Solidarity and Equal Burden Sharing in the EU over Irregular Migration: Pervasive Reality or Bedtime Story?

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Abstract: Since the establishment of the European Community, the existence or lack of solidarity among member states has been debated by the European policy-makers. Recently, the Lisbon Treaty saw the enshrinement of a solidarity clause, explicitly demanding upon EU member states to provide assistance to each other in time of emergencies, disasters, terrorist attacks or crises. In the spirit of this clause, our research wishes to demystify if there is solidarity in the EU over irregular immigration, and if there exists an equal distribution of burden and willingness to accept the burden among EU countries. As our main hypothesis, we consider that the EU is heading towards more security and no solidarity concerning irregular migration. In order to prove our assumptions, firstly, we analyze the solidarity within the borders of the Union, unfolding the behaviour of the European institutions and some EU countries while their fellow member states (e.g. Malta and Italy) deal with extraordinary waves of irregular immigrants, depicting the Schengen zone, as an area of mutual distrust. Secondly, we question the existing solidarity beyond the borders of the EU towards refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants, emphasizing on the existence of double standards when dealing with immigrants, showing a European Union whose solidarity is selective. We wonder whether the EU member states will manage to rise above their fragmented nation-state attitude, and whether they will be able to consolidate a powerful supranational European Union based on mutual trust and solidarity, successfully continuing to tell the story of Europe.

Keywords: welfare state system, Lampedusa, asylum policy, Dublin regulation, Schengen