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Migration Without Borders: North Africa as a Reserve of Cheap Labour for Europe

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by

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1. INTRODUCTION

Migration without borders is not a hypothetical scenario. Except for the last century, migration was without physical borders, and the movements of individuals from one place to another were not restricted by national or regional borders, visa systems, or national security fears. For example "if any one had suggested in, say, 1910, that migration was an unusual phenomenon, they would have been regarded by any knowledgeable person with astonishment" (Harris, 2004: 1). In the past, migration was restricted by other kinds of borders such as the lack of information, weakness of migration networks, natural hazards, tribal systems, and the primitive means of transportation. In the era of globalization, information technology, abundance of knowledge and information, increasing terrorism threats, the rise of national identities and the claimed clash of civilizations, migration became a major political issue. Developed countries regard migration as a threatening factor that affects their sovereignty and national identities, while developed countries regard it as a possible escape from their political, economic, and social and overpopulation problems.

This paper examines the scenario of migration without borders and the relationship between countries in the southern and the northern shores of the Mediterranean, Southern and Western Europe and North African countries. The demographic changes in Europe, where the population of countries such as Spain and Italy would actually be declining if it was not for migration, force European countries to find ways for maintaining economic growth and labour demands. At the same time, countries in the southern shore of the Mediterranean suffer from high levels of population growth, unemployment, economic and socio-demographic pressures (Zohry, 2002a). This paper sheds some light on the possibility of liberating labour movement between these two regions and its positive and negative implications for both sides.

Since Libya as one of the Arab oil producing and exporting states is a country of immigration that attracts migrants from neighbouring Arab countries – especially Egypt and Tunisia - and the stock of Libyan migrants in Europe is not statistically significant, this study focuses on the three countries of Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) and highlights Egyptian migration, though the latter is linked to another migration system with the Arab Gulf countries and the number of Egyptians in Europe is not significant. At the same time, with high levels of unemployment in Egypt and the decreasing job opportunities for Egyptian immigrants in the Arab oil-producing countries, Egyptian migration to Europe is expected to increase.

This paper consists of six sections. After this Introductory Section, Section two deals with demographic changes in Europe and its need for immigrants. Section three is devoted to the study of North African migration to Europe, examining the issues of unemployment in North Africa as the main catalyst for migration, number of migrants, the role of remittances in migration, and illegal migration. Section four presents European migration policies, in general, and as regards North Africa, in specific. After the detailed description of migration streams from North Africa to Europe and of the policies concerning the movement between the two regions, Section five presents the Migration Without Borders Scenario. Concluding remarks are given in the last Section.

“The Mediterranean Sea marks one of the sharpest demographic and economic divides currently to be found on the world map. To the north lie countries whose demographic growth is extremely low and whose standard of living is among the highest in the world. To the south of the Mediterranean lie the countries of North Africa, with rates of natural increase which are extremely high and whose economies, while not uniformly weak, provide their populations on average with incomes worth only 6 per cent of the values of incomes in Western Europe” (Rees et al, 1996, as cited in Safir, 1999).

The Maghreb countries and Egypt have some common general characteristics, including the Arabic Language (with a wide spread of French in the Maghreb countries), Islamic religion, and sociocultural practices. Variations in economic indicators are observed, where the GDP per capita for Tunisia and Algeria are much higher than that for Egypt and Morocco (Table 1).

Table 1

Basic data on Egypt and the Maghreb countries: demographic, economic, and social indicators

Indicators	Year or period	Algeria	Egypt	Morocco	Tunisia
Capital		Alger	Cairo	Rabat	Tunis
Surface Area ('000 km^2)		2,382	1,001	447	164
Human Development Index					
Value	2002	0.704	0.653	0.620	0.745
Rank	2002	108	120	125	92
Population (millions)	2003	31.8	71.9	30.6	9.8
Natural increase (percent)	2003	1.7	2.0	1.7	1.1
Infant Mortality Rate, per 1000	2003	43	39	41	23
Total Fertility Rate	2003	2.7	3.3	2.7	2.0
Life expectancy	2003	70	69	69	73
GDP per capita (US$)	2002	5,760	3,810	3,810	6,760
Total external debt (billion $)	2003	21.19	28.75	16.48	15.27

Sources: The data presented in this table come from the African Development Report 2004 (African Bank for Development, 2004) and Human Development Report 2004 (UNDP, 2004).

2. DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN EUROPE AND THE NEED FOR MIGRANTS

Demographic pressures in Europe are caused by under-population, decreasing levels of fertility, and changes in the structure of the population pyramids towards an ageing society. The pervasive low fertility levels in most of the European countries together with the high levels of life expectancy have led to problem of ageing population in the European societies. As a result, in most countries the percentage of population above 65 years of age is expected to increase. This increase will be translated into a shortage of population in the productive age (15-64 years old) and augment the burden of dependency on working population. By 2020 the European Union's working age population is estimated to shrink from 303 million to 295 million and then to 280 million by 2030.

After 30 years of restrictive measures on migration, in response to these demographic changes European countries have begun to realize that restricting migration is at odds with their economic perspectives. They started to reassess their migration policies for demographic and socioeconomic reasons to attract highly skilled migrants (IOM, 2003). For example, Germany launched what is called “Green Card Programme” to attract information technology specialists from India and from other countries to satisfy the growing demand in new technologies, computer engineering, and software development professions. In the United Kingdom, a series of measures were implemented in 2000 to facilitate the issuance of work permits for a wider range of jobs and professions. Similar arrangements and regulations have been considered in France and some other European countries. These are just few examples of what I may call a “slow change” of the European mentality concerning migration issues. Another important landmark is the speech by Mr. Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, before the members of the European Parliament in January 2004: “*many of the societies around the world will become increasingly diverse over the coming decades. This is the inevitable result of the movement of people across international borders. This movement will not stop. As an international community, we must manage human movement across international borders much better than we are doing now—not only for the good of those moving, but also for the good of the countries of origin, transit and destination*” , Mr. Annan said. In his speech Mr. Annan urged to move the agenda from the issue of illegal immigration and the current methods of preventing it by member-states to the clear understanding that migration movements to the European Union (EU) and around the world are likely to increase with each year, and it is the duty of the EU to face this reality with a strategic, managed and comprehensive approach.

3. NORTH AFRICA AND EUROPE: MIGRATION SYSTEM

3.1 Unemployment: the migration catalyst

Unemployment rates in North Africa range between 12 percent of the labour force in Egypt and 28 percent in Algeria. Unemployment in Tunisia has increased over the last decade, and is now above 15 percent of the labour force. Urban unemployment is rising and includes an increasing proportion of the young and educated people. The labour force is growing at a faster rate than the total population, and fertility has been falling in the last two decades due to a successful population policy and family planning program.

In the last few years (2001-2003), Morocco experienced higher economic growth (6.3 percent, 3.2 percent and 5.2 percent respectively). This was translated into job creation, particularly in urban areas where the unemployment rate decreased from 22 percent in 1999 to 18.3 percent in 2002 and to 19.3 percent in 2003. Still, to be able to reduce unemployment rates in the coming years, the Moroccan economy must maintain growth rates of at least 6 percent per annum (World Bank, 2004).

Algeria, with the highest unemployment rate in the region (28 percent unemployment rate – more than 2.5 million unemployed persons) is considered one of the seven world economies that have unemployment rates in excess of 20 percent. The working-age population is growing by 2.7 percent a year and the labour force by 3.7 percent, as increasing numbers of people seek jobs. The situation in Tunisia and Egypt is somewhat better, given their lower unemployment rates. Yet both will also face tremendous pressure to create jobs for the new entrants into the labour force (Economic Research Forum, 2003). In view of the current rates of unemployment in the Maghreb countries, the overall number of unemployed persons exceeds four million citizens, primarily young people. Together with 2.7 million unemployed citizens in Egypt the number of unemployed persons in North Africa amounts to around seven million people. In addition, high – but decreasing – levels of population growth lead to the creation of new forces in the labour market every year.

3.2 Migration streams

International migration has always been considered a demographic and socio-economic phenomenon, which is affected by both internal and external factors. The most important among these factors is the labour market, at the international level, and the political conditions in both sending and receiving countries (Choucri 1999). Large flows of Northern African migrants to Europe can be also explained by the geographical proximity of two regions.

Established migration channels, such as between France and the Maghreb countries, have existed for several decades. This pattern has continued until today (IOM, 2003).

Morocco and Algeria, and to a lesser degree Tunisia, dominate the southern Mediterranean migration flows to Europe. The historical development of Maghrebian migration to Europe is closely connected with the colonial ties between Europe - namely France – and the countries of this region (Safir, 1999). By the end of the World War II, the total number of Maghrebians in France increased to more than 40 thousands. The end of the WW II can be considered as a landmark in the history of Maghrebian Migration to Europe. Postwar reconstruction works and the out-migration from Southern Europe in the 1950s and 1960s (King, 2000) stimulated a growing demand in foreign labour which stimulated migration streams from Maghreb to France for almost three decades (1945-1975). After independence of Maghreb countries and until mid-70s migration was an important factor of socioeconomic integration between Maghreb and Southern Europe and an element contributing to the stability of this region (Tapinos, 2000). By 1975, the estimated number of Maghrebians in France was 1.1 million. However, mid-seventies is regarded as the official end of Maghreb migration to Europe. Due to the economic recession in Europe that followed the oil embargo and the 1973 rise in prices, the demand for foreign labour decreased and new restrictions on immigration were introduced. Only migrants involved in family reunion were officially permitted to enter in Europe. The new regulation stimulated a parallel migration stream, which is illegal migration. In this context, illegal migration can be explained as a reaction of closing doors in front of immigrants.

At the same time, the policies of countries in the southern shores of the Mediterranean towards international migration were liberal and encouraging. Maghreb countries motivate migration for two reasons: reducing tensions in the labour market and decreasing unemployment rate, and increasing monetary flows from labour remittances which contribute to the balance of foreign finance.

Maghrebians in Europe

According to the European sources, the total number of Maghrebians in Europe is about 2.2 million. National estimates in the sending countries almost double this number. For instance, while European sources estimate the number of Tunisians in Europe by about 300 thousand, national statistics claim that the number of Tunisians in Europe has achieved 600 thousand. Besides possible margin of error in estimating number of migrants by both sides, differences in the calculation may be attributed to nationality acquisition by Maghrebian migrants in Europe, and undocumented migration.

Moroccans comprise the largest migrant nationality among Maghrebians and North Africans in Europe in general, and specifically, in France. The total number of Moroccans in Europe is about 1.323 million comprising about 56 percent of Maghrebians in Europe. Most of Moroccans are concentrated in France (46.5%), Germany, United Kingdom, Belgium, Spain, and Italy. Algerians rank second after Moroccans in Europe with 0.679 million migrants, that constitutes about 31 percent of total Maghrebians in Europe. Their traditional destination is France, where more than 90 percent of Algerian migrants in Europe are concentrated. Tunisian migrants in Europe comprise 13.4 percent of Maghrebians in Europe; about 75 percent of them are in France while about 15 percent are in Italy, the second destination country of Tunisian migrants (Table 2).

Table 2

Estimated number of persons from Maghreb living in major receiving European countries circa 2000

Country	Number	Percent	Major receiving countries
Morocco	1,232,133	55.8	France (46.5%) Germany (12.2%) United Kingdom (12.2%) Belgium (9.7%) Spain (9.7%) Italy (6.6%)
Algeria	679,738	30.8	France (90.4%) Germany (2.5%) United Kingdom (2.1%)
Tunisia	297,284	13.4	France (74.4%) Italy (14.4%) Germany (8.2%)
Total	**2,209,155**	**100**	

Source: calculated from tabulated data and text by Boubakri, 2003

Egyptians in Europe

Egyptian emigrants are overwhelmingly concentrated in the Gulf States. According to the estimates of the Agency for Statistics (CAPMAS), the total number of Egyptians abroad is 2.7 million; 1.9 million are in the Arab Gulf countries and Libya, and 0.8 million in the Western countries (North America, Australia, and Europe). About 80 percent of Egyptian migrants to the West are concentrated in four countries: USA (318,000 or 38.6 percent), Canada (110,000 or 13.3 percent), Italy (90,000), and Greece (60,000). The other 20 percent are mainly in Western Europe countries, such as Holland, France, England, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Spain. The major two receiving countries of Egyptian migration in Europe are Italy and Greece (CAPMAS, 2000). However, Italy is considered the main destination of Egyptian migrants since the early 1980s.

The statistics given by CAPMAS are estimates which are drawn from the reports of Egyptian embassies abroad, records of cross-border flows from the Ministry of Interior, work permits from the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration, and some other sources. The receiving countries have a statistics differing from tjat of CAPMAS. For example, the Italian government estimates that there are around 35,000 Egyptians in Italy whereas CAPMAS gives a figure of 90,000 (Zohry and Harrell-Bond, 2003).

3.3 Migration and development: remittances

In economic terms, the most important aspect of migration is the remitted money and goods by migrants to their home country. Such flows of wealth are important to both migrants' families and the economy of sending countries (Caldwell 1969). *Remittances* are defined as money transmitted from one place to another, although remittances can also be sent in-kind. However, the remittances usually refer to cash transfers. *Migrant worker remittances* are the part of total remittance flows that is transmitted by migrant workers, usually to their families or friends back home.

Globally, total remittances increased from less than $2 billion in 1970 to $70 billion in 1995. Their growth is erratic from year by year. Remittance data are generally under-reported. Developing countries received $35 billion in workers remittances in

1995, up from $31 billion in 1994. Five countries paid 80 percent of remittances in 1995: Saudi Arabia ($16.6 billion), USA ($12.2 billion), Germany ($5.3 billion), France ($3.1 billion), and the United Kingdom ($2.7 billion). Kuwait paid $1.8 billion, and Oman $1.3 billion in 1995 (IMF 1990-2003). Egypt received the largest single year amount of workers' remittances of $6.1 billion in 1992. Egypt and Morocco are among the top ten receiving countries of migrant remittances worldwide (IOM, 2003).

The size and frequency of total remittance flows are determined by several factors, such as the number of migrant workers, wage rates, economic activity in the host and in the sending country/region, exchange rates, political risk, facilities for transferring funds, level of education of the migrant, whether or not accompanied by dependents, years since out-migration, household income level, and relative interest rate between labour sending/receiving countries.

Remittances to their countries of origin lie at the heart of migration motivation for Maghrebians, especially after independence. Remitted funds are important for the economy of the Maghreb country at the macro level as well as at the micro level (Safir, 1999).

Together with tourism, remittances represent Morocco's major source of foreign currency. According to the International Monetary Fund's data (IMF, 1990-2003), Morocco is the world fourth-largest recipient of official remittances, totalling $3.3 billion in 2001. Remittances to Morocco mainly come from France, where almost one-half of foreign currency flow is remitted from the traditional destination of Moroccan migrants. Some 40 percent of remittances come from other European countries (Manly, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium/Luxembourg, United Kingdom, and Germany). A negligible percent of remitted money come from Arab Gulf countries and the United States of America. The percentage distribution of remittances by country and region is relatively aligned with number of Moroccan migrants worldwide (Table 3).

Table 3

Geographic origin of migrant remittances to Morocco (2002)

Destination country	Percentage of total remittances to Morocco
France	48.6
Other European countries	40.3
Arab Gulf countries	4.6
U.S.A.	4.2
Other countries	2.3
Total	**100**

Source: calculated from Sorensen, 2004

The total amount of funds remitted by Algerian migrants abroad was $1 billion in 2000. Most of this amount was remitted from Western Europe countries, especially France. Remittances made by Tunisian migrants abroad are the lowest among the Maghreb countries. This may align with the number of Tunisian migrants abroad. The Tunisian migrants' remittances are about $0.75 million per annum (IMF, 1990-2003). Tourism and remittances constitute increasing sources of foreign currency (is it correct this term?) for the Tunisian economy.

Remittances are among Egypt's largest sources of foreign currency, along with Suez Canal receipts and tourism. According to the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) data for the fiscal year 2001/02, the total remitted money by Egyptians abroad was $2.8 billion (CBE, 2003). According to the International Monetary Fund data, Egypt ranked fifth among developing countries in remittances. Remittances from Egyptian migrants in Europe comprise 15.3 percent of the total remittances by Egyptians abroad ($425 million). The correlation between number of migrants and the percentage share of remittances is not clear in the European case. The percentage contribution of Egyptians to the total amount remitted from countries such as Italy, Greece, and Netherlands which are the main destinations of Egyptian migrants in Europe, is less than in countries with fewer number of Egyptians such as Switzerland and the United Kingdom. This may be attributed in part, to the differences in migrant composition in these countries from the point of view of occupation and skill level.

Research on the use of remittances shows that a large part of these funds is used for daily expenses such as food, clothing, and health care. Funds are also spent on building or improving housing, buying land or cattle, and buying durable consumer goods (Zohry 2002b). Generally, only a small percentage of remittances is used for 'productive investments', i.e. for activities with multiplier effects in terms of income and employment creation. The Egyptian data indicate that about 74 percent of migrant households spend the largest share of funds received from relatives abroad on daily household expenses. This percent indicates the importance of migration and remittances in poverty alleviation. Although the local use of remittances focuses on daily expenditure, the impact of these remittances upon national economy and development plans cannot be ignored.

3.4 Illegal migration

Illegal migration is motivated by the will of the individuals in less developed countries to move to a new land, settle down and work in the host country in order to improve their living standards and socio-economic conditions and escape poverty in their countries of origin. "Illegal migration is badly viewed by people and officials alike. It is considered a negative move that should be combated" (Ennaji, no date: 1).

As I mentioned before, in the face of the tightened policy adopted by the European community, especially after the Schengen agreement in 1990 and the Maastricht Treaty (requiring a visa, strict border surveillance, and imposing a selective ceiling for work permits), illegal migration increased and illegal migration networks grew, especially from Morocco to Spain across the Straits of Gibraltar and from Tunisia and Libya to the nearby Italian coasts and islands across the Mediterranean. Statistically speaking and due to the clandestine nature of this movement of people, accurate figures of the numbers involved are difficult to estimate. Although the governments of sending countries set measures to stop illegal migration, they cannot eradicate it completely. The governments of host countries in Europe cannot stop the movements of illegal migration either. It is worth mentioning that under the Migration Without Borders Scenario, illegal migration will not exist.

4. EUROPEAN MIGRATION POLICIES

Attempts have been made by the European states to establish a common European Migration Policy. However, what have been achieved so far is a set of cooperative arrangements and declarations between major receiving countries in Europe and major sending countries in Eastern Europe and North Africa (IOM, 2000). The most comprehensive European agreement regarding migration issues was that of Schengen (1985), in which five countries - France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany - agreed to end controls on their internal frontiers.

After a long period of encouraging migration, especially form Maghreb, Europe made an important shift in migration policy by 1974. This shift was stimulated by the 1973 oil embargo (oil crisis) and the recession that followed, the rising unemployment rates, and the fear of the impact of immigration on social integration (Colinson, 1996). The majority of European countries, especially those involved in Maghreb Migration (France, the Benelux countries, and Germany) officially allowed entry only to persons involved in family reunion. Countries in the other shore of the Mediterranean were affected by this shift in the European migration policy since it affected labour remittances negatively. This shift could be regarded as the major drive for illegal migration towards Europe in the last three decades.

4.1 The Barcelona Declaration

After more than twenty years of bilateral economic cooperation between European countries and countries of North Africa, the conference of the European Union and Mediterranean Foreign Ministers in Barcelona (November 27-28, 1995) marked the start of a new quality partnership between the two parties including bilateral, multilateral, and regional cooperation. The Barcelona Declaration adopted at the Barcelona Conference expresses the two parties' intention to establish a common Euro-Mediterranean area of peace and stability based on fundamental principles including respect for human rights and democracy (political and security partnership), create an area of shared prosperity through the progressive establishment of a free-trade area between the European Union (EU) and its partners and among the Mediterranean partners themselves, accompanied by substantial EU financial support for economic transition in the countries of co-operation and for the social and economic consequences of this reform process (economic and financial partnership), and develop human resources, promote understanding between cultures and rapprochement of the peoples in the Euro-Mediterranean region as well as to develop free and prosperous civil societies (social, cultural and human partnership) (European Union, 2004). Noteworthy, is that the Barcelona Declaration is aligned with the Middle East peace process.

4.2 MEDA I and II

The MEDA programme is the principal financial instrument of the European Union for the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The MEDA Programme offers technical and financial support measures to accompany the reform of socioeconomic structures in the Mediterranean partner countries. The first legal basis of the MEDA programme was 1996 MEDA regulation for the period of 1995-1999 where the programme accounted for € 3.435 million. In November 2000 a new regulation establishing MEDA II for the period of 2000-2006 was adopted. The funding of the new programme amounts to € 5.35 billion. The main areas of intervention and objectives are directly derived from those of the 1995 Barcelona Declaration. The total amount of money devoted to MEDA I and II is € 8.7 billion to cover the period from 1996 till 2006.

The EU development assistance going to the countries of North Africa and the Middle East is attributed - in part - to concerns about addressing the main cause of migration in these countries (IOM, 2000). The idea which lays behind increasing aid to non-EU Mediterranean countries is to accelerate sustainable economic and social development which are regarded as a prerequisite to prevent and decrease migration pressures.

Collinson (1996) argues that this aid will not have any real impact on migration trends in the region. Collinson regards the aid levels agreed-upon (4.7 billion Euro) for the period 1995-99 as a result of political compromisation rather than region’s needs analysis. Boubakri (2003) notice that most of the agreements and declarations focus on security issues in how to prevent illegal migration rather than setting up a new and fair migration policy. Tapinos (2000) argue that trade openness, capital flow and aid are not about to decrease emigration propensities in the sort run.

Free trade and direct aid to developing countries to decrease migration pressures through strengthening the economies of sending countries and making them able to create new jobs that may attract potential migrants need a huge amount of resources in the sending countries. In addition, sending countries' economies should be ready to absorb and efficiently employ funds and investments to attract potential migrants to stay. However, due to political unease, the failure of sending countries' economies to efficiently create jobs, overpopulation problems, limited amount of aid received by sending countries, and regional instability, such policies has a minimal effect on reducing the volume of migration stream in the short- as well as the long-run. Hence, trade and aid as alternatives to migration are not effective tools. The proposed Migration Without Borders scenario may be regarded as an alternative to such tendency.

5. THE MIGRATION WITHOUT BORDERS SCENARIO

Given the existing socio-demographic, economic, and political conditions, what if we implement the Migration Without Borders scenario between Europe and North Africa? Liberating labour movement between North Africa and Europe will lead to a mass number of young, unemployed, unskilled, and deprived people (mainly males) fleeing to "European Eldorado". The pace of movement and the volume of the migration streams will be strong.

5.1 Phases of migration under the MWB scenario

The phases that follow the assumed liberation of the movement between the two regions can be summarized as follows:

Phase I: The massive movement phase
Phase II: Adjustment and return migration phase
Phase III: Stability and labour market equilibrium phase

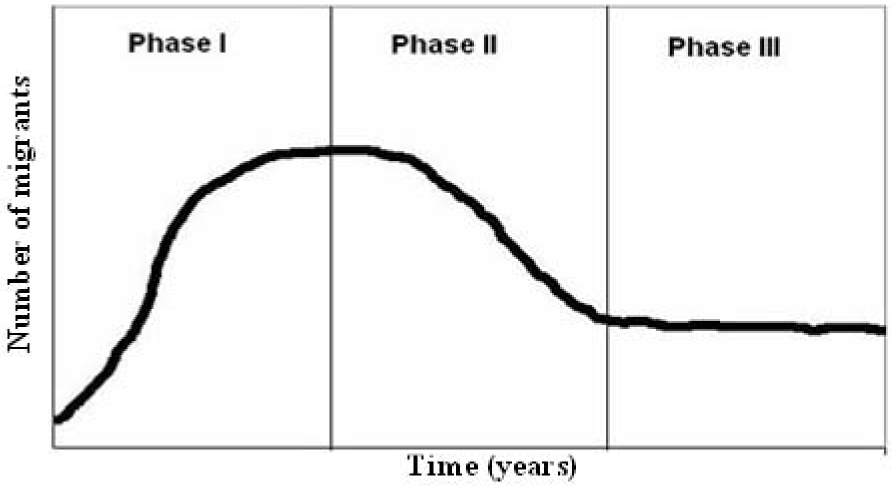
The expected duration of Phase I or the massive movement phase may range between one and three years. We cannot measure directly the number of potential emigrants, but one may expect that the number of migrants from the south to the north is to exceed the total number of unemployed persons since some of employed persons and underemployed government officials and some highly skilled workers may wish to practice their right to migrate freely. The total number of migrants may exceed the figure of four million. Despite the fact that Egyptian migration is linked to the Arab Gulf migration system, though Egypt's unemployment rate is 14 percent (2.7 million unemployed citizens), one may expect that part of this stock to migrate in Europe to get benefit of the expected opportunities there under the Migration Without Borders scenario.

After an unstable period, the pace and volume of migration flows are expected to slower down. This is what is called the adjustment and return migration phase (Phase II). This phase overlaps with Phase I. This phase is expected to start few months after the beginning of Phase I due to the fact that this counter migration stream represents migrants who fail to adjust to the new lives in Europe or due to their failure to find jobs in the European labour market. The return migration stream will start with few thousands of migrants then it will grow in parallel with the increase of number of North African migrants. Counter and/or return migration streams last for a long period and each migration flow has its own counter migration stream but the effective return migration flow that is associated with the liberation of movement between the two geographical regions may take three years.

The stability and labour market equilibrium phase (Phase III) is expected to be achieved as a result of labour market mechanisms. The stability phase is expected to be reached within four to five years from the zero point (liberation of movement and implementation of the MWB scenario). This point represents the win-win situation where it satisfies the needs of European economies and relief economic and demographic pressures on the economies of North Africa. The three phases of migration and their associated migration volume are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Phases of migration from North Africa to Europe under the Migration Without Borders (MWB) scenario



5.2 MWB Scenario and migration equilibrium

Under the assumed MWB scenario, international movements between North Africa and Europe can be regarded as internal migration movements; therefore, theories of internal migration, especially rural-to-urban migration, can be applied to explain this type of mobility. As we assumed earlier, in the third phase equilibrium point is expected to be achieved as a result of labour market mechanisms within four to five years since the start of movement liberation and implementation of the MWB scenario. But one should not expect that after this point, migration flows from North Africa to Europe will stop. Experience from developing countries evidances that throughout the developing world, rates of rural–urban migration continue to exceed the rates of job creation and to surpass greatly the capacity of both industry and urban social services to absorb this labor effectively (Todaro, 1976).

In 1976 Todaro, along with many others, realized that rural–urban labor migration was no longer a beneficent or virtuous process solving simple inequalities in the spatial allocation of labor supply and demand. Todaro suggested that the decision to migrate includes a perception by the potential migrant of an “expected” stream of income which depends both on prevailing urban wages and on a subjective estimate of the probability of obtaining employment in the modern urban sector, which is assumed to be based on the urban unemployment rate (Todaro, 1969; 1997).

According to the Todaro approach, migration rates exceeding the growth of urban job opportunities are not only possible, but rational and probable in the face of continued and expected large positive urban–rural income differentials. High levels of rural–urban migration can continue even when urban unemployment rates are high and are known to potential migrants. Indeed Todaro (1976: 31) outlines a situation in which a migrant will move even if that migrant ends up by being unemployed or receives a lower urban wage than the rural wage: this action is carried out because low wages or unemployment in the short term are expected to be more than compensated by higher income in the longer term as a result of broadening urban contacts and eventual access to higher-paid jobs. The approach therefore offers a possible explanation of a common paradox observed in Third World cities – continuing mass migration from rural areas despite persisting high unemployment in these cities.

Nevertheless, and despite the fact that Todaro's model was developed to explain migration from rural to urban in developing countries, I do feel that the Todaro model has something to contribute to a portrayal of the North Africa/Europe case after removing restrictions on migration movements between the two regions.

5.3 Advantages

Liberating movement between Europe and North Africa is expected to have advantages and disadvantages for both sides. For receiving countries, the most important advantage is the elimination of illegal migration, where all population movements will be considered legal as long as they are not associated with any kind of violence or criminal activities. The MWB will provide cheap unskilled labour force needed in the northern shore of the Mediterranean to sustain economic development and will contribute to decreasing the impact of demographic pressures and changes in the European population's age structure towards ageing. An added advantage of MWB for the European population is to understand and communicate with the culture of North African countries which may lead to narrowing the gaps between given cultures and societies.

For sending countries, the MWB will have a positive impact on decreasing overpopulation pressures by exporting a proportion of the population surplus and decreasing unemployment problem by finding new markets for national labour.

Migrants’ remittances are expected to increase and positively affect the human wellbeing in North Africa. In a globalized world, understanding and communicating with the culture of European countries is an important factor for societies of North African countries. Possible increase in tourism and European investment in North African is also expected.

5.4 Disadvantages

For receiving countries, and for the first phase of MWB, a period of an increasing instability and insecurity is expected. Flooding the labour market with a huge number of unskilled migrants in the first phase is also expected. The rise of xenophobia, racism, social integration, and naturalization may result from liberating the movement between the two geographical blocks as well, especially in the first phase.

Sending countries may face a possible shortage of labour force in selected sectors and professions associated with the increase in wages in some sectors and professions. With the increases in migrants’ remittances and the exposure to different consumption patterns, a possible tendency to consumerism in the society is expected. Due to the fact that most of North African migrants are young men, especially in Egypt, a short term imbalance in population structure is expected.

Weighting all the advantages against all the disadvantages in case of implementing the MWB Scenario, one can say that the overall outcomes are positive and leads to adopting this scenario for the good of the two geographical regions. MWB is a step towards putting things in order and stop forcing and reinforcing barriers against population movements. Restricting human movements caused a lot of retentions and widened the gaps between developing and developed countries. MWB is a sort of “back to origin” act that should be supported by all of those who are concerned with future of this world.

6. CONCLUSION

Economic imbalances in the international economy, globalization, and free trade agreements stimulate migration streams - legal and illegal. Given the economic imbalance between Europe and North Africa, migration streams will continue in the foreseeable future. The volume of illegal migration is a reaction of restricting legal migration. Economic aid as a means for reducing the volume of legal and illegal migration is not sufficient.

Liberating human movements between Europe and North Africa is advantageous for both parties. In the long run, labour market mechanisms will adjust the pace and volume of migration flows from the south to the north to reach the equilibrium point, a point that satisfies the needs of the European services and industries for labour and relief the economic and demographic burdens in North Africa.

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