Unauthorized Migration from Africa to Spain

Jørgen Carling*

ABSTRACT

The dynamics of unauthorized border-crossing in the Mediterranean region has received extensive media coverage but little academic attention. This article examines the patterns and dynamics of transit migration towards the Spanish-African borders, and of unauthorized migration across these borders. The geography of migration is examined in detail, and this leads to several conclusions with implications for migration management. First, the origins of sub-Saharan African transit migrants in Morocco are remarkably diverse. Second, cities and towns far beyond Europe play a pivotal role in the migration dynamics at the Spanish-African borders. Third, the Strait of Gibraltar itself has lost much of its importance as a crossing point. Fourth large-scale smuggling to the Canary Islands directly from West Africa is still marginal in numerical terms, but represents a worrying scenario.

INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the millennium, on average about 350 African boat migrants have been intercepted along Spanish shores every week. The approximate weekly death toll among these migrants is four deaths. These figures represent an unauthorized migration flow that has existed at a substantial scale for 15 years. In the past decade or so, this flow has been increasingly composed of transit migrants originating in West and Central Africa, and even from Asia. Transit

* International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)
migrants are migrants who neither originate in, nor are destined to, North Africa; they are passing through on their way toward Europe, but often end up staying in North Africa for an extended period.

Significant proportions of the overall migration from Africa to Spain arrived through unauthorized entry. A nation-wide survey of immigrants in 2000 found that about 40 per cent of Africans had entered Spain without a visa, despite being required to have one (Diez Nicolás and Ramírez Lafita, 2001). The bulk of unauthorized migrants entering Spain from the south are either Moroccans or sub-Saharan Africans, transiting through Morocco or Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara. The share of sub-Saharan Africans is growing, and the migration dynamics at Spain’s southern boundaries have repercussions beyond the Maghreb, into West and Central Africa.

This article gives an empirical overview of recent unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain. It aims to bridge the gap between the myopic perspective of daily media reports and the broad sweeps of available academic research. In fact, books and journal articles about immigration to southern Europe have focused on the situation of illegal residents, and on the politics of immigration, but only briefly addressed unauthorized migration itself (e.g. Anthias and Lazaridis, 2000; Bodega et al., 1995; Cornelius, 2004; Hamilton, 1997; Huntoon, 1998; King and Black, 1997; King et al., 2000; Montanari and Cortese, 1995; Quassoli, 1999; Sciortino, 1999). This contrasts with the situation in the United States, where researchers have thoroughly analysed the dynamics of unauthorized immigration from Mexico. This research addresses the interaction between authorities, smugglers, and migrants, and the effects of specific policy measures on the number of unauthorized entries and migrant deaths (e.g. Andreas, 2000; Cornelius, 2001; Eschblach et al., 1999; Espenshade, 1994; Jones, 1995; Nevins, 2002). Despite the lack of in-depth empirical analysis, the imagery of unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain has acquired a central place in migration studies. The word *patera* – the type of wooden boat used by human smugglers in this area – has become a part of the vocabulary of the international migration literature, and the Strait of Gibraltar is strongly associated with the phenomenon of migrant deaths.

The research presented in this article is based on the analysis of approximately 800 media reports, government statistics, various “grey” literature, academic publications and detailed accounts of approximately 1,200 migrant deaths along Spanish borders over the past decade. A few notes of caution are required regarding the use of media reports as sources. First, media reports do not always feature the quality control that is integral to academic research. Second, reader accessibility may be given priority over attention to detail; for instance, statistical definitions might be ignored. Third, it is not always easy to see how
the political context influences media reporting, and to interpret the coverage accordingly. Handled with caution, the nearly two decades of detailed reporting on unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain nevertheless constitutes a material with great potential. Some journalists have worked regularly on this topic for many years and their experience contributes to the quality of the coverage. In this case, the value of media sources lies partly in the systematic documentation of empirical events over a long period, partly in the information uncovered through investigative journalism, and finally in the recounting of contrasting perspectives, such as those of Spanish and Moroccan governments and non-governmental organizations. Similarly, given such a politicized topic, reports from governments and non-governmental organizations must also be treated with caution as primary data.

The first main section of the article places unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain within a wider migratory context. The second section addresses transit migration towards the zones of departure for Spain, and the third section examines the final step into Spain at different sections of the Spanish-African borders. I have presented an analysis of Spanish migration control measures elsewhere (Carling, in press). For a more general overview of recent immigration and immigration policy in Spain, see Cornelius (2004).

The meaning of “unauthorized migration”

The use of the term “unauthorized migration” in this article is deliberate and has an analytical purpose. In analysing migration dynamics, it is useful to single out entry which is unauthorized in the sense that it occurs outside the common, authorized means of entering the national territory. This excludes other forms of irregular entry, such as entry with forged passports or unlawfully obtained visas. Such entries are in breach of immigration laws, but nevertheless “authorized” by an oblivious immigration officer. By contrast, migrants who successfully land between the designated Authorized Crossing Points, or stow away on freighters, enter the country without any form of authorization. Literal unauthorized border-crossing is, therefore, just one aspect of what is variously referred to as “irregular”, “undocumented”, or “illegal” immigration and residence. Table 1 presents key characteristics of three types of irregular entry, of which the first two can be regarded as forms of unauthorized migration. “Unauthorized entry by sea” refers to voyages for the purpose of unauthorized entry, while “stowing away” refers to hiding in a ship that arrives openly and lawfully.
Table 1: Characteristics of Selected Types of Irregular Entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Unauthorized entry by sea</th>
<th>Stowing away</th>
<th>Documented entry on false premises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intention to enter unseen?</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At an Authorised Crossing Point?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aided by facilitators (smugglers)?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the carrier’s consent to transportation?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the carrier’s consent to smuggling?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In breach of immigration laws?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorized by immigration officer?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The ‘yes/no’ values are the answers to the question posed in each row. For instance, Stowing away involves an intention to enter unseen. These are the answers corresponding to typical cases, to which there may be exceptions. For instance, unauthorized entries by sea could occur at an Authorized Crossing Point by chance.

Unauthorized entry is legitimate under the 1951 Geneva Convention when it is done for the purpose of seeking asylum. Migration can therefore be “unauthorized” without being illegal. Having said that, only a small minority of unauthorized entrants from Africa to Spain seek asylum, and few of these are found to fulfil the requirements for protection under the Geneva Convention. While the term “illegal” is avoided by most international agencies and many academics, this is the standard term in Spanish media and politics. The more politically correct terms “irregular” and “undocumented” can be seen as having a euphemistic tone to them, migrants themselves also often say “illegal” (Uehling, 2004). It is worth noting that a different vocabulary is often used in countries of origin. In both official and unofficial contexts in Morocco, unauthorized migration is referred to as _hijra sirrTyä, meaning “hidden” or “secret” migration (Juntunen, 2002). In Cape Verde, the popular expression for going irregularly to Spain is _bâ gatxôd, “going hidden” (Carling, 2001).

Statistics on unauthorized entry are limited to counts of apprehensions of those attempting to enter Europe outside authorized crossing points. These figures are the combined outcome of actual flows and the effectiveness of border control, both of which might have an impact on changes over time. There are also definitional problems with these data. In Spain, despite the enormous attention
given to unauthorized migration, there is no systematic national coordination of comparative statistics on migrant apprehensions. Figures on apprehensions are frequently quoted in the media and often compared with the corresponding figure for the previous year. However, several nuances obscure the picture. First of all, figures are sometimes, but not always, presented separately for migrants apprehended “in boats”, “on beaches”, and “in the inland”, and the latter group may have resided in Spain for a long period by the time they are arrested. In some cases, figures also include migrants who are “detected but not intercepted”. Finally, most figures are based on apprehensions by the Guardia Civil, a joint military and civilian police force, and usually exclude apprehensions by other agencies. The data on Spain presented here is the best estimate for apprehensions upon arrival, based on a large number of primary and secondary sources.

CONTEXTS OF RECENT UNAUTHORIZED MIGRATION

This article focuses on events leading up to migrants’ arrival on Spanish soil. Nevertheless, three factors concerning the migrants’ subsequent situation in Spain are fundamental to the migration dynamics and warrant attention: the limited detention period, the opportunities for regularization, and the obstacles to readmission.

First, Spanish law stipulates that intercepted migrants can be detained for a maximum of 40 days. If the authorities are unable to identify and/or return the migrants to their country of origin, or a transit country, during this period, they must be released. In recent years, this has happened with tens of thousands of migrants annually.

Second, the freedom of movement within the Schengen area, and the series of regularization programmes in southern Europe, has meant that migrants who arrive without authorization have had a realistic opportunity for acquiring a residence permit at a later stage. The latest regularization programme was initiated in Spain in February 2005 and was open to immigrants who had been resident in Spain since before August 2004, had guaranteed employment, and met certain other criteria.

Third, Morocco has signed a readmission agreement with Spain that also covers transit migrants, but Moroccan authorities have generally only accepted the readmission of Moroccan nationals. Consequently, sub-Saharan Africans have less to lose if they are intercepted. This affects the choice of itineraries and smuggling modes of the two groups.
These three aspects of the Spanish policy environment contribute to making unauthorized migration a worthwhile strategy for many Africans. The regularization programmes, in particular, have come under heavy criticism on the grounds that they embody a “pull effect” (efecto llamada) on would-be migrants to the south of the Mediterranean.

Another important contextual factor in unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain is the Western Sahara conflict. Western Sahara was administered by Spain until 1976 and has subsequently been disputed between the pro-independence Frente Polisario group, and Morocco. Military conflict ended with a cease-fire in 1991. Polisario currently controls about a third of Western Sahara while Morocco is actively pursuing the functional integration of the remainder of the country with Moroccan territory. More than 100,000 Sahrawis (natives of Western Sahara) still live as refugees in camps in Algeria. A United Nations plan for a referendum on Western Sahara’s future is yet to be implemented. The conflict has various implications for migration dynamics on the ground, as will be shown below. In addition, unauthorized migration and the Western Sahara dispute are two of the most contentious issues in relations between Morocco and Spain and are implicated in the same bilateral nexus of cooperation and conflict.

Spain as a country of immigration

Spain has not only transitioned from a recent country of emigration to, currently, a country of immigration, Spain has become Europe’s principal immigration country. In 2003, Spain received more than a third of the immigrants to the 25 EU member states. At the same time, Spain is a principal gateway to Europe, acting as a transit country for unauthorized migrants arriving from the south, who subsequently travel to other European countries.

The number of Africans in Spain has grown rapidly, both in terms of documented and undocumented immigrants. They now account for slightly more than a quarter of all legally resident foreign nationals. In the five-year period from 1998-2003, the number of African residence permit holders grew from 179,000 to 433,000. Throughout this period, Moroccans have accounted for more than three quarters of the African total, and constituted the largest group of foreign nationals in Spain. It is worth noting, however, that the fastest growing foreign populations in Spain are not Africans, but Eastern Europeans (especially Romanians, Bulgarians, and Ukranians) and Latin Americans (Ecuadorians and Colombians).

About a third of all Africans legally resident in Spain are women, but the vast majority of unauthorized boat migrants are men. The proportion of women has increased, however, especially among some sub-Saharan African nationalities.
A survey of all unauthorized migrants arriving in the Canary Islands in 2000 found that 23 per cent were women (Diputado del Común, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2002). The proportion was much higher for Nigerians than for any other nationality: 44 per cent. During the past couple of years there have been frequent reports of pregnant women arriving with the belief that giving birth to a child in Spain will give them the right to remain in the country.

While Moroccans are the most numerous immigrant group in Spain, other European countries are still much more important countries of destination from a Moroccan perspective. For instance, remittances from France are almost five times greater than remittances from Spain. Only in the proximity of the Strait of Gibraltar are migratory links with Spain more significant than links with other European countries. The principal sub-Saharan African source countries of unauthorized immigration also find France and Italy more important final destinations than Spain.

The changing role of buffer zones

Spain’s dual role as a country of transit and destination is mirrored by Morocco’s dual role as a country of transit and origin. Morocco exemplifies the situation of countries that have come to constitute protective “buffer zones” beyond the official borders of the EU (O’Down and Wilson, 1996). The European integration process has created a geographical constellation that hinges on the integrity of the external borders. This has had profound impacts on migration to, from, and through the states immediately outside the external borders of the Schengen area. These buffer states fall roughly into two groups: former communist countries in East Europe, and former guest worker exporters in the South. The latter group includes the archetypical guest worker countries – Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey – as well as other countries with substantial migration to Europe in the second half of the twentieth century, notably Cape Verde, Algeria, and Lebanon.

All the southern buffer states have gradually developed dual roles within two distinct but overlapping migration systems. On the one hand, they are long-standing countries of origin for migration to Europe, with current migration dominated by family reunification or family formation. On the other hand, they are transit countries for migrants from Asia, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa who often rely on unauthorized entry to Europe. In some cases, the native population sustains a persistent demand for human smuggling, and the two migration systems become integrated in the infrastructure of unauthorized entry. This is the case in Morocco and Western Sahara, where Maghrebis and sub-Saharan Africans often use the same smugglers and arrive on the same boats. In other cases, the two systems are largely separate despite significant emigration.
pressure from the native population. In Cape Verde, people smuggling services to the Canary Islands are almost exclusively procured by transit migrants from the West African mainland, while the Cape Verdeans themselves seek to emigrate by other means.

The current trend across the southern buffer states is towards more transit migration in relation to native emigration (Bensaâd, 2003; Boubakri, 2001; Pastore, 2004). In 2003, sub-Saharan Africans accounted for about one quarter of migrants apprehended after crossing the Strait of Gibraltar, compared to less than 2 per cent in the late 1990s. Among the migrants who arrived on the Canary Islands in 2003, as many as two thirds were sub-Saharan Africans (Pardellas, 2004b; Romaguera, 2004; Yárnos, 2002). Both cases also contain a small proportion of Asians (3-5 per cent).

Transit migration through the buffer zones overlaps with immigration. While Libya and southern Algeria have long attracted migrants from the south, Morocco, Tunisia, and Cape Verde are also becoming destination countries for sub-Saharan African migrants. This is partly because what was originally intended as transit migration often becomes de facto immigration. Many migrants remain in the transit countries for months or even years as they strive to earn money for their own subsistence, and for financing their final unauthorized passage to Europe. If they cannot access additional funds from relatives in Europe or in the country of origin, transit migrants are often trapped in a situation where the meagre income from begging or casual work is hardly enough for survival, let alone for arranging to be smuggled to Spain (Collyer, 2004). Even if the journey from West Africa to the buffer zones is time consuming and expensive, the final leg is still the greatest barrier. A similar process is occurring on a smaller scale within Morocco, as impoverished people from the inland migrate to gateway cities, such as Nador, in the hope of entering Spain. Most of them do not make it past the border, and so remain in the cities (McMurray, 2001). While the proximity to Spain is often said to intensify native Moroccans’ migration aspirations, the long distance back to their countries of origin can be said to have the same effect for sub-Saharan African transit migrants. Having travelled so far, and almost reached the goal, the disincentive to turn back is strong.

Emigration from Morocco

Morocco has a complex history of mass migration to Europe. There are substantial regional differences in the distribution among different destinations, and in the stage of maturity of the emigration dynamics (de Haas, 2005; van der Erf and Heering, 2002; Reniers, 2000; Sørensen, 2004). The large-scale labour emigration of the 1960s and 1970s was directed primarily to France, followed by Belgium,
the Netherlands, and Germany. During this period, Spain was almost exclusively a transit country for Moroccans. In the 1980s, however, Spain and Italy emerged as important destination countries. The diversification of destinations coincided with the progressive inclusion of new sending regions, especially the Atlantic coast and the interior, and a growing proportion of urban migrants.

By 1991, immigration from Morocco had become a cause for concern in Spain. In May 1991, Spain introduced a visa requirement for North Africans, one of the last countries in Western Europe to do so. The visa requirement resulted in endless queues outside the Spanish consulates in Morocco and fuelled a rapidly expanding economy of illegal migration services.

In recent years, three areas of origin have been prominent among unauthorized Moroccan migrants intercepted in Spain: the northwest region near the Algerian border; the impoverished inland area between Casablanca, Beni-Mellal, and Marrakech; and the southern area of Guelmine, into occupied Western Sahara. In the Western Saharan capital Laayoune, the organizational centre for human smuggling to the Canary Islands, emigration aspirations are high among native Sahrawis disillusioned by 30 years of Moroccan occupation and oppression, as well as among impoverished Moroccan settlers brought in by the authorities in 1994-1995 to influence the referendum then-expected to take place on Western Sahara’s future (Bárbulo, 2001, 2002).

Average per capita income has risen steadily in Morocco over the past decades, but the 1990s also saw a significant rise in the incidence of poverty as well as in the unemployment rate (World Bank, 2003). A survey conducted in 1998 found that 72 per cent of the population wished to emigrate. Among the population less than 30 years of age, the proportion was as high as 89 per cent (Canales, 1998). A Eurostat survey, carried out the year before, found that 20 per cent of the overall population in Morocco intended to emigrate, with much higher levels of aspiration among young men (Commission of the European Communities, 2000; Van der Erf and Heering, 2002). These statistics illustrate the persistant emigration pressure in Morocco. Since migration networks between Morocco and Europe are so well developed, however, many aspiring migrants can enter Europe without resorting to unauthorized migration across the Strait to Spain. Having legally resident relatives in Europe is usually a precondition for securing entry on a short-term visa or through family reunification. For every 1,000 inhabitants in Morocco there are roughly 30 Moroccan-born legal residents in Europe. The corresponding figure for sub-Saharan African countries is only three, indicating that the density of family ties to Europe is only a fraction of the level in Morocco. Consequently, many sub-Saharan Africans who are determined to migrate to Europe have no other options than to go on their own.
Emigration from Sub-Saharan Africa

The largest numbers of sub-Saharan African migrants travelling through Morocco and Western Sahara and entering Spain without authorization come from Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone (see Table 2). In addition, there have been arrivals from the remaining countries in West Africa, and from other Central African countries. It is remarkable that the migrants’ origins are so diverse, indicating that the idea of travelling to Europe through Morocco has indeed become established in most of West Africa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1520</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.R. Congo</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1690</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2130</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2220</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>120.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1580</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total/Average</td>
<td>269.2</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>1106</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>333.8</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3810</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5760</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21460</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2007 The Author
Journal Compilation © 2007 IOM
TABLE 2: SOURCES AND NOTES:

1. The countries listed are those deemed to be most important over the past couple of years, based on the following sources: Bárbulo, 2004e; Barros et al., 2002; Cembrero, 2003a; Collyer, 2004; Diputado del Común, 2001; Favresse, 2003; Fayrén and Adell, 2000; García and Lorenzo 2004, Human Rights Watch, 2002; Instituto de Migraciones y Servicios Sociales, 2001; Lahlou, 2003a, 2003b; Pardellas, 2004b; Romaguera, 2004; Yáñez, 2002.


4. There is great variation in how the readmission agreements work in practice. A readmission agreement with Cape Verde (which is an important transit country) was also signed in 2004. Although there is no formal agreement with Senegal, readmissions have been carried out on an ad hoc basis.


7. United Nations Development Programme, 2004

8. Indicates countries with armed conflicts during 1999-2003. Only includes conflict in which one party is the government, and which claim at least 25 battle-related deaths per calendar year. The recent riots in Nigeria do not fall within the definition of armed conflict, but they have claimed several thousand lives. Gleditsch et al., 2002; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2004.

9. Based on the 2003 “Combined Polity score” of the Polity IV Project of the Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM), University of Maryland (Marshall and Jaggers, 2002). Indicates countries with values of 0 or below, as well as “interregnum” situations. Marshall and Jaggers, 2002.

10. Per capita income and life expectancy at birth are weighted averages.

Data on average incomes, conflict, and democracy have only limited explanatory power in the analysis of migration flows. Understanding why so many West Africans aspire to go to Europe requires a more thorough analysis of the social mechanisms at work. Table 2, however, illustrates the remarkable fact that the only feature that unites these countries is that they are poor, African countries. The incidence of conflict, political stability, and democracy is highly mixed. Less than one third of the unauthorized migrants arriving in 2003 came from countries with ongoing or recently terminated armed conflict.5 While many of the countries of origin are very poor, the financial cost of migration means that sub-Saharan African transit migrants are often not the poorest of the poor. In many cases, the precipitating factor in people’s decision to risk migrating to Europe is not absolute poverty in itself, but a deterioration in living standards due to job loss, political upheaval, or other circumstances (Collyer, 2004).

It is highly likely that migration pressure from West Africa will persist or increase in the years to come, for at least three reasons. First, there tend to be strong self-perpetuating mechanisms in international migration (Massey et al., 1998). A
growing number of communities in countries such as Senegal, Mali, and Ghana have become deeply involved in migration to Europe (Black et al., 2003; Martin et al., 2002; Riccio, 2002). This can in itself be expected to contribute to future emigration pressure. Emigration is often concentrated in certain regions within the countries of origin, such as the Kayes region in Mali or the Edo region in Nigeria. Such areas may have a very well developed infrastructure of migration even if the level of emigration from the country as a whole is modest.

Second, there is general agreement that when poor societies become wealthier, migration tends to increase rather than decline. If West Africa experiences economic growth (which has hardly been the case during the past decade), it will take a long time before this contributes to lower levels of emigration aspiration. It is worth noting that the wish to emigrate is widespread in Morocco, even with a per capita purchasing power more than three times as high as that in the sub-Saharan African countries of origin.

Third, migration is likely to increase with the level of conflict and civil unrest. It remains to be seen, however, to what extent future refugee crises affect the external borders of Europe. During the recent wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, more than 90 per cent of the refugees stayed within the region. With roughly 900 Liberian migrants reaching Spain by boat in 2003, Liberia was the fourth most important country of origin. Nevertheless, this figure is minuscule in relation to the more than 300,000 Liberian refugees within West Africa.

TRANSIT MIGRATION

This section and the next will address transit migration, and unauthorized entry into Spain, respectively. The various migration routes and places mentioned in the text are displayed in Figure 1.

In 2003 and 2004 unauthorized arrivals by boat along the Spanish coasts were split almost equally between the Canary Islands and the Spanish mainland. In addition, there were many attempts at unauthorized entry across the borders of Spain’s two North African enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla. There are “waiting zones” near the departure points for all these routes, where transit migrants wait for a chance to take the final step into Europe. These include spontaneous camps in the forests of Mount Gourougou, outside Mellilla, and in the Saguia el-Hamra canyon outside Laayoune in Western Sahara. In these and other places, transit migrants live under precarious conditions while waiting for an opportunity to enter Spanish territory.
Unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain

FIGURE 1: ROUTES OF UNAUTHORIZED MIGRATION FROM AFRICA TO SPAIN

Sources: The information in the map is compiled from a large number of media reports, official documents, and research reports from the period 2000–2005.
Sources: The information in the map is compiled from a large number of media reports, official documents, and research reports from the period 2000–2005.
The majority of sub-Saharan African migrants headed for Morocco or Western Sahara take one of three routes, passing through Niger, Mali, or Mauritania. Many migrants do not have sufficient money for the whole trip when they set out, and have to work their way towards the North. Spending several years on the way from West Africa to Europe is not uncommon. Virtually all transit migrants depend on human smugglers to reach North Africa. This is usually on a small-scale basis and transit is provided by different smugglers for different sections of the journey (Collyer, 2004).

**Trans-Saharan migration**

The easternmost of the three routes goes through the Nigerien desert town Agadez, which is a particularly important migration node (Bensaâd, 2002, 2003; Favresse, 2003; Fayrén and Adell, 2000; Gantin, 2001; Larsheim et al., 2002; Onishi, 2001). This is one of many remote and poor Saharan communities that have been revitalized, or, in some cases, experienced regular booms, as a result of the migration business. Agadez is an assembly point for migrants from West and Central African countries as far apart as Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is also the point where the two main routes to Europe diverge. One leads northeast to Libya, an increasingly important transit point for unauthorized migrants entering southern Italy. The other route leads northwest into Algeria and onwards to Morocco.

As in other transit nodes for irregular migration, a range of migration-related services are on offer in Agadez (Gantin, 2001; Onishi, 2001). These include counterfeit and forged documents of different quality, in addition to smuggling. In the Algerian consulate in Agadez, there are hundreds of photos of West Africans who have submitted visa applications with different names and nationalities as many as three or four times (Gantin, 2001).

In the words of Ali Bensaâd (2003: 5), “Agadez is the place where information and rumours about the whole migration chain converge, manipulated and distilled by the ‘travel agents’”. The significance of the bifurcation at Agadez was clearly seen in the summer of 2001, in the aftermath of an accident where more than a hundred migrants, on their way to Libya, died of thirst when a truck lost its way in the desert (Bensaâd, 2002; Gantin, 2001). The authorities subsequently stepped up surveillance and did not allow trucks headed for Libya to carry passengers. This did not deprive Agadez of its position as a transit node, but led to a reorientation towards Algeria. More recently, the flow to Libya has resumed. Bensaâd (2003) estimates that 100,000 migrants pass through Agadez every year, and that the majority continue to Libya, either to work there or to try to reach Italy. Nigerians constitute the largest group of transit migrants in Agadez, followed by Ghanaians (Simon, 2004).
The second trans-Saharan route goes through Gao in eastern Mali, another desert gateway town. Like Agadez, Gao was a centre for trans-Saharan trade several centuries ago, and has recently experienced rejuvenation as a node for West African migration towards Europe. According to the local police, human smuggling is now the town’s principal business (Baxter, 2002; Winter, 2004). Migrants from Nigeria, Senegal, and other parts of West Africa gather in Gao where onward transport is organized. On the Algerian side of the border, the city of Tamanrasset attracts many sub-Saharan African migrants who work in order to finance their onward journey. The population of this remote place has exploded over the past decades, and now has about 70,000 inhabitants, of which nearly half are sub-Saharan Africans (Simon, 2004).

The journey across the Sahara is the most difficult and dangerous leg of the journey before reaching the external borders of Europe. Testimonies from migrants who have made the crossing suggest that deaths are common and that many survivors have endured indescribable horrors (Collyer, 2004).

West African migrants headed for Europe make use of the different bilateral and multilateral agreements on the free circulation of people. However, the reality for migrants at the borders is often more complicated than the international treaties imply. Citizens of ECOWAS member states are granted visa-free entry to other member states of up to 90 days. Despite the provisions in the treaty, there are numerous examples of temporary border closures and even arrests and expulsions of migrants on the grounds that they lack sufficient means for subsistence.

Many sub-Saharan African transit migrants have citizenships that grant them visa-free entry into Morocco. The land border with Algeria has been closed to traffic since 1994, however, making unauthorized entry the only alternative for transit migrants coming from Algeria. The principal point of entry is in the vicinity of the border cities of Oujda (Morocco) and Maghnia (Algeria), where border police on both sides allow for certain permeability (Barros et al., 2002). The Oujda-Maghnia crossing is also where sub-Saharan Africans arrested in Morocco are returned to Algeria, adding to the number of migrants waiting for a chance to enter Morocco. Estimates of the migrant population camping in the vicinity of Maghnia vary from several hundred to 10,000 (Vermeren, 2002).

Once inside Morocco, the migrants who have entered from Algeria either travel south in order to reach the Canary Islands, or remain in the northern part of the country. There are growing numbers of sub-Saharan migrants in the big cities (especially Casablanca and Rabat), in urban centres where human smuggling is organized (Tanger, Tétouan, and Nador) and in squatter camps in the vicinity of the Spanish enclaves (Lahlou, 2003a; Sletten, 2004). Since 2002, intensified
efforts by Moroccan authorities to fight unauthorized migration have made many transit migrants shun the city centres and retreat to squatter camps in rural areas (Collyer, 2004). In the fall of 2005, it became clear that Moroccan authorities had transported many hundreds of sub-Saharan African migrants to remote locations in the desert near Algeria and in the Polisario-controlled part of Western Sahara. The migrants were abandoned with no or inadequate supplies of food and water. Several groups of migrants were encountered by United Nations MINURSO troops, Polisario troops, and humanitarian organizations.⁹

**Migration through Mauritania**

The third migration route goes along the West coast of Africa, through Mauritania to Western Sahara. This itinerary appears to be more recent, and as late as 2000 was reported to be insignificant (Barros et al., 2002). The West Africans following this route usually pass through the Senegalese-Mauritanian border town Rosso or cross into Mauritania from the Malian city of Kayes. In Rosso, the migrants are approached by smugglers or middlemen as soon as they arrive at the bus station.¹⁰ Just like in Agadez, there is a choice between clandestine entry (often with the consent of bribed officials on both sides) and independent travel with forged documents. Mauritanian identity cards can easily be obtained in Rosso.

After crossing Mauritania, the migrants gather in either the coastal border town Nouadhibou or the mining town Zouerate in the Mauritanian desert near the Western Saharan border. In Zouerate, smugglers assemble groups of migrants who are then transported on jeeps through the desert. While the border itself can be crossed without difficulty, there is a defensive wall further into Western Sahara. This is a sand berm constructed by the Moroccans in the late 1980s to ward off Polisario guerrillas. It is about three metres in height, aligned with bunkers, fences, and landmines, and very difficult to cross outside the three desert control posts. Nevertheless, the soldiers on guard reportedly let smugglers enter with a group of migrants in return for a bribe (Bárbulo, 2004c; Carbajosa, 2004). In some cases, the migrants travel to the far north of Mauritania before crossing into Western Sahara. A variant of the Mauritanian desert route is along the coast by fishing boats. The migrants then contact smugglers after landing in Western Sahara.

**Transit from Asia**

Morocco and Western Sahara also are being used ever more frequently as transit points for Asian migrants trying to enter Europe. This applies particularly to Chinese, Indians, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis. Asian migrants are known to have been flown into Casablanca, smuggled into Ceuta and Melilla, and then transported to the mainland. In the case of the Chinese, Spanish police have found that Chinese and Moroccan smugglers have been cooperating in the smuggling
of Chinese, via Malaysia, the Middle East, and Nigeria, to Morocco and finally to Spain. In the early 2000s, there were allegedly several hundred Asians, mostly Chinese, waiting in Tanger for an opportunity to enter Ceuta (Abad, 2000; Abad, 2001; Cembrero, 2003b; Rodriguez, 2000).

Asians have also started arriving at the Canary Islands. It came as a surprise when four Filipinos were arrested as they arrived in a patera on Fuerteventura in May 2000. In 2003, however, 280 Asians were among the patera migrants intercepted in the Canary Islands. About half were Indians, while the others included Bangladeshis, Afghans, Iraqis and Filipinos (Bárbulu, 2004a; Pardellas, 2003a). On two occasions in 2004, Polisario troops encountered groups of South Asian migrants in the Western Saharan desert outside the Moroccan defensive berm. The migrants claimed that they had been abandoned by smugglers (United Nations Secretary General, 2004).

UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY INTO SPAIN

After reaching the departure areas in Western Sahara or Northern Morocco, migrants face the most expensive, and often most dangerous, part of their journey. This is the decisive step across the external borders of the European Union. The only way of quantifying the unauthorized migration flow is to refer to apprehensions along these borders. Figure 2 displays the increase in the number of interceptions of unauthorized migrants along the Spanish coasts since 1993. The figure rose steadily through the mid-1990s, more than doubled from 1999 to 2000, and remained steady around 16,000–19,000 interceptions per year from 2000 to 2004. The rising number of interceptions during the 1990s was the outcome of more migration combined with better surveillance and border control. The fact that interception numbers have remained relatively stable since 2000 could mean that the total (detected and undetected) flow is declining. It was during this period that advanced surveillance systems were installed along a gradually larger proportion of the coast. While total interceptions have stabilized since 2000, this period has seen a dramatic geographical shift towards the Canary Islands. Figure 2 also shows the number of foreigners intercepted in Morocco, which is roughly similar to the number of interceptions in Spain.

Unauthorized migration across Spain’s maritime borders has usually been undertaken with relatively small boats. Pateras are wooden boats 5–6 metres long, originally used for fishing. For human smuggling purposes, they usually carry 12-15 passengers. Today, pateras are increasingly being replaced by zodiacs, inflatable rubber boats that travel much faster and carry up to 70 passengers. The migrants arriving in this way usually carry no documents and a minimum of
luggage: if anything, a bag of dry clothes, some dried fruit or other provisions, and a mobile phone for calling friends or relatives upon arrival (Mantilla and Mora, 2004).

Spanish authorities have sought to control unauthorized immigration across the maritime borders through early detection and prompt interception of unauthorized migrants. To this end, the so-called Integrated System of External Vigilance (SIVE), a technologically advanced surveillance structure, has been established along the coasts most affected by unauthorized immigration. The system will soon cover the entire Andalucian coast as well as the islands Fuerteventura and Lanzarote. The expansion of the SIVE has had a significant impact on the geography of human smuggling from Africa to Spain (Carling, 2007). As the following sections will show, this has initiated a shift away from the Strait of Gibraltar itself.

FIGURE 2: UNAUTHORIZED MIGRANTS INTERCEPTED ALONG THE SPANISH COASTS AND IN MOROCCO

Source: Guardia Civil/Ministerio del Interior (Reported in El País 1998–2005) and Ministère de l’Intérieur, Maroc (Reported in Fargues 2005).
Across the Strait of Gibraltar and the Alborán Sea

Until the mid-1990s, the Strait of Gibraltar was the unrivalled focus of unauthorized immigration to Spain. The strait has retained strong emblematic value, since no other place symbolizes Europe’s external boundary more strongly than this narrow waterway, where Africa is a mere 14 kilometres away.

Unauthorized migration across the Strait of Gibraltar has probably been common since the days of labour migration to France in the 1960s. It increased during the 1980s, and became a serious issue after the first known drowning accident in November 1988, in which 19 Moroccans lost their lives. This marked the beginning of a wave of arrivals and accidents. The year 1991 decisively transformed the practice of unauthorized migration and migration control in the Gibraltar region. As noted above, Spain introduced a visa requirement for North Africans in this year. The number of patera arrivals rose markedly, and the first unauthorized migrant reception centre was opened in Tarifa. (Driessen, 1996). The composition of the migrant flow also changed, with a growing number of sub-Saharan African migrants arriving along with the Moroccans.

The strait of Gibraltar itself is an attractive crossing point due to the very short distance between the two coasts (Route 1 in Figure 1). Nonetheless, the strong currents and heavy traffic of large ships makes the passage particularly dangerous. This is also where the SIVE was first and most extensively developed. As a consequence, human smugglers have increasingly adopted routes on either side of the Strait itself, as well as across the Alborán Sea. On the Atlantic coast, pateras and zodiacs now leave Morocco from the coast between Tangier and Rabat, and arrive in the western part of Cádiz province, near the city of Cádiz itself (Route 2). Similarly, on the Mediterranean side of the Strait, the departure zone has expanded past Tétouan and Oued Laou (route 3). The most drastic change, however, has been the shift away from the Strait to the Alborán Sea, where boats leave Morocco in the vicinity of Melilla, and land in Grenada and Almería (route 4). During 2004, these two provinces received almost three quarters of all the boat migrants intercepted along the south coast (Secretaría de Estado de Inmigración y Emigración, 2005).

Northern Morocco is home to a variety of human smuggling networks, ranging from internationally organized criminal groups to individual fishermen-turned-smugglers. In the Spanish media and official discourse, the smugglers are invariably referred to as “the Moroccan mafias”. The term “mafia” is also used in EU documents on the subject, such as the Action Plan for Morocco (Council of the European Union, 1999). The bulk of smuggling is usually not organized by tight-knit criminal organizations, however, but in fluid networks of individuals (Collyer, 2004; Juntunen, 2002).
Smuggling networks can be organized in different ways, but usually include recruiters or touts, middlemen (who may or may not own the pateras), pilots, and various categories of assistants (Juntunen, 2002; Najib, 2003b). There is often a team on the Spanish side that awaits the migrants and transports them away from the beaches. In some cases the migrants buy a package that includes a link with specific employers in Spain. The touts travel the country in search of potential clients and supply them to the coordinators against a commission of €70-100 per person. The migrants are then accommodated near the northern coast for anything from three days to several weeks while the trip is being prepared. The pilot who is given the assignment receives €200-500, depending on the weather and other factors (Najib, 2003b). If the weather is good, the smugglers return to Morocco with the boat. They often drop off the migrants 100 metres or more from the shore and force them to swim ashore in order to minimize the risk of interception. If there is no team of smugglers awaiting their arrival, the migrants are on their own from that point.

From Northern Morocco to Ceuta and Melilla

The Spanish city enclaves in northern Morocco are bounded by Europe’s only land borders with Africa, and have been subject to considerable migration pressure. Ceuta, located next to the Strait of Gibraltar has an 8 km border with Morocco and a population of 75,000. Melilla, next to the Moroccan city of Nador, has a 10 km border and a slightly smaller population. Residents in the surrounding Moroccan provinces can travel freely to the two cities, and close to 50,000 people do so every day (Sánchez, 2004; Toledo, 2004). Onward travel to the mainland is restricted, however, since the enclaves are not part of the Schengen area.

Sub-Saharan African migrants started arriving in Melilla and applying for asylum in late 1991 (Fayrén and Adell, 2000). The majority lacked documents but proved very difficult to repatriate. The same development occurred in Ceuta a few years later. As the number of unauthorized migrants in the enclaves increased, and the reception centres became overcrowded, the central government initiated several transfers to the mainland. During the years 1996-1999, a total of nearly 10,000 migrants were transferred in three transfer operations (Barros et al., 2002). At the same time, the borders were drastically reinforced to reduce the number of entries.

Algerians usually enter with forged Moroccan documents, and the small number of Asians are usually assisted by sophisticated human smugglers. Sub-Saharan Africans, however, often are left only the option of trying to cross the perimeter fences (Barros et al., 2002). In September and October 2005 several hundred sub-Saharan African migrants, who had been living in the forests outside the
enclaves for up to two years, attacked the borders. In some places, large numbers of migrants climbed the fences by means of improvised ladders and cardboard suits to protect against the barbed wire. In other places, hundreds of migrants rocked the taller fences and managed to bring them down. More than a dozen migrants died on the borders, the majority killed by gunshot wounds in clashes with Moroccan forces.

Those who succeed in entering the enclaves usually pursue a strategy of registering with the police as soon as possible and hope to eventually be transferred to the mainland. This is an uncertain, and potentially very slow, process, but constitutes a much less dangerous and costly option than trying to make the crossing without authorization. Spanish authorities have often dealt with the accumulation of non-returnable migrants in Ceuta and Melilla by issuing expulsion orders and then allowing them to transfer to the mainland in the hope that they will leave Spain voluntarily. Those who have remained in the country and found work have, in many cases, been able to benefit from the series of regularizations of undocumented migrants in Spain. In total, more than a million undocumented immigrants have been able to regularize their status in Spain since the early 1990s. This certainly makes it easier for prospective migrants to consider unauthorized entry as part of a migration strategy, even if many of them may later find that they are not eligible for regularization.

From Morocco and Western Sahara to the Canary Islands

Since the late 1990s, the Canary Islands have become a major destination for unauthorized migrants from Africa. The first patera to land on the Canary Islands arrived in 1994, carrying seven Sahrawis (natives of Western Sahara). During the following years there was a trickle of Polisario leaders and other opposition figures. From 1997 onwards, ordinary Moroccans dominated the flow, and since 2000, sub-Saharan Africans have been the majority (Bárbulo, 2004f; Comité de Expertos sobre Población y Inmigración en Canarias, 2003).

Until 1999, the Guardia Civil had only one patrol boat in the Canary Islands (Rodríguez, 1999). By that time, however, the smuggling infrastructure was well developed, and there were reportedly about 1,500 migrants waiting on the mainland for a chance to cross over. The organizational centre of human smuggling to the Canary Islands is Laayoune, the capital of Western Sahara. The city’s population has grown rapidly due to Moroccan settlement and today has about 180,000 inhabitants. In the late 1990s, the smuggling business was controlled by a small number of individuals, some of whom actively recruited Moroccans from the impoverished region of Beni Mellal to the north. The arrest or escape of key individuals from the smuggling industry effectively diversified
Unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain

Unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain now involves a large number of small players. There are allegedly around 20 smuggling networks, each of which has its patrons among the security forces (Bárbulo, 2001, 2004f).

Those migrants who arrive from the north are often accommodated in Agadir, while the smugglers gather a group sufficiently large to implement the smuggling operation (Lahlou, 2003a; Najib, 2003a). The migrants are then transported south by car, first on the main road, and then on smaller tracks in order to avoid the numerous police controls near the border with Western Sahara. Most Moroccan migrants await the crossing in pensions and private houses in Laayoune itself. Sub-Saharan Africans, however, usually camp out in the Saguia el-Hamra canyon some 30 km from the city (Bárbulo, 2004c).

Unauthorized migrants to the Canary Islands depart from the coast near the border between Morocco and Western Sahara. Departures are concentrated along a 100 km stretch of coast from the mouth of the Saguia el-Hamra wadi near Laayoune to the town of Tarfaya in Southern Morocco.

During the first years, the pateras used for reaching the Canary Islands were local fishing boats. Nowadays, the boats are purpose-built pateras. The 120 km journey to Fuerteventura takes about 20 hours if the weather is good, but could take several days (Lahlou, 2003a). Although the journey is much longer, the sea is calmer and less dangerous than in the Strait of Gibraltar. Most of the migrants arrive near Faro de la Entallada on the south-eastern coast of Fuerteventura, which acts as a guiding star for the pateras approaching in the dark.

In 2003, the number of migrants landing on Fuerteventura corresponded to nearly 10 per cent of the resident population. The large number of arrivals has put severe strains on the local authorities. As with the North African enclaves, the central government has organized transfers of migrants to the mainland in order to ease the pressure on local government and communities. In 2002 and 2003, a total of more than 10,000 sub-Saharan Africans were transferred from the Canary Islands to Barcelona, Madrid, and other cities on the mainland. This has led some analysts to conclude that sub-Saharan Africans prefer the Canary Islands over the more expensive crossing of the Strait of Gibraltar because they know that the government will take care of onward transportation (Bárbulo, 2003).

**To the Canary Islands from the South**

Unauthorized migration flows via Morocco and Western Sahara, are complemented by a growing number of arrivals to the Canary Islands directly by sea from the south (See Figure 1, Route 10). In some cases, migrants are transferred to small
boats near the Canary Islands, while in other cases, larger ships run aground, moor, or anchor near the coast (see Table 3). During 2004, there were three large arrivals with more than 100 migrants each. The first was a fishing boat with no flag, the second was a dilapidated oil tanker flying the flag of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and the third was a former expedition vessel flagged in Honduras. The three ships combined carried migrants from at least 10 different countries in Western and Central Africa.

#### Table 3: Incidents Related to Large-Scale Human Smuggling to the Canary Islands from the South

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name, length</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Number and origin of passengers</th>
<th>Details and outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td><em>Jom Kabafumo</em></td>
<td>Cape Verde (Santiago)</td>
<td>97; Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, Togo, Guinea-Bissau, and other countries</td>
<td>Migrants arrested upon departure from Santiago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2005</td>
<td><em>Ice D-Olome, 25 m</em></td>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>227; Cape Verde, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Yemen</td>
<td>Anchored off Tenerife; migrants arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2004</td>
<td><em>MV Polar, 46 m.</em></td>
<td>Gambia (Banjul) via Cape Verde</td>
<td>176; Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Senegal.</td>
<td>Anchored off the coast of Gran Canaria; migrants arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2004</td>
<td><em>Hollgan Star</em></td>
<td>Sierra Leone (Freetown)</td>
<td>500; Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>Boarded by Sierra Leonean, Guinean and Spanish police upon departure from Freetown; crew arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2004</td>
<td><em>MT Conakry, 71 m.</em></td>
<td>Senegal (Dakar) via Cape Verde (Sal)</td>
<td>153; Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal.</td>
<td>Intercepted by the Navy 110 km south of Gran Canaria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2004</td>
<td><em>Fullbeck, 25 m.</em></td>
<td>Guinea (Conakry), via Senegal and Mauritania</td>
<td>110-120; Cameroon, Congo, DR Congo, Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.</td>
<td>Ran aground on the coast of Tenerife. 92 of the migrants arrested upon arrival, the others escaped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2003</td>
<td><em>Ocean King, 22 m.</em></td>
<td>Mauritania (Nuadhibou)</td>
<td>20; Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone.</td>
<td>Moored in the harbour of Arrecife (Lanzarote); migrants arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2002</td>
<td><em>Noé, 52 m.</em></td>
<td>Senegal (Dakar)</td>
<td>At least 223; Gambia, Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Mali and Senegal</td>
<td>Moored in the harbour of Las Palmas (Gran Canaria). 223 migrants arrested after a chase through the streets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain

In addition to the three documented arrivals on the Canary Islands, a fourth ship was intercepted upon its departure from Sierra Leone in August 2004. The ship was set to sail for the Canary Islands and the passengers were about to board when police interrupted the operation. The intervention was based on cooperation between Spanish, Sierra Leonean, and Guinean authorities. Later in the year, a total of seven ships in Sierra Leone, Côte d’Ivoire, and Ghana were said to be under surveillance by Spanish authorities. One was reportedly prevented from departing from Freetown with close to a thousand passengers (Bárbul, 2004b, 2004d).

Several of the ships that have transported migrants to the Canary Islands have had their last port of call in Cape Verde. The role of Cape Verde as a transit country is also documented by past arrests of migrants about to embark for Spain and reports of undisclosed departures containing large numbers of migrants (Andrade, 2000; Carling, 2001; De Pina, 2003; De Pina, 2004).

There is a growing number of mainland Africans from different countries eking out a living as itinerant vendors in Cape Verde in the hope of onward migration. While other West Africans are granted visa-free entry to Cape Verde under the ECOWAS treaty, they can be rejected if they do not have means to provide for their own subsistence.

The recent large-scale arrivals in the Canaries have presented Spain with a form of unauthorized migration that was previously restricted to Italy and Greece. Several characteristics of these arrivals are causes of concern from a Spanish perspective. First, there is apparently ample supply of dilapidated fishing boats and vessels related to the oil industry in the harbours of West Africa. Second, although cooperation with Cape Verde and Mauritania is relatively good in the

---

**TABLE 3: INCIDENTS RELATED TO LARGE-SCALE HUMAN SMUGGLING TO THE CANARY ISLANDS FROM THE SOUTH CONT.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name, length</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Number and origin of passengers</th>
<th>Details and outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2001</td>
<td><em>Ashva</em>, 30 m.</td>
<td>Senegal (Dakar)</td>
<td>111; Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone,</td>
<td>Moored near Santa Cruz (Tenerife); migrants arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2000</td>
<td><em>Kolossova</em></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>45; Senegal</td>
<td>Disembarked migrants on Gran Canaria; migrants arrested, ship escaped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2000</td>
<td>[Unknown]</td>
<td>Cape Verde (Santo Antão)</td>
<td>40–60; Cape Verde, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo</td>
<td>Migrants arrested upon departure from Santo Antão; ship escaped.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

area of migration, departures are possible from a large number of countries with different prospects for cooperation. Third, the price charged by smugglers is remarkably low. Migrants have reported paying US$ 400-500 for the trip from mainland West Africa to the Canaries, which is less than the cost of being smuggled from Western Sahara to the Canary Islands, and only a fraction of the price of crossing the Gibraltar. This indicates that there is considerable potential for unauthorized migration along this route. The largest incident in the Canary Islands to date was the arrival of the freighter Noé in December 2002, carrying more than 220 sub-Saharan African migrants from Dakar (Bárbulo, 2004a; Pardellas, 2003b, 2004a, 2004c).

CONCLUSION

The strong migration pressure on Europe from the south manifests itself in several ways, one of which is attempts at unauthorized entry and transit migration towards possible entry points. This is only part of the larger picture of irregular migration and undocumented residence. The different terms are often confounded, however, and one of the ambitions of this article has been to demarcate the notion of unauthorized migration. In this article I have presented an empirical overview of the current routes of transit migration and unauthorized entry from Africa to Spain. I will end by recapitulating a few of the most important findings.

One striking feature of unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain is the diversity of origins. As shown in this article, sub-Saharan African migrants are recruited from a vast area that includes most of West Africa and parts of Central Africa, and which is not limited to regions marked by armed conflict. This implies that addressing the “root causes” of these migration flows is a daunting challenge.

A second point that emerges from the preceding analysis is that places far beyond Europe are important in the dynamics of migration pressure. Saharan gateway cities such as Agadez and Gao are places where important decisions are made by migrants about their commitment to high-risk migration projects and about their choice of itineraries towards Europe.

Third, the abandonment of the narrow Strait of Gibraltar in favour of other routes is a key development in the geography of unauthorized entry. The shift towards passage from Western Sahara to the Canary Islands is already well established, and the arrival in the Canary Islands of larger ships from the south may anticipate future developments. These route shifts illustrate the difficulty of containing unauthorized migration through border control measures.

The many fatalities, the suffering of migrants in transit, and the strong political commitment to reinforce Europe’s external borders are factors which point to
the importance of understanding the migration dynamics of unauthorized entry. Further research is needed to better understand the processes by which migrants make their choices, their interaction with smugglers, and the consequences of various control measures.

NOTES

1. The final version of this manuscript was submitted to International Migration in December 2005 and this marks the cut-off point for the analysis.
2. According to Article 31 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (the Geneva Convention), the contracting states “shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence”.
3. The Schengen Area is the area of free movement within Europe, including most European Union states and some non-member states. For more information, see: http://www.mediavisa.net/schengen-area.html.
4. Calculated on the basis of data from the OECD Database on immigrants and expatriates, which is compiled from 2001 population censuses. The data set does not include country-level figures for the foreign-born in Germany.
5. This calculation is based on arrivals in the Canary Islands and Campo de Gibraltar during 2003 (Pardellas, 2004b; Romaguera, 2004). About 12 per cent of the sub-Saharan Africans were grouped together under a residual category. Depending on the nationality of these migrants, the proportion coming from countries with ongoing armed conflicts could range from 12 to 24 per cent. The proportion coming from countries that experienced armed conflict during the past five years ranged between 23 and 35 per cent. Information on conflicts is taken from the Uppsala Conflict Database (www.pcr.uu.se/database).
6. The movement of migrants has contributed to the revival of old trading posts such as Tombofo (Mali) and Agadès (Niger), and contributed to the growth of towns and cities elsewhere in the desert, including Gao (Mali), Dirkou (Niger), Sebha (Libya), and Tamanrasset, Illizi, and Djanet (Algeria) (Baxter, 2002; Bensaâd, 2002, 2003; Boubakri, 2000; Gantin, 2001; Ouzani, 2004; Pastore, 2004; Pliez, 2000).
7. The Economic Community of West African States includes the following states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.
8. This applies to nationals of the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville), Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Senegal.
9. I am grateful to Anna Alissa Hitzemann for first-hand information about migrants abandoned in Western Sahara.
10. I am grateful to Erik Hagen for first-hand information about the migration business in Rosso.
REFERENCES

Abad, R.

Andrade, A.L.

Andreas, P.

Anthias, F., and G. Lazaridis (Eds)

Bárbulo, T.
2003  “Interior ha enviado a 10.000 Subsaharianos desde Canarias a la Península en 22 meses”, *El País* (Madrid), 1 December.
2004a “De India a Fuerteventura en patera. la policía reconstruye los más de 7.000 kilómetros de ruta que recorren los inmigrantes Asiáticos llegados a Canarias”, *El País* (Madrid), 22 January.
2004d “La policía vigila en Sierra Leona un barco que intenta llevar 1.000 Africanos a Canarias”, *El País* (Madrid), 1 December.
2004e “Mali es ya el primer exportador de inmigrantes subsaharianas a España”, *El País* (Madrid), 23 July.

2002  “La inmigración irregular subsahariana a través y hacia Marruecos”, Oficina Internacional del Trabajo (International Labor Organization), Ginebra.

Baxter, J.

Bensaâd, A.

Black, R., et al.
2003  “Migration, return and small enterprise development in Ghana: a route out of poverty”, paper presented at *International Workshop on Migration and
Unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain

Poverty in West Africa, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, 13-14 March.

Bodega, I., et al.

Boubakri, H.

Canales, P.

Carbajosa, A.

Carling, J.
2001 Aspiration and Ability in International Migration: Cape Verdean Experiences of Mobility and Immobility, Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo, Oslo.

Cembrero, I.
2003a “Jóvenes, pobres y dispuestos a recorrer cientos de kilómetros”, El País (Madrid), 18 February.
2003b “Marruecos asegura haber detenido a 31.739 candidatos a emigrar clandestinamente”, El País (Madrid), 29 July.

Collyer, M.

Comité de Expertos sobre Población y Inmigración en Canarias
2003 “Informe de diagnóstico y de propuestas”, Consejo Económico y Social de Canarias, Las Palmas.

Commission of the European Communities

Cornelius, W.A.
Council of the European Union

De Haas, H.

De Pina, A.D.

De Pina, C.

Díez Nicolás, J., and M.J. Ramírez Lafita
2001  *La Voz de los Inmigrantes*, Instituto de Migraciones y Servicios Sociales (IMSERSO), Madrid.

Diputado del Común
2001  “Estudio sobre la inmigracion irregular proveniente del Magreb y el África Subsahariana en la provincia de Las Palmas”, Diputado del Común, Santa Cruz de La Palma.

Driessen, H.

Eschbach, K., et al.

Espenshade, T.J.

Fargues, P. (Ed.)

Favresse, R.

Fayrén, J.G., and C.B. Adell

Gantin, K.

Garcia, B.L., and L. Lorenzo

Gleditsch, N.P., et al.
Unauthorized migration from Africa to Spain

Author: Hamilton, K.A.

Human Rights Watch
2002 “Spain, the other face of the Canary Islands: rights violations against migrants and asylum seekers”, Human Rights Watch, 14(1, D).

Hunton, L.

Instituto de Migraciones y Servicios Sociales

Jones, R.C.

Juntunen, M.

King, R., and R. Black (Eds)

King, R., et al. (Eds)

Lahlou, M.


Larsheim, J., et al.

Mantilla, J.R., and M. Mora
2004 “Muchos ni lutan. Si se caen al agua, ni siquiera bracean”, El País (Madrid), 5 August.

Marshall, M.G., and K. Jaggers

Martin, P., et al.

Massey, D.S., et al.
McMurray, D.A.
2001  *In and Out of Morocco: Smuggling and Migration in a Frontier Boomtown*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Montanari, A., and A. Cortese

Najib, A.
2003a “Au cœur de la mafia des passeurs d’hommes”, *La Gazette du Maroc* (Casablanca), 17 November.

Nevins, J.

O’Down, L., and T.M. Wilson

Onishi, N.

Ouzani, C.

Pardellas, J.M.
2003a “280 inmigrantes Asiáticos llegaron este año en pateras a Canarias: el cónsul Indio duda de la nacionalidad declarada por los últimos detenidos”, *El País* (Madrid), 11 December.
2003b “Un barco nodriza deja a siete inmigrantes en una patera a 80 metros de la Gomera”, *El País* (Madrid), 11 January.
2004a “ Interceptado rumbo a Canarias un carguero con 150 ‘sin papeles’”, *El País* (Madrid), 2 February.
2004c “Un barco negrero en la isla equivocada. Los patrones cobraron 500 dólares a cada uno de los 100 Africanos por llevarlos a Las Palmas y embarrancaron en Tenerife”, *El País* (Madrid), 9 January.

Pastore, F.

Pliez, O.
2000 *Dynamiques urbaines et changements sociaux au Sahara: le cas Libyen*, Institut de Géographie, Université de Provence, Aix-en-Provence.

Quassoli, F.
Reniers, G.  

Riccio, B.  

Rodriguez, J.A.  
1999  “Más de 1.500 africanos aguardan en playas del Sáhara para cruzar en patera a Canarias”, El País (Madrid), 1 November.  
2000  “Mafias Chinas y Marroquíes se asocian para traficar con inmigrantes Orientales”, El País (Madrid), 4 May.

Romaguera, C.  
2004  “El refuerzo de la vigilancia en el Estrecho no rebajó la llegada de inmigrantes en 2003: detenidas 235 personas por tráfico de extranjeros, el doble que el año pasado”, El País (Madrid), 4 January.

Sánchez, D.  
2004  “Ceuta y Melilla, a este lado de la valla”, El País (Madrid), 24 August.

Sciortino, G.  

Secretaría de Estado de Inmigración y Emigración  

Simon, J.  

Sletten, O.  

Sørensen, N.N.  

Toledo, O.  
2004  “Una ciudad ante el reto del desempleo y la inmigración”, El País (Madrid), 24 August.

© 2007 The Author  
Journal Compilation © 2007 IOM
Uehling, G.  

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  

United Nations Secretary-General  

Uppsala Conflict Data Program  
2004 *Uppsala Conflict Database*, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Uppsala.  

Van der Erf, R., and L. Heering  

Vermeren, P.  

Winter, J.  

World Bank  

Yáños, C.  
LES MIGRATIONS ILLICITES ENTRE L’AFRIQUE ET L’ESPAGNE


MIGRACIÓN NO AUTORIZADA DE ÁFRICA A ESPAÑA

La dinámica de la circulación no autorizada entre fronteras en la región del Mediterráneo ha sido objeto de una amplia cobertura mediática pero de poco estudio. En este artículo se examinan las estructuras y la dinámica de la migración de tránsito hacia las fronteras hispano-africanas, así como de la migración no autorizada entre dichas fronteras. Se analiza en detalle la geografía de las migraciones y se extraen varias conclusiones con implicaciones para la gestión migratoria. En primer lugar, los orígenes de los migrantes de tránsito del África subsahariana por Marruecos son muy diversos. En segundo lugar, las ciudades y pueblos muy alejados de Europa desempeñan un papel fundamental en la dinámica migratoria que se observa en las fronteras hispano-africanas. En tercer lugar, el Estrecho de Gibraltar por sí mismo ha perdido mucha importancia como punto de cruce de fronteras. Y en cuarto lugar, el tráfico ilícito de migrantes a gran escala a las Islas Canarias directamente desde África Occidental sigue siendo marginal en términos numéricos, pero presenta un panorama preocupante.