type on the *economization* of migration is due to the effect that each of the two discourse types has on public opinion and on the degree of public satisfaction (measured by electoral success) that a government could attain if it adopted one of the two. In a society governed by insecurity, public opinion needs to be reassured by governments. The discourse type on the *economization* of migration has not reached the public nor has become hegemonic because of the impact that fear and media influence have had on the formation of public perception of immigration. It has only partially survived in the way many government policies on immigration have increasingly established skilled workers' schemes, legalized routes of entry based on skill (mainly in the IT sector):

> We have now launched the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme. This represents a further step in developing our immigration system to *maximize the benefits to the UK of high human capital individuals*, who have the qualifications and skills required by UK businesses to *compete in the global marketplace*. The programme will allow highly skilled persons to migrate to the UK bringing with them new skills, talents and experiences.[68]

Also in the latest Italian immigration policy (the "Bossi-Fini," 2002–L.106/2002, which modified the previous March 1998 policy), the emphasis on economic migration has increased compared to the past. The policy is such that an Italian residence permit will be valid for two years and will only be granted to individuals who are able to show a valid contract of employment. If the migrant loses his/her job, however, he/she will have to go back to his/her country of origin or become "irregular." The text of Article 5 (comma 5, my translation) states:

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[66] Also Nigel Harris, "Open Borders: A Future for Europe, Migrants and World economy," June 2003, *OpenDemocracy.net.*

[67] Bill Jordan and Franck Duvell, *Migration: The Boundaries of Equality and Justice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 62.

[68] UK White Paper, February 2002, p. 42, emphasis added.

> The residence permit or its renovation are refused (or, if the residence permit has already been given, it will be taken back) when the requested conditions for the entry or stay in the territory of the State are not fulfilled (stable employment etc) or are no longer fulfilled (if the migrant has lost his/her job).

The stress on employment in the new Italian policy has therefore become the *only* way in which a migrant (not an asylum-seeker) can stay in the country.

One example of the influence of the *economization* of migration has been the move by the British government to accept a number of asylum-seekers from the closing refugee camp of Sangatte, France, as economic migrants rather than as political refugees.

> As part of the final closure deal (Sangatte refugee camp) we (Britain) will take a fair proportion of those in and around Sangatte. They will not come here as asylum seekers, however, but on *"work permits,"* to contribute and pay taxes, rather than being dependent on support.

> I have made it clear repeatedly that there is a clear difference between economic migration routes and our *asylum system, which is there to protect those fleeing persecution*—it is not a way for people to come here simply because they want to work. We are opening up more and more ways for people to come and work here legally in *ways, which boost our economy.*[69]

This shows that the discourse type of the *economization* of migration is always more acceptable than a more humanitarian discourse type but, nevertheless, not hegemonic overall. Also, the use of the *economization* of migration discourse type in this case was mainly instrumental. The government needed, in fact, to find a way to "justify" in the eyes of public opinion the opening of borders to more than a thousand political asylum-seekers (mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq, "sensitive" countries); it could have done so only by adopting an economic explanation (i.e. they can come in only if they contribute to our economy) rather than a humanitarian one.

The Securitization of Migration

The discourse on the *securitization* of migration, which aims at containing and controlling the phenomenon, answers public fears of economic competition and of threat to the cohesion of the community.[70] For this reason, discourses representing migration as a cultural and economic challenge to social and political integration have become an important source for mobilizing rhetoric and institutions. *Securitization* is a *speech act*[71]—it is the utterance itself that is the act. Beck[72] suggested that it is cultural perception and definition that constitutes risk. I would rather suggest that it is the fear of losing one's identity (*identity* as social construction: being this on the basis of overlapping and coexisting

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[69] David Blunkett, Home Office Press Release 335/02, December 2, 2002, emphasis added.

[70] Security is a response to a threat to the identity of the imagined community. According to Jef Huysmans, the security story is about three things: threat, the object which is threatened (the reference object) and the maintenance of this object's identity. Huysmans, 1995, *op. cit.*

[71] Waever, *op. cit.*

[72] Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 135.

discourses such as political beliefs, nationality, economic situation, etc.) that makes people feel under threat: thus, it is the constructed identity that produces fear of the "excluded" (the migrant in this case) and, in so doing, it is identity that constitutes risk. The continued repression of what is excluded, in fact, is the condition of possibility not only for the existence but also for the essence of the social identity in question.[73] However, Beck's statement that "established risk definitions are thus a magic wand with which a stagnant society can terrify itself and thereby activate its political center and become politicized from within"[74] is broadly correct in the case of immigration. Even if Laclau and Mouffe would respond that reality is *always* politicized, we can add that the definition of threat or risk by way of securitizing the "intruder" aids to the formation of a political discourse[75] and of a "collective will."

An example of the necessity to establish political frontiers and securitizing the stranger in the politics of immigration ("boundaries first!") can be seen, for instance, in this recent affirmation by the British Home Secretary, David Blunkett, in the introduction to the 2002 White Paper:

> Confidence, security and trust make all the difference in enabling a safe haven to be offered to those coming to the UK. To enable integration to take place, and to value the diversity it brings, we need to be *secure within our sense of belonging and identity* and therefore to be able to reach out and to embrace those who come to the UK. Those who wish to work and to contribute to the UK, as well as those who seek to escape from persecution, will then receive the welcome they deserve. (emphasis added)

David Blunkett's statement demonstrates the perceived need to define boundaries in order for the enhanced plurality/diversity deriving from immigration not to endanger society (see occurrence of terms *secure*, *security*). The establishment of boundaries becomes a prerequisite for immigration management and for the preservation of the unity of democracy. Only through the maintenance of security and clear boundaries will a "safe haven" be possible. Only if they are willing to integrate will we welcome them. Also the following excerpt from the Home Secretary's speech in October 2002 illustrates the progressive *securitization* of the political discourse on immigration. The political rhetoric adopted here (one that underlines the adoption of security measures not to prevent asylum-seekers from crossing borders into the UK but instead to "nobly" attempt to stop the cycle of exploitation and trafficking into the UK) highlights the political theme of borders linked, once again, to the dominant theme of security and migration:

> I went to Calais and Frethun and to Belgium last week. I secured … agreement … that will ensure that we have properly organized immigration controls. We *secured the fencing and security* at the depots. *Not because this is anti-asylum, but because it is anti the organized traffickers* who are exploiting the exploitable across the world; getting their families to pay for children as well as adults to be trafficked across Europe, to be dumped in Sangatte, and then to try

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[73] Ernesto Laclau (1990), p. 32, in Torfig, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

[74] Beck, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

[75] According to Teun Van Dijk, political discourse could be defined as a "class of genres defined by a social domain, namely that of politics" and more simply, "discourse is political when it accomplishes a political act in a political institution, such as governing, legislation, electoral campaigning, and so on." See Teun Van Dijk, "Political Discourse and Ideology," paper for *Jornadas del Discurso Poltico* (Barcelona: UPF, 2001).

and make their way in containers or under trains across to Britain. It is a scandal that needs to be stopped and we should be the first to say so.[76]

Immigration policies exist with the aim of formally determining a politics of belonging and defining political boundaries of exclusion and inclusion within society. If the phenomenon of immigration constitutes a threat to society (as often communicated by the media) and immigrants become the constructed "enemy," then the choice of a certain type of national/hegemonic discourse on security and immigration might be able to contain the threat within defined boundaries and ultimately control it. Politicization of migration is therefore aimed at preserving the status quo.

European Union Discourse: Re-invention or Re-elaboration?

With the sovereignty of nation-states vividly displaying its limitations … the traditional model of society loses its credence as a reliable frame of reference …[77]

Having established under what pressures national governments have chosen a certain type of immigration policy discourse and how a particular discourse becomes hegemonic at the national level, one would then question whether or not the increased competence and influence of the EU on national immigration policies has produced changes in policy discourses on immigration. Has the shift in the focus of identity (from national to European democracy)—but also a shift in the size of the community of belonging—resulted in a new hegemonic political response to immigration?

Despite the recognized need of Europe for foreign workers and laborers, the perceived necessity to strengthen national and European identity and to create a politics of inclusion and exclusion (that could be adequate to the needs of the new Union) has become the priority. With the increased influence of the European Union on national decision-making, the security discourse on immigration has been felt by European authorities to reflect the resurgence of "national" or "European" identity in Europe better than the discourse on the *economization* of immigration. Miles *et al.*[78] specify that within the framework of the evolving rules of the EU, there are two general categories of migrants: those who are citizens of other EU countries and can move freely across borders and those who are citizens of non-EU nation-states and who must, for this reason, undergo extensive controls.[79] The question of exclusion, inclusion and politics of identity in the Union has become a critical one. Through cultural and political discourse, the European Member States have seen a reaffirmation of we-identity by sustaining a politics of belonging aimed at the exclusion of the Other (the non-European or "third country national") and at the preservation of a transnational democracy[80] in between unity and plurality. The idea of European identity is thus based on the essentialist model provided by 19th century's nation-states,

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[76] David Blunkett, October 2, 2002, Home Office website.

[77] Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 57.

[78] Robert Miles and Dietrich Thranhardt, *Migration and European Integration: The Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion* (London: Pinter, 1995).

[79] Extensive controls are also ways in which socio-political boundaries are established and reinforced through identity politics, knowledge and power.

[80] James Anderson (ed.), *Transnational Democracy: Political Spaces and Border Crossings* (London: Routledge, 2002).

following which immigration is not a threat in itself but it *becomes* a threat for the way it is perceived by Western societies (e.g. invasion of national/European identity, competition over jobs, etc.). In other words, it is the identity and social meaning that has been attributed to immigration that justifies and provokes European policy responses aimed at limiting it.

With the increased influence of the European Union on national affairs (Treaty of Amsterdam) and with the EU's stress on respect for fundamental rights (through, for example, the establishment of the European Court of Human Rights), it is surprising to see a reaffirmation of the discourse type of *securitization* of immigration, which characterizes and is hegemonic in nation-states. It is less surprising, however, when one observes that the process of EU decision-making on immigration matters, based on *unanimity* rule, is dramatically influenced and determined by the nation-states.[81] The intergovernmental character of decision-making today is organized in such a way that nation-states' own concerns and hegemonic political orientations will have a determining impact on how European discourse on immigration is expressed and applied, resulting in what might appear as the "weak and immobile"[82] policy-making system of the EU. On the other hand, the Member States' legislations and policies are themselves deeply influenced by the increased competence of the European Union. The re-invention of the national discourse is therefore the result of the mutual influence of the national and the transnational in the process of European integration.

The intergovernmental character of policy-making within the EU is what, it could be argued, characterizes the *securitization* direction of some of its policies: as Newman observes, "the most repressive aspect of the EU power remains one in which there is close and secretive cooperation between the states without any substantial possibility of scrutiny or accountability at national or EU levels."[83]

As Mary Kaldor[84] writes, in the 1980s, the need to create and solidify a European identity resulted in the proposal of several measures: a European national holiday, a European "transnational" anthem, a European flag and European Union signs on external borders. Recognizing the necessity of creating a social/cultural identity for the political Union brought the EU to institutionalize some of these measures (such as flag, signs and anthem), to define a concept of supranational European citizenship and to create symbols with which European citizens could identify. The intention was to re-invent and legitimize the concept of Europe by transforming it into a transnational entity which was not only political and economic in nature but which also had a social dimension that made it closer to the heart of Europeans. This involved appropriating the symbols of the nation-state and using them to create a collective identity and an affective dimension at the supranational level. However, increased political

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[81] Also Ferruccio Pastore, "Just Another European Dream? Why Did the Communitarization of Immigration and Asylum Policies Almost Fail and How We Should Revive It," paper presented at the international seminar on "European Migration and Refugee Policy: New Developments," Cicero Foundation, Rome, November 15, 2002.

[82] Michael Newman, "Re-conceptualizing Democracy in the European Union," in James Anderson (ed.), *Transnational Democracy: Political Spaces and Border Crossings* (London: Routledge. 2002), p. 84.

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[84] Mary Kaldor, "Europe at the Millennium," *Politics* 20:2 (2000), pp. 55–62.

competence of the European Union on matters, which had been until then of exclusive competence of the nation-states, only partially provided new solutions to old challenges. In the case of immigration, the need to substitute "fragmented" national approaches with more solid measures of intergovernmental character[85] and the purported European "new shared vision" (creating an area of "freedom, security and justice") did not, in reality, propose an actual "novel" direction for policies. In other words, the increased intergovernmental play (and the nature of the decision-making process) and the "self-limited sovereignty" of nation-states[86] did not result in a change in hegemonic discourse and political orientation on immigration (constructed around the notions of immigration as economic and social threat, as underlined above). The European discourse has not changed so dramatically and the old national discourse on security was replaced by a re-invention of the same. As Larsen argues, even when there is a change in discourse there is not really a complete change of discourse—only if the governing statements are altered would we see the complete disappearance of a given discourse.[87] In the case of the EU, the governing statements or nodal points remain the same (belonging, boundaries, etc.) and, as a result, the type of dialogue adopted by the European Union on immigration matters does not differ substantially from previous national discourses on immigration. Identity and social meaning attributed to immigration justify and provoke both national and European policy responses aimed at limiting it. The influence of the nation-states is, therefore, far from fading.

> The great significance of the Schengen agreement does not lie in the abolition of border controls between the Member states. The real qualitative change is that these countries now share a common external border. (emphasis on new European borders)[88]

> The external borders of the EU play a key role in defining and protecting the area of freedom, security and justice that we all desire. *The control and surveillance of borders contribute to managing flows of persons entering and leaving that area and help protect our citizens from threats to their security.* Besides, they constitute a fundamental element in the fight against illegal immigration.[89]

Closure and exclusion have been part of the rhetoric on immigration in Europe over the past 30 years. Older countries of immigration such as the UK and France have adopted an increasingly strict immigration regime in the 1960s and 1970s. New countries of immigration such as Italy, in order to be in line with other Member countries in entering the Schengen agreement, on the other hand, have later "borrowed," through a process of "policy learning," the strict immigration policies of older countries of immigration. As a consequence, in a Europe where the majority of national immigration policies focus on discourses of exclusion and security in one way or another, it is no surprise that the

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[85] European Commission, 2001.

[86] Christian Joppke (ed.), *Challenge to the Nation-State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[87] Henrik Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[88] Romano Prodi, *Europe As I See It* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 75.

[89] Council of the European Union, June 11, 2002, emphasis added.

convergence between Member States' policies is taking place first in areas of security and control of migration.[90]

A Re-invented Discourse

Following the signing of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 (in force in 1999), the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) states that it is the aim of the EU to "maintain and develop the Union as an area of *freedom, security and justice*, in which the free movement of persons is assured in conjunction with *appropriate measures* with respect to *external border controls, asylum [and] immigration*" (Article 2, emphasis added).

The combination of justice, freedom and humanitarian assistance with border controls and security is what so markedly characterizes the vision, the new re-invention of the European Union and the actual innovation brought by the European political discourse. This *new vision*—one based on a balance between freedom, security and justice within the borders of the European Union—consists, in the words of Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Antonio Vitorino, of a balance between the "concepts of freedom, security and justice (which) are of equal importance: none is superior to the others. There is a particular link between freedom and security: freedom loses much of its meaning if it cannot be enjoyed in a secure environment."[91] This very vision was also at the basis of Article 29 of the Amsterdam Treaty, which states that "The Union's objective shall be to provide citizens with a high level of safety within the area of Freedom, Security and Justice" and it is a vision "in the sense that we all clearly see the final objective which has to be achieved as a sort of guiding light but that we realize at the same time that we are not yet at the end of the road."[92]

Creating a harmonious area of freedom, security and justice *within* the EU and for all citizens of the EU entails a more marked definition of the borders between the Inside and the chaotic Outside. Disharmony and chaos brought by immigration would in fact unbalance the equilibrium upon which the new vision of the EU is based. For this reason, once again, immigration needs to be securitized.

The characteristic of the hegemonic discourse on Europeanization of immigration is therefore the stress on control, the link between threat and immigration and the urgent need, however, to balance humanitarian protection and European security.[93]

> The Union also has an *increasing responsibility* in the world, due to its position, its *tradition of safeguarding peace and human rights* and its interest in having a stable international environment in which to achieve its own commercial ambitions.[94]

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[90] Since national priorities of security over and above necessity will be once again dominant through unanimity rule at the level of the European Council. See also Fiorella Dell'Olio, "Immigration after Nice: From 'Zero' Immigration to Market Necessity," in Anthony Arnull and Daniel Wincott (eds), *Accountability and Legitimacy in the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[91] Speech by Antonio Vitorino to the conference organized by the Union Independente des Syndacats de police on "Public and Private Security," Brussels, November 21, 2000.

[92] *Ibid.*

[93] Also in Sandra Lavenex, *op. cit.*

[94] Romano Prodi, *op. cit.*, p. 7, emphasis added.

As the European Union is presenting itself as a moral institution and as a human rights protector (hence adopting and manufacturing a different identity from that of nation-states, introducing—through the Amsterdam Treaty—sanctions against Member States violating the principles of democracy and human rights, etc.),[95] its discourse on immigration will also be articulated differently from that of nation-states:

> The European Union needs a comprehensive approach to migration addressing political, human rights and development issues in countries and regions of origin and transit. This requires combating poverty, improving living conditions and job opportunities, preventing conflicts and consolidating democratic states and ensuring respect for human rights, in particular rights of minorities, women and children. To that end, the Union as well as Member States are invited to contribute, within their respective competence under the Treaties, to a greater coherence of internal and external policies of the Union. Partnership with third countries concerned will also be a key element for the success of such a policy, with a view to promoting co-development.[96]

The difference between national and European discourses on security and migration lies in the way the security focus is formulated. In national hegemonic discourses, security is usually linked to territoriality, quotas and explicit measures for maintaining control over admission of foreigners. In European discourses, instead, security is implied within discussions of humanitarian assistance, fundamental rights and protection.

> Overall, immigration calls for a *comprehensive approach* that takes all the political, social and human dimensions fully into account.

> Border controls are bound up with asylum policies , *security is linked to ensuring fair treatment* for all, and the effectiveness of various decisions and measures within the EU depends on relations with non-member countries and on development cooperation too.[97]

The discourse type of *securitization* of migration is still hegemonic; its *articulation*, however, has been slightly modified (as part of the new ambitious project of identifying the EU as a moral institution/actor responsible for the protection of human rights, something that nation-states did not give as much prominence to).[98]

The reasons why such discourse is still hegemonic are manifold. First of all, the discourse type is, once again, produced by the need of delineating political boundaries for the protection of identity.[99] Identity, negotiation of defined

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[95] The Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into force on May 1, 1999, inserts a new Article 6 in the Treaty on European Union, which reaffirms that the European Union "is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States." Member States violating these principles in a "serious and persistent" way run the risk to see certain of their rights deriving from the application of the Union Treaty suspended. See also Newman, *op. cit.*

[96] European Council, Tampere, October 15–16, 1999, presidency conclusions, itern.11.

[97] Romano Prodi, "The Seville Summit: Immigration, Enlargement and Reform", speech at the European Parliament, Strasbourg, July 2, 2002.

[98] The tension between human rights and security underlies both national and European asylum policies. See, for example, Liza Schuster, *The Use and Abuse of Political Asylum in Britain and Germany* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Lavenex, *op. cit.*

[99] Laclau and Mouffe, *op. cit.*

borders and the need for legitimating power are characteristics that belong to both national and transnational governance. Secondly, transnational competence, because of the actors at play and the type of decision-making process in place (unanimity voting), is irremediably linked to the identity of nation-states.[100] The fears and the triggers (media, public opinion) that have produced the hegemony of a certain type of discourse on immigration in the nation-states are now directly transferred to the transnational, European level. Moreover, in all those cases in which a real compromise among national diverging sets of interests cannot be established, it is very likely that communitarization will be but a *photography* of what already exists at the national level.[101]

The democratic contradiction between plurality and unity that Laclau delineates is even more applicable in the European Union where the issue of identity and plurality is more complex and where the community of belonging is more extensive (and more diverse). Europe's large foreign population—comprising migrants from former colonies, economic migrants, asylum-seekers—constitutes both a threat and a spur to the building of "social Europe."[102] The realization of spur or threat depends on how the delicate equilibrium of unity and plurality inherent to democracy ("transnational democracy" in this case) is managed by European authorities. Despite Europeanization being a process of institutionalization that refers to the establishment of new "structures of meaning and schemes of interpretation which explain and legitimize practices and rules,"[103] the embedded meaning in the management of migration in the EU is still the same as the one that nation-states adopted, although in a different guise. The change in articulation is discursive and due to the need to "turn page" and to legitimize the seriousness, enhanced morality and novelty of the European Union as a "global actor."[104]

Despite the fact that "the European integration process is—in principle—involved in the development of and the struggle against the representation of

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[100] Because of unanimity voting the European Commission's proposals are more often than not met with what Pastore calls "passive resistance of national sovereignties" and are therefore limited in their action. This type of voting and the often contrasting priorities of the Member States have also led to the poor quality of the Communitarization of immigration and asylum policies and to a limited convergence of vision. Pastore argues, for example, that the resulting convergence is likely to be a convergence to the bottom where the common minimum standard will very often coincide with the lowest common denominator (security and control). These contrasting priorities and lack of agreement on issues other than control and security are both due to Member States' jealousy of their national sovereignty and to the structural diversity among Member States in the migratory field. See Pastore, *op. cit.*

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[102] Patrick R. Ireland, "Migration, Free Movement, and Immigrants Integration in the EU: A Bifurcated Policy Response," in Stephan Leibfried and Paul Pierson (eds), *European Social Policy: Between Fragmentation and Integration* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1995), p. 231.

[103] Johan Olsen, "European Challenges to the Nation State," *Arena Working Paper*, No. 14 (Oslo, 1995), p. 5.

[104] Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor* (London: Routledge, 1999).

migration as a cultural danger,"[105] the discourse of Europeanization of immigration has incorporated and re-appropriated the national concepts of immigration and security.[106] Although this may well be a strategy designed to enhance the Union's legitimacy, there may be the risk of imitating and reproducing the politics of the "protective state" and making the European Union relevant to the lives of ordinary Europeans by responding to their concerns and anxieties without distinguishing whether these are their own anxieties or their national governments' anxieties about "un-meltable ethnies."[107] In particular, the tragic events of 9/11 have sped up the process of securitization (or the "security continuum," as Didier Bigo calls it) at the European level by tying up internal and external security concerns and therefore by linking, even more, immigration and terrorist threat.[108] The governments of the Member States, security agencies and European public opinion have been made increasingly more aware of the extent to which international crime can be fought more effectively by common action and the development of an Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (Treaty of Amsterdam) could provide the framework for such action. However, as Anderson and Apap[109] observe, the problem of balance between security (intrusive investigatory procedures, controls on persons and their activities, etc.) and freedom (civil liberties, rights for non-EU nationals, treatment of immigration and asylum cases, etc.) in the wake of September 11th is likely to become more acute. Since September 11th, in fact, governments across the world have enacted policies aimed at the containment of fear and at the preservation of security and unity of their nations. However, the impact that these policies have had on civil liberties (in particular those of Muslim citizens) has been significant—incrementing security at the expense of liberty. Post-9/11 security concerns and their impacts on civil liberties have further exacerbated the securitization process of migration policies and have further enhanced the contradiction between the discourses of unity and plurality in democratic societies (and, by securitizing unity in order to preserve it from plurality, one risks destroying the very foundations on which democratic society is constructed). Rather than relying on intelligence-driven criteria or individualized suspicion, governments have often used national origin as a proxy for evidence of dangerousness, thus increasing suspicion, stigmatization and fear of resident ethnic minorities and migrants

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[105] Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the Securitization of Migration," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 38:5 (2000), pp. 751–777, at p. 763. See also Huysmans, 1995, *op. cit.*

[106] Alessandra Buonfino, "Ever Closer Cooperation on Immigration and Asylum? The Limits of a Shared Vision between the Member States and the Commission," *Soundings: Journal of Politics and Culture*, forthcoming, 2004.

[107] Theodora Kostakopoulou, "The 'Protective Union': Change and Continuity in Migration Law and Policy in Post-Amsterdam Europe," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38:3 (2000), pp. 497–518.

[108] Also in Pastore, op. cit., and Valsamis Mitsilegas, Jorg Monar J. and Wyn Rees, *The European Union and Internal Security: Guardian of the People?* (New York: Palgrave, 2003). The process of securitization has also had the effect of restricting civil liberties and reinforcing those very same fears that motivated the process of securitization in the first place.

[109] Malcolm Anderson and Joanna Apap, "Changing Conceptions of Security and their Implications for EU Justice and Home Affairs Cooperation," in *CEPS Policy Brief*, No. 26 (Bruxelles, 2002).

among the population.[110] In order to protect national unity against the threat of diversity, governments have therefore often violated fundamental civil liberties and have undermined the actual national unity that they were trying to preserve. In a recent report, the Migration Policy Unit[111] shows that in the US, for example (but this is also broadly applicable to Europe), more than security and civil liberties what is ultimately at stake is the character of the nation and the strength that the nation derives from its diversity. The contradiction between *plurality* and *unity* inherent to (in this case, transnational) democracy is again at the heart of the dilemma.

Conclusion

According to Bigo, "security (…) consists of reassuring and protecting the public, not disturbing and worrying them. But sometimes, in seeking to achieve the former we unintentionally produce the latter."[112] This security/insecurity dilemma is at the heart of the immigration debate in Europe today. In a world where boundaries and categories are necessary in order to establish and reaffirm identity, immigration—as the flow of foreigners, the Other—has increasingly become a phenomenon that needs to be controlled, filtered, if not reduced. Because of the fear and *perceived risk*[113] that immigration arouses in receiving societies, *securitization* has gradually become the optimal national discourse type amongst many possible, coexisting discourses competing for hegemony. Securitization is the best possible discourse (security as a "speech act," according to Waever[114]) for the preservation of unity in a world of plurality because of its perceived ability to preserve existing boundaries and keep identity strong and legitimate.

In this paper, I have argued about the origins and mechanism behind the increased *securitization* of migration in Europe. I have argued that, in order to analyze the development of a hegemonic discourse, one needs to look at the interplay of social actors in the production and establishment of a powerful discourse type over another. The *securitization* of immigration discourse type is produced by a dynamic interplay of public opinion, mass media and governments coupled with the increasing number of migrants and refugees crossing the world's borders. As Bigo suggests, the *securitization* discourse, however, produces a "security dilemma." Inevitably, the process of *securitization* of migration, despite having been established with the perceived purpose of "reassuring" the public, will provoke and re-create fear within society. As a result, immigration will always be perceived as a threat.

This is a concern that the European Union has partially acknowledged.

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[110] In the context of the European Member States, one could see the enhanced powers recently given by the British government to immigration officers and the inaction of measures aimed at deporting immigrants whose words or actions are deemed to "seriously prejudice" British interests (April 2003) as clearly restricting civil liberties.

[111] Muzzaffer Chishti, Doris Meissner, Jay Peterzell, Stephen Yale-Loehr, Demetrios Papademetriou and Michael Wishnie, "America's Challenge: Domestic Security, Civil Liberties and National Unity after September 11th," *Migration Policy Institute Report*, Washington, DC, June 2003.

[112] Bigo, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[113] Beck, 1999, *op. cit.*

[114] Waever, *op. cit.*

Through speeches and policy proposals and, in order to escape the national "security dilemma," the EU has attempted the adoption of a "new" language (indicative of a tentative "new" identity) aimed at the identification of the EU with a new, moral institution committed to human rights and cooperation. The attempt to make the EU into a "new" institution in opposition to national fragmented and inefficient approaches is visible in the new articulation of EU immigration discourses. The discourse type of human rights and economization of migration (articulated around nodal points such as humanitarian aid, economic benefit, etc.) are, for this reason, present but only partially coexist with the main concern of the nation-states that make up the Union: *security*. European Union decision-making is such, in fact, that the preponderant security concern of nation-states is awake, inescapable and dominant in EU policies and discourses. As a result, sadly, the security dilemma in this 21st century European "Risk Society," despite appearances, is still present and hegemonic.

Contemporary discourse and policies on immigration should, however, strive to go beyond *securitization* and beyond the perception of immigration as a threat. Breaking the security drama of which the migrant has become the unwilling protagonist is essential for the creation of policies on immigration which are fit for an increasingly globalized world. A re-conceptualization of boundaries and hegemonic identities (thus going back to the very origins of the mechanism of politicization, as described in this paper) and the de-securitization of the Other should therefore be the first steps to take in order to escape the security dilemma.