Euro-Mediterranean Relations in the Field of Migration Management: Contrasting the cases of Morocco and Turkey

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1 The Mediterranean is a symbol of life, conflicts, peace and history. It is blue for some and white for others. It is a place that throughout human history has witnessed vast diversity, mobility and instability. At the intersection of three continent – Asia, Africa, and Europe – the Mediterranean has always been synonymous with craftsmen, intellectuals, artists, and travelers’ mobility and encounters. Conquests, colonization, and forced migrations – from the expulsion of Jews from Spain to the displacements caused by wars with the Russian and Ottoman Empires – have marked the history of mobility in this place.

2 In the modern period, the region has known important developments, wars, colonization, decolonization, conflicts, peace processes, unions, cooperation, trade, and transformations of life patterns, causing increased inter-regional and extra-regional mobility. In the 1960s, Europe, once considered a land of emigration to the New World, became a region of immigration for people coming from many countries. The 1970s initiated a new era of European migration policies that put an end to the so-called “sheltering of the workforce” that had existed until then. These new policies have been marked by the closing of borders, the enlargement of the Schengen area to southern European countries such as Spain, Italy and Portugal, as well as the adoption of new security measures to control the entry and mobility of people and goods within the borders of the European Union (EU). In this sense, Mediterranean third countries began to play a central role in this strategy to prevent the “uncontrolled irregular” migration from neighbouring countries (Sempere Souvannavong 2011).

3 Therefore, a long cooperation process began and developed between the European Union and the Mediterranean third countries. The migratory issue has had and still has a very
important place in these cooperative processes. For the EU, instability in neighboring countries provokes a great influx of immigrants to its territory. Therefore, the cooperation to strengthen the security and stability in these countries aids in the reduction of migratory pressure on the countries in the EU (Lorca, Lozano and Lajara 1997).

4 Since 2002, the externalisation of the border resulted in the EU border control being subcontracted to non-member countries of the Union. Not only have EU borders expanded since then, but the outsourcing process extended the areas in which security forces can intervene. Frontex led the implementation and transmission of new strategies to neighboring countries to control the border.5

5 Morocco and Turkey benefit from a privileged position, leading the list of the Mediterranean third countries that are EU partners. In the last few years, each country has independently developed greater collaboration and cooperation with the EU in different areas, especially with regards to issues related to migratory flows. This has happened through the signature of agreements with Frontex and through the “EU Mobility Agreement” in the case of Morocco and the “EU Readmission Agreement” in Turkey’s case.6

6 These two distant countries have a long history of emigration, transit, and immigration, in addition to an increased interest in emigration. Moreover, remittances from nationals living abroad are an important source of capital input and an economical pillar in both countries.

7 Both Morocco and Turkey have declared that their new policies were prepared with more consideration of the international legislation and with a new approach based on the respect of human rights as part of their general vision for a global respect of human rights.

8 The new and growing cultural diversity in these two countries as a result of immigration represents one of the most important challenges of migration policies, and puts a strain on national policies for managing national diversity in both countries. The terms guest, transit or passengers are nothing more than excuses to deny the receiving country’s character as a mixed nation. An immigration policy demonstrates its effectiveness when it has a higher interest to include diversity, reconciliation, and the respect for differences as key factors to increase citizen satisfaction.

9 In this respect, Morocco and Turkey both deny their “guests” permanent status and need to open a more structured discussion of this new cultural diversity, added to the existing diversity; furthermore both countries also need to develop new national policies in different areas in order to deal with this diversity.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


NOTES

1. Reference is made to the blue sea to citizens from Western European countries and the White Sea to the citizens in countries to the south and east of the Mediterranean. In Arabic is used the expression The White Sea of the middle [البحر الأبيض المتوسط – al-Bahr al-Abjad al-Mutawasit], in Turkish Akdeniz [White Sea] as opposed to Karadeniz [Black Sea].

2. It was signed by several European countries in Luxembourg, in Schengen city, on 1985, and it consists of the lift of internal borders among the signatories of the agreement. The citizens of the signatory countries, the residents of those countries, besides the people with the Schengen visa can travel freely throughout all the States that implement the Convention.

3. The Mediterranean Third Countries or MTC are the partner countries as the countries of Maghreb, of Mashrek and Israel. These countries are linked to the European Union through agreement of cooperation, which include trade, industrial cooperation and technical and financial assistance.

4. After the Arab spring, the arrival of a large number of people put the frontiers of the EU into crisis. Residence documents granted by Italy have been rejected by other Schengen countries, creating -in consequence- a major debate over the Union’s borders.

5. European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the EU.

6. “EU Mobility Agreement” provides for a series of initiatives, which are designed to ensure that the movement of persons is managed as effectively as possible.

7. A readmission agreement is an agreement by which the signatory States are committed to readmit its citizens (nationals), including the people who have transited throughout its territory, detained illegally on EU territory.

8. Here is made a reference to the Turkish word misafir meaning “visitor” or “guest” and it is commonly used in the media or in political speeches referring to foreign students [misafir öğrenciler] or refugee, asylum seekers and Syrians immigrants. This word refers to the temporary nature of the stay of these people in the Turkish territory.

9. Here is made a reference to the Arabic word Abir to sabil - عبر السبيل which literally dignifies “the passenger along the way,” a word commonly used in Moroccan society to designate sub-Saharan migrants. Refers to transit nature that does not belong to a logic of permanence or long term staying.
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