

## Internal and international migration of Tunisians. Characteristics, factors and repercussions

Received date: 19/04/2023 Accepted date:10/06/2023 Published date: 20/06/2023

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### Abstract:

The aim of this article is, firstly, to analyze migration (internal and international) in Tunisia, its main characteristics, its determinants and its effects. In the first part, we will analyze the main characteristics of internal migration in Tunisia, its factors (determinants), its relationship with regional development and its effects (in particular its demographic repercussions).

In the second part, the interest will be focused on international migration, its evolution, its main characteristics (in particular the migration of skills) and its various effects and repercussions (among others, the importance of financial transfers from Tunisians abroad). Finally, the third part will focus on the perception of migration by the population surveyed.

**Keywords:** International migration; Internal migration; development; Migratory balance; financial transfers.

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## 1. Introduction:

In previous research, we have shown that despite the significant improvement in human development indicators in all regions in Tunisia, regional disparities remain considerable and unequal regional development remains thorny, reflecting an imbalance threatening the future of the country with “the Tunisian coast and desert” (Bousnina A., 2012). But the meticulous and in-depth study of development indicators shows the importance of local inequalities, not only at the inter-regional level but also and above all at the intra-regional level and within the most developed governorates of the country, which shows the primacy of local issues (Bousnina A., 2019).

In this regard, the unequal regional and local development has generated a concentration of the population on the eastern side to the detriment of the interior regions, where urbanization and the level of human development are still low compared to the coast. In addition, the socio-economic imbalance has induced a demographic imbalance which manifests itself through human concentration and above all internal migration (towards the most developed regions which are becoming very attractive unlike the repulsive "underdeveloped" regions) *and also the international migration of young Tunisians, in particular towards Europe*. This is what we will focus on in this article, focusing on the characteristics of migration and its relationship with development in Tunisia.

Our main **hypothesis** is as follows: the migration of Tunisians, at the internal level but also and above all at the international level, is essentially determined by inequalities and development difficulties. This migration (especially international migration) can have very important effects on development in Tunisia (notably thanks to financial transfers).

### 1. Internal migration in Tunisia

The negative demographic growth recorded in some governorates (namely the North-West, notably Le Kef and Siliana) - unlike the positive balance in the coastal regions - can be determined by two factors: fertility and internal migration. Given the insignificant differences in natural population growth (fertility and mortality), interregional gaps and uneven population growth can be determined by migration dynamics and rural exodus.

### **1.1. Some characteristics of internal migration in Tunisia**

Internal migration has affected all regions of the country without exception. It has increased considerably since independence, and after a relative decline over the past two decades, it has experienced a further significant increase since the number of trips between governorates exceeded, for example, between 1999 and 2004, 444 thousand with an average of nearly 89,000 people annually against only an average of 58.6,000 during the period 1987-1994 (and 55,000 between 1979 and 1984), i.e. a percentage of 0.9% of the entire population in 2004 (against a proportion of 0.66% in 1994 and 0.78% in 1984). The same trend was recorded in 2014, with a number of trips that exceeded 430,000 people between 2009 and 2014 (nearly 86,000 on average annually).

As for the regional differentiation of the migratory balance, we notice the same geographical cleavage in favor of the "favored" coastal regions and to the detriment of the "disadvantaged" inland regions, although we have recorded a certain transformation of the migratory structure and origin and destination of migrants. Indeed, the

role of the Capital was preponderant since it attracted the overwhelming majority of internal migrants often from southern regions (before 1956) and especially from the North which became - after independence - the main repulsive zone.

Since the end of the 1960s, the role of the District of Tunis has been in sharp decline with the extension of the eastern attraction zone to a large part of the eastern seaboard (Jedidi M., 1994, p.11). For example, the Capital attracted more than 4/5 of migrants between 1956 and 1966 (191,820 out of 238,980 people) while it only attracted less than 54% of inter-governorate mobility during the period 1970-1989 (101,870 out of 191,820 people); this proportion will fall further since it was less than 45% in 1999-2004. Of course, this regression of the place of the Capital will benefit the other coastal governorates, in particular Sousse and Monastir (whose net migration rose from 6,200 in 1966 to nearly 40,000 in 2004 and more than 30,000 in 2014) and in the Center East in general, which saw its balance increase from 18,000 in 1984-1994 to nearly 50,000 in 2004 (nearly 40,000 in 2014).

In this regard, and contrary to the observation of several researchers, internal migration and rural exodus are not tending to decrease but are increasing, and the "depopulation" of the interior regions is likely to worsen any further. This is evidenced by the evolution of net migration from the North-West, the loss of which fell by more than half, going from -36,620 in 1980-1984 to -18,093 people in 1984-1989, but which experienced a spectacular increase from 1989



(-35900 in 1989-1994) and especially during the last decade with a significant loss of -45300 people. The decline is even more remarkable for the Center West, whose loss has more than doubled in such a short period of time, going from less than 24,000 to -52,500 between the last two censuses.

It should be noted, in this respect, that all the interior governorates - without exception - have a negative net migration while most of the coastal governorates have a positive balance; the recent evolution of the geographical distribution of migrants confirms this regional divide and the aggravation of this territorial dichotomy. Between 1994 and 2004, for example, the (positive) migratory balance of the Sahel was multiplied by 3 while that of the governorates of the Center West experienced a substantial drop, aggravating the loss which doubled in Kairouan and Kasserine and which almost tripled in Sidi Bouzid (Bousnina A., 2015).

Furthermore, the data from a few surveys (in particular that of 2012) confirm the repulsive nature of the inland regions and the attractive nature of the coastal regions, and for only one year (between May 2011 and May 2012), the Centre-West and the North -West recorded a negative net migration of -55,853. Similarly, the 2014 GPHC shows that these two regions (CW and NW) recorded a negative migratory balance of more than 82,000 between 2009 and 2014, with a number of outgoing people that exceeded 123,000 people.

Apart from nuances, we have witnessed since independence "a divergent evolution, that of the coast towards an increased dynamic despite the continuous crisis of certain spaces or the shortness of breath (Gabes, Mahdia) and that of the interior towards a continuous decline despite the limited dynamism of certain spaces" (Belhedi A., 1992, p.172).

Thus, we can notice the existence of two large groups, one very attractive and the other very repulsive and which are at the antipodes of each other: the Capital and the Center East on one side and the Center West and North West on the other side.

Table 1. Net migration by region between 1987 and 2014 (in thousands)

Région	1987-1994	1999-2004	2009-2014
DT	44.8	57.3	47.7
NE	-0.2	3.4	5.7
NW	<b>-35.9</b>	<b>-42.3</b>	<b>-38.1</b>
CE	18.6	47.7	37.4
CW	<b>-23.9</b>	<b>-53.9</b>	<b>-44.3</b>
SE	-2.7	-2.1	-1.9
SW	-3.6	-10.0	-6.5

NIS: National Institute of Statistics; GPHC: General Population and Housing Census.

This regional classification (which confirms the unequal regional and local development) is attested by the differentiation of the migratory balance by governorate, according to the statistics of the last GPHC of 2014; for example:

- in the District of Tunis, thanks to the various development indicators of the governorate of Ariana (which is one of the most developed in the country), the region is generally attractive and the migratory balance is positive in most delegations (40,087, with an incoming workforce of around 60,000 people). Like the governorate of Ariana,



the region of Ben Arous recorded a positive migratory balance of 27,000, this balance concerns the majority of the delegations and the number of entrants exceeds 48,000 individuals. For Manouba, the governorate is relatively attractive, with a positive balance of 8,468 and an incoming workforce of 22,000 people (compared to an outgoing number of 14,000 individuals).

- for the North-East, the development indices are relatively satisfactory in Nabeul, which explains the attractive nature of the governorate, recording a positive migratory balance of nearly 13,000, with a number of newcomers exceeding 29,000 people. It should be noted that the migratory balance in Bizerte often depends on the delegation and its developmental situation, that's why this balance is negative in certain communes precisely, namely Sedjnane, Djoumine, Mateur, Ghezalla and Menzel Bourguiba. In the governorate as a whole, the balance is negative (-6,384) with a number of leavers of more than 15,000 people.

- for the North-West, the developmental situation explains the repulsive nature of the region, since the data from the last GPHC show a negative migratory balance from Béja (-7,964) and this for almost all the delegations, with a number of outgoing around 14 thousand people. Like Béja, the repulsive nature of the region explains the negative migratory balance of Jendouba which exceeds -12,782 and which concerns almost all the delegations, with a number of outgoing people of around 18,000 people. With the development indicators in Kef, one cannot be surprised at the repulsive nature of the region, with



a migratory balance of -7,898 and a number of outgoing people of 14,000 people. Finally, and like all the governorates of the North-West (and the Center-West), the migratory balance of Siliana is negative with -9,528 and a number of outgoing people of more than 14,000 people.

- for the Centre-East: in Sousse, the various development indicators remain, in most cases, satisfactory, which explains the attractiveness of the region which records a positive migratory balance of more than 19 thousand with a number of incoming which exceeds 36 thousand people. For Monastir, we can expect a significant attractiveness of the region, with a positive migratory balance for almost all the delegations (the balance is 11,859 according to the GPHC of 2014) and a number of incoming which is around 25 thousand people. On the other hand, development indicators explain the repulsive nature of the governorate of Mahdia, which is the only region of the Sahel to record a negative migratory balance (-3,127) with a number of outgoing people that exceeds 12,000 people. As for Sfax, the migratory balance is slightly positive in the whole of the governorate of Sfax, with a balance of more than 9 thousand and a number of incoming which exceeds 29 thousand people.

- concerning the Centre-West: with the developmental situation, we can only find a negative migratory balance in the governorate of Kairouan (-22,418) which reflects the repulsive nature of the region, with a fairly large number of out-migrants exceeding 30 thousand people. Like Kairouan (and all the interior regions), the migratory





balance in Kasserine is negative in almost all the delegations, repellent par excellence, with a balance of -12,837 and a number of outgoing people of more than 18 thousand people. Like Kairouan and Kasserine, the region of Sidi Bouzid is repulsive with a negative migratory balance exceeding -9,138 (which concerns almost all the delegations) and a number of outgoing people exceeding 16,000 people.

- for the South-East: the migratory balance is slightly negative in Gabes (-2,173), with certain attractive delegations (Gabes Sud) and others repulsive (Gabes Ville), the number of incoming and outgoing being relatively close (respectively 12 thousand and 14 thousand). As for the migratory balance in the governorate of Médenine, it differs markedly according to the delegation concerned (which explains the relative balance between incoming and outgoing), with a negative balance in Ben Guerdane and Beni Khadech and a certain attractiveness in Djerba Houmet Souk and Djerba Midoun which recorded a positive balance of nearly 4 thousand people.

- at the South West : the migratory balance is negative in most of the Gafsa delegations, this balance is -5,746 with a fairly high number of outgoing people, around 14,000 people. It should also be noted that because of the low migratory mobility, the balance of the governorate of Tozeur is very low (-324), and we find a certain balance between the number of outgoing and the number of incoming (the two being of nearly 4,000 individuals). Like the governorate of Tozeur, and taking into account the low mobility of the population, the balance in Kebili

is also very low (-463), and there is a relative balance between outgoing and incoming.

## 1.2. Determinants and effects of internal migration

After having analyzed - very briefly - the problem of migration from a quantitative point of view (through migratory flows), we will focus our interest in this paragraph on the qualitative aspect and especially on the articulation between migration and regional development, this is all the more important since the displacement of the population has been considered as one of the repercussions of uneven development and since it has been assumed, subsequently, that migration is determined by development.

First, it should be emphasized that most of the repulsive interior governorates are predominantly rural and agricultural regions, and that the migratory movement is assimilated in the majority of cases to a rural exodus. The latter is thus determined by a socio-economic dynamic inherent in the crisis of the rural world and the peasantry, a crisis which is itself determined by the failure of the economic and developmental model. According to A. Bedoui, it is a model of dependent accumulation which has resulted (with a view to acceptable profitability for capital) in the extensive submission of the rural world and particularly of agriculture to the demands specific to this type of capital; this model (which excludes the peasantry) has generated a deterioration in the terms of trade between agriculture and industry and a deterioration in the purchasing power of the peasantry, and in particular of the majority of the least well-off peasants who find

themselves forced to flee the agricultural sector in search of wage employment in urban centers (Bedoui A., 1994, pp.27-30).

Despite the search for the regionalization of space and a more egalitarian spatial allocation of resources, and despite the tendency for the attraction capacity of some urban centers to run out of steam, in particular from the 1980s (especially with increase in agricultural prices and the implementation of numerous rural and regional development programs), the issue of rural exodus and the "depopulation" of inland regions has not yet been resolved, and this especially since the indicators show a relative decline in the rural population and in the predominantly agricultural and rural regions (in particular the Center West and the North West), because the taking into account of the unequal development by the public authorities has made late and in a "conjectural" manner, hence "the structural delay which characterizes the rural environment compared to the urban environment both in terms of infrastructure and equipment and in terms of social advancement [to this use] of an intervention a posteriori after the development of a spatial and socio-economic dynamic for the benefit of coastal urban areas" (Gdoura M. et Sahnoun A., 1994, pp.106-107).

Moreover, the articulation between migration and development can be confirmed by numerous surveys which have tried to show that internal migration is a direct consequence of unequal development. For example, the results of the IREP survey (1994) showed that working life (looking for work or improving one's current job) is the

cause of nearly 50% of displacements and that the improvement of living conditions and the “promotion of migrants” explain a third of migrations; and it is above all the problem of employment which is decisive in this regard, because the administrative centralization and the concentration of jobs push a very large proportion of young people - especially graduates - to leave their region, because employment (in accordance to their qualification) is still lacking (Bousnina A., 2012, pp.149-153).

The data from the various GPHC are no exception to this rule, since work is the origin of the migration (in 2004 for example) of more than 117,000 people, i.e. in relative terms more than 28% of the movements, whereas family support (42.8% of trips) is considered an indirect factor of migration, since it is often determined by socio-economic reasons such as improving income or looking for work, and we thus find that economic factors form the main motivations for departures.

Table2. The factors of internal migration

1991		2004	
Factor	%	Factor	%
Job seeking	24,7	Job	26,4
Work transfer	21,6	Acquiring housing	3,4
Acquiring housing	15,4	Improvement of housing conditions	4,8
Family cause	14,7	Marriage	8,3
New project	1	going with the family	42,8
Study of children – health	4,2	Studies	11,4
Retirement	2	Other causes	2,9
Other causes	16,4	Total	100
Total	100		

Source : IREP (1994), NIS (GPHC 2004)

Thus, migration is determined by a dialectic between **push factors** and **pull factors** resulting from the unequal distribution of resources



and socio-economic dynamism or from unequal regional development: "The migratory dynamic is more sensitive to the notion of gap and gradient than to that of level reached, which means that the accusation of gaps between regions, environments or sectors necessarily generates migratory transfers even if the general level of disadvantaged regions or rural areas is much improved" (Belhedi A., 1996, p.217).

This blocking of development has generated undeniable demographic repercussions, in particular the "depopulation" of certain delegations where the population growth rate is not only stable but is even negative (between the two censuses of 2004 and 2014, the population growth in Kef is of -0.62), with an equally negative net migration of -7898 (between 2009 and 2014). The importance of rural exodus and depopulation in these localities and the low attendance of these municipalities allow us "to qualify them as *empty centers*, these municipalities do not represent central places in their local spaces despite the diversity of the level of 'equipment and services, which does not allow them to play a role of supervision and territorial command and articulation in a global system" (Mhidhi N., 1998, p.188).

This situation of "landlockedness" and underdevelopment has harmful **demographic effects**, in particular depopulation and rural exodus:

-depopulation is evidenced by a negative growth rate in all the governorates of the North-West (-0.05 in Béja, -0.37 in Jendouba, -0.62 in Kef and -0.48 in Siliana)

-the displacement of the population is attested by a still negative migratory balance reflecting the repulsive nature of the region; this balance is -35 thousand between 2009 and 2014 (in thousands: -7.9 in Béja; -12.7 in Jendouba; -7.9 in Kef and -9.5 in Siliana).

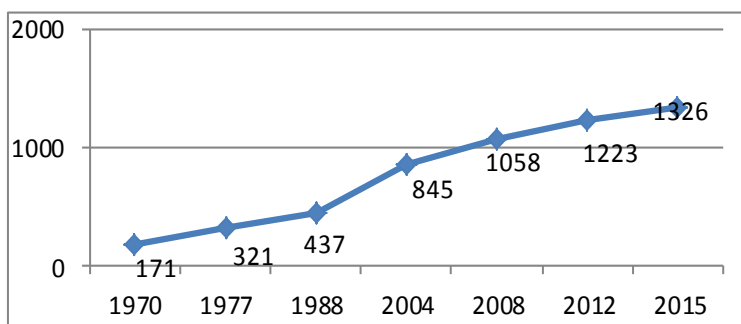
This crisis in the North-West, and rural regions in general (a crisis which is at the origin of significant migratory flows which sometimes generate a stagnation, even a reduction in the population) is inherent in many structural causes which explain the depopulation of this region. These include: the concentration of ownership, the low diversification of agriculture, the deterioration of income in agriculture, the mechanization of this sector (with the non-diversification) which has reduced the need for labor (the regression of working days available in the countryside of the region), mechanization by way of hire which generated a relationship of exploitation and domination and which accelerated the rhythm of destruction of the balance of the family economy, the absence of structural transformations of compensation (the weakness of industrial and tertiary investments)... (Dimassi H. et Zaiem M.H, 1982, pp.16-32).

## **2. International migration**

### **2.1. Some characteristics of international migration of Tunisians**

Like internal migration, international migration plays a fundamental role in the “regulation” of Tunisia's demography. In 2014, the number of Tunisians residing abroad was estimated at 1,282,000 people (including 87% residing in Europe), i.e. more than 11.6% of the 11,012,000 in the country in 2014, which reflects the importance of emigration in Tunisia. The evolution of migratory flows shows the rapid increase in the number of Tunisians abroad, since this number increased from 171,000 in 1970 to 1,326,000 in 2015, as shown in the following graph:

Graphic 1. Evolution of the number of Tunisians residing abroad in thousands (1970-2015)



Source: OTA (Office of Tunisians Abroad)

The analysis of the distribution of Tunisians abroad shows that more than 84% of Tunisian expatriates reside in Europe, mainly in France (54.7%), Italy (15.4%) and Germany (7.1 %). The proportion of the Arab world is 12.3% (especially in Libya: 5.6%) and that of America is nearly 3%.

Table 3. The distribution of Tunisians abroad by major region between 2002 and 2012

Year	Europe	Maghreb	Arab countries	Africa	Asia	America and Australia	Total
2002	668173	71201	31886	955	585	21080	793880
2003	701660	78110	38816	1149	669	22800	843204
2004	738582	85628	34115	1054	832	24655	884866
2005	779161	90735	38138	1236	976	23698	933944
2006	815483	90946	39689	1277	1066	25650	973140
2007	846803	98109	44051	754	1134	26827	1018173
2008	873947	102930	50326	1057	1246	28291	1057797
2009	911378	106835	47879	1279	1123	29718	1098212
2010	958606	110038	52252	1495	1020	32223	1155634
2012	1032412	91584	59616	2143	1383	36075	1223213

Source: OTA (Office of Tunisians Abroad)

For OECD countries, we note the high concentration of emigrants in European countries, particularly France and Italy, which attract (in 2016) nearly 78% of Tunisians (aged 15 and over) residing in these country, as shown in the following table:

Table 4. Main countries of destination of Tunisian emigrants (aged 15 and over) in OECD countries in 2016

Country	Number
France	384 900
Italy	103 600
Germany	31 600
Canada	22 900
Belgium	15 100
Swiss	10 300
USA	10 000
United Kingdom	7 100
Sweden	5 000
Total OECD	630 000

Source: OECD (2018), Talent Abroad. A review of Tunisian emigrants, OECD Edition, Paris, 2018



During the last decades, we must note the importance of the brain drain and the migration of Tunisian skills abroad. There is even talk of a **“brain and skills drain”**:

“The note drawn up by the Ibn-Khaldoun forum displays the latest figures from the report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development **evaluating the number of Tunisian executives in the fields of medicine, engineering, computer and higher education who settled abroad between 2011 and 2018 to 95,000 people, 84% of whom are in Europe**” (Hizaoui, N., 2020).

Table 5. Distribution of Tunisian Skills Abroad for a few specialties by host country in 2011

Speciality	Distribution by specialty
Teaching and scientific research	2083
Architecture	1938
Medicine and pharmacy	893
Computer science	380
Attorney	89
Businessmen	1105
Other specialties	1860
Total	8343
Country	Distribution by host country
Europe	4193
America - Canada - Brazil	1609
Arab countries	1226
Africa	136
Asia	68
Australia	11
Total	7243

Source: OTA (Office of Tunisians Abroad)

The figures in this table are for 2011, but since then there has been a considerable increase in the migration of skills.

According to a recently published OECD report, **the number of Tunisian emigrants with a higher level of education (in 2016), in**

**OECD countries alone, represents more than 140 thousand people** (nearly 24% of emigrants Tunisians in the OECD). In terms of evolution, in 2000/2001, only 71,000 Tunisian emigrants (living in OECD countries) had a high level of education. In 2015/2016, they were more than double (143 thousand); during this period, their share in total Tunisian emigrants increased from 16% to 24%. At the same time, the share of Tunisian emigrants with a low level of education fell from 56% to 47% (OCDE, 2018, pp.89-92).

This increase in the level of education is particularly marked for women. Within the Tunisian diaspora in OECD countries, the average level of education of women increased more rapidly than that of men between 2000 and 2016 (in 2016, 24% of them had a higher education diploma compared to 14 % in 2000) while the proportion of higher education graduates among men increased from 18% to 24% (the number of emigrants with higher education qualifications thus increased from 28,000 to more than 48,000) (Ibid, p.94).

According to the data in this report, Tunisian emigrants are more and more numerous in certain specific qualified professions, Tunisian emigrants are more represented than all emigrants (in OECD countries) in certain highly qualified professions (the directorships, intellectual and scientific professions, etc.). For example, doctors and nurses are particularly numerous to migrate and are (proportionally) more numerous compared to emigrants from the North African region. In 2011, one in five doctors and 4% of nurses practiced their profession in an OECD country. In 2000/2001, these expatriation rates



were 15% and 2% respectively. In 2011, more than 3200 doctors and 1500 nurses were in OECD countries. **In 2016, nearly 4000 doctors practiced in OECD countries**, which represents an emigration rate of nearly 22% for this profession (the same is true for teachers who are strongly represented among Tunisian emigrants, in 2011, about 3% of Tunisian teachers lived in OECD countries) (Ibid, pp.126-127).

## **2.2. Effects and repercussions of international migration**

The study of the evolution of **financial transfers** from Tunisians abroad shows that these transfers amounted in 2010 to 2904 million dinars (including 78% in cash). Compared to 1986, this transferred income is ten times much greater. We also note that remittances in cash increased from 245 million dinars in 1986 to 2284 MD in 2010. Per person, we note that the income transferred by each Tunisian emigrant during the period 1997-2010 represents an average of 1912 dinars, which corresponds to 48% of the average income in Tunisia (or GDP per capita, evaluated at an average of 3989 dinars between 1997 and 2010). This development shows the importance of the economic and financial contribution of Tunisians residing abroad (Yedes I., 2012, pp.120-125).

From a macroeconomic point of view, the contributions of emigration play a fundamental role. Transfers or “salary savings” repatriated by TLA (Tunisians living abroad) amounted to 2436 MTD in 2008 (i.e. the equivalent of 1.315 billion euros or 1.941 billion US\$), up 10.8% compared to 2007, ie a slight improvement compared to a year earlier (+9.4% in 2006/2007). Thus, the Central Bank of

Tunisia recognizes in transfers the merit of having contributed to sustaining general growth and especially that of the average per capita income, which increased from 8.3% in 2007 to 8.8% in 2008, to stand at 4832 TND (i.e. approximately 3926 US\$), against 4400 TND in 2007. Consequently, transfers from SUT represented in 2008: 5% of GDP (in 2007 and 2008); 71.8% of tourist receipts; 71.8% of FDI, against 106.1% in 2007 (i.e. transfers were 6.1% higher than FDI for this last year); 21.8% of national savings (10,068 MTD).

These contributions from emigration play an increasingly decisive role in preserving a minimum balance in terms of the country's external payments. Over the past decade, transfers from labor savings abroad alone covered about 2/3 of the country's current account deficit (excluding labor income); whereas until the mid-1990s, this rate rarely exceeded 50% (Boubakri H., 2010, p.67).

At the regional level, a closer reading (at the level of the governorates) makes it possible to identify the most attractive areas for postal transfers, where the governorate of Tunis stands out clearly with, alone, 17.6% of postal transfers, followed by six governorates, all coastal (Medenine, Nabeul, Sousse, Bizerte, Ben Arous and Mahdia) with shares ranging from 6 to 7.5% each. The 11 governorates that receive the lowest amounts (with less than 3% of transfers each) are all located in the interior, far from the eastern coastline with metropolitan dimensions (Ibid, p.74).

Thus, the contribution of the Tunisian diaspora abroad remains, therefore, very important for Tunisia. According to the recent



indicators provided by the BCT, and in this difficult economic context of the country, the income from money transfers made by the Tunisian diaspora abroad constituted an unexpected lever for Tunisia. **Until October 2020, these revenues reached 4.69 billion dinars**, which is much higher than the revenues generated by the tourism sector until October 2020, which barely reached 1.8 billion dinars. In a debate organized by the Ibn-Khaldoun Forum for Development, Mohamed Malouch, consultant at Deloitte and former president of Tunisian-American Young Professionals (TAYP), specifies that the transfers of Tunisians residing abroad remain significant, totaling, during the period **2012-2018, nearly 24.6 billion dinars**, an amount exceeding by more than 50% the flow of foreign investments (17.7 billion dinars) and making it possible to cover almost a quarter of the trade balance deficit (Hizaoui N. , 2020).

In short, by analyzing **the impact of emigration**, we can speak, like several researchers, of gains and losses:

- emigration has constituted throughout the contemporary history of Tunisia an important regulator of its employment market, and it is the **source of transfers of funds** which allow it to enjoy serious advantages: significant resources in currencies providing it with an import capacity giving it access to capital goods and the most advanced consumer goods and services, sources of income contributing to the improvement of general well-being, particularly that of low- and middle-income populations, and a significant contribution to the investment. Moreover, the density of the links of a

Tunisian community deployed on the scale of all the major economic centers of the world with its country of origin is a fundamental source of wealth, information and connection with economic and cultural production

- over the past two decades, however, a "**brain drain**" is real: fewer and fewer students who successfully complete their engineering studies abroad return to Tunisia and hundreds of doctors leave their country each year. Rare are the graduates of the great schools who return. The issue of developing these skills in the service of the development of their country of origin is becoming more and more acute (Ben Romdhane M., 2011, pp.166-167).

### **3. Perception of migration by the population**

The negative perception and pessimism of a large proportion of respondents, in particular for the different dimensions of development policy (and more particularly for certain "key sectors" such as unemployment, standard of living, socio-economic situation, etc.), explain the trend in favor of external emigration and the sending of Tunisian workers abroad.

The table below confirms this enthusiasm for leaving, since nearly 75% of respondents show their approval for the "expatriation" of Tunisian workers. Only 25% of respondents disapprove of this choice, since they consider that Tunisia needs its human resources and skills. As for the majority, favorable to emigration, they explain their choice for various reasons:

- improve their economic and financial situation

- it facilitates the reduction of unemployment
- the inability of our economy to create jobs
- have more know-how and qualifications
- improving wealth and income (and having more foreign currency for Tunisia)
- gain work experience
- learning and transfer of technology and science
- bring investments to the country
- carry out, even in part, a cultural exchange
- improvement of social status.

However, it should be noted that the proportion of people in favor of emigration decreases significantly when the choice of leaving concerns the person interviewed himself, and only 56% of the people interviewed prefer to live abroad, since a large proportion of respondents expressed their attachment to the family and their total refusal to “go into exile” far from the country (according to the terms of some).

Table 6. The attitude towards the emigration of Tunisian workers

Question: In general, are you in favor of sending Tunisian workers abroad?		
	Number	%
Yes	397	74.2
No	138	25.8
Total	535	100

Source: Personal inquiry

Table 7. The attitude towards life abroad

Question: If you had the choice, would you prefer to live abroad?		
	Number	%
Yes	301	56.3
No	234	43.7

Total	535	100
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Source: Personal inquiry

Moreover, the rural exodus and the importance of internal migration have generated an undeniable decline in the interior governorates and especially in rural regions (not only at the socio-economic level but also and above all at the demographic level).

For example, the average annual increase is much higher in eastern cities compared to inland regions. During the last decades, this increase has exceeded 2% and 1.8% respectively in the District of Tunis and the Center-East while it was less than 0.6% in the Center-West and it is even negative in the North-West (-0.36%). This denotes very clearly the repulsive nature of the interior regions, unlike the eastern facade, and we can even affirm that this divergence is worsening, because the human concentration and the demographic weight of the coastal regions are constantly increasing (Bousnina A., 2012, p.210).

The perception of the rural exodus (and of the decrease in the agricultural population) is often negative, and almost all (95%) of those questioned condemn this movement of the population. The reasons invoked to denounce this “desertion” of the countryside are very varied:

- the importance of the contribution of the agricultural population to the national wealth
- the danger of the food crisis
- an imbalance between the different economic sectors
- the risk of increased imports of agricultural products (therefore an increase in the trade balance deficit)
- the rural exodus (and consequently a multiplicity of problems in the cities) and the shortage of labor in agriculture
- the increase in unemployment in the cities
- regional imbalance
- according to some respondents, even if agriculture is a difficult job, it should be encouraged, paid for properly, and above all, help





those who remain to work the land, because this makes it possible to avoid certain "useless" imports

- according to the words of other interviewees, there will be no manpower to work in the agricultural sector, so there will be a decrease in agricultural production, and therefore this requires the use of imports and subsequently food addiction.

This degradation of demography and agricultural employment is, in reality, inherent in the crisis of the "Tunisian rural world" in general.

As previously analyzed, it should be emphasized that most of the repulsive interior governorates are predominantly rural and agricultural regions, and that the migratory movement is assimilated in the majority of cases to a rural exodus. The latter is thus determined by a socio-economic dynamic inherent in the crisis of the rural world and the peasantry, a crisis which is itself determined by the failure of the economic and developmental model.

On the other hand, regional disparities and the "geographical dichotomy" in Tunisia explain the preferences in favor of coastal regions and to the detriment of inland regions. This observation is confirmed both by the statistical data and by the analysis of the perceptions and representations of the respondents:

- the unequal regional development has generated a concentration of the population on the eastern side to the detriment of the interior regions, where urbanization and the level of human development are still low compared to the coast. According to the latest data from the NIS, the coastline - which represents only less than 30% of the area - concentrates more than 70% of the total population of the country. Two regions are characterized, in this respect, by their attractiveness; these are the North-East (including the District of Tunis) and the Center-East (the Sahel and Sfax) which only cover 17% of the surface, but which attract more than 60% of the population.

- at the level of perception, only three regions monopolize almost 80% of respondents' preferences: the District of Tunis, the North-East and the Center-East, i.e. the largest cities and the most developed and most urbanized in the country (although nearly 35% of respondents expressed, in another question of the survey, their preference for the countryside which has a particular attraction for a large number of citizens).

As noted by A.Girard and H.Bastide, “despite public protests, the movement of abandonment of the countryside, or rather the regrouping of the population in urban units, is a natural, desired and wanted by men” (Girard A. et Bastide H., 1960, p.273).

For the Tunisian case, and as carefully analyzed by H. Sethom, “the priority enjoyed by city dwellers, since independence, to the detriment of rural people, and more particularly peasants, is responsible for the persistence of the evils suffered by Tunisian rural society, namely unemployment and underemployment, poverty for the majority of rural people, rural exodus, accentuation of regional imbalance, the appearance and deepening of a chronic food deficit which has developed the country's dependence on foreign countries” (Sethom H., 1992, p.379).

### **Conclusion:**

Migration is determined by dialectic between push factors and pull factors resulting from the unequal distribution of resources and socio-economic dynamics or from unequal regional development. This concerns both internal migration and international migration.

With regard to internal migration, it has been shown that all the interior governorates - without exception - have a negative net migration while most of the coastal governorates have a positive “balance”; the recent evolution of the geographical distribution of migrants confirms this regional divide and the aggravation of this territorial dichotomy. In addition, regional disparities constitute the main factor of population mobility and migratory flows often result

from inter-regional differences, and the repulsive and attractive factors inherent in unequal regional development (between developed coastal regions and marginalized interior governorates).

On the other hand, and because of the economic crisis in general and youth unemployment in particular, *we have noted the importance of the brain drain and the migration of Tunisian skills abroad (or even the massive exodus brains and skills)*. But, despite the rapid increase in this emigration of Tunisian executives, the economic contribution of the Tunisian diaspora remains very significant and its impact on development remains undeniable, thanks, among other things, to its contribution to supporting economic growth and the increase in per capita income, also thanks to the significant resources in foreign currencies, *the non-negligible contribution of the diaspora to investment and significant financial transfers (exceeding, during the last decade, 24 billion dinars)*.

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