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**International migrations in North Africa:
Political and geographical dimensions**
(Evolution of models, categories and destinations)

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Abstract:

This paper deals with the understanding of the multiplication of the migratory functions in the North African region: (areas of departures, of transit and of immigration) and of the forms of transitory migration witnessed by this area in its relations with neighbouring regional entities (Sahara, Sub-Saharan countries, and European countries on the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea). It also aims at analysing the contents of migrations affecting North African countries: origins, routes and destinations. These movements establish relations between the countries in the region, as well as with other sending or destination areas of the movements, in Africa, in the Middle-East, in Europe and in North America. Irregular and transit migrations that have developed in this region during the last ten years have deeply upset the ancient migratory systems in the area. European countries have successfully engaged with north-African countries in policies aiming at controlling movements and in the struggle against irregular migrations, whose purposiveness matches the aims of European migratory policies. North Africa is nowadays a 'Safe migratory area' between Africa and Europe.

Plan

Introduction

I. Geographical configuration, migratory systems and statistical dimension.

1. The geographical dimension of the region
2. Differing migratory systems
The similarities
The differences
3. Oil and conflicts are the driving forces of migration in North Africa and the Middle East
4. A short statistical overview
4.1 Data without homogeneity
4.2 The geographical repartition of emigrants

II. The evolution of the afro-Mediterranean regional migratory context: a view from Central Maghreb

1. The colonial system is the origin of the workforce migration in the Maghreb
2. The slippage of the migratory centre of gravity towards southern Europe
3. Political tensions, economic transition and migratory transition
3.1 Morocco and Tunisia: readjustment and transitory migration
3.2 Algeria and Libya: civil war and embargo
4. Sub-Saharan Africa: economic and forced migrations
5. The Sahara is at the centre of the renewal of migratory geography in North Africa
6. Geography of the ports and migratory geography

III. Egypt: a recent migration with temporary dominant features

1. A recent migration concentrated around the Gulf and Libya
2. A migration classed in two main categories: temporary emigration and permanent emigration
3. Immigration in Egypt
4. Refugees and asylum-seekers
Palestinian refugees
Sudanese refugees
Somali refugees
Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees

IV. Libya: one of the largest immigration countries in the region and possibly in the Mediterranean area.

1. Incomplete or unreliable statistics
2. Populations and geographical distribution
3. Sectors of activity for foreign manpower

V. The ‘Imbroglia’ of migrations between Europe and the Maghreb: migratory policies and international relations in the region.

1. North Africa: ‘A safe migratory area’ for Europe
2. Police cooperation and migratory controls
3. The ‘voluntarism’ of the European Union
4. The involvement of the Maghreb countries: the Moroccan and Libyan examples
5. Morocco is well engaged in the ‘struggle against irregular migrations’
6. A continued participation of the inhabitants of North African countries.

Conclusion

Introduction

As we moved from one century to another (20thC to 21st C), we witnessed an undisputable transitory migration¹ in North Africa and in the Maghreb in particular. Originally, and still, a departure region for the movements, North Africa has also become a migratory crossroad where movements of migrants mingle from the various neighbouring entities of this region (Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle-East) and possibly from further afield².

It is also quite indisputable that the Maghreb region has been pushed to the front of the international migratory 'stage' since the controls of irregular migrations and the repression of so-called 'clandestine' migrants and traffickers have become a recurrent dossier in the relations between the European Union and the countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea in general.

This transitory migrations is the manifestation of a whole set of deep changes in the countries and the societies of departure. Such changes have affected the emigration 'worlds' in these countries and societies. The migration modes have evolved; the categories and the profiles of migrants have multiplied and are more diversified. New locations and new routes are mobilised by the migrants and the agents involved in the mobility linked with migration. New territories are re-invented. Spaces and migration fields are better articulated and the migratory geography becomes more complex.

I. Geographical configuration, migratory systems and statistical dimension.

1. The geographical dimension of the region

North Africa (NA), as studied here, is made up of five countries with very different and sometimes in sharp contrast demographic, geographic and regional dimensions: Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

As regards regional organisations, 4 of these 5 countries (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) are members of the UMA (Union du Maghreb Arabe), a regional grouping of states since 1994. The fifth member of UMA, Mauritania, is classed by international powers, The UN in particular, as a country from the 'West African' region. On the other hand, Egypt is classed, according to the same logic, as a 'North African' region, even though it does not belong to UMA, and even if it 'looks' rather towards the Gulf and Africa, or towards the USA, and much less towards the Maghreb and Europe.

But geography is not the only differentiating factor between these countries. All the countries in that region claim very strong African dimensions and 'depths'.

The national territories of the 5 countries cover vast areas of the Sahara and so are also very 'Saharan' countries. Further south, the 4 'Sahelian' countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Mali, Niger, Chad and Sudan), sharing borders with North African countries, also cover vast areas of the Sahara.

While the Sahara is a physical separation between North Africa and Sahelian Africa, it also helps in uniting them.

¹ In the present instance, the term 'transitory migration' describes the shift from one model in which departure movements are dominated by labour migrations of men often alone, later extended by the migrations of their families, towards a model in which countries and regions of departure become a crossroad where modes of migratory circulation multiply: departure movements as ever, but also transit movements and immigration movements. Such transition also manifests itself in the multiplication of migrants' categories, their profiles, as well as the modes of departure or of border crossing.

² Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan nationals are often found among clandestine migrants intercepted (or found drowned) at sea or close to the coasts of North-Africa or even Senegal.

Besides, the demographic size of each country in the region, the annuitant nature of the oil-based economies of two of the countries in the region (Algeria and Libya); the advances achieved by the economic reforms in the other three (Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia), are as many elements to take into account to make the distinction or to compare migrations in each of these countries relative to the others.

2. Differing migratory systems

While geography makes the distinction between these five countries, they are also distinct thanks to very different models or migratory systems.

The migratory system in central Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia)

The migratory system in Libya

The migratory system in Egypt

While several aspects distinguish and differentiate these systems, others unite them.

The similarities

- The main character of certain destinations: Europe for Maghrebeans, and the oil-rich countries (The Gulf and Libya) for Egyptians.
- The geographical and migratory ‘centrism’ of Libya as an important immigration country from the other North African countries, as from other areas of the world (South and East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa).
- The diffusion of transitory migration movements over the whole of the countries in the region with some differences according to their geographic situation: while Egypt is little affected by this type of movements, three other countries are nowadays on the front-line (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). Libya’s role as an immigration country now doubles up as a transit role.
- Egypt is mainly the destination of asylum-seekers and of statutory refugees from the main poles of tensions and conflicts south of its borders: South Sudan, Darfur, Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia...
- Two countries act as major axis for the passage of irregular migrants: Tunisia and Morocco. The reason is obvious: their proximity to Europe. Two straights separate these counties from Europe: the Gibraltar Straight between Morocco and Spain and the Sicilian Straight between Tunisia and Italy. Malta and other islands remote from their mainland (Canary Islands, Lespedeza) have become, by default, arrival zones for tens of thousands of irregular migrants from Tunisia or from Libya (Lespedeza and Malta) or from morocco, Mauritania and more recently from Senegal and the Gambia.

However, there are many more differences between these systems than there are common points.

The differences:

- The historical colonial dimension of Maghrebeans emigration
- The vast nature of the Maghrebeans and Egyptian emigration, on the one hand, and of the foreign immigration into Libya, on the other hand.
- The role of the oil-revenue economies in foreign immigration into Libya, on the one hand, and into the countries of the Gulf and Iraq (until 1990), on the other hand.
- The vast nature of the departure of nationals from sending countries in the region (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt), varies from one country to another according to the destination:

Western Europe is an area of mass arrivals for Maghrebeans (Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians), while Egyptians, and still less Libyans, are far less numerous in Europe. For their part, the oil-producing countries in the Gulf and Libya are a major destination for Egyptians (in their hundreds of thousands of migrants in the four main receiving countries: Saudi Arabia, Libya, Jordan and Kuwait). While Libya never was the main destination for Maghrebeans, it has lost a lot of its migratory importance as a major destination country for these groups since the mid-eighties (economic difficulties and tensions with the western world, followed by the embargo between 1992 and 2000). Supplanted by Italy, Libya no longer was the second migratory destination for Tunisians from the nineties. Since that time, fewer Moroccans also went to Libya. During the civil war of the nineties, many Algerians have migrated to Libya, but they are far less numerous since the easing of tensions. Maghrebean immigration into Libya is therefore relatively moderate.

3. Oil and conflicts are the driving forces of migration in North Africa and the Middle East

The conflict between Arabs and Israel that has lasted since the thirties, then the civil war in Lebanon, and finally the succession of crises and wars in the Gulf since the eighties, have caused the forced exodus of Palestinian, then of Lebanese and Iraqi populations. Around five million Palestinians are refugees. Four million Iraqis are refugees today, or displaced in their own country or in neighbouring countries. A large number of Iraqis have left Iraq in the last thirty years and have settled in Europe and mostly in the United States, in Canada and in Australia.

The North African countries have in turn been affected, directly or indirectly, by these crises in the Middle-East. Egypt has often found itself confronted with the consequences of these conflicts: Palestinian refugees, Lebanese, and Iraqi. The first crisis, then war, in the Gulf in 1990-91 has led hundreds of thousands of Egyptian migrants to leave Iraq and Kuwait. Behind Saudi Arabia, Kuwait remains the second country of immigration for Egyptians, even though their numbers have dropped since that date. Yet, Iraq occupied the second place until 1990, with hundreds of Egyptian emigrants.

As for Libya, the Egyptian migration towards that country has also been a major stake in the relations between the two countries. Egyptian emigration towards that country was at its golden era during the seventies when the Libyan régime, in its attempts to unite with Egypt and Sudan, was calling for the 'Arab masses' to come and settle to exploit the land in 'their country', Libya. Egyptian fellahs (peasants) were particularly targeted by such calls. However, the Egyptian-American rapprochement and peace with Israel has put an end to the honeymoon between the two states. Tensions and even armed confrontations between the two régimes led to the expulsion of a large number of Egyptian workers. During the eighties, tensions with the western world, followed by the embargo imposed on the country (from 1992 to 2000), strictly applied by the Arab states bordering Libya (Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria) had the consequence of widening the gap between Libya and its Arab neighbours. Emigrant nationals from Arab countries were regularly facing expulsion, discrimination or bad treatment from the Libyan security forces. However, the need for manpower, relations established in the country and the networks maintained with the local society by such migrant groups allowed them to remain and sometimes even to escape expulsion or controls. This explains how, in

spite of everything, Libya remain the second country of immigration for Egyptians (332 600 migrants), after Saudi Arabia, but ahead of the United States.

4. A short statistical overview

4.1 Data without homogeneity

The figures put forward by the countries of departure are often quite different from the figures put forward by the destination countries. The gaps vary from 30% to 150%. If one considers the case of Egypt as a departure country, Egyptians residing abroad and registered by the Egyptian diplomatic authorities account for nearly 250% of the figure put forward by the destination countries. While CAPMAS estimated the number of Egyptians residing in Italy at 90 000, Italian sources limit the number to 35 000. The gap for Tunisians is 190%, that for Moroccans is 170%, and that for Algerians is 130% (CARIM, 2006. p. 7).

Similar types of gaps exist between the countries in the region. While Moroccan sources put forward a figure of 25 637 residing in Tunisia in 2004, the general census of the Tunisian population for that year only accounts for a quarter of the Moroccan figure, i.e. 6363 Moroccan immigrants. The Tunisian census only accounts for 9612 Algerians, against 30 000 according to Algerian sources. On the Algerian side, similar discrepancies can be observed: 18661 Moroccans (according to Algerian sources) against 79 800 according to Morocco, i.e. a gap of 1 to 4. According to Algerian sources, there are only 8389 Tunisian persons, against 13 544 according to Tunisia.

4.2 The geographical repartition of emigrants

7.7 million North African nationals are emigrants in the countries of that region or in the rest of the world.

Europe gives shelter to 4.6 million North African migrants, i.e. 60% of North African migrants worldwide.

Arab countries follow closely (sending and receiving countries) with 2.4 million migrants originating from the region, i.e. 30.8% of the total. Thus, North African immigration in Europe represents twice the numbers for Arab countries.

644 000 North African migrants live in America, mostly North America (United States and Canada), i.e. 8.3% of the total. Egyptians account for two-thirds of such immigration, against 27.8% for Moroccans. The United states are the first country of immigration for Egyptians outside Arab countries (see table in annex), way ahead of the European countries.

The 2.6 million Moroccans in Europe form the largest North African community on the continent and account for more than half of the migrants (56.4%). They are followed by Algerians (21.4%) then Tunisians (15.1%). With 32 600 persons, Egyptians represent only 7%.

The proportions are reversed in Arab countries. Egyptians are the most numerous: 1.9 million, i.e. 80.3% of North African immigration in that zone. Moroccans represent barely 12%, while Tunisians do not exceed 5%.

According to the data put forward by the destination countries, Maghrebeans migrate mostly towards Western and Southern Europe. The European countries accommodate more than 90% of the Algerians, and between 80 and 83% of the Moroccan and Tunisians. Around 3.5 million North Africans reside in the EU: over 2 million Moroccans, between 800 000 and 1 million Algerians, 500 000 Tunisians and 10 000 Egyptians.

Europe only accommodates 15% of Egyptians, while 70% have settled in other Arab countries, in particular, countries with oil-based economies (mostly the Gulf and Libya) (CARIM, 2005. Pa. 10).

If one shifts the perspective from the countries of origin, and according to the data put forward by the latter, Morocco comes first in the region with more than 3 million registered abroad, followed by Egypt with 2.75 million.

Algeria and Tunisia each account for about 1 million nationals living abroad: 1.2 million for Algeria and barely 1 million for Tunisia.

The numbers of Moroccans living abroad have doubled between 1993 (1.5 million) and 2004 (over 3 million). The growth of the Moroccan population living abroad increased only by 1.3% in the same period. France recorded the highest rate of growth: + 434 000 Moroccans in 11 years; followed by Spain (+ 358 000) and Italy (+ 207 000). The volume of annual growth has not stopped increasing (+ 92 000 per annum over the 1993 to 1997 period, and + 250 000 per annum in 2002-2004).

In relation to the total population residing in each of these countries, Morocco and Tunisia record the highest rate of migrants abroad: 10% in each of the two countries; respectively 3.2 million migrants for 32 million inhabitants in Morocco, and 1 million migrants for 10 million inhabitants in Tunisia. The 2.7 million Egyptian migrants would only represent 3.8% of the population of 70 million in Egypt. The rate for Algerians is lower still: the million of Algerian migrants represent only 3% of the 33 million people living in Algeria.

Main destination countries for nationals of various North African countries

Egyptians			Moroccans			Algerians			Tunisians		
Destination countries	Number	%	Destination countries	Number	%	Destination countries	Number	%	Destination countries	Number	%
Saudi Arabia	9236	33,7	France	1113	36,0	France	9322	86,9	France	4930	58,5
Libya	3326	12,2	Spain	176	13,7	Tunisia	75	2,8	Italy	28	12,0
United States	3180	11,6	Low Countries	4239	9,7	Morocco	3000	2,3	Libya	42	7,1
Jordan	2268	8,3	Italy	303	9,7	Belgium	2500	1,7	Germany	6002	6,4
Kuwait	50	7,0	Belgium	2989	9,5	United Kingdom	1816	1,4	Saudi Arabia	5392	2,3
Canada	1905	4,0	Libya	49	3,9	Canada	1500	0,9	Belgium	1921	2,0
United Arab Emirates	1100	3,5	Germany	97	3,3	German y	1008	0,8	Algeria	1708	1,6
Italy	9500	3,3	United States	1020	3,2	Spain	9018	0,5	United Arab Emirates	1355	1,0
Australia	9000	2,6	Algeria	1000	2,6	Italy	5753	0,5	Other European countries	8115	0,9
Iraq	7000	2,4	Canada	7979	2,5	Libya	5753	0,5	Low Countries	7756	0,8
Greece	6562	2,2	United Kingdom	7771	1,1	United States	4988	0,4	Switzerland	7058	0,8
	6000			3500			3853			6909	
Total	2736	100	Total	3089	100	Total	1072	100	Total	8432	100
	729			090			246			04	
Source: CAPMAS, Cairo. 2000/2001			Source: MAE. Rabat. 2004			Source: CES. Alger. 1997			Source: MAE. Tunis. 2003		

II. The evolution of the afro-Mediterranean regional migratory context: a view from Central Maghreb

1. The colonial system is the origin of the workforce migration in the Maghreb

A brief historical perspective will help us to re-locate the migrations in the region in a historic context.

Indeed the emigration of the Maghrebeans workforce is a pure product of the French colonial system.

The first migratory movements towards the mainland were noted as early as the turn of the century (Simon, G. 195). Enterprises in the Marseilles area and the construction of the Paris Underground appear to have been among the first to recruit workmen from Kabily, the

Algerian region that contributed most to the migratory movement towards France. In 1913, the Moroccan Sous area sent its first workers to France.

However, the First World War contributed to a wide diffusion of the migratory phenomenon in the Maghreb. 120 000 'colonial workers'³ were recruited, sometimes forcibly, to replace mainland manpower mobilised at the front. 150 000 soldiers were mobilised for front-line duties. After the Second World War, the need for manpower exploded. Hundreds of thousands of North African migrants, as well as Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and many more were recruited *en masse* by enterprises and reconstruction sites. The thirty glorious years from 1945 to 1975 were a period of economic boom and accelerated growth in all of Europe, and were the golden age of the emigration of workers in Europe.

In 1962, half a million Algerians were working in France. The successive independences of the Maghreb countries caused the departure *en masse* of the settlers, the Jews, and the ancillary personnel of the French army, as well as the intensification of the departures of the local populations towards the former mainland. Other Western Europe countries (Germany, Belgium, the Low Countries...) also recruited widely among the migrant manpower, North African in this instance. Bilateral manpower conventions were signed in the 60s between the countries of departure and the countries of destination.

At the end of more than half a century of migratory movements between the two shores of the Mediterranean, the Maghrebean migratory system was finally 'formatted' as we know it today: linked organically to France first, and to Western Europe next.

For instance, France remains virtually exclusively the country of immigration for Algerians across Europe (932 275 reside in that country out of 991 796 settled on the continent) and even across the world (932275 in France out of a total of 1 072 246 Algerians living abroad).

The first signs of the shift from a temporary and rotating migration of workforce towards a stabilising migration, therefore durable and permanent, were, from the beginning of the 70s, the slowing down of the rotation of the workforce, the lengthening of the duration of sojourn and the arrival of families (Simon, G. 1995, p. 341).

Even if nowadays, Spain and Italy are emerging as the new poles for North African migrations in Europe, they are so by default, in a way: it is because France, Germany and the Benelux have put a formal end to immigration in 1974, and then formed the first cluster of member countries of the Schengen space in 1986, that most North African migrants shifted their outlook towards these new immigration countries. Older immigration countries (France, Belgium, Germany and the Low Countries) still accommodate today the most numerous Maghrebean communities in Europe.

2. The slippage of the migratory centre of gravity towards southern Europe

Spain and Italy, in particular, were migration transitory countries towards the traditional immigration countries in Europe until the mid-80s (and remain partly so today). Following the application of the visa system in 1986, migrants re-deployed *en masse* towards the work places of Spain and Italy. As other migrants from the Third World, the first Maghrebean migrants took advantage of the opportunities afforded by non-declared work ('black work') in both countries. In 1990, nearly 100 000 Moroccan workers were employed in non-declared sectors and services of the industrial regions of Barcelona and Madrid. The immersed sectors of the Italian economy in industrial regions and districts (Lombardy, Piedmont, Venetia, Liguria, Pouilles, Rome area...) were employing a large immigrant workforce. Tunisian and Moroccan workers and employees, as many other migrants from the Third World committed

³ 78000 Algériens, 35000 Marocains et 18000 Tunisiens (Simon, G. 1995, p. 338)

themselves en masse in the service industry (hostelry, catering, urban services, independent trading...), and also to agriculture (arboriculture, greenhouse growing, fisheries...).

Italy and Spain are now some of the main poles for North African immigration in Europe. The former accounts for 500 000 migrants and occupies the second place in Europe after France, while the latter accounts for 450 000 migrants and takes third place.

For Moroccans, Spain has become the second immigration country after France, while Italy takes third place. Both countries have thus supplanted two other major immigration countries for Moroccans (Belgium and the Low countries) that occupied the second and third places until the end of the 90s. Ditto for Italy that has become the second immigration country for Tunisians after France and that has thus supplanted Libya, now in third place.

According to Egyptian sources, Italy is also a destination of choice in Europe for Egyptians, besides Greece.

The mid-80s is also the beginning of a period of brittleness, instability and deep mutations (demographic, social and economic) for countries of the Maghreb, which caused, among other things, the reinforcing of the regular and irregular migratory movements towards Europe mostly.

3. Political tensions, economic transition and migratory transition

3.1 Morocco and Tunisia: readjustment and transitory migration

Committed since the mid-70s to policies of liberalisation and economic reforms, quite timid at first, Tunisia and Morocco were confronted in the mid-80s to grave financial and economic crises that ended with shock therapy in the form of the application of structural adjustment plans (PAS) under the Aegis of the IMF and the World Bank. The effects of the PAS are now well-known: reduction of public employment capacity in the States facing public deficits and the demands for rigorous economic policies, deregulation of the work market and loss of salaried work security, dismissals and unemployment linked to privatisation...etc.

Other factors combined to explain the persistence, the reinforcing even, of the propensity to emigration from the Maghreb:

- The reinforcing of the active age tranches and the arrival on the work markets of the demographic boom cohorts of the 60s, 70s and 80s.
- The rise in the rate of scholasticity in the 6-16 age tranches, as well as the extension of schooling beyond that age in increasing numbers of young people and girls, in particular, contribute to the increase in the numbers of graduates and young people in further education.
- The persistence of high unemployment rates afflicting 15 to 53 year-olds in particular, among whom the rate reaches levels of 30 to 50%.
- The difficulties for the Maghrebean economies to generate sufficient growth rates that would allow the national work markets to absorb the cumulative and additional demand for employment.

3.2 Algeria and Libya: civil war and embargo

For their part, Algeria and Libya have been through a context of high tension, internal in the case of Algeria, and rather international in the case of Libya, during the 15 years from the mid-80s to the end of last century.

As early as the beginning of the 80s, the drop in oil prices has badly shaken the oil-based economies of these two countries, and had the knock-on effect of destabilising these states dependent on their clientele for their revenue. In Algeria, the social crisis grew worse to reach the uprising of 1988 and multi-party politics that opened the way the rise of radical Islamism and to the pre-eminence of the FIS on the Algerian political scene between 1989 and 1992.

Similar economic difficulties led the Libyan state to harden its migration management on its territory (mass expulsions of Tunisian workers in 1985, and African in 1986), while the relations between the régime and its international environment were steadily growing more tense and deteriorating (tensions with Tunisia and with European countries, indirect confrontation with France in Chad over the Aozou Strip claimed by Libya, American bombings of Tripoli and Benghazi in 1986, atrocities in Berlin, in Lockerbie and in Niger attributed to the Libyan secret service...).

He signing of the Marrakech Treaty in 1988 to create the Union of the Arab Maghreb (UMA) only momentarily eased tensions in the Maghreb region.

Morocco and Tunisia have since then enjoyed a peaceful political context and sustained economic growth during the 90s, even if some structural weaknesses persisted in their economies and work markets. Both countries signed association agreements with the EU as early as the mid-90s.

However, the context has been much harder for the other two countries. From 1992 and for 7 to 8 years, Algeria had plunged into civil war, while during the same period, Libya was subjected to international sanctions and an embargo. Between 1992 and 2000, that country went through a difficult social and economic situation, made worse by the low oil prices:

- Strong erosion of the value of Libyan currency while foreign currencies soared on the parallel market
- Inflation, deterioration of the economic situation and drop in income for the Libyan population because of the increasing difficulty for the régime to fulfil its 're-distributing' function and to keep control of a subservient society
- Migratory pressures from Sub-Saharan countries linked to the new orientation of the Libyan international policies, which, at that time, sought to compensate its isolation *vis à vis* the western world by means of alliances and overtures towards Sub-Saharan Africa in particular. For many years the Libyan authorities openly encouraged immigration into the country and the free movement of nationals from that part of Africa. The setting up of the regional organisation 'CENSAD' (Regroupement des pays du Sahara et du Sahel), and then of the African Union (replacing OUA) is the result of the enterprising pan-African dynamism of Libya.

4. Sub-Saharan Africa: economic and forced migrations

The economic liberalisation and the application of rigorous economic plans in most of the debt-ridden African countries during the 80s and the 90s (liberalisation of prices and investments, privatisation, devaluation of national and regional currencies such as the CFA Franc, tariffs dismantling) under the control of international financial institutions (world Bank, IMF, World Trade Organisation) have clearly rendered more fragile the social policies in these countries and the resources devoted to them.

States found themselves less and less able to assume their former economic and social role (public employment, subsidies for first necessity products, social services such as health, education or social defence...)

It is in this context that, during the 90s, ethnic conflicts, civil wars and humanitarian crises in Africa became exacerbated. Nationals of sub-Saharan African countries fled such zones of major risks and instability as Sudan, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Great lakes area, Ivory Coast, Nigeria... The on-going conflict in Darfur, as well as the regional crises that are linked to it directly or indirectly (South-east Chad, eastern areas of the Central African Republic...) still feed the flow of departures towards prosperous countries like Libya, Algeria, and even Morocco and Tunisia, albeit in less important numbers than towards refugee camps. While part of the displacements are for economic reasons, it is indisputable

that a number of those migrants are refugees fleeing the risks and dangers and who are therefore in need of protection.

5. The Sahara is at the centre of the renewal of migratory geography in North Africa

The shift of the migratory centre of gravity around the region has not only affected Mediterranean Europe (Spain and Italy), but also North-African countries and mostly their Saharan outlands. The renewal of Saharan geography has opened the way for the renewal of the migratory geography in the region and on its southern margins.

Effectively, this immense desert area is no longer the empty zone it once was since the decline of the caravan trade in the modern era and during the colonial era, but in the last two or three decades, it has become a zone of intense traffic of persons and goods between North Africa and Sahelian Africa.

Three major factors explain the ‘rehabilitation’ of the Sahara as a land of articulation and of links between these two geographical sets in Africa:

- The human and historic links that have been maintained or reinforced between the populations and ethnic groups united for centuries (Arabs, Tuareg, Toubous...) on territories and lands that stretched over the Sahara and over its northern and southern peripheries.
- The integration and the economic regional development enjoyed by the Saharan zones of the North-African countries. Agriculture, road infrastructure and towns were the main beneficiary sectors of this regional development. A dense network between staging locations, relay-towns and regional and national metropolis eventually opened the entire Sahara and its peripheries. In the North, large towns (Layoune, Tamanrasset, Sabha and Khofra) are among the most dynamic Saharan metropolis. In the South, towns and road traffic relays have developed thanks to the development of the tertiary economy, itself a beneficiary of the intensification of the movements of persons and goods between the two zones (shepherds, traders, transport professionals, carriers, migrants and refugees...). Anonymous and hidden for centuries, the Nigerian town of Agadez has now become a major crossroad in the movements of migrants and the associated exchange and transaction flows that have become the main supports of this new Saharan dynamic.
- Migratory flows have contributed enormously to the development of social and economic networks around the movements of persons and material exchanges that, nowadays, extend from various sub-Saharan areas (western, central and eastern) to the Mediterranean shores of North Africa.

6. Geography of the ports and migratory geography

Trans-Saharan migrations have not just re-drawn the geography of the Sahara outlands of the Maghreb; they have also re-aligned the functions of the North-African ports and shores.

Since the start of the mass irregular migrations from the Maghreb towards Europe at the end of the 80s-beginning of the 90s, ports and mostly fishing ports on the shores of Morocco, Tunisia and more recently, Libya since 2000-2002, have witnessed a shift in their main function (fishing, transit and international trade) towards a new function of departure point and organisation for irregular migrations through illegal crossing of the maritime borders of the countries of departure and those of arrival (Italy, Spain, Malta).

The small and large trading or fishing ports, on entire sections of the Moroccan coastline on one side, and of the Tunisian coastline on the other side, have been used as departure points for irregular migrants towards the Spanish coast (from Malaga to Cadiz), and towards the Italian islands of Sicily, Lampedusa mostly, Linosa and Patellaria, or towards Malta from Tunisia and Libya.

T. Bourguiba (2002) had already described the geography of irregular migrations from the small Tunisian fishing ports spread on the eastern and northern coasts.

III. Egypt: a recent migration with temporary dominant features

In relation to the size of its population (70 million inhabitants), Egypt is a small migratory pole: barely 3 million Egyptian emigrants, i.e. 4.3% of the total population. The numbers of foreigners in the country also remains variable.

1. A recent migration concentrated around the Gulf and Libya

The evolution of international emigration from Egypt has seen several phases.

Historically, Egypt has been a land of immigration rather than emigration. The country only started to send its migrants abroad at the beginning of the 20th century.

Indeed, it is only following the wars of 1967 and 1973 against Israel and the economic liberalisation of the 70s that the country has opened its doors to departures, mostly in response to the enormous needs for manpower of the oil-based economies of the middle-East and Libya, subsequent to the rise in oil prices from 1973.

Thus, the numbers of emigrants went from 70 000 persons in 1970 to 1.4 million in 1976 (CAPMAS, 1976; in Zohry & Harrell-Bond, 2003).

The results of the 1996 census showed that Egyptian migrants abroad numbered 2.8 million.

According to the latest figures available for 2001, Libya accommodates 333 000 Egyptians, i.e. 17.4% of the temporary Egyptian emigration towards Arab countries. The first Arab receiving country is Saudi Arabia (with 924 000 Egyptians, i.e. 48.3%) (CAPMAS, 2001, in Zohry & Harrell-Bond, 2003). Jordan is in third place (227 000 migrants, i.e. 12%)⁴, followed by Kuwait (190 000, i.e. 10%), the United Arab Emirates (95 000, i.e. 5%)... Iraq is now only in sixth place (66 000 migrants) after being the second largest importer of Egyptian manpower in the region, after Saudi Arabia, during the 70s and 80s.

2. A migration classed in two main categories: temporary emigration and permanent emigration

Temporary emigration is manpower (skilled or otherwise) contractually recruited in the oil-producing countries of the Gulf and Libya. This is a rotating migration because the average duration of sojourn varies from 5 to 10 years. The countries of the Gulf rarely allow sojourns to exceed 10 years.

Permanent emigration comprises the Egyptian communities mostly settled in western countries (North America and European countries).

In the last few decades, the temporary Egyptian emigration towards the Arab countries of the region has far exceeded permanent emigration towards North America and European countries. This led some researchers to talk about '*the permanency of temporary emigration*' (Farrag, 1999).

Permanent emigration

According to CAPMAS estimations, there would be around 850 000 Egyptian migrants largely concentrated in North America and European countries. The United States are the first receiving country for Egyptians (320 000), followed by Canada (110 000), Italy (90 000),

⁴ In respect of Jordan, the most recent figure (194 census), indicated the number of Egyptian migrants in Jordan at that date at 125 000 persons. In 2005, 82.3% of the 110 580 foreign workers in Jordan were Egyptian. However, certain sources estimated the number of foreign workers (legal and illegal) in Jordan at between 300 000 and 400 000 persons. (Olwan, Md. Y. In FARGUES, Ph. Migrations méditerranéennes. Rapport 2005. Florence. 2006. 405p)

Australia (70 000) and Greece (60 000). The remaining 20% are shared between the main European countries (CAPMAS, 2001, in Zohry & Harrell-Bond, 2003).

3. Immigration into Egypt

From Biblical times, Egypt has received foreign individuals, groups or communities. In the 20th century, Russians, Armenians, Balkans, Africans...have emigrated or have sought shelter in Egypt.

According to the last census in 1996, 115 589 foreigners were residents in Egypt. These emigrants originated from the following countries and continents:

Africa: 19 605 nationals from 51 African countries representing 17% of the total immigration, including 11 004 Sudanese (56.1%). There are few nationals from other countries in North-Africa (2 128 Libyans, 394 Algerians, 382 Moroccans and 359 Tunisians).

Asia: 55 386 nationals from 47 countries, i.e. 48% of the total. Palestinians are the largest foreign group (28 648 nationals, i.e.51.7% of the total. The other main nationalities account for 1 000 to 3 000 each (Syrians: 3 811; Saudis: 3 294; Yemenites: 2 782; Jordanians: 2 454; Malays: 1 772; Lebanese: 1 679; etc...). A large proportion of these immigrants is made up of young students at the Theological University of El Azhar.

Europe: 28 428 nationals from 45 different countries (24.6%), including: Germans: 7 024; Russians: 6 748; Italians: 3 375; French: 2 239; British: 2 211; Swiss: 1 287.

Americas: 5 732 nationals from 22 countries (4.9%), including 4 840 Americans, i.e. 84.4% of the total.

The nationalities of a further 5 840 immigrants have not been ascertained (5%).

4. Refugees and asylum-seekers

Situated at the crossroad of areas of armed conflicts, of ethnic tension and instability, Egypt has become a major receiving country for refugees.

Palestinian refugees

Among the thirty or so known nationalities of refugees in Egypt, Palestinians are in first place. Estimations of their numbers vary very widely from 54 000 according to the Palestine embassy in Cairo to 100 000 according to some Egyptian medias. Other sources estimate the number of Palestinians living in Egypt or outside Egypt (in possession of Egyptian travel documents, in the case of the latter) at more than a million.

Sudanese refugees

In 2001, fewer than 3 000 Sudanese refugees were recognised by the Egyptian authorities. This figure is a long way from reflecting the actual numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers in the country.

The first wave of Sudanese refugees in Egypt goes back to the first civil war between 1955 and 1972. The second wave goes back to the second civil war started in 1983. Most of the refugees came from South Sudan, from South Kordofan, and from the South of the Blue Nile area. Refugees from the Muslim North have also joined the refugees from the South. Besides direct persecution and the effects of the civil war, the causes for seeking asylum also stem from famine and the difficulties met in everyday life in the refugee or displaced persons camps in Sudan and around Khartoum. Until 1995, Sudanese refugees were not obliged to seek asylum. They were classed as 'displaced persons'. Following the attempt on the life of the Egyptian president, Egypt has modified its 'open door' policy towards its neighbours from the South. From then on, any Sudanese has to obtain a visa to enter Egypt. Asylum-seekers have to go through the RHC recognition process.

Somali refugees

According to the RHC, there were in 2003 1 832 recognised Somali refugees, 1 544 asylum-seekers and 952 failed asylum-seekers.

Somali refugees and residents in Egypt enjoy the efficiency and the robustness of active social networks within the Somali diaspora, which allows Somalis to take advantage of the transfers carried out by members of the diaspora installed in western countries and in Saudi Arabia.

Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees

The repression and insecurity due to the nature of the current and past authoritarian regimes (Mengistu, for instance) in Ethiopia and in Eritrea, to the civil wars within these two countries or to the war against each other, are the main causes of the continuous flow of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees since the 70s towards other neighbouring countries in Africa, in the Gulf and Egypt.

Data on these refugees are ephemeral and unreliable. The UNHCR puts forward figures of 18 Eritreans and 59 Ethiopians in 2001. Only 13% of the asylum-seekers are granted refugee status. A. Zohry and B. Harrell-Bond estimate their numbers at 5 000 (A. Zohry et B. Harrell-Bond, 2003).

IV. Libya: one of the largest immigration countries in the region and possibly in the Mediterranean area.

1. Incomplete or unreliable statistics

Statistical data on foreigners in Libya remain very fragmented and incomplete, or quite remote from the reality on the ground. Apart from a few researchers (Pliez, O. 2002, 2004 ; Grégoire, E. 2004 ; Bredeloup, S. 2005), most of these studies and reports⁵ avoid looking closely at the statistical data of migrations in one of the major immigration countries in Africa and in the Mediterranean. The reasons for this vary: the vastness of the Libyan territory and its dominant Saharan nature, the immensity of the land borders and their frequent porosity. This is more likely a temporary and rotating immigration.

Public practices in the field of immigration administration are deliberately vague and changeable at the whim of the state of relations between Libya and the migrants' states of origin. Laissez-faire and extreme rigours, even repression of migrants and irregulars have always alternated in the management of foreigners in the country. The free movement of nationals from North Africa, such as those from sub-Saharan Africa make controls, census and estimations that much more difficult. The liberalisation of economic activities and the great needs of foreign personnel on the local work market have eventually rendered ineffective the episodic attempts at reducing foreign manpower or controlling it properly. The statistical Libyan apparatus, like that of other States in the region, is ill-adapted and inefficient.

For these reasons, we will not know the exact number of foreigners in the country any day soon.

2. Numbers of immigrants and geographical distribution

While all this data, official and otherwise⁶, coming from that country estimate the numbers of foreigners at between 1.5 and 2.5 million, and agree on the growth in their numbers since the 90s (mostly in respect of nationals from sub-Saharan African countries),

⁵ For instance, the 2005 report 'Mediterranean migrations' from the 'Institut Universitaire Européen de Florence (Fargues, Philippe. 2005), totally ignores Libya as a country of immigration and transit and accords it no mention, while dedicating whole chapters to the other countries in the region.

⁶ Declarations from political leaders, press agencies despatches, estimates from researchers and from international organisations, etc.

the results of the 2006 general population census show that the numbers of foreigners recorded in the country do not exceed 350 000 persons out of a total population of 5 373 000 (Comité National de l'Information et de la Documentation. 2006). The proportion of foreigners thus fell to 6.1% of the total population against 8.5% in 1995. As detailed results of the 2006 census, in respect of the 'non-Libyan population' living in the country are not yet available, we base our work on the results of the general Libyan population census in 1995. At that time, there were 409 326 'non-Libyan' residents out of a total population of 4 799 065 inhabitants.

Numbers of foreigners living in Libya in 1995

Groups	Numbers			
	Male	Female	Total	%
Non-Libyan Arab	217691	114331	332022	81,1
Africans	22414	12105	34519	8,4
Asians	23371	7627	30998	7,6
Europeans	6287	4314	10601	2,6
Americans	413	203	616	0,2
Other	31	19	50	0,0
Undetermined	470	50	520	0,1
Total	270677	138649	409326	100

Non-Libyan Arab		
Nationalities	Numbers	%
Egyptians	120810	36,4
Sudanese	94769	28,5
Palestinians	37855	11,4
Syrians	21958	6,6
Moroccans	15132	4,6
Tunisians	12727	3,8
Algerians	8622	2,6
Other Arab	7489	2,3
Mauritanians	5363	1,6
Iraqis	4625	1,4
Lebanese	2672	0,8
Total	332022	100

Africans			
Nationalities	Numbers	%	
Chadians	17793	51,5	
Nigerians	5978	17,3	
Maliens	5363	15,5	
Other Africans	2257	6,5	
Ghaneans	1615	4,7	
Gambians	564	1,6	
Senegalese	406	1,2	
Ethiopians	173	0,5	
Burkinese	172	0,5	
Beninese	127	0,4	
Togoese	71	0,2	
Total	34519	100	

Source : Comité National de l'Information et de la Documentation. 1998.

These figures show a large shift deviation when compared with the data supplied by certain countries of origin, for instance. Even when the data put forward by the countries of origin is more recent, (2001 in the case of Egypt, 2004 for Morocco and 2003 for Tunisia), the gaps remain enormous. Egyptian sources estimated the numbers of Egyptian in Libya at 332 600 persons in 2001, against 120 810 according to the 1995 Libyan census. While Tunisian sources mention 60 000 Tunisians in Libya, the Libyan census only accounts for 12 727. 120 000 Moroccans are mentioned by Morocco, while the Libyans account for only 15 000. The gaps are thus 1 to 3 for Egyptians, 1 to 5 for Tunisians and 1 to 8 for Moroccans.

However, O. Pliez (2004) accepts the estimations put forward by several sources, placing Egyptians, Sudanese and Chadian in first place among the nationalities present during the last few years in Libya, with numbers around half a million for each of the national group.

Foreigners are concentrated in four main zones:

- The North-west of the country (Tripolitany): 167 000 'non-Libyans', i.e. 45.7% of the total foreign population.
- The North-east region around Benghazi (Cyrenaica): 112 000 'non-Libyans', i.e. 27.4%
- The Fezzan area around Sabha: 40 000 'non-Libyans', i.e. 10%
- The central region and the South-east (the area around Khofra): 40 000 'non-Libyans', i.e. 10% of the foreign population.

The remaining 6.9% of foreigners are scattered over the rest of the territory.

3. Sectors of activity for foreign manpower

The main areas of employment for foreigners are the urban services, education, trade, the building trade and public works, agriculture and domestic services.

Egyptians are well represented in education, trade, hostelry and catering, and in agriculture.

Tunisians, Algerians and Moroccans invest mostly in areas of hostelry and catering, in commercial activities and in car maintenance.

Sub-Saharan migrants can be found in virtually all sectors of activity. However, their main employment sectors are private economy, activities linked to the maintenance of places and town infrastructure (roads, parks and public places, electrical networks,

drinking water and sanitation...) agricultural work on public and private farms (fields and stock).

In the next few years, a spectacular development of immigration in Libya can be expected. The movement may already be underway. Several indicators tend to reinforce this perspective:

- The lifting of the embargo since 2003, the entry of Libya on the international scene and the normalisation of its relations with the western world.
- The rampant liberalisation and privatisation of entire sectors of the Libyan economy (trade, telecommunications, tourism, ports and airports, banking and insurance, agriculture...).
- The increases in the price of oil in the last two years have more than doubled the oil revenue of Libya. An ambitious programme of social and economic development has been announced, with a budget of \$80 billion⁷.

A country destined to attract more migrants still!

Political leaders, economic operators, business leaders, and businessmen are jostling each other in Libya. The country is likely to become a gigantic building site that will absorb still more migrants, in spite of the declarations⁸, the regulations and the restrictions that the public authorities would announce or apply, or that European countries would demand.

V. The ‘Imbroglío’ of migrations between Europe and the Maghreb: migratory policies and international relations in the region.

1. North Africa: ‘A safe migratory area’ for Europe

North Africa is nowadays a ‘safe migratory area’ between Africa and Europe. All sending countries (countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa), transit countries (mostly in the Maghreb) and destination countries (mostly in Europe) are taking part in the progressive installation of this apparatus. It is aimed *in fine* at hardening further the conditions of entry and sojourn of foreigners in North African and European countries. Consequently, this consists in a set of initiatives, measures and regulations expressing the same logic and seeking the same objectives: to make any migratory movement difficult, even impossible, from the south towards the north, regardless of the geographic location of such ‘South’ and ‘North’. This explains why the very notion of ‘borders’ becomes a relative and shifting term given the multiplicity of successive borders and lines of migratory controls between Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa, through the northern and southern borders of North African countries in particular.

The countries in the region have been forced to question two fundamental principles that were the basis of their management mode for migrations and their historic relations with countries of Sub-Saharan Africa:

- The application of strict rules and control measures of migratory movements when entering their borders and when leaving towards Europe. The struggle against irregular migrations does not affect foreigners exclusively (including nationals from other countries in the region: Maghrebians and Egyptians), but also and mainly their

7

⁸ Kadhafi’s son, Saif el Islam, has classed ‘irregular migration’, which he qualified as a ‘second form of colonialism’, as the second greatest danger that could threaten the unity and security of Libya (Journal Alhayat, et AFP, 21/08/2007).

own nationals who wish to emigrate, legally or otherwise. The emphasis has therefore shifted from a policy of promotion of departures to a policy of control and dissuasion.

- The new apparatus in the struggle against irregular migrations has led countries in North Africa to review in depth, even upset, some of the foundations of their relations with their neighbours south of the Sahara. Human exchanges and the free movement of persons and goods between neighbours on the two shores of the Sahara in particular had not suffered from constraints or major restrictions since the era of independence during the 50s and the 60s for the countries of the Maghreb in particular. The free movement of persons is written in most agreements, conventions and bilateral/multilateral treaties linking the countries of the region to each other or to their neighbours south of the Sahara (UMA, CENSAD, NEPAD, African Union...) from Sudan in the East to Senegal in the West. Sub-Saharan nationals are not the only ones suffering from these restrictions, other categories of nationals in countries of the region who wish to travel to another country in the same region also suffer. The Tunisian authorities restrain the departures towards Libya of young Moroccans, Algerians or Tunisians in a draconian manner for fear that they become involved in sea departures towards Malta and Italy.

Let us remind that these developments occur at the end of a decade of major changes in the migratory context of North Africa and the Mediterranean.

2. Police cooperation and migratory controls

The setting up of the Schengen visa system, and its widening to all countries of the EU, has resulted in an explosion of irregular migration since the mid-90s.

From the European side, the re-admission agreements are the first major initiative to counter this type of movement. Since 1998, all countries in the region have signed agreements or bilateral re-admission protocols with the countries on the northern shore, as have done other transit countries in Eastern and South-eastern Europe. The external borders of Europe are no longer exclusively on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, but also in North Africa with lines of control of foreigners and travellers:

- Control at border posts for departures towards Europe;
- Control of foreigners (mostly North Africans and Sub-Saharan) within these states;
- Control of the entry of foreigners through their borders generally, and in particular of the continental borders on the Saharan outlands of these states in the direction of the south.

Since the tragedies of the irregular migration attempts in Ceuta, Melilla and in Morocco in October 2005, the diplomatic ballet, the negotiations and the pressures have not ceased to arrive at a new set of re-admission agreements between the countries of North Africa (the Maghreb in particular) and their southern neighbours in Sub-Saharan Africa, which are sending countries and also transit countries for these movements.

3. The 'voluntarism' of the European Union

In this respect, the EU is extremely active. Thus in 2006, it has contributed to the organisation of 3 successive euro-african conferences on the subject of migrations, in partnership with the African Union (Algiers, Rabat and Tripoli). The Sub-Saharan countries were also associated as observers to the work in informal forums, such as the '5+5 Dialogue' (Tunis, Algiers, Rabat, Paris), that act as the stage (and the backstage) for the negotiations surrounding this subject. The EU also devotes

substantial credits, in partnership with transit countries mostly, to finance projects and programmes aimed at improving the knowledge of movements and at enhancing the capacity to control them by its members, or by its southern partners (such as the AENEAS programme).

The 7th framework of PCRD devotes a credit line to European university research projects on migrations. The partnership with universities and research centres in third countries, mostly in Africa, is further encouraged.

However, it is in the field of security that the EU is more active and more generous. The various ‘generations’ of association agreements are the main components of this policy. Many European programmes are aimed at improving the operational control and information capacities of migratory movements to the benefit of government agencies, security forces and naval forces in the countries of transit or departure (North Africa and the Sahel countries), as well as in the destination countries: logistical equipment, equipment, personnel training, shared activities (information exchange, combined patrols...)⁹.

It is, however, the ‘*Frontex*’ (Frontières Extérieures)¹⁰ apparatus that illustrates the will of the EU to proceed with a blockade of the North African and European coasts against crossings and attempted crossings from the African coastline. This consists largely of means and equipment to monitor and carry out interceptions at sea (aircraft, fast patrol boats, ships, radars, infra-red cameras...)¹¹

Frontex is not shy in publishing its activities in the media, notably on TV in 2007, showing night interceptions or rescues at sea, using infra-red techniques.

4. The involvement of the Maghreb countries: the Moroccan and Libyan examples

The evolution of the Libyan position and policy on the question of irregular migrations is spectacular in such a short time.

During the period of tension between Libya and the western world (1985 to 2000), and while Libya was subject to the embargo (192 to 2000), that country had turned to the Arab world, then to its continental ‘depths’ in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to develop a very active policy of cooperation, of alliances and aid to development in Sub-Saharan African countries. New regional organisations such as the ‘Regroupement des Etats du Sahel et du Sahara’ or the new ‘African Union’ are the result of this diplomatic Libyan ‘voluntarism’. The free movement of persons within this regional set is one of the foundations of this regional cooperation.

During the 2001 to 2004 years, the period during which Libya was re-negotiating its return to the Mediterranean and international scene (lifting of the global embargo, including the weapons embargo, abandoning and dismantling the programme of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)...), the difficulties in controlling the long land borders stretching over 4 000kms, was a strong Libyan argument to ‘pay for’ the Libyan ‘cooperation’ with Italy in the struggle against the movements of clandestine migrations.

⁹ In 2006, within this framework, Morocco benefited from a credit of €40 million, while Spain received €800 million.

¹⁰ L'Agence Européenne pour la Gestion de la Coopération Opérationnelle aux Frontières Externes.

¹¹ At the beginning of 2007, 19 aeroplanes, 24 helicopters and 107 boats have been made available by the member States.

Without under-estimating too much the role of other factors, everyone is convinced that the migratory question was one of the key-factors, perhaps even the key, to the normalisation of relations between Europe and Libya. Libya has come a long way from being accused in 2003 by the Italian Interior Minister of being the 'distribution hub' of clandestine emigration towards Italy and Malta. Libya is now regarded and treated as 'strategic partner for Europe' in the struggle against illegal migrations. Meetings and gatherings on the subject between European and Libyan leaders have not ceased since the 'Technical mission' of the European Commission to Libya at the end of 2004.

However, Libya still exploits, as ever, the question of migrations to add weight to the orientation of its relations with the EU and the member countries. Less exposed and less vulnerable than other countries in the region, which are subjected to European pressures to 'cooperate' more on the question of migrations, Libya blows hot and cold alternatively. Libyan leaders declare on occasions that 'Africans have the right to migrate to Europe following the pillage of the continent by colonial powers...' ¹², and on other occasions that 'Libya is as much a victim of illegal migration as Europe'. This type of migration is even regarded as the second source of the dangers threatening Libya in the next few years ¹³.

Following the example of Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, Libya has become one of the pillars of the apparatus of the struggle against illegal migrations in the Maghreb and in the Mediterranean.

5. Morocco is really committed to the 'struggle against irregular migrations'

Morocco and Tunisia have been, as early as 1998, the first North African countries to sign re-admission agreements with Spain and Italy. Morocco, in particular, was subjected to strong pressures from Spain (European Summit in Seville in 2002), for stronger commitment in the struggle against irregular migrations.

Above all, the tragic events in Ceuta and Melilla in 2005 have demonstrated the extent of the Moroccan commitment. The Moroccan security forces took part, alongside Spanish police, in the bloody repression (tens of casualties) of Sub-Saharan nationals who attempted to breach the walls and barbed wire protecting the Spanish enclaves. In the days and weeks following these events, Morocco then proceeded with the repatriation and the expulsion of illegal migrants, towards the desert at first, then by air. This 'migration crisis' of autumn 2005 was the origin of intense diplomatic activity to 'settle' the role of Morocco as a major partner in the region in the struggle against irregular migrations (emergency European aid). A dialogue and regional concertation were launched later, associating the Maghreb countries, the Sahel countries whose nationals are the most numerous among illegal migrants (Senegal, Mali, Niger, Gambia, Burkina-Faso, Ivory Coast...) and the countries of the EU. Thus, re-admission agreements were signed between Morocco for one part, and Senegal, Mali and Niger for the other part.

The struggle against irregular migrations is progressively turning into a commonplace activity for the security forces in the region. Statistics are drawn up and information made public about police and naval forces operations: interceptions and arrests, rescue at sea, repatriation and expulsion. (BOUBAKRI, H. 2006, 2007).

6. A continued participation of the inhabitants of North African countries.

¹² Kadhafi's Declaration, Jana ; 2006

¹³ Saif al Islam's Declaration. AFP. 21/08/2007.

According to an assessment from the Italian interior Ministry at the start of 2007, 22 016 arrivals were recorded in 2006 on the coasts of Sicily, Calabria and Pouilles. This figure is slightly lower (-4.5%) than that recorded in 2005 (22 939 arrivals). The latter figure represented almost double that recorded in 2004 (13 000 arrivals), however¹⁴.

In 9 months January to September 2006), 16 000 illegal migrants were intercepted off Lespedeza and were brought ashore on the island. Most of these migrants had left from Tunisia and Libya. The large numbers of Maghrebeans and Egyptians should be noted. Thus, in the space of two weeks, the majority of the 2 000 migrants arriving on Lespedeza were from the Maghreb.

The end of 2006 marked a turning point for the traffickers in the execution and the organisation of the sea crossing operations. In the night of the 18th to the 19th of December 2006, only one boat, 30metre long, came close to the Italian coast with 648 persons on board (including 21 women and 7 children), all claiming to be Egyptian nationals. The boat was eventually taken to the port of Licata, in southern Sicily¹⁵.

One of the fundamental lessons from this data is the predominance, the resurgence even, of the participation of North African nationals in irregular migrations. The share of Maghrebeans has thus moved from 11.9% in 2001 to 70% in 2005 and 2006, as in 2002. Overall, Africa contributes 95% of the movements.

When reading these figures, we are led to draw the following conclusions:

- Sub-Saharan migrants are by far less numerous than North African migrants. This proves that the importance of Sub-Saharan migration is inflated and that they are used as scarecrows by the leaders of the EU.
- The increasing numbers of nationals from North African countries sending movements raise many questions about the crisis of confidence of many young Maghrebeans vis à vis their own countries because of the lack of prospect for a decent and blooming life at home.
- The failure, partial at least, of the control measures and of the re-admission agreements passed between EU countries and North African countries.
- One can also wonder whether the application of control measures on migrations in the countries of the region is not more severe and more restrictive towards the nationals from Sub-Saharan countries than towards North African nationals. How can the drop in the participation of Sub-Saharan nationals be explained otherwise, while that of North Africans is still increasing?

Morocco, Spain and Italy have published reports on their activities in this field. Spanish sources recoup those from Morocco. During 2003, 19 176 persons were arrested as they arrived on the Spanish coast via the Gibraltar Strait or on the Canary Islands. In 2004, this figure had fallen to 15 675 persons, i.e. a drop of 18% (Khachani, M. 2006). Arrivals of migrants on the Canary Islands represented 53.7% of total arrivals (on the islands and in the Strait area), while 38.6% of the ‘pateras’ make landfall on the islands.

Arrivals of irregular migrants and ‘Pateras’ on the coasts of the Gibraltar Strait area and on the Canary Islands

	2003	2004	2005
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¹⁴ Associated Press (AP). 06/01/2007.

¹⁵ AFP. 19/12/2006

Numbers of migrants	19176	15675	11781
Number of « Pateras »	942	740	567

(Secrétariat d'Etat à l'émigration et l'immigration. Madrid. In Khachani, M.2006)

The downward trend in arrivals noted by the authorities in both countries between 2004 and 2005 (Khachani, M. 2006) failed to resist the spectacular development of sea crossings during 2006, as much towards Italian coasts as Spanish Coasts.

Thus, the Spanish authorities claim that their security services have foiled 5 500 attempts at clandestine migration, and have dismantled 120 'human trafficking' networks during the first 4 months of 2006¹⁶.

For the whole of 2005, the same sources claim that 480 migrants trafficking networks have been dismantled and that 30 000 attempts at clandestine migration have been foiled, in which 8 000 Moroccans were involved; the remainder being a mixture of nationals from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb and Asia¹⁷.

30 000 irregular migrants arrived on the Spanish coasts or were intercepted in 2006.

According to the Catholic charity CARITAS, nearly half a million illegal migrants were living in Italy in 2005. Only less than half (50 000) of the 116 580 people arrested by the police were taken back to the border in the same year. This clearly shows the 'marginal' nature of so-called 'clandestine' migrations from North Africa, in comparison with the estimated half million clandestine migrants in Italy, and as many in each of the major immigration countries on the north shore (Spain, France, Germany, Greece...).

Conclusion

From East to West, north to South, the movements of irregular migrants have clearly increased in 2006: in Lespedeza as in the Canaries, in the Mediterranean as in West Africa. The populations involved are not only poor populations but also students, graduates, businessmen. They are not only Africans from Sub-Saharan countries, but many Maghrebeans are still leaving illegally. This is proof that security policies will not solve this problem, but rather the international will and regional cooperation will allow better management of the movements. The majority of legal migrants settled in Europe and in America today were illegal originally. The transfers of funds from working abroad towards families, regions and countries of origin make a better and wider contribution than the policies of development aid, of the fight against poverty and of the development in these countries.

On the other hand, the social and societal transformations shown or caused by these population movements are of capital importance for the understanding of the evolution of the societies from which they emanate. However, this should not hide the major risks of tension or misunderstanding that could be caused by these movements if they are not properly 'governed'. Racism and discrimination in the receiving countries of the region, mostly at the expense of African migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, are part of these risks.

¹⁶ <http://www.angolapress-angop.ao>. 05/06/2006

¹⁷ Ibid.

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