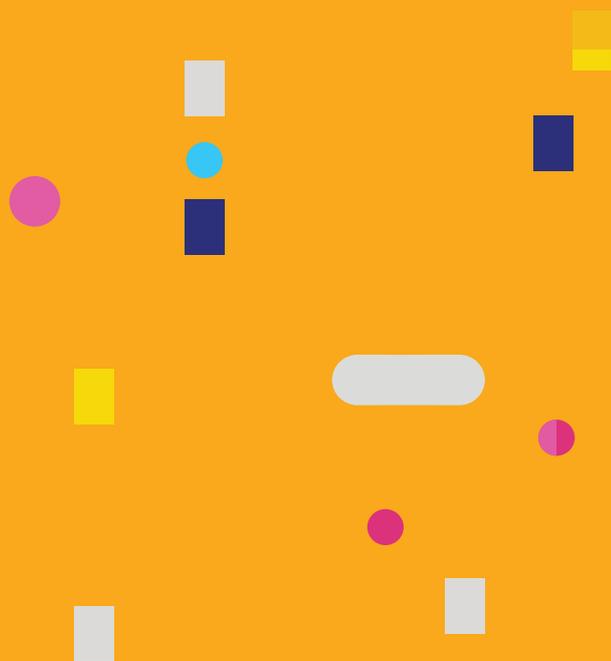


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# Migration in the Mediterranean: The challenge between Africa and Europe

Mohammed Amine Ziani



INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
Migration Policy Programme

The text was created within the internship programme Open Society Internship for Rights and Governance, Open Society Fellowship



Project co-financed from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund



EUROPEAN UNION  
Asylum, Migration  
and Integration Fund

Safe harbour

The content of this publication does not reflect the official opinion of the European Commission and Polish Ministry of Interior and Administration. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in the publication lies entirely with the Institute of Public Affairs.

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Foundation Institute of Public Affairs/Fundacja Instytut Spraw Publicznych  
00-031 Warsaw, Szpitalna Str. 5 / 22  
tel.: (+48 22) 55 64 260, fax: (+48 22) 55 64 262  
e-mail: [isp@isp.org.pl](mailto:isp@isp.org.pl), [www.isp.org.pl](http://www.isp.org.pl)

North Africa and the Western Europe countries such as France and Spain share a common history of colonisation. Current cooperation between those regions is happening in many domains. From economic exchange and cooperation to security challenges, such as providing stability on both banks of the sea by the military operations conducted by the European Forces in Africa or the intelligence exchange between the North African states secret services and their partners in Europe.

The migration challenge is considered as one of the most important subjects in the common agenda between North African states such as Morocco, Tunisia and Libya and The European Union. The migration situation in this region is complicated. The source of this complexity lies in many factors related mainly to the political situation and its instability. The geopolitics of Africa with its ethnic complexity and terrorist organizations activities in addition to the demographic explosion linked with the lack of natural resources and geographical factors that lead to an extreme desertification. All those facts make Africa a platform of permanent migration to Europe. This analysis will tackle the sources of this dilemma and its outcomes in Europe with the potential solutions proposed by both sides of the Mediterranean Sea to control it.

### **I - The Principal causes of migration from Africa to Europe**

Since the large wave of independence movements after the World War II, many countries in Africa were establishing their national order. Many facts were combined during this time related to the geopolitics of those new nation-states and the Pan African spirit of many independence leaders during this period. This image of independence leadership was linked for long decades with the army power in many African countries. As a result, a lot of newly established countries in the continent were suffering from political instability and wars resulting from their internal power struggles. The army became involved in the policy making and the economic orientations of those countries.

Africa was steeped in wars and dilemmas since the beginning of its own political history, mainly as a result of the geographic legacy of colonialism, where many ethnicities were divided and many areas were cut from their countries or included into others for political interests during the colonisation

era. These facts have increased the identities division in Africa and have led at the end to a permanent instability and a number of massacres during the post-colonial history of Africa. After the first conference of the African organization of liberation in 1961, more than 32 borders conflicts were raised<sup>1</sup>. Some of those conflicts turned to military operations causing serious casualties which is the case of Morocco and Algeria in 1963<sup>2</sup>. This borders structure still presents an obstacle that causes instability in many countries by creating minorities leading at the end to massive waves of refugees. The other point that should be mentioned is the demographic weight of the continent with more than 1,2 billion people, expected to reach 2,2 billion by 2050<sup>3</sup> and a very low economic potential that could be barely compared to California state GDP. Those facts shows the inequality between Europe that hold less than 800 million people and Africa with its fast increasing demography and the lack of economic opportunities for young people who represent 40% of the demographic structure in the continent<sup>4</sup>. Thus, migration remains the first option to develop their way of life and escape the instability of their birth countries. In addition, Africa faces severe effects of climate change. These include desertification and a lack of natural resources for a large population of Africans, who suffer who suffer from food insecurity that African governments haven't found a solution for, with corruption and the instability in the state administration further This is the case of Nigeria and the Sahel countries, where the terrorist group Boko Haram controls a large part of the territory based on tribal allegiance and creates instability in the region; this in turn increases the movement of refugees and migrants to Europe.

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1 Francis Nguendi Ikomo, *Africa's international borders as potential sources of conflict and future threats to peace and security*, Institut of Security Studies, Paper N.223, May 2012; file:///C:/Users/acer/Downloads/Paper\_233.pdf.

2 *Idem*.

3 Lilli Sippel, Tanja Kiziak, Franziska Woellert, Reiner Klingholz, *Africa's Demographic Challenges*, Berlin Institute for population and development, Septembre 2011; [https://www.berlin-institut.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Afrika/Africas\\_demographic\\_challenges.pdf](https://www.berlin-institut.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Afrika/Africas_demographic_challenges.pdf)

4 *Idem*.

## II - Early solutions for migration

In the year 2008 the French president Nicolas Sarkozy launched an ambitious initiative called the “Union for the Mediterranean”<sup>5</sup>. This initiative aimed to be the new Marshall Plan dedicated for developing the Mediterranean countries through investment in their human potential and infrastructure. The objective was to reach a certain level of development in Africa and in the other countries in the south of the Mediterranean Sea. Other assumptions of the plan included investing more in regional cooperation and dialogue with an emphasis on young people, in order to address the strategic objectives of the region’s stability, human development and integration. However, this ambitious project faced unexpected obstacles. In 2011 the Arab Spring blocked most of operations in major countries such as Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Syria and created a new migration challenge after the fall of regimes in some countries and the start of civilian wars and internal power struggles. This in turn created a chaotic situation in which the terrorist organizations found the perfect conditions to implement their order and their activities. In Libya where al-Qaida and ISIS are active, and in Syria where the situation is much worse with many armed actors on the ground, hundreds of thousands of people have fled from their homes. Their flight was made easier by the absence of surveillance along a large portion of the sea coast. This was the case of Libya and Syria, with the events in those countries leading to a refugee crisis in Europe at the end to 2015<sup>6</sup>.

## III - The Kingdom of Morocco as the main departure point to Europe

Migration has been one of the biggest issues in relations between Morocco and the European Union. While the latter has attempted to engage Morocco in efforts to reduce irregular emigration and transit migration, Morocco has an interest in facilitating mobility for its own citizens. Morocco was always considered as a main source of labour force for Europe during the last century. However, the increasing immigration restrictions in Europe that were aiming to stop migration movement have led to an increasingly irregular character

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5 Tasche Thérèse Carolin, *The Project of a Union for the Mediterranean – Pursuing French Objectives through the Instrumentalisation of the Mare Nostrum*, *L’Europe en Formation*, 2010/2 (n° 356), p. 53-70; <https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-europe-en-formation-2010-2-page-53.htm>.

6 Glen Carey, *Syrian’s Civil War*, Bloomberg, July 2018; <https://www.bloomberg.com/quicktake/syrias-civil-war>.

of migration and the exploration of new destinations beyond the traditional destination such as France. Since the 1990s, Moroccan low skilled migrants have targeted Italy and Spain. Over 3 million Moroccans are currently willing to live abroad. After 1995, Morocco also evolved into a transit country for migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa. The main target of those people is Europe. In spite of this, some migrants fail to reach Europe, so they decide to stay in Morocco as a second best option.

After the new liberal immigration policy that includes potential solutions for regularization of unauthorized African and European immigrants<sup>7</sup> launched by the King of Morocco in 2013 Morocco seems to be converted officially to a country of immigration. In other way, this policy could be considered as an outcome of negotiations with the European Union to admit unauthorized migrants in Morocco. Despite intensified border controls, thousands of Moroccans and other Africans manage to enter Europe each year. Notwithstanding, it should be emphasized that the majority of Moroccan migrants cross borders legally.

In 2003, Morocco passed a new law regulating the entry and residence of foreigners. The law included heavy sanctions against irregular immigration and largely ignored migrants' rights<sup>8</sup>. This new law in Morocco results from pressure made by the European Union, aiming to make Morocco the "policeman" in North Africa.

In June 2013, Morocco and 9 EU Member States signed a mobility partnership<sup>9</sup>, which establishes political objectives for a more efficient management of migration. The partnership deal contained mutual declaration of intent to enter into negotiations to simplify the issuance of visas for Moroccan students and high-skilled migrants. In return, Morocco is to collaborate in the readmission of unauthorized migrants. Although the Moroccan government is formally presenting its commitment with the European Union in the fight against ir-

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7 Hein de Haas, *Morocco: Setting the Stage for Becoming a Migration Transition Country?*, March 2014; <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/morocco-setting-stage-becoming-migration-transition-country>.

8 Katharina Natter, *The Formation of Morocco's Policy Towards Irregular Migration (2000-2007): Political Rationale and Policy Processes*, *International Migration*, 2013; <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/imig.12114>.

9 European Commission, *Migration and mobility partnership signed between the EU and Morocco*, June 2013; [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-513\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-513_en.htm)

regular immigration<sup>10</sup>, this position includes also serious doubts about the credibility and effectiveness of these policies. Morocco readmits sub-Saharan unauthorized migrants, particularly because doing otherwise may harm strategic political relations with sub-Saharan countries. Especially after the massive diplomatic campaign of the King of Morocco and the orientation of the country to Africa. On the other hand, the Moroccan government qualify the European Union's intention to create a "common Euro-Mediterranean space" as lacking credibility because of restricted access of Moroccans to the EU while the EU citizens enjoy the benefit of free access to Morocco, and the protectionist measures that still prevent Morocco from freely exporting agricultural products to the European Union.

#### **IV- Future Vision about migration from Morocco**

From the Moroccan perspective, migration constitutes an important development resource, emigration is believed to have a stability function regarding the high youth unemployment and limited domestic opportunities. It can only mean that Morocco's emigration potential will remain high in the coming years. In addition, the rule of media increases the aspiration for many young low-skilled and, increasingly, high-skilled Moroccans, migration continues to represent a promising path to success<sup>11</sup>. The extent to which Moroccan emigration will rise depends on how fast European destination countries will recover from the current economic crisis. Although the limited opportunities in the established destination countries may also lead to the emergence of new Moroccan migration destinations in and beyond Europe. However, in the medium to long term, emigration might decrease following the substantial decline of Moroccans attaining working age in the coming decades, although this obviously depends on future economic growth and political stability. Although Moroccan policymakers and the media have stressed the temporary, transitory character of sub-Saharan immigration, an increasing proportion of these migrants are becoming long-term or permanent. Their presence confronts Moroccan society with an entirely new set of social issues typical for immigration countries

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<sup>10</sup> Hein de Haas, *Morocco: Setting the Stage for Becoming a Migration Transition Country?*, March 2014; <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/morocco-setting-stage-becoming-migration-transition-country>.

<sup>11</sup> Hien de Haas, *Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union: An Overview of Recent Trends*, IOM, 2008; <http://publications.iom.int/books/mrs-ndeg32-irregular-migration-west-africa-maghreb-and-european-union>.

issues that do not yet resonate with Morocco's self-image as an emigration country.

The situation on the Morocco-Spain border is complicated. Thousands of migrants are stuck at the gates of Europe. Some of them remain in the forests of Morocco for months and even years waiting for a chance to take a boat to the Spanish coast or cross the border with Spain. Corruption among the authorities who are responsible for border control plays a major role in the crisis<sup>12</sup>, since the border guards are involved in some parts in facilitating the traffic of migrants. This undetected corruption on the local level increases the complexity of the situation in the region and weakens the state's border control policy.

### Summary

The complexity of Africa makes for the continent's permanent struggle, which leads to a permanent migration resulting from the instability and from the under-development of the African continent, linked with the demographic explosion. All of these factors reduce chances to control migration. The political instability in the Mediterranean countries is slowing down the development process of the Union For The Mediterranean initiative. The bid of the European Union in Morocco to play the role of Europe's Policeman and control illegal migration movements from its coasts seems to be difficult. This is true especially given the pressure from Europe on Morocco to adopt legal measures to be converted into a residency country of migrants from Sub-Saharan countries. The covert reasons behind the EU and Morocco statements reduce the level of trust and credibility between both parts. Still, the increasing low level of development, combined with high unemployment rates, turn Morocco into a potential departure point for migrants in the years to come.

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<sup>12</sup> *The militarisation of the European borders: the daily terror in Morocco*, beatingborders, June 2015; <https://beatingborders.wordpress.com/2015/06/17/the-militarisation-of-the-european-borders-the-daily-terror-in-morocco/>.