

‘La mal vie’

The routes, drivers and politics of North African irregular migration

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Between 2016 and 2019 irregular migration by North Africans to Europe increased noticeably. The rising numbers are driven by economic pessimism, social frustration and structural inequality. Old routes, which stretch from North African to European shores, have resurged in popularity. While some North African migrants engage with smugglers to take them north, a growing number are opting to organise their trip themselves, buying boats and heading for Europe. This dynamic has changed the politics around migration for both North African governments and those European nations offering aid.

Key findings

- ▶ Between 2016 and 2019 the number of North African irregular migrants apprehended by North African and European states rose significantly.
- ▶ Rising irregular migration is part of a larger trend of migration from North Africa to Europe. This 'brain drain' has a far bigger impact on North African states than the types of irregular migration most of concern to Europe.
- ▶ The demographics of North African migrants are changing. Historically, it was young men who headed north. Over the last three years, growing numbers of women, children and families have joined them.
- ▶ North African migrants are reverting to migration routes directly from their home countries to Europe, rather than migrating via Turkey or Libya as in the past.
- ▶ Human smugglers continue to play an important role in enabling the transit of North Africans to Europe. However, self-organised smuggling, involving migrants sourcing the necessary materials (boats, engines, GPS, etc.) and departing on their own, is growing in popularity.
- ▶ A rich social media ecosystem has emerged around irregular migration in North Africa, with regularly updated content both driving a desire to emigrate and offering practical information on how to accomplish it.
- ▶ For North African states, these factors mean that the politics around migration and migration control have changed. Government efforts to halt the departure of their nationals risk further fuelling social pressures and protests.

Recommendations

- ▶ North African governments and international donors should design migration programmes that incorporate routine, iterative reviews and that are flexible enough to be redesigned in response to changing situations.
- ▶ Short-term technical solutions to irregular migration should give way to longer-term, strategic and comprehensive programmes.
- ▶ Instead of stand-alone counter-migration programming, donor and government efforts should address key structural issues, including weak rule of law, criminal justice reform and security sector reform.
- ▶ Highly tailored interventions for countering migration on each route and among each nationality could have an impact. Social media in particular offers a novel means of better understanding drivers and, through that, crafting innovative responses.
- ▶ Routine engagement and multi-stakeholder dialogue among North African states and key constituencies linked to migration should be increased in order to identify frustrations and drivers of the phenomena.
- ▶ Engagement and dialogue between North African states on issues of irregular migration should be encouraged. The similarities in driving and enabling factors across the region mean that regional states are best positioned to offer each other policy recommendations and good practices in addressing shared challenges.
- ▶ Open and honest dialogue is needed on migration between Europe and North Africa. There must be a discussion on how regular and irregular migration can best serve the needs of North Africa and Europe.

Hundreds of Moroccan youth crowded the beaches of Al-Hociema in late September 2018. Both men and women had come, drawn by a rumour that had spread online that migrant smugglers were offering passage north to Spain. A similar scene had played out the night before in Martil, close to the city of Tangier, where youth chanted ‘free migration’ as they waited and hoped that smugglers would come to take them north.¹

The scenes were simultaneously extraordinary and highly reflective of North African youth’s mounting desire to migrate to Europe, whether by legal or irregular means.

Close to 35 500 Moroccans were caught by European states between 2016 and 2019.² For other North African nationalities the numbers may be slightly less, but they are growing rapidly. Between 2015 and 2018 the number of Algerian migrants apprehended by Algeria and European states more than tripled to over 13 000.³ Observers and Algerian media reports suggest far larger numbers of migrants have arrived in Europe undetected.⁴ In 2017 and 2018 Tunisia witnessed the largest migration wave since the 2011 revolution.⁵ Even Libyans, long presumed to be averse to irregular migration, are leaving in growing numbers.⁶

Rising irregular migration by North Africans poses a complex challenge to governments

The profile of the migrants has also changed. Once it was young men, often with limited education. These men continue to crowd the boats, but their travelling companions increasingly include university graduates, women, young children and the elderly. As one observer noted, parents are taking their families north not for themselves, but to ‘ensure a better future for their children’.⁷

Rising irregular migration by North Africans poses a complex challenge to regional governments. Halting the migrant flow is key strategic goal for European states. But, in a time of worsening economic troubles and rising social frustration, migration offers an outlet for the region’s youth. Migration is a key stabilising factor in North Africa in an otherwise volatile time. For regional governments, efforts to address the issue are thus complicated and politically fraught in ways fundamentally

dissimilar from previous efforts to address migration by foreigners who were transiting through the region.

This study explores the current state of irregular migration by North Africans (Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians and Libyans) to Europe. It focuses primarily on seaborne irregular migration along the western and central Mediterranean migration corridors, entailing departures from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya towards Spain, Italy and Malta. For each corridor, departure points and smuggling methods will be discussed. Next, the study will turn to the factors driving and enabling the rise in irregular migration, including the growing role of social media. Finally, it will detail government responses before ending with a brief set of recommendations.

This study builds on an evidence base first developed by the ISS in the 2016 publication *At the edge: trends and routes in North African migration*. The report is based on over 100 interviews conducted in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia with migrants, smugglers, civil society members, government officials and international observers. This field research was complemented by an analysis of media articles, data and reports from governments and intergovernmental organisations, and academic and policy articles on the phenomenon.

North African migration in the past

Moroccans, Algerians and Tunisians have been migrating to Europe in large numbers since the North African nations gained independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Leveraging the large diasporas that had developed during the colonial era, and lured by Europe’s need for labour, migrants from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia began to go north seeking work.⁸ Many arrived in bilateral worker exchange programmes, others went on tourist visas and stayed, working in agriculture or in the continent’s large informal sector.⁹ Visas were rarely required and travel was straightforward, as migrants arrived on ferries, planes, by bus or by car. Some came planning to stay; for others, work in Europe was part of a circular rhythm, with part of the year spent in their home country and part in their host community.¹⁰

Tightening European border security began to alter this flow in the 1980s and 1990s. Visa requirements were instituted by many European countries for all North African nations. These travel documents were expensive and difficult to access. ‘I remember [in 1991] people began queuing at two or three in the morning near the

French consulate to hand in their visa files; the queues were 40 meters long,' said an Algerian from the western city of Oran. 'Some slept there all night.'¹¹ The imposition of visa requirements did not dissuade Moroccans, Algerians and Tunisians from seeking work in Europe. Jobs existed and, more importantly, in the popular imagination Europe was a place of opportunity.¹²

But stricter entry requirements did affect how North African migrants travelled to Europe, sparking the creation of the first widely-used migrant smuggling pathways across the Mediterranean in the 1990s. The western Mediterranean corridor was forged by smugglers pioneering maritime routes from Morocco, across the Strait of Gibraltar and Alboran Sea, and into southern Spain. Land routes ran from Morocco into the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.¹³

Similarly, Tunisian smugglers developed routes from the northern and southern coastal areas of the country towards Italy's Pelagie islands and Sicily.¹⁴

Smugglers operating in both the western and central Mediterranean were not sophisticated. Most were fishermen, although some had prior experience in moving drugs or other contraband commodities. Nonetheless, little expertise was needed given limited enforcement efforts by North African states. The routes grew in popularity as North Africans seeking jobs or, in the case of Algerians, escaping conflict, sought a path north.¹⁵

European states responded to the rise in migrant smuggling in part by hardening their borders and investing in ships and surveillance technology. Spain, for example, erected walls around its North African enclaves and deployed an integrated maritime surveillance system. They also began to engage more directly with North African states on assistance in stemming migration, information sharing and return of apprehended migrants.¹⁶

There is little evidence that North African states were particularly concerned about the irregular migration of their nationals. However, the issue of migration, specifically migration control, was one of the few points of diplomatic leverage that Morocco and Tunisia, in particular, held when negotiating with their northern neighbours. And so, North African states struck agreements with European states, and with the European Union (EU), to suppress irregular migrant departures from their shores.

Yet even as deals were struck, North African governments often tacitly allowed migration by their citizens, provided it

was deniable. 'Under Ben Ali,' explained one Tunisian expert, 'the main instruction for anyone intending to migrate clandestinely was that, if caught, the person should deny as much as possible that they were Tunisian, throw away their identification and change their dialect.'¹⁷

Nonetheless, greater enforcement by North African governments had an impact in displacing migration routes. Tunisian smugglers transferred their operations to Libya, where international sanctions in the 1990s and early 2000s had prevented governmental cooperation with Europe.¹⁸ Tunisian and Moroccan irregular migrants followed. By 2006 more Moroccans were apprehended by Italian authorities in the central Mediterranean than by Spain in the western Mediterranean.¹⁹

Migrants also sought passage through the eastern Mediterranean: from Turkey, through Greece and up routes through the Balkans. By 2012 most Algerians and Moroccans were apprehended in the Balkans, rather than in the central and western Mediterranean.²⁰

Stricter entry requirements affected how North African migrants travelled to Europe

The migration of North Africans to Europe indirectly, via transit countries, remained constant throughout much of the first half of the 2010s. Up through 2015, most Moroccan and Algerian irregular migrants accessed Europe through the eastern Mediterranean. After the 2015 and 2016 agreements between the EU and Turkey limited the use of that route, departures shifted to western Libya.²¹

This led to a rise in lateral migration across North Africa, especially by Moroccans, who used smuggling networks and overland tracks through Algeria and Libya to reach embarkation points on the Libyan coast.

However, whenever security service pressure or political willingness to combat migration waned, the potential for large-scale migration from Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian shores reemerged. This was underscored in 2011, when in the immediate wake of the country's revolution 27 982 Tunisian irregular migrants left the country's shores and were apprehended by Italian authorities.²²

This two-month pulse was primarily due to the disruption and distraction of the security forces in the wake of the revolution. ‘The coastal areas were almost deserted [of security forces],’ reminisced one migrant. ‘It was the opportunity of a lifetime.’²³

Back to the future: new crowds on old routes

Between 2016 and 2019 North African irregular migration has changed yet again. There has been a sharp increase in the number of migrants apprehended. However, the change in the magnitude of the phenomenon has also been accompanied by a shift in who is migrating, and how and from where they depart for Europe.

Unlike earlier periods in the decade, North African irregular migrants now embark for Europe directly from their home countries. Concurrently, the pool of migrants has expanded from the typical uneducated young men to include women, children, middle-aged and elderly individuals, as well as those with university degrees.

Growing number and changing demographics

Over the last three years the number of North African irregular migrants has grown steadily. In 2016 European and Balkan nations intercepted 12 482 Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians and Libyans; by 2018 the number stood at 31 171.²⁴ Tunisian and Algerian apprehensions have also climbed in a roughly similar ratio to those in Europe, suggesting that rising apprehensions are not

caused by heightened enforcement alone. Observers in North Africa suggest that the increase in departures could be even starker than that conveyed in official numbers, which only count those apprehended. One Algerian lawyer explained that ‘20 to 30 boats’ embarked from just the area around Annaba, an eastern Algerian city, per day, each carrying 15 to 20 migrants.²⁵ Similar views of a significant undercount in departures were voiced by others in eastern and western Algeria, as well as in other North Africa countries.

There has been a shift in who is migrating, and how and from where they depart for Europe

Close to 45% of the 72 127 North African migrants apprehended by European and Balkan nations between 2016 and 2018 were Moroccan.²⁶ Algerians form the next most commonly encountered nationality (31%), followed by Tunisians (19%) and Libyans (5%).²⁷

Nearly all of Algeria’s recent apprehensions, totalling 11 568, involve its own nationals, with a small number of Yemenis, Palestinians and sub-Saharan Africans also reported.²⁸ A similar dynamic prevails in Tunisia, where the overwhelming majority of the 9 610 migrant apprehensions in littoral areas have involved Tunisians,

Figure 1: Migrant apprehensions by Algeria and Tunisia, 2016–2018

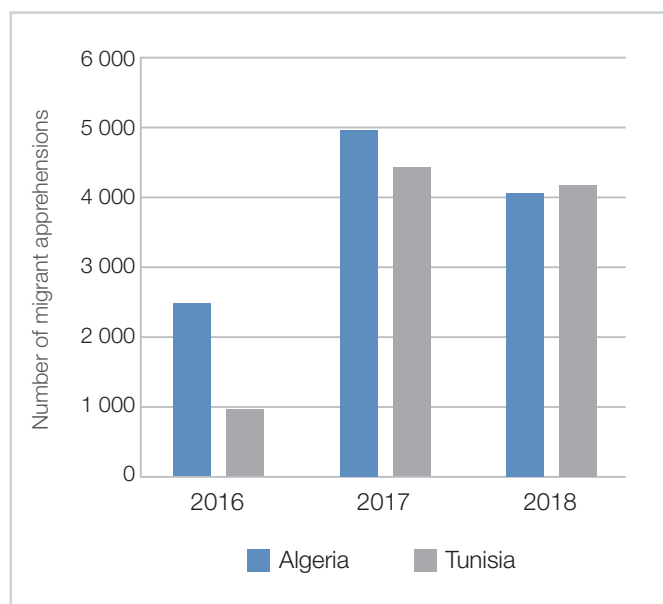
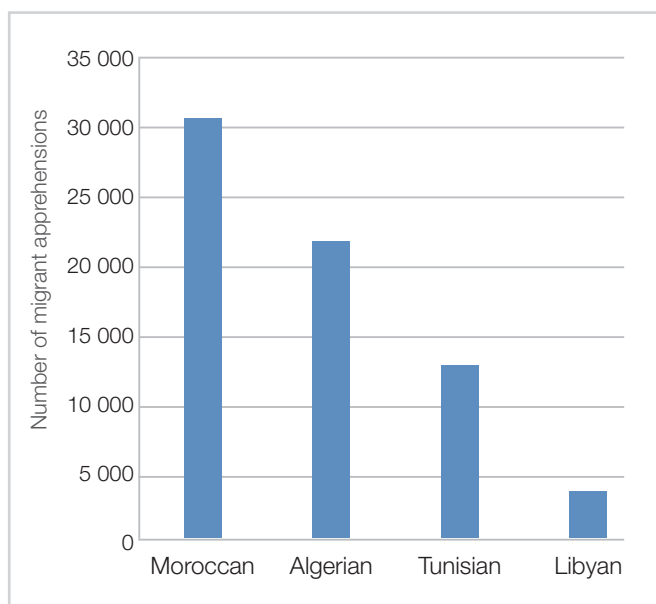


Figure 2: Migrants apprehended by European and Balkan States, 2016–2018



with small numbers of Syrians, Iraqis, Moroccans, Algerians and sub-Saharan African migrants.²⁹ In Morocco, the trend differs, with Moroccan nationals comprising only 20% of migrant apprehension, owing to relatively high use of the western Mediterranean corridor by sub-Saharan migrants.³⁰

The increasing visibility of North African migration actually outpaces the rise in absolute numbers. Overall irregular migration to Europe has declined in recent years, falling from close to 363 000 in 2016 to around 139 000 in 2018.³¹ So, migrants from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya have become a larger part of the remainder, growing from 4% to 27% over the last three years.³² It is this rising visibility of apprehensions and growing numbers that have increased domestic political pressure in Europe and diplomatic pressure by European states on those in North Africa to address the phenomenon.

In part, the rise in the number of North African irregular migrants is linked to changes in who migrates. In the recent past, most Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian irregular migrants were young and male.³³ They were often portrayed as having limited education and enjoying few job prospects. 'Your typical [migrant],' explained a Tunisian security force official, 'is 18 to 35 years old, male, a high school dropout, jobless and from an underprivileged family.'³⁴

While rooted to a degree in reality, the portrayal of irregular migrants as unemployed and under-educated young men is not completely accurate. Most North African irregular migrants interviewed for this study held jobs, even if low-wage ones, before their migration attempt. This matches anecdotal reports from observers interviewed throughout the region.

The stereotype has been battered further over the last few years as a growing number of university degree holders and others with steady jobs have migrated irregularly from each of the North African countries. This is in part owing to the high unemployment rates and limited career prospects many university graduates face, especially in Algeria and Tunisia.

However, there is also a perceptual issue in the rise in migration by degree holders. 'They feel that they have better prospects once they arrive [in] Europe,' a researcher on Tunisian migration explained, 'that their degrees will get them jobs and distinguish them from the non-educated *harragas* [irregular migrants]'.³⁵

More women and children are also taking passage on migrant vessels.³⁶ 'A lot of women are leaving here and taking their children with them. A female friend of mine and her two female friends left on a fishing boat,' explained a youth from Jendouba, in western Tunisia.

The steep increase in women was also flagged by observers in Algeria and Morocco as one of the major changes over the last year.³⁷ In the western Mediterranean, three-fifths of child migrants found in 2018 were Moroccan, followed by Algerians.³⁸ The specific reasons behind this increase are unclear, although they may involve a mix of both greater social acceptance of irregular migration by females and children and the worsening of factors driving migration in the region.

Portraying irregular migrants as unemployed and under-educated young men is not accurate

Finally, in Algeria more families are migrating as single units. In part, this is because of social media and the internet, and the ability it offers migrants to better understand and have control over their journey. This heightened surety on the process has led parents to accept the risks of migrating along with their children.

'Parents can get better boats, more powerful engines and research the weather forecast,' explained an Algerian journalist. 'They know that the weather will be clear for the next three or four days, so this allows people some comfort in taking the risk of taking their children with them.'³⁹

A social worker was more pessimistic about the roots of family migration: 'The parents do not do this for themselves. They do it for their kids, so they have a future elsewhere. This is why you now find families with their three- or four-year-old kid crossing the sea.'⁴⁰

It is also important not to sensationalise the current rise in North African migration: while large and unprecedented for today's generation, far larger numbers of North Africans migrated north to Europe in the past, notably in the 1970s and 1980s. Rather, the current moment represents an important point for analysis and understanding of how migration occurs, and what drivers and enabling factors are behind the current pulse.

How North African irregular migrants reach Europe

Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians and Libyans seeking to migrate to Europe use a variety of means to accomplish their aim. Some of these are legal, some entail fraudulent documents, and still others involve transit north on boats or hidden in cars. The following section will detail the different methods and routes in turn.

Legal migration and North Africa's 'brain drain'

While North African migrants using clandestine methods to reach Europe get significant media attention, they are only one part of a larger story. Large numbers of young Moroccans, Algerians and Tunisians are leaving their home countries legally, to live and work in Europe, Canada, the United States and Gulf countries.

For most, their desire to emigrate is driven primarily by economic considerations. As a Tunisian consultant in Paris explained, 'Here I am paid five times the equivalent of a worker in Tunisia in the same position.'⁴¹

Others frame it in terms of the perception that conditions in North African states are declining. 'The working conditions in Tunisia are getting more and more unbearable,' explained one young Tunisian medical student planning to migrate. '*L'état se resserre* [the noose is tightening].'⁴²

Most migrants' desire to emigrate is driven primarily by economic considerations

European nations have benefitted from this exodus of well-educated North Africans. Scores of medical specialists in particular have settled in Europe, primarily France and Germany. In 2018 this included half of all newly graduated doctors in Tunisia and another 4 000 from Algeria.⁴³

It is this exodus of highly educated talent from the region that is arguably one of the most damaging forms of migration for North African nations, as it erodes key sectors, such as healthcare, heightens social frustration with governments over weakening service delivery in those sectors, and stymies efforts to leverage the human capital of the region to build resilient economies in North Africa.

A large cadre of North Africans go through the steps to legally apply for tourist visas to Europe – some with the intention of overstaying, but most for the simple opportunity to travel, to see family, or to enjoy a new adventure. In 2017 over 1.6 million North Africans applied for visas to Europe alone, up from around 1.2 million in 2014.⁴⁴

The rate at which visas are rejected has also increased, although it differs significantly based on nationality. Nearly 36% of Algerian applicants for short-term European visas are refused, versus close to 15% in Morocco.⁴⁵ After one or more rejections, however, North Africans hoping to migrate to Europe often begin looking at other options.

Fraudulent documents

A booming underground industry in falsified work contracts, fake marriages and other fraudulent means of gaining residency can be found throughout North Africa. Moroccans in Europe in particular have been caught in large numbers using falsified documents or doctored contracts by European authorities.⁴⁶

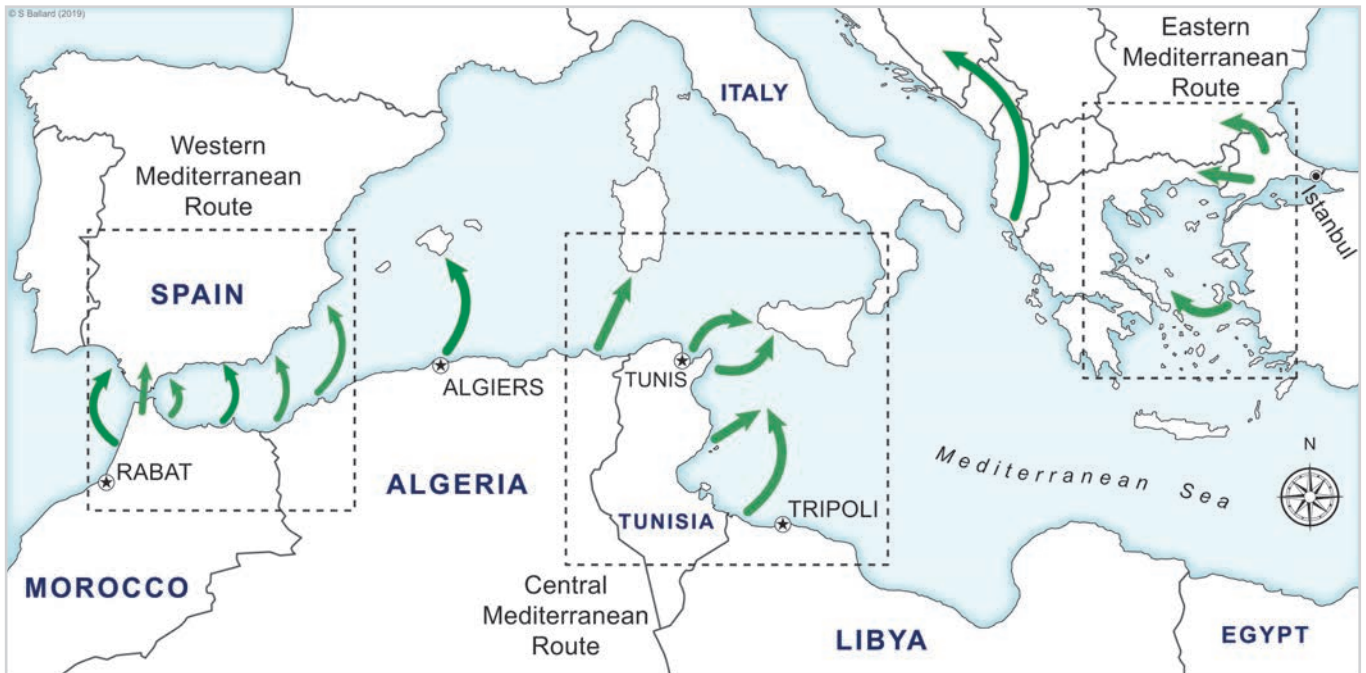
Fraudulent documents are on average more expensive than the forms of clandestine migration described later. A falsified French work contract as sold in Tunis, for example, reportedly costs 2 900 to 3 500 euros.⁴⁷ However, using falsified work contracts or fake marriages is viewed as a less risky means of accessing Europe and a safer way to live and work there once arrived.

Irregular routes and methods of maritime migrants

Irregular passage to Europe on boats or hidden in vehicles is not the most common means for Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians and Libyans to get to Europe. It is, however, the most publicised, with dramatic videos and media reports emerging over the last few years highlighting the arrival of boatloads of North Africans on European shores.⁴⁸

Because of this, maritime migration is a significant irritant in bilateral relations between the EU, its member states and North African nations. Because of the danger and risk of death for the migrants, such migration also causes tensions in the domestic politics of North African states. For this reason, understanding how and why maritime migration is changing is crucial.

Figure 3: The three routes used by North Africans to reach Europe



Source: Author's own map, S Ballard – cartographer

The routes and methods used by irregular migrants have seen tremendous changes over the last three years, transformed by changing push and pull factors in the North Africa and along the routes themselves.

The western Mediterranean corridor, comprising departure points in Morocco and western Algeria, has unexpectedly emerged as the focus of both North African and sub-Saharan migration towards Europe.⁴⁹

The routes used by irregular migrants have seen tremendous changes over the last three years

In the central Mediterranean, the number of departures from Tunisia, and to a lesser degree eastern Algeria, has grown.⁵⁰ However, few North Africans now venture through Libya, dissuaded by the perceived violence and danger of the situation.

Use of the eastern Mediterranean corridor has declined even further.⁵¹ While some nationalities – notably Algerians and Libyans – continue to move through Turkey and the Balkans in an attempt to reach Europe, the number of North African migrants on that route is

a fraction of what it was in 2015, when use of the route was at its peak.

The diversity of options for North African irregular migrants seeking to get to Europe underscores the difficulty regional and international actors face in halting migration through national-level securitised approaches alone.

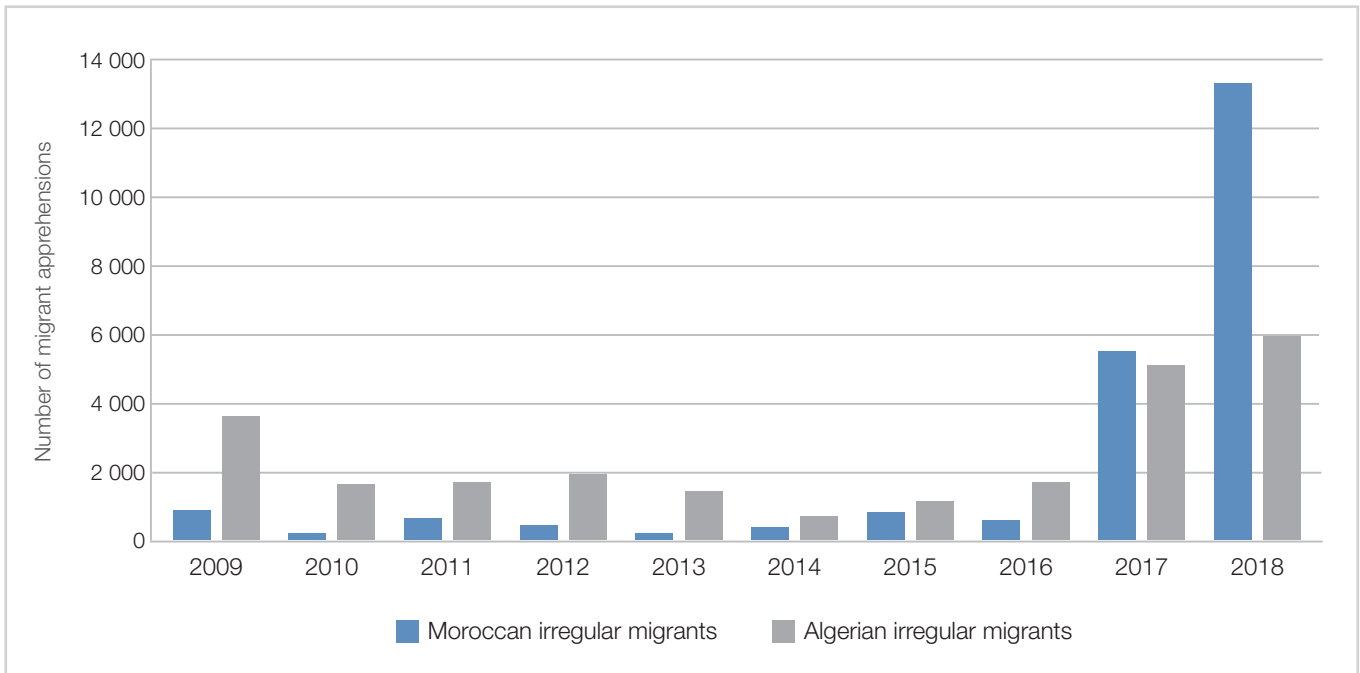
A recurrent theme among North African migrants is flexibility in shifting routes and the use of alternative methods in response to security or political pressures. The following section will explore the three main routes and methods used by the migrants.

Western Mediterranean corridor

The western Mediterranean corridor involves several distinct routes between Morocco and Algeria and the Spanish mainland and Balearic Islands. Much further to the south, a migration route between Morocco and western African countries and Spain's Canary Islands also seems to be rising in popularity, although for reasons of conceptual focus it will not be dealt with in this analysis.

Between 2016 and 2019 the western Mediterranean corridor surged in use among North African irregular migrants. Primarily, this is owing to the sharp decrease

Figure 4: Moroccan and Algerian irregular migrants apprehended in the western Mediterranean



in Moroccan migrants migrating to Europe via Libya and Turkey, and their current preference for departing directly from Morocco to Europe.⁵²

A discernable shift in Algerian irregular migration departures from the east to the west of the country has also played a significant role. In 2014, 436 Moroccans and 734 Algerians were apprehended by European authorities. By the end of 2018, 13 316 Moroccans, 5 990 Algerians and 520 Tunisians had been caught.⁵³ In Morocco and Algeria, thousands of other North African migrants were detained by local security forces.⁵⁴

Migration across the western Mediterranean corridor is eased by northern Morocco's proximity to Europe. In contrast to routes across the Mediterranean from Libya or Tunisia, the distance between North Africa and Europe around the Strait of Gibraltar is 14 km. This shortens the duration of transit and lessens the likelihood of interception by law enforcement actors.

For migrants attempting to reach Spain's enclave cities of Ceuta and Melilla, by land or by sea, the transit can be even shorter.

The rising popularity of the western Mediterranean corridor is attributable to a mix of push and pull factors. In part, it is linked to the sharp decline in migration

through Libya between 2017 and 2018 owing to worsening security conditions and the growing risk of violence against Moroccan migrants.⁵⁵ Several well-publicised instances in which Moroccan migrants were detained contributed to perceptions of the danger of crossing the country and pushed Moroccans away from using the route.⁵⁶

Since 2016, the western Mediterranean corridor surged in use by North African irregular migrants

In turn, migrants seem to have been pulled to the western Mediterranean corridor by growing reports of successful transits by other migrants. The genesis of the eased transit is unclear: it may be linked to an attempt by Morocco to gain leverage over Spain by letting migrants through.⁵⁷ There may also be a connection between ongoing protest movements in Hociema and Jerada in northern Morocco and the government's interest in and ability to fully counter migration from the region.⁵⁸

In Algeria the reasons for the rising popularity are even less clear, with little indication that security force

pressure has risen in other areas of the country or that smuggling networks have shifted operations. What is clear, however, is that migration departures from both northern Morocco and western and central Algeria now form the main maritime route to Europe for North African irregular migrants.

The following two sections detail the primary departure points in northern Morocco, and western and central Algeria. Further, in each section the means of migration is explored, including the use of smugglers and of self-organised smuggling endeavours.

Moroccan maritime departure zones

Most migrants crossing the western Mediterranean corridor from Morocco depart from points on or close to the Strait of Gibraltar or areas along the Alboran Sea. To the west of the Strait, in the Atlantic Ocean, Moroccan migrants depart from beaches between Salé and Larache on wooden or inflatable boats.⁵⁹

Beginning in mid-2017, the size of the boats and number of passengers increased dramatically, holding up to 70 migrants in some cases.⁶⁰

The trip can last up to 14 hours, with the boats landing the migrants in Spain's Cádiz province.⁶¹ Atlantic departure points have increased in popularity owing to the more limited security force pressure compared to more northerly departure locations.⁶²

Another set of departure points is located close to the city of Tangier. Migrants leave from beaches such as Mrisat or Kankhouch using a variety of craft, including inflatable boats, dinghies and jet-skis.⁶³ Jet-skis in particular have emerged as a favoured transport option for migrants. These craft, carrying one to two migrants, can transit the straits rapidly and often outrun law enforcement pursuers.⁶⁴

In other instances, 'mother ships' carry migrants from the Tangier area into Spain's territorial waters, before loading

Figure 5: Routes from northern Morocco and western Algeria



Source: Author's own map, S Ballard – cartographer

them into dinghies for the remaining distance to the Spanish coast.⁶⁵

Fnideq and Martil, slightly to the east of Tangier, and Asilah, to the south-west, are also commonly mentioned departure locations.⁶⁶ Migrants departing from the area around Tangier arrive in the provinces of Cádiz or Malaga. The routes close to Tangier are used mostly by Moroccan migrants and those from sub-Saharan Africa, although a small number of Algerians and Tunisians have also been intercepted in the region.⁶⁷

A number of departure points along the Alboran Sea have surged into prominence over the last three years, including beaches between the cities of Nador and Hociema.⁶⁸ There both wooden and inflatable boats are used, arriving in the provinces of Cadiz or Malaga.

Departure points along the Alboran Sea have become prominent over the last three years

A more recent trend involves the use of large speedboats.⁶⁹ These vessels either deposit migrants close to Spanish beaches or transfer them into dinghies in Spain's territorial waters for the final leg of the journey.⁷⁰ Other migrants use rubber dinghies launched from Nador in an attempt to access the Spanish enclave of Melilla (a similar dynamic is seen near Tangier with the enclave of Ceuta).⁷¹

These departure points were once primarily used by sub-Saharan migrants, but now these points seem to be used by a growing number of Moroccans, possibly because of increased security pressure in the Tangier area, along with Algerians.⁷² Ongoing protests in the northern city of Hociema also seem to have played a role in increasing departures from the region.⁷³

Human smugglers operate from each of the Moroccan departure zones. Often these networks are small, involving two to three people, with some linked to the region's kif (cannabis resin) industry.⁷⁴ Migrants come into contact with smugglers via word of mouth, social media channels, or recommendations from friends or relatives who have already successfully migrated to Europe.⁷⁵

However, the visibility of smugglers and their intermediaries seems to be increasing. 'Over the last

24 months,' explained one Moroccan community leader, 'smugglers have become much more visible in the markets, offering a range of services.'⁷⁶ Depending on the method of smuggling, the cost of passage can vary from 1 000 to 3 000 euros, with the price having risen as the route's popularity has increased.⁷⁷

Table 1: Transit methods and prices from northern Morocco to Spain

Form of transport	Route	Cost
Small rubber dinghy	Tangier, Nador	40–200 euros
Jet-ski	Tangier	1 800 euros
Speedboat	Tangier, Hociema	1 000–3 000 euros
Large boat	Atlantic	1 500–2 000 euros ⁷⁸

More expensive fees, up to 8 000 euros, are charged for trips that involve assistance in moving once in Europe, including the provision of fraudulent documents by Spanish-based smugglers.⁷⁹

Normally, half of the payment is provided on departure with the balance paid by either the migrant or family members on arrival in Europe.⁸⁰ The prices and payment arrangements are rarely fixed and instead based on negotiation and whether a migrant has a connection to, and the trust of, a smuggler.⁸¹

A new trend in Morocco is maritime self-smuggling, although this has existed for somewhat longer in Algeria. In self-smuggling, a group of migrants – often from the same neighbourhood or town – directly sources the boat and motor before heading north without smuggler assistance.

Sourcing the components has been made easier by social media and online shopping. 'For 1 400–2 000 euros,' said one Moroccan researcher, 'you can buy a Zodiac online on Avito [an online classified site popular in Morocco] and pick it up in Tangier. Then you just need to find someone to bring it to the water and you and your group can depart.'⁸²

While in some cases GPS units are used, even those without significant navigational experience can succeed

in the journey by 'leaving at night, and [following] the lights of the Spanish coast north'.⁸³

Some migrants also attempt to access Spain overland, through its enclave cities of Ceuta and Melilla, or via the buses travelling between Tangier and Spain.⁸⁴ These attempts primarily involve fraudulent documents, by both Moroccans and Algerians, although some migrants, often youth, try to hide in vehicles or stowaway on ships in order to get to Spain.⁸⁵

'I have been thinking of migrating since the age of 13. I lived in a bad neighbourhood; it was a hub of extremism. I remember they told me they will give 20 000 dirhams (€1 800) for those who go to Iraq. One man from our neighbourhood went to Syria and came back with 71 000 dirhams (€6 500).

I want to leave to be able to do something in the future. I want to live like others, and I need to feel that I am protected. In foreign countries, at least when someone gets sick, they get proper treatment regardless of their status.

I've tried to leave twice. On my first attempt I convinced my aunt and her husband, and their kids who live in Europe, to take me with them. I made it through two security checks but was caught at the third. I was brought to court, but I was a minor so only received a warning.

On my second attempt, my friends and I went to the station where they have buses that go from Tangier to Spain. Normally in the tyre of the big buses, there is a space above like a box where you can squeeze and hide. Three of my friends managed to fit themselves into the space, but when it was my turn, I was caught. I don't know what happened to my friends.

I'm waiting to try another attempt. I will not give up.'

– Moroccan youth, Tangier, January 2019



MIGRANTS FIND
SMUGGLERS VIA
SOCIAL NETWORKS OR
WORD OF MOUTH

Western and central Algerian departure zones

Increased migration through the western Mediterranean corridor is not only due to rising Moroccan migration. The locus of Algerian irregular migration has also shifted to the west. In 2016, 54% of interceptions recorded in Algeria occurred in the east of the country; by 2018, 41% of interceptions took place in the west, although the specific drivers of this route shift are unclear.⁸⁶

There are two Algerian embarkation zones. In western Algeria, migrants depart from beaches in the *wilayas* (provinces) of Tlemcen, Ain Témouchent, Oran and Mostaganem.⁸⁷ Most recent apprehensions by Algerian authorities have been in Oran, with Cap Falcon and Madair also popular points of embarkation. From these areas, migrants aim to reach the Spanish provinces of Almería and Murcia.⁸⁸

Migrants traversing this route are mostly drawn from the local population. However, Algerians from interior or central *wilayas*, and a small number of foreigners from Yemen, Palestine and various sub-Saharan African countries, have also been recorded in boats leaving from the area.⁸⁹

Over the last three years another departure route towards Spain's Balearic Islands has grown in popularity in central Algeria, owing to rising security force pressure in the west of the country. However, the route is used far less than that in the west or that detailed later in the east of the country. The Algerian migrants traversing this route depart from beaches close to the communities of ChercHELL, in Tipaza *wilaya*, Ténès in Chlef, Zeralda in Algiers and Delys in Boumerdès *wilayas*.⁹⁰

Human smugglers operate in both western and central Algeria, with Oran, Mostaganem and Chlef reported to have large concentrations of networks.⁹¹ The networks, and the services they offer, range in professionalism and cost. 'When we pay the high price, smugglers assure us we will arrive safe and sound. If we pay a lower price, then we are told ... there is a chance that the crossing could fail,' said one migrant in Spain.⁹²

Most (90%, according to an activist in Oran) offer basic services – transport north in a fishing, inflatable or home-made boat, alongside, on average, a half-dozen to two dozen other migrants.⁹³ Such transits cost between 550 and 1 110 euros, with women and youth paying higher prices.⁹⁴

Table 2: Transit methods and prices from western and central Algeria to Spain

Form of transport	Cost
Fishing/inflatable boat	550–1 110 euros
Speedboat	2 500 euros
Self-organised	750–1 000 euros

A small number of smugglers offer passage on speedboats heading north. For 2 500 euros, these networks deliver migrants to the Spanish coast in roughly three hours, before returning to western Algeria.⁹⁵

Although the speedboats are a far surer, and more rapid, means of getting to Europe, their cost puts them out of the reach of many young Algerians.⁹⁶ This is exacerbated

by the stipulation by some smugglers that the price of passage is paid in euros rather than Algerian dinars.⁹⁷ Instead it is families or those with means who can afford this option, further highlighting growing changes in the types of Algerians taking irregular passage to Europe.

Nearly all networks are local, small scale and organised around a single network leader, who has access to boats and engines and, in some cases, contacts with security force personnel. Workers are tasked with making contact with potential migrants and steering the vessel north.⁹⁸

In most instances, migrants find smugglers via social networks or word of mouth. 'It is easy to get in touch with ... traffickers or smugglers,' said one youth in Oran. 'Everyone in our neighbourhood, for example, knows the name of one guy who organises embarkations west of Oran.'⁹⁹

As in Morocco, self-organised smuggling has risen in popularity in western Algeria

Smugglers operating from Algeria have links with and are enabled by Spain-based networks. In the Balearic Islands, for example, smugglers provide newly arrived Algerian migrants with lodging and fraudulent documentation before aiding them in departing the islands for mainland Europe.¹⁰⁰

As in Morocco, self-organised smuggling has risen in popularity in western Algeria. This form of irregular migration appears to be more common and longer standing in Algeria than in other North African countries.

Some level of self-organised smuggling has likely always occurred in Algeria, but observers in the country's west trace its emergence to the early 2010s, when the commercial availability of engines, semi-rigid boats and GPS systems increased in the country.¹⁰¹

Rising Internet usage in Algeria has further fuelled the phenomenon, by enabling prospective self-organised smugglers to identify those selling vessels and access other information. As one journalist in Oran explained:

With social networks it is very easy for people who live in Tiaret, which is about 400 km away from Oran, to get in touch with people who

live in Kristel near Oran, in order to exchange information. That means [a self-organised smuggler] can organise ... very fast. The only difficulty for the young people who want to cross like this is to collect enough money to buy the necessary equipment.¹⁰²

The cost of self-organised smuggling trips in western and central Algeria is relatively low. Algerian media, reporting on one attempt, indicated that the migrants had bought a boat for close to 3 400 euros and a motor for roughly 4 000 euros.¹⁰³ These costs, alongside the purchase of fuel and GPS units, bring the average cost for a migrant departing in a small boat to around 750–1 000 euros.¹⁰⁴

The upfront expenditure necessary for self-starting incentivises somewhat large groups of migrants. ‘The difficulty [in purchasing equipment] is reduced when the number of people is higher,’ explained a journalist in Oran. ‘It is easier for a group of 20 people than for a group of five.’¹⁰⁵ The attempts seem to involve groups of individuals who are already connected in some way, either from the same neighbourhood or town, or family members.

The central Mediterranean corridor

The central Mediterranean corridor encompasses departure zones in eastern Algeria, Tunisia and western Libya, and arrival areas on the Italian islands of Sardinia, Sicily and the Pelagie archipelago, along with Malta.

Over the last three years, the usage of the corridor, both among migrants overall and specific to those from North Africa, has changed significantly. In 2016 and 2017 Italian apprehensions of North African irregular migrants significantly outpaced those of Spain, on the western corridor, and Greece and Bulgaria, on the eastern corridor (described later).

Moroccan migrants, in particular, used the corridor in large numbers, with embarkations from Libya to Italy outpacing those from Morocco to Spain.¹⁰⁶ Yet Moroccan migration through Libya largely ended in 2018, owing to concerns of violence, detention and abuse, although an extremely limited number of Moroccans have been detected leaving from Tunisia.¹⁰⁷

At the moment, the central Mediterranean corridor remains a key zone of North African irregular migration to Europe. In particular, this is because of the sharp rise in Tunisian irregular migration in 2017 and 2018. Tunisians

embarking from littoral zones throughout the country now comprise the largest group of migrants apprehended by Italian authorities.¹⁰⁸

While the centre of gravity of Algerian migration has shifted west, significant numbers of Algerians continue to transit from eastern departure points to Italy. Though Italy has put in place increasingly securitised policies aimed at deterring migration, there is little indication among migrants interviewed in this study that these have had a significant effect in dampening usage of the corridor.

The following three sections will detail the departure zones and methods of irregular migration along the central Mediterranean corridor. In specific, it will detail the current situation in eastern Algeria, Tunisia and western Libya.

Eastern Algerian departure zones

While fewer migrants depart from eastern Algeria than from embarkation points in the centre and west of the country, the east has still seen a significant increase in migrant traffic over the last three years.

Between 2015 and 2016 Italian apprehensions of Algerians coming from eastern embarkation points quadrupled, doubling again in 2017.¹⁰⁹ The region is popular owing to its proximity to the Italian island of Sardinia, with the average transit taking around 12 hours.¹¹⁰

The central Mediterranean corridor is a key zone of North African irregular migration to Europe

Embarkation points in eastern Algeria are concentrated in the wilayas of Annaba and El Taref, and include the beaches of Sidi Achir, Ras El Hamra, Oued Boukrat, Sidi Salem and El Kala.¹¹¹ These departure zones are used by both migrants from the local area and a broader swath of Algerians from the centre-east of the country, including the *wilayas* of Khenchela, Batna, Constantine and Oum El Bouaghi.¹¹²

As in the west and centre of Algeria, migrants departing through the east employ both smugglers and self-organised smuggling.

The smuggling networks in the area are small, based around families or other trusted ties and rooted in a given locality.¹¹³ The boats used are small, often

Figure 6: Routes from eastern Algeria and northern Tunisia



Source: Author's own map, S Ballard – cartographer

containing only 10–15 individuals and include a mix of commercially purchased and artisanal craft. The cost of passage, at 2 000 to 3 000 euros, is slightly higher than in the west.¹¹⁴

Migrants access information on the smuggling networks, or more often on the intermediaries working for the networks, either by word of mouth or from social media.¹¹⁵

The mother of two missing migrants said the following: ‘A friend of [my sons] came from Annaba and spent about a month with them at Meissonnier. As far as I know, he introduced them to someone who organises *harga* [irregular migration attempts] from El Kala.’¹¹⁶

Table 3: Transit methods and prices from eastern Algeria to Italy

Form of transport	Cost
Fishing/inflatable boat	2 000–3 000 euros
Self-organised	750–1 000 euros

As in the west of the country, self-organised smuggling has also grown in popularity in eastern Algeria. Many of the self-organised attempts involve migrants from the same town or neighbourhood, who pool their money in order to buy the necessary equipment.¹¹⁷ Either one of the organisers drives the craft or they ask around in a coastal area for someone who knows how to pilot a boat and wishes to head north.¹¹⁸

‘Our son always talked about leaving Algeria to live somewhere else, somewhere with more opportunities than here. We are not rich, but not poor either. We never thought he would really try to leave by boat and become a harraga, like the others from our neighbourhood. We thought this is the casual talk of an adolescent teenager, but the day ahead of his final school exams he did not come home and instead crossed the sea.

He was intercepted by the Italian coast guard and sent back twice, but this didn’t stop him. So, he

tried it a third time and reached Italy with half a dozen other harragas from Annaba. After his arrival he went to France. He lived in France for around six weeks, found work and made some friends, but he was not feeling good. After several weeks in France, he had more and more problems with his work and could not adapt to the country, and the general environment of his “new life” was not as good as he’d imagined. I was able to persuade him to come home.

Back in Annaba, he enrolled in school again. But only a month after his arrival, he asked me to buy him a scooter. He sold it the same day and bought a boat engine. The next evening, he left home and didn’t come back. He disappeared for days, but then contacted us to say that he’d taken the same route through Italy and made it to France. He’s still there.’

– *Father of an Algerian irregular migrant, Annaba, December 2018*

Tunisian departure zones

In the wake of the 2011 revolution and the brief burst of irregular migrants who left the country in the months afterward, migration from the country seemed to go dormant for roughly six years.

The migration that occurred between 2012 and 2017 was, on average, lower than that which preceded the revolution. Beginning in August 2017 this changed.

In the matter of a few weeks, departures from central and southern Tunisia in particular spiked. In addition, the number passengers on boats coming from Tunisia grew significantly. Where once 15–30 migrants were the norm, fishing vessels carrying 100–200 men, women and children started to appear.

One example occurred in November 2017, when 94 Tunisian migrants were found on a 14 m fishing boat designed for 30.¹¹⁹ In 10 other incidents between October 2017 and May 2018 boats containing over 80 individuals were intercepted.¹²⁰ One held 219, including a number of women and children.¹²¹ All of these had departed from south-eastern Tunisia, primarily the governorates of Mahdia or Sfax (including the Kerkennah Islands), and were headed towards Italy’s Pelagie islands.¹²²

In June 2018 one of the large vessels, carrying close to 200 Tunisians, sank off Kerkennah. At least 84 died, including 13 youth from one town.¹²³ The tragedy, more akin to events seen off Libya, underscored the rapid changes permeating irregular migration from Tunisia in 2017 and 2018.

The growth in Tunisian migration does not have any one single cause. Rather, a number of enabling factors converged in the fall of 2017. One was the limited security

Figure 7: Tunisian migrants apprehended in the central Mediterranean corridor

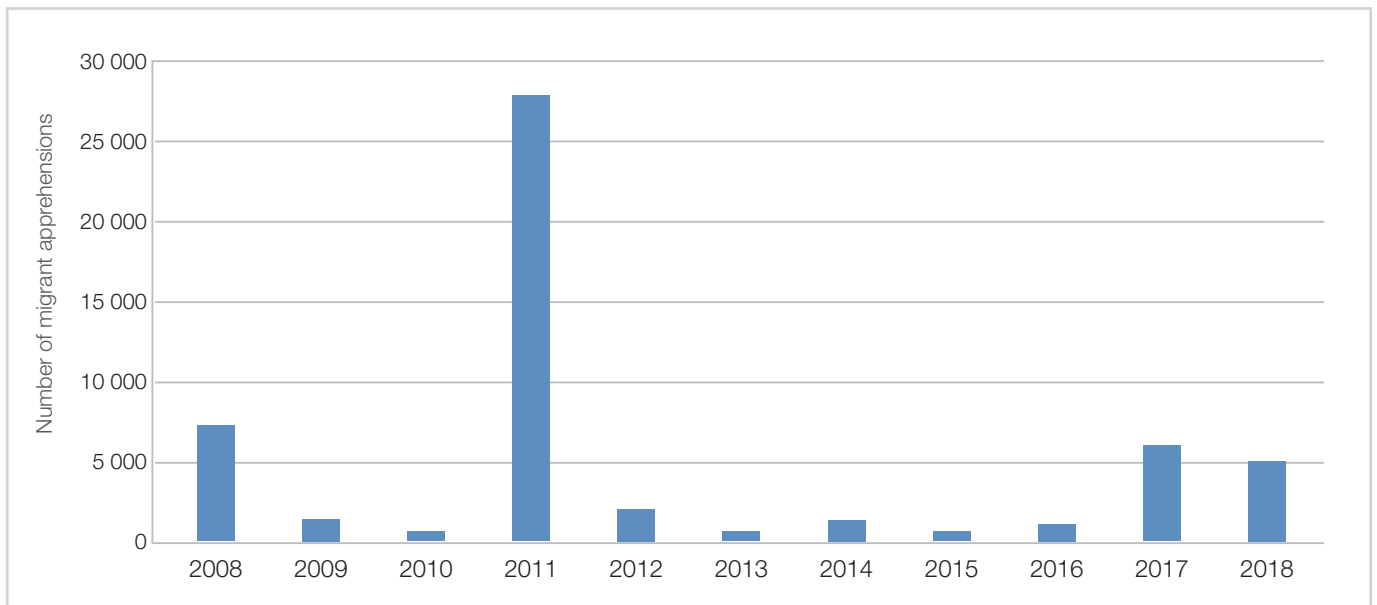
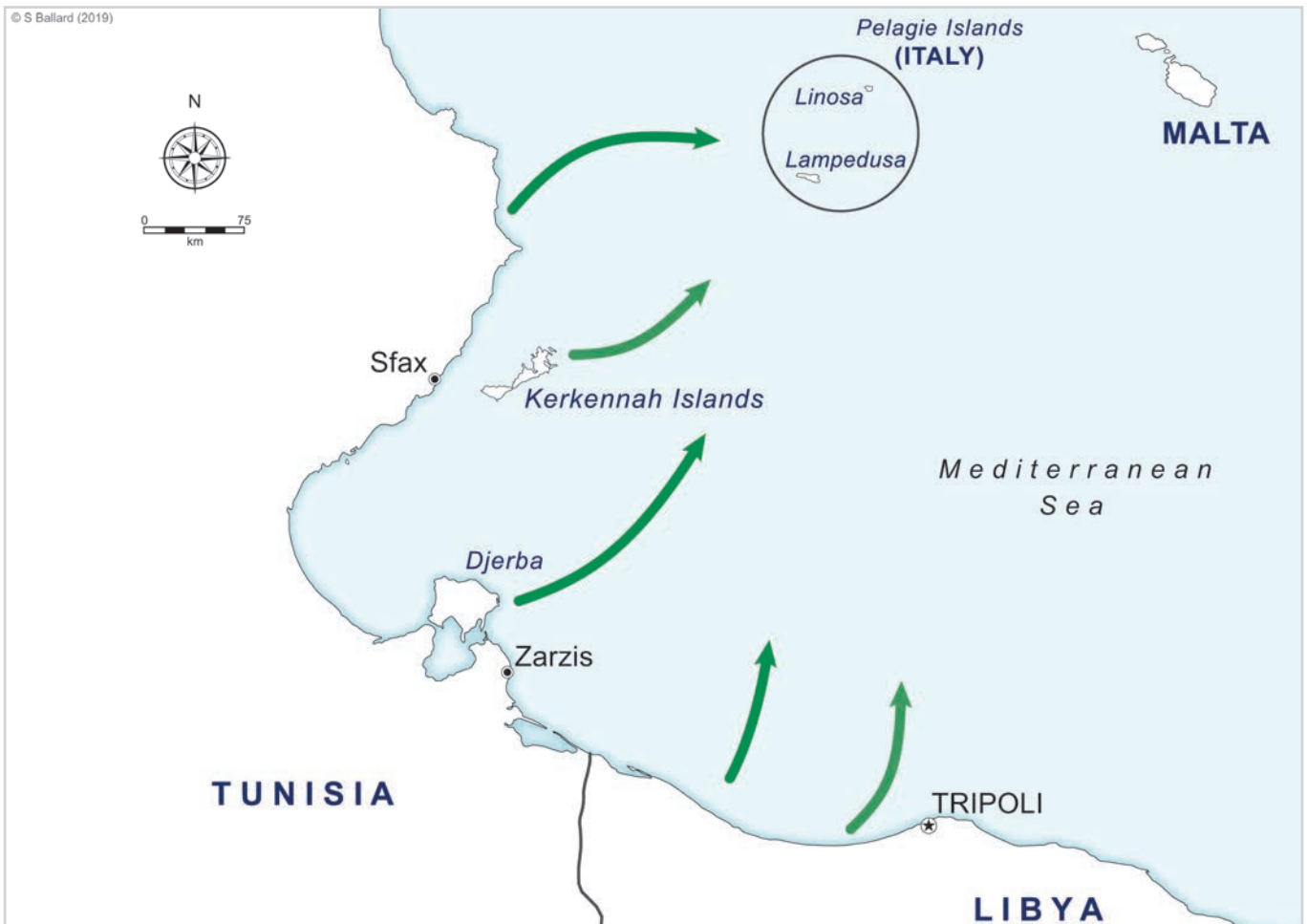


Figure 8: Routes from central and southern Tunisia and western Libya



Source: Author's own map, S Ballard – cartographer

force presence on the Kerkennah Islands, where residents had driven away police and National Guard officers in 2016 in protests over local issues.¹²⁴

A second was a steep decline in the fisheries in the Gulf of Gabes, owing to a blue crab infestation that saw some fishermen lose up to 30% of their income.¹²⁵ Facing severe financial distress, the fishermen, many from Kerkennah, were receptive to smugglers' offers to participate in migrant smuggling.

A third factor was the smugglers themselves. The shift from migrant boats with a limited number of passengers to those with 100–200 was unprecedented in Tunisia's migrant smuggling history. However, it showed obvious parallels with how migrant smuggling had been conducted in western Libya in the wake of that country's revolution.¹²⁶ Techniques pioneered in Libya seem to have diffused into south-eastern Tunisia's smuggling community.

Persistent if unconfirmed rumours attribute this diffusion of Libyan techniques to the return to Tunisia of two to three dozen Tunisian smugglers from Libya in the late summer of 2017, after the Libyan smuggling network they were employed by was defeated by a rival armed group.¹²⁷ Once there, they applied their knowledge of the human smuggling business to a newly receptive Tunisian market.

However, the Libyan smugglers' tactic of overloading boats proved ill suited to the Tunisian context, and underscores why Libyan smuggling strategies are unlikely to spread to other areas of North Africa.

Simply, overloaded boats have a tendency to capsize. When this happened in Libya, it brought international opprobrium but little effective pressure on smugglers to change their ways, owing to the lack of a functioning government and the foreign origins of the victims. These factors do not apply in Tunisia.

When two large boats full of Tunisians sunk off the country's shores, killing over 100, public pressure on the Tunisian government to act forcefully was overwhelming, including protests and social unrest in the victims' home communities. As a result, the government acted: smugglers were targeted and arrested, police presence re-established in the Kerkennah Islands and travel by non-residents to the area was strictly controlled.¹²⁸

The crackdown by the government in the summer of 2018 did not curtail migration or smuggling overall. However, it did drive a reversion of smuggling patterns towards more traditional norms for Tunisia. Smugglers stopped using large boats; most incidents in the summer and fall of 2018 again involved 15–30 passengers.¹²⁹

In addition, a redistribution of embarkation points away from the centre-south of the country occurred, and more towards coastal towns in the north-east and far south. In general, northern departures – from Bizerte, Tunis and the Cap Bon peninsula – lead to Sicily, while those in the south and centre of the country involve transit to the Pelagie islands.

The crackdown by the Tunisian government in the summer of 2018 did not curtail migration or smuggling overall

'The most popular ones in Tunisia are Sidi Daoud, Kerkennah, Mahdia, La Goulette and La Marsa,' said one returned migrant, naming towns in the north-east of the country. 'I know this because half my neighbourhood either left or attempted to leave; most of them through Sidi Daoud because of its proximity to Europe.'¹³⁰

Nearly all irregular migrants that Tunisian authorities report intercepting are Tunisian nationals.¹³¹ The perception of the route as being overwhelmingly Tunisian is shared by Italy. 'Italian police believe no more than 10% of migrants coming from Tunisia are non-Tunisian,' said one diplomat.¹³² This low number belies fears that foreign migrants, blocked from departing through western Libya, will instead turn to Tunisia.

Tunisian smuggling networks offer a diverse set of smuggling options. Some involve basic transit, using homemade boats, fishing craft or rubber dinghies, aimed only at getting migrants to Sicily or the Pelagie islands.¹³³ The cost of passage currently averages between 570 and 850 euros, a decline compared to previous years.

In other instances, fishermen sail small groups of migrants close to Italian territorial waters before transferring them into rubber dinghies for the remainder of the voyage.¹³⁴

Other smugglers offer a more rapid service using speedboats. Mostly, these shuttle between north-eastern Tunisia and Sicily, occasionally carrying both migrants and other forms of contraband.¹³⁵ This costs around 3 000 euros.¹³⁶



NEARLY ALL IRREGULAR MIGRANTS THAT TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES REPORT INTERCEPTING ARE TUNISIAN NATIONALS

Still other smugglers use yachts, often owned and operated by foreigners. Migrants who can pay the 4 000-euro cost embark off major Tunisian ports and are taken to locations in Italy and France.¹³⁷ More comprehensive packages are also on offer, which provide migrants with smuggling assistance both in getting to Europe and moving while within Europe.

Table 4: Transit methods and prices from Tunisia to Italy

Form of transport	Cost
Fishing/inflatable/homemade boat	570–1 600 euros
Speedboat	3 000 euros
Yacht	4 000 euros

Regardless of cost or craft, most smuggling trips begin in a similar way. Migrants hear about smuggling options through word of mouth or on social media.¹³⁸ This information will lead them to a middleman, usually one of several who work for the smuggling organiser.¹³⁹ While most are men, some smuggling networks employ female intermediaries in order to lessen the risk of attracting law enforcement attention.¹⁴⁰

‘I met my middleman through a friend,’ explained a Tunisian migrant who had returned. ‘He was the one who collected the money. He was a very good guy. He gave us advice and allowed us to bargain with him on the price of the passage.’¹⁴¹

The middleman vets the prospective migrants, provides them with information and handles monetary arrangements. Most communication is done in person, although some coded communication through social networks also occurs.¹⁴²

If the embarkation point is far from where the migrant lives, it is common for migrants to travel to and be collected at a safe house supplied by the smugglers, often waiting for good weather or lessened security force pressure.¹⁴³

After a few days or a week, once conditions are right and a departure date has been fixed by the smugglers, the migrants are instructed to pay. Normally, this is the only point where they will interact with the organiser. In some instances, the organiser will supply someone to captain the vessel, although this role is often delegated to one of the migrants, who in return travels for a reduced price or for free.¹⁴⁴

The networks themselves are often fairly small, entailing three to four individuals and operate in discrete

‘I had been thinking about leaving for a long time. I wanted to go legally, but it was not possible for me.

My sister’s ex-fiancé knew a guy who could take me. The price was 4 000 dinars [1 160 euros], but they gave me a discount because I’m a woman. I had no money, so I sold all my jewellery. I got a call two days before the departure. I was told to take only necessary things in one backpack.

We met [the organiser] when we left at around one in the morning to pay him. The man who drove the boat went for free. There were 19 of us; the men had been hiding in the forest for two days.

Then it was time, and we needed to swim to the boat, which was already in the sea. The water was so cold. There was no one by the beach except for us.

The boat driver gave us a sign that it was all clear by flashing a light four times.

One of the guys had a traditional compass made from sand and a thread, and so that’s how we steered. We had to stop a lot and ended up throwing most of the provisions overboard because the boat was so small and heavy. The engine’s safety belt ripped, so we stopped and tried to fix it with our coats. We thought we were going to die, and so we had to stay still so that the boat kept stable. Finally, an hour later, the engine began working again.

Around nine at night we saw the Italian shore. We hit a huge rock when we landed, and we all fell into the water. I couldn’t swim so the guys helped me reach land. We took our bags and started running in separate directions. Honestly, [when I arrived] I didn’t feel anything. I was numb and cold. Even after, I didn’t really sleep until I got to my sister’s house in France.’

– *Female Tunisian irregular migrant, France, February 2019*

geographic areas. 'They work more effectively in their hometowns, where they are more connected to the communities and able to reach out to potential migrants,' a Tunisian security official explained.¹⁴⁵

In addition to the middlemen and the organiser, other network members are tasked with managing interactions and payments to government officials, housing migrants, feeding them and in some cases steering the boat.¹⁴⁶

Self-organised smuggling is becoming more popular in Tunisia, although it is still far more nascent than in Algeria or Morocco.¹⁴⁷ Self-organised smuggling in Tunisia involves smaller groups than in Algeria or Morocco, often four to eight individuals.¹⁴⁸ Little additional information is available on the cost or specific departure locations for this type of migrant transit.

Finally, attempts by youth – including young teenagers – to stow away on cargo ships docked in Tunisian ports occur with some frequency. While some of these attempts occur individually, or in groups of two to three, others involve a dozen to over 100 individuals.¹⁴⁹ In one incident in March 2019, 130 individuals attempted to breach the port of La Goulette near Tunis, including over 40 youth under the age of 16.¹⁵⁰ Most were from outside Tunis, and had travelled to the capital for their stowaway attempt.

Libyan departure zones

Western Libyan departure zones were of prime importance for North Africans, especially Moroccans and Algerians, migrating through the central Mediterranean corridor. This, however, has changed. In 2017 Italy intercepted 6 000 Moroccan irregular migrants, most of whom had embarked from Libya. This number fell to just 400 in 2018.

For North Africans transit through Libya has always involved a trade-off between personal security and surety of departure. As one Tunisian migrant noted, 'Libya is governed by militias and so the risk of being killed or abducted is very high. But once you make it to the harbour, there are no guards, you can just pay off the militias and you will be safe to go.'¹⁵¹

There was also the perception among North Africans that they could and would receive better, or at least safer, treatment than migrants from outside the region.¹⁵²

The logic underpinning this trade-off has changed. In part this is because of the unstable security situation

'There were two different groups in the smuggling network that took me [to Libya]. The first group was made of Tunisians who gathered the [migrants] in Tunis and took us to the southern border.

There we met the second group, who took us from the borders to the harbour we left from. This journey took two to three days, even though the harbour is geographically not far [from the border]. But they needed to be very careful and to take us around the known placements of the armed militias. It was extremely scary, but you had to be brave and silent.'

– *Returned irregular migrant, Tunis, January 2019*

in western Libya, exacerbated by the ongoing conflict around Tripoli, and the actions by some armed groups to curtail migrant embarkations, because of either local politics or donor inducements.¹⁵³

In addition, several highly publicised stories have emerged involving Moroccan migrants held in detention centres or otherwise victimised by Libyan armed groups, undermining the belief that the 'Maghrebi brotherhood' imparted any sort of meaningful protection.

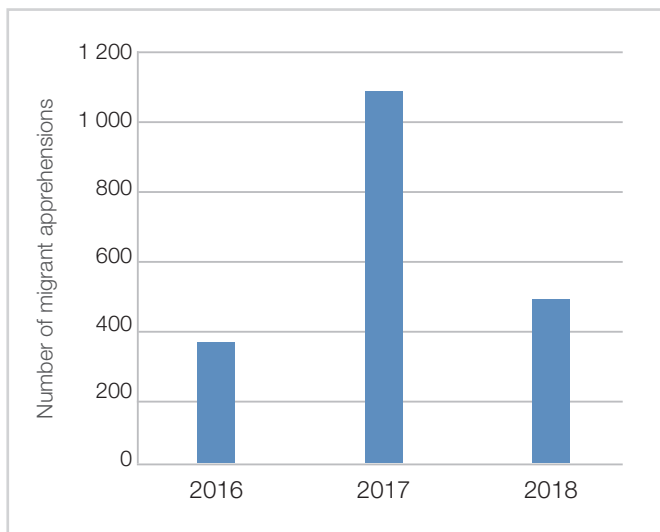
Finally, the growing availability of affordable embarkation options for migrants directly from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia has undermined the rationale for transiting via Libya.

For North Africans transit through Libya involves a trade-off between security and surety of departure

However, while this logic has changed for now, Libya's fundamental draw for North African migrants remains. Some 15 000 Tunisians, Algerians and Moroccans continue to live in Libya, primarily in the west, forming a pool of potential migrants north to Europe.¹⁵⁴

Others might be willing to return and risk transit through the country if the security conditions calmed. If security force pressure on migration attempts in other North African countries increases, it is likely that a renewed

Figure 9: Libyan irregular migrants intercepted by Italy



wave of Moroccans, Algerians and Tunisians will again seek passage from Libyan migrant smuggling networks.

A small number of Libyans do continue to depart from the nation’s shores for Italy, although this number has oscillated over the past three years. Although historically Libyans have not migrated in numbers nearly as large as other nationalities in the North Africa, there is the risk that either the severe economic difficulties facing the country, especially the middle class, could prompt a rapid rise in outbound departures by Libyan citizens.¹⁵⁵

Such departures could also occur if there is an intensification in the current battle for Tripoli between armed groups linked to the internationally recognised Government of National Accord and Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar’s Libyan National Army. Already, the conflict has internally displaced 80 000 civilians in western Libya.¹⁵⁶

The proximity of large population centres to the sea and the presence of experienced smuggling networks in the area raise the risk that civilian displacement could easily and with little warning lead to a sharp increase in irregular migration by Libyans.

The eastern Mediterranean corridor and Balkans

The final corridor through which North African migrants reach Europe is the eastern Mediterranean corridor, involving routes beginning in Turkey and entering Europe in Greece or Bulgaria.

Well used by Moroccans and Algerians since the late 2000s, the corridor has seen the number of North

Africans apprehended fall sharply along the main Turkey–Greece axis, even as routes through the western Balkans appear to be reinvigorated.

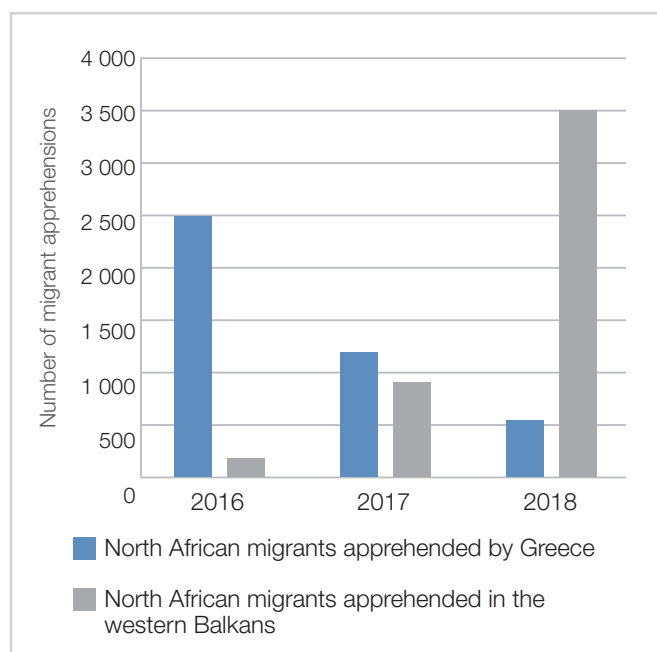
The decline in numbers transiting from Turkey to European points of entry is most probably not attributable to any single factor. The 2015 and 2016 agreements between Turkey and the EU to increase its efforts to counter migration, the risk of being turned back by national authorities and the cost of the journey (including the flight) all likely play a role.

However, similar to the rationale underpinning the decline in Libyan departures, the growing frequency and seeming ease of departure directly from their home countries has likely been determinative, especially for the Moroccan and Algerian migrants who have been the primary North African users of the route.

There is some evidence that North Africans, especially Libyans and Algerians, are transiting through the Balkans in increased numbers, using a route crossing Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and then Croatia.¹⁵⁷ North Africans comprise roughly a third of all migrants found on this route.

But the overall importance of the Balkan route remains fairly limited. Only 11% of European apprehensions of North Africans in 2018 occurred along it, and the total number of Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian and Libyan

Figure 10: North African migrants apprehended by Greece and western Balkan nations



migrants encountered along it pales in comparison to the far more heavily used western and central Mediterranean corridors.

Nonetheless, the Balkan route detailed above is one that should be investigated further. A high number of Libyans were apprehended by Bosnia in 2018, which should prompt further inquiries to better understand why the route is growing in use and how North Africans reach the Balkans.

What drives North African migrants?

No single factor is exclusively responsible for the rise in North African irregular migration. 'Migration today is multi layered,' explained an Algerian observer, 'it is not exclusively economically motivated. There are social reasons, economic reasons and political reasons.'¹⁵⁸

Many of the drivers – including poor economic prospects and frustration with government service delivery – are longstanding. However, the last few years have witnessed an exacerbation of these factors, although they differ in intensity across North Africa.

For many North Africans, recent years have been ones of increasing economic pessimism, social frustration and political discontent. Some have found an outlet on the streets: in addition to wide-scale political protests in Algeria in the Spring of 2019, cyclical social unrest has been a recurrent feature in Tunisia, and regional protest movements persist in northern Morocco. Others have chosen to migrate.

First and foremost is economic frustration. In part this reflects the difficulties of finding a job: officially 15.5% of Tunisians are unemployed, along with 11.1% of Algerians and 9.8% in Morocco.¹⁵⁹ However, the unemployment rate for youth and especially college graduates is far higher. In Morocco more than a quarter of youth are unemployed, a rate rising to 42.8% in some urban areas.¹⁶⁰ In Tunisia youth unemployment in 2018 was significantly worse than that immediately before the country's 2011 revolution.¹⁶¹

Even when jobs can be found, wages are often not sufficient to enable a living; major life steps such as renting or buying a house and even marriage are viewed as unattainable.

'I came from a poor family, they were waiting for me to graduate and work to help them,' said one Tunisian

migrant. 'When I did, I could only earn 300 dinars [a month]. I could barely breathe. I had no hope left I could live normally, have a wife, a car, a house and kids.'¹⁶²

In Algeria wages have stagnated for years, leading to a decline in purchasing power that has forced families to do more with less.¹⁶³ Inflation overall across North Africa – standing at 1.9% in Morocco, 4% in Algeria and 7.5% in Tunisia – remains a serious issue.¹⁶⁴ Unofficial numbers suggest that Tunisia's real inflation level could be as much as 17%.

The inflation and declining purchasing power are key factors leading many North Africans to migrate north.¹⁶⁵ As one security official explained, 'When you stop being able to afford to live, you would want to leave.'¹⁶⁶

North Africa's robust informal economy provides livelihoods or supplementary income for some jobless or underemployed workers. However, such work is often tenuous, heavily dependent on official tolerance and, in the case of smuggling, the activities of neighbouring states.

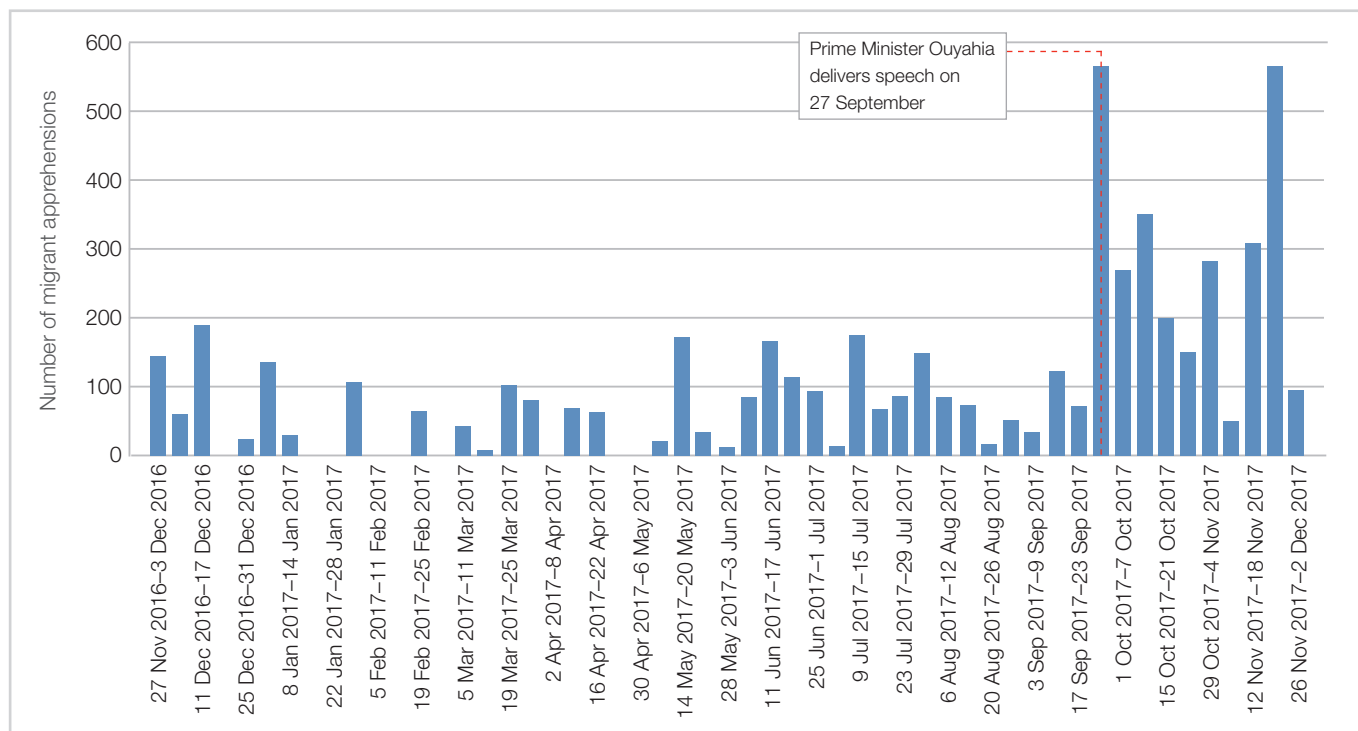
In Algeria wages have stagnated for years, forcing families to do more with less

Cross-border smugglers in particular are highly vulnerable to changes in governments' border policies.¹⁶⁷ When borders are hardened in the name of security and tolerance of smuggling wanes, economic difficulties spike for border communities or those individuals inland who source or sell contraband goods. Sometimes this leads to protests.¹⁶⁸ However, a reduction in informal economic opportunities can also drive migration as the newly unemployed are forced to seek other options.¹⁶⁹

Migration in North Africa is driven not just by present frustration and deprivation but also by pessimism over the economic future. High inflation and limited prospects of national economic situations improving have driven some North Africans to migrate now, while they still have sufficient savings, rather than later when the value of those savings will have diminished.

'There is also this feeling of a possible return to the economic crisis of the 1990s,' said an Algerian researcher. 'In fact, today is not as bad as in the

Figure 11: Algerian irregular migrants apprehended by Algeria in the wake of the Prime Minister's speech



1990s, but people feel like that the situation today is getting close.¹⁷⁰

In some instances, political statements and speeches about economic issues have exacerbated migration levels, seemingly by affecting perceptions that current economic difficulties will ease in the near term. This was vividly manifest in late 2017, when then Algerian prime minister Ahmed Ouyahia indicated in a speech to Parliament that the price of oil, the country's primary export, was unlikely to recover soon.¹⁷¹ In the wake of the speech, Algerian interceptions of migrants spiked significantly.

Political pessimism among Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians and Libyans is another key push factor for migration. Youth, in particular, feel excluded and estranged from the political process.

In part this is because of the simple reality that the leadership of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco are overwhelmingly old, while the region's population is young. Even when specific leaders are deposed – as with Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika – older generations retain control of ossified systems of power. This has eroded trust among the region's populations that the leadership truly understands the key frustrations and concerns of its citizenry. As a human rights activist

from eastern Algeria noted, 'Not one of our leaders lives in our era, and they want us to live in a bygone era.'¹⁷²

Lack of political action and the inability of governments to deliver economic opportunities or basic services have bred cynicism. One youth in Tunis underscored this cynicism, noting that politicians have no relevance in neighbourhoods.¹⁷³ 'I have given up,' another said, 'it's pointless to vote.'¹⁷⁴

This is part of a regional sense that the youth as a generation is blocked. As one teacher in Oran put it, for 'more and more there is the impression that they cannot breathe'.¹⁷⁵

Pessimism over the economic future is helping drive migration in North Africa

The perception that politics are frozen and unable to offer opportunities or a voice to young Moroccans, Algerians and Tunisians is a potent factor pushing irregular migration. 'You leave the country because you do not have anything to lose,' explained an Algerian social worker. 'If you die, you do not lose anything, because

there is nothing to lose in Algeria. If you make it to the other side, you have everything to win.’¹⁷⁶

A cross-cutting factor that exacerbates frustration with politics and governance is inequality. Normally, analysis of inequality in North Africa revolves around economic inequality. There is good reason for such an approach: throughout North Africa economic gains are spread unevenly.

Some places, such as rural and inner-city areas in Morocco, have seen far fewer benefits from the country’s economic growth in recent years. In Tunisia, governorates in the interior and south of the country are economically marginalised compared to those on the coasts.¹⁷⁷ In Algeria one journalist noted that ‘the Kabylie and Jijel are massively affected [by migration], because the country ignores these areas. There is no investment there.’¹⁷⁸

Morocco has been lauded for its economic growth, which makes the continued high levels of irregular migration from the country puzzling

The existence of economic inequality certainly is a driver of irregular migration, as disadvantaged youth see little economic benefit in staying in their existent situation. More pervasively, however, the existence of economic inequality can blind foreign observers to the true socio-economic state of affairs in North African states.

Morocco has been lauded for its economic growth, which makes the continued high levels of irregular migration from the country puzzling. However, the benefits of growth are concentrated in certain regions and among specific population groups, and it is the large segment of the population left on the outside of this that forms the pool of potential migrants.

However, addressing structural inequality should also be a focus. In North Africa, where you are born, who your family is, what class you are, what education you receive and your age affect not only economic opportunities, but also the nature and degree of government services you can access, as well as the type of interactions you routinely have with government officials.

This is rooted in an extremely weak application of the rule of law in North Africa. ‘I’ve never seen a wealthy man in front of a judge,’ said one young Tunisian. ‘Those standing there don’t wear Prada shoes.’¹⁷⁹

Frustrations around structural inequality prompted one of the key rallying cries of the Tunisian revolution, as protesters demanded ‘dignity’. Similar calls are commonly heard in Algeria and Morocco.¹⁸⁰ Yet despite the ubiquity of frustration with inequality, little has improved. Precisely because inequality has not been addressed it has eroded governance and economic development in the region.

Donor efforts to address economic inequality among youth are often stymied by structural inequality: those who need assistance the most continue to



EUROPE IS SEEN BY NORTH AFRICAN MIGRANTS AS A PLACE WHERE RULE OF LAW IS APPLIED, WHERE RIGHTS EXIST AND WHERE PEOPLE ARE TREATED WITH DIGNITY

lose out to those born with the necessary connections. One young Tunisian professional, describing a donor-funded innovation incubator in the interior of the country, bemoaned the fact that only those with connections were able to participate.¹⁸¹

For those structurally shut out from access to government services, fair treatment by officials and economic opportunity, migration is one of the few ways to better their circumstances.

A young Moroccan migrant explained that his disillusionment and desire to leave began when his family was forced to move town after a dispute with an influential family that had links to the local police.¹⁸² 'We had no rights,' he said.¹⁸³ One Tunisian migrant put his frustration more simply: 'I have no dignity here. Al aych al kareem [a dignified life] is a myth.'¹⁸⁴

Europe is seen by North African migrants as a place where rule of law is applied, where rights exist and where people are treated with dignity. This image of a European ideal is a powerful draw for those whose lived experiences have been defined by inequality and frustration.

This highlights a key fact: North African migrants come to Europe as much because of a perception of what Europe is as because of what Europe actually offers. 'For [migrants] Europe and France are a kind of a paradise. Everything is believed to be clean and beautiful,' explained one Algerian journalist. 'There is money, there is work, there are beautiful women, there are a lot of positive things you do not necessarily find at home.'¹⁸⁵

Visions of Europe as a place of opportunity, without stifling social strictures or political limits, have been popularised by TV shows, movies, social media and the large diaspora population living in Europe. 'They come back [to Tunisia] on holiday,' said one Tunisian, 'with cars, and a girlfriend or wife. They have nice houses being built. It's the dream.'¹⁸⁶

This perception draws youth to migrate by feeding a sense among those with otherwise few opportunities that by staying put they are missing out on opportunity and on life. 'All the youth talk and dream of migration to save themselves and their families. Every summer, you see people in their nice cars vacationing here in town and you want to go and seek the same future,' said one Moroccan migrant.¹⁸⁷

Social media and migration

Over the last three years, social media has emerged as a key factor fuelling dreams of migration and offering detailed instructions on how to accomplish that goal. Videos with titles like 'How to cross borders', 'How to cross to Europe without papers', and 'Ways to cross with a Moroccan', are posted on YouTube or live-streamed on platforms such as WhatsApp, FaceTime, Instagram Live and Facebook.¹⁸⁸ This content both drives migration and enables it.

Some videos, including daily or weekly video blogs and other social media posts, involve North African emigrés in Europe offering a mostly romanticised representation of the continent. Europe is portrayed as clean, safe and filled with economic and social opportunities, where rule of law is upheld. Engagements with government officials are flagged as fair and functional.

These videos further fuel a vision of Europe as the antithesis of the lived reality of many in North Africa. By demystifying Europe, these videos and posts make prospective migrants feel as though they 'know' the continent and what their life could or would be like if they migrated, thereby making it less intimidating to leave.

This image of a European ideal is a powerful draw for many North African migrants

Other videos show migration attempts themselves. Videos capture youth departing from North Africa or travelling north in boats, demystifying the migration experience and so driving demand.¹⁸⁹

Other videos offer prospective North African migrants practical advice on how to get to Europe.¹⁹⁰ This includes migration routes, crossing points to avoid, the prices of different forms of crossing, useful cover stories, and information on the degree and form of counter-migration enforcement employed by security forces in both North Africa and Europe.

For example, one video, titled 'This is the way I reached Greece 2018 – an Algerian irregular migrant tells about the land route from Turkey to Greece', recounts the experiences of one young migrant. In a 20-minute video originally streamed live before being reposted on

YouTube, the migrant explains in detail what route he took from Istanbul to Thessaloniki in Greece.

The video has garnered over 250 000 views and generated hundreds of comments. Many of these are by Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian citizens either seeking additional information on the migrant's journey or sharing information about smugglers at crossing points in northern Morocco.

Other videos cover strategies on how to regularise one's legal situation – or, at the very least, avoid deportation – once in Europe. 'Claim to be underage, claim to be Libyan, claim to be looking for your father,' advised one Moroccan video blogger.¹⁹¹

In the videos' comments sections more specific information is available, including phone numbers of smugglers as well as the specific dates, times and locations of groups planning to cross. This information is generally unfiltered and uncensored, and is continuously updated and corrected.

The normalisation of discussions around migration are magnified by social media

Often, the conversations that germinate within the comments transition into more private peer-to-peer settings such as Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp, enabling a self-contained exchange of more sensitive information.

While this content is intended for specific national audiences, with video titles referring to the nationality of the creator, the conversation in the comments section shows that viewers of popular videos and channels come from a broad cross-section of North Africa. Moroccan video creators influence Algerian migrants and vice-versa.

Enabled by the linguistic similarities between Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian dialects, this also underscores that the region's Internet users interact in a shared space, transcending the hardened borders and political fragmentation of the region.

Social media usage fits within a broader normalisation of discussion of migration in North Africa. Because of the potential for arrest and

'It was always a dream for me to go to Europe. In Morocco we have lack of job opportunities, corruption, and there is a lack of recognition of your efforts and work. You work all day and you only receive a cheap salary; you cannot survive on it. I want to go find a suitable job, have a bank account, buy a car and help my family.

I contacted a friend of mine through Facebook and asked him about his experience since he is now living in Barcelona. I asked him about his experience, how he got to Europe, so I could follow his steps. He told me to go through Nador.

So, I went to Nador and tried to escape to Mellila, but I was caught by the police and fell and was hurt badly. Of course, I did not give up on my dream.'

– *Youth, Morocco, February 2019*

legal sanction, in the past those planning to migrate rarely discussed it openly.¹⁹² Information on different options for migration could be difficult to access.¹⁹³ This seems to be changing, however. 'It is part of the daily discussions in coffee shops or in public transport,' explained one young Algerian.¹⁹⁴

The normalisation of discussions around migration and the diffusion of information on options have been magnified by social media, effectively enabling youth to crowdsource advice on routes and methods to a vast community interested in migration. 'Today, when people leave, they meet in social networks before the *harga* and continue speaking on social networks until they arrive at their destination,' said one Algerian activist.¹⁹⁵

Governments and responses

North African states are acutely aware of rising irregular migration from their shores. However, they face an increasingly difficult challenge in identifying how to address it without exacerbating social or political instability. The specific decisions made on how best to address irregular migration form the final section of this study.

All North African states nominally oppose irregular migration by their nationals, and maintain laws criminalising the act. Smugglers, including self-organised smugglers, can face serious sanctions.

Migrants themselves face much less time in custody or a suspended sentence.¹⁹⁶ Compared to the number of interceptions recorded, the number of judicial cases is often relatively low.¹⁹⁷ In part this is due to necessity. As one Algerian lawyer noted, ‘Our prisons do not have the capacity to accommodate hundreds of thousands of *harraga*.’¹⁹⁸

The deterrent effect of current laws, for smugglers or for migrants, is offset not only by the limited likelihood of prison but also by the potential for significant gain. In Tunisia, for example, with each migrant paying 2 000–3 000 dinars per trip, smugglers make far more in a small number of trips than they could in other jobs. As a result some will do the work knowing that even if they are caught, once released from custody they can keep the money they have made.¹⁹⁹

The capacity of North Africa states to address irregular migration has arguably grown over the last decade. New equipment has been bought or acquired from European and North American donors, including surveillance equipment to better manage land and maritime borders. ‘Whenever there is an incident involving migration,’ explained a diplomat, ‘we hear calls for more equipment.’²⁰⁰

Sometimes requests for aid are clearly related to halting migration, such as with more patrol craft. However, in many instances the equipment requested, such as bulletproof vests and armoured vehicles, has little to do with migration. Instead they appear more linked to broader border security or counter-terrorism priorities.²⁰¹ These priorities are often more salient to North African states, as the threats they are meant to counter – cross-border infiltration and terrorist attacks – are viewed as far more dangerous to the safety and stability of the state than outbound migration.

Yet responding to weak migration management purely by acquiring equipment or providing training misses the reality that coordination among different government agencies dealing with migration in North Africa is often weak or non-existent.²⁰²

‘What is lacking is a [migration] strategy on the broader governmental level, involving not only the Ministry of Interior, but also the education, agriculture, employment and sustainable development ministries,’ explained a Tunisian security official. ‘In the absence of tangible efforts from these ministries, you should not

expect the security sector to have the magic stick to stop this phenomenon.’²⁰³

The larger issue that has stymied North African governments, however, is one of priorities and politics when it comes to migration. The governments of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia face an increasingly resistive population and mounting social protests. They also confront domestic terrorism challenges – the acute danger posed by militants differs in each country.

The priority for North African governments is stability. Limited security resources are focused towards that end, either by confronting terrorist threats or by managing the growing number of protests and protest movements the authorities face.

The politics around migration have also changed dramatically over the last three years. Previously, migration management at Europe’s behest, catering to European domestic political needs, was an effective way for North African states to ensure diplomatic benefits and economic aid. There was little risk for the governments in doing so, as most of their citizens went to secondary countries before departing for Europe.

The capacity of North Africa states to address irregular migration has arguably grown over the last decade

These routes have now changed. Rigid enforcement of migration laws is now most likely to impact North Africans in their home countries, increasing disaffection with the government among both apprehended migrants and their families. This can become acute when government enforcement is perceived as being too brutal, such as in the fall of 2018 when protests emerged after Moroccan forces opened fire on a migrant boat and killing one young Moroccan and injuring three others.²⁰⁴

Further, preventing citizens from migrating eliminates one important means of lessening social tension in an otherwise volatile moment. The result can be increased street protests and an intensification of demands that North African governments provide jobs, services and opportunities – demands that regional governments are ill prepared or economically unable to meet.

So, for North African governments, halting migration to satisfy European partners now runs counter to their own political need to ensure stability. This has not resulted in an explicit repudiation of previous agreements with Europe. Rather, it has manifested in lessened political will to address the issue, a sense that percolates down through the ranks.

This then should lead Europe to pause and take note: migration is not simply a factor in European politics – it deeply affects contemporary North African politics as well. Diplomatic engagements, policies and aid programmes aimed at addressing irregular migration need to be attuned to this reality, and it is crucial to recognise that approaching the issue primarily through securitised approaches will not succeed as long as the underlying drivers remain unaddressed.

This should prompt a rethink of European programmes designed to counter migration through simple border hardening and forced migrant returns. While this provides a highly visible demonstration of effort, and metrics that can be counted and reported, it does little to address the larger drivers of migration. '[This is] inefficient, as it cannot be enough to stop irregular migration,' noted a Tunisian military official.²⁰⁵

Addressing the larger drivers of migration in North Africa will not be easy or quick. But absent such comprehensive engagement, North African irregular migration to Europe is only likely to grow.

Conclusion

As 2019 began, irregular migration by North Africans to Europe was in a state of flux. The number of irregular migrants from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya is growing rapidly. They are also more visible as the number of migrants arriving in Europe from other countries declines. This has ensured that the question of North African migrants, ignored in Europe while it dealt with migration 'crises' involving Syrians or sub-Saharan migrants, is increasingly coming to the forefront of current policy debates. It is likely this will emerge as an increasingly acute factor in the coming 24 months.

North African migration has also reverted from routes used at the beginning of the decade to those used at the beginning of the century: Moroccans leave for Europe from Morocco, Algerians depart directly from Algeria and Tunisians head north to Italy from their own beaches.

That this reshoring should happen now is no surprise. North Africa is undergoing a period of fragility, propelled by worsening economic trends, social unrest and contentious politics.

This fragility, and the departure of migrants directly from their home countries, has changed the politics around migration in the region. It is becoming more difficult for North African states to act as European gatekeepers, regardless of diplomatic pressure or aid inducements. For European states, this should prompt a rethinking of their approach to the migration issue, and a larger re-examination of priorities on this issue. Simply put, by seeking above all else to accomplish the short-term political goal of addressing migration, European states may unintentionally worsen the risk of greater instability in North African states, which poses a far more acute and intractable strategic challenge.

Migration is not simply a factor in European politics – it also affects contemporary North African politics

Yet the present moment is not only one of gloom. As can be seen in the ongoing protests in Algeria, there is a deep love of country among North Africans and a desire to build a life in it. There is drive and demand for change: for more inclusive and representative political systems, greater economic opportunity, less structural inequality, strengthened rule of law, a greater sense of dignity and well-being, and revived hope for the future.

It is these changing factors in North Africa that are most likely to lessen the drive to migrate. Foreign strategies to address migration must take these changes into account, recognising that political pressure on North African states to halt the departures, coupled with greater security aid – which was successful in stemming transit migration in years prior – is far less useful in the current context. Narrow technical fixes are no longer enough.

Recommendations

As discussed, the issue of irregular migration in North Africa is complex, influenced by route options, drivers (including both push and pull factors) and government action. Because of this complexity, there are no easy or

quick fixes. The following eight recommendations aim to address key factors impacting migration and point the way towards further research and policy development.

- The rapidly evolving situation around irregular migration means that static plans are likely to become obsolete quickly. North African governments and international donors should design programmes that involve routine iterative reviews and have the flexibility to be redesigned in response to changes in the situation.
- Short-term technical solutions to irregular migration should give way to longer-term, strategic and comprehensive programmes. This requires that national governments and donors adopt strategic patience, and not demand immediate results.
- Broad-based approaches to countering migration should be avoided. Rather, tailored interventions on each route and among each nationality offer a far greater potential for impact. Social media around migration in particular offers a novel and potentially highly effective means of better understanding drivers and, through that, crafting innovative responses.
- Migration is deeply influenced by structural inequality and weakness. National governments and donors should prioritise efforts to address key structural issues, including weak rule of law, criminal justice reform and security sector reform. Ideally, this will also include mainstreaming efforts to combat structural inequality within all programmes and donor activities in North Africa.
- Routine engagement and dialogue between North African states and key constituencies linked to migration should be organised. Multi-stakeholder dialogue offers a key means through which frustrations and concerns can be rapidly conveyed and national governments can get a clearer picture of the specific drivers of irregular migration within their borders.
- Engagement and dialogue between North African states on issues of irregular and regular migration should be convened. The similarities in drivers across the region mean that regional states are best positioned to offer each other policy recommendations and advice on good practices in addressing shared challenges.

- Open and honest dialogue is needed on migration between Europe and North Africa. It should be focused more broadly than irregular migration alone. There must be a discussion predicated on how migration can best serve the needs of North Africa and Europe. This should also entail specific discussions around novel programmes to satisfy North Africans' desire to work in Europe through short-term, legal channels and to equitably address the accelerating 'brain drain' from the region.

Open and honest dialogue is needed on migration between Europe and North Africa

- Additional research is necessary. Key areas for future study include deepening the knowledge base on the manifestation and impact of inequality across North Africa; the potential of the private sector in addressing regular and irregular migration; the factors underpinning growing female and family-unit migration; how smuggling and self-smuggling methods diffuse between different North African countries; the factors involved in the rise of Libyans migrating through the Balkans; and the impact of hardening border security on interregional migration and migration from North Africa to Europe.

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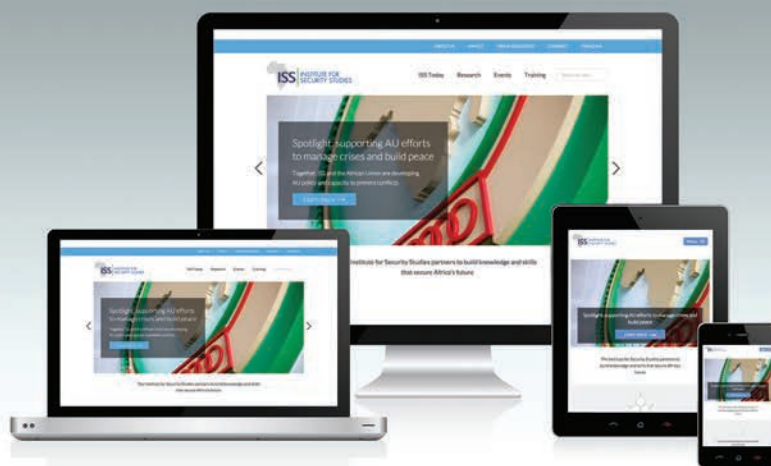
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