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# MIGRATION IN THE GREATER MEDITERRANEAN REGION

## ROOT CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN SECURITY



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## **ABSTRACT**

While Mediterranean sea-crossings have partially decreased in recent years, mass flows of people towards European countries remain of strategic concern. In this context, migration, especially when undertaken through irregular and disorderly channels, has emerged as both a national security and a human security issue. To date, this phenomenon continues to generate real concerns and dilemmas for nation-states, while also exposing migrants themselves to insecurity, vulnerability and abuse.

Managing migratory flows across the Mediterranean has often been framed as a zero-sum game between stability and humanity, between ‘stopping the boats’ versus ‘rescuing the migrants’. While recognizing that there are no easy or immediate solutions in the present global context, this paper seeks to approach this salient issue in an over-the-horizon manner, highlighting the risks and opportunities which lie ahead.

This study draws attention to the fact that irregular migration tends to undermine state security in largely unconventional ways, while the accompanying securitization process may create additional challenges across countries of origin, transit and destination. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes the need for policymakers to capitalise on lessons learned, assess which policy interventions work best and look over-the-horizon with a view to increasing resilience to other potential ‘crises’. Towards this end, this paper offers some preliminary lessons, observations and recommendations which are primarily intended to strengthen the knowledge base for migration policymaking. These include, amongst others, the need to incorporate critical insights on the securitization of migration, to take into account the complex links between development and migration and to balance short-term responses to the impacts of irregular migration with long-term policy objectives on leveraging the benefits of regular migration.

In the preparation of this study, the NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub (“the Hub”) engaged African and Middle Eastern subject matter experts (SMEs), including during an online workshop titled “*Migration in the greater Mediterranean region*”. Held on 5 May, 2021 the workshop provided an opportunity for the Hub and the external experts to analyse the root causes of contemporary international migration, along with its consequences for state and human security in Europe and beyond. This targeted analysis also informed the actionable recommendations captured in this study, which relate to the present-day drivers and consequences of irregular migration, as well as the future challenges associated with migratory flows.

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## INTRODUCTION

Migration is an “age-old phenomenon” - changing one’s location has been an essential human characteristic since the beginning of time. Globalization has further intensified this trend, particularly the transformation of economic and trade processes, which have been enabling greater movement of labour, goods and human capital.

This paper is only concerned with *international* migrants and *international* migration. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines an international migrant as: any person who has changed his or her country of usual residence, distinguishing between “short-term migrants” (those who have changed their countries of usual residence for at least three months, but less than one year) and “long-term migrants” (those who have done so for at least one year).<sup>1</sup>

The first IOM World Migration Report (WMR) was published in 2000. It showed that there were 150 million international migrants globally at that time. The 2020 report demonstrates an increase to 272 million.<sup>2</sup> However, worldwide distribution is not even, with the Mediterranean region being one of the areas where the issue of migrants and asylum seekers<sup>3</sup> is of great concern. Increasing pressure on countries bordering the Mediterranean and, as a consequence, stress on landlocked European countries has been present, though the numbers have reduced in comparison to the peak experienced during the European Migrant and Refugee crisis, in 2015.<sup>4</sup>

Since last year, COVID-19 pandemic-related border closures across Africa (in 43 of Africa’s 54 countries) have disrupted the normal flows of regional migration and, coupled with the restrictions on entering Europe, have trapped many migrants in unsafe conditions and forced others to take more dangerous migration routes (e.g., the shift from the Central Mediterranean to the still more dangerous Western Mediterranean routes, including via the Spanish Canary Islands).<sup>5</sup> Mediterranean sea-crossings dropped by 20% in 2020<sup>6</sup> (to 86,670 arrivals), but mass flows of people towards European countries remain of great concern,

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<sup>1</sup> However, not all countries use this definition in practice. UN DESA, 1998. Available at: [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2020.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Table1. Key facts and figures from the WMR 2000 and 2020. Available at: [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2020.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Asylum seeker – An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every recognized refugee is initially an asylum seeker.

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Master Glossary of Terms (2006)

<sup>4</sup> The European Migrant “Refugee crisis” – is the massive refugee movement since 2015, with leap in casualties, as a result of local disputes in Africa and the Middle East, from the original region to the European Union through the Mediterranean Sea or southeast Europe (The UN Refugee Agency, 2015; Amnesty International, 2015)

<sup>5</sup> African migration trends to watch in 2021 – African Center for Strategic Studies -. Available at: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-migration-trends-to-watch-in-2021/>

<sup>6</sup> Total maritime arrival in 2020: 86,670; total land arrivals in Europe: 12,589. Data collected by European Commission from the monthly reports sent by Member States’ official institutions.

since many experts agree that, when the effects of the pandemic have passed, there will be a bounce-back effect leading to a large increase in migratory flows.

The present study is intended to contribute to a better understanding of the human and state security issues which is pivotal in the wider Mediterranean region. In terms of the analytical study process, it begins with an assessment of the root causes of international migration as a whole, and then moves on to investigate the implications for human security and the challenges for state security, with greater emphasis on irregular migration,<sup>7</sup> although this is not intended to detract from the importance of regular migration.

Subsequently, the research study and this paper are focused on an analysis of the dilemma generated by the dichotomy of human security and state security associated with the phenomenon of migration. This stage of the analytical process was developed during an on-line Workshop which brought together regional subject matter experts in order to collect and benefit from their insights and opinions.

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<sup>7</sup>Irregular migration: the movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination. Although a universally accepted definition of irregular migration does not exist, the term is generally used to identify persons moving outside regular migration channels. Moreover, categories of migrants who may not have any other choice but to use irregular migration channels can also include refugees, victims of trafficking, or unaccompanied migrant children. The fact that they use irregular migration routes does not imply that States are not, in some circumstances, obliged to provide them with some forms of protection under international law, including access to international protection for asylum seekers fleeing persecution, conflicts or generalized violence. In addition, refugees are protected under international law against being penalized for unauthorized entry or stay if they have travelled from a place where they were at risk (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 28 July 1951, entered into force 22 April 1954)189 UNTS 137, Art. 31(1))

## I – ROOT CAUSES AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

### Root Causes

The root causes of international migration are often inter-related and identifying to what degree each factor has influenced the decision to migrate can often be very difficult. That said, the following are the widely accepted root causes:

Poverty and Uneven Wealth Distribution: These are undoubtedly among the main causes of international migration, caused by poor governance in social, political and economic affairs. Social and economic inequality is present in many countries in Africa and the Middle East, where people experience frustration due to the scarcity or a complete lack of opportunities to improve their standard of living. The youth are particularly vulnerable and they often feel powerless, while their family difficulties are exacerbated by a combination of socio-economic deprivation, widespread poverty, lack of job opportunities and poor governmental services for citizens.<sup>8</sup>

Demographic Pressure: Demographic growth in these regions, in particular the youth bulge in Africa, is fuelling the flow of people looking for a better life.<sup>9</sup> Africa is currently the fastest-growing region in the world and it is expected to surpass 2 billion people by 2050. The pressure this growth is generating is likely to worsen the abovementioned real and perceived inequalities in the social, political and economic domains.

Environmental Vulnerability and Climate Change: Increased temperatures, floods, droughts, desertification and coastal erosion further damage the already fragile environment, impoverishing the regions and their inhabitants, affected by food and water insecurity.<sup>10</sup> Both growing population and climate change act as threat multipliers in the already precarious context of regions where the poorest and most vulnerable areas will be hardest hit. Nevertheless, the effects of these changes on international migration are difficult to predict. Some see millions of ‘climate refugees’ moving south-to-north, while others underline that affected communities may become ‘trapped populations’.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Drivers of Religious Radicalisation and Extremism in the Sahel (NSD-S HUB -2020). Available at:

<https://thesouthernhub.org/resources/site1/General/NSD-S%20Hub%20Publications/Drivers%20of%20Religious%20Radicalisation%20And%20Extremism%20In%20The%20Sahel.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Africa has undergone the most significant change, with its population growing by nearly 30% over the last decade, due to high fertility rates and increasing lifespans. Nevertheless, this growth has been partially mitigated by emigration from Africa to other regions (namely Europe and Asia). In 2019, Egypt had the largest number of people living abroad, followed by Morocco, South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan and Algeria. Available at: [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2020.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Natural Disasters in the Middle East and North Africa: A Regional Overview. (The World Bank -2014) Available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/211811468106752534/pdf/816580WPOREPLA0140same0box00PUBLIC0.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> The World Bank estimates that by 2050, 143 million people living in three particularly exposed regions – Sub Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America – will be pushed by climate change stresses to migrate within their

Conflicts, Persecution and Human Rights Violations: In Africa and the Middle East, many people leave their homes because of indiscriminate violence and/or fear of persecution. Often related to poor governance, they can be fuelled by general instability, corruption and weak rule of law as well as the absence of trust in the political system. Thirteen African countries are currently involved in major internal armed conflicts and they account for almost 90% of the people displaced by conflict and persecution on the African continent.<sup>12</sup> The Middle East continues to host the largest number of refugees globally.<sup>13</sup> Looking at the eastern part of the Mediterranean region, in 2018, for the fifth consecutive year, Turkey was the largest host country in the world, with 3.7 million refugees, mainly Syrians (over 3.6 million). Reflecting the significant share of Syrians in the global refugee population, two other bordering countries, Jordan and Lebanon, are in the list of the top 10 host countries.<sup>14</sup>

Natural Disasters: The worldwide number of natural disasters has almost doubled and in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) the average number has almost tripled since the 1980s. Approximately 40 million people were affected by over 350 natural disasters between 1981 and 2010, according to the EM-DAT database.<sup>15</sup> The most frequent disasters in the MENA region are floods, earthquakes, storms and droughts.<sup>16</sup>

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countries in the first instance, with possible further consequences for onward movement. It is estimated that 8% of the African population in 2100 will be affected by prolonged periods of heat, and over 13% by prolonged periods of drought. World bank Report: "Groundswell : Preparing for Internal Climate Migration". Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461>

<sup>12</sup> Displacement and autocracy in African countries (Libya, Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Burundi, DRC, Cameroon, CAR, Nigeria, Mali, and Niger) experiencing major conflict. "Shifting Borders: Africa's Displacement Crisis and Its Security Implications." (Africa Center for Strategic Studies - 2019). Available at: <https://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ARP08EN-Shifting-Borders-Africas-Displacement-Crisis-and-Its-Implications.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> IOM World Migration Report -2020. Available at: [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2020.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> ibid

<sup>15</sup> MENA's hazard risk is high. Between 1981 and 2010, more than 80% of the region's disaster events occurred in 6 countries: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Morocco and the Republic of Yemen. Source: "Natural Disasters in the Middle East and North Africa: a Regional Overview" (The World Bank - 2014). Available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/211811468106752534/pdf/816580WPOREPLA0140same0box00PUBLIC0.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Strategic Foresight Analysis Report 2017 (NATO ACT - 2017). Available at: [https://www.act.nato.int/application/files/1016/0565/9725/171004\\_sfa\\_2017\\_report\\_hr.pdf](https://www.act.nato.int/application/files/1016/0565/9725/171004_sfa_2017_report_hr.pdf)

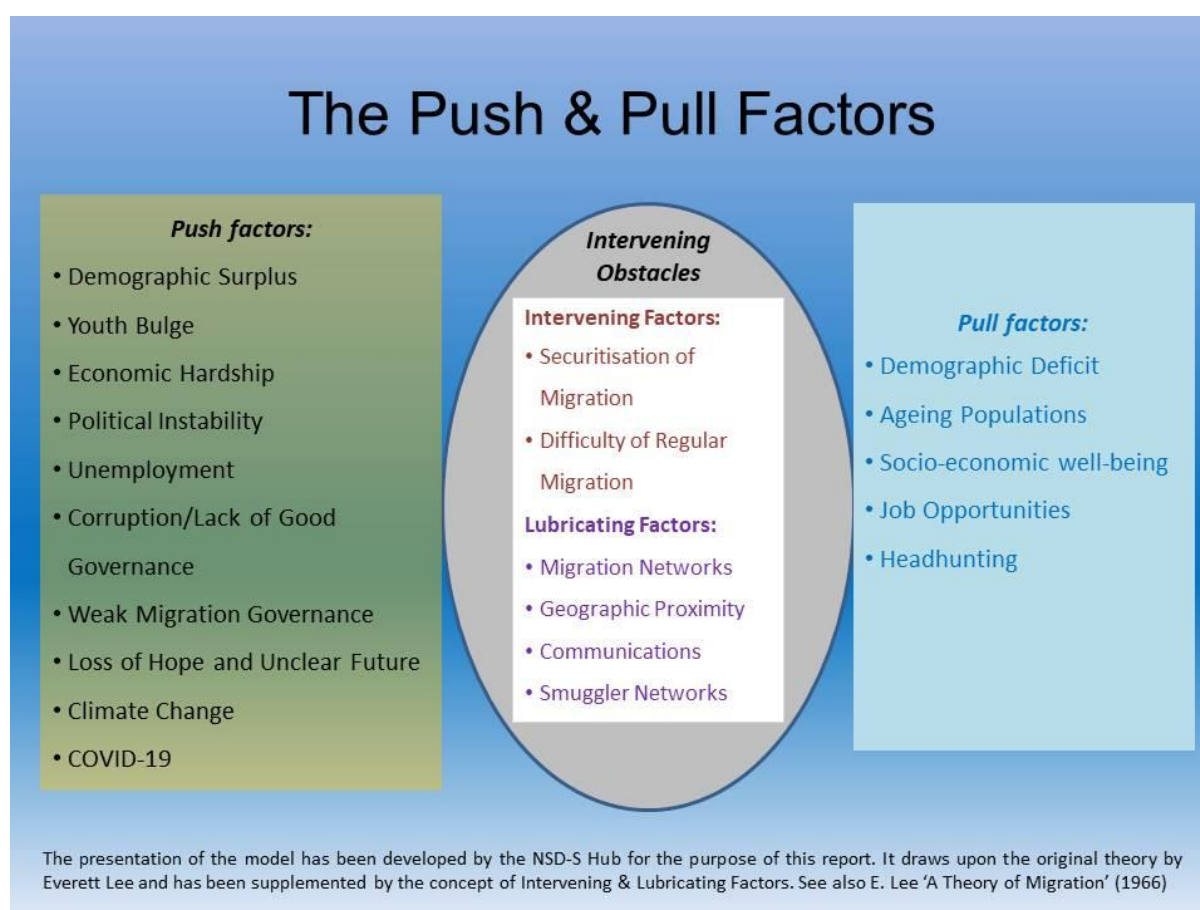
Environmental change and disasters in Eastern and Southern Africa are prevalent and increasing, and are influencing human movement and displacement. WMR 2020 (IOM-UN – 2020) Available at: [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2020.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf)



## Push and Pull Factors

The push-pull framework can further facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of migration.<sup>17</sup> Everett Lee (1966) developed a “general schema into which a variety of spatial movements can be placed.” He divided the forces exerting an influence on migrant perceptions into ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. On the one hand, the *push* factors are the reasons why people leave their country, while the *pull* factors refer to the reason why people move to a particular country.

Pull factors, all conducive to voluntary migration, include the real or perceived opportunities for employment and work opportunities, a better life, higher income, improved security and superior education and health care in destination countries. The variety of interconnected drivers often makes it difficult to clearly distinguish push from pull factors.



**Figure 1 – Push and Pull Factors Framework of Migration.**

<sup>17</sup> The push-pull framework has been one of the most influential conceptual tools used in the study of migration. Nevertheless, recent literature also acknowledges that this conventional framework does not fully capture the complexity of how development and globalization processes affect contemporary migration.

Lee's theory also encompasses 'intervening obstacles' (or intervening factors), interposed between origin and destination. These constitute friction in the migration process.

Moreover, the push-pull dynamic is intensified by a number of other factors which facilitate migration. This is what is missing in Lee's conceptual framework and can be called 'lubricating factors'. These include: the geographical proximity in the case of the Africa-Europe migration stream; improved communications, especially social media and the internet; better information availability; the smugglers' network; and often the growing need to join relatives, families and friends.

### The 'mechanism' which drives people to migrate

Migration is a very complex phenomenon and the currently accepted interpretation of 'root causes' also implies a chain of mechanisms which eventually produce migration due to the effect of other factors (drivers).

Defining these factors (Box 1) and examining the entire chain (Figure 2) can help to understand the visible outcomes and assess the scope for policy influence. In order to explain the mechanism which produces migration, the model developed by Jorgen Carling in

#### **Box 1 – Root Causes and Drivers of Migration:**

*"Root Causes of Migration" are basically thought of as the social and political conditions which induce departures: in particular poverty, repression and violent conflict.*

*"Drivers of Migration" is a more inclusive term which also encompasses the mechanisms that eventually produce migration outcomes. For instance, social networks and access to information would be part of the drivers of migration, but they are not root causes.*

*Source: "Root causes and drivers of migration. Implications for humanitarian efforts and development cooperation" - J. Carling and C. Talleraas, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).*

<https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=346&type=publicationfile>

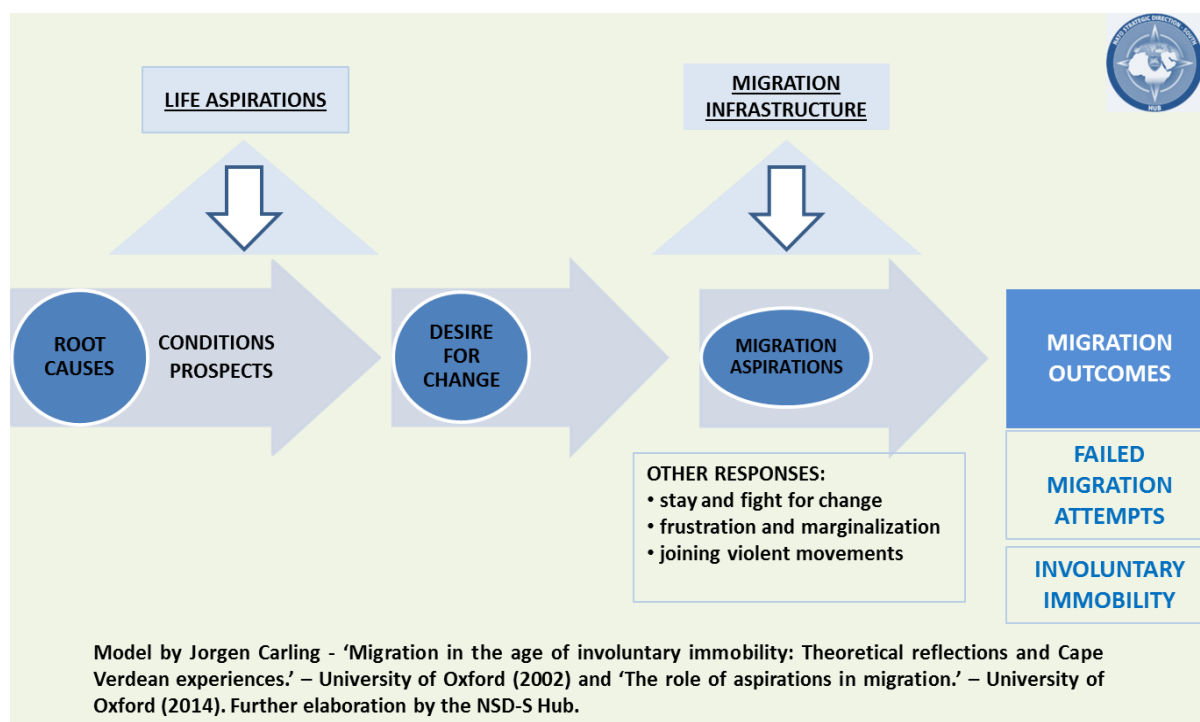
his theory of "Root causes and drivers of migration" can be used.

The root causes can be identified in the conditions of states, communities and individuals which inspire a desire for change, which then lead to migration aspirations.

The 'conditions' are the elements at the base of the system and they act in connection with the prospects for improvement. Conditions, prospects and individual life aspirations combine to create a desire for change, aimed both at seeking security in the short-term and a better standard of living in the long-term. Such desires can produce migration aspirations as well as other responses to make the change possible.

When looking at the dynamics acting within the mechanism, it is possible to recognize how aspirations to migrate can reach their desired outcome - the final step of actually moving. To

achieve this, they need to be facilitated by a migration infrastructure.<sup>18</sup> This infrastructure covers a range of factors which shape whether migration aspiration achieves its desired outcome or not, so it plays a highly relevant role in generating real flows of people. Migration infrastructure has five dimensions: Commercial (smuggling); Regulatory (states' apparatus and rules); Technological (communication and transport); Humanitarian (International Organizations and NGOs); and Social (the migrant network).<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 2 – Migration Producing Mechanism.**

For those who have developed migration aspirations, there are essentially three possible outcomes. Firstly, they could *succeed* in migrating or, more accurately, arriving at the destination, even though this does not imply improving one's life aspirations. A *failed* migration attempt is the second potential result: they start the movement but are not able to reach the destination. While the extreme form of failure is death, getting blocked along the way, detained or repatriated either during the journey or soon after arriving, are common occurrences. The third outcome occurs when the migration aspiration is hampered at the outset and people do not leave. This is *involuntary immobility*. It is a hidden outcome but, because of the frustration it creates among the people who do not depart, it has the potential to conceal considerable pitfalls such as pushing people towards radicalization.

<sup>18</sup> Anthropologists Xiang Biao and Johan Lindquist's theory.

<sup>19</sup> These factors could be partially comparable to what was previously categorized as intervening and lubricating factors.

Many possible policies to tackle migration could be formulated based on this model. The various strategies would have different implications for the lives of individuals and the development of countries and communities of origin. When migration is prevented in conventional ways, through a State Security approach, founded on restrictive immigration policies and border enforcement, involuntary immobility and growing frustration could result.

Alternatively, if policy interventions are successfully directed at the first link of the chain, people would stay because they would want to, rather than because they are blocked from leaving and feel trapped. The early stages of the process coincide with how people perceive their individual or community conditions and prospects, something very linked to their own sense of security (a human security perspective).

On the whole, it could also be asserted that migration is the result of disparity but, today more than ever, globalization decisively acts to support (lubricate) the individual migration aspiration. What should be clear is that any possible strategy aimed at managing migration must be based on a comprehensive approach which takes into account both state and human security.

## II – IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN SECURITY

Broadly defined as freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom from indignity, human security can provide a useful framework for understanding the risks and vulnerabilities associated with migration, especially when it happens through irregular channels. This chapter, therefore, focuses primarily on irregular migration into Europe across the Mediterranean Sea and illustrates some of the ways in which this phenomenon affects the human security of migrants and asylum seekers.

### Snapshot - The Current Migration Situation

- A sharp reduction in irregular arrivals to the EU since 2015, with the numbers dropping by more than 90% by the end of 2020 (Figure 3).
- A decrease in irregular border-crossings on the Western and Central Mediterranean routes, primarily attributed to enhanced migration management and border control in North African countries.
- A shift in migration flows, with the highest number of irregular border crossings on the Western African migratory route (i.e., arrivals in the Canary Islands) recorded since 2009.
- Some changes in the primary countries of origin, from Syria (50.2%), Afghanistan (20.2%) and Iraq (7.1%) in 2015, to Tunisia (20.1%), Algeria (13.9%) and Morocco (7.6%) in 2020.

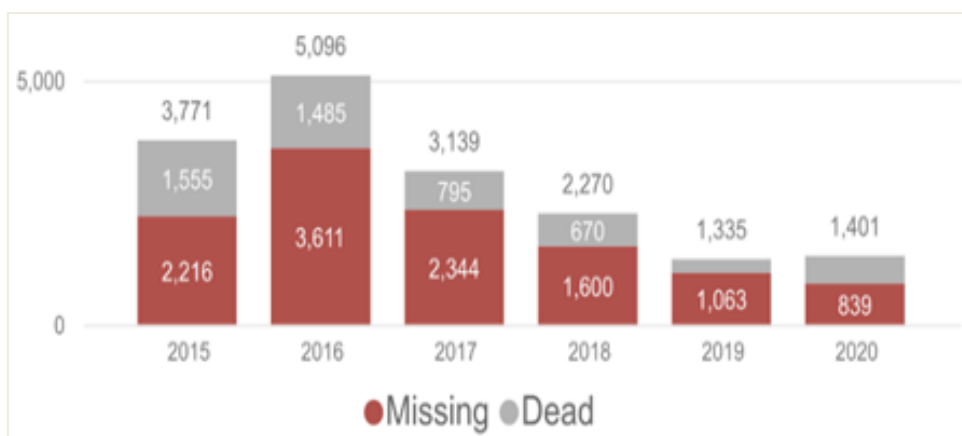
| Previous years | Arrivals  | Dead and missing |
|----------------|-----------|------------------|
| 2020           | 95,031    | 1,401            |
| 2019           | 123,663   | 1,335            |
| 2018           | 141,472   | 2,270            |
| 2017           | 185,139   | 3,139            |
| 2016           | 373,652   | 5,096            |
| 2015           | 1,032,408 | 3,771            |
| 2014           | 225,455   | 3,538            |

### Dangerous Sea Crossings

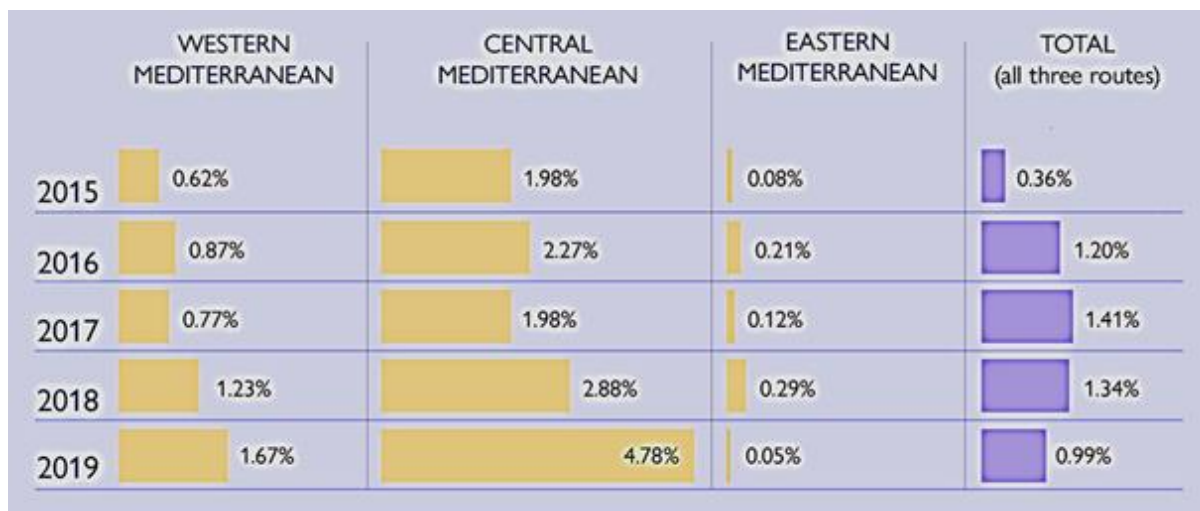
The absolute number of people dying or missing in the Mediterranean Sea has decreased over the past six years. In 2015, there were an estimated 3,771 migration-related fatalities

at sea.<sup>20</sup> Since then, fewer people have suffered the same fate, with 1,401 thought to be dead or missing in the Mediterranean in 2020.<sup>21</sup> As of 8 April 2021, the estimated toll was 340 people.<sup>22</sup> To a large extent, this demonstrates fewer attempted crossings, fewer deaths at sea and fewer arrivals in Europe. However, this should be nuanced with some trends in fatalities and continuing controversies.

The IOM Missing Migrants Project estimates that “one in 33 people died attempting to cross the Central Mediterranean in 2019, compared to one in 35 in 2018 and one in 51 in 2017”.<sup>23</sup> The two graphs presented in this section capture these trends.



**Figure 4: Dead and missing in the Mediterranean** (Source: UNHCR)



**Figure 5: Death rates in the Mediterranean** (Source: IOM's Missing Migrants Project)

Even as the overall number of migrant deaths and disappearances among those attempting the crossing has decreased over the past few years, the fatality rate has

<sup>20</sup> The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), (2021), *Europe, Dead and Missing at Sea*. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/95?sv=0&geo=0>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> The International Organization for Migration, (2019), Press release: *Mediterranean Arrivals Reach 110,699 in 2019; Deaths Reach 1,283. World Deaths Fall*. Available at: <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-mediterranean-arrivals-reach-110699-2019-deaths-reach-1283-world-deaths-fall>.

increased, especially along the Central Mediterranean route. In addition, more vessels have been reported missing *en route* to Europe since mid-2017. Non-governmental actors have also reduced their Search and Rescue (SAR) presence in the Mediterranean.

SAR operations remain a major point of contention. Many politicians and law enforcement agencies see them as a ‘pull factor’ and have criticised them over the years. A UK House of Lords report, for example, noted that “Critics suggested that search and rescue activity by Operation Sophia would act as a magnet to migrants and ease the task of smugglers, who would only need their vessels to reach the high seas; these propositions have some validity.”<sup>24</sup> In its 2017 Risk Analysis Report, Frontex also concluded that all parties involved in SAR operations in the Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR Med/Frontex and NGO vessels) were unintentionally strengthening the criminal business model by increasing the chances of successful smuggling at a minimum cost. Allegedly, these operations also encouraged migrants and refugees to attempt the dangerous crossing, knowing that they would benefit from humanitarian assistance to reach the European Union (EU).<sup>25</sup>

Civil society groups and migration activists have, on the other hand, disputed the validity of these claims. This discrepancy was also present in the previously cited House of Lords report, which stated that “search and rescue are, in our view, vital humanitarian obligations. We commend Operation Sophia for its success in this task”. Additionally, a study published by the Migration Policy Centre, found no relationship between the presence of NGOs at sea and the number of migrants leaving Libyan shores between 2014 and October 2019.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the Forensic Oceanography project found that during the months when SAR NGO presence decreased, the mortality rate went up.<sup>27</sup>

## Human Rights Abuses in Libya

For years, UN bodies, human rights organizations, journalists and activists have been documenting the conditions and insecurity faced by migrants and asylum seekers in Libya. Amid ongoing armed conflict, insecurity and lawlessness, migrants and asylum seekers have been reported to be exposed to human rights abuses and violations. These include

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<sup>24</sup> House of Lords European Union Committee, 14th Report of Session 2015–16, “Operation Sophia, the EU’s naval mission in the Mediterranean: an impossible challenge”, p 3.

<sup>25</sup> Frontex, (2017), *Annual Risk Analysis*, p 32. Available at: [https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/Annual\\_Risk\\_Analysis\\_2017.pdf](https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2017.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> European University Institute, (2019), *Sea Rescue NGOs: a Pull Factor of Irregular Migration?* Available at: [https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/65024/PB\\_2019\\_22\\_MPC.pdf](https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/65024/PB_2019_22_MPC.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Forensic Oceanography, Forensic Architecture agency, Goldsmiths, University of London, (2017), *Blaming the Rescuers - Criminalising Solidarity, Re-Enforcing Deterrence*. Available at: <https://blamingtherescuers.org/report/>.

extortion, sexual abuse, forced labour, torture, arbitrary arrest, overcrowding and deprivation of basic necessities.<sup>28</sup>

Even though many reports have confirmed that Libya is still not a place of safety for disembarkation, the people who try to escape these conditions are increasingly being intercepted or rescued by the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) and brought back into the country.<sup>29</sup> The migrants and asylum-seekers are then placed in detention centres, often controlled by armed groups, some of which have been located dangerously close to fighting.

In January-March 2021, a total of 4,005 refugees and migrants were rescued or intercepted by the LCG and disembarked in Libya.<sup>30</sup> The number for the previous year was 10,950.

### Migrant arrival in Europe

Difficulties relating to the reception of irregular migrants and asylum seekers have increased as European states have sought to manage the issue of migratory flows. This includes highly vulnerable migrants, such as children and victims of human trafficking. There have been reports of inadequate conditions including overcrowded facilities, limited access to healthcare, legal assistance, family contact and outside space.<sup>31</sup> The manner in which all parties are approaching this highly sensitive issue is still a matter for debate.

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<sup>28</sup> United Nations Support Mission in Libya, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, (2018). *Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/LibyaMigrationReport.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Oral update of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Libya pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution, (2020), 43rd session of the Human Rights Council. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=25973&LangID=E>.

<sup>30</sup> UNHCR, (2021), *UNHCR Update Libya*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR%20Libya%20Update%20%20April%202021.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Global Detention Project, (2018). *Harm Reduction in Immigration Detention*. Available at: <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/harm-reduction-immigration-detention>.



### **III – CHALLENGES TO STATE SECURITY**

The movement and integration of those from across the Mediterranean remain of major concern for Europe and, by extension, the Atlantic Alliance. The development of a collective understanding among NATO members of the security implications of such migration for the wider Mediterranean region (including North Africa and the Sahel) has not yet been achieved. Making the topic even more complex is the fact that some media are suggesting the existence of direct connections between migrants and terrorism.

In the most general sense, security refers to the absence of threats. The traditional approach to international security has focused primarily on military concerns. However, security studies have moved away from the state-centric approach, broadening the definition of security to include a number of potential threats, such as those relating to the environment, poverty and international migration, all of which have been labelled as security risks or threats.

A state must also maintain security against internal and external threats to its character, rule or territorial and demographic integrity. For this reason, a state's security affects the safety of its citizens and their citizens judge whether they are secure and their government can provide them with a safe state.

As a general rule, organized criminal networks are involved in many different types of criminal activities spanning several countries. These activities not only include trafficking in people, but also drugs, illicit goods and weapons, armed robbery, counterfeiting and money laundering.

The way in which migrants arrive at the destination country is a matter of growing concern for states and international organizations. Smugglers in organized criminal networks take advantage of the large number of migrants willing to take risks related to such journeys. The UN Security Council and the broader UN system have also begun to recognize the security implications of human trafficking and its links with conflict, instability and terrorism. Resolution 2331<sup>32</sup> is the first to recognize human trafficking as a tactic of terrorism which undermines broader conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

#### **Human Smuggling and Trafficking**

Migration presents challenges for host countries, in particular the risk of societal and political tensions: migrants do not always integrate sufficiently and often the local population feels discriminated against due to the assistance migrants are provided. The

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/resolution/resolution-2331-2016/Resolution-2331-2016-en.pdf>

perception of migration as a threat to national security has heightened in recent years, in part as the security agenda has become more prevalent across many aspects of policy, and in part in response to the rapid increase in the number of international migrants.

The growing smuggling of migrants and human trafficking industries based in Africa can pose a genuine threat to law and order, especially where they are related to organized crime and intersect with the movement of illicit goods, including weapons and drugs.

The two markets of migrant smuggling and human trafficking represent a very lucrative business in Africa which generates vast amounts of money, whose profits are said to foster corruption, criminal networks and non-state armed groups (NSAGs). Profits from human smuggling are estimated to be \$765 million annually along the Trans-Sahara route alone.<sup>33</sup>

While existing evidence cannot support the hypothesis that human smuggling and trafficking represent a major source of funding for terrorist activities, trafficking at large represents a clear challenge to security at both national and regional levels.

### The Nexus between Migration and Terrorism in Destination Countries

The study of the migration–terrorism<sup>34</sup> nexus first gained interest after the September 11 attacks, the 2004 Madrid train bombings and the 2005 London bombings.

Immigrants and asylum seekers became labelled as the enemy.<sup>35</sup> More recent terrorist attacks, such as the 2015 Paris attacks, as well as developments in migration<sup>36</sup>, have all motivated further analysis of the interplay between migration, terrorism and public policy.

A review of the literature does not provide clear-cut evidence on the links between migration and terrorism. Some studies find a blurred correlation, while others conclude that more migration does not necessarily lead to more terrorism in destination countries. There have been three large studies investigating the effect of migration on terrorism in the destination country of migration.<sup>37</sup> Our analysis would agree that migration *per se* is not a ‘Trojan horse’ of terrorism.

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<sup>33</sup> [https://thesouthernhub.org/NSD-S Hub Publications/20200320\\_NSDS HUB Migration and human trafficking.pdf](https://thesouthernhub.org/NSD-S Hub Publications/20200320_NSDS HUB Migration and human trafficking.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> According to Enders, Gaibullov and Sandler, in “Terrorism and Counter-terrorism: an overview”- Oxford Economics Papers 2015, terrorism can be defined as the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or subnational groups against non-combatants in order to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims. According to this definition, terrorism is distinct from unorganized forms of violent political protest (including riots, mob violence), and non-political acts of violence (such as violent crime, school shootings).

<sup>35</sup> Saux, M. 2007. “Immigration and Terrorism: A Constructed Connection. “European Journal of Criminal Policy and Research 13(1-2), pp.57-72.

<sup>36</sup> For instance the influx of refugees to Europe beginning in 2015.

<sup>37</sup> As explained in [Terrorism and Migration: An Overview | British Journal of Political Science | Cambridge Core](#)

For the period from 2014 – 2018, 104 religious radical extremists entered the European Union's (EU) external borders, using long-haul irregular migration methods.<sup>38</sup> 28 successfully completed attacks which claimed the lives of 170 victims and wounded 878. An additional 37 were arrested or killed plotting attacks, and 39 others were arrested for illegal involvement with foreign terrorist organizations. Although certainly of concern, these figures represent a tiny proportion of the total number of migrants for that period (0.005%).

However, migration may lead to terrorism under unfavourable circumstances, especially when state capacity and socio-economic conditions in host countries are inadequate and detrimental to migrant integration. This could lead to radicalization, most commonly in second or third generation migrants, which is a process in which a person or group adopt an extremist system of values combined with expressing approval, support for, or use of violence and intimidation as a method of achieving changes in society or encouraging others to such acts.<sup>39</sup> The final stage of radicalization is the actual undertaking of a terrorist act. However, focusing on the nexus between migration and terrorism may distract from more significant challenges that are related with migration, and from the real terrorist threat.

### Reactions to Migration

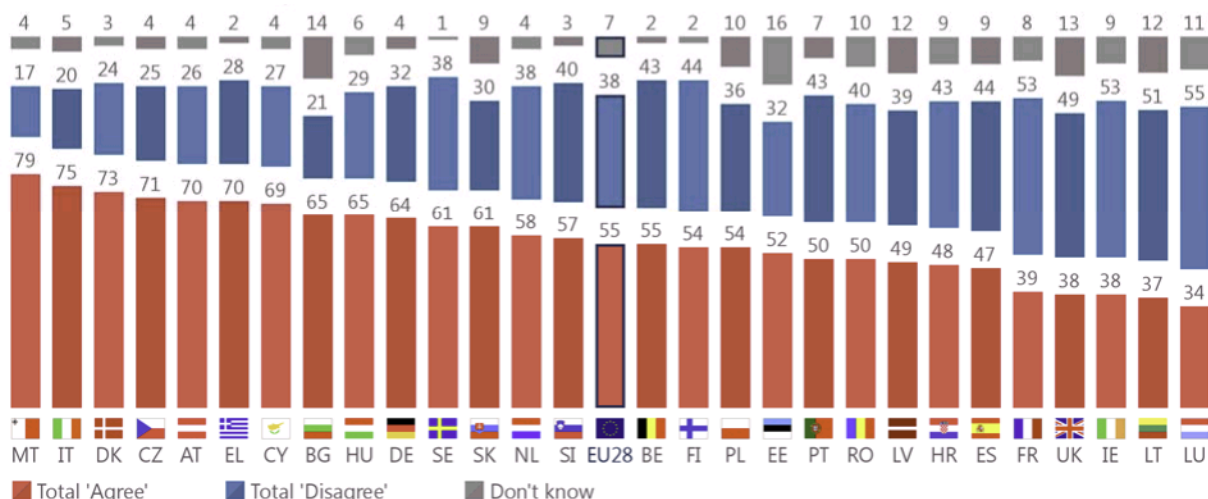
The mixture of increasingly diverse cultures in destination countries can lead to social tensions, sometimes followed by instances of violence and discrimination. This may be the result, among other things, of negative perceptions of migrants and their effect on the economy (real or otherwise). There may also be perceptions/misconceptions that migrants are more likely to engage in criminality.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> [Data: Terrorist Migration Over European Borders \(2014-2018\) \(cis.org\)](https://data.cis.org/)

<sup>39</sup> Szlachter, D., Kaczorowski, W., Muszynski, Z., Potejko, P., Chomentowski, P., & Borzol, T. (2012). Radicalization of religious minority groups and the terrorist threat - report from research on religious extremism among Islam believers living in Poland. *Internal Security*, 4(2), 79-100.

<sup>40</sup> Available at: [https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2169\\_88\\_2\\_469\\_ENG](https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2169_88_2_469_ENG) In 20 of the 28 Member States, at least half (50%) of respondents agree with the statement that immigrants worsen the crime problems in their country. In Portugal (50%) and Romania (50%) only half of respondents agree with this, compared with three quarters (75%) of those polled in Italy and nearly eight in ten (79%) respondents in Malta. Notably, Denmark, where attitudes to immigrants tend to be more positive on other questions, has a high proportion (73%) of respondents who think immigrants worsen the crime problems. Four countries stand out with high proportions of respondents who disagree with this statement: Luxembourg (55%), Ireland, France (both 53%) and Lithuania (51%), where more than half of the respondents do not think that immigrants worsen the crime problems in their country.



**Figure 6 –Replies to question:** There are different views regarding the impact of immigrants on society in our country. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? **Overall, immigrants worsen the crime problems in our country.**

Available at: [https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2169\\_88\\_2\\_469\\_ENG](https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2169_88_2_469_ENG)

Social tensions stemming from migration may be exacerbated if there are deficient measures to promote integration in the country of destination.

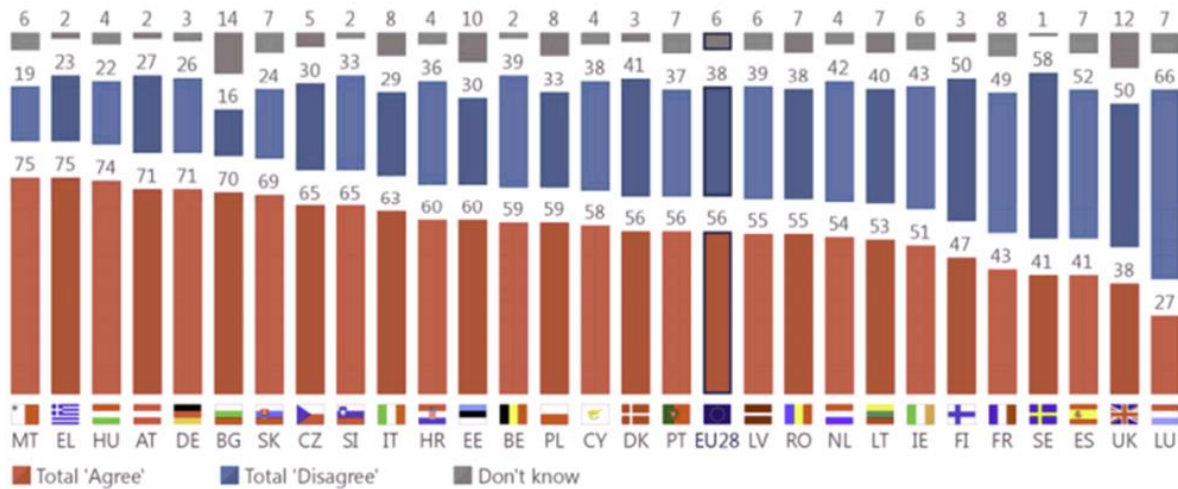
Social unrest can occur when the local population feels discriminated against, resulting in collective dissatisfaction and manifesting itself in unconventional and sometimes violent forms of behaviour which disrupt the established social order.

Equally, the poor management of migration in destination countries can be just as destructive. It can encourage migrant smuggling and human trafficking, as well as social unrest, xenophobia and discrimination, as observed during Europe's ongoing 'migration crisis'.

It has also been argued that migrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, are threats to the destination state's social security and welfare system. From this perspective, migration is seen as a problem rather than an opportunity.

Migrants are often portrayed as being so numerous and poor that they pose a strong economic threat to the state, creating housing shortages and straining education, transportation, sanitation and communication services.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Stivachtis, Y. 2008. "International Migration and the Politics of Identity and Security." *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2(1), pp.1-24.



**Figure 7 –Replies to question:** There are different views regarding the impact of immigrants on society in our country. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? **Overall, immigrants are a burden on our welfare system.**  
 Available at: [https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2169\\_88\\_2\\_469\\_ENG](https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2169_88_2_469_ENG)

While it is generally accepted that it is also possible for migrants to be agents of positive change, their integration can prove challenging and there has at times been friction with local populations. Arguably, more balanced dialogue in the public domain regarding migration might lead to a reduction in these tensions, even reducing the likelihood of such riots as those in several European countries over the last decade.

### Effects of Migration on the Welfare of Origin and Destination Countries

Welfare is defined as “the economic well-being of an individual, group or economy” and it loosely follows the definition of “social welfare” described, by Abraham Bergson and Paul Samuelson, in welfare economics.<sup>42</sup> This analysis overlooks temporary and circular migration which, while ensuring freedom of movement, allegedly maximizes the benefits for both origin and destination countries.

Migrants are conceptually clustered with respect to their talents and expertise into either ‘skilled’ or ‘unskilled’, and this note also considers their contribution to fiscal systems with respect to their age structure.

<sup>42</sup> Bergson, A. (1938); A Reformulation of Certain Aspects of Welfare Economics, Quarterly Journal of Economics, 52: pp. 310–334. Samuelson, P.A. (1947); Foundations of Economic Analysis, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

Most empirical studies present migration as a ladder towards benefits for destination countries depending on their integration into the domestic economy and to what extent their skills complement the native workforce's talents and expertise. Strictly in terms of fiscal impact, highly skilled migrants are portrayed as positively contributing to the welfare systems of host economies through taxation, while unskilled migrants tend to generate losses on the fiscal balance due to integration costs, with these two separate effects normally counterbalancing each other.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, also migrants' age structure plays a role: young migrants tend to have positive net fiscal positions, but they rapidly turns negative if considering their contributions in all their lifetime.

On a slightly different note, unskilled migrants usually obtain manual and routine occupations which, requiring physical and manual skills only, can lead to fierce competition with the local populations which, in turn, can specialize towards occupations requiring a higher set of skills.<sup>44</sup> Also, the lesser skilled migrants appear prone to entrapment in precarious low-income sections of the labour market, especially in the presence of an underground economy.

While the net effect of migration on welfare in destination countries appears to be highly dependent on countries specificities, origin countries conversely experience mixed effects which, depending on the impact on domestic productivity, can potentially determine dependence on external resources such as, for example, remittances from diaspora communities, and the brain drain phenomenon.

At large, a more nuanced understanding is required of when migration (or migrants) threaten state security. Very rarely do migrants pose a terrorist or direct security threat, or reverse economic growth, or exacerbate environmental change, even though such outcomes are often asserted. But migration – especially irregular migration and granting asylum – can divert public resources, damage public confidence in the government, provoke extreme responses and challenge the exercise of national sovereignty.

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<sup>43</sup> Rowthorn R. (2008); *The Fiscal Impact of Immigration on the Advanced Economies*, Oxford Review of Economic Policy, Volume 24, Number 3, pp.560–580

<sup>44</sup> Borjas G. J. (2003); *The Labor Demand Curve Is Downward Sloping: Reexamining The Impact Of Immigration On The Labor Market*, The Quarterly Journal of Economics 118 (4), pp. 1335—1374

## IV - STATE SECURITY VS. HUMAN SECURITY – A ZERO-SUM GAME?

As outlined in the second and the third chapter of this study, migration – especially irregular migration – can trigger concerns and dilemmas for states facing this phenomenon, while also exposing migrants themselves to insecurity, vulnerability and abuse. Therefore, even though it has been a constant feature in human history, irregular migration has increasingly emerged as both a national security and a human security issue.

Each of these two approaches entails different social overtones and policy implications. For example, addressing irregular migration from a national security perspective means that nation-states are operating on the basis of existing or prospective threats to their sovereignty, territory, population, institutions and/or values. This triggers the implementation of policies which tend to focus on surveillance, border control, anti-smuggling, the detention of irregular migrants and their expulsion, etc. Meanwhile, human security places the survival, rights and dignity of the migrants at the forefront. From this perspective, the policy imperative is to protect vulnerable migrants from human trafficking, to prevent loss of life (e.g. in the Mediterranean Sea) and to safeguard the rights of those who are fleeing persecution and violence.

In political discourse, academic research, advocacy and the media, the two approaches have often been framed as alternatives to one another. Managing migratory flows across the Mediterranean has seemingly raised the prospect of a zero-sum game between stability and humanity, between ‘stopping the boats’ versus ‘rescuing the migrants.’ While some commentators have praised efforts to reduce migrant arrivals on the shores of Europe, others have criticised them for undermining the rights of asylum-seekers in need of protection.

Against this polarised background, navigating the current approaches to managing migratory flows to Europe and assessing their longer-term implications is far from straightforward. What is clear, however, is that reconciling state and human security in the context of irregular migration has proved to be a difficult balancing act. As the Commission on Human Security (CHS) noted quite compellingly in 2003, “few societies protect human security with the force and effect of their responses to the many threats to state security.”<sup>45</sup>

In light of the above, this paper seeks to move the conversation beyond the ‘zero-sum game’ mentality, highlighting instead some of the strategic risks and opportunities that lie over the horizon. A critical starting point in this regard is acknowledging that in many parts

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<sup>45</sup> Commission on Human Security/UNOPS (United Nations Office for Project Services), (2003). *Human Security Now*.

of the world migration will continue to be fuelled by globalization, demographic shifts, economic disparities and climate change. This is in addition to forced displacement – within and across borders – which is caused by violent conflicts, political turmoil and humanitarian crises. In today’s (and tomorrow’s) deeply interconnected world, these driving forces will continue to shape human mobility, pushing people into regular or irregular movement using whatever channels are available to them.

The predictability of continued migration then raises the question of how best to manage the effects, including but not limited to those related to irregular migration. In the present global context there is no ‘silver bullet’ on how best to manage migration. Nonetheless, attention is drawn to the fact that migration tends to undermine state security in largely non-conventional ways, while the securitization of migration may create additional challenges across countries of origin, transit and destination. Furthermore, this paper emphasizes the need for policymakers to move beyond short-term interventions and to focus on long-term, sustainable approaches to managing migration.

Finally, changes such as those brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic can radically and very suddenly alter the landscape. The necessary responses to the pandemic have reshaped border management and human mobility, inadvertently providing the space to assess, inform and improve strategic approaches to managing international migration. This paper offers some preliminary lessons, observations and recommendations which are primarily intended to strengthen the knowledge base for policymaking on migration.

### **The Securitization of Migration – How It Came About and What It Entails**

Narratives in political discourse have played a significant role in driving the securitization of migration. As mentioned earlier in this paper, political discourse in Western countries has often connected migration to security-related problems, such as terrorism, transnational crime, domestic instability, domestic crime and riots in urban ghettos, as well as welfare fraud, or ‘freeloading’. People fleeing violence and persecution, or searching for economic opportunities, have increasingly been perceived as a threat to national security, social homogeneity, cultural traditions and socio-economic welfare.

However, as noted in the previous chapter, migration *per se* should not be considered a Trojan horse for terrorism and organised crime. Rather, to date, it has undermined state security in largely non-conventional ways, challenging the exercise of sovereignty, diminishing public confidence in the ability of states to secure national borders, overwhelming asylum-processing systems, brushing against closely held notions of national identity and stoking public anxiety in an era of economic uncertainty. Large increases in the immigrant share of the population are also thought to contribute to political instability in



destination countries.<sup>46</sup> Over time, demographic changes associated with immigrant arrivals can alter the existing political, social, ethnical and religious equilibria, exacerbating vulnerabilities in the system, creating new ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ (including in electoral contests), and potentially being seen as disruptive by other segments of the population.

Broadly speaking, the politicization and securitization of migration on the European continent has been accompanied by the implementation of policies and laws that have sought to restrict entry channels for regular and irregular migration, to deter irregular stay and work, and to enhance expulsions of irregular migrants. The enforcement of these policies has been accompanied by an increase in the deployment of immigration officers and frontier guards, the expansion of policing activities in the Mediterranean and the deepening of law enforcement cooperation between countries located north and south of the Mediterranean, as well as between European and African countries.

### **The Long-Term Impact on (In)Stability**

In the long(er) run, the securitization of migration may exacerbate challenges in countries of origin and transit in the wider South, potentially reinforcing some of the structural problems that drive migration in the first place. At the same time, in destination countries throughout Europe, the securitization of migration – and the inherent portrayal of migrants as a threat – could create long-term repercussions for social and political stability.

For starters, some of the risks lie in developing countries in the wider South where migration helps relieve the growing pressure and challenges stemming from demographic growth, extreme poverty, food crises, environmental stress, weak socio-economic infrastructure and poor governance. Many countries in West Africa, across the Sahel, through the Horn of Africa and the Middle East already experience a combination of these factors which contribute to instability.<sup>47</sup> As efforts are made to crack down on irregular migration towards Europe, broad swathes of already vulnerable communities may experience additional socio-economic hardship and shocks, raising the prospect of additional instability. Nowhere has the danger been more visible than in the Sahel. Niger is one of the often quoted examples on the mixed results of policies that crack down on irregular migration, without sufficiently increasing the resilience of the local communities which benefit from this phenomenon.

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<sup>46</sup> Gebremedhin, T.A. and Mavisakalyan, A. (2013), Immigration and Political Instability. *Kyklos*, Volume 66: pp. 317-341. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/kykl.12024>.

<sup>47</sup> (In)stability is customarily associated with political, social and institutional performance, especially in relation to the ways in which societies and their governing structures contend with internal and external pressures (e.g. conflict, resource scarcity, economic shocks, environmental degradation, climate change, population growth, terrorism and organized crime, maritime piracy etc). Instability, therefore, can take many forms: political systems that are not built on the consent of the population, lacking in legitimacy and representation; institutions that do not manage conflict and change peacefully; societies that are not guided by the rule of law and respect for human rights; communities where basic needs are not met, insecurity is rampant and socio-economic opportunities are only open to the privileged few.

Strategies based on the securitization of migration may have also had knock-on effects in Libya, empowering non-state armed actors and arguably diminishing the prospects for stability in the long run. As the LCG (Libyan Coast Guard) has increasingly intercepted or rescued migrants at sea, more migrants have been transferred back into the detention system and the rotation of migrant populations through multiple detention centres has become a prominent practice in the country. The detention centres have, therefore, become part of the political economy of conflict, enabling systemic extortion, human trafficking, enforced labour and even forced recruitment by militias.<sup>48</sup>

Developments elsewhere in North Africa also illustrate the trade-offs that may accompany the securitization of migration. As migratory flows were rerouted from Libya, neighbouring Algeria and Egypt witnessed increases in irregular departures to Europe, while Tunisia has had to cope with overcrowding in migrant centres. In Morocco, attempts by the authorities to clamp down on the trafficking networks triggered violence against the police and the migrants themselves.<sup>49</sup> In light of these dynamics, North African countries could face growing pressure on their land and maritime borders, state structures, labour markets and public services. This is a worrying prospect in a region already facing high levels of youth unemployment and socio-economic pressure.

Furthermore, looking ahead, there is also a risk that security forces in North Africa might find themselves overstretched, as they contend with cross-border terrorism, smuggling and returning foreign fighters, as well as rising numbers of irregular migrants whose movement has become criminalised. Last but not least, if human smugglers continue to fill the gap created by the lack of legal migratory routes to Europe, transit countries in this region could also risk the expansion of criminal networks, higher levels of corruption and growing lawlessness.

Meanwhile in Europe, the securitization of migration may well provide a welcome short-term solution to appease public and political pressure, but it has not eradicated the arrival and presence of irregular migrants, nor is it likely to do so in the future. However, the underlying portrayal of migrants as a threat may create long-term repercussions for social and political stability in Europe. As it penetrates different levels of society, this negative rhetoric can have a broader societal effect, fuelling and sustaining public intolerance, xenophobia and discrimination towards first- and second-generation immigrants already established in Europe. In certain European countries, the anti-immigration drive has already been linked to a significant increase in violence and hate crimes regarding migrants, refugees and minorities associated with migration.

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<sup>48</sup> Malakooti A., (2019), The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/default/files/migrant\\_detention\\_libya\\_-\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/default/files/migrant_detention_libya_-_final_report.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Bozonnet C. (2018), *Maroc : « La seule politique migratoire cohérente de l'Europe, c'est mettre la pression sur les pays de transit »*. Le Monde. Available at: [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/11/02/maroc-la-seule-politique-migratoire-coherente-de-l-europe-c-est-mettre-la-pression-sur-les-pays-de-transit\\_5377982\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/11/02/maroc-la-seule-politique-migratoire-coherente-de-l-europe-c-est-mettre-la-pression-sur-les-pays-de-transit_5377982_3212.html).

In the long run, such dynamics can affect the level of integration of migrant minorities, while those among them who feel subjected to stigmatization and discrimination may become more susceptible to radicalisation. Furthermore, if migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees from underdeveloped countries are increasingly portrayed as threats to be managed, their continued exclusion from the 'normal' fabric of society will serve to reinforce the divide between the relatively richer and poorer nations, between the global North and South.

Going forward, there is no doubt that concerns and anxieties about job security, public services, cultural identity, terrorism and other challenges facing Europe need to be acknowledged and addressed. Meanwhile, in the wider South, the troubled security dynamics may provide additional opportunities to rationalize the securitization of migration. However, when weighing different policy choices, decision-makers should assess the extent to which current policies serve the long-term interests of fostering stability, scrutinizing the trade-offs and taking steps to reduce the adverse effects.

### **Opportunities to enhance strategic approaches to migration management**

As previous chapters have outlined, much has changed since 2015, when irregular migratory flows to Europe spiked and crisis-response mechanisms were put into place. Now is the time to capitalise on lessons learned, to assess which policy interventions work best and to look over the horizon with a view to increasing resilience to other potential 'crises'. The securitization of migration has focused the attention of policymakers, mobilised resources and produced important data and lessons that can be used to inform the design and management of future interventions. In a discussion about opportunities to enhance strategic approaches to managing migration, several lessons and policy recommendations stand out:

- **Revisit commonly held assumptions on why people migrate:** Some of the interventions intended to stem irregular migration to Europe focus on creating greater employment opportunities and improving rural livelihoods in African countries of origin. These interventions target vulnerable communities in remote areas and displaced populations, especially the women and youth among these groups. However, the majority of those who migrate through irregular channels are young men, urban-based and better educated, who can fund the costly journey to Europe. This is often not just an individual decision, but rather a household strategy to increase income over the long-term through remittances. Analysis of the purchasing power of remittances measured against the migrants' earnings suggest that it could take as long as 40 years to attain a similar level of financial empowerment at home. The World Bank's Africa Migration Project has also confirmed the crucial role of remittances in promoting food security, health and education at the household level in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, many of those who attempt irregular migration to Europe are endeavouring to make a

transformative, generational leap in social mobility. And, in a departure from conventional wisdom, recent surveys show that greater awareness of the risks would not hold them back.

- **Incorporate critical insights on the securitization of migration:** A growing body of work points to some of the potential adverse consequences associated with the securitization of migration. There is a need to measure, document and mitigate more systematically such unintended effects, especially when they might affect the resilience of communities and state structures, the relationship between the governing and the governed, or the social cohesion between migrant and local communities.

As policymaking affects the lives, livelihoods and rights of migrant and local communities alike, the importance of engaging in evidence-based dialogue on migration cannot be overemphasized. This includes periodically re-evaluating the markers for success in relation to contentious policy issues, such as the disengagement from search and rescue in the Mediterranean, the role of civil society in migration management, the disembarkation of migrants in areas where lives and freedoms may be threatened, and the factors that hinder the establishment of coordinated international efforts to save lives at sea. This evidence-based dialogue should also include realistic analysis of labour market needs in countries of destination, including the extent to which underground labour markets may act as a pull factor for irregular migration.

- **Explore new ways of altering the socio-economic factors driving migration:** Efforts undertaken over the past few years illustrate the difficulty of addressing some of the most intractable societal challenges in countries of origin. There is little evidence to date that interventions aimed at increasing vocational skills in African countries of origin have translated into gainful employment in the local markets for the targeted beneficiaries. Therefore, the expected impact of such interventions on migration to Europe remains modest. Going forward, anchoring such efforts in national labour market strategies and ensuring coordination among a broader set of stakeholders (e.g. the private sector, national chambers of commerce, sub-national development agencies etc.) could help generate more employment opportunities. However, it is worth noting that even if such programmatic and policy responses become more effective with time, it is likely that the overall development gains on the African continent will be far more consequential in the long term, sustaining and potentially intensifying intra-regional mobility and international migration to Europe.
- **Support efforts to address the governance deficit:** Beyond the issue of economic opportunities, there are other prevailing realities in countries of origin that swell the ranks of the disenfranchised who seek to migrate, especially among the youth. Many are confronted with what looks like a lifetime of broken promises and unfulfilled

aspirations amid continued political oppression, social exclusion, mismanagement of public affairs and lack of basic services. According to the 2020 Arab Youth Survey, more than half of the young men and women in the Middle East show dismay at the level of government corruption and poor leadership, and are therefore considering emigration. While it is the responsibility of leaders in Africa and the Middle East to steer structural change in countries of origin, international partners can support such endeavours by channelling resources in ways that incentivize inclusive social and political arrangements.

- **Assess the sustainability of current policy approaches:** To date, activities aimed at improving migration management and promoting law enforcement cooperation have strengthened the apparatus of the state in countries of origin and transit. However, tighter border controls in these areas have not stopped criminal networks from engaging in human smuggling. Smuggling prices have skyrocketed, while migrants have become increasingly dependent on their smugglers for passage to Europe. In addition to the perpetuation of this exploitative system, tighter border controls have been associated with other pernicious effects: an increase in the prices and bribes paid to local authorities, the concentration of the smuggling business in the hands of criminal networks with cross-border reach, as well as incentivising such criminal networks to diversify and scale-up their capabilities. Therefore, in the long run, the impact of the current policy approaches on the fight against human smuggling and trafficking remains unclear. What is clearer though is that the lack of alternative legal channels and the hardening of borders has translated into a rising demand for smuggling services, which risks boosting criminal networks and increasing corruption levels.

Furthermore, it is worth keeping in mind that efforts to improve migration management are being undertaken in countries of origin and transit which often have weak institutional and fiscal capacities. Modest political will may also be a factor in these contexts, where migration is not customarily perceived as a priority concern. Collectively, these dynamics raise questions about the long-term sustainability of efforts geared towards improving migration management, especially in the absence of external resources.

- **Balance short-term responses to the impacts of irregular migration with long-term policy objectives on leveraging the benefits of regular migration:** As the previous chapters have outlined, it is irregular, unsafe and unregulated migration that poses the greatest challenges to state security and human security. Responding effectively to large scale movements of people does not only entail addressing the present-day drivers and consequences of irregular migration, but also anticipating and preparing for future challenges. Ageing populations, geopolitical instability and conflict, rising inequality and environmental changes will continue to set off migratory flows well

into the future. The combined impact of these drivers will largely depend on how countries of origin, transit and destination cooperate on preventive measures, legal pathways, and support for reception, processing, integration and returns.

## V - CONCLUSIONS

Forward-looking policies must be attuned to global realities and future scenarios, including those designed to envisage an increasing number of people migrating in the years and decades to come. To avoid or minimize destabilizing consequences in the future, policymakers from European and partner countries should seize opportunities to advance towards a comprehensive, long-term strategy on migration. Most notably, this means expanding the legal pathways for migration through bilateral, regional and multilateral arrangements. This includes regional mobility within Africa and the Middle East, but also towards Europe. Access to regular channels would discourage people from attempting irregular and dangerous paths of entry and residence, leading to fewer deaths and abuse at the hands of smugglers. With fewer people being pushed into irregular stay and entry, European states would also be confronted with fewer risks related to unregulated migratory pressure.

Many states recognize that cooperation on international migration is in their shared interest, in order to reap the benefits associated with this phenomenon as well as to manage the negative effects. The challenge that lies ahead is to leverage interdependence between the political, social and economic interests of the various national and sub-national constituencies, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Although it is important to remember that refugees and migrants have been amongst the most vulnerable during the COVID-19 outbreak, perhaps the pandemic has also presented us with an opportunity. Migration – including irregular migration - has temporarily reduced, while the media and public priorities are focused on health. In the context of what might be a cautious resurgence of multilateralism and solidarity, more forward-looking policies on migration may also have a chance.

Last but not least, it is worth re-emphasizing that the majority of migration is regular, not irregular, and regular migration on the whole promotes human security and benefits, or at least does not undermine, state security. Also, context matters: while the movement of a large number of migrants across a border in a short time period may stress national systems, managed migration need not. National responses to migration should be proportional to its potential challenges.

