Encouraging unwanted immigration: a political economy of Europe’s efforts to discourage North African immigration

GREGORY WHITE

ABSTRACT  It is often asserted that pressures for North African migration to Europe would be reduced if the European Union encouraged economic development on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Such arguments prompt questions about the efficacy of past and present endeavours by Europe to support economic development in North Africa. This article argues that the European Union’s efforts have ironically encouraged a form of economic development in its southern neighbours that abets, rather than discourages, migration. Deeper economic reform is necessary by the European Union itself—within the economic space that Europe dominates—if genuine progress is to be made on North African migration pressures.

Most discussions of the problems associated with North African immigrants in Europe conclude in a similar fashion: economic development must be encouraged in North Africa. Academics, journalists and policy makers all invoke economic growth in North Africa as a solution to immigration pressures on Europe, regardless of their political perspective, their analytic purchase, or the specific subject under consideration. According to this reasoning, an enlightened self-interest on the part of Europe would consider economic development on the southern shores of the Mediterranean to be in Europe’s advantage. In the words of one study’s title, it would ‘[help] migrants to stay at home’ (Böhning, 1994). For example, Covey and Kupiszewski concluded a recent article on the Schengen immigrant visa regime with the following:

An enlightened approach which may work to gradually lessen the pressure of inward migration might be for the Union to seek to reduce the push factors existing in third world countries and to commence various forms of cooperation with them, which would include the formulation of policies aimed at the management of migration, the development of skills to manage these policies, and the more general encouragement of positive public and individual attitudes towards inward migrants. (1995: 960, emphasis added)

Similarly, Bodega et al, in their analysis of Moroccan immigration to Spain, argue:

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By investing in the country of origin we may have a chance to control this migratory current ... The [United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation] recommends important investments for the improvement of agricultural production in North Africa. Perhaps this is the best way out. (1995: 818)

In part, it is easy to be sympathetic to such statements. There are, indeed, grave economic problems in North Africa, or the Maghreb as it is known in Arabic.¹

Statements calling for economic development, however, seem to be offered as afterthoughts following lengthy analyses of the 'problems' the 2.5 million Maghrebis might cause in Europe.² Moreover, the frequency of the seemingly obligatory call for economic development suggests several questions: what has been the track record of past efforts on the part of the European Union to help Maghrebi development efforts? What are the EU's current efforts? What is Europe not doing?

This article argues that development assistance efforts by the EU have been (and remain) inadequate. Moreover, they may, ironically, continue to engender the very circumstances that fuel immigration. For example, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy has, since its implementation in the early 1960s, contributed to the decline of the Maghreb's agricultural sector(s), prompting urban migration within Maghrebi countries and, in turn, emigration to Europe. Rather than calling for economic development in the Maghreb—and pressing Maghrebi governments to adopt politically infeasible economic policies—EU policy makers should examine their own foreign economic policy and promote a vision that will transcend the current state of xenophobic public opinion.

This article, first, examines the factors that impel Maghrebi migration. Second, it turns to a treatment of the official response by Europe—focusing most notably on the Barcelona Process, which began in 1995. Third, it offers a consideration of what Europe is not doing to improve the situation. Finally, the article concludes with a call to situate the Maghreb within, not outside, the European economic space. A reconsideration of the Maghreb's situation will go far in reminding European officials and citizens that the European political economy needs reform writ large if fresh perspectives on the problem of immigration are to emerge.

Factors that propel migration from the maghreb

Before turning to an examination of Euro–Maghrebi relations—and the character of European assistance to North African countries—it is appropriate to consider the factors that push migration to Europe. Why are Maghrebis inclined to migrate northward?

First, and most obviously, there exists a profound differential in the standards of living and economic development between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. The advanced industrial societies of Europe continue to outpace their industrialising counterparts to the south. Maghrebi efforts to industrialise in the postcolonial era have been hampered by a wide array of factors, ranging from the legacy of colonialism to climatic conditions, from poor
Table 1

Human Development Index for Selected countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>HDI rank</th>
<th>Life expectancy (years) 1995</th>
<th>Adult literacy rate (%) 1995</th>
<th>Educational enrollment ratio (%) 1995</th>
<th>Real GDP per capita (PP$) 1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>21 176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>14 789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>21 548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>20 370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>20 174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>12 674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>6 309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5 618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5 261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3 829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3 477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


One useful indicator of the North–South differential is the UN Development Program’s human development index (UNDP, 1998). The human development index (HDI) is an aggregate indicator that combines several factors such as GDP per capita, literacy rate, education and life expectancy in assessing the quality of life of a given country’s population. Admittedly, the HDI is imperfect because such data do not adequately reflect disparities and irregularities within a country. It is valuable, nonetheless, because it provides an illustration of the disparities between countries. Thus, it amply demonstrates the disparity between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. The southern European economies of Spain, France and Italy are ranked, respectively, 11th, 2nd, and 21st on the HDI list. By contrast, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia are ranked 125th, 82nd, and 83rd. Table 1 provides the data for these rankings.

Second, in addition to the difference between the regions in terms of standards of living, wage remittances are of central importance to Maghrebi economies. Remittances are earnings repatriated to families remaining in the sending country and are an essential component of domestic economies. According to one estimate, foreign workers around the world remit as much as $67 billion to their homelands; a figure that would place labour remittances second only to oil in world trade (Castles & Miller, 1993: 5). In Morocco, for example, remittances in 1990 reached $2 billion, a figure that dwarfed the $165 million earned from foreign direct investment (FDI). Middle-income countries seek foreign capital such as FDI, but find remittances more flexible and exceptionally lucrative. Table 2 provides the figures for the Maghreb.

Wage remittances have prompted the creation of rather shrewd methods of currency exchanges between Europe and the Maghreb. Maghrebi currency is non-convertible on the international market; the Tunisian dinar, for example, has
TABLE 2
Foreign direct investment and workers’ remittances: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, 1980–96

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Foreign direct investment Net $ millions</th>
<th>Workers’ remittances $ millions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>314</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>358</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>487</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1988</td>
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<td>379</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1989</td>
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<td>345</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>352</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>233</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1054</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>235</td>
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<td>1985</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


been carefully controlled by the regimes of Habib Bourguiba (1957–87) and Zine al-abidine Ben Ali (1987). In Paris one might exchange a wallet full of dinars for French francs, but at a very poor rate. In turn, a returning migrant might convert French francs to the local currency, but be subject to sophisticated
and expensive controls. Consequently, strategies of cash transfers have developed outside official exchange mechanisms. An Algerian man explained how a Maghrebi worker in Paris might employ a four-party currency transfer. Such a transfer initiates during a telephone call home to Algeria. The caller [party A] asks a family member [party B] to give dinars to the family [party C] of a fellow immigrant in Paris [party D]. Once the second family [C] receives the money it informs its family member in Paris [D] to give an equivalent amount of French francs to the first caller [A].

Remittances are such a pivotal component of Maghrebi economies that, in the eyes of their European counterparts, Maghrebi officials have been slow to check emigration. Despite lip service to limit emigration and the efforts to cooperate with European officials (discussed below), the governments of Tunisia’s Ben Ali and Morocco’s King Hassan II, as well as Algeria’s generals, know how crucial emigration is to their economies and societies.

Third, in addition to the material and actual differences reflected in the UNDP data and the importance of remittances, there are profound ideological and cultural factors at work. The Maghreb is located within a cultural and economic space dominated by European media and entertainment industries. Satellite dishes are increasingly affordable to Maghrebs and urban and suburban landscapes throughout the region are dotted with paraboles turned toward Europe. Coupled with many Maghrebs facility with the French language such programmes reinforce perceptions of a better life in Europe. French language programmes are common in Maghrebi households. One can also obtain Spanish-language programmes in Northern Morocco and Italy’s Rai Uno in Tunisia. Tunisians affirm that, although they do not converse in Italian, they understand and enjoy Italian programmes. Advertisements news programmes, movies and situation comedies give Maghrebs an outlook, however distorted, on European (and American) life. They also fuel anger among political Islamists about the secularisation wrought by advanced industrialisation and have been dubbed les antennes diaboliques, or ‘the devil’s antennae’. Europe’s ideological hegemony combines with actual, concrete differences to create a complex belief that the grass is greener across the Mediterranean.

Fourth, and finally, there is a profound demand for legal and, increasingly, illegal immigrant labour in Europe, primarily in construction, seasonal agricultural labour, and domestic service sectors. For example, according to the Spanish Council for Scientific Research (csic) in Madrid, the bulk of illegal immigrants in Spain are Moroccan (Bodega et al, 1995). They tend to live in agricultural regions and in coastal, tourist areas; if they live in cities, they are primarily in Madrid and Barcelona. Moroccan immigrants in Spain are generally young and single; if they are married, they do not come with their spouses. Illegal immigrants arrive in Spain through a variety of means, with some coming across the Strait of Gibraltar on rickety boats, or pateras (Huband, 1995). The demand for Maghrebi labour persists although the official rate of unemployment in Spain in 1995 was 21.4% (Eurecom, 1996: 4). As Bhining notes, and as elaborated more fully below, European trade protection minimises investment in export sectors in developing countries and leads to an increased demand for cheap migrant labour in OECD countries (Bhining, 1994: 172).
Similar dynamics are evident in Italy as well, as Maghrebis endeavour to reach Lampedusa, an Italian island off the coast of Tunisia. Once in Lampedusa, Italian officials send the illegal immigrants onto processing centres in Sicily, where they are given an expulsion order that gives the immigrants 15 days to leave the country. Most do leave, by heading north into Europe, not back home (Bohlen, 1997).

In sum, despite European efforts to limit immigration in the 1980s, and 1990s, the push from the Maghreb (and the pull and allure of Europe) remains. Europe’s demand for cheap labour, the perceived and real differences in the economic conditions between the different coasts of the Mediterranean, and the crucial importance of remittances to Maghrebi economics have served as fuel to propel migration northward. Flourishing migration networks—strengthened by family, professional contacts and education—also reinforce the persistence of immigration (Castles & Miller, 1993: 87; Meissner et al, 1993: 47; Cassarino, 1997).

One final observation needs to be made before turning to the official responses by European governments and the European Commission in Brussels. Algeria’s horrific civil war continues to rage within Algeria and reverberate beyond its borders. A full examination of the war is well beyond the scope of this study. But the cancellation of the January 1992 elections and the bloody confrontation between the corrupt military junta and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) have left the Algerian population lost in the middle, longing for peace. June 1997 elections did not dampen the tensions and uncertainties within Algeria, nor were the April 1999 elections expected to change the fundamental circumstances greatly. As a result, Algerians seek to emigrate in order to escape the conflict.

In addition, neighbouring Tunisia and Morocco reel from the Algerian conflict as illiberal governments must contend with Islamist opposition movements. Tunisia, for example, has clamped down severely and has now become a focus of criticism by international human rights organisations, as the Ben Ali regime has eradicated all opposition (Hafidi, 1995; Hamdi, 1997). It is difficult to assess the validity of European fears that Algerian instability prompts immigration, but it would be shortsighted to ignore that the fears are robust.

**Europe’s official response**

It is important to acknowledge that the calls to support Maghrebi development are not new. European officials have long recognised the need to support and promote economic development to the south. As the old aphorism goes, ‘Europe lacks a southern border’, and European officials appear to understand that chronic underdevelopment in the Maghreb can come back to haunt it in the future. Since the Maghreb’s independence from France in the late 1950s and early 1960s, various agreements have been signed by Europe and the Maghreb, with the oft-stated goal of encouraging industrialisation and job creation.

Most prominent in these efforts were two generations of bilateral agreements. Europe signed the first generation of Association Agreements with Morocco and Tunisia in 1969. The agreements were limited to trade in industrial—not agricultural—products and included little by way of economic assistance. For example, Morocco and Tunisia’s agreements with the then EEC allowed indus-
trial exports to enter the EEC without duties or quotas. Agricultural products were allowed some admission, depending on the season and product (Damis, forthcoming).

The Association Agreements were followed, in turn, by a second generation of agreements: three bilateral Cooperation Accords in 1976 that Europe signed with Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. All were designed to facilitate the import of Maghrebi industrial products into Europe; they also had the de facto effect of increasingly limiting agricultural exports (Vanderwalle, 1996). The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), discussed below, became more developed during the 1970s. In addition, the agreement included enhanced development aid and legislation designed to regulate immigration and labour. The Association Agreements continued into the 1990s under five-year aid protocols.

In the 1990s new efforts have been launched to encourage economic growth in the aftermath of the 1991 Maastricht Treaty, the demise of the Soviet Union, Europe’s competition with NAFTA and East Asia, and the above-mentioned instability in Algeria. The new diplomatic and international efforts have profound implications for the flow of migrant labour to the north. Three efforts merit mention in this analysis.

First, in November 1995 the Spanish government hosted a much-vaunted conference in Barcelona to focus attention on the Maghreb, the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference. Spain held the presidency of the European Union at the time. Along with France and Italy, Spain has sought to turn the EU’s attention southward and counteract the preoccupation of Germany and other northern member countries with developments in Central and Eastern Europe.8 The repercussions of the 1991 Gulf War also served to prompt greater European preoccupation with Mare Nostrum.

The result of the Barcelona Conference was, indeed, a significant enhancement of aid to the Maghreb, with the Mediterranean to receive 4685 million ECUS ($6090.5 million) in aid over the five years from 1995–99. Under the MEDA programme—the French acronym for mesures d’ajustement—efforts have been devoted to the development of the private sector in the region. The overall amount of money, however, is much less than the aid earmarked for the Eastern European countries of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Aid to Central and Eastern Europe may be as much as 200 times larger than the amount devoted to the Mediterranean (Salamé, 1999). The enhanced aid packages included funding to Maghrebi governments, as well as agricultural crop substitution programmes. The latter featured, most prominently, programmes to discourage the growth of cannabis in the Rif Mountains of Morocco (Simonnet, 1995). Hashish is an astronomically lucrative crop thanks to the demand for (and criminalisation of) the drug in advanced industrialised countries. Instead, the EU wishes to promote the growth of other non-traditional exports such as cut flowers. Such efforts, however, may prove insufficient given the centrality of hash production to the northern Moroccan economy.

In sum, ‘Barcelona’ has become a euphemism for Europe’s attention to its southern neighbours. The prospects for its success remain constrained, not least because Europe negotiates as a bloc—with all 15 EU members—while only selected non-EU countries participate. For example, Mauritania does not partici-
pate, even though it is part of the Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA). More strikingly, Libya does not participate because of sanctions imposed upon it by the United Nations since 1992. Libya is also a member of UMA and is deeply integrated in the European economy, the third largest supplier of oil to Europe (Salamé, 1999; Vandewalle, 1998). Similar selectivity occurs with respect to Machreqi, or Eastern Mediterranean, countries. This fracture leads to a reinforcement of vertical, uneven integration of non-member countries, the ‘hub and spoke effect’ discussed below. Most of all, despite Barcelona’s efforts to improve trade and financial flows, immigration remains sharply restricted. Ghassan Salamé agrees with the developmental logic with which this analysis began, yet he is also critical of its lack of foresight.

The basic European assumption remains valid: economic development and widespread prosperity, which means lower levels of income distribution disparities in the other side of the Mediterranean, is the best remedy to unwanted immigration. But the concept is somehow too absolute and too much long-term oriented to be used in present and short-term circumstances. I do believe that a higher level of sophistication is badly need when it comes to entry visa policies into the European Union countries. Entrepreneurs, industrialists, political refugees, and students should not be treated like any other visa seeker. (Salamé, 1999)

As of 1999, the 1995 Barcelona initiative has faltered, with substantial doubts about its future viability.9

The EU’s second initiative with the Maghreb, ‘Partnership Accords’, also emerged in 1995 (Damis, forthcoming; Cassarino, 1999). Third generation agreements with Europe, they were signed first by the EU and Tunisia in June 1995 and the EU and Morocco in November 1995. The two Partnership Accords supplanted the 1976 Cooperation Accord framework. Tunisia’s and Morocco’s Accords are designed to phase-in free-trade zones over a 12-year period. The Agreements are not as elaborate as the customs unions that Israel and Turkey have obtained with the EU, but more directly mirror negotiated frameworks that the Palestine Authority and Jordan have signed. Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, and Algeria have also begun negotiations with Europe. From the perspective of the European Commission, these ‘European NAFTA’ will support Tunisia’s and Morocco’s efforts to attract FDI and create employment. Moreover, they are meant to ensure, in theory, Tunisian and Moroccan stability so that they avoid Algeria’s chaos.

From the perspective of the governments of Hassan and Ben Ali, the Partnerships are logical extensions of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) pursued since the 1980s. Morocco’s SAP began in 1983 and Tunisia’s in 1986. The SAPs, sponsored by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), exacted political costs in their implementation, with popular unrest emerging after austere budget cuts to social programmes (Walton & Seddon, 1994). Moreover, they furthered a form of liberal, free market economic development that encouraged migration in the first place. As the Tunisian and Moroccan economies struggled to implement reforms consistent with the Washington consensus, unemployment pressures grew in North Africa. Despite such instabilities and contradictions, Europe and the international community have
Recently, for example, a team of analysts for the IMF concluded:

[Tunisia and Morocco] have undertaken commendable macroeconomic policy reforms in recent years ... There nevertheless remains a clear need for sustained reform efforts ... Adjustment will inevitably involve short-term costs, given the resource reallocation requirements. The emphasis must therefore be on minimizing these costs through proper planning and sequencing of policies, and protecting the most vulnerable segments of the population. (Chaufor et al, 1996: 48)

Similarly, Uri Dadush of the World Bank wrote in *Jeune Afrique* with respect to Tunisia:

Tunisia’s Free Trade Agreement with Europe will consist of a substantial increase in aid, but it will have only a limited impact on Tunisia’s access to Europe’s market because Europe’s tariff barriers are already rather low for industrial imports. All of this underlines the importance of the establishment of [market] reforms designed to stimulate investment in an export sector that is more diversified and more dynamic. (Dadush, 1997: 39)

In sum, the ongoing pursuit of economic liberalisation will continue to exact costs from the vast bulk of people within Morocco and Tunisia. Only a few are sufficiently cushioned to withstand the vagaries of unbridled market mechanisms. In addition, free trade is likely to have a devaluation pressure on Maghrebi currency, a dynamic that will not work to the advantage of immigrants seeking to repatriate their earnings (Tapinos et al, 1994: 93).

Securing the Partnership Accords were high priorities for both Rabat and Tunis. There are concerns expressed, however, that the gradual opening of the Maghrebi economies to European economies by 2009 will promote severe economic dislocation, rather than job creation (Wall, 1996). One factoid bandied about in Morocco’s economic press, for example, is that Morocco’s private sector will lose as much as one-third of its domestic firms as larger, more efficient foreign firms arrive. The figure may actually be much higher, perhaps as much as 60%. Tunisia will doubtless suffer similar loss of firms (Utica, 1995). Whatever the actual figures, it is probable that the next 10 to 15 years will be exceptionally precarious vis-à-vis the Partnership Agreements. The Partnership Agreements reinforce vertical trade between Morocco and the European Union, and Tunisia and the European Union, prompting FDI to go to Europe rather than to the Maghrebi country (Böhnning, 1984: 174). Economists have dubbed this trade-distortion phenomenon the ‘hub–spoke effect’, with Europe as the hub of a wheel in which investors operate and from which spokes emanate (Jbili & Enders, 1996; Aghrouit & Alexander, 1997). Finally, the 1995 agreements remain closed to agricultural trade, a sharp point of frustration for Maghrebi authorities (Damis, forthcoming).

The third and final realm of European–Maghrebi relations—the close cooperation between European and Maghrebi Interior Ministries—moves beyond direct economic cooperation, although it has implications for immigration. This cooperation has always existed, but it has deepened in the 1980s and 1990s. In the Maghreb, the most powerful ministries, by far, are the Interior Ministries, complex amalgams of intelligence bureaus, information agencies and police and
military forces. They dominate the political landscape. For example, Interior Minister Driss Basri in Morocco has been a central actor in Moroccan politics since his appointment by Hassan in the early 1980s. Responsible for managing political stability, Maghrebi interior ministries have been the subjects of harsh criticism by human rights analysts for years (Waltz, 1991; Manaï, 1995; Perrault, 1991; Burgat, 1993). The ministries, however, have made it clear that human rights is not a top priority. They cite instead the need to maintain stability and, in the case of Tunisia, to ensure the viability of its tourist sector and its attractiveness to European visitors. Tunisian Interior Minister Abdallah Kallel said in 1992: ‘We do not have petrol, we have sun, and the sun needs security’.

Since the early 1980s the European Union has supported an enhancement in the degree of cooperation between Mediterranean interior ministries—an internationalisation of interior ministries—whereby European interior ministers meet biannually in the Council of Ministers, with their Maghrebi counterparts in attendance. Driss Basri and his staff have attended every biannual summit of European Interior Ministers since 1988. In addition, Maghrebi interior officials travel frequently to Madrid, Paris or Rome for summit meetings. In October 1996, for example, Rabat’s newspapers were filled with reports of Basri’s meetings in Madrid with his Spanish peer, Jaime Moyer Oreja, to discuss illegal immigration, drugs and terrorism. These are certainly serious problems, but the meetings provide de facto legitimisation for a Moroccan government that has, at best, a spotty democratisation track record (Gardner, 1997).

Such meetings also have led to perversely paradoxical and even tragic statements by Maghrebi officials that play on the racist fears of Europeans. Unless the Maghreb receives support, aid or concessions on negotiations, so goes the threat, economic circumstances will prompt Maghrebs to migrate north. More powerful than the stability card when played in international negotiations, the immigration card has the unseemly effect of justifying Europe’s fears (White, G, 1996).

The Barcelona Agreement, the Partnership Accords, and collaborations between interior ministries are efforts championed by European officials. Despite their ostensible goals of promoting economic development, however, their prospects for success have been and remain uncertain. One also has to wonder what Europe has not done, the subject to which this analysis now turns.

Europe’s ‘non-response’

Given the failure of efforts to slow ‘unwanted migration’ (Böhning, 1994) from the Maghreb, it is important to assess what the EU is not doing. Rather than talking about Maghrebi development(s), how might the EU reform itself in a fashion that would contribute to a relaxation of immigration pressures? This is a profound question that demands a multifaceted response. Four tentative observations are offered here.

First, the EU is not pursuing needed reform of its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Established in the 1960s, the CAP protects European farmers from external agricultural competition and was responsible for the vibrant rebuilding of the European agricultural sector(s) in the aftermath of World War II. The
policy is essentially a package of import substitution mechanisms that supports European farmers, protects them from cheaper agricultural imports, and subsidises European exports. Unable to feed itself in the 1950s, Europe became a net exporter of agricultural produce by the 1960s, and today, along with the USA, dominates the world agricultural market.

By contrast, the three Maghrebi economies offer a mirror image of Europe’s agricultural developments. Net exporters of agricultural commodities in the 1950s, the Maghrebi countries were able, upon independence, to feed themselves. By the 1970s, however, the Maghreb had lost its ‘agro-alimentary self-sufficiency’. Over the decades Maghrebi officials found it more cost-effective (economically and politically) to purchase cheap European commodities—especially wheat—to satisfy powerful urban interests (Richards & Waterbury, 1996). Such disincentives drove down Maghrebi wheat production. In addition, exports of ‘Mediterranean’ products—citrus, wine, tomatoes and olive oil—have been effectively shut out of the European market, especially since Spain joined the then EC in 1986. Before Spanish accession, the EC was not self-sufficient in these commodities and Moroccan oranges or Tunisian olive oil could enter, albeit with careful restrictions. By the late 1980s, however, Maghrebi exports were effectively shut out.

The transformation of the Maghreb’s agricultural production profile must be considered in the same context as the vibrant ‘shadow’ cast by the CAP. Of course, the dismal state of Maghrebi agriculture can be tied to poor policy decisions and climatic calamities, but the effects of European expansion and integration have to be highlighted as well. As the agricultural sectors have declined in recent decades, Maghrebis have migrated to cities and/or overseas, escaping rural areas that have proven unable to support the population. If the European Union wants Moroccans to stay in Morocco as farmers, then it has to support equitable, sustainable development. Instead, once fertile areas, such as Morocco’s gharb, have deteriorated greatly (Swearingen, 1986).

Second, and on a related note, Europe must reform its patterns of consumption. Admittedly, this is a tall, if not impossible, order. Europe’s industrial society, however, devours resources at an enormous rate. The subordinate position of the Maghreb in the European economic space is a function of the seemingly insatiable appetite of advanced industrial countries. For example, trans-Saharan gas pipelines run from Algeria through Morocco to Spain and Portugal and from Algeria through Tunisia to Italy. Oil companies possess concessions in Algeria and Tunisia. Morocco’s prized phosphates continue to find ready markets. European tourists visit the sunny beaches and historic ruins in enclaved tourist centres. Export-producing zones employ Maghrebis at low wages. European boats strip Moroccan waters of high-value catches such as sardines and tuna (White, G, 1997b). The result is environmental damage (Berriane, 1996), lack of export diversity, and the creation of low wage sectors (Cason & White, 1998). In sum, the distortion of Maghrebi industrial development and, most notably in this context, the inability of the Maghreb to generate employment is the obverse of European ‘development’.

Third, the EU (and the USA and UN) is currently refraining from calling for improved political rights in the region. Throughout the postcolonial era the West
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has supported Maghrebi countries with troubling democratic records and has sustained the affluent few in each country that provide their government with crucial support. Several examples of Western support are arms deals, financial aid, preferential arrangements on oil and phosphate exploitation, and joint military exercises. ‘Security concerns’ have justified support to undemocratic governments. Security concerns during the Cold War were based on fears of Soviet expansion in North Africa. In the 1990s, however, fundamentalist Islam has supplanted the Communist threat. Fear of Islamism in the West has prompted support for governments such as Tunisia’s that, as noted above, has eradicated all opposition, loyal or otherwise (Grimaud, 1996). The USA has significantly enhanced its military cooperation with both Morocco and Tunisia in the late 1990s.

For its part, Algeria remains one of the seminal ethical questions of the late 20th century; should democratisation be cancelled if its outcome is deemed unsavoury? The political climate in the Maghreb motivates many of its people to seek emigration. Yet, paradoxically, the inhospitable terrain for political liberties in the Maghreb requires support from the West (White, G, 1997a). The April 1999 ‘election’ in Algeria, wherein Abdelaziz Bouteflika won after opposition candidates pulled out of the contest, is unlikely to meet with sharp criticisms from the EU. The EU has supported the Algerian military throughout the 1990s.

Fourth, and finally, the EU and member countries persist in crafting restrictive notions of European identity. Such notions of identity ignore the fact that individuals are shot through with multiple identities and that a given European family may have descended from non-European immigrants. The Mediterranean, in particular, has a deep history in which individual identities are tangled. There is a profound degree of irony, for example, in French citizens in southern France asserting their ‘Frenchness’ when their ancestors migrated from various parts of the Mediterranean. To cite another example, why was this author, the grandchild of Irish immigrants, able to obtain an Irish passport and citizenship from the Irish Consulate in Chicago? He is now the citizen of a country to which he has never travelled, only because the Irish government wishes to nurture its tourist economy and does not fear a wave of return migration from North America. Yet, perhaps, a Tunisian living in Dublin—who has worked there legally for years, contributed to the economy and raised a family—is sharply restricted in his or her ability to become a citizen. Daniele Lochak wrote of ‘good foreigners and bad illegals’, and restrictive frameworks implemented by the EU against Maghrebs after the urgings of the French. If someone appears to be likely to move within the EU—ie presents a risque migratoire—he or she can be denied a visa (Lochak, 1997).

In 1987 Morocco petitioned to join the European Community, a petition that was rejected in two months. When an official at the European Commission was asked what the prospects were for Moroccan membership in the EU, he responded frankly, ‘No chance. After all, they’re Muslims.’12 Such dichotomous constructions of identity have persisted in being fashionable (Huntington, 1993). They have been used by the former Secretary General of NATO, as well as in response to Turkey’s application for EU membership. As Salamé (1999) avers:
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Nobody can build a genuine partnership while constructing the other, with shaky arguments, into an adversary. Europe, if it really pursues a relationship that goes further than being a trade partner, has to free itself from the obsessive search of new enemies, from a fortress mentality as well as from Crusade nostalgia.

European officials and its citizenry must challenge such efforts, not only because they defy reality, but because of their inherent destructiveness.

**Conclusion**

Much is made in popular and academic discourses of the need to support economic development in the Maghreb. The onus is placed on Maghrebi policy makers and citizens. In other words, Maghrebis must reform *their* economies. At the most, Europe is called upon to support such efforts. Once again, the logic behind such arguments is that, by improving the Maghrebi economy, pressures on external border controls—entry visas, long-term work and residency permits—would be eased. Europe deploys a wide array of mechanisms to limit inward migration, but problems will persist in Europe without a reduction of external pressures. A 1990 report on investment opportunities in North Africa offers yet another example of the logic:

The EC also has its own self-interested concerns for the accelerated economic development of North Africa—and not only as a potential for its own exports. The EC would much prefer North Africans to find prosperity at home rather than add to the tide of immigrants from the south. (Strange, 1990)

This article argues, however, that such efforts are insufficient. The neoliberal policies promoted by international financial institutions and the European Union risk engendering the kind of economic and political developments that should be avoided. North African countries have begun to open their economies to competition that they are not well positioned to confront and have implemented supply-side policies that are unlikely to trickle down. They may, however, become much *less* attractive to foreign investment, *less* stable, and more prone to the 'supply push' of migration (Böhning, 1994: 167). Moreover, expectations of rapid growth in the Maghreb are simply unrealistic. For example, a 1996 World Bank report on Morocco argued that the Moroccan economy would have to grow by 6–7 per year in order to overcome social and employment pressures (Banque Mondial, 1996). Such growth is impossible. Thus, as Mark Miller argued:

> It is clear that much more will have to be done by many states if they are to keep international migration a positive factor in international comity rather than a source of tension and disorder. [There is also a] need for more intensive and systematic reflection on the normative and ethical dimensions of immigration and refugee policies. (Miller, 1994: 15)

In the end, one wonders if Europe might be better off if it pursued a truly enlightened self-interest and reformed itself.
Notes

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1 The usage of al-Maghreb can be confusing. The Maghreb includes the former French colonies of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. In Arabic, Maghreb means, literally, ‘where the sun sets’, and Morocco is known in Arabic as al-Maghreb because of its situation on the westernmost part of the Arab world. In addition, the Maghreb increasingly includes Libya and Mauritania. Here, however, the three central countries of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia are the focus.

2 Maghrebis account officially for 2.5 million of the 10 million foreign workers in the EU, not including the 1.56 million Turkish Gastarbeiter in Germany. The levels are probably much higher (Joffé, 1998: 255).

3 Interview with the author, Rabat, 22 June 1994. On a related note see Cassarino (1997) for an analysis of trans-Mediterranean business networks that migrants form while they are in Europe.


5 See Bianchi (1989) for an analysis of similar dynamics within Egypt.


7 See Taylor & White (forthcoming) for a comparative treatment of Algeria’s and Nigeria’s political economy.


9 See Joffé (1998) for a superb edited volume. Other efforts, such as that of the Five Plus Five group—the five members of the UMA plus Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece and France—have also produced little by way of concrete success. Nor have the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSMO) or the Middle East–North Africa (MENA) process, with annual meetings in Casablanca, Cairo and Doha.

10 Portugal also joined the Community in 1986. The ‘Second Enlargement’ of the EC includes Greece, which joined in 1981.

11 See White, D (1997) for an analysis of the importance of Portugal’s access to Algerian gas.

12 Interview with the author, Brussels, 17 June 1993.

References


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Contemporary South Asia

EDITORS
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The region of South Asia is home to one quarter of the earth’s population and some of its poorest states. Yet South Asia also contains the world’s most populous democracy and includes the sixth and seventh declared nuclear weapons states. The region has spawned the great world religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism.

Unfortunately, examinations of South Asia’s diversity have all too often been limited by the national borders of its nation-states. Contemporary South Asia seeks to remedy this by presenting research and analysis on contemporary issues affecting the region as a whole. It seeks to cultivate an awareness that South Asia is more than a sum of its parts — a fact of great importance not only to the states and peoples of the region, but to the world as a whole — and to address the major issues facing South Asia from a regional and interdisciplinary perspective. The overriding purpose of the journal is to encourage scholars to search for means, both theoretical and practical, by which our understanding of the present problems of co-operation and confrontation in the region, amongst its diaspora, and within the global context can be enhanced.

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