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Changing Migration Patterns in the Mediterranean Region

by Ramzi Ben Amara



ABSTRACT

A New-Med conference entitled "Changing Migration Patterns in the Mediterranean Region" took place in Tunis on April 24, 2015. It focused on the issue of migration, taking into account the perspectives of a wide range of actors and stakeholders, including states, international institutions, and human rights organisations. After an introductory session which discussed the key migration challenges in the Mediterranean context, the first panel analysed the impact of the "Arab spring" on migration trends in the region. The second panel dealt with the case studies of Morocco, Turkey, and Tunisia. The third and final session concentrated on changing migration patterns, with a special focus on Tunisia.

Mediterranean | Migration | Tunisia | Morocco | Turkey | European Union



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by Ramzi Ben Amara*

Introductory session

The introductory session was opened by **Ettore Greco**, director of the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) of Rome. Dr. Greco welcomed participants and thanked the distinguished guests for coming to Tunis. The role of the Centre of Tunis for Migration and Asylum (CeTuMA) in the organisation of the conference was acknowledged, and gratitude was extended to the partnering institutions, namely the IAI, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the German Marshall Fund of the US, the Compagnia di San Paolo foundation. Special mention was made to the role the Organisation for Security Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) may have as a cross-regional platform for exchanging best practices and lessons learnt in the field of migration management and migration policy.

Greco then introduced the New-Med Research Network. Established in 2014 at the Italy-supported conference on "Towards Helsinki +40: The OSCE, the Global Mediterranean and the Future of Co-operative Security", New-Med is a "Track II" network of researchers and experts who offer their expertise to policy discussions taking place in political fora such as the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group. The activities of New-Med take the form of expert meetings and studies relating to defining policy issues in the Mediterranean region. The network focuses on new approaches to policies and cooperation. Its agenda can be summarised as:

- putting Southern Mediterranean perspectives at the centre of discussion;
- overcoming a Euro-centric approach to Mediterranean policy;
- facilitating the exchange of knowledge and information between the academic and diplomatic circles in a range of areas relating to Mediterranean policy, from economic to cultural cooperation;
- analysing the new security environment in the Mediterranean region and proposing new approaches to security in all three dimensions: military, economic-social, human;

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· Paper produced within the framework of the New-Med Research Network, June 2015. Report of the conference on "Changing Migration Patterns in the Mediterranean Region", organised in Tunis on 24 April 2015 by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), and the Centre of Tunis for Migration and Asylum (CeTuMA).

- raising the regional profile of policy priorities shared by Mediterranean countries;
- exploring which issues may be best tackled in a multilateral context.

Greco made a strong case for tackling the issue of migration in a Mediterranean context. The subject features widely in national debates in Europe and especially within the context of broader strategic and political discussions. Approaches differ widely, however, both within Europe and between European and extra-regional actors. The level of priority attached to migration management also differs significantly. New-Med has tried to raise the profile of this issue in a cross-regional setting, bringing in the perspectives of Mediterranean and other European and African countries that are involved in the fast-changing migration patterns and flows of the 21st century. New-Med has also focused on specific aspects of the migration phenomenon and the response to migration. New-Med recent publications¹ on migration were noted; some of the New-Med authors on migration attended the meeting and presented their findings.

Greco mentioned European efforts in Brussels to revise and upgrade migration management, especially after the death of hundreds near the coast of Malta a few days before the conference. The question was put to guests whether the new EU policy will be up to the task. Greco observed that the EU should look at other actors performing assistance and fully appreciate the geopolitical reasons driving migration flows in the case of Libya (absence of a state). He also added that the conference in Tunis aims to examine the issue of migration from an historical perspective, focusing on the impact that the Arab uprisings in 2011 had on that phenomenon. Dr. Greco also stressed that Southern perspectives are particularly important as North African countries are hard pressed to revise their own approaches to the phenomenon, in some cases designing for the first time in their history a full-fledged migration policy. The experience of regional organisations that have upheld certain standards when it comes to migration management and allow for the comparison of different approaches was mentioned in this context.

Dr. **Ramy Salhi**, from the Centre of Tunis for Migration and Asylum (CeTuMa) and regional director of the EuroMed Human Rights Network (EMHRN), was the next speaker at the introductory session. He welcomed the Tunisian governmental delegates, the representatives of the Compagnia di San Paolo, the experts and researchers who had come to discuss the issue of migration, and finally, Kamel Jendoubi, a renowned defender of human rights and current Tunisian Minister to the Head of the Government in Charge of Relations with Constitutional Institutions and Civil Society.

Salhi drew a distinction between different reasons which push people to migrate, including labour and forced migration. He mentioned different events related

¹ New-Med papers are being published on the IAI and OSCE websites, including on the topic of migration.

to this phenomenon like the various conflicts in Africa, the repercussions of the global financial crisis of 2007-8, the unstable situation of the Middle East and the uprisings of 2011. He showed that, in comparison to 2011, the number of migrants had increased three times (200,000 in 2014). He explained that this had to do with the security situations in Syria, Libya, as well as the unsolved Palestinian issue.

Salhi remarked that the objective of the EU seems to be focused on controlling migration to and finding mechanisms to reduce the flow of people entering Europe from the Mediterranean region. In many cases, the humanitarian aspect is neglected. No serious discussion about migration policy reform is being held in Europe. He gave the example of the EU providing funds (14 million euros) to Malta on 4 February 2015 in order to ensure the security of its borders.

He then gave the example of the 1,500 migrants who died while crossing maritime borders to Europe in 2014 and the incapacity of the EU to prevent and manage such tragedies. He recommended urgently changing the policy of asylum and migration in Europe. This change is much needed at a time when a larger share of migrants falls into the category of people escaping insecurity, whether or not they can be technically considered as war refugees. At the same time, he pointed out the absence of a system of asylum in the countries southern of the Mediterranean with exception of Morocco. He criticised the absence of any declaration of circulation or any effecting mechanisms for protecting migrants' rights in the Southern Mediterranean. He articulated the necessity of introducing a security policy and the signature of meaningful agreements related to migration to these countries from sub-Saharan Africa. As for Tunisia, he explained that despite efforts made to reform migration policy and adopt international standards, existing schemes with the EU still strongly limit migration to Europe.

Kamel Jendoubi, Tunisian Minister to the Head of the Government in Charge of Relations with Constitutional Institutions and Civil Society, was the third speaker. The minister highlighted the following points:

- the actors dealing with migration in Tunisia are civil society and international cooperation actors;
- in Tunisia, there was no policy related to migration. There is research on migration but a strategy is only now being developed. Tunisia is now a country of immigration and a transit country. About 10 percent of Tunisians are living outside of the country and keep in touch with their motherland;
- Tunisia is a young democracy with laws related to asylum and the right to leave the territory. Migration is still a topic that cannot be tackled easily. Efforts should be made to adopt not only an effective migration policy, but also one in tune with the democratic experiment Tunisia is leading.

The fragility of the Tunisian democracy is shown in different sectors: security, the economy, society. He gave the example of Libyans who are welcomed in Tunisia. At the same time, the situation remains fragile to the extent that there is a risk of a security and economic crisis in Tunisia at any time. He commented:

- The current situation is a responsibility of Tunisia and also of Europe. The

problem can only be solved through dialogue and cooperation.

- The humanitarian aspect is more than important yet is confronted by a lack of common strategy between the countries of the south of the Mediterranean.
- Europe, with its long diplomatic tradition and as a neighbouring continent, should review its policy. Experiences from regional organisations, including the OSCE, could be better analysed in search for lessons learnt and concrete projects aimed at supporting capacity building and information sharing. The Minister insisted that Tunisia is not looking for assistance but rather for an egalitarian relationship with Europe to tackle the issue of migration. He advocated a meeting during which research expertise could be shared with policy makers.
- He added that the new Tunisia offers a place for debates (on migration, for example). Several human right activists have set up in Tunisia: this can be beneficial to debate on this subject.

His message to Europe is that migration is a global issue and that Tunisia alone cannot solve it. He invited the different parties to share this responsibly.

Massimo Carnelos, counsellor at the Policy Planning Unit of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome, expressed thanks to the organisers. He spoke of the dramatic recent events in the Mediterranean (death of the migrants near the coast of Malta). He predicted that the issue of migrants in the Mediterranean region will continue to be a problem for European foreign policy for years to come. The root causes of migration are related to widespread poverty, inequality, violence and repression. "Desperation leads people to leave," he noted. He also spoke of a "silent policy" or an absence of policy related to migration. He observed that the EU is good at implementing laws but fails to put them into practice. He insisted that a common policy on migration should be developed at three levels: countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination.

The speaker valued the work of New-Med and highlighted three major points:

1. New-Med is a network of dialogue involving independent thinkers who can creatively tackle key policy issues, including migration. The network does not shy away from criticising mainstream policies when needed. The network enhances the perspective of the Southern countries. It elaborates policy-oriented research.
2. Security should be envisaged in a comprehensive perspective. The OSCE offers a paradigmatic experience in this context.
3. The Mediterranean region is a large area – a global region. It is related to sub-Saharan Africa just as the Gulf is related to Asia. Regional dialogue should take place through platforms that approach the region in non-compartmentalised ways. He appreciated the effort of the OSCE to "build bridges" between countries and experiences in the Eurasian and Euro-Mediterranean regions.

Nicolò Russo Perez, program manager in charge of Compagnia di San Paolo's activities in the field of international relations, thanked the organisers and then presented an overview of his organisation. It was established in 1963 as a charitable

body during a time of social turmoil in northern Italy. Its work consisted of social inclusion and giving micro-credits. Some 25 years ago, an internal separation between the bank and the foundation took place, with the foundation becoming independent and able to concentrate on philanthropic activities. The foundation has developed its own operational approaches to external activities and strategic partnerships. Among its goals, it supports researchers who can innovatively contribute to public policy at the national, regional and international levels. The issue of migration is a historic challenge for Italy and other Mediterranean countries. He exhorted New-Med researchers to come up with concrete recommendations to be submitted to policy makers.

Session I. The Arab uprisings and changing migration patterns in the Mediterranean

The first panel was chaired by **Lorenzo Kamel**, associate fellow at the Mediterranean and Middle East Programme of the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome. Dr. Kamel started by sharing his own experience of living in the Middle East where millions of people were forced to leave their homes. He indicated that the Arab Middle East is inhabited by about 5 percent of the world population but that 53 percent of the world's refugees come from that region. He highlighted the importance of taking more into account the human dimension of migration and the measures that should be adopted in the country from which the largest percentage of refugees come from: Eritrea. He also gave example of other countries (Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan) where migration is a serious issue. These three countries are hosting more refugees than the 28 EU member states together. Kamel observed that rhetorically the EU embraces the promotion of democracy, but in practice stability tops the agenda. Before introducing the panel speakers, he dealt with the visa issue at EU embassies in various countries of the Mediterranean region.

The panel tackled four different issues related to migration:

1. continuity and change in European policies towards migration following the Arab uprisings;
2. instability in the Southern Mediterranean;
3. irregular migration as a security issue;
4. the role of the OSCE.

The first speaker in this panel was **Ummuhan Bardak**, senior specialist in the thematic Policy Unit Operations Department of the European Training Foundation (ETF), Turin. Her presentation was entitled "Changing migration patterns in the Mediterranean Region."² She claimed that education should be empowered in the EU and in neighbouring countries. But her focus in this talk was on economic migration, especially involving youth.

² See Ummuhan Bardak, "Continuity and Change in Youth Migration Patterns from the Mediterranean", in *IAI Working Papers*, No. 15|09 (April 2015), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/4130>.

She gave the principal reasons for migration: social, demographic and economic drivers. She provided updated statistics about the young populations in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, and Palestine. In these countries more than 60 percent are between 0 and 30 years. She commented that normally three decades are needed for a population to be stabilised. In the Near East the population is even younger than in North Africa. She observed that between 30 and 35 percent of the young population are at school age (secondary and university) and that statistics related to secondary school attendance are not very high. Tunisia and Jordan make an exception (high attendance of secondary schools) if compared to Morocco and Egypt. The labour market (employed and unemployed) comprises 35 percent of young people (50 percent male, 20 percent female). Young people who are not in education make up 35 to 40 percent of the population. About 28 percent of youth are unemployed and the majority of these are female. Using these statistics, the researcher made the following observations:

- migration is attractive for young people;
- migration flows show geographical and linguistic diversity and “path dependency”;
- student migration is modest but persistent and carries high social and economic value;
- as a general tendency, migrants’ profile is characterised by three main features: young, single, low educated (this changed slightly with the increasing of the level of education);
- migration has increased since 2000, especially after the Arab Spring;
- migration flows have not significantly changed their nature after the Arab uprisings: demography, economy, labour market, political uncertainty remain lead drivers. Conflict is now acting as a major push factor;
- traditional destinations in Europe are becoming saturated; new markets are emerging, e.g. Italy, Spain and Portugal;
- the 2007/8 economic crisis had a negative impact on public opinion in Europe against migrants;
- Arab workers in the Gulf region are less welcomed than was previously the case (72 percent in 1975 to 23 percent in 2009);
- the increase in high skilled migrants is marginal.

Bardak concluded that migration will continue to be a problem for the EU and for the countries of the Southern Mediterranean, especially for those economies that are struggling with austerity programs, high levels of youth unemployment, and anaemic growth. She commented that only skilled migrants may be able to land the hope-for jobs in the host country. She mentioned the introduction of the Blue Card (Germany) as well the various programmes for medium-skilled migrants or for seasonal migrants. She pointed out that high quality of migration is more and more needed and commented that the intra-EU migration policy put pressure on Southern Mediterranean countries.

Ferruccio Pastore, director of the Forum of International and European Research on Immigration (FIERI) in Turin, gave a talk entitled “Changing migration patterns in the Mediterranean and associated policy challenges.” He first asked if anything

had really changed. On Christmas 1996, a boat with 200 illegal migrants sank near Sicily. By October 2014, the number of such deaths reached a record high, and in April 2015 another disaster happened near Malta. Political reactions to these events were the same in each case. Concerning the reasons for migration, the speaker gave the example of Italy during the Kosovo war in 1999. In 2011, the uprisings in the Arab world resulted in similar flows of migration.

Indicators show a peak in irregular migration across sea borders – between 2010 and 2014 accounting for between 50,000 and 250,000 migrant crossings. The main routes are through Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. There are no precise statistics relating to the number of deaths. The European countries do not count deaths related to irregular migration. Nevertheless, non-official estimates are 3,000 between 1999 and 2011. Since January 2015, about 1,700 people have lost their lives on their way to Europe.

The researcher explained the situation related to migration in the following terms: 1) the geopolitical unprecedented push factors; 2) the “Libya rupture”; 3) the growing integration of smuggling markets.

The impact of migration on EU states and societies is, according to Pastore, very uneven. He noted the growth of asylum applications and their “spontaneous” distribution. The number rose from 200,000 in 2010 to 600,000 in 2014. This issue becomes a topic for debate in countries such as Germany, Sweden and Italy, in which most asylum seekers make their applications. Pastore proposed ways to fix the asymmetric distribution of refugees and proposed changes to EU policy. A change in the situation of refugees was in the contrary relative. He admitted that “such uneven impact makes any cohesive EU policy very hard to reach.”

Monika Wohlfeld, holder of the German Chair for Peace Studies and Conflict Prevention at the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies in Malta, worked with Tunisian students and researchers and has recently published an edited book on migration. She is an expert on security. She observed that during the 1980s migration was related to terrorism and drugs smuggling. Today, migration is studied within the context of control of territory and questions of sovereignty.

Migration routes to the Mediterranean start largely from Syria, Somalia and Eritrea. Migrants from these three countries have the highest rate of recognition of asylum (97 percent of Syrians, 93 percent for Eritrean). In order to have their claim recognised they have to cross borders and risk their lives.

Migration can be divided into acceptable and unacceptable migration or regular and irregular. Irregular migration is undocumented and uncontrolled. Compared with regular migration, irregular flows involve lower numbers of migrants. The question of security should be studied from two perspectives: from the angle of the state and of human beings. In the EU, national security is considered more than human security because migration is perceived as a threat. There are not enough migration policies in the EU – and the same applies in the context of the South-

South migration.

Who should be doing what? The potential players are civil societies, NGOs, the EU, and southern countries. It was explained how the OSCE could offer a platform for exchanging experiences on migration in light of the different sub-regional perspectives represented in the organisation and the difficulties encountered so far in exclusively intra-EU formats. The issue of migration management should not be left to the EU to discuss. The researcher strongly believes that migration should not be mainly treated as a threat, but rather as a lever for development.

Teresa Albano, representative migration expert with the OSCE Secretariat, gave a lecture entitled "The OSCE approach to migration governance." She noted that this topic is "timely and urgent" within the context of the actual events (death of migrants near Malta). Statistically, there are 232 million international migrants and 740 million internal migrants worldwide. To ensure good migration governance is a political dilemma, according to Ms Albano. The presentation covered border control, demographics, permanent migration, state control, integration, migrants' human rights, qualified labour, seasonal and temporary migration, and private sector needs.

The OSCE was founded in 1975 to meet the challenges of European security. The movement of people has been a key issue of debate in the organisation. The laws of the organisation are not legally binding although the 57 participating states have shown their commitment to them. The OSCE focuses on environmental and economic questions related to migration. It collects data and conducts projects in cooperation with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The presenter believes that migration policy formulation should build on a correct assessment of economic realities, including forecasts of labour market requirements. State "prerogatives" as well individual rights should be taken into account when formulating migration policy. The EU should reflect more on the positive aspects of migration and learn from experiences such as those of Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The OSCE remains a critical platform for political dialogue including EU as well as non-EU states. As migration is increasingly at the centre of political debate, the OSCE stands ready to play a facilitator's role in discussions taking place at the interregional level.

Debate

Ettore Greco: a number of asylum seekers reached Europe by risking their lives. The EU has failed to discuss workable mechanisms to assess their claims. What type of mechanisms to do you envisage?

Monika Wohlfeld: policies should be taken at different levels – countries of origin, transit, and destination. In the EU states, the issue is how to host migrants while decisions are being taken. It is not an easy task and there are no real solutions. The number of migrants is increasing exponentially and during the first four months of 2015 the number of migrants was higher than during the whole of 2014. Debates should not be restricted to technicalities.

Ferruccio Pastore criticised the lack of expertise on the issue of migration. In order to have workable mechanisms four things needed:

1. foreign policy strategy (where to start from?);
2. control of territory;
3. the possibility of bringing refugees to the EU – and agreement in the EU about who accepts refugees and how many;
4. raising political awareness about smuggling business and connections between forced migration and organised crime.

Mr. Amine El Abbassi, from the Maison du droit et des migration (Tunis), mentioned the “screening” tools for controlling the entrance of migrants to Europe, the pilot program in Tunisia and Morocco on rights of asylum and the question of human rights.

Ummuhan Bardak remarked that the EU created policies covering all aspects of migration and development. The EU asylum policy was criticised. The EU controls its borders through neighbouring countries. This has impacts on the mobility of people from the Mediterranean region. The countries south of the Mediterranean like Tunisia or Morocco do not have the financial means to tackle illegal migration. In fact, the EU is ready to pay the outsource costs of control policy. How this money is managed is being debate. The issue of security is absorbing the largest part.

Nabil Ben Bakhti, from the UNHCR Tunis office, observed that dealing with asylum applications before migrants reach Europe is not a helpful policy because refugees prefer to go to the north. He gave the example of Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, Senegal, Gabon, and the Ivory Coast where asylum applications can be studied. Nevertheless, people in these countries prefer to reach the EU directly rather than applying in third countries.

Farah Ben Cheikh, from the Faculty of Law, Tunis, asked if the Blue Card in Europe is similar to the Green Card of the USA.

Ummuhan Bardak: the Blue Card is only for high skilled migrants entering the EU. To obtain the card the migrant has to meet challenging requirements such as the promise of a job before moving to the EU. The implementation of the card has been disappointing since it is not attractive to most migrants who do not meet the conditions for obtaining it. It normally gives migrants the right to work in the EU for two years, which can be extended to another five as a maximum.

Session II. Regional responses (to migration)

This session was headed by **Emiliano Alessandri** (Mediterranean Focal Point, OSCE Secretariat). He introduced the panel and its focus on perspectives from the southern Mediterranean. He clarified the regional and sub-regional aspect of the next presentations. He reiterated the interest of the OSCE in the topic of migration. The OSCE comprises all of the EU member states but also important players in the Mediterranean equation, including Turkey. Discussions on migration are taking place in OSCE fora such as the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group. New-Med experts should concentrate on distilling policy-oriented recommendations from their analyses. He thanked the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for their participation in the meeting.

Mehdi Lahlou, professor of Economics at the Institut national de statistique et d'économie appliquée (INSEA), Rabat, was the first speaker. He started with the general context of the topic namely the Arab Spring, the economic crisis, as well as the crisis of many states in Africa. He showed the change of migration paths from 2005 towards the east of North Africa and the massive flows of migrants to the Canary archipelago.³ He pointed out that Western policies in Libya and the war in Iraq under George W. Bush profoundly destabilised the region and created the conditions for security threats such as that represented by the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). As long as the Southern Mediterranean will remain mired in conflict, migration will be an unavoidable collateral phenomenon.

Prof. Lahlou noted that Europe is becoming older but richer. Africa has 1 billion people today, who are estimated to reach two billions in 2050. The population is increasing and solutions should be long term.

The issue of migration in Morocco has not been solved – it has only been securitised. The speaker reminded the audience of the 2006 summit in Rabat after migrants died near Melilla.⁴ The Tripoli summit of the same year made migration a global issue with emphasis on questions of security in countries of origins and those of transit.⁵

As far as the issues faced by southern Mediterranean are concerned, Lahlou criticised the approach of dictatorships to migration as well the failure to integrate migrants in these countries. The management of this phenomenon varies in Tunisia, Algeria

³ See Mehdi Lahlou, "Morocco's Experience of Migration as a Sending, Transit and Receiving Country", in *IAI Working Papers*, No. 15|22 (June 2015), forthcoming.

⁴ The first Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development was held in Rabat on 10-11 July 2006. For more information see the Rabat Process website: <http://www.processusderabat.net>.

⁵ An EU-Africa Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development was held in Tripoli on 22-23 November 2006. See European Commission, *The global approach to migration one year on: towards a comprehensive European migration policy* (COM(2006) 735), 30 November 2006, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52006DC0735>.

and Morocco. In Morocco less than 3 percent of the population are migrants. This country succeeded to some extent to stop the flow of migrants, which decreased from more than 31,000 migrants from Mauritania, Senegal and the Canaries in 2006 to only 280 in 2014. Yet, migration policy still does not protect the rights of migrants and economic conditions are far from creating the needed opportunities at the domestic level. One element hindering the creation of a radical solution to migration is the tense political relationship between Morocco and Algeria. Both countries invest 16 billion dollars in military equipment while they could shift to mutually advantageous cooperation, including by reinforcing each other's labour markets; the speaker asked if this money could be instead used in development and in creating opportunities in their countries of origin.

Finally, the speaker claimed that "the southern Mediterranean should not be a dam" for stopping migration – it should, rather, be a bridge towards development in Africa.

Ahmet İçduygu, director of the Migration Research Center (MiReKoc) at Koc University, Istanbul, gave a talk entitled "Irregular migration and asylum in Turkey." The presentation was divided in four parts: 1) history, 2) irregular migration; 3) current state; 4) possible new policies.

Part 1 introduced Turkey as a destination for migrants from Europe, the Mediterranean region and west Asia. Turkey is no longer a sending country only. He mentioned the changing economies of neighbouring countries and the collapse of the communist regime as reasons for migration. Political instability in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria also resulted in transit flows of migrants through Turkey.

He observed that all forms of irregular, circular, transit migration and asylum-seeking exist in Turkey. In the 1980s, Turkey experienced flows of Afghans (500,000) and Iranian (1 million) migrants. In 1988, many Iraqis came in Turkey; in 1989, many Turks came back from Bulgaria; in 1992, many Bosnians fled the war; and in 1999, scores of Albanians migrated to Turkey. Among circular migrant groups are Ukrainians, Georgians, Azeri and Moldavians. Transit migration flows come from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Pakistan. Numbers have increased from over 107,000 migrants in 2013 to over 200,000 in 2014. The wealth of experiences Turkey has accumulated holds lessons for the international debate on migration.

Turkey has signed several international agreements and laws concerning policies and administrative regulation, including the 2005 action plan on migration and asylum in addition to several other readmission agreements.⁶ Turkey has been inspired by the EU but is also looking at other regional experiences. The issue

⁶ See Ahmet İçduygu, "Turkey's Migration Transition and its Implications for the Euro-Turkish Transnational Space", in Senem Aydın-Düzgüt et al. (eds.), *Global Turkey in Europe II. Energy, Migration, Civil Society and Citizenship Issues in Turkey-EU Relations*, Roma, Nuova Cultura, April 2014 (IAI Research Paper 13), p. 81-106, <http://www.iai.it/en/node/1805>.

of refugees is increasingly important for Turkey. By 2015, over 3 million Syrian refugees had fled to Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Some 2 million refugees are currently living in Turkey; of the majority of them are in urban centres while others have found a semi-permanent settlement in refugee camps. Some 4/6 of them are near the Syrian borders. 600,000 Syrian refugees benefit from health services and there are 40,000 new births every year.

He concluded that irregular migration is an issue in Turkey and has a long history. He calls for a political discussion involving both Mediterranean and European countries. Current talks with the EU can be complemented with regional dialogue involving actors in the Balkans and the Middle East. Turkey's political ties in Africa can also be leveraged in order to find a better approach in countries of origins. The EU could be interested in Turkey's supporting role.

Hassan Boubakri, professor of Geography at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Sousse and president of the Centre of Tunis for Migration and Asylum (CeTuMA), spoke about the Tunisian case of migration.

Tunisia cannot be isolated from the regional context. The flow of migrants goes back many decades. Tunisia accommodates between 1 million to 1,5 million Libyans. About 100,000 Libyans are estimated to be close to the former regime and cannot go back to their country. Free circulation between Tunisia and Libya exists since 1988, so there is virtually no irregular migration between these countries.

What happened in North Africa after 2011 is similar to the situation after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 2014, 600,000 people tried to migrate to Europe. Half of them reached Europe in the same year. About 80 percent of them came by sea. This "explosion" is due to the attraction of the EU for migrants, the intra-European circulation, and the inability of North African countries to manage transit flows.

Migration was defined as a global phenomenon related to a movement of persons who circulate from one place to another. However, the situation in the Maghreb region and the political transition in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco and the civil war in Syria, Libya and Yemen led to unprecedented flows. In 2011, many Tunisians tried their chance to cross the borders to Europe through Lampedusa. Other migrants were attracted by criminals and were involved in Jihadi movements in Syria and Libya.

Other flows of migration are due to several reasons including violence (Nigeria) and civil war (sub-Saharan Africa, Mali, Central Africa, South Sudan – with its 1 million displaced people –, Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia). Migrants from these countries tend to leave their homes due to political and social instability.

Compared with the past, the situation has changed: instead of economic refugees today's migrants are largely humanitarian refugees and asylum seekers. This can be explained by major issues: civil war, political inaction, more powerful and ramified organised crime networks. For example, in Libya in 2012 a militia took

320 migrants from a private jail. But there was no reaction in the countries of the south: "nous regardons trop vers le Nord" (we too often look to northern Europe for solutions).

Regarding transit migration, there is no reason to stay in Tunisia or look for asylum, especially since there is yet no national policy to provide basic services. In Morocco, migrants can ask for asylum. Generally, there is a xenophobic sentiment towards migrants and foreigners in North Africa (for example, African students were attacked in Tunisia when the national football team was disqualified from the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations).

Boubakri discussed Tunisia's relationship to the EU with regard to border control and terrorist risks: all countries (origin, transit and destination) share the same concerns over migration. Yet there is generally poor political governance of migration. This remains a big challenge for all these countries.

Finally, the question of being a neighbour unwilling to assist those countries needing assistance was discussed. Boubakri claimed that responsibility should be shared: we should not talk any more about "who" is responsible for migration problems since we all are responsible. The question was put whether Southern Mediterranean countries will be able to develop an approach to migration different from European countries now that they are themselves faced with significant inflows.

Debate

Mr. Said from Algeria noted that, although migration has changed in many aspects, there is no major change in the Mediterranean region. The contexts remain the same: Africa-Europe; Maghreb-Europe; Africa-Africa. The answer cannot be found in the states in North Africa but only from African countries that are a chronically faced with instability and conflict. He observed that the flow of migration is mixed and that high-qualified migrants have better chances. He added that migration between the Maghreb states has increased exponentially. He exposed the absence of effective migration policies in Tunisia and Algeria and to some extent in Morocco.

Mehdi Lahlou confirmed the absence of full-fledged migration policies in the Maghreb states. The migration phenomenon interests civil societies more than the regimes of these states. One should not forget that over 500,000 Moroccans are living in Algeria and the two states seem to be more concerned about bilateral political issues than with the destinies of their respective peoples.

Hassan Boubakri said that since 2011, there was an attempt to count the number of migrants in Tunisia. Since 2013, this undertaking has been blocked by the Tunisian authorities. This is a serious setback. The rights of migrants are currently reduced ("*gelé*") in Tunisia. People living in border regions are not concerned about the laws of the states and interact between each other. The relationship between Morocco

and Spain and between Italy and Libya should be revised in order to solve the issue of migration.

Session III. Changing migration patterns: Tunisian perspectives

The afternoon session was chaired by **Hassan Boubakri**. The case of Tunisia was discussed from a political point of view as well from the perspective of experts.

Khawla Ben Aicha, a member of the Tunisian Assembly of People's Representatives (Tunisians abroad, France 1), started her presentation about the institutional framework of migration of Tunisians abroad. The national institution in charge is the Tunisian National Agency for Labour (Ministry of Labour). The affairs of Tunisian migrants abroad are the responsibility of the State Secretary for Migration. In addition to that there is an Observatory for Migration. Both are affiliated with the Ministry of Social Affairs. All questions related to illegal migration, consular affairs, and international agreements related to migration are dealt with by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Agency of Promotion of Industry is related to the Ministry of Industry. As for the issue of governance, there is a National Office of Tunisians Abroad. There is also a Committee for Tunisians Abroad.

The presenter introduced a project in the making related to Tunisian migrants. The project aims at involving Tunisian immigrants in discussions about migration policy through the creation of a National Board of Tunisians Overseas. The project was initiated by the Ministry of Social Affairs. There are some issues related to this body. First of all, its legal status remains undefined. There is a necessity to prepare a bill in order to set up a High Council for Migration. There is also a suggestion to set up a National Council for Migration through a Government Order that can be later transformed into a bill. This council consists of 15 ministers, 5 representatives of the trade unions, 28 civil society representatives and 18 Tunisian migrant representatives. All these efforts go in the direction of opening up the debate on migration by involving civil society actors.

An issue raised is if this project reflects the expectations of all Tunisians abroad. One should note that only 10 percent of them are participating in associations. There are 18 deputies in the Tunisian parliament representing Tunisians overseas. Ben Aicha, as one of them, opposed the presence of the government in the project of creating National Board of Tunisians Overseas. She is concerned about the representation of the Council. She, together with other deputies, suggested to foresee a new structure of the council that would make it more representative. The programme of the project is to:

- ensure employment for Tunisian migrants;
- strengthen the link migration-development;
- set up a prize for migrants for the best contribution in science and culture;
- appoint a migrant representative in local councils;
- provide legal support for Tunisians abroad;

- update and upgrade electronic services relating to national administration for Tunisians residing abroad;
- translate parliamentary debates into French/English support;
- promote the establishment and growth of non-governmental associations involving Tunisian diasporas.

It is necessary to solve the issue of missing Tunisians as a result of illegal migration. As a step for protection against illegal migration, the UNHCR appointed a dramatist to work on this topic. A lot of work among youth is to be done. The legal aspect of migrants coming back to Tunisia is to be revisited. The Law of February 2004 is against human and refugee rights. Tunisians coming back without identity are considered as criminals.

Former minister of Culture **Mehdi Mabrouk**, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) Tunis Office, raised a central question about the lack of interest in issues related to migration in Tunisia after the revolution. He observed:

- the transition in Tunisia has been absorbed by problems other than migration (the social contestation is related to internal social problems within the country);
- civil society actors are emerging;
- there is a focus on drafting the Constitution;
- there is an absence of real policy related to migration and a lack of courage in tackling migration. The law of 2004 is still the legal framework for migration. There is no political will to change this law and set up a new relationship with other partners.

Proposals to solve this issue were suggested:

- introducing people's right of movement and collecting data related to migration;
- encouraging willingness to establish new laws;
- refusing the new form of extradition;
- intensifying the fight against xenophobia;
- avoiding stereotyping Africans;
- fighting racism;
- reforming the system of education (revisit manuals which are full of stereotypes).

The last presentation was delivered by **Farida Souiah**, senior SNSF researcher at the Institute for Social Sciences of Contemporary Religions (ISSRC), University of Lausanne. Dr. Souiah has completed a distinguished PhD on the *harraga* (illegal migrants) in Tunisia and Algeria (she herself possesses two passports, one European and one North African). *Harraga* are generally young unmarried men from Algeria and Tunisia who are excluded from existing legal frameworks for migration and who cross the border to reach Europe illegally. Migration is a matter of diplomacy. It needs multilateral decisions from different actors (ONU, EU, OSCE, states, civil society, etc.). Between Algeria and Tunisia some discussion is taking place on the issue of migration. Migrations remains under-discussed at the sub-regional level in the southern Mediterranean. At the ONU, discussions focus on the link between migration and development. In other fora, such as the EU, security is the main concern.

Debate

Taher Cheniti, secretary general of the Tunisian Red Cross, intervened to highlight the role of his organisation in cooperation with the UNHCR. The humanitarian aspect is the most important aspect for the Red Cross. Migrants have the right of assistance. His organisation is preoccupied with the fight against discrimination of migrants; migration challenges in urban areas; and closing of the Choucha migrant camp (no other similar centre exists).

Ummuhan Bardak noticed that the North African countries will continue to be transit from sub-Saharan flows. What can be the strategy going forward? She noted that it is necessary to dismantle the illegal networks that profit from illegal migration by creating mechanisms of control at different levels. She concluded by opposing the idea of a retention centre as envisaged by Spain and France.

Mr. Said commented that politicisation of migration and the absence of a coherent policy on migration have led to chaos in North Africa. In Algeria, there were 2 million migrant foreigners during the colonial period. They came from Malta, France, Israel, and Italy. Those born in Algeria became French and were not considered as migrants. After independence, 40,000 Jews left Algeria. In Algeria, there are Chinese migrants. There is also circular migration in the country with the Niger Republic and Mali.

Concluding remarks

Emiliano Alessandri announced that there will be a follow-up to the conference and that New-Med will continue tackling this topic supporting discussions that are taking place within the OSCE. Some of the experts who attended the Tunis conference will be asked to prepare papers offering advice on specific policy challenges.

Hassan Boubakri noted the need to rework the relationship between the EU and the Maghreb countries in light of the new realities, including in the field of migration management. He recalled the responsibilities of southern Mediterranean countries in forging their own migration policies. He appreciated the role of organisations such as the OSCE in facilitating cross-regional exchanges aimed at sharing knowledge and identifying best practices.

Updated 24 June 2015

Conference Programme

Tunis, 24 April 2015, Majestic Hotel (Mélodie Hall)

Introductory Remarks

Ettore Greco, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome

Ramy Salhi, Centre of Tunis for Migration and Asylum (CeTuMA) and EuroMed Human Rights Network (EMHRN)

Kamel Jendoubi, Tunisian Minister to the Head of the Government in Charge of relation with Constitutional Institutions and Civil Society

Massimo Carnelos, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome

Nicolò Russo Perez, Compagnia di San Paolo

First Session

The Arab Uprisings and Changing Migration Patterns in the Mediterranean

Chair **Lorenzo Kamel**, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome

Panelists **Ummuhan Bardak**, European Training Foundation (ETF), Turin

Ferruccio Pastore, Forum of International and European Research on Immigration (FIERI), Turin

Monika Wohlfeld, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, Malta

Teresa Albano, Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), Vienna

Second Session

Changing Migration Patterns: Tunisian Perspectives

Chair **Hassan Boubakri**, University of Sousse & Tunisia's National Observatory of Youth & Centre of Tunis for Migration and Asylum (CeTuMA)

Panelists **Ahmed Driss**, Centre des études méditerranéennes et internationales (CEMI), Tunis

Hatem Ferjani, Deputy Assistant to the President of the Assembly of People's Representatives in charge of Tunisians abroad

Mehdi Mabrouk, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS), Tunisia Office

Farida Souiah, Monika Salzbrunn and Simon Mastrangelo, Institute of Social Sciences of Contemporary Religions (ISSRC), University of Lausanne

Third Session

The Regional Response

Chair **Emiliano Alessandri**, OSCE Secretariat, Vienna

Panelists **Mehdi Lahlou**, Institut national de statistique et d'économie appliquée (INSEA), Rabat

Ahmet İçduygu, Migration Research Center (MiReKoc) at Koc University, Istanbul

Hassan Boubakri, University of Sousse & Tunisia's National Observatory of Youth & Centre of Tunis for Migration and Asylum (CeTuMA)

Concluding Remarks

Emiliano Alessandri, OSCE Secretariat, Vienna

Hassan Boubakri, University of Sousse & Tunisia's National Observatory of Youth & Centre of Tunis for Migration and Asylum (CeTuMA)

Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Founded by Altiero Spinelli in 1965, does research in the fields of foreign policy, political economy and international security. A non-profit organisation, the IAI aims to further and disseminate knowledge through research studies, conferences and publications. To that end, it cooperates with other research institutes, universities and foundations in Italy and abroad and is a member of various international networks. More specifically, the main research sectors are: European institutions and policies; Italian foreign policy; trends in the global economy and internationalisation processes in Italy; the Mediterranean and the Middle East; defence economy and policy; and transatlantic relations. The IAI publishes an English-language quarterly (*The International Spectator*), an online webzine (*AffarInternazionali*), two series of research papers (*Quaderni IAI* and *IAI Research Papers*) and other papers' series related to IAI research projects.

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- 15 | 11 Ramzi Ben Amara, *Changing Migration Patterns in the Mediterranean Region*
- 15 | 10 Andrea Dessì, *A Multilateral Approach to Ungoverned Spaces: Libya and Beyond*
- 15 | 09 Alessandro Marrone (a cura di), *Il Libro bianco: una strategia per la politica di difesa dell'Italia*
- 15 | 08 Stefano Pioppi, *Somali Perspectives: Institutional and Policy Challenges*
- 15 | 07 Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré, *Which Role Should the EU Play in International Relations? Understanding the Post-Lisbon Foreign Policy at Times of Change*
- 15 | 06 Alessandro Marrone e Michele Nones, *La formazione degli ufficiali delle Forze Armate italiane nella prospettiva europea*
- 15 | 05 Chiara Franco, *Coercive Diplomacy, Sanctions and International Law*
- 15 | 04 Gabriele Rosana, *Crisi in Libia. Intervento militare o soluzione politica?*
- 15 | 03E Roberto Aliboni, *What to Do About Libya: Intervention or Mediation?*
- 15 | 03 Roberto Aliboni, *Che fare in Libia? L'Occidente fra intervento e mediazione*