

EU Migration Policy after the Arab Spring: Searching for Domestic and Foreign Policy Coherence

Panel: Session 5 (Lilac/Tulip)

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Organizing Institution: Center for European Policy Studies

Speakers: Sergio Carerra, Center for European Policy Studies (moderator)
Joanna Parkin, Center for European Policy Studies
Jean-Pierre Cassarino, European University Institute
Ptryk Pawlak, European Union Institute for Security Studies

Panel Short Summary

Ardie Ermac, Korea University
Matthew Jensen, American Enterprise Institute

Respect for human rights and the free movement of people within Schengen Area are principles that lie at the heart of the European Union (EU). Yet the actions of the EU and the EU member states following the Arab Spring have been incoherent and, at their worst, betray mounting xenophobia. Dr. Sergio Carerra, the moderator of this panel and a researcher at the Center for European Policy Studies, pointed to security issues and a trend towards populism in member states' politics as driving the incoherence of policy between the member states and the European Union institutions, and these issues dominated the ensuing conversation.

Although outwardly the European Union has expressed support for the spirit of the Arab Spring revolutions, it has not been supportive of the sort of immigration and development policies that might help the new North African governments succeed. Dr. Jean-Pierre Cassarino, a professor at the European University Institute, was clear that much of this discrepancy comes from the security concerns of each individual member state—the other panel participants shared this view.

Joanna Parkin, also a researcher from the Center for European Policy Studies, was driven to uncover the impact of the Arab Spring on the EU's migration policy towards the Mediterranean in a recent paper that she presented during her allotted time. Studying the events following the Arab Spring, Ms. Parkin, like the other panelists, noted that the EU has fallen back to a security driven approach to immigration policy. She described how one

driving factor for this default position is that the main actors involved in the decision making process in member countries tend to be Justice and Home Affairs officials, rather than foreign affairs experts. Moreover, she blamed the Lisbon Treaty for bringing about the unintended consequence of intensified turf and ideological struggles between EU institutions.

Dr. Patryk Pawlak of the, European Union Institute for Security Studies, emphasized the inherent linkage between domestic and foreign policy, paying particular attention to the latter. Essentially, Pawlak argued that striking a balance between the domestic and foreign pressures is perhaps the most important challenge for the EU in relation to their immigration policy. He identified the following challenges to the successful execution of this balancing act: first, the domestic political environments in member states are not favorable as they are growing heavily populist; second, the EU's integration policies are inherently one way, where the immigrants are expected to assimilate in the host societies but the host countries feel no obligations to meet the needs of the immigrants; and third, the broader geopolitical challenges, such as the issue of stability in the Middle East, hamper the adoption of a coherent immigration policy.

There was an overall agreement amongst the participants that incoherent immigration policies set forth by EU member states and the EU institutions are suboptimal; however, there is some concern that the situation could deteriorate further if populism rules in upcoming elections. Although the EU institutions have no power over that factor, they do have the power to educate EU citizens regarding the safety and benefits of immigration. This and a strong focus on the development of North Africa, rather than focus purely on immigration issues, may be the only ways to improve upon the security-driven status quo.

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