

Policy Report

Identifying migration scenarios (trends, continuities and brakes) and mobility issues in the Arab Mediterranean Countries

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

Introduction

1. Situation of international migration in the Arab Mediterranean countries (AMCs): changes in continuity
2. The brain drain: a loss of earnings
3. Money transfers: a false compensation
4. The limits of migration policy
 - 4.1 The AMCs, lands of transit and immigration
 - 4.2 Irregular migration and refugees: an absolute urgency
5. A necessary collaboration between countries, but ...

Conclusion

Recommendations

References

Endnotes

Abstract

This report on the youth migration policies of the Arab Mediterranean countries (AMCs)¹ has the principal aim of attempting to formulate policy design options for the countries of origin of the migrants. These, essentially, seek to reduce the proportions of this growing phenomenon, particularly among the youth population. The report is structured in three complementary levels: the first is dedicated to the detailed description of the various dimensions of the problem. The second part contains the analysis, discussion and evaluation of the reasons – both obvious and latent – behind the phenomenon. The third highlights the policies implemented in the international cooperation field and aims to foresee the ways to reconcile positions in the complex processes of mastering the migratory flows in the Arab countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean.

In terms of analysis, some of the most notable results we obtained were:

- The emigration of young people in the AMCs is a reflection of the great imbalance between the demographic growth of the population (youth bulge) and the countries' limited capacities for economic growth with the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world.
- The reality of the socio-political and economic systems of the AMCs tends towards the perpetuation of their status as countries of departure for young international migrants.
- The deep upheavals experienced by certain Arab countries have not had an attenuating effect on the migratory phenomenon among young people.
- In their new configurations, the Arab countries of the southern Mediterranean have become countries of immigration and transit, principally from Africa towards Europe.
- The importance of remittances towards the AMCs cannot justify the deficits on the human development level that result from the brain drain.
- The migration policies of the destination countries of young migrants have shown their limitations in reducing illegal migration. It is imperative, therefore, to reflect on an alternative global strategy centred around a reconfiguration of the economic development of these countries.

Introduction

Our paper forms part of the general problematic of the SAHWA Project,² which asks questions about the fate of the social group of young people in the Arab world and, more particularly, in the countries of the south and east of the Mediterranean basin (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia), since the socio-political earthquakes engendered by what is commonly called the “Arab Spring”. Our paper concentrates on the specific issue of the relations between young people in Arab societies and the issue of migration now that it has taken on troubling and dangerous proportions. Our paper does not include the case of Tunisia, due to the authors not having received the report on that country’s migration policy

These days, immigration along the south-north axis has grown to alarming proportions. To be sure, the phenomenon is a historical fact. But the novelty is that the new migratory configurations involve many more young people and irregular and illegal forms are well-established. In this context, the Arab Mediterranean countries are notable for being “exporter” countries of migrants and invite, as a result, questioning of the dysfunctionalities eroding their inefficient social systems. Further still, these same countries are increasingly becoming incorporated into the largest international migratory movements, making them countries of both destination and of transit for migrants and asylum seekers.

So in accordance with the issue of migration in the AMCs, our aims revolve around the following points:

- a. To provide a full picture of the issue of international migrations in the Arab Mediterranean countries through a description of their current evolution and integrating the decisive changes at various levels that characterise the region.
- b. To understand the rationale behind the new migration order, in the sense of grasping the potential changes as well as the constants.
- c. To analyse migration policies along two fundamental axes: the brain drain and remittances, and the conditions of the relations established between the migrants’ countries of departure and destination, taking into account the political, economic and security issues that they represent.

To meet the assigned objectives we have made use of the SAHWA study data on young people as well as the results of numerous studies and pieces of research related to the subject.

In terms of research methods, the SAHWA Project focusses on five Arab countries in the southern Mediterranean: Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, where the qualitative survey was performed on an overall sample of 10,000 young people aged from 15 to 29 years old.³ Because of the complexity of the issues approached, the data analysed are both qualitative and quantitative. At the first level (the survey), a questionnaire was used structured around the following themes: education, employment, cultures and values, political engagement and two transversal themes: migration and gender. At the qualitative level (Ethnographic Fieldwork),⁴ four techniques were used: focus groups, Life Stories, narrative interviews and Focused Ethnography. The analysis phase resulted in five national reports produced by the teams of the project's five partners,⁵ in line with the demands of the mixed research method,⁶ combining the figures and the qualitative data.

1. Situation of international migration in the Arab Mediterranean countries (AMCs): changes in continuity

It has become almost banal to show the substantial differences between specialists in the field – scholars, politicians and institutions – when it comes to the numbers of migrants in each individual country, making reference to the striking disparities in definitional, apparent or latent positions. Although aware of the limits of the coded language of describing international migration, we do not claim to be above attempts at quantification even if they may be read as an order of magnitude that can be improved.

These past decades, a new trend and dynamic has been established in the AMCs' migratory movements. They have become part of an unprecedented strategy at both geographical and human levels, and, for the countries of the Maghreb, its shape fits almost exclusively with the lines of colonial heritage.

According to the World Bank, cited by Bardak (2015: 21) the number of international migrants from the AMCs in 2011 was as follows:

- Egypt: 3.7 million migrants out of a total population of 79.39 million.
- Morocco: 3 million migrants out of 32.06 million inhabitants.

- Algeria: 1.2 million migrants out of a total population of 37.76 million.
- Lebanon: 1 million migrants out of a total population of 4.38 million.
- Tunisia: 650,000 migrants living abroad out of a population of 10.67 million inhabitants.

Although the data on the Maghreb is limited, it does provide with a valuable indication: that migrants from the central Maghreb make up 5.8% of the total population of the Arab Maghreb Union. A notably superior rate to the global average, which is 3.2% (Musette, 2016: 35-43). In absolute terms, Egypt has the highest number of migrants in the AMCs, followed closely by Morocco. These two countries are notable for the high number of their people living abroad. But in terms of the rate of emigration, it is Lebanon that is characterised by the highest level of emigrants. It is 28th in the list of countries with the highest levels of emigration of those with higher education qualifications (PNUD, 2016: 268).

The geographical aspect of the migratory patterns in the AMCs is underlined by the fact that 93.77% of Algerian migrants are in Europe, as are 82.82% of Moroccan migrants and 71.37% of Tunisian migrants. Of the Egyptians and Lebanese, 4.14% and 20%, respectively, live in Europe. In Arab countries, notably the Arab countries of the Gulf, the Egyptian community is overrepresented with 4,783,000 migrants. By contrast, 7.64% of migrants of Moroccan nationality are there and 26.7% of Tunisians (PNUD, 2016: 269). The new migration directions being taken by the countries of the central Maghreb – namely Italy and Spain – are essentially due to restrictions applied by the traditional destination countries, in this case, France and Germany.

The Lebanese, for their part, are also characterised by the diversification of the destinations of their migratory flows. These grew during the 1975-1990 war and have continued to grow as a result of the situations at the time on the economic, political and security levels.

With regard to the human component, a consensus emerges in the writing on migration in the Mediterranean and the AMCs (De Hass, 2007; Charef, 2007; Abedellaoui, 2009; Abi Samra, 2010; Fargues, 2013; Bardak, 2015; Kasparian, 2013) highlighting the fact that the new waves of migrant populations are characterised by their youth. This trend may easily be understood when we underline later that unemployment in the AMCs particularly concerns first-time jobseekers as well as the holders of university qualifications.

Another distinctive trait worth emphasising concerns the high – or even very high – levels of qualification of the new generations of migrants coming from the AMCs. Faced with the intensity of the brain drain in Lebanon and to a lesser degree in Morocco, we may reasonably ask the following question: is there or can there be gains from the brain drain (“brain gain”) in terms of the movement of competences and the optimal use of the potential of the diaspora? Should this represent an objective that should guide the relations of states with their diasporas, or are the benefits of remittances enough to compensate given the fact that in Lebanon, for example, one household in two has an emigrant relative? (Kasparian, 2013).

In the new migration landscape, the issue of gender is strong and persistent. Indeed, previously, if women always formed part of the migratory flows in the AMCs, it was because of their position as a family member. Girls and mothers with families took part more often than not with the aim of family reunification. What appears to be new in the structure of the migrants from the AMCs is observing women who hold medium, high, or very high levels of education that may allow them to go and live abroad without a male family presence. This is a new attitude that coincides with the appearance of new destinations, as is the case of Canada for Algerian migrants, for example. The same sign of feminisation can be seen in emigration in Morocco. However, it must be said that the progressive feminisation of migratory flows has not reached the same levels for Lebanon and Egypt. The reason for this is linked to the dominant destinations of these two countries, namely, the oil-producing countries of the Gulf. This tendency is easily explained by reference to the status and social position of women in countries such as these where conservative values dominate.

Highlighting the profiles of the migrants allows us to accept the theory of the new generation that represents irrefutable proof of what must be acknowledged to be the new migratory pattern of our countries, which must be a decisive element in all migratory policy.

Furthermore, we note in the literature on international migration that the economic factor, through employment, is the essential reason people dream of going to live in a country other than their own. Indeed, the AMCs suffer from high unemployment rates. This lack of employment opportunities particularly affects first-time jobseekers, who happen to be young people. This common characteristic in young people’s relationship with the labour market

could be approached via the great imbalance being produced between the growth of the population and economic growth. The point of impact materialises, especially, in the social pressure exerted by the youth bulge on the capacities of the labour market to meet the demand (Bricker & Foly, 2013). The rising numbers of young people as a group in the structure of a society is not necessarily a sufficient condition for generating a social inclusion problem. The real and decisive causes are found in the pressure applied by young people on the population as a whole by means of the labour market. Thus, faced with structural unemployment linked to economic growth, in the eyes of young people migration is the appropriate solution.

The shallowness of the labour market and the deficit in job supply has today become a characteristic of the AMCs and, more generally, the Arab world. The rate of unemployment is 28.2% in the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) and 30.5% in North Africa, the highest levels in the world (ILO, 2015). It is more than double the global average, which is respectively 12% and 13%. By country, the unemployment rate of young people in 2013 was as follows: Morocco 21%, Algeria 29.9%, Egypt 27.3%, Lebanon 20.70% and 33.5% in Tunisia.

The decisive importance of the employment shortage in the AMCs, notably among young people, has very severe consequences to the point that it can represent a real and permanent threat to the social cohesion of each country. Nevertheless, when it is not the foundations of the social, educational and political system that are troubled and in peril, at the time of a temporary lull, the turn abroad begins to figure. It is the outcome of a situation that is expressed thus by the International Labour Organisation: "A high unemployment rate, an increased propensity for in-work poverty and the shortage of quality jobs are the essential factors that guide the decisions of young people to definitively go abroad" (L'économiste 2016: 9). The situation of unemployment has psychological and social effects on young people as was clearly revealed by the young *hittiste* from Algeria who said: "*The relationship with my family is tormented and troubled: when you don't work, the home is considered a hotel. You do no work, you don't tidy anything up at home. The older you grow, the more you resent it. When you navigate [work] you can leave home and assert yourself*" (Focused Ethnography – Algeria).⁷

The analysis of the structure of youth unemployment tends to reveal the negative, weakening consequences on the functioning of the systems. Young university graduates suffer from the highest rate of youth unemployment. The rate reaches 26.3% in Morocco, 30% in Lebanon

and Egypt, and 14% in Algeria. Though in the case of Algeria the rate may seem less alarming, it remains the highest of all the different levels of youth education. Thus, it appears that the unemployment rate among young people is proportionate to the level of education, with the peak among graduates including graduates of prestigious universities.

From this fact, two consequences proceed: the first concerns a phenomenon that is becoming more and more widespread, namely, the departure abroad of highly qualified young people (brain drain), skills holders meant to enrich the national human capital. The second relates to the relevance of the educational system as a whole as a fundamental lever of social success and the damaged image younger generations have of it. These positions are largely confirmed by the results of the SAHWA survey, which reveals an average of 37.3% of young people seek to emigrate for economic reasons linked to job opportunities and better living conditions. Those who stated their hope of emigrating in search of better study and training opportunities made up 15%. Young people are highly critical of the education system and its relationship to the labour market. On this issue, a young Egyptian explained it thus: “Yes, there are job opportunities with a university degree, but the problem that we encounter is that we haven't received practical education at school. We have only learnt books, nothing practical.”⁸

2. The brain drain: a loss of earnings

The brain drain phenomenon is the most significant reflection of the inadequacies of the education systems in the AMCs and their relationship to the labour market. The significant part of the state budget spent on the education system at its different levels cannot be content only to perform the social function of the educational institution. Because in the terms of the issue of the economy and education, the latter affects the economic and social development of a country.

The highly controversial issue of the brain drain aligns with this new order of migrant populations in the AMCs, namely, that labourers and low-skilled people have been joined by candidates holding high qualifications and skills. Doctors, engineers, liberal professionals, researchers and others seek new horizons to bring value to their skills and ambitions (Fargues, 2005, De Haas, 2007). In this regard, the data from the French National Medical Council (CNOM)⁹ is highly revealing: it shows that 40% of registered medical staff and born abroad have their origins in the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). A little further south than Algeria, in sub-Saharan Africa, the situation is more dramatic still: according to data from the

World Health Organization (WHO), in 2006, of the 57 countries citing an alarming deficit of doctors, 36 were from the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, while in the same period (1990–2004), the level of flight of doctors or what is known as the “medical brain drain” grew considerably (Bhargava & Docquier, 2008 cited by [Zehnati, 2016]).

The desire of senior workers, on whom the state has agreed to spend enormous amounts, to go and work abroad is, without doubt, the visible face of an enormous contradiction. A study carried out in Morocco observes that the annual emigration of 1,500 engineers abroad costs Morocco around \$47 million. That is the proof, of undeniable importance, that the brain drain phenomenon is not merely the result of economic conditions linked only to jobs. This has led Charef (2009: 40) to underline that both the material and immaterial have a role to play in people's fulfilment. The SAHWA survey brings more clarity in this area. Indeed, when young people are asked about attraction factors in their desire to emigrate, they speak, first of all, of the quality of the way of life (37.4%) of the country in which they want to settle (especially European countries). They also share the hope of living abroad (39.3%) because they feel that in their country there is a notable absence of the adequate framework to satisfy their needs as young people.

It is necessary to investigate the socioeconomic, political and cultural environment as a whole to be able to grasp the underpinnings of young people's attitudes in the AMCs. This methodological position that is adequately expressed in the following words: “Migration may also be understood as a political reaction to the nepotism and clientelism that plague all Arab countries, including education and professional systems. The structural adjustment plans, which were seen as prerequisites for political reform in ossified polities, in fact achieve the opposite” (UNDP, 2016: 156).

In its most immediate consequences, the unemployment of university graduates undoubtedly has a negative impact on young people pursuing university studies. Success in their studies and the corresponding return on them in terms of the acquisition of a social position is shattered by the unemployment of university graduates. As the results of the SAHWA survey (2016) show, a significant proportion of young people at various stages of the training cycle express a desire to go abroad not for a short visit but in the hope of settling there.

Table 1: Young people aged 15–29 wishing to emigrate or re-emigrate by AMC

	Algeria	Egypt	Lebanon	Morocco	Tunisia	Total
Yes	25.7%	17.5%	16.0%	7.4%	52.8%	24.2%
Undecided	4.7%	2.5%	2.9%	7.3%	1.6%	3.8%
No	69.6%	80.0%	81.1%	85.3%	45.6%	72.1%
Total	2000	1947	2000	1862	2008	9817

Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016.

More than one young person in five would opt for migration without their choice being necessarily and directly related to the thorny issue of employment. Several surveys of young people in Arab countries have shown the growing numbers of young people wishing to emigrate (UNDP, 2016: 156). This shows the certain influence of factors related to the expectations and aspirations of young people in what they conceive to be their social position and life in society, which do not correspond to their current life situation. This the reality for many of the young people in the AMCs: the dysfunction and insufficiency they observe, mixed with the patent dissatisfaction of their needs, creates in them a sentiment that Hammouda (in the case of Algeria) calls a social malaise (2008).

3. Remittances: a false compensation

In all the debates on the issue of international migration an implicit aspect of regret and frustration appears linked to the fact that migration means leaving one’s family, parents, loved ones and friends, etc. In a word: leaving the land of one’s birth to go and live in another country definitively or not.

The positive aspect stems from the fact that the movement of money can have an effect on the level of household poverty, improving living standards by covering expenses linked to different requirements ranging from the satisfaction of basic needs to saving and investment. Indeed, we are tempted to surrender to the facts when we observe the sums of money transferred to the AMCs. In 2015, the World Bank put forward the following sums: \$19.7bn sent by migrants to Egypt, \$7.2bn to Lebanon, \$6.4bn to Morocco, \$2.3bn to Tunisia and \$2 billion to Algeria. For certain countries like Morocco and Egypt these funds represent the main source of foreign currency inflow. However, it must be underlined that the real values transferred are much larger than those mentioned above, especially in Algeria and Egypt (European Commission, 2010: 76), as they may take place outside the official banking circuit,

whether through borrowing via informal networks – highly beneficial exchange rates on the parallel market – or going down the route of non-monetary, cheap, technological transfers.

Several studies and reports (Musette, 2006; Kasparian, 2013; Mouhoud, 2013; UNICEF, 2014, among others) confirm the economic and social advantages of remittances. Nevertheless, though they play an undeniably positive role in the short and medium term on families' levels of poverty in migrants' countries of origin, their effect is considerably reduced and even very weak in the long term as they are in the main directed towards unproductive consumption and investment in fields such as construction and property. Yet, a decisive impact on the migration phenomenon could be made if this investment was integrated into a long-term economic and social development policy in the migrant-exporting countries in order to have a lasting effect on the economic fabric. The case of Lebanon aside, where money transfers seem to play a positive role in the functioning and dynamic of the national and private banks (due, in particular, to their establishment in foreign countries), in the rest of the countries the impact is extremely weak if not insignificant. The experience of Tunisia attests to this, where the mobilisation of remittances in the economic development of the country reach less than 0.5% of the overall amount of national investment (Musette M.S, 2006: 18–19). In the relationship between migrants and their country of origin the foundations must be laid of an attitude of confidence among potential migrant investors along with a policy of encouragement on the part of the public powers in the country of origin. But it would be incorrect to limit the effects of migration to transfers in terms of money. Several other routes may be taken to exploit the skills pools that the diaspora might possess. We will attempt to explore such a route in the framework of analysing the migration policy of the AMCs.

4. The limits of migration policy

Apart from certain isolated experiences where migrations have taken place following intergovernmental agreements, in the AMCs nearly all migration is the result of individual initiative and decision-making upon which the public powers have no impact. It is left, therefore, to the migration policy framework to manage the migrant population once they are settled in a foreign land, as they are citizens with full national rights and are registered through consular services. Hence, migration policy may be applied a priori and a posteriori. It is applied – or may be applied – before the migratory act occurs, above all for qualified and

highly qualified people. Establishing a set of dissuasive measures with the aim of keeping young people in their country could be called a migration policy of a fundamentally preventive nature, in the sense that it concerns measures and decisions taken with the goal of reducing to a certain degree the magnitude of the problem. With this objective, all the AMCs have put in place instruments, mechanisms and structures aimed at giving multi-dimensional responses to the hopes of young people first through the economic dimension articulated around the burning issue of employment. It must be recognised that in this regard there are considerable insufficiencies in the AMCs demonstrated by the level of youth unemployment and underemployment to which (even illegal) migration seems to be the final answer.

On the other hand, what seems more convincing is the action a posteriori, namely, once the migratory act has been completed. In fact, the countries of migrants' origin conceive of the groups of their emigrants as integral parts of the overall populations of their countries. To this effect, the state owes them protection and political, cultural and social management to strengthen the ties with the motherland. The end goal of the state's migration policy is to maintain the strength of the links between emigrants and their country of origin.

Several institutional arrangements have been created in order to make permanent and consolidate the multifaceted relations of the community abroad and the diaspora with their country. To this effect, certain structures at the highest workings of the state are created to handle the affairs of the community living abroad. That is the undeniable reflection of the priority and quality of the relations linking the members of the community to their country. Building strong bonds between the members of the community living abroad and the country of origin is the unwavering mark of the constant search for identity and belonging. To this end in Algeria a secretary of state has been created for the affairs of the national community abroad, whose rights to political representation, association, to vote and to stand in elections are recognised. In Morocco, the goal of maintaining and consolidating the links with Moroccan nationals living abroad required the creation in 1990 of the Hassan II Foundation, which has the mission of providing aid and support to face the difficulties Moroccans abroad may encounter in the reception country. The same principle presides over the migration policy of the Egyptian government. In Lebanon, the same migration policy principles prevail except that the state of political instability that characterises the country means that emigration and the interest given to it are at the discretion of the political tendencies of the different political

parties, at least those that are most dominant on the Lebanese political scene. Indeed, the place granted to Lebanese emigration and its future depends on the political line of each party. After the end of the 1975–1990 war, under the Hariri government, in 1992 a Ministry of Emigrants was created. Thus the priority economic objective seems to have led progressively to the convergence of the points of view of the different political groupings. The Ministry of Emigrants is in charge of all the aspects of the social, economic and cultural life of emigrants: from marital status to the issue of ownership via issues of information and culture.

Finally, in Tunisia the Ministry of Social Affairs and Solidarity is granted the management of the Tunisian community abroad, in a structure named, to that effect, the Office of Tunisians Abroad.

Beyond the structural and institutional arrangements set up in the AMCs to manage the affairs of their national communities abroad, no doubt the decisive economic importance of remittances due to their impact on the socioeconomic situation of the country is the reason for the existence and maintenance of the links between the respective governments and their communities living abroad.

However, migration policy cannot be limited only to the issue of remittances, though they are important and decisive. They seek to exploit the potential of the skills and know-how of the diasporas in order to find all the formulas likely to contribute to the development of the country of origin. Hence the number of initiatives being taken to set up a solid capital network that is worthy of being the basis of the effective and efficient movement of skills. Often the reactions of the members of diasporas urge the building of lasting ties through calm, rigour and organisation in the image of the World Lebanese Cultural Union, a key structure in the diaspora associations (meant to be apolitical and non-religious), which has been subject, in a politicisation drive, to numerous control and domination attempts by the state institutions. In fact, the non-economic contribution of the diaspora takes the form of transferring skills to the country of origin where there is a need for expertise. The networks formed secure the ties and their development between the two sides.

In the AMCs' migration policies, the cultural, identity and religious issues have not been neglected by the decision-makers and conceivers of the programmes. In reality, giving a full account of the migration policy in the AMCs only through a discussion of the flows from

them as countries of migrant departure, leads us to omit from the analysis the effects of the migratory transition they are currently undergoing, which is making them countries of transit and immigration.

4.1. The AMCs, lands of transit and immigration

In the context of the migratory phenomenon's evolution, these days an inter-African process of migration is being produced which is tending to widen the spaces and diversify the corridors of migration movements in a general manner. Like other countries that have gone through the same migration experience, such as Italy and Spain, the AMCs are living through their migratory transition (Boubakri, 2007: 3), making them not only countries of migrant departure but also lands of transit and immigration. Global movement gives these countries the increasingly significant characteristic of lands of passage, while the goal of the migrants is to reach the countries of southern Europe.

We may, on this basis, ask ourselves why this phenomenon arises, or at least explore the increasingly large dimension it has taken on, particularly from the 1990s onwards. In fact this new migration route has emerged as a reaction to the closure of European borders as part of a policy of fighting irregular migration, the imposition of a visa system and also as a consequence of the numerous economic, political and security crises that have above all hit the countries of the Sahel (a groups of countries that, it should be recalled, have the lowest human development index values in the world) (Withol De Wenden, 2010; Lahlou, 2003) and the sub-Saharan regions.

According to their geographical position, the Arab countries located on the south and east of the Mediterranean, as well as being themselves lands of migrant departure towards Europe have become territories where African candidates for migration are in (principally irregular) transit, fleeing poverty, conflict and insecurity in the sub-Saharan region and in other African countries. On this subject, Lahlou reports that over the past ten years, the number of migrants that have arrived in the countries of the Maghreb through the borders of sub-Saharan Africa (essentially Algeria and Libya), are between 65,000 and 80,000 annually (2003: 44). Egypt is the destination for migrants coming, principally, from Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Eritrea. Additionally, although Egypt has for a long time been a point of departure for illegal migration, notably through the port of Alexandria, the European Union's (EU) experts on

immigration note that the country's location on the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea is transforming it into a new space of passage, essential, privileged in the transit of irregular migrants towards Italy, following all the measures and tangible results recorded by the FRONTEX system in the management of Europe's external borders.

Lebanon, for its part, is the land of transit for many Palestinians and Syrians who arrived in Lebanon as refugees.

To the extent that the destination remains, to a large degree, Europe, the main objective of the European countries is to restrain the migratory flows originating in Africa and elsewhere, notably at the level of the so-called countries "of passage", namely, the countries of North Africa and the Middle East on the southern shores of the Mediterranean basin (the gateway to Europe). In this way, all the provisions aimed at blocking the migratory flows crossing these regions serve, ultimately, the fight against irregular migration towards European countries. In this sense, it appears in the reading of the report on the migration of young people written by the SAHWA research team in Morocco (HEM-CESEM) that their country and those of North Africa in general, notably, the central Maghreb, are playing the role of "fortress Europe".

Looking more closely, this is a situation of extreme sensitivity, for the very fact that the AMCs find themselves simultaneously in three different positions, which makes the production of a coherent overall strategy highly problematic: they are countries of migrant departure, transit and immigration all at once. Said another way, the national policy on the migration phenomenon must be based on conciliatory principles, of which only a thoughtful political flexibility is up to simultaneously handling the pressures of a political, economic, judicial, diplomatic and security nature. The Arab Mediterranean countries find themselves between, on the one side, the cooperation and partnership agreements and bilateral treaties signed with the EU, and on the other, freedom of movement agreements complying with regional and continental agreements made at several levels with their partners in sub-Saharan Africa as part of the African countries' cooperation framework, NEPAD.

Besides this, it should be said that the surveillance and control implemented in the southern parts of the countries of North Africa, notably Algeria and Tunisia, have also been

strengthened for security purposes due to the consequences in the region of the armed conflicts in the Sahel (Libya, Niger and Mali among others).

Table 2: North Africa: Stocks of migrants

Country	Stock of migrants in 2010	Stock of migrants, as a percentage of the total population, in 2010
Algeria	242,000	7
Egypt	245,000	3
Morocco	53,000	2
Tunisia	34,000	3

Sources: World Migration Report 2010/ IOM (data for 2010). Drawing on data from UN DESA Population Division in: Patrick Taran, 2011.¹⁰ Migration in MENA Countries – Challenges post Arab Spring.

In this way irregular immigration in the AMCs places them in an uncomfortable situation because of the difficult balance to be made between the regional neighbourhood, economics, security, human and legal policies. The position seems to be complying with the short-term specificities of reconciling tolerance and rigour. Thus, of the 140,000 to 150,000 foreigners living in Morocco, it is estimated that half are in an irregular situation, and that 10,000 to 20,000 are originally from sub-Saharan Africa and Syria. The public powers first responded with a mass return, but under pressure from humanitarian organisations, notably the National Human Rights Council, the Moroccan government has begun to move towards regularisation and a large number of irregular migrants have benefitted.

Despite the diversity and defectiveness of the statistical data on the foreign population in Algeria, it appears, according to the Algerian Ministry of Labour, that there were 140,000 foreign workers with a work permit.¹¹ The estimates of irregular migrants in Algeria are around 120,000 people.¹² The Algerian authorities seek to protect themselves from becoming an area of transit by increasing controls, and implementing arrests and renewals at the borders. Hence, they request cooperation in these readmission operations from the governments of the countries of origin of the irregular migrants. The adaptation of the legislation to the new conditions of population displacement began in 2008 with a law penalising the act of irregular migration, in line with the position of the Egyptian authorities on the issue.

4.2. Irregular migration and refugees: an absolute urgency

These days, it is not wrong to assume that the debate and reflection on migration is dominated by its aspect of illegality. Not only is this phenomenon the most dramatic and the most spectacular of the modes of migration, it is also growing. In this regard, the figures are revealing: during 2016 – still not finished at the time of writing – we note that more than 89,000 migrants, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa have reached the coasts of Italy. The attempts to cross the Mediterranean Sea have led to the drowning of 3,000 people, a number that is 50% higher than the number of deaths in 2015 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

In terms of the AMCs, 2014 was a peak in this field: irregular emigration flows rose by 170%. Approximately 220,000 irregular migrants were recorded in 2014. While crossing the Mediterranean very often results in arrest or sinkings and a large number of victims, in 2008, 2215 young people were arrested while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea illegally.

Taking the AMCs individually the figures are overwhelming: in Morocco, the numbers of irregular migrants of Moroccan or other nationalities arrested by the security forces are constantly increasing. So during the year 2000, 24,409 arrests were made, of whom 9,353 were Moroccans. In 2001, this number rose to 26,427, of whom 13,327 were Moroccans (Lahlou, 2003: 45). In 2007, there were 32,000 irregular arrivals. In their 2014 report FRONTEX reported that Moroccans were one of the largest groups in an irregular situation in Europe. As for Algeria, we can easily understand the extent of the phenomenon: between 1992 and 2003, 28,800 migrants entered Algeria illegally. During 2006, no fewer than 3,234 irregular migrants were apprehended (Musette et al., 2006: 21). During the last quarter of 2008, 1,500 Algerians were subject to returns to their country of origin. For their part, the Egyptian authorities stopped 7,000 irregular migrants in 2014 and 8,500 in 2015. In Lebanon too, the phenomenon is growing, notably with the movements of Palestinian and Syrian refugees. Tunisia, for its part, has not been an exception as between the years 1998 and 2003, more than 40,000 people were subject to arrest in their attempt to illegally cross the borders (Boubakri & Mazella, 2005: 152).

Thus, the question that arises is: why does this trend towards the growth of irregular movements – supporting risk-taking and fatalism without precedent – in the context of the international movement of people? This growth has taken place in response to the set of

control and restriction measures (drastic reduction of mobility and the imposition of the visa system) taken from the 1970s onwards by the majority of western European countries.

This highly complex fact means the mitigation procedures concern the countries of departure and those of destination equally. In this sense, we can clearly see that in the destination countries, irregular migration is an issue, notably because migrants' position of dependence gives certain employers an advantage in terms of working conditions and salary levels. In order to take a position on a segment of the labour market, we should bow to the evidence that irregular migrants have "... the underground economy as the only place of insertion into the labour market" (OECD, 1999: 255). One of the most frequently recurring questions on this issue is: who are these young people risking their lives attempting to reach the countries of southern Europe?

Given the level of danger irregular migration involves, it is tempting to think that it is only a situation of poverty, and perhaps of extreme poverty and profound desperation, that could push young people to take such a risk. Yet, the reality is quite different because it is not only the poorest young people living in great precariousness who begin such an adventure due to its exorbitant cost. In reality, the young people come from all sections of the population, which reflects the reaction to the restrictions imposed on the free circulation of people as well as their intense desire to reach Europe to live there.

What is more, political crises, armed conflicts and civil wars are also circumstances that cause and intensify the human tragedies that result in the loss of human lives as well as the grave consequences of injuries and mutilation. Such situations have accompanied human societies throughout history, and these days the tragic recent events in Syria are added to them, recording, in the space of five years, the loss of 250,000 human lives and more than a million wounded (PNUD, 2016: 131). The least fatal situations are those arising from the mass displacements of populations, fleeing conditions where the logic of arms and destruction reigns.

Consequently, and above all since the second quarter of 2015, Europe has been the scene of extraordinary flows of refugees fleeing war zones, notably in Afghanistan, Iraq and above all Syria. The displacements of populations towards Europe rose steadily to reach a record of

1,320,000 people in 2015 coming, mainly, from Syria. This situation of mass population displacement flocking towards Europe produces two connected positions: the first concerns the emergence of a challenge to be managed and the second surrounds the issue created.

The apparent challenge is shaped by the real willingness and capacity to take charge of the effects of human tragedies by respecting the right to asylum and granting the status of refugee. The issue it raises for the political, economic and security dimensions of the sphere of European geopolitics lifts the veil, ultimately, on the weak links in the configuration of the Schengen Area and the respect for the principle of free movement and external borders. This has led the EU to adopt a quota policy when receiving asylum seekers and often to manage the “misunderstandings” emerging among European countries, notably those of eastern Europe, who have rejected or limited the reception of refugees. The European Union has also intervened decisively on the EU funding of the expenses of refugee camps set up in Greece, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.

In the end, the scope of the phenomenon of irregular migratory flows in reaching the threshold of repeated human catastrophe, has made both the governments of the destination countries and the authorities in the countries of the migrants’ origin react. The latter have shown their desire for action by the criminalisation of irregular migration. The seriousness and urgency of the phenomenon has required the mutualisation of the efforts of the countries involved to attempt, in a multidimensional strategy, to attack the very roots of the phenomenon. This is what appears, by way of example, through the setting up of collaboration plans to deal with the insidious smuggler networks at departure country level.

5. A necessary collaboration between countries, but ...

Other than all the harmful and malicious causes of the stigmatisation of migration, the control and management of the flows that fall under the influence of the international founding principles of the respect for human rights and the right to asylum require, at all times, collaboration and cooperation by countries of departure and countries of reception. In this framework, the AMCs have shown great willingness to collaborate on the control of migration, especially that of an illegal nature.

It is clear that the collaborative position of the southern Mediterranean countries in reality translates to decisions to toughen up surveillance and control measures through the criminalisation of the act of irregular border crossing. However, it appears to draw a line of demarcation between the two cooperation partners according to their respective interests. Indeed, affected by the pressure of population displacement and enduring the tensions created by their public opinions, the countries of southern Europe have a tendency to insist on policy that favours and prioritises security while the partners on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, under pressure from internal difficulties – particularly the Algerian government – envisage managing migration flows in accordance with two additional points:

- Management of the migrations through respect for the rights of national communities living abroad (freedom of religion, cultural values, identification values, etc.).
- Placing migration (particularly that of an irregular nature) within a larger framework of partnership in which a special place is granted to the principle of the free movement of people and co-development to establish durable solutions to the phenomenon.

As a consequence, a dynamic has been created in this domain that ranges from setting up general frameworks of consultation and dialogue in which the subject of migration features as a major challenge through to multilateral and bilateral agreements. The participation of the twelve countries on the southern perimeter of the Mediterranean at the meeting in Barcelona in 1995 towards Euro-Mediterranean cooperation is an example of this. With the aim of drawing up and applying road maps, the AMCs have also welcomed several working meetings of the Dialogue 5+5 group, which have been held, among other places, in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. General agreements have been signed at a multilateral level, engaging regional organisations such as the African Union and the European Union, committing the latter as well as the migrants' departure countries.

The permanence of the irregular migratory flows with their tragedies and the policies set up previously do not seem to provide convincing results. The insufficiency and inadequacy of the restrictive and coercive approach in attempting to weaken the determination of young people seeking to join the European El Dorado without no limit on the price to be paid should be admitted.

Either way, we are tempted to assume that, confronted with the imbroglio and the sensitivity of the situation, to which are added the mass displacements in Europe of refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere, it is at the security level that Europe has shown most willingness. For this reason bilateral agreements, with their operational nature, prevail over all other forms of collaboration between the countries concerned by irregular migration.

They take, thus, the form of pressure exerted on the AMCs through different partnership structures, demanding a more effective operational arsenal and predisposition to the end of reducing irregular migration. This can be observed in the numerous calls made by European governments, notably France, Italy, Spain and Germany, and through varied forms of aid with the goal of alleviating, first, the flows coming from sub-Saharan countries and the Sahel. But for the AMCs it is also about controlling the migration of their own citizens with more resolve. To this effect, several regulatory frameworks have been drawn up, negotiated, signed and implemented for the reintegration of Maghrebi citizens without papers.¹³

We note that in the context of this problem, migrations reveal an issue with the relationship between fundamental human values and national interests, as it exposes the practice and limits of the philosophy of human rights and the freedom movement of individuals on one side and the economic interests and the security priorities of the countries of the other.

It is a cohabitation that is strained by the reality of handling migratory movements, where it becomes a deal and an exchange that takes place between the countries supplying and receiving the migrants. Thus, in exchange for the acceptance of readmissions by the AMCs, the latter benefit from multiple advantages such as development aid, as these statements by German Chancellor Angela Merkel reveal: “*We either have to let people come to us, or we have to combat the root causes of migration so that people see prospects for staying there, close to their homes*”. The agreements also give rise to a certain largesse and generosity in the determination of visa quotas and residence permits for qualified workers and students (Withol De Wenden, 2010: 140). The most significant example was the exchange negotiated between Libya and Italy before the “Arab Spring” revolution, wherein Libya was prepared to cooperate and operate systematic and strict control of sub-Saharan migrants in exchange for an offer of legitimate diplomatic movement in Europe for President Gaddafi, who had been

deprived of it. At the time of the deal, Libya demanded €5 billion from the Italian government and the construction of a motorway between Tunisia and Egypt (Schuman, 2015: 7).

Conclusion

Having analysed the economic, sociological and political aspects that directly or indirectly affect the evolution of the phenomenon of youth migration in the AMCs, all the data points towards an important fact: in these countries the dominant trend is towards the permanence of migration or even its growth if bold and decisive action is not taken. Likewise, one can observe a change in the structure of the migration and its geography in line with the characteristics of the development of the countries of departure. It equally results that the migrations in the AMCs are the result of their structure and function. So it is that, contrary to what may have been expected, the research data on the subject shows that the emergence of what is called the Arab Spring has not caused a decisive increase in the migratory flows among young people, except in the case of Tunisia.

In line with this new trend, it is equally remarkable that the AMCs are progressively aligning with the new logic characterising the globalisation of the migration movements in the sense that they are becoming lands of transit for migrants moving towards Europe but also countries of immigration. Finally, the last result of our work related to the increasing significance of irregular migration in the AMCs, leaving in its wake a certain "confusion" between refugees seeking asylum and migrants seeking work. There is no doubt that the remittances from which the families of migrants benefit contribute considerably to the reduction of poverty in a highly significant number of households in the AMCs. The impact on the gross domestic product of these countries is not demonstrated, but is it sufficient to compensate for the losses of the brain drain?

In reality, the result of the relationship between the two is the fruit of a strategy and choices that are decided at the highest levels. At all events, in light of the truth of the facts, it turns out that priority is given to the immediate over the long term in the sense that contributions on the economic level have more weight than those of the human capital of a nation and the investment made in it. However, this poses an immeasurable risk to society of making the

state of dependency permanent: human capital is the key asset on which all the strategies of economic and social development of a society rest.

In highlighting the prospects of the migratory flows in the AMCs, it is worth noting that in these countries there is a great imbalance between the startling demographic bulge of the social category of young people and the level of economic growth. The point of impact is at the level of the incapacity of the second to respond effectively to the needs of the first. Ultimately, the AMCs have the highest levels of youth unemployment in the world. Given the failure of large-scale economic projects implemented by the state and the private sector to provide growth and create employment, it is opportune if not imperative to diversify the routes and means of creating economic activities. The diffusion of the culture of entrepreneurship among the youth population, in order to deal with unemployment, particularly among first-time jobseekers, is a strategy that is worth considering as a way to include young people in the world of economic activity, guarantee their social inclusion and thereby reduce their desire to emigrate.

However, youth migration is not only linked to economic motives to the extent that young workers, academics in training and others feel the need to leave their country to go and live elsewhere. To this end, it is the task of the decision-makers to encourage research and reflection on the human environment and non-economic material of young people's lives in order to identify their needs and act on the indicators of their social inclusion.

Recommendations

1. To the extent that international migrations are also the result of the imbalances in the relationship between the economic and demographic dimensions of societies, it is imperative for the countries that provide migrants to propagate and disseminate the culture of birth control.
2. Rehabilitate the socioeconomic role of school (representation of university degrees) in parallel with the formalisation of the economy so that the relationship between the levers of social success and levels of qualification are legitimated and are seen as such by young people.

3. Encourage all measures that work towards the social recognition of young people by including them in all decision-making structures, especially those that directly concern them.
4. Put in place structures of research and reflection on young people for the purposes carrying out regular surveys to know the wishes of each category of young people and act in consequence.
5. Target the inclusion of qualified and highly qualified young people by offering them the means of expressing their competence and placing them in positions of responsibility.
6. Spread the culture of entrepreneurship among young people by including it in school programmes.
7. Migration is best managed through active cooperation between the countries involved. For this reason, international cooperation and partnership based on the guiding principle of shared interests should be encouraged.
8. Establish permanent trusting dialogue between departure and destination countries with a view to putting into practice a common development policy.

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Endnotes

1. The AMCs are the five countries studied in the SAHWA Project: Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia.
2. SAHWA is a research project funded by the European Commission. Using an interdisciplinary approach, it aims to analyse a series of subjects relating to youth in the Arab Mediterranean countries and the ways they “negotiate” the transitions underway since the so-called Arab Spring. Complementary information can be found on the project's official website: www.sahwa.eu.
3. SAHWA Youth Survey 2015.
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11. 140 000 travailleurs étrangers exercent en Algérie. *Econews*, 21 June 2014. Url: http://www.leconews.com/fr/emploi/140-000-travailleurs-et-rangers-exercent-en-algerie-21-06-2014-170187_343.php.
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13. The last, dated December 6th 2016, was distinguished by the visit of the Belgian prime minister, Charles Michel, to Algeria. The visit's aim was to discuss with Algerian authorities the readmission of their undocumented nationals in Belgium.



Researching
Arab Mediterranean Youth:
Towards a New Social Contract



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The SAHWA Project ("Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract") is a FP-7 interdisciplinary cooperative research project led by the Barcelona Center for International Affairs (CIDOB) and funded by the European Commission. It brings together fifteen partners from Europe and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries to research youth prospects and perspectives in a context of multiple social, economic and political transitions in five Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon). The project expands over 2014-2016 and has a total budget of €3.1 million. The thematic axis around which the project will revolve are education, employment and social inclusion, political mobilisation and participation, culture and values, international migration and mobility, gender, comparative experiences in other transition contexts and public policies and international cooperation.

