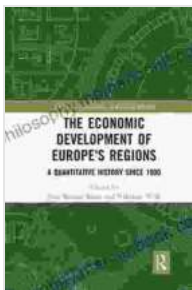


# Fortress Europe: Exploring the European Union's Immigration and Asylum Policies

The European Union has emerged as a central player in the global migration landscape, with its policies having a profound impact on the lives of migrants and asylum seekers. The concept of "Fortress Europe" has been employed to describe the EU's stringent border controls and restrictive immigration and asylum policies. This article delves into the complexities of Fortress Europe, examining its historical evolution, key elements, and multifaceted implications.



## Classical Trade Protectionism 1815-1914: Fortress Europe (Routledge Explorations in Economic History Book 32) by Agnes Ravatn

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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## Historical Context: From Open Borders to Fortress Europe

The idea of Fortress Europe emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. As the borders of Eastern Europe dissolved, the EU witnessed an unprecedented influx of migrants and asylum seekers. Concerns over uncontrolled migration, terrorism, and

social cohesion prompted member states to tighten border controls and strengthen internal security measures.

The Schengen Agreement, signed in 1985, established a passport-free zone within the EU. However, the increase in irregular migration led to the creation of the Dublin Regulation in 1990, which established a common asylum system and assigned responsibility for asylum applications to the first EU country of entry.

## **Key Elements of Fortress Europe**

Fortress Europe encompasses a range of policies and measures designed to control migration and strengthen border security. These elements include:

- **Physical Barriers:** The construction of fences, walls, and other physical barriers along EU borders has become a key feature of Fortress Europe. These barriers aim to deter irregular migration and prevent the unauthorized entry of individuals into the EU.
- **Border Surveillance and Control:** The EU has invested heavily in border surveillance systems such as surveillance cameras, drones, and thermal imaging equipment. Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, coordinates border control operations and supports member states in managing irregular migration flows.
- **Cooperation with Third Countries:** The EU has entered into agreements with third countries, such as Turkey, Libya, and Morocco, to stem migration flows and prevent migrants from embarking on perilous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea.

- **Asylum Policies:** The EU's Common European Asylum System establishes common standards for the processing of asylum applications and the provision of protection to refugees. However, member states have adopted varying interpretations and practices, leading to disparities in asylum outcomes.
- **Immigration Policies:** The EU has introduced quotas and restrictions on legal migration, with a focus on attracting skilled workers and limiting low-skilled labor. Member states have implemented their own immigration policies, which often prioritize economic interests over humanitarian concerns.

## **Impacts of Fortress Europe**

The policies of Fortress Europe have had far-reaching consequences for migrants, asylum seekers, and the EU itself.

## **Migrants and Asylum Seekers**

Fortress Europe has made it increasingly difficult for migrants and asylum seekers to enter and remain in the EU. Physical barriers, stricter border controls, and restrictive asylum policies have forced many to resort to irregular and dangerous migration routes. The Mediterranean Sea has become a deadly crossing point, with thousands of migrants losing their lives in the perilous journey to Europe.

Once in the EU, migrants and asylum seekers often face discrimination, xenophobia, and social exclusion. They may encounter difficulties in accessing basic services, obtaining employment, and integrating into society. The lack of safe and legal migration channels has pushed many

into the shadows, creating a vulnerable population living in fear of deportation or exploitation.

## **The European Union**

The policies of Fortress Europe have also had a significant impact on the EU itself. The focus on border security has diverted resources away from other areas, such as economic development and social cohesion. The EU's credibility has been questioned in light of its harsh treatment of migrants and asylum seekers.

The migration crisis of 2015, when over a million migrants and asylum seekers arrived in Europe, exposed the limitations of Fortress Europe. Member states struggled to coordinate a common response, and the lack of solidarity undermined the EU's internal cohesion.

## **Human Rights and International Law**

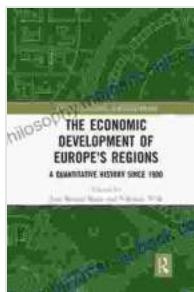
Fortress Europe has raised concerns about human rights violations and the disregard for international law. Critics argue that the EU's policies violate the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of asylum seekers to countries where they face persecution or serious harm.

The use of pushbacks, where migrants and asylum seekers are forcibly returned across borders without due process, has been condemned by human rights organizations. The EU's cooperation with third countries, such as Libya, has also been criticized for supporting regimes that engage in human rights abuses.

Fortress Europe represents a complex and multifaceted approach to migration and asylum in the European Union. While it has been successful

in reducing irregular migration, its policies have come at a high cost to migrants, asylum seekers, and the EU itself.

The challenges of migration and asylum require a comprehensive and humane response that respects human rights and international law. The EU must strike a balance between border security and its humanitarian obligations. This involves investing in legal and safe migration channels, strengthening protection mechanisms for asylum seekers, and promoting social inclusion for migrants. Only through a fair and balanced approach can the EU truly address the challenges of migration while upholding its values and safeguarding the rights of those seeking refuge and protection.



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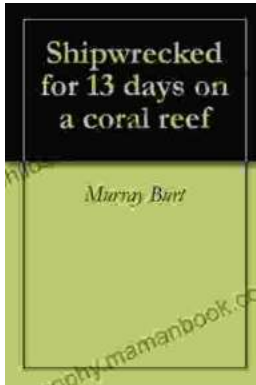
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