



Organisation for Studies on International Relations

What are the push and pull factors that trigger migration into the European Union?

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Introduction

In this last decade, Europe has been bombarded by the idea of migration. This has been a consequence of the incontestable increase in regular and irregular migrants through the Mediterranean and into Europe. Many public actors such as the media and politicians, give the impression to the general European population that this is a new phenomenon.

In reality, migration is a face in the facet of humanity which has been ever-present. The length of which people migrate can range from a small distance to a lengthy journey. Emigration is a way of surviving by moving to places that can offer you shelter, security and nutrition. Therefore many of the push factors are a lack of these three. And the most prominent pull factors are a promise of the same three. With the emergence of societies and states this movement became more scrutinized. This is due to the simple fact that once a territory is claimed a state it is now a political figure with its own characteristics and citizens. If a migrant chooses to move into a new territory where a state is situated due to promises of nutrition and security it is crucial for the potential immigrant to be accepted not only by the body of governance of that state but also by its people and its economy.

Therefore the emergence of the state did not inhibit migration but it conceptualised it in a political manner. It divided migration into two scenarios which are immigration and emigration and it also tried as much as possible to understand the reasons behind migration as well as its consequences; economically, demographically, socially and politically. Those experiencing discontent in their own state or cannot inhabit the area due to threats on their life, being hunger or warfare seek shelter in neighbouring countries. Others which would be of a braver heart prefer to seek refuge in Europe, many a time reaching the coasts of Malta, Spain, Greece, Italy and Lampedusa by crossing the Mediterranean (See fig 1.1). They would then apply for asylum and protection in the European Union through the receiving country. If their request would be approved they would be given the refugee status. (See fig 1.2). However, not all those who decide to cross waters are guaranteed safety and refugee status. Few reasons for this are that either they

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encounter problems while at sea, which would lead to people drowning. Moreover they could simply not be accepted and pushed back to their country of origin. Incidents of this type have taken place in these past few years and unfortunately every one of them included the loss of life.

Ravenstein, in his work; 'The Laws of Migration', provided the foundation for the modern "push-pull" theory of immigration to be conceptualized. The push factors include situations such as unemployment, economic stagnation and persecution; these are then met by the pull factors. Pull factors which consist of better welfare systems, employment and higher wages, attract those who are suffering social injustice or a low quality of life. The push and pull factors are considered to be variables which can clearly explain and identify how international migration flows originate and the reasons behind every flow.¹ However, as mentioned before these are variables and one cannot assume that the push factors are common for each migrating case. However there are some factors which are common to almost all cases and these will be analysed through specific case studies as per the sections following. The author will focus on three particular variables; political, economic and ecological.

¹ Valazquez (2000), *Approaches to the Study of International Migration*, Estudios Fronterizos, p.3

Wars and Persecution; Libya and Syria Case Studies

One of the most common causes of irregular migration into the European Union in the 21st century is social unrest which sometimes leads to persecution. Civil wars and persecution have been an eminent factor in world politics after the Arab Spring started in 2011 and as a consequence Europe has experienced massive waves of migrants coming from regions of conflict. Countries which are transiting from a civil war such as Libya and Egypt, as well as countries which are still undergoing political revolutions, such as Syria, have seen and are seeing a considerable amount of outflowing nationals.

The International Organization of Migration estimated that in 2011 around 422,912 Libyan nationals fled Libya². The impact of this can be felt when one is informed that pre-revolution the number of Libyan nationals which resided outside of Libya amounted to 100,565, most of who were businessmen and students which only resided in foreign countries temporarily³. Only 3.6% fled to EU Member States according to the statistic provided by the Migration Policy Centre, the rest of those who fled Libya sought refuge in either Egypt or Tunisia. When it comes to Syria, it is estimated that about 1,643,747 Syrian nationals have fled their state due to the Syrian Civil War. 8.0% of that number is currently seeking refuge in the European Union. It is completely understandable that people want to move far away from danger, and so citizens of a country undergoing a revolution or a civil war scenario would want to immigrate to a place safer for their being and their families' lives.

North Africa in general demonstrates lack of democracy and political stability. It is inevitable that with these two deficiencies combined; lack of human rights is present. Those who want to get out of this situation are making use of the inefficient border control and are setting out for irregular emigration in hope of better security and stability in the receiving end.⁴ It is the high level of governance and political

² MPC Team (2013), Migration profile: Libya, p. 2

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dr. Susanne Schmid (2012), Migration Potential from North Africa to Europe, p. 5

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stability that is attracting irregular emigrants into the European Union. (See fig 1.3) The European union in conjunction with other world organizations are pursuing intervention in a non-intervening way. Implementation of sanctions and democratization plans are ways of not intervening militarily yet still attaining results. A start of a democratization process of the country in question such as Libya, would give hope to the residents and would also quiet things down. This in turn would reduce the numbers of irregular entries into the European Union through the Mediterranean. Bringing stability into these countries and simulating European governance would make the political push factor diminish from the state in concern.

The European Union, being a highly developed and democratized union offers the looked-for level of human rights and a promise of a better life, with the security of private property, work opportunities and peaceful streets. This contrasts greatly with the current North African States and other dictatorial states such as Syria which exhibit prospects of terrorist attacks, famine and shooting. Lack of development and democratic governance would not only lead to political turmoil but it would also effect heavily potential investment in the country, meaning it would affect its economic situation.

Financial Insecurity; Case study of Eritrea

States which are experiencing difficulties in sustaining their economy are being unsuccessful in supplying the citizens with opportunities to better their financial status and their standards of living. For the main part of it, economic push and pull factors of irregular migration are the same as the economic push and pull factors of regular migration. The movement is from countries with a low socio-economic status to a country with a higher socio-economic level. This is due to the fact that a higher level of development translates into economic opportunities and so a better quality of life.⁵

Statistics on Eritrea estimate that an average Eritrean's GNI per capita is of \$0,531⁶. Due to lack of data its Multidimensional Poverty Index could not be calculated, however one can imagine the standard of living given that the its HDI value is that of 0.351⁷. This contrasts greatly with European countries such as Italy which has an HDI value of 0.881 as of 2012⁸ and a GNI per capita of \$ 35,320.00 as of 2011⁹. As Branko Milanovic in his article in "The Globalist" mentions, "Large gaps in mean incomes and wages are obviously a magnet for migration."¹⁰ High consumption and high wages attract those who are in need of them.

Eritrea's GDP as a percentage of world total is that of 0.01%¹¹ with comparison to one of the European Union Member States such as Germany which

⁵ The Causes of Illegal Immigration—Part II (2010), The Reasoned Society, at <http://thoughtdigest.wordpress.com/2010/07/16/the-causes-of-illegal-immigration-part-ii/>, (viewed on 12.05.2014)

⁶ Human Development Report (2013); Eritrea; p.2

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Italy, Human Development Index, at <http://countryeconomy.com/hdi/italy> (viewed on 13.05.2014)

⁹ Italy – GNI per Capita, at <http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/italy/gni-per-capita> (viewed on 13.05.2014)

¹⁰ Branko Milanovic (2013), 'The Economic Causes of Migration', The Globalist, at <http://www.theglobalist.com/economic-causes-migration/>, (viewed on 13.05.2014)

¹¹ Global Finance; Eritrea; viewed at <http://www.gfmag.com/global-data/country-data/eritrea-gdp-country-report>, (viewed on 13.05.2014)

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has a percentage of the world total GDP of 3.95% as of 2010¹². Europe, offers a higher standard of living than the majority of North African countries. Once the irregular migrants enter into the labour market, they would find out that they are being paid much more for the same work they used to do in their own country. Even though many a time the amount paid would be less than the amount paid to a European citizen. Social benefits are another crucial aspect of economic migration. The welfare system in many European countries entitles refugees and other migrants to benefits. This would make it easy on the migrants who fail to find a job or have been laid off work. This maximizes the economic benefits and so it is important when mentioning financial security. Furthermore therein industrialized countries there is a level of high consumption, something which is not frequently found in undeveloped or developing countries, or even countries which are governed under a dictatorial regime and the individuals' intake is heavily regulated.

¹² Global Finance; Eritrea; viewed at <http://www.gfmag.com/global-data/country-data/germany-gdp-country-report>, (viewed on 13.05.2014)

Conclusion

This report focused mainly on two of the many push and pull factors. These were the political and economic factors. In each case study information as well reasons were given for each territory as well as for the push and pull criteria. In summary, the reader can appreciate that each movement is a movement by people who have been let down by their state.

When one takes into consideration the above case studies and the reasons and theory for each one, it will become clear that the rising irregular entries are not the most devastating incidents that a country can experience. Therefore, in the author's opinion countries should help each other rise from political dysfunction and economic stagnation by investing in their modernization, industrialization and democratization. In return the developed states would get back the profits from their investments since the demand is highly evident. In addition to this, the irregular entries would drop due to the diminishing of the all –important push factors that made emigration attractive in the first place.

Implementing human rights in each state's constitution by international law would be an important step in safeguarding democracy and equality, not only in freedom of speech but also in wages. Migrants are in constantly in dire search of security, being residential, economic and political. This is a trait in human nature, which belongs to the instinct of survival and it is quite lucid why migrants gravitate to states, like the European Union, which can offer this stability for the young adults and families that travel in tightly packed boats across the Mediterranean. This is not only shocking but it is also an eye opener of what corruption, power and money can do to a state.

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Illustrations

Figure 1.1

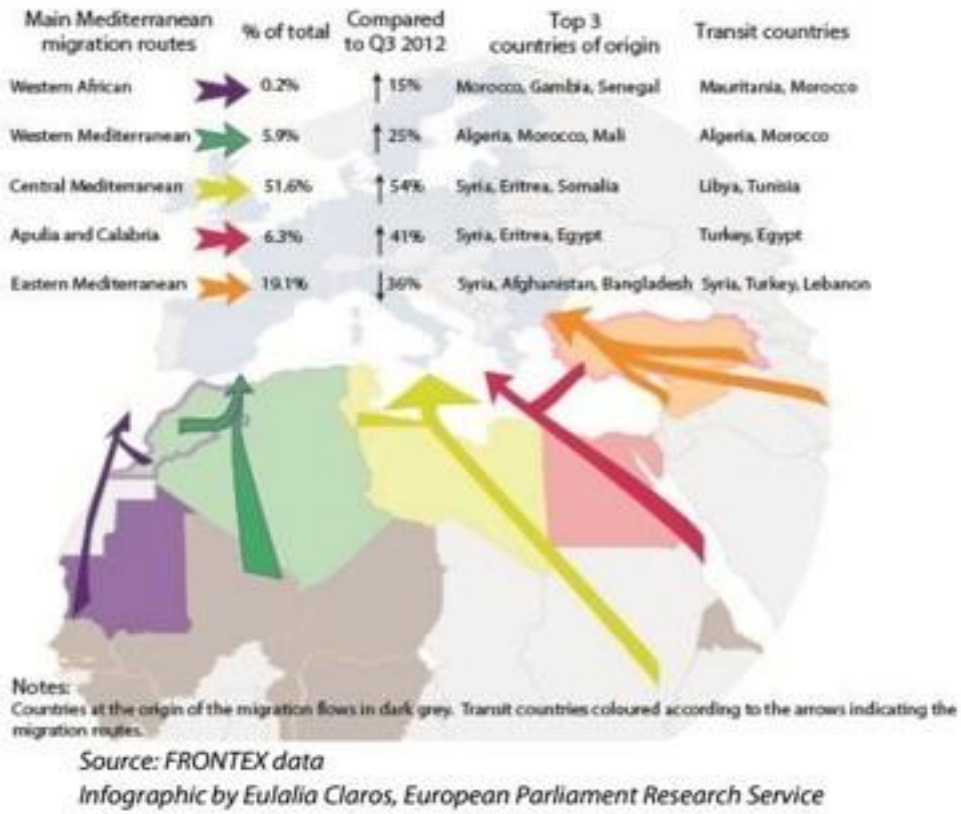


Figure 1.2

What are the push and pull factors that trigger migration into the European Union?

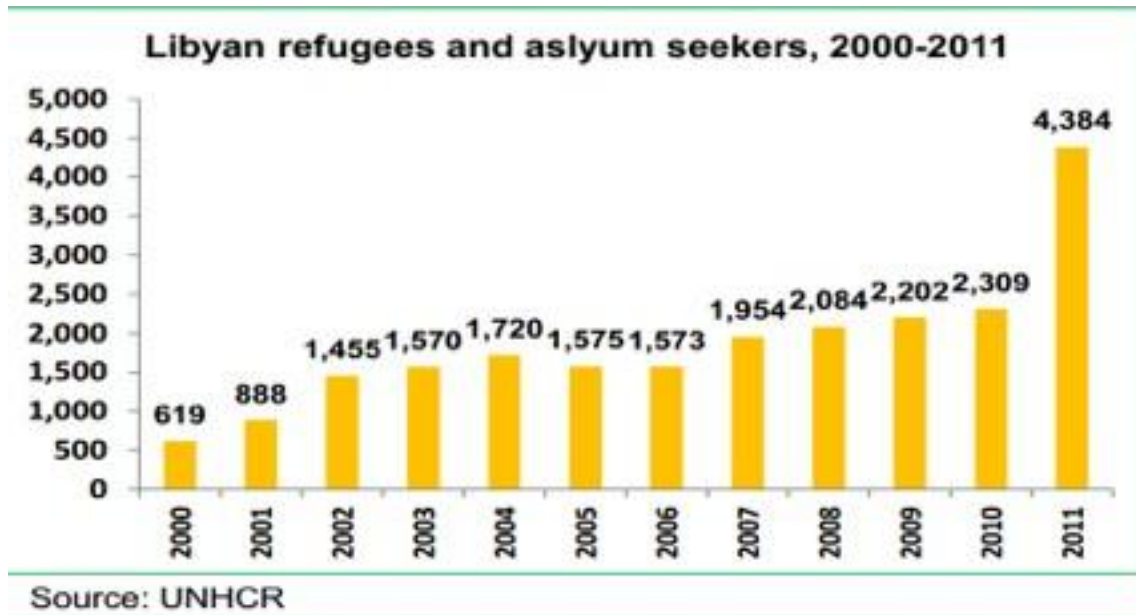


Figure 1.3

Push-factors Countries of origin	➔	Migrants	←	Pull-factors Countries of destination
↓		Structure of differences in life chances		↓
Population growth, young age structure		← 1. Demographic factors and social infrastructure →		Stable population, population decline, demographic ageing
Inadequate educational institutions, medicare and social security				Welfare state benefits, educational institutions, medicare, social security
Unemployment, low wages		← 2. Economic factors →		Labour demand, high wages
Poverty, low consumption and living standard				Welfare, high consumption and living standard
Dictatorships, shadow democracy, bad governance, political upheaval		← 3. Political factors →		Democracy, rule of law, pluralism, political stability
Conflict, (civil)war, terrorism, human rights violation, oppression of minorities				Peace, security, protection of human and civil rights, protection of minorities
Ecologic disaster, desertification, lack of natural resources, water shortage, soil erosion, lack of environmental policy		← 4. Ecological factors →		Better environment, environmental policy, protection of natural resources and environmental protection
↓		Migrant networks		↓
Decisions of the family or the clan		← 5. Migrant flows and migrant stocks →		Diaspora, ethnic community
Information flows, media, transferred picture of country of origin				Information flows, media, transferred picture of destination country
Possibilities of (ir)regular immigration, routes of trafficking				Possibilities of (ir)regular immigration (right of residence)

Source; Paper by Dr. Schmid (2012), Migration Potential from North Africa to Europe

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