

Emigration flows from North Africa to Europe

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The region of North Africa (NA) represents a striking locality regarding migration with several migration patterns, namely emigration in the form of labour export to Europe and North America and, to a lesser extent, to the Arab Gulf area. The latter has increased enormously in the last decade because of the political instability in most of the NA countries. The aim of the present chapter was to explore the patterns of migration stocks and flows in NA countries, based on several websites, systematic review of journals, comparable data available by the United Nations and by the International Organization of Migration. The NA region has become an area of transit migration and labour migration. Emigrant flows from NA countries towards Europe and North America are increasing this decade more than towards the Arab Gulf countries after being replaced by Asian labour. The recent increase in the proportion of women among the migrant population is remarkable. Remittances sent by African migrants have become an important source of external finance for countries of origin. Transient and irregular migration to Egypt originates at the borders with Sudan, Palestine and Libya with destination to the Euro Mediterranean countries. In Tunisia and Morocco, irregular migrants originate from Sub-Saharan Africa to the northern borders. The NA countries serve as departure rather than destination countries, and migration flows to the Euro-Mediterranean countries through legal or illegal routes.

Introduction

The location of North Africa (NA), at the crossroads of one of the largest and most ancient medieval civilizations, has contributed to the diverse ethnic and cultural mix seen today. As part of the Arab world, Africa and the Mediterranean have benefited and contributed throughout their history to human and cultural exchanges, not only at the regional level but throughout the world. By being one of the oldest forms that contributed to human, cultural and commercial exchanges, migration has always been involved in making this region historically an 'open space'. However, although the contemporary phenomenon of migration has kept the same characteristics as before, it has recently taken many forms and has become more problematic. Since the colonial era, thousands of citizens of northern countries, especially those of the former colonial powers, are residing in NA, which has represented a relatively high proportion of the population for many years. These countries have been transformed from sources of immigration to sources of emigration, with the emigration rate multiplied by three in a period of 50 years.

As a crucial issue of the North–South relations, international migration is of major concern to all countries of the European Union (EU). Since the implementation of the Barcelona Process in 1995, the EU policies have been working to control the Maghreb countries in terms of migratory flows and to protect its southern border. Although subject to great controversies, the history of migration, which dates back for several decades, is still a relevant subject. Researchers and specialists are often called to make updates on the history of this immigration and have still not reached any consensus or unanimity about the question. In addition, this controversy continues to grow each time there are elections in the north or fatal accidents in the southern beaches. Furthermore, although the original analysis of migration is no longer valid, analyzing the

evolution of migration is still relevant and requires a continuous follow-up. This is especially because the scope of the analysis is far beyond the boundaries of academic research and falls more so into the political arena. Consequently, this analysis should not be done by historians, sociologists or political scientists alone; it requires a multidisciplinary approach.

Migration stocks and flows were reviewed from several websites and journals, as multi-country data are not adequately available from national sources. The present article relied on comparable data available by the United Nations, in addition to the United Nation High Commissionaire for Refugees (UNHCR), and International Organization of Migration and published articles.

Immigration flows

Initially, the migration of Maghrebians to Europe was the direct result of colonization and has since been regarded as an economic factor regulating the labour market, in both the Maghreb and Europe, especially in France. This phenomenon dates back to the colonial impact but has gained momentum with decolonization, and it appears that it has taken other irreversible forms with globalization. Regulation of migration has become structural and immigrants who 'dared' to cross the Mediterranean found themselves bound to their initial decision, with their emigration becoming a point of no return.¹

As stated by Fernand Braudel,² the Mediterranean was defined as a 'movement space', where an exchange takes place coupled to intermingling conflicts. The south shore, now considered as a main area of migration to the north shore, was also an area of immigration that received different populations in distress from Andalusia, Italy, Spain, Malta and other Mediterranean islands.

Migration is a fact which finds its explanation in the multidimensional story that links the countries of origin with the receiving

countries. The concept of space is a sensible explanation beyond the geographic boundaries with economic, human, social, cultural and political significance. The changing world has shown that the migration issue goes beyond the job market. It has also been shown throughout history that the dominant relationships and dependences are the fundamental underlying reason for population movements.

Although over the past decade there has been an increase of Egyptian migration towards Europe, a distinction can be made at the most general level between Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia), which have been firmly integrated into the Euro-Mediterranean migration system, and Egypt, which is predominantly connected to the Gulf migration system and other Arab countries. If the migration of North Africans has boomed a few years after the end of colonialism, while the migration of Egyptians to Europe is a special case, as the first Egyptian migrants of the late 19th century and the first decades of the 20th were mainly students. Labour migration of Egyptians to Europe is a recent trend dating back only two decades. Egyptians migrate mainly to the Gulf countries, and they represented the highest number of migrants in all sectors in these countries. Libya, which is a rich NA country, was still a country of immigration rather than emigration. It received mainly Arab migrants but also migrants from other African countries, Asia and Eastern Europe.³

The official halt to immigration to Europe and the changes in the forms of immigration from 1975 to date

The year 1974 was pivotal in modifying the pattern of immigration. Having poorly calculated their decisions, European governments were responsible for turning North African immigration first to encompass family members and later to perpetuate immigration. These decisions had as initial goals to reverse the direction of immigration, by stopping immigration and providing return aid. However, all proposed approaches were not successful to stop migration neither in France nor in the other countries. Meanwhile, companies of the southern European countries have adjusted their 'life' irreversibly depending on immigration as a factor and valve regulating the labour market. However, the year 1975 had completely changed the image of the North African immigrant within the European society. Since then, several events have occurred; however, they all culminate in the demonization of the Maghreb. The symbol of 'the abroad' is at the same time the cause and the consequence of the EU economic and social crisis, and later as 'unpleasant presence', that undermines national identity. The years preceding the crisis of 1973 are considered the turning point that changed the image and experience of North African immigrants in Europe. Subject to continuous attacks by the media, they started to be the cause of all evils of the Western world, similarly, to how Italians were blamed historically in America.

The rising unemployment and the threat of recession triggered an obsessive fear demanding that immigrants must pay for it. As from that date, a new policy focused on two issues. The first one was the control of migration to ensure a minimum of arrival to support the economic and demographic recovery. The second issue was to strengthen control with the social action that benefited immigrants and their families. However, despite the political and legal decisions, migration flows failed to stop. Maghreb immigrants fearing to lose their jobs and not being able to integrate adopted another form of migration, which is family emigration. Furthermore, a large proportion of temporary or seasonal migrants called to work only for a specific period preferred to settle permanently. The number of new immigrants was thus supplied by the candidates of family reunification (both wives and children of immigrants), and by the new potential migrants, who came as tourists, found a job and then settled. The number of Maghrebians has since increased in all countries with traditional migration as well as in new countries

Table 1 Evolution of North African immigration in France from 1974 to 1984

Years	Algerians	Moroccans	Tunisians	Total
1974	871 233	302 255	162 479	1 335 957
1975	884 320	322 067	167 463	1 372 850
1976	803 986	347 984	174 486	1 326 456
1977	829 572	376 055	176 154	1 381 781
1978	819 053	385 991	180 429	1 385 473
1979	782 111	399 952	183 782	1 365 845
1980	828 176	421 265	181 618	1 431 059
1981	816 873	444 472	193 203	1 454 548
1982	805 353	492 669	212 909	1 510 933
1983	777 037	519 871	214 957	1 511 865
1984	750 090	540 228	224 124	1 514 442

Source Ref⁶.

that have seen a rapid increase in the number of migrants from Maghreb, including Italy, Spain and even Greece.

Statistical sources often provide different and sometimes conflicting data, although they all agree that the total number has increased between 1974 and 1984 with a difference in the magnitude of this increase between countries (Table 1). While the number of Tunisians and especially Moroccans increased in a significant manner, the number of Algerians declined.⁴ Overall, the proportion of Maghrebian immigrants in France increased from 25.5% in 1962 to 33.9% in 1982.⁵ This period was marked by the increasing number of children and by the beginning of feminization due to family reunification and natural increase. From 1968 to 1982, the percentage of children under 17 years increased from 29.7 to 44.3% of all Maghrebian immigrants, whereas it increased between 1975 and 1982 from 27.7 to 43.5% among Tunisians and from 26.1 to 43.5% among Moroccans. As an example, in 1975, 75% of the surveyed 30–40-year-old Algerians men were married, but only 24% lived in couples. Seven years later, the proportion of married men was identical, but the rate of union reached 52%. Starting from that time, a deep transformation occurred in the structure of the North African population in France and Europe, and by the 80th and 90th, most arrivals were families, wives and children. This was more pronounced in some countries such as France (where, for example, the number of women among all the Moroccan population increased from 26.7% in 1975 to 39% in 1982).⁶ Similarly, the number of Algerians women settled in favour of family reunification during the same period was 10 times higher than that of men. The proportion of Tunisian women also increased from 30.9% in 1975 to 41.1% of all Tunisian immigrants. In 1990, a similar trend was observed in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, but mainly among Moroccans. In those countries, family reunification has enabled the establishment of many families, while it remained marginal in other countries with recent immigration such as Spain and Italy.

At a global level, the number of North Africans in Europe has reached a relatively high level and has become an unavoidable reality in the social, economic and political life. Morocco is currently the largest provider of migrants both in absolute and relative terms. The number of Moroccan registered by the Moroccan consulates throughout the world has doubled over the past 12 years, from 1 549 000 in 1993 to 3 089 000 in 2004, corresponding to a rate of growth of 6.3% per year, which is five times higher than that of their country of origin (+1.3% per year). This increase includes both first and second generation of migrants, with Europe being the main destination (87% of total migrants). France remains the destination of choice for Moroccans (434 000 Moroccan migrants). It should, however, be noted that new host countries could also have absorbed a significant number of Moroccans, such as Spain with 358 086 and Italy with 207 250 people. Moroccan migration is furthermore characterized by its diversity as it moves towards several other

non-European countries such as the Arab Gulf countries and North America.¹

Algeria ranked first in terms of migration for a long time according to her special status with France but has seen its status relegated to a second place after Morocco. Like the other NA countries, Algerian migration has become a migration for familial reunification, although to a lesser extent than among Tunisians and Moroccans. As a result, newcomers from Algeria were largely women and children. In addition, while during the 80s, only 100 000 Algerians emigrated, the numbers of Algerian emigrants step up in the 90s because of the political and security events of the time, amounting to nearly 200 000 persons. Algerians migrate primarily to Europe (mainly France), although they recently increasingly migrate to North America, especially to Canada. This period was characterized by an increase in the number of asylum seekers. According to UNHCR, Germany was the country that received between 1990 and 1998 the largest number of Algerian refugees with 35 100 requests as compared with 14 642 requests for France. The accumulation of Algerian migration process has resulted in a number of migrants reaching in 1995, 1 073 000 people living mainly in Europe (92.5% of the total) with France being the first host country (86.9% of the total). For both Tunisians and Moroccans, the 80s and 90s were also a period of continuous migration.

Tunisian nationals were the first to benefit in 1981 from the legalization of illegal immigrants in France, with estimates varying from 17 300 to 45 700 cases. In Italy, Tunisians have benefited from the legalization of 10 000 cases in 1988 and 25 500 in 1991. According to the Tunisian statistics, the Tunisian population abroad reached nearly 10% of the local population. Europe remains the preferred destination of Tunisians and France the primary host country. However, the average population growth abroad between 2002 and 2004 was 3.82%, constituting 7.37% for women, excluding children. In addition, if the increase in the female population in France (5.53%) was below the average, then that observed in Italy was exceptionally high with an increase of 21.62%.⁷

Outward migration from Egypt has increased because of the increasing rate of unemployment in Egypt from 8.9% in 2010 to 13.4% in 2013.³ Fluctuations in outward flows of emigrants from Egypt to the Arab Gulf countries in the last three decades occurred as a result of Gulf wars and the international restrictions against Libya. The percentage of Egyptian migrants who preferred travelling to Europe as a destination increased enormously from 6% in 1997 to 33.7% by 2007. This might be due to the competition they face in the Arab Gulf with the cheaper labour from South East Asia.⁸

Migration over the last decade

During the last decade, the world has undergone profound political, economic and demographic changes, with a significant impact on the Arab world in general and the NA region in particular. The Egyptians have continued to move mainly towards the Gulf countries, although with a greater diversity of destinations.⁹ Maghrebians still have the same destination, although in recent years they started to migrate to other countries such as North America. Moreover, it should be noted that at the period of crisis, NA countries have become an area of transit migration and maybe also of labour migration. Taking some advantages from a relatively high natural growth rate, NA has achieved a significant progress and in spite of a decreasing in fertility. The total NA population including Egypt is estimated at 173 million by 2013 (Table 2). With an average annual growth of 1.66%, Egypt is the most populated NA country. The North African population is also a young population with rates of population of working age exceeding 63%.

Statistical data on migration remain inconsistent and sometimes contradictory because of the various definitions of migration and citizenship. To have consistent data, statistics provided by the World

Table 2 Estimates of the population in the Arab countries for the years 2000, 2010 and 2013 (in millions)

Countries	Total		
	2000	2010	2013
Algeria	31 719	37 063	39 208
Egypt	66 137	78 076	82 056
Libya	5 176	6 041	6 202
Mauritania	2 708	3 609	3 890
Morocco	28 710	31 642	33 008
Tunisia	9 553	10 632	10 997
Total	144 003	167 063	175 361
World	6 127 700	6 916 183	7 162 119

Source Ref⁹.

Table 3 Number of migrants to and from the Maghreb and Egypt

Countries	2000	2013	Difference
	Emigrants		
Algeria	1 036 939	1 763 789	726 850
Libya	246 475	368 637	122 162
Mauritania	142 578	135 591	-6987
Morocco	1 970 467	2 868 828	898 361
Tunisia	488 122	658 364	170 242
Egypt	2 305 125	3 465 707	1 160 582
	Immigrants		
Algeria	250 110	270 407	20 297
Libya	558 770	755 974	197 204
Mauritania	62 593	90 206	27 613
Morocco	53 124	50 771	-2353
Tunisia	36 212	36 526	314
Egypt	169 149	297 448	128 299

Source Ref⁹.

Bank were used below, but these end to be lower than local estimates. During the last decade, the migration flow of NA countries was dynamic. It increased from 6.2 million people in 2000 to 9.3 million people in 2013 (Table 3)⁹, an average annual growth rate of 3.81% with Egypt and Morocco being the largest providers of migrants. Egyptian migrant population was estimated in 2013 to 3 465 707 persons located mainly in the Gulf countries and in other countries, including Europe, USA, Canada and Australia.⁹

Among Maghrebians, Moroccans have seen during the last decade their migrant population increasing to a considerable extent from 2.0 million people in 2000 to 2.9 million in 2013 with an average annual growth of 3.5% (Table 3). During the same period, the number of Tunisian migrants increased by 170 000 between 2000 and 2013, an annual rate of 2.7%. With the exception of Mauritania, all other NA populations have seen their migrant populations increase. Data on the Libyan population residing in Egypt, Tunisia and Malta remain unclear but may account to tens of thousands. In Tunisia, for example, unofficial estimates put the figures to 1 or 1.6 million.

Traditionally, Arab and North African immigrant used to constitute a young and single population. Several factors were behind the change in the structure of the population, including family reunification, improvement of the educational level of women, emancipation of women, which led to an increase of autonomous female migration, and increased level of permanent celibacy and increasing age at marriage.¹⁰ One of the main factors that determined this form of migration is the status of women, which varied by country. The status of Tunisian women is far ahead of other Arab countries, and there have been a sizeable proportion of women migrants. Over the past two decades, there has been a remarkable increase of Moroccan women in all European

Table 4 Migrant women in the Arab world in 2000 and 2013

Countries	2000	2013
World	85 725 516	111 193 961
Arab world (total)	17 102 554	30 302 601
Arab world (women)	5 999 867	9 470 038
Morocco	886 470	1 308 490
Egypt	795 472	1 165 705
Algeria	460 314	859 818
Tunisia	203 182	278 094
Libya	62 117	97 947
Mauritania	52 797	58 110

Source Ref⁹.

countries, including Italy and Spain. The published statistics record legal migration but miss clandestine migration.

In absolute numbers, the share of migrant women has increased steadily, with a proportionally higher number of Moroccan women (886 470 in 2000 and 1 308 490 women) (Table 4). The rate of increase was 3.66% on average. In contrast, even if the number of Algerian women is less than that of Moroccan, in a period of 13 years, the rate of growth of Algerian reached 6.68%. What is remarkable is the increase in the proportion of women among the migrant population being the highest 49.3% for Tunisian and the lowest 34.1% for Libyans. The equivalent figure for Moroccan, Algerian and Egyptian is 47.7, 45 and 13.6%, respectively.⁹

Conclusion

Writing about migration has never been an easy task. Statistical sources may be absent, and even when available, they are often contradictory. For decades governments, research centres and international organizations ‘competed’ for the definitions of migration for their interests, which were often conflicting. With the rise of illegal migration, statistics have become more than ever approximations, often far from reality. However, it is clear that migration is an irreversible fact that will continue because of the needs of both southern and northern countries. Industrialized countries undergoing the third stage of the demographic transition will need a cheap labour force, while the southern countries will need to export part of their youth in need of work. North African countries are in a severe dilemma. They are committed to control their borders against migration of their fellow citizens, as well as against transit migration. However, migration continues to prevail and ease the pressure of demographic and socio-economic factors. North African and transit migration from NA will certainly remain an important factor which will change in structure constituting, more than ever, all social classes and men and women. NA will also receive citizens of other countries, both for transit and

settling down. Demographic transitions, and economic and social changes in NA could lead to new forms of migration.

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Key points

- Migration is the result of a long history of domination, co-operation and the future.
- North African migration is under constant change.
- North African migration is one of the basic images of the Mediterranean space.

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