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Migrations from the Sahel: a new  
challenge for the Maghreb?

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## *Migrations from the Sahel: a new challenge for the Maghreb?*

### *Abstract:*

*The Sahel is currently during a severe crisis making the living conditions even harder. Consequently, more people are choosing to flee their country and move to more stable regions, such as Northwest Africa, which has gone from being a transit area on the way to Europe to becoming a destination for migration. This is a new trend, and it is expected that this migration flow will become more significant in the coming years. Therefore, the Maghreb countries must confront this increase of immigration, since its poor management may trigger negative consequences and insecurity, both for these countries and Europe.*

### *Keywords:*

*Migration, Sahel, Maghreb, instability, challenge, population, Europe.*

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## Introduction

Over the past few years, the situation in the Sahel (the area that comprises the territories of Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad and that constitute the Sahel G5<sup>1</sup>) has seriously deteriorated. Although due to its geographical situation, this region may seem distant and not very relevant for Europe, the development of the Sahel should be considered as essential for the stability of the old continent. This land is currently one of the main focuses of terrorism, crime and poverty, and is only separated from Europe by the Maghreb<sup>2</sup>.

Meanwhile, Northwest Africa, the current transit area between the Sahel and Europe, has managed to consolidate itself as one of the most stable regions in the continent. However, in the last decade, this stability has been threatened by several events such as the Arab Spring (2011) and the death of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya (2011). In addition to this, the Maghreb has now to face the challenge of immigration coming from the southern countries in crisis, which, although it does not yet represent a significant number, is expected to continue to rise and transform Northwest Africa into a migratory destination region.

Aware of the geostrategic importance of the Sahel, Spain maintains a clear commitment to peace and development in this territory; and this is reflected in national documents in which this region is included as a priority, such as the national security strategy<sup>3</sup> or the external action strategy<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> To know more about the Sahel G5 consult: DSN, "La Fuerza del Sahel G5", Sitio Oficial del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional, Gobierno de España, 14 June 2019. Available at: <https://www.dsn.gob.es/es/actualidad/sala-prensa/fuerza-conjunta-del-g5-sahel> (all the links quoted in the paper are active to date 2/03/2020)

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the Maghreb includes the countries of Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania (the latter due to its location belongs to both Maghreb and Sahel region) and Northwest Africa is also used as a synonym to refer to the same area.

<sup>3</sup> Gobierno de España, "Estrategia de Seguridad Nacional", page 46, 2017. Available at: [https://www.dsn.gob.es/sites/dsn/files/Estrategia\\_de\\_Seguridad\\_Nacional\\_ESN%20Final.pdf](https://www.dsn.gob.es/sites/dsn/files/Estrategia_de_Seguridad_Nacional_ESN%20Final.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> MAEC, "Estrategia de Acción Exterior", page 127, 2015. Available at:

## The Sahel: a complex reality

Traditionally, the Sahel has been one of the areas with the greatest migratory movement on the planet<sup>5</sup>. Nowadays, in the light of the severity of the crisis, this mobility has intensified, whether in the form of internal or Transahelian migration or towards the Maghreb.

The crisis in the Sahel is multi-causal. Firstly, these countries are among the least developed<sup>6</sup> and most fragile<sup>7</sup> states in the world. Regarding the economic sphere, their GDP is much lower than the average and up to ten times less than the GDP of their northern neighbours<sup>8</sup>, which is reflected in its society as it is estimated that around 40% of their population lives in extreme poverty<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, these countries have always suffered from great corruption and politician instability, which have increased considerably in the last decade<sup>10</sup>.

The fragility and weakness of the States create the ideal scenario for criminal activity, to which is added the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity that, conveniently instrumentalized, feeds conflict and favours the radicalization of criminal groups. Consequently, the Sahel has become one of the most active centres of terrorism, a refuge for terrorist groups such as Force de Libération du Macina (FML), AQIM (Al-

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<sup>5</sup> CHARRO BAENA, Pilar (2013). “África en Movimiento: Perfil de las Migraciones en el África Subsahariana”. En Ministerio de Defensa, “Monografías 134: África: Riesgos y Oportunidades en el horizonte de 2035”, pages 211-230, Madrid, 2013. Available at:

[http://bibliotecavirtualdefensa.es/BVMDefensa/i18n/catalogo\\_imagenes/grupo.cmd?path=95754](http://bibliotecavirtualdefensa.es/BVMDefensa/i18n/catalogo_imagenes/grupo.cmd?path=95754)

<sup>6</sup> UN-OHRLLS, available at: <http://unohrlls.org/about-ldcs/>

<sup>7</sup> THE FUND FOR PEACE, “Fragile States Index Annual Report 2019”, Washington, 2019. Available at: <https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/9511904-fragilestatesindex.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> World Bank Data, available at: <https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/global-economic-prospects>

<sup>9</sup> UNCTAD, “Development and Globalisation: facts and figures”. 2016. Available at: <https://stats.unctad.org/Dgff2016/DGFF2016.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> World Bank data, available at:

[https://tcddata360.worldbank.org/indicators/h395cb858?country=MLI&indicator=376&countries=MAR,MRT,NER,TCD,SEN&viz=line\\_chart&years=1996,2018&compareBy=region](https://tcddata360.worldbank.org/indicators/h395cb858?country=MLI&indicator=376&countries=MAR,MRT,NER,TCD,SEN&viz=line_chart&years=1996,2018&compareBy=region)

Qaeda's branch in the Maghreb), or the West African Jihad (MUYAO)<sup>11</sup>, as well as for other non-autochthonous groups that have extended their area of action<sup>12</sup>.

The presence of these organisations not only causes terror and violence, but it is also associated with an increase in criminal activity in the area. This is attributable to the three main sources of funding of these groups: kidnapping, drug trafficking and people smuggling<sup>13</sup>. Besides, the geographical location of the Sahel, on the way to Europe from Sub-Saharan Africa, is particularly favourable for trafficking activities.

Furthermore, this region is one of the most vulnerable lands to climate change, both regarding its geographical position and the number of people affected. Climate change has a direct impact on the lives of the inhabitants of these countries since the dominant economic activity is the primary sector<sup>14</sup>. Desertification, floods, and droughts hamper agriculture and livestock farming which results in a reduction of crop yields and increases food insecurity in a region that has traditionally struggled to supply its population<sup>15</sup>.

The effects of the crisis are multiplied by the pressure of the population growth<sup>16</sup>. The declining infant mortality rate, the increasing life expectancy, the high percentage of young people and the control of epidemics in the territory have led to unsustainable demographic growth. By 2050, the population of the Sahel is expected to grow from 78.5 million to over 200 million, and by 2100, it will be of over 430 million<sup>17</sup>. This

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<sup>11</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2019: measuring the impact of terrorism", Sidney, November 2019, available at: <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/11/GTI-2019web.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> As Boko Haram, originally from Nigeria but now also active in some parts of the Sahel region. Ibidem, pages 14 y 21.

<sup>13</sup> FAGÍN TABOADA, José Carlos. *El Sahel, una Nueva Amenaza en la Frontera*, opinión paper, IEEE, Madrid, 2017. Available at: [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_opinion/2017/DIEEEO15-2017\\_Sahel\\_FaginTaboada.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2017/DIEEEO15-2017_Sahel_FaginTaboada.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> CIA, "The World Factbook", Field listing: GDP-composition, by sector of origin, Washington, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/214.html>

<sup>15</sup> FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP y WHO, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019. Safeguarding against economic slowdowns and downturns", FAO, Rome, 2019. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> The best example is Niger, where the population has doubled its size in less than 20 years. World Bank Data, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/sp.pop.totl>

<sup>17</sup> Ministerio de Defensa, "Panorama de Tendencias Geopolíticas. Horizonte 2040", Madrid, December 2018, available at: [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Nacional/2019/panorama\\_de\\_tendencias\\_geopoliticas\\_2040.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Nacional/2019/panorama_de_tendencias_geopoliticas_2040.pdf)

exponential increase in population hinders governance, as it complicates the efforts of the State to control the territory, and to tackle poverty and inequality, resulting in the deterioration of the fragile service systems<sup>18</sup>.

As a result, millions of people are moving to other places in search of greater stability and new opportunities. Nonetheless, a massive increase in emigration may have negative consequences for the Sahel.

Emigration means a decrease in human capital, which implies a reduction in productivity and general production. The profile of the migrant is that of a young person, usually male and of working age. In the case of the Sahel, where agriculture is the principal economic activity, the loss of human capital is more severe on account of the fact that the production is mainly for self-consumption, especially in rural areas<sup>19</sup>.

This said, not only do people dedicated to the primary sector emigrate, but also the most qualified are leaving their countries. The improvement of education quality and literacy<sup>20</sup> in the region has not been supported by opportunities for skilled employment; hence many people seek these jobs abroad. This migration is a great loss to the State as these citizens, properly embedded in the institutions, would help promote education, strengthen the capacity of the State and consequently, they would contribute positively to the governance of the country.

In addition, migrants leave their families behind, especially children and the elderly, and their departure has negative consequences on these more vulnerable groups. In many cases, the absence of a parent means that children have to leave school to support themselves, either working or doing household chores. It has also been proved that, given these conditions, children are more likely to develop psychological problems<sup>21</sup>. Nor

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<sup>18</sup> To know more about this topic consult: MORAS, Juan, *Sahel: un tsunami demográfico... ¿reversible?* Analysis Paper, IEEE, 2018. Available at: [http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_analisis/2018/DIEEEA03-2018\\_Sahel-Tsunami\\_demografico\\_reversible\\_JAMT.pdf](http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2018/DIEEEA03-2018_Sahel-Tsunami_demografico_reversible_JAMT.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> OECD, "The development impact of migration in origin countries", in "Perspectives on Global Development 2017: International Migration in a Shifting World", pages 183-216, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2016. Available at: [https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/persp\\_glob\\_dev-2017-11-en](https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/persp_glob_dev-2017-11-en)

<sup>20</sup> Among the young population, the literacy rate has gone in twenty years from a 26% to a 48% in Niger, from 32% to 57% in Mali, 17% to 30% in Chad and 20% to 58% in Burkina Faso. World Bank Data, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.ZS?end=2018&start=1976&view=chart>

<sup>21</sup> Van de Glind, Hans, "Migración y trabajo infantil: Análisis de las vulnerabilidades de los niños migrantes y niños que quedan atrás" page 13, Oficina Internacional de Trabajo, Geneva, 2010.

can the impact of this situation on the State be denied; since these two groups suffer from greater vulnerability and dependence, they require more attention from the State, thus contributing less to it and hindering governance.

### **The Maghreb: from transit region to final destination**

As mentioned above, migration in the Sahel is not a new phenomenon, and the Maghreb has traditionally been a transit area for sub-Saharan migration on its way to Europe. In order to reach this destination there are three main routes through Northwest Africa: the first and busiest<sup>22</sup> is the Central Mediterranean Route, which arrives in Italy or Malta through Libya, Tunisia or Algeria; the second, the Western Mediterranean Route, reaches peninsular Spain from Algeria and Morocco; and, finally, the Western African Route connects Morocco with the Spanish Canary Islands. Therefore, Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia are the main transit areas.

However, in recent years, migration trends in the region have changed. The higher prosperity of and stability in the countries of Northwest Africa, as well as the cultural, religious, and economic links of these states with the Sahel, and the worsening of the aforementioned crisis, have turned the Maghreb into a migratory destination. This trend is also encouraged by the closure of borders in Europe and the tightening of its migration policy<sup>23</sup>, which makes it difficult for immigrants to reach the continent via the traditional routes. In 2007, fewer than 3% of the immigrants considered Morocco as their destination, whereas in 2016 almost 70% regarded Morocco as their final country of destination<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> IOM, "World Migration Report 2018", Chapter 3: Migrations and Migrants: regional dimensions and development, Geneva, 2017. Available at:

[https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2018\\_en\\_chapter3.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en_chapter3.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Examples of this are FRONTEX efforts in the last year. See in: FRONTEX, "2019 in Brief", Warsaw, 2020. Available at: [https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/frontex\\_inbrief\\_website\\_002.pdf](https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/frontex_inbrief_website_002.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> VV AA, "Les migrants subsahariens au Maroc: Enjeux d'une migration de résidence", Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Rabat, 2016. Available at: [https://www.kas.de/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=5757725d-390b-3cbf-1151-999a9653f572&groupId=252038](https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=5757725d-390b-3cbf-1151-999a9653f572&groupId=252038)



To achieve their goal, many migrants hire smugglers who know the routes and connections better, as these paths are difficult to cross without prior knowledge<sup>25</sup>. Although there are a large number of Transaharan routes, most sub-Saharan migrants access the Maghreb through the Eastern Route, beginning in Agadez (Niger) and from there to Sebha (Libya) or Tamanrasset (Algeria). Once in Algeria, many proceed to Morocco<sup>26</sup>. Other important routes are the Central Route from Gao (Mali) to Algeria and the Atlantic Route from Senegal to Morocco.

Although Libya was prior to the fall of Gaddafi the main receiver of migration in Northwest Africa, the growing instability in the country has consolidated Algeria as the main destination. One example is the city of Tamanrasset, which Bensaad describes as a veritable “Tower of Babel”<sup>27</sup> since 40% of its population are immigrants. Nonetheless, this is not the only case, as other cities in the country such as Algiers and Oran also have large immigrant populations in their urban centres.

### **A new challenge for the Maghreb?**

Nowadays, immigration in the Maghreb represents a low percentage of the population, however, the new migration dynamics towards Northwest Africa may pose a challenge for these countries. Although these States are the most developed in the continent, they are not yet fully consolidated, thus a rise in immigration adds uncertainty and may deteriorate the existing fragile political and economic balance.

One of the major weaknesses of their economies is unemployment, especially among the young population<sup>28</sup>. Immigration is a challenge in this field, as these people migrate in the hope of finding a job to send remittances to their families in the country of origin. Furthermore, in the economic terms, it is worth noting the high inflation in countries such

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<sup>25</sup> Altai Consulting, “Mixed migration: Libya at the crossroads”, Tripoli, 2013. Available at: [http://www.altaiconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Altai\\_Consulting-UNHCR-Mixed\\_Migration\\_Libya-1.pdf](http://www.altaiconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Altai_Consulting-UNHCR-Mixed_Migration_Libya-1.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> IOM, “Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union”, Geneva, 2008. Available at: [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mrs-32\\_en.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mrs-32_en.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> BENSAAAD, “Las migraciones subsaharianas en Argelia”. in VV AA, “Magreb y las migraciones subsaharianas: el papel de asociaciones y sindicatos”, pages 101-133, Casa Árabe, Madrid, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> High unemployment rates, in the whole region young unemployment rate is above 20%. World Bank Data “World Development Indicators: unemployment”, 2018, available at: <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.5#>

as Algeria and Tunisia, a phenomenon that could be fuelled by the arrival of the new population.

In this way, immigration can pose a challenge to the economy of the region, and in order to minimize the negative effects, governments will probably have to agree an increase in public spending to ensure stability for both their native and immigrant population, with this increase in public spending to meet the needs of immigration possibly triggering social tensions.

Indeed, there have already been protests and confrontations with immigrants from the south. Examples of these tensions are the increasingly common cries of *soudani* or *azzi* (pejorative for black people), aggressions and evictions. Migration is perceived as negative to a greater extent<sup>29</sup>.

These attitudes are consolidated in the local media. At times, certain publications may reinforce stereotypes and prejudices, feeding the fears of the population. Headlines such as “*Population threatened by Africans*” in *El Watan* newspaper are becoming more frequent<sup>30</sup>. The messages sent from these media can result in the stigmatization of the immigration; among the most repeated information is the criminalization of these migrants, portrayed as traffickers, terrorists, swindlers or pimps, and the use of terms such as “danger” or “threat” associated with the idea of migration<sup>31</sup>.

This depiction of migration may lead to the dehumanization of these people, which may result in the creation of the perception that immigration constitutes nothing more than a burden to the state and a threat to society. In turn, this may contribute to the polarisation of that society and the reaffirmation of certain discriminatory behaviours. But the idea created by the media may not only be reflected in the attitudes of the people but could also influence governmental actions. Racist social reactions can lead to more aggressive anti-migration policies as a response by the government to keep “its” population happy.

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<sup>29</sup> IOM, “How the World Views Migration”, IOM, pages 12 y 32, Geneva, 2015. Available at: [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/how\\_the\\_world\\_gallup.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/how_the_world_gallup.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> BENSÂAD, “Las migraciones subsaharianas en Argelia”. In VV AA, “Magreb y las migraciones subsaharianas: el papel de asociaciones y sindicatos”, pages 101-133, Casa Árabe, Madrid, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> TEMPLALI, “Las migraciones subsaharianas en la prensa diaria Argelina”. In VV AA, “Magreb y las migraciones subsaharianas: el papel de asociaciones y sindicatos”, pages 85-100, Casa Árabe, Madrid, 2011



## The immigrants in the Maghreb

Immigrants living in Northwest Africa arrived in search of new opportunities, with the aim of improving their lives. The vast majority of these people have no links with terrorist or smuggling groups; indeed, many have fled from the terror that these groups have instilled in their own countries. Nonetheless, the precarious situation in which they find themselves in the countries of destination makes them susceptible to radicalization.

In contrast to the perception that the native population of the Maghreb has of immigrants that steal their resources, this new population lives in a situation of economic and social precariousness, which is also far from the expectations that the migrants themselves held when they decided to leave their own countries. In many cases, they find themselves living in small collective rooms where abuse and aggressions are not unknown, and even a significant number of these immigrants are unable to find housing. In addition, most have no source of income and thus, some of them resort to begging as a way of life<sup>32</sup>. In opposition to the image of the immigrant who takes all the jobs, they have few employment opportunities and do not manage to get a job, or, if they do, it is often undeclared activities such as gardening, construction work or domestic service.

As a result, a high proportion of immigration lives in poverty. Although it is simplistic to affirm that poverty equals criminality, what is clear is that, along with other variables, it does favours it, as a situation of poverty facilitates the recruitment of new members for criminal or terrorist cells. In fact, economic frustration is the primary reason why young people are drawn into this world.

People who are unemployed or working in the informal sector, especially those who are educated but underemployed, are more likely to be seduced by these groups than those who are economically active and whose expectations are met<sup>33</sup>. Terrorist and criminal groups take advantage of the feeling of helplessness and disillusionment of these migrants with greater preparation to attract them to their organizations. This view is

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<sup>32</sup> AMERM, "L'immigration subsaharienne au Maroc", June 2008. Available at: <http://amerm.ma/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/De-l'afrique-subsaharienne-au-Maroc-Les-réalites-de-la-migration-irregulière.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> UNDP, "Journey to Extremism in Africa", Chapter 3: Economic Factors, pages 54-61. New York, 2017. Available at: <http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org>

supported by several experts and studies, among them a World Bank Report which found that members of terrorist organizations in the Middle East and Northwest Africa have more education than the average person in the region<sup>34</sup>.

Another reality is the marginalization of this group of people. This is another of the top exploited assets by terrorist groups when it comes to recruiting new members since they promise immigrants to be part of “something bigger”, that is to say, to feel integrated. Social exclusion and institutional discrimination generate a collective feeling of marginalization, alienation, and disenchantment with the new country of residence. This prevents immigrants from identifying with the host society; and consequently, mistrust increases, not only towards the autochthonous population but also towards the State. As mentioned above, immigration in the Maghreb is subject to racist and xenophobic attitudes, sometimes encouraged by the media, and which often lead to confrontations and attacks. For Jessica Stern, envy, despair, and humiliation are key feelings for understanding Islamic extremism<sup>35</sup>.

Far from improving and promoting integration, in many cases, the measures taken by the government to satisfy its angry population have deteriorated the conditions of the immigrants. Some measures aimed at tacking confrontations and terrorism have turned out to be counterproductive. In a study conducted by the UN on the main reasons for joining terrorist organizations, 71% of those interviewed acknowledged that the critical point in their decision was right after a government action which led to the arrest, deportation or death of a family member or friend<sup>36</sup>. Moreover, the State may end up exercising institutional discrimination which, if perpetuated, would mean the limitation of the rights of these people and, therefore, an increase of instability. As the International Institute for Peace reaffirms, failure to respect human and political rights encourages terrorism<sup>37</sup>. Hence, the most aggressive government measures such as raids,

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<sup>34</sup> VV AA, “Economic and social inclusion to prevent violent extremism”, MENA Economic Monitor, World Bank Group, Washington, 2016. Available at:

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/409591474983005625/pdf/108525-REVISED-PUBLIC.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> STERN, Jessica, “Trauma and humiliation: Get to the roots of terrorism”, The New York Times, 26 April 2002. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/26/opinion/IHT-trauma-and-humiliation-get-to-the-roots-of-terrorism.html>

<sup>36</sup> UNDP, “Journey to Extremism in Africa”, Chapter 5: Tipping Point, pages 72-80, New York, 2017. Available at: <http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org>

<sup>37</sup> International Peace Academy, “Human Rights, the United Nations, and the Struggle against Terrorism” page 19, New York, 2003. Available at: <https://www.ipinst.org/wp->

expulsions or limitations of rights, instead of providing security, accelerate the process of radicalization, and thus provoke greater insecurity.

### **The attempts to manage this new situation**

Traditionally, the Maghreb has opted for aggressive migration policies, however, it has now to adapt to its new situation as a destination region. The increase in migratory pressure poses a new challenge and has therefore led to the creation of new measures and strategies that seek to limit the negative effects.

The different countries of Northwest Africa have approached the migration issue in different ways. Among them, Morocco launched in 2013 an ambitious national immigration strategy that meant a complete break with the previous vision of the Maghreb and the African Union. It is based on the integration of immigrants, guaranteeing basic services such as education, access to the labour market and to health care<sup>38</sup>; but be that as it may, its effectiveness and implementation is being questioned. Algeria also announced measures in this line of action, although they have not yet been implemented<sup>39</sup>. In Tunisia, there has been no substantial change in migration policy, which continues to be governed by the “laissez-faire” approach, albeit now made more difficult by the increase in immigrants arriving from Libya. Still, some laws have been passed to promote a certain degree of integration, such as the law for the criminalization of racist actions proposed in 2016 and adopted in 2018<sup>40</sup>.

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[content/uploads/2015/06/human\\_rights.pdf](#)

<sup>38</sup> Conseil National des droits de l'homme, “Etrangers et droits de l'homme au Maroc: pour une politique d'asile et d'immigration radicalement nouvelle”, Rabat, 2013. Available at:

[https://cndh.ma/sites/default/files/etrangers\\_et\\_droits\\_de\\_lhomme.pdf](https://cndh.ma/sites/default/files/etrangers_et_droits_de_lhomme.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> TADESSE ABEBE, Tision, “Algeria and Morocco’s migrant policies could prevent violent extremism”, ISS, 2018. Available at: [https://issafrica.org/iss-today/algeria-and-moroccos-migrant-policies-could-prevent-violent-extremism?utm\\_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm\\_campaign=ISS\\_Today&utm\\_medium=email](https://issafrica.org/iss-today/algeria-and-moroccos-migrant-policies-could-prevent-violent-extremism?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=ISS_Today&utm_medium=email)

<sup>40</sup> NATTER, Katharina, “Rethinking immigration policy theory beyond “Western Liberal Democracies””, Comparative migration studies, 6(1), 4, page 12, Amsterdam, 2018. Available at: [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5830462/pdf/40878\\_2018\\_Article\\_71.pdf](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5830462/pdf/40878_2018_Article_71.pdf)

The intricacy of the situation entails that these more integrative measures sometimes overlap with more traditional measures such as deportations and raids. In spite of the difficulties, the governments of Northwest Africa continue to seek more effective measures in this area and to cooperate actively with the European Union<sup>41</sup>.

From Europe, in addition to helping the countries on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea with this new migration challenge, the focus is on the region of origin: the Sahel. There are numerous ongoing strategies that aim to tackle the crisis in this territory, such as the Regional Action Plan of 2015<sup>42</sup>. The European Union also constitutes the main source of international aid in the region and promotes cooperation with other local actors and organizations. In the case of Spain, the Sahel appears as a priority too as was mentioned at the beginning.

In short, both regional and international actors focus their efforts on reducing the negative effects of mass migration while acting in the area of origin.

## Conclusion

The complexity of the situation is undeniable, and it is therefore essential that the measures adopted are multidimensional. In order to reduce the migration flow towards the north, it is crucial to maintain the current actions in the Sahel and to increase cooperation between regional actors, immigration-receiving and transit countries and the European Union. The stability of the Sahel is not only a priority for the countries of this area, but also for the security of the Maghreb and Europe.

This said, the strategies adopted in the Sahel are unlikely to have an immediate effect, since stabilization requires continuous and sustained measures, and their effectiveness is demonstrated in the medium and long term. Nonetheless, migration to the north is already an ongoing phenomenon that will not cease to increase in the coming years, so the countries of the Maghreb must maintain and intensify their efforts to minimize the potential adverse effects of immigration.

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<sup>41</sup> For example: EU “EU emergency trust fund for Africa: improving migration management in the North of Africa region” 2019. Available at:

[https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/eueta/files/facsheet\\_north\\_africa\\_dec\\_2019.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/eueta/files/facsheet_north_africa_dec_2019.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Council of the EU, “Council conclusions on the Sahel Regional Action Plan 2015-2020”, Brussels, 2015. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21522/st07823-en15.pdf>

Mismanagement of immigration could lead to an increase in terrorism in the area, as these organizations feed on the vulnerability, poverty, disillusionment, and lack of integration of the population to recruit new members. Therefore, the governments of the region have to pay special attention to these conditions and improve the current situation of their immigrants. The integration of this group is the most important and complex challenge for the Maghreb.

The present is the ideal time to tackle the challenge since the number of immigrants is still small and manageable. Tomorrow may be too late.

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