

MEDITERRANEAN MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Historical and political continuities and discontinuities

Sarah Wolff and Leila Hadj-Abdou

Since 2015, the high volumes of arrivals of migrants and refugees to Europe have put the spotlight more than ever on the Mediterranean. Typically described in the public debate as the ‘cradle of civilization’ and a fertile space of mobility and exchange, the Mediterranean has lately become associated with scenarios of threat and tragedy: ‘The Mediterranean is today the center of the world . . . [it] is the most problematic region in the world, and still the least integrated in the world’ as Federica Mogherini (2015) the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has put it. The Mediterranean Sea today stands for the ‘deadliest stretch of water’ (UNHCR, 2012) for people aiming to reach Europe. In 2014 and 2015 alone, 7,000 lives were lost in this sea (IOM, 2016a), mostly in the central Mediterranean route (ibid.).

The debate about refugees and the high death toll of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea has altered the common perspective on the region. It has also established a crisis narrative that suggests discontinuity, i.e. a breaking point in contrast to a previous linear pattern of normality (Lindley, 2014). This rupture narrative, however, conceals historical continuities, as well as the political process that has led to the contemporary situation. Migration and population movements are indeed common to the southern rim of the Mediterranean, but movement has never been so restricted and thus irregularized than in the past decades. Refugee protection in the Mediterranean region is also weak.

The EU’s policies are also ill equipped and ignorant of these historically rooted dynamics of mobility. The EU’s internal security interests have prevailed over the need for a common Mediterranean regional governance approach. Beyond its humanitarian narrative, the EU has had difficulties to use all possible aid, trade, economic, diplomatic and humanitarian tools to address the complex and interrelated root causes of migration such as poverty, conflict, socio-economic precariousness and climate change. This is nonetheless critical in building resilience in Arab Mediterranean societies, supporting their administrative and integration capacities, as well as relying on transnational non-state actors and increasing refugees and migrants’ protection in the Mediterranean. In the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, societal resilience amongst Syrian’s neighbors, such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, who are welcoming millions of refugees, is also at stake. But northern and southern EU member states have argued about

'burden-sharing' and 'solidarity' while new lines of cleavages have appeared between eastern and western EU member states as the western Balkan route became central to refugees' and migrants' journey to Europe. EU policies have proved to be driven by short-termism as they ignore the demographic challenge of an ageing EU and the consequent need for migrant workforces in European labour markets. This remains a major challenge given that Mediterranean countries are also undergoing a demographic transition with a declining fertility rate.

In order to unravel the underlying idea of discontinuity of the current crisis narrative, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on highlighting the historical continuities in the Mediterranean migrations prior to the Arab uprisings. After analysing post-war migration patterns and refugee flows in the Mediterranean, explanatory factors for the ongoing crisis are found in the discussion of 1990s and 2000s policy developments. Irregularity, securitization and externalization of EU migratory policies are specifically scrutinized. The second part analyses the post-Arab uprisings developments. While Mediterranean migrants' vulnerabilities and precariousness are on the rise, it shows how EU policy remains risk averse and how migratory politics is used as an instrument of soft power by Mediterranean countries.

Migration as a historical defining marker of the Mediterranean

Migration has always been a central and defining feature of the Mediterranean. While the directions and patterns of movements have shifted over the years, the region was and continues to be a sending, receiving as well as transit region of immigration.

Mediterranean migration fuelled by post-war economic growth

Post-war economic growth has stimulated migration in the region since the 1950s. Initially migration movements were characterized by south to north flows within Europe, including a large degree of internal migration within European Mediterranean countries, as was the case with massive north-south movements within Italy. Growing sectors such as industry, mining, housing construction and agriculture (de Haas, 2007) in Europe's north were largely dependent on so called 'guest workers', which were recruited from Europe's south. Greece, Portugal, Italy and Spain were significant exporters of labour forces from the 1950s onwards, particularly to Germany, Austria, Belgium, France and the Netherlands. As labour supply from the northern Mediterranean started to slow down, immigration from the southern Mediterranean gained relevance. In the 1960s the new north African nation states, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, which had just gained independence from the colonial powers, but also Turkey, became important source countries of labour immigration to Europe.

Both waves of 'guest-workers' were initially regarded as temporary phenomena. Not only did most host societies expect post-war immigration to be temporary, but most migrants conceptualized their stay as limited. Many intended to return to their countries of origin after having saved sufficient means to acquire property back home (de Haas, 2007). However, many of these temporary 'guests' eventually turned into permanent residents. The transition from previous temporary, circular to permanent migration was paradoxically partly an – unintended – consequence of restrictive European immigration control policies. In the wake of the 1973 oil crisis, which set off a period of economic stagnation, European labour recruitment schemes were officially put to an end, and western European nation states closed their borders to reduce immigration. Many migrants chose to reunite with their families in their host countries, instead of returning back home and facing the risk of not being able to return. The active attempts of western European governments to prevent the settlement of immigrants

at the time failed. Constitutional norms concerning the protection of the family, which were enforced by European national courts, were a major factor in preventing repatriation policies in the 1970s (Castles, 2004: 216).

Irregularity as an intrinsic feature of Mediterranean migration regimes

At the same time former northern Mediterranean emigration countries underwent an important transformation. In 1972 Italy had for the first time a positive migration balance, followed by Greece and Spain in 1975, and Portugal in 1981 (Montanari and Cortese, 1993: 221). Following political and economic integration into Europe, and steady economic growth, these former emigration countries started to attract significant numbers of immigrants from the south and eastern Mediterranean region especially throughout the 1990s and the 2000s. Spain witnessed the largest inflows in the region, becoming one of the largest recipients of absolute migration in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with migration rates multiplying by five from the 1990s to the 2000s (İçduygu, 2007: 154), including significant numbers from North Africa, particularly Morocco.

This type of migration, however, significantly differed from previous immigration flows in the region. Immigration in the northern Mediterranean was largely characterized by irregular entry, a mode of migration driven by the shadow economy, as well as the inappropriate regulation of labour migration in Europe's south, which was unable to address labour force shortages. Until the mid-1980s there were no legal avenues to enter Italy or Spain for work purposes (Barbulescu, 2012: 58). The introduction of visa requirements for Maghrebi immigrants in Spain and Italy in the early 1990s also contributed to foster irregular migration. The crossing of the Mediterranean Sea started in so-called *pateras*, small fishing boats often operated by smugglers (de Haas, 2008: 3). Migration up to the mid-2000s was largely managed through post-migration regularization schemes (Triandafyllidou, 2007). In spite of the late introduction of quota systems in Spain and Italy, large-scale irregular migration continued to match the real demand of the labour market (de Haas 2008: 12). To put it differently, irregularity became an intrinsic and permanent character of the migration regimes in the region (cf. İçduygu, 2007: 154). Southern European economies relied heavily on the supply of cheap foreign labour in order to keep their economies competitive and to sustain economic growth (cf. *ibid.*: 158).

During the 2000s, migration across the Mediterranean to Europe's shores continued. Migration patterns did not significantly alter until the economic recession in 2007. The economic downturn triggered a new emigration from southern Europe, the region that was most hit by the recession, to northern Europe (Castles et al., 2014: 118). However, while initially the recession was expected to lead to massive return migration this did not prove true. Return migration has been highest for EU migrants, who enjoy free movement rights, but was not significant for migrants from outside the EU, for whom returning would have often meant losing their residency rights (*ibid.*). Immigration, including labour migration, continued during the recession period, which suggests a persistent labour demand in certain sectors, such as the care industry (*ibid.*).

Eventually in the 2000s, north African states and Turkey became destination and transit countries of immigration (Düvell, 2014), partly due to developments in Libya under Gaddafi. Immigration flows into Libya had already started in the 1960s after the discovery of oil and hydrocarbon reserves (MPC, 2013: 1). Immigration was further fueled by the so-called 'open door' policy of the Libyan regime towards sub-Saharan African countries and used as an instrument of soft power in response to international isolation of the country following the 1992 UN embargo and the conflictual relationships of the regime with the neighbouring Arab countries (*ibid.*).

At the beginning of the 2000s a major anti-immigrant backlash in Libya eventually led to a tightening of immigration regulations in the country, and sub-Saharan migration started to shift towards Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (de Haas, 2008: 3). Consequently sub-Saharan migrants started to settle in north Africa, but also increasingly joined north African migrants trying to come to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea route.

The construction of irregular mobility in the Mediterranean as a security problem

These developments were accompanied by a growing concern in Europe with irregular migration in the Mediterranean from the beginning of the 1990s onwards (Lutterbeck, 2006: 59). A securitized reading of migration became dominant and was sustained through a portrayal of immigrants as desperate and passive victims of ruthless traffickers and criminal smugglers (de Haas, 2008). The security imperative was further strengthened through an issue linkage of international migration to terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11, the 2003 Madrid and 2005 London attacks (Lutterbeck, 2006: 59; de Haas, 2008: 2).

This process of securitization of immigration is to be understood as a self-referential practice, and not a question of measuring de facto threat (Geddes, 2009:18). 'It is self-referential because it is in this practice [of securitization] that the issue becomes a security issue', as Geddes (2009:18) has aptly put it. One aspect of this securitization process was the increasing border militarization along the Mediterranean shores. Semi-military police forces, i.e. police forces with a military status, were increasingly employed by Italy and Spain to respond to irregular migration movements at sea (Lutterbeck, 2006: 64). Additionally European naval forces started to join forces to 'secure' Europe's southern borders (ibid.). In 2003, for instance, Operation Ulysses was pioneered in Spain. This joint mission of the navies of France, the UK, Spain, Portugal and Italy, was targeting irregular migration across the Straits of Gibraltar and the west Sahara towards the Canary Islands (Lutterbeck, 2006: 68). Bilateral patrolling with non-EU Mediterranean countries became common practice, the most successful examples being between the Moroccan Royal Gendarmerie and the Spanish Guardia Civil, or between the Italian Guardia di Finanza and the Libyan authorities under Gaddafi (Wolff, 2012). The EU started to train Arab Mediterranean law enforcement authorities and border guards.

A bundle of policy measures ranging from joint deportations, carrier sanctions, which co-opted private transport businesses into border control, and the adoption of a range of new surveillance technologies, as well as the establishment of a range of new agencies and institutions such as the border agency Frontex to implement these policies, complemented the militarization of European borders in the Mediterranean and beyond (Düvell and Vollmer, 2011: 8–11)

Fortress Europe? Externalization of migration control

These developments have been often characterized in popular discourse as the erection of a so-called 'Fortress Europe'. Such a depiction, however, is misleading for several reasons. For one, the idea of a 'Fortress Europe' implies to some extent that immigration inflows were actually stopped. However, there was no halt to immigration. Instead, immigration routes were reshaped and diversified across the Mediterranean (Triandafyllidou, 2014) which also made many of these journeys more deadly. The militarization of the Mediterranean border also led to a growing professionalization of smugglers (de Haas, 2008: 7).

The process of securitization was accompanied by the externalization of EU migratory policies, aiming at co-opting non-member states into European and EU migration and asylum

policies through foreign policy tools (Geddes, 2009) The European Parliament and Commission did note the need for co-operation with non-EU states as early as 1987 (Triandafyllidou, 2014: 9). As a result of this foreign policy focus cooperation between north and south Mediterranean countries to control migration intensified. The Mediterranean became a ‘laboratory’ for the ‘extra-territorialization’ of European immigration control. Extra-territorialization in the realm of immigration can be understood as

the way in which the EU and its Member States attempt not only to prevent non-Community nationals from leaving their countries of origin, but also to ensure that if they manage to do so, they remain as close to their country of origin as possible, or in any case outside EU territory. It furthermore covers measures that ensure that if individuals do manage to enter the EU, they will be repatriated or removed to ‘safe third countries’.

(Rijpma and Cremona, 2007: 12)

At regional level, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), launched in 1995 by EU ministers of foreign affairs and their Mediterranean counterparts to spread ‘peace, prosperity and stability’ was initially not concerned with migration, as Mediterranean partners considered discussions of migration of their citizens as ‘taboo’. Yet the combined evolution of changing migratory fluxes in the region and the externalization of justice and home affairs (JHA) policy helped to ‘depoliticize JHA’ on the Euro-Mediterranean agenda. In 2002, a JHA regional programme was adopted within a wider package to re-launch the Barcelona Process, and was balanced by a strong commitment on the social, cultural and human partnership. Justice and home affairs and migration, with a strong emphasis on the readmission of irregular immigrants, became de facto the ‘fourth basket’ of the EMP (Wolff, 2012: 79–80). A milestone in curbing irregular migration was the 2002 Seville European Council (Geddes, 2009). Under the influence of the Spanish presidency of the EU, the Council for the first time introduced the provision that any future cooperation, association or any equivalent agreement with a non-EU country needed to include a joint management of migration flows and a compulsory readmission clause regarding irregular immigrants (*ibid.*). These targets were later integrated into the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which from the mid-2000s onwards became the main EU bilateral policy framework with Mediterranean countries.

EU migration cooperation with non-EU countries has often been described as strongly asymmetrical, the EU was exerting leverage to push for its own migration agenda and co-opt third countries in implementing control mechanisms outside the borders of the EU. This perspective, however, suppresses the fact that the EU fixation on migration control, at the same time also gave leaders in the region considerable power, using migrants and the willingness to implement control measures strategically as bargaining chips (Cassarino, 2012). Cooperation with northern neighbours provided authoritarian leaders such as Ben Ali in Tunisia or Gaddafi in Libya with the opportunity to ‘boost their national prestige and international reputation in spite of their dubious domestic legitimacy’ (Cassarino and Lavenex, 2012: 1). Under the prerogative of curbing migration, calls for democracy and human rights in the region became sidelined (Cassarino 2012). The EU and its member states reinforced cooperation with southern Mediterranean countries on border control and readmission of migrants, regardless of whether their governments respected basic human rights of those returned or not (Cassarino and Tocci, 2011: 8). In particular, the cooperation of Italy with Libya throughout the 2000s attracted repeated criticism from human rights associations and also from the UNHCR and the European Parliament (see Cuttita, 2010). Severe human rights abuses occurred to a large extent, leaving

in particular Sub-Saharan migrants in Libya in extremely vulnerable conditions (Bialasiewicz, 2012). Extra-territorialisation of migration control created 'off-shore' black holes where European norms, standards and regulations' (ibid: 861) did not apply.

The major focus on control, readmission and return remained a continuous feature of the EU policy agenda towards its southern neighbors throughout the 2000s, and has de facto trumped other approaches also existent on the EU migration policy agenda, such as the facilitation of legal migration (Cassarino and Lavenex, 2012). More significantly it has shifted the attention away from refugee protection in the region. Displacement of people and the reception of refugees, however is equally defining the Mediterranean. Refugee flows are closely related to Mediterranean colonial history. For instance, the Algerian War of Independence (1954–62) alone displaced more than 200,000 people who fled to Tunisia and Morocco (UNHCR, 2000). The unsuccessful independence struggle of the West Sahrawi led to another 150,000–200,000 refugees in the 1970s (Farah, 2003). The largest numbers of displaced people in the region are Palestinians. The Palestine–Israel conflict has produced more than 5 million people in need of protection, of which a large number were received in Lebanon, Syrian and Jordan (UNRWA, 2016). Turkey, moreover, has traditionally been another significant source country of asylum seekers.

The Mediterranean migratory space and politics post-Arab uprisings

Mass displacement is a major feature of post-World War II in the Mediterranean and has always been linked to socio-political and economic changes (Marfleet and Hanieh, 2014: 37). The recent Arab uprisings are no exception. Yet, following the post-Arab uprisings, migrants and refugees are increasingly facing vulnerabilities and precariousness, therefore highlighting the limits of protection regimes in the Mediterranean. EU policy has also been risk averse, continuing to privilege its own internal security over the widening of legal channels for migrants and increased protection for refugees – a situation complicated by the fact that increasingly EU's Mediterranean partners are using migratory politics as soft power to exert influence on the EU.

Mediterranean migrants' vulnerabilities and precariousness

The dismantlement of the Gaddafi regime and the Syrian conflict certainly explain the post-Arab uprisings influx of migrants and refugees ready to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Major regional geopolitical changes have led populations to flee conflict. Migratory patterns are also evolving rapidly due to the rise of socio-economic inequalities, poverty and climate change. New categories of displaced people have appeared, challenging conventional tools of international law. Next to the 'mixed migratory flows', the Arab uprisings have seen more 'stranded migrants'. These are migrants who are either in transit or at destination in north Africa, Yemen, Turkey and Greece but have no support from their governments (Chetail and Braeunlich, 2013). This was the case of workers from Vietnam, Thailand, Turkey and Ghana, and of Senegalese who were left behind by their companies with no way to get back home after the fall of the Gaddafi regime. State failure in Libya also meant that those who managed to return home, such as Egyptian migrants, returned to precarious conditions back in the Delta and Upper Nile, thus becoming potential candidates for crossing the Mediterranean (Marfleet and Hanieh, 2014).

Although initially it was mostly men crossing the Mediterranean, women are increasingly crossing it too. In 2016, the proportion of women reaching the Greek island of Kos was around 25 per cent (Freedman, 2016: 6). Women and children are more at risk of death in the Mediterranean as 'anecdotal reports indicate that during sea voyages women and children are more

likely to be located in areas below deck where exposure to fumes, leaking water, and other hazards is likely' (Pickering and Cochrane, 2012: 33). Women are also increasingly fleeing precarious situations of living in refugee camps at the EU's borders, which involve not only conflict violence but also family violence (Freedman, 2016: 12). In spite of the emergence of a debate on the need for a gender-sensitive approach to EU migration and asylum policies, the diversity of implementation of EU asylum legislation by member states has created additional protection gaps for women and girls (Shreeves, 2016).

Refugees are confronted to growing precariousness in Arab Mediterranean countries of first refuge, which, in July 2016 were hosting almost 5 million refugees. This figure includes 2.1 million Syrians in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, 2.7 million Syrians registered by the government of Turkey, as well as more than 29,000 Syrian refugees registered in north Africa (UNHCR, 2016a). In comparison, between April 2011 and April 2016 there have been 718,821 Syrian asylum applications in the EU (including Norway and Lichtenstein) (UNHCR, 2016b), putting in perspective the 'quantitative crisis' claimed by European media and policy-makers. Middle East and North African (MENA) countries host 39 per cent of them while Europe only 6 per cent (UNHCR, 2016c). Refugees' hosting societies are under strain, with increased tensions between local communities and refugees. Getting access to basic needs such as jobs, healthcare, food or even psychological support is a daily struggle. In 2016, in Lebanon 70 per cent of refugee households lived below the poverty line and in Jordan 90 per cent of registered Syrian refugees in urban areas were living below the national poverty line (UNHCR, 2016d). Palestinian refugees continue to be in a precarious situation too with around 5 million registered by UNRWA (IOM, 2016b) and around 110,000 having fled from Syria (UNHCR, 2016b). This situation explains why after many years in MENA countries, refugees decide to cross the Mediterranean.

The continuities of an EU risk-averse policy

In the aftermath of the Arab uprising, the European Commission released a communication that proposed the establishment of 'a dialogue for migration, mobility and security with the Southern Mediterranean countries' (European Commission, 2011). The paper emphasized that the EU needed to provide 'clear support to the people in the Southern Mediterranean' through 'active management of migration flows, the strengthening of legal migration opportunities together with measures to address irregular migration'. Although the communication was based upon a 'root causes' narrative, which recognized the daunting 'challenge of creating jobs and improving living conditions throughout the region', little has been done so far (European Commission, 2011).

The focus on 'managing' and 'ordering' Mediterranean migratory flows was, as noted previously, a persisting EU concern. The Arab uprisings have accelerated the reliance on sophisticated biometrics, surveillance and smart border technologies to implement remote-control policies (Zaiotti, 2016: 6), presenting important internal, external and legal challenges (Wolff, 2008). Militarization is continuing with the EUNAFCO  ED Operation Sophia launched to 'disrupt the business model of human smugglers and traffickers in the Southern Central Mediterranean'. As legal migration opportunities to come to Europe are seldom, refugees and migrants have opted out for riskier journeys, which are controlled by human smugglers. The absence of a competence for EU-wide search and rescue missions, which remains a member state competence, as well as the sanctioning of any commercial airlines and shipping companies for carrying persons without the proper visas or travel documents to enter the EU through Directive 2001/51 and lengthy visa procedures have contributed to the blossoming industry of human smuggling, putting migrants even more at risk (Wolff, 2015).

The decision to relocate 160,000 refugees under the influence of Germany revealed divisions amongst EU member states. Since 2015, walls and fences have been erected between Austria and Italy, Hungary and Austria, and on the Greek–Macedonian border, while Bulgaria announced the plan to construct a new wall with Turkey. These initiatives contributed to the rise of anti-immigrant and often anti-Islam movements such as Pegida in Germany or the Golden Dawn in Greece, which have spread all over Europe. Also the message of the president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, representing the European heads of states and governments, could not have been clearer when he declared ‘Don’t come to Europe. Don’t believe traffickers. Don’t risk your lives and your money’ (Chadwick, 2016).

The evolution from an ‘Arab Spring’ to an ‘Arab Winter’ and the realization that EU’s southern neighbourhood was becoming a ‘ring of fire’ rather than a ‘ring of friends’ has rapidly overshadowed EU’s declarations for more mobility for Arab Mediterranean citizens. The ‘crisis’ narrative requiring exceptional measures was exploited by various EU member states as a trump card in EU negotiations. The traditional northern–southern dividing line on ‘burden-sharing’ and ‘solidarity’ resurfaced with southern EU member states pursuing specific strategies to gain financial and operational support to police EU’s southern borders. Malta, Italy, Greece and Spain have been in the frontline of rescue at sea missions while coping with the lasting consequences of the 2007 financial crisis. Capacities to welcome and process asylum-seeker’s applications have come under strain, to the extent that the European Court of Human Rights condemned ‘northern’ EU countries for transferring asylum-seekers back to the country of first entry such as Greece, unable to ensure their human rights and dignity.

Southern EU member states pursued strategies to resist ‘policies that displace responsibility for migration and asylum away from the core of Europe towards its peripheries’ (Mainwaring, 2012a: 38). This helped them to gain more influence and financial support from northern EU member states in order to control their borders (Wolff, 2008). Malta for instance retained up until January 2016 a detention policy of 18 months for any migrant arriving on Maltese soil, which was seen as a strategy of deterrence for migrants but also forced some EU member states to stop asylum-seeker transfers through the Dublin Convention to Malta (Mainwaring, 2012b). Faced with the immobility of its European peers, in October 2013 Italy launched a major military rescue operation called ‘Mare Nostrum’ following the death of 300 migrants close to Lampedusa Island, which shocked the Italian public. The operation, with a budget of €9 million per month and involving 900 personnel, saved 150,000 migrants (Carrera and den Hertog, 2015: 3–4). One year later, the operation was ended and succeeded by a much more modest Frontex operation, the Triton operation. The Mare Nostrum operation was accused of pulling more migrants as ‘smugglers abused the proximity of this operation near to the Libyan coast to put more people in the sea with the assumption that they would be rescued very soon’ (Frontex interim executive director Gil Arias, quoted in *ibid.*). Italy was also blamed by other EU member states for not systematically recording the fingerprints of asylum-seekers (Trauner, 2016: 315).

Mediterranean countries’ migratory politics and soft power

The 2015 European Agenda for Migration, the European Agenda on Security but also the 2015 Valetta summit with African partners and the EU/Turkey 2015 and 2016 deals have shown the EU’s continuous willingness to cooperate with third countries in organizing returns, and the fight against irregular migration in the Mediterranean. Thus, mobility partnerships concluded with Morocco and Tunisia, an EU external migration instrument that organizes mobility for ‘short periods’, is in fact used to ‘combat illegal immigration, networks involved in the networks involved in the trafficking and smuggling of human beings, and to promote an effective

return and readmission policy while respecting fundamental rights' (Council of the EU, 2013). The EU has also reactivated the negotiation of EU readmission agreements with third countries. Yet without clear mobility incentives in the form of visa facilitation, many non-EU southern Mediterranean countries have been resisting the EU's demands (Wolff, 2014). Morocco pursued an issue-linkage strategy by suspending EU readmission agreement negotiations following discontent with the negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. In addition signing an EU readmission agreement would also not have been considered as 'appropriate' by Moroccan officials who do not want to be regarded as the 'Gendarme of the European Union' by other Mediterranean and African partners. This issue of 'image' of Morocco in its own neighbourhood, including its own geostrategic interests, has been clearly overlooked by EU officials, thus reducing their leverage in the negotiations (Wolff, 2014).

While some argue that the EU has capitalized on the fragility and weakness of north African governments following the Arab uprisings to get them to sign mobility partnerships (Limam and del Sarto, 2015), geopolitical concerns continue to prevail in the migratory politics choices made before and after the Arab uprisings (Natter, 2014). If in the 2000s the 'remote-control' demands of the EU matched Morocco's willingness to regain a regional power role in Africa after some years of isolation from its European and African neighbours (Natter, 2014: 19), the 2014 Moroccan immigration reform can similarly be explained by the geopolitical motives of the kingdom to gain new economic markets in west and sub-Saharan Africa. After 15 years of sub-Saharan migration, Morocco has become a destination country and cannot, geopolitically, afford to be seen as a violator of sub-Saharan migrants' rights in the region, as denounced by Medecin Sans Frontieres in 2012.

Mediterranean countries can aptly use migrants and refugees as an instrument of soft power. Thus, Turkey became a key strategic partner in the EU's attempt to control the eastern Mediterranean route. After having welcomed millions of Syrian refugees, the country gained leverage and was able to capitalize on European internal divisions between Germany and other EU member states. The March 2016 EU–Turkey deal, complementing the October 2015 EU–Turkey Action Plan, and enacting the principle to return Syrian refugees back to Turkey in exchange for resettling other Syrian refugees from Turkey to Europe (*the one for one* approach), caused a general outcry for curbing refugees' rights. Human Rights Watch (2016) denounced deportations from the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios. Refugees' and migrants' rights are at stake at two levels (Carrera and Guild, 2016). First, Turkey is indeed not yet considered as a 'safe third country' by the UNHCR, where it would be considered safe to return refugees, following the *principle of non-refoulement*. Second, Turkey's geographical limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention exempts the Turkish authorities from applying the Convention to non-European refugees, namely Syrian refugees. In exchange for this deal, Turkey has secured the opening of new chapter in its accession negotiations with the EU and an additional financial support of €3 billion. The refugee issue has thus enabled Turkey to return to the centre of attention of EU politics after years of being the pariah among EU's neighbours. Some have also maintained that the hosting of Syrian refugees is also providing the AKP government with 'loyal' supporters, and thus strengthening its position domestically (Parkes, 2015).

Conclusions

Controlling migrants and borders has become the main objective of states and international agencies at a global level, as a result of the growing geopolitical and socio-economic uncertainties deriving from globalization. Migrants and refugees are considered as 'transgressors' of the territorial borders of the nation state (Marfleet and Hanieh, 2014: 25), and the Mediterranean is no

exception. The exceptionalism of the 2015 migrant and refugee crisis framed by European policy-makers and media as a security issue, has been oblivious of the social, economic and political reality of migration in the Mediterranean. Migration and mobility is a defining marker of the region, in spite of the many constraints that migrants and refugees face. Migration in the Mediterranean has been managed through a self-feeding dynamic: stricter migration controls and a lack of legal avenues, together with the persistence of economic needs, caused an increase in irregular migration, which in turn generated the need for more control.

In many ways the recent Mediterranean history of migration is a showcase of the core dilemma of migration governance, namely the conflict between economic interests and public resistance to migration, which Hollifield (1992) has pointedly framed as the paradox of open markets and closed political communities. The increase of border control, which is a consequence of this disjuncture of economic and political interests and the growing securitization of migration, however, drives migrants and refugees to undertake riskier journeys and to cooperate with human smugglers to make their way through Europe. The situation in EU's southern neighbours, hosting millions of refugees is such that the situation is clearly unsustainable for countries of first refuge whose societal resilience is at stake. Transregional governance is nonetheless absent in a region governed by state-driven migratory politics.

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