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Towards a more integrative Mediterranean policy of the migration humanitarian crisis

The complexity of migration in the context of European politics and society

The phenomenon of migration is fundamentally intertwined with the dynamics of political decision-making, social preferences, and ethical considerations. Since the second half of the 19th century, immigrant labor has played a crucial role in the economic development of European countries. However, contemporary societal debates are increasingly challenging this phenomenon. A significant proportion of the European population associate migrants with various negative connotations. Consequently, migrants are often perceived as threats to national security by a significant part of the population.

The issue of migration has become a focus of discussion, especially with the impending European elections and the rising influence of far-right political parties within several member states. Recent data reflecting migration flows into Europe further strengthens this discourse. In 2023, maritime arrivals to Europe rose to their highest levels since 2016, exceeding 274,000 individuals. Moreover, the reported number of missing or deceased individuals exceeded 4,000, which indicates that the Mediterranean routes are particularly dangerous.

European migration policies, mainly aimed at strengthening external borders, have not curtailed mobility but have significantly transformed the trans-Saharan migration industry. These policies have made migration routes more hazardous, prolonged, and costly. Furthermore, the criminalization of migration has shifted the role of smugglers to traffickers who engage in the transportation of migrants alongside other illicit goods, such as contraband, arms, and narcotics.

The persistent pursuit of stringent migration controls may be yielding counterproductive results, with smugglers increasingly engaging in destabilizing criminal activities within already fragile regions. While the European Union perceives the migration issue primarily as a security concern, this perspective risks exacerbating instability in the strategic Sahel and Sahara regions. Nonetheless, the persistent increase in migration flows may indicate that current border management strategies are reaching their functional limits in effectively curtailing irregular migration amid escalating push factors in Africa.



I/ Migration management between the European Union and Tunisia : an examination of policy implications and human rights concerns

On January 10, 2023, Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Antonio Tajani, urged the Tunisian government to take action against irregular migration. Tajani's message implied a tacit agreement wherein Tunisia would secure its borders in exchange for Europe's support or tolerance of Tunisia's internal governance, regardless of its authoritarian nature.

In response, Tunisia proposed to manage migration on behalf of EU nations, requesting a muted European response to its domestic affairs. The Tunisian government implemented stringent visa regulations and agreed to security measures to curb illegal migration by land, air, and sea. These measures effectively turned Tunisia into an extension of Europe's border security apparatus, creating a de facto buffer zone between the southern Mediterranean and its southern neighbors.

The migration management strategy developed between the EU and Tunisia is heavily influenced by electoral considerations in European countries such as Italy and France and significantly impacts the political stability of Tunisian regimes. Tunisia's compliance with European migration policies is further linked to its eligibility for European support. However, this strategic alignment perpetuates a cycle that infringes on individual and collective rights, contravenes international human rights agreements, and overlooks the underlying political, economic, and social drivers of migration.

Despite these challenges, Tunisian authorities have not established a comprehensive national strategy on migration. Instead, they have adopted a security-oriented approach that is lacking legal legitimacy and violates international conventions. Tunisian fishermen, for instance, face risks and harassment while conducting rescue operations at sea due to European policies that criminalize non-governmental organizations involved in search and rescue efforts.

The European Union's securitization of migration has led to the establishment of agencies such as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and systems like the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) to control irregular migration. However, these policies frequently disregard international maritime laws and contribute to the perilous circumstances faced by migrants in the Mediterranean.

To summarize, the current migration management approach between EU countries and Tunisia is characterized by a security-oriented framework that prioritizes border control over human rights. This approach fails to address the root causes of migration, which perpetuate a cycle of dependency and underdevelopment in countries of origin and transit. The ensuing human and legal consequences are tragic,



as the approach contravenes international laws and conventions intended to protect migrants' rights.

II/ Migration and integration dynamics in Morocco : historical and contemporary perspectives

Throughout the 20th century, Morocco emerged as one of the world's primary emigration nations. In the 1960s, labor mobility agreements between Morocco and various European nations significantly accelerated the rate of emigration to Europe. Moroccan immigrant communities in Europe are one of the largest and most widespread, with approximately 5 million Moroccans living abroad (MRE), representing over 10% of Morocco's population.

Regarding immigration, Morocco has historically experienced significant migration flows, including students and pilgrim tourists. In recent years, these flows have expanded to include individuals seeking to immigrate to Europe. The late 1980s witnessed the arrival of the first waves of sub-Saharan migrants, predominantly in Tangier. Since the early 2000s, migration flows have diversified and intensified, increasingly emanating from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. Moreover, these migratory patterns include both migrants and asylum seekers. Due to the increasing difficulties these individuals face in entering Europe, their stays in Morocco have become less temporary. In parallel, over the past two decades, Morocco has also emerged as a significant hub for north-south mobility, attracting a growing number of Spanish and British migrants. Consequently, Morocco is now also considered as a country of immigration.

In response to these developments, the National Immigration and Asylum Strategy (SNIA) was established to "ensure better integration of immigrants and better management of migratory flows within the framework of a coherent, comprehensive, humanist, and responsible policy." Additionally, Morocco is actively reforming its legislative and regulatory frameworks on immigration, asylum, and human trafficking while making basic public services, such as education, health, social assistance, housing, vocational training, and employment, accessible to migrants and refugees.

Despite these strategic efforts, the migrant population in Morocco faces numerous challenges related to socio-cultural and professional integration, including:

- Issues with administrative regularization, particularly in obtaining residence permits.
- Language barriers, especially with Arabic and the Moroccan dialect (Darija).
- Difficulties in compiling necessary documentation for establishing and renewing residence cards (e.g., bank statements, criminal records, lease contracts, work contracts).
- Issues accessing housing due to inflated prices and commission fees.



- Exploitation by certain employers manifesting as indecent wages, the absence of employment contracts, and irregular payments.
- Limited access to primary healthcare services in certain regions.
- Problems with the recognition of diplomas and certifications obtained outside Morocco.
- Experiences of racism.

In conclusion, while Morocco has made significant progress in its migration management and integration policies, ongoing efforts are required to address the challenges faced by migrants, ensuring their successful integration and the protection of their rights.

III/ Conclusion

Integrating Western countries into global measures with African states, in a growing anti-Western sentiment is a complex challenge that requires nuanced and multifaceted strategies. Both China and Russia have capitalized on this sentiment, leveraging their investments and political influence. To combat this and foster cooperation, Western countries must adopt a comprehensive approach that involves policy changes, genuine engagement, and efforts to win the hearts and minds of the African population. This involves not only addressing immediate developmental needs but also fostering long-term partnerships, built on mutual respect and shared goals. Moreover, the ability of cooperation efforts to tackle the causes, as opposed to mainly the symptoms, of irregular migration will be an important factor to consider in upcoming migration policy scenarios.



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