



*The use of political information in the media:
A study on illegal migration in the Maghreb*

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Abstract ;

In the 21st century, information has become a sculptor, meticulously crafting narratives and shaping public discourse around sensitive topics like illegal migration. Media outlets, once perceived as neutral platforms, are now wielding this chisel with increasing frequency, their strokes driven by political agendas or opportunistic exploitation of uncertainties. In the Maghreb region, this manipulation paints a stark picture: migrants morph into "enemies at the gate," threatening to invade Western nations.

But beneath the surface of sensational headlines and carefully curated narratives lies a more complex reality. This study ventures into the tangled web of internet, media, and the illegal migration crisis in the Maghreb. We dissect the media's influence on public perception, scrutinize how governments leverage social media for intrusive surveillance, and expose the opaque tactics of internet censorship employed by host countries. Yet, our journey doesn't end there. We delve into crucial questions: how does media sculpt the political landscape surrounding migration pressure? Can we predict future migration flows based on the Maghreb context? By seeking answers, we aim to build a model that not only understands the past but anticipates the future. A future where migration is viewed with empathy and understanding, not manipulated with fear and division.

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Introduction :

In today's whirlwind of change, information flows like a rapid river, shared across ever-evolving platforms. One crucial platform? Politics. Media, once a passive observer, now stands as a sculptor, shaping public perception and influencing decisions, behaviors, and reactions. Politicians, hungry for the shortest, most impactful connection, have found their weapon of choice: the media.

Gone are the days of static newspapers and one-way television broadcasts. Today's political arena thrives on the dynamic, interactive space of the internet, particularly social media. But is this power wielded responsibly? While countless studies dissect the costs and benefits of immigration, the factors swaying public opinion remain shrouded in mystery.

This study delves into the uncharted territory: the first national-level investigation into public opinion on illegal immigration, with a laser focus on the media's role. While research abounds on the European perspective, the southern shores of the Mediterranean remain largely unexplored. How do they react to the harrowing images of migrants risking their lives? Do local media tell their stories, or are people left solely to European and pan-Arab narratives? How are migrants portrayed? What impact does this have on public opinion and potential migrants? And what

about the audience's reaction to sensationalized, biased European reports? Even the stance of Maghrebi governments remains unclear.

I. Conceptual Framework:

I.1 Political information and media

In today's digital age, forget town halls and soapbox speeches. Reaching millions with a single message requires a more potent tool: the media. Politicians have traded handshakes for hashtags, realizing the immense power of these platforms to transcend time and space. Gone are the days of waiting for the evening news; with a click, citizens absorb political developments, both local and global, in real-time. Think of it as a personalized democracy, where information flows freely and instantly. But with great power comes great responsibility, as scholars like Dustmann and Preston remind us. As media shapes political communication, we must remain vigilant, analyzing its impact and ensuring its responsible use in shaping our ever-evolving democratic landscape.¹

Forget the days of cramped newspaper ads and fleeting TV soundbites! In the past, getting your political message across was like squeezing ketchup from an empty bottle. The internet and social media have swept in like a digital genie, shattering space and time limitations. Now, anyone can be a political rockstar, blasting their message to the masses with just a click. No more fighting

for inches in the paper or begging for seconds on the airwaves. The world is your megaphone, ready to amplify your voice and reach corners newspapers and TV could only dream of. But remember, with great power comes great responsibility. Use this newfound platform wisely, for the fate of democracy might just rest on your carefully crafted tweet.² Gone are the days of political messages bottlenecked by newspapers and TV time constraints! The internet and social media have revolutionized communication, tossing open the doors to direct engagement with vast, diverse audiences. Politicians can now bypass traditional gatekeepers and speak directly to the people, like a rockstar serenading millions with a single tweet. This digital megaphone amplifies voices to corners newspapers and TV could only dream of reaching.

But the stage isn't empty. It's teeming with competition, making image crafting crucial. Forget monotonous speeches and text walls – visuals rule the roost now. Political parties like savvy PR agents analyze trends and choose their media channels meticulously, understanding that the right platform can turn promises into votes. Remember, with great power comes great responsibility. Use this digital stage wisely, for the future of democracy might just depend on your next captivating post.

1.2 Illegal migration: A Multifaceted Lens on Mediterranean Migration

Traditional perspectives on Mediterranean migration often paint a one-dimensional picture, dominated by a Eurocentric security lens and focused solely on irregular African movement towards Europe. This limited view overlooks the historical complexities and multifaceted realities of migration within the region.

While acknowledging the contemporary flow of African migrants northward, it's crucial to remember the diverse emigration histories of North African countries themselves. Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria have long ties with France as a destination, while Libya has functioned as an immigration hub. Egypt, on the other hand, witnessed temporary and permanent migration patterns towards Arab nations and Anglophone countries.

The contemporary landscape adds further nuance. Southern Europe has emerged as a new destination for all North African countries except Libya, which now serves as a transit point for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. This dynamic interaction highlights the interconnectedness of the region and the multidirectional nature of migration flows.

To truly understand the impact of migration on the Mediterranean, we must move beyond singular narratives and embrace a more comprehensive approach. This calls for:

- **Decentering the Eurocentric Lens:** Shifting the focus to examine intra-regional migration patterns and their historical context.
- **Acknowledging Diversity:** Recognizing the various motivations, destinations, and experiences of migrants across the region.
- **Beyond Security:** Moving beyond securitization narratives to explore the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of migration.
- **Engaging Multiple Perspectives:** Incorporating the voices and experiences of migrants, policymakers, and local communities.

By adopting a multidisciplinary and multifaceted approach, we can unlock a deeper understanding of Mediterranean migration and its diverse impacts on individuals, communities, and the wider region. This shift in perspective can inform more effective and humane policies that address the complex realities of migration in the 21st century.

Recent migration patterns originating from and transiting North Africa paint a complex picture, far removed from simplistic, sensationalized narratives. This study delves into this dynamic landscape, illuminating major migration routes, interception data by southern European countries, and policy

responses on both sides of the Mediterranean.

Firstly, it sheds light on the "new migrations" themselves, dissecting their characteristics and motivations. We move beyond reductive labels like "illegal migrants," acknowledging the diverse experiences and aspirations driving individuals to undertake these journeys.

However, the journey is fraught with challenges. The study exposes the alarming gaps in upholding international human rights standards across North African nations. This failure fuels concerns about migrants' safety and dignity, demanding immediate attention and reform. Shifting our gaze northward, we confront the limitations of European policy. The "failed policy" label rings true as the securitization approach, previously employed by Spain and Italy, persists under the EU umbrella. This narrow perspective overlooks the fundamental realities of Africa's transformation into a major emigration continent.

Furthermore, the study critically examines the seemingly contradictory stance of European policy. While condemning North Africa's human rights abuses towards migrants and asylum seekers, it simultaneously welcomes skilled African workers³. This selective approach, prioritizing skills over basic human rights, raises ethical concerns and questions its long-term effectiveness.

Ultimately, the analysis exposes the inherent flaws in viewing migration solely through a security lens. It advocates for a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the complex interplay of social, economic, and political factors driving these movements. Only then can we formulate policies that address the root causes, promote sustainable development in Africa, and foster a more humane and equitable migration landscape across the Mediterranean.

I.3 Media Framing and Attitudes About illegal Immigration:

The Maghreb region grapples with a complex, sensitive issue: illegal immigration. In this landscape, the media plays a pivotal role in shaping public understanding. It acts as a mirror reflecting existing societal anxieties and opinions, yet simultaneously contributing to how the debate unfolds. Specifically, the way media frames the arguments becomes crucial in presenting the issue and influencing individual and collective responses.

Framing refers to the conscious selection and presentation of information, highlighting specific aspects while downplaying others. This shapes how audiences perceive the issue, influencing opinions and behaviors. While striving for objectivity is ideal, media representations invariably carry an inherent bias due to selective reporting and editorial choices.

In the case of illegal immigration, this bias frequently manifests in framing the issue primarily through a **humanitarian lens**. This highlights the tragic dimensions of the migration crisis, focusing on emotional narratives and individual suffering. While empathy is crucial, this framing often **neglects the root causes** of the phenomenon and **downplays potential security concerns**.

Critics argue that such framing represents a **strategic communication model** that intentionally creates an incomplete picture. They accuse the media of deliberately omitting key information about causes and security risks, potentially manipulating public opinion through manufactured narratives. These accusations point to various manipulative strategies potentially employed:

- **Distraction:** Shifting the focus away from root causes towards emotional narratives.
- **Problem-solution framing:** Constructing a perception of urgency for specific solutions favored by certain entities.
- **Gradual manipulation:** Incrementally building public acceptance for unpopular policies via sustained exposure to specific narratives.
- **Emotional manipulation:** Exploiting fear and other emotions to influence responses.
- **Targeting vulnerabilities:** Exerting greater influence on less informed

individuals who might be more susceptible to emotional manipulation.

However, such accusations require careful examination. While media bias undoubtedly exists, its extent and motivations are complex and require nuanced analysis. It is crucial to consider alternative perspectives and avoid overly simplistic explanations.

Ultimately, understanding the intricate relationship between media framing, public opinion, and complex issues like illegal immigration necessitates a critical, multi-faceted approach. Only through open dialogue and rigorous analysis can we navigate the complexities of information consumption and build a more informed, engaged citizenry⁴.

The popular notion of the media as a mere "mirror of society"⁵ often reflects a simplistic understanding of its complex role. While the media undoubtedly holds up a reflective surface, it's far from a neutral one. Examining this metaphor within a nuanced framework allows us to delve into the intricate relationship between media representations and the realities they purport to portray.

The claim that the media transmits an "objective reality" is easily problematized. Organizational structures, editorial biases, and production-consumption dynamics all contribute to a curated version of events, shaping our understanding of society itself. Recognizing these filters is crucial to fostering critical media literacy and

navigating the inherent subjectivity of information consumed.

Furthermore, the power dynamics between media and policy warrant closer examination. Media dependence on policy, and vice versa, creates a complex dance where narratives can be amplified or muted depending on agendas and interests. When manipulated by "populist actors," this media machinery can amplify divisive rhetoric and exacerbate social anxieties.

For instance, contemporary trends in policy reporting often give undue attention to populist voices, potentially contributing to the "irrational fear of newcomers" and the subsequent demonization of immigrants. This labeling, often couched in terms of social, economic, and security threats, fuels harmful narratives that disregard the complexities of migration and the human costs of such rhetoric.

Therefore, unraveling the media's "mirror" metaphor necessitates acknowledging its inherent subjectivity and its potential to exacerbate or mitigate societal anxieties. By deconstructing these dynamics, we empower ourselves to become more discerning consumers of information and advocate for responsible media practices that reflect the true complexities of our diverse and interconnected world.

II. The media and The threat of illegal immigration in the Maghreb:

II.1 The threat of illegal immigration in the Maghreb:

Migration, a potent elixir of social change, consistently churns up controversy, fracturing societies and questioning the very efficacy of governance. Achieving policy coherence in this domain seems like grasping smoke, as diverse winds of security concerns, economic anxieties, demographic shifts, fickle public opinion, and intricate regional and global dynamics interweave.

The recent economic maelstrom and the pervasive cloak of insecurity have propelled migration to the forefront of the international stage. Post-9/11, the "global war on terror" has tragically entangled security and migration issues, creating an inescapable Gordian knot. Further complicating matters, these events have fueled a conflation of legitimate security concerns with the challenges of migrant integration.

From the turbulent protests of the "sans papiers" in French suburbs to the extended racial tensions in Northern England, and the recent uprising in Italian detention centers, a potent cocktail of unease simmers within migrant communities. These are stark reminders that many European countries' immigration and integration policies have gone awry, inadvertently forging an even tighter bond between security and migration.

For this is not merely a lament. Within this labyrinth lies an opportunity for a paradigm shift. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of migration necessitates a comprehensive approach that transcends simplistic security narratives. We must weave together economic opportunities, address demographic realities, and foster inclusive societies that welcome diversity as a strength.

This demands collaboration across levels, from local communities to international institutions. Only by untangling the knots of fear, prejudice, and political expediency can we craft policies that promote sustainable development, respect human rights, and ensure the peaceful coexistence of all within our complex global tapestry.⁶

From "Low Politics" to Security Spectacle

Migration, once confined to the technical realm of "low politics," has undergone a dramatic metamorphosis, morphing into a potent force intertwined with national security, a realm of "high politics." This transformation finds fertile ground in a climate of global insecurity, where anxieties run high. Fueling these anxieties are the haunting images of overcrowded fishing boats overflowing with African migrants, desperately attempting to cross the treacherous Mediterranean. Their perilous journeys and eventual arrival on shores like the Canary Islands and Lampedusa paint a stark picture, reinforcing the perception of a

mounting "African migration pressure" threatening Europe's southwestern borders.

However, this narrative requires closer inspection. We must move beyond the sensationalized spectacle and delve deeper into the complex realities driving these migrations. Is it simply a question of "pressure" exerted by desperate populations, or are there deeper structural and historical factors at play? Are these images truly representative of the broader landscape of African migration, or do they serve to amplify specific anxieties with specific political agendas?

By critically examining the framing of migration as a security threat, we can begin to deconstruct simplistic narratives and engage in a more nuanced discussion. This approach allows us to move beyond fear-mongering and explore the root causes of migration, fostering international cooperation and humane solutions that address the needs of both migrants and receiving communities.

The Maghreb region, encompassing Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia, has witnessed a dynamic political evolution, particularly since the establishment of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in 1989. Initially envisioned as a pathway to an Arab "super state" by Muammar al-Qaddafi, the AMU aimed to foster cooperation and integration among North African states.

While the dream of a unified North Africa remains elusive, the AMU has undoubtedly served as a platform for regional dialogue and collaboration. However, its progress has been hampered by various challenges, including:

- **Economic and political instability:** The region has experienced periods of economic unrest, particularly in Algeria, and political tensions, especially between Algeria and Morocco over the disputed Western Sahara territory. These factors have hindered the implementation of joint AMU goals.
- **Uneven development:** Disparities in economic development and political systems across member states can create obstacles to effective cooperation.

Despite these challenges, the AMU region remains a crucial player in the dynamics of African migration. Driven by complex factors like poverty, conflict, and climate change, a growing number of migrants from the Maghreb embark on perilous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea in search of better opportunities in Europe.

Understanding the Drivers of Migration

It is crucial to move beyond simplistic narratives that portray migration solely as a security threat. Instead, we must delve into the multifaceted factors that compel individuals to undertake these risky journeys:

- **Economic disparities:** The stark economic inequalities between North Africa and Europe create a powerful push factor for many migrants seeking better livelihoods.
 - **Political instability:** Conflict and political repression in countries like Libya can drive people to flee in search of safety and stability.
 - **Climate change:** The increasing frequency and intensity of droughts and other climate-related disasters can displace communities and contribute to migration flows.
 - **Demographic factors:** Rapid population growth, particularly among young people, can create pressure on limited resources and job opportunities, mendorong migration as a viable coping strategy.
- Addressing the root causes of conflict: Fostering peace and stability in conflict-ridden regions can help stem the flow of refugees and internally displaced persons.
 - Combating climate change: Mitigating the effects of climate change and supporting adaptation efforts can reduce the displacement of communities due to environmental factors.
 - Providing safe and legal migration pathways: Establishing clear and accessible channels for regular migration can help reduce the resort to irregular and dangerous routes.

By understanding the complex drivers of migration and implementing comprehensive solutions, we can work towards a future where migration is a safe, orderly, and beneficial process for both migrants and receiving communities.⁷

For decades, Southern Europe has borne witness to the ebb and flow of irregular migration originating from North African shores. Thousands have braved the treacherous Mediterranean in search of new beginnings in Spain and Italy. But, like the shifting sands of the desert, the landscape of migration is undergoing a metamorphosis.

This metamorphosis began in the early 1990s, when an increasing number of sub-Saharan Africans began migrating to North African countries. Driven by poverty,

Addressing the Challenges

Finding sustainable solutions to the complex issue of migration necessitates a multifaceted approach that goes beyond border security measures. Effective strategies should focus on:

- Promoting economic development: Investing in job creation, infrastructure development, and sustainable agriculture in North African countries can provide opportunities for people within their own communities.

conflict, and climate change in their homelands, they saw North Africa as a potential steppingstone to Europe. These migrants came from an increasingly diverse array of countries and regions, such as Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria as well as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Sudan, the Horn of Africa, and even Asia.

This influx represents a significant shift in the migration dynamic. No longer is it a singular story of North Africans seeking opportunities across the sea. Instead, it's a complex tapestry woven with threads of poverty, conflict, and climate change, driving individuals from far-flung corners of the continent towards unfamiliar shores.

Understanding the Challenges, Charting a New Course:

Recognizing the multifaceted nature of this evolving migration is crucial. Viewing it solely through a security lens paints an incomplete picture and risks fostering harmful stereotypes. Instead, we must delve deeper, exploring the root causes that compel individuals to undertake these perilous journeys.

Finding sustainable solutions necessitates a comprehensive approach that transcends border security measures. Investing in economic development, addressing the root causes of conflict, mitigating climate change, and establishing safe and legal migration pathways are all essential threads

to weave into the fabric of a future where migration is a managed, humane, and mutually beneficial process.

Southern Europe stands at the crossroads of these shifting currents. By understanding the complexities of this new migration landscape and fostering collaborative solutions, we can navigate this chapter with empathy, foresight, and a commitment to a more just and equitable future for all.

II.2 Policing Media:

The representation of African migrants in European media has often painted a bleak picture, perpetuating an "apocalyptic image" of desperate individuals fleeing war and poverty. This narrative, fueled by portrayals of mass migrations and fears of "threatening invasions," reinforces negative stereotypes and contributes to a hostile climate for migrants.

However, a counter-narrative is emerging, driven by efforts to challenge these harmful portrayals. Recent years have witnessed initiatives by European media to give voice and visibility to migrants and their lived realities. Initiatives include:

Dedicated programming: Public television channels have launched programs tackling immigration issues and catering specifically to migrant communities.

Ethical guidelines: Many countries have adopted "ethical conduct" codes for public media, promoting balanced and non-

discriminatory reporting on migration. These codes address phrasing, source selection, and overall framing of migration coverage.

Despite these advancements, concerns remain. Studies consistently show that migration is still frequently presented as a threat to European societies. This manifests in various ways:

Overemphasis on foreign origin: Journalists often highlight the foreign status of individuals involved in minor offenses, while neglecting to report on forced repatriations of irregular migrants.

Selective focus on security issues: Migration coverage tends to disproportionately focus on security concerns, criminality, and social exclusion, further reinforcing negative associations.

Moving forward, a critical approach is essential. Examining media narratives through a lens of power and representation allows us to:

Identify biases and harmful stereotypes: By recognizing how existing power structures inform media coverage, we can uncover biases that unfairly target specific groups.

Promote nuanced and balanced reporting: Encouraging diverse voices and perspectives within media narratives can foster a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues like migration.

Advocate for systemic change: Challenging media portrayals is crucial, but long-term solutions require addressing the root causes of negative attitudes towards migrants, often deeply embedded in socio-political structures.

By fostering critical media literacy and advocating for responsible reporting, we can work towards a future where European media portrays African migrants with empathy, accuracy, and respect for their human dignity. This shift is essential for building truly inclusive and welcoming societies.

II.3 Media and Policy-making in Maghreb:

Morocco, alongside Algeria, forms the demographic backbone of the Arab Maghreb Union, with their combined population exceeding 60 million – three-quarters of the entire union. Yet, their story extends beyond borders, woven into the rich tapestry of global migration. Remarkably, nearly 3.3 million Moroccans now reside abroad, a threefold increase over the past 15 years⁸

This "Moroccan diaspora" is experiencing a fascinating geographical shift. While traditionally concentrated in the European Union – predominantly France (1.6 million) and Spain (700,000) – recent trends reveal a diversification of destinations. This broadening reflects complex push-and-pull factors, encompassing changing economic

opportunities, evolving demographics, and individual aspirations⁹.

Understanding the pervasiveness of Moroccan migration necessitates examining multiple facets:

Drivers of Emigration:

- Economic disparities: Moroccans, particularly young adults, often seek better livelihood opportunities abroad due to limited domestic options.
- Demographic pressures: Morocco's growing population puts strain on resources, further mendorong individuals to migrate in search of stability.
- Social networks: Established communities of Moroccans abroad can facilitate migration through social support and information sharing.

Destinations and Dynamics:

- Traditional ties: France and Spain remain central to the Moroccan diaspora due to historical and cultural connections, facilitating integration.
- Emerging destinations: Countries like Italy, Germany, and Belgium are attracting increasing numbers of Moroccan migrants, offering new options.

- Remittances: The diaspora plays a crucial role in Morocco's economy, sending back an estimated \$30 billion annually, constituting a vital source of foreign exchange.

The Future of Moroccan Migration:

- Diversification: The geographical spread of the diaspora is likely to continue, with potential destinations including North America and the Gulf region.
- Policy considerations: Balancing the benefits of diaspora contributions with potential challenges requires effective policies on integration, skills development, and brain drain mitigation.
- A narrative shift: Moving beyond solely economic framing, migration needs to be understood as a complex phenomenon with diverse motivations and outcomes.

By studying the Moroccan case, we gain valuable insights into the multifaceted realities of migration in the Maghreb and beyond. Recognizing its historical roots, evolving dynamics, and diverse impacts allows us to navigate this complex phenomenon with greater understanding and build more inclusive societies for all.

While the specter of the recent global financial crisis loomed large, its immediate impact on North African economies,

particularly Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, has been surprisingly muted. However, the future remains clouded, as the ripples of Europe's economic woes, particularly in Spain and France, threaten to wash ashore in the coming years.

According to the Centre Marocain de Conjoncture, the initial effects of Spain's downturn on Morocco are anticipated to be "slight." However, the broader European slowdown, especially in France, another key economic partner, paints a less sanguine picture. This raises concerns about potential deeper impacts within the next two-year window.¹⁰

Navigating these turbulent waters will require strategic maneuvering by North African authorities. Recognizing the potential for remittance losses due to economic hardship in Europe, policymakers are seeking to mitigate these impacts. Their efforts focus on:

- Facilitating easier and better regulated remittance transfer processes: Streamlining remittance channels and reducing transaction costs can incentivize continued financial support from migrant communities abroad.
- Attracting MRE (Moroccans Résidant à l'étranger) investment: Creating an environment conducive to investment by Moroccans living abroad can attract

valuable capital and expertise back into the domestic economy.

However, these strategies need to be implemented within the broader context of international economic uncertainty. Continuous monitoring of the evolving situation and proactive adaptation will be essential for effectively mitigating the potential downside risks.

This initial resilience of North African economies in the face of the global crisis offers a glimmer of hope. However, complacency would be a dangerous misstep. By acknowledging the potential challenges ahead and implementing well-crafted strategies, the region can weather the storm and emerge stronger, laying the foundation for a more resilient and diversified future.

Morocco's economic dependence on its vast diaspora is no secret. With remittances exceeding \$30 billion annually, the government has been proactive in forging institutional ties with Moroccan residents abroad (MRE). But their strategy goes beyond simply courting financial contributions. Recognizing the diaspora's potential as not just senders but investors, Morocco is weaving a multi-pronged approach, weaving financial incentives, legislative reforms, and even public communication campaigns into a tapestry of engagement.

Earlier this year, the government launched a captivating public campaign across major

media outlets, extending an invitation to MREs. The message is clear: capitalize on Morocco's GDP growth and attractive incentives, while simultaneously contributing to the nation's social and economic development. This shift beyond remittances signals a strategic understanding of the diaspora's potential as agents of positive change¹¹.

This multifaceted approach holds several strengths:

- **Harnessing financial power:** By attracting investments, Morocco taps into a previously underutilized source of capital, potentially fueling further economic growth.
- **Leveraging expertise:** MREs often possess valuable skills and knowledge gained abroad, which can be injected into domestic projects, fostering innovation and competitiveness.
- **Nurturing a sense of belonging:** Inviting the diaspora to participate in the nation's development reinforces feelings of connection and encourages continued engagement.

Challenges remain:

- **Navigating bureaucratic hurdles:** Streamlining investment processes and ensuring transparency will be crucial in attracting and retaining MRE investors.

- **Tailoring incentives:** Different segments of the diaspora may have varying needs and motivations. Offering diverse incentives can broaden participation.
- **Ensuring equitable benefits:** Investments should translate into tangible benefits for both MREs and the wider Moroccan population, fostering trust and inclusivity.

By recognizing the diaspora as partners, not just remittance sources, Morocco has embarked on a promising journey. As it navigates the challenges and maximizes the opportunities, its success could serve as a model for other nations seeking to leverage the power of their diasporas in building a more prosperous and inclusive future.

While the recent global crisis prompted Morocco to launch a public campaign wooing its diaspora for investment, their efforts extend far beyond this single initiative. Recognizing the multifaceted value of its emigrant communities, the government employs a strategic mix of direct and indirect engagement strategies¹².

One intriguing example is the "Canal Atlas" program, a fixture on national television for four years. More than mere entertainment, this show serves as a bridge between Morocco and its diaspora, focusing on "migrant-development." It educates and empowers MREs by providing:

- Investment guidance: Detailed information on potential projects, locations, and government incentives equips viewers with the knowledge to confidently invest in their homeland.
- Connection to opportunities: By showcasing diverse investment possibilities, the program ignites entrepreneurial spirit and facilitates informed decision-making.

Foster national pride: Highlighting successful diaspora contributions fosters a sense of shared purpose and encourages participation in the nation's growth.

Canal Atlas exemplifies Morocco's understanding that remittances, while crucial, represent only one facet of the diaspora's potential. By nurturing knowledge, aspirations, and a sense of belonging, the government cultivates a fertile ground for deeper engagement and mutually beneficial partnerships.

However, challenges remain:

- Bridging the information gap: Ensuring consistent and accessible information dissemination across diverse diaspora communities is crucial for maximizing program reach and impact.
- Tailoring the message: Different segments of the diaspora may have varying aspirations and needs. Diversifying program content

and communication channels can address these nuances.

- Demonstrating impact: Highlighting success stories of MRE investments can inspire further participation and build trust in the government's initiatives.

By implementing these strategies, Morocco can further unlock the transformative potential of its diaspora. From financial investments to knowledge transfer and cultural exchange, the diaspora can serve as a powerful catalyst for the nation's progress. Canal Atlas offers a glimpse into this future, where distance is bridged not just by remittances, but by a shared vision and collaborative engagement.

The allure of a better life abroad holds a powerful grip on young minds, especially in countries facing economic challenges. In Morocco, television programs specifically targeting young viewers raise concerns about their potential to fuel irregular migration to Europe.

A recent survey by Sadiqi found a striking statistic: over half of young Moroccans (55.5%) believe their own media, particularly TV channels, encourage irregular migration. This perception stems from the portrayal of successful Moroccan emigrants (MREs) and an "idealistic image of a wealthy Europe."¹³

But is this perception reality? Does media coverage truly act as a siren song, luring

young people towards perilous journeys in search of an elusive dream?

Understanding this complex issue requires examining both sides of the coin:

Fueling Aspirations:

- **Success stories:** Showcasing MREs who have prospered abroad can ignite aspirations and entrepreneurial spirit in young viewers. However, the risk lies in presenting these narratives as representative of all migration experiences, neglecting the hardships and challenges faced by many.

European allure: Emphasizing the perceived wealth and opportunities in Europe can create an inaccurate and romanticized image, potentially overlooking the realities of integration and everyday life in these countries.

Distorting Reality:

- **Selective portrayal:** Focusing solely on success stories without acknowledging the struggles and failures of irregular migration can paint an incomplete and misleading picture.
- **Economic anxieties:** Young people grappling with unemployment and limited opportunities at home may perceive irregular migration as the only escape route, further amplified by media portrayals that downplay the risks and difficulties.

Moving forward, navigating this complex terrain requires a multifaceted approach:

- **Media responsibility:** Diversifying content to include narratives of struggle alongside success, emphasizing the risks and challenges of irregular migration, and presenting balanced portrayals of life in Europe are crucial steps.
- **Addressing root causes:** Tackling youth unemployment, improving economic opportunities, and fostering a sense of hope and agency within Morocco are essential long-term solutions.
- **Open dialogue:** Encouraging open and honest discussions about migration, its complexities, and alternatives can empower young people to make informed decisions.

By recognizing the potential influence of media and actively shaping its narrative, Morocco can work towards bridging the perception gap and creating a more realistic and empowering media landscape for its young generation. Only then can we move beyond the mirage and navigate the complexities of migration with empathy, responsibility, and a commitment to a brighter future for all.

III. The Government efforts face illegal immigration according to Media:

III.1 Algeria: The Government efforts face illegal immigration according to El Chourouk in Arabic and El Watan in French:

The phenomenon of "Harragas", Algerian youth attempting perilous journeys across the Mediterranean, has catapulted irregular migration onto the national stage, demanding attention from both civil society and the government. This dramatic shift marks a departure from the previous media landscape, where migration coverage primarily focused on statistics and sub-Saharan migrants.

Prior to 2019, news reports largely addressed sub-Saharan migrants crossing Algerian borders, detailing arrest figures and legal statuses. Algeria's established refugee population, including Sahrawi refugees from the Western Sahara conflict and Palestinian refugees, received some coverage, but rarely dominated headlines. Sub-Saharan asylum seekers and "economic migrants", estimated at 1,600 and 20,000 respectively, remained largely in the periphery of media narratives.¹⁴

However, the emergence of the Harragas phenomenon transformed the media landscape. Since the first reported attempt in 2019, the issue has become a "burning" one, attracting hundreds of articles, analyses, criticisms, and denunciations across public

and private media outlets. This shift highlights several key points:

- Shifting public anxieties: The rise of the Harragas phenomenon reflects broader public anxieties about economic prospects, youth disenfranchisement, and potential instability. Media coverage amplifies these concerns, fueling national discourse.

Evolution of the narrative: From solely focusing on external migration (sub-Saharan migrants), the media spotlight has turned inward, confronting the domestic realities driving irregular migration among Algerian youth.

- Increased scrutiny: The sheer volume of media coverage indicates heightened public and governmental interest, potentially paving the way for policy changes and support mechanisms to address the root causes of irregular migration.

Understanding this media metamorphosis necessitates further exploration:

- Motivations behind the shift: Delving into the factors triggering this sudden surge in coverage, such as specific events or changing political dynamics, can provide valuable insights.
- Representations of the Harragas: Examining how media portrays the motivations, struggles, and successes (if any) of these young migrants can reveal

potential biases and their impact on public perceptions.

- Impact on policy and society: Assessing the influence of media coverage on government policies, civil society responses, and broader societal attitudes towards irregular migration is crucial for understanding the phenomenon's multifaceted impact.

By critically analyzing the changing media landscape, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complex factors driving irregular migration in Algeria. This knowledge can pave the way for more informed and effective responses, addressing both the immediate challenges and the underlying causes of this complex issue.

Prior to 2005, irregular migration in Algeria existed largely on the periphery of public discourse. Media narratives focused primarily on statistics of sub-Saharan migrants crossing borders, neglecting the burgeoning phenomenon of "Harragas" - Algerian youth desperately attempting perilous journeys across the Mediterranean. However, a confluence of factors - a surge in attempted crossings, French pressure for joint patrols, and growing domestic awareness - forced a stark shift in the media landscape.

Suddenly, the Harragas were no longer mere numbers but real people, their stories dominating public conversations and news headlines. Analyzing articles from leading

daily newspapers, El Chourouk and El Watan, reveals a poignant narrative: one of young people portrayed as victims of circumstance.¹⁵

The media paints a bleak picture of a collapsed economy, stunted job opportunities, and a general lack of life prospects that drive these desperate souls to risk their lives at sea. This framing highlights the socio-economic factors pushing youth towards irregular migration, shifting the focus from individual choices to systemic challenges.

Understanding this media shift requires delving deeper:

- Shifting external pressures: The French government's proposal for joint patrols undoubtedly played a role in bringing the Harragas issue to the forefront. Examining how media coverage responded to this external pressure can shed light on the interplay between domestic narratives and international dynamics.
- Evolution of internal discourse: Prior to 2005, did any media coverage foreshadow the rising tide of Harragas attempts? Exploring earlier narratives can provide insights into the gradual emergence of this phenomenon in the public consciousness.
- Beyond victimhood: While highlighting the socio-economic context is crucial, a nuanced understanding requires

exploring other potential factors influencing the Harragas' decisions, such as social networks, peer pressure, and individual aspirations.

The media's portrayal of the Harragas as victims not only reflects a shift in focus but also carries potential social and political implications. It sparks public empathy, potentially prompting policy changes and support mechanisms to address the root causes of irregular migration. However, it is crucial to critically examine whether this framing risks oversimplification or overlooks potential agency or individual responsibility.

By critically analyzing the media's evolving portrayal of the Harragas, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complex phenomenon of irregular migration in Algeria. This knowledge can inform more comprehensive responses, addressing both the immediate challenges and the underlying socio-economic and systemic factors that push young people to take such desperate measures.¹⁶ For years, the plight of "Harragas" - Algerian youth risking perilous journeys across the Mediterranean - remained largely invisible in national media narratives. Focus lay firmly on statistics of sub-Saharan migrants, obscuring the growing desperation within Algeria's own borders. But a turning point arrived in 2005, triggered by a surge in attempted crossings, external pressure, and a growing tide of domestic awareness. The media landscape

underwent a dramatic shift, transforming the Harragas from mere numbers into individuals with compelling stories.

Through in-depth analysis of leading dailies El Chourouk and El Watan, a poignant narrative emerges. The Harragas are not painted as statistics or faceless masses, but as victims of a profound "social malaise." This term, frequently employed in the analyzed articles, goes beyond economic hardship, encapsulating a deep sense of deprivation and exclusion from Algerian society.

This framing serves several purposes:

- **Shifting the Gaze:** The focus pivots from individual choices to systemic challenges, highlighting the socio-economic realities that push young people towards such desperate measures.
- **Evoking Empathy:** By portraying the Harragas as victims, the media seeks to garner public sympathy and understanding, potentially paving the way for policy changes and support mechanisms.
- **Sparking Conversation:** The term "social malaise" ignites broader discussions about societal problems, youth disenfranchisement, and the need for systemic change.

However, a critical approach is necessary to avoid oversimplification:

- Beyond Victimhood: While acknowledging the socio-economic context, it's crucial to explore other potential factors influencing the Harragas' decisions, such as social networks, peer pressure, and individual aspirations.
- Nuances of "Malaise": The term "social malaise" itself requires unpacking. What specific societal factors contribute to this feeling of exclusion and deprivation? How do they vary across different regions and demographics?
- Policy Implications: While empathy is crucial, media narratives can shape policy responses. It's important to scrutinize whether framing the Harragas solely as victims risks overlooking potential agency or individual responsibility, potentially influencing policy approaches in unforeseen ways.

The perilous journeys undertaken by Algerian "Harragas" across the Mediterranean have ignited a media firestorm, exposing deep divides in narratives and highlighting the complex challenges facing the nation.

Victimhood and Responsibility:

- Private media (El Chourouk & El Watan): This camp portrays the

Harragas as victims of a dire socio-economic reality, painting a picture of "widespread frustration" and "social malaise" driving young people to such desperate measures. Implicitly, the government shoulders some blame for this situation. Media emphasis lies on understanding the root causes and avoiding criminalization.

- Government-controlled media: Here, a contrasting narrative paints the Harragas as engaging in an act of "cowardice" and disloyalty, undermining national pride. The focus is on deterrence through public censure and framing irregular migration as a threat to national security.

Clashing Narratives and Societal Impact:

- Government strategy: Despite its "criminalization" approach, statistics reveal an increase in attempted crossings, suggesting the ineffectiveness of this messaging.
- Civil society response: Empathy for the Harragas' plight and critique of government propaganda are widespread, creating a rift between generations and the political establishment.
- Pull factors: The allure of higher wages and job opportunities in Europe alongside the bleak socio-economic realities at home fuel the desire to migrate.

Understanding the Complexities:

- Beyond victimhood: While acknowledging systemic challenges, exploring individual motivations and agency beyond solely "desperation" is crucial for a nuanced understanding.
- Media responsibility: Recognizing the power of media narratives and their potential impact on policy responses and societal attitudes is essential.
- Addressing root causes: Effective solutions require tackling the underlying socio-economic factors driving irregular migration, not just focusing on deterrence or public relations campaigns.

The Harragas phenomenon serves as a stark reminder of the multifaceted challenges facing Algeria. By critically examining the contrasting media narratives, their societal impact, and the complex interplay of push and pull factors, we can move beyond simplistic portrayals and work towards more comprehensive and effective solutions. This necessitates open dialogue, addressing both the immediate realities and the systemic issues that fuel the desire for a better future, ultimately bridging the growing rift between generations and fostering a more inclusive and prosperous Algeria.¹⁷ This phenomenon, extensively covered by Algerian media, reveals a potent mix of push and pull factors

propelling young people towards irregular migration.

- 80% of reports highlight unemployment or precarious work as the primary driver, painting a bleak picture of limited opportunities and stifled potential. This echoes the lived experiences of countless young Algerians struggling to find their footing in a challenging job market.
- Beyond statistics: Moving beyond mere numbers, these reports humanize the narrative, portraying the Harragas not as faceless migrants but as victims of a socio-economic system that fails to nurture their skills and aspirations.

A System on Trial:

- Implicit indictment: The media coverage, in essence, puts the system on trial. By consistently framing young people as victims, it raises questions about the effectiveness of current economic policies and their ability to create a future for Algeria's youth.
- Beyond blame: While highlighting systemic challenges is crucial, a nuanced understanding requires acknowledging individual agency and exploring other potential factors influencing migration decisions, such as social networks, peer pressure, and individual risk tolerance.

- Pull factors: The narrative is incomplete without acknowledging the pull factors across the Mediterranean. Higher wages, perceived job opportunities, and perhaps even an idealized image of life in Europe contribute to the allure of irregular migration.
- A complex equation: Understanding the Harragas phenomenon necessitates examining the interplay of push and pull factors. The desperation fueled by economic hardship in Algeria intertwines with the perceived hope and opportunity offered by Europe, creating a potent mix that propels young people towards perilous journeys.

Towards Solutions:

- Addressing the root causes: Effective solutions cannot solely rely on portraying the Harragas as victims or criminalizing their actions. It is crucial to tackle the underlying socio-economic challenges that push young people towards such desperate measures.
- Fostering dialogue: Open and inclusive dialogue involving policymakers, civil society, and young people themselves is essential to understand the complexities of irregular migration and develop effective solutions.
- Building a brighter future: Ultimately, creating a more prosperous and inclusive Algeria with opportunities for its youth is the most sustainable way to

address the root causes of irregular migration and offer a brighter future for all.

By critically examining the media narratives and delving deeper into the push and pull factors, we gain a richer understanding of the Harragas phenomenon. This knowledge can inform more comprehensive and effective responses, moving beyond simplistic portrayals and working towards a future where young Algerians can chart their own destinies within their own nation.

Algerian Media Expose Human Rights Abuses Faced by Harragas

The treacherous journeys undertaken by Algerian "Harragas" across the Mediterranean are not only fraught with physical dangers but also raise concerns about potential human rights violations upon reaching their intended destinations. Algerian media outlets like El Chourouk and El Watan have played a crucial role in shedding light on such abuses, dedicating 10% of their analyzed articles to denounce these practices.

Harragas in the Crosshairs:

- **El Chourouk's stark accusation:** In its September 22nd article, the newspaper paints a graphic picture of "appalling and degrading treatment" inflicted upon Algerian Harragas at the hands of Spanish coast guards and border police. This raises serious concerns about potential violations of

fundamental human rights principles, including the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

- **Beyond anecdotal evidence:** While individual stories hold immense power, a comprehensive understanding necessitates broader research encompassing data on the frequency and nature of alleged abuses, official responses from Spanish authorities, and independent investigations by human rights organizations.

Media as Watchdog:

- **Bringing abuses to light:** The active role of Algerian media in highlighting these concerns serves as a vital watchdog mechanism, holding authorities accountable and ensuring transparency. This can contribute to positive change by pressuring governments to uphold their human rights obligations and implement humane treatment practices.
- **Nuances and limitations:** It is crucial to acknowledge the potential limitations of media narratives. Sensationalization or bias could hinder objectivity and constructive dialogue. Collaborative efforts involving journalists, human rights groups, and relevant authorities are essential for a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

Towards Solutions:

- **Diplomatic engagement:** Constructive dialogue between Algerian and Spanish authorities is crucial to address these concerns. Establishing clear protocols for interception, detention, and repatriation procedures that adhere to international human rights standards is essential.
- **Independent investigations:** Encouraging independent investigations by human rights organizations can provide impartial assessments of the situation and identify areas for improvement.

Ultimately, tackling the root causes of irregular migration, such as economic hardship and lack of opportunities in Algeria, is vital for reducing the need for desperate journeys and the associated risks of human rights violations.¹⁸

By critically examining media reports, engaging with broader research, and exploring potential solutions, we can contribute to a more informed and nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by Harragas. This knowledge can ultimately pave the way for a future where human rights are upheld, and safe and dignified migration pathways are available for all.

Desperate Gambles and Dreams of El Dorado: Algerian Harragas Navigate a Perilous Path

The perilous journeys undertaken by "Harragas," Algerian youth attempting irregular migration across the Mediterranean, are driven by a complex interplay of push and pull factors, as revealed by leading Algerian newspapers El Chourouk and El Watan.

Fleeing Despair, Chasing Hope:

- **A cocktail of pressures:** The media portrays the Harragas' motivations as multifaceted, encompassing not just **poverty and unemployment** but also **low wages, homelessness, hopelessness, stress, and discontentment**. This paints a poignant picture of young people driven to desperate measures by a bleak socio-economic reality.
- **Risking all for a "promised land":** Driven by the hope of a better life for themselves and their families, the Harragas embark on perilous journeys, often with romanticized notions of El Dorado fueling their determination. These portrayals highlight the power of **aspirations and the pull of perceived opportunities**, even in the face of known risks and hardships.

A Harsh Reality Beyond Dreams:

Facing brutality at every turn: The media doesn't shy away from depicting the harsh realities the Harragas encounter after arrival. Ill-treatment by **coast guards, prison wardens, and employers**, coupled with **low-paying and undesirable jobs**, exposes the brutal human cost of their gamble.

- **Undeterred by hardship:** Despite the numerous challenges, the media narrative suggests a sense of **resolute determination** among the Harragas. Even after failed attempts, the allure of escaping their dire circumstances outweighs the fear of hardship, highlighting the profound desperation driving their actions.

Success, Martyrdom, and the Burden of Expectations:

- **Success: A beacon of hope:** For those who succeed, the narrative suggests they become "**models and "good examples"**" for those left behind. This reflects the social pressure and expectations placed upon the Harragas, where success validates their risky choices and potentially provides hope for others.
- **Martyrdom: A tragic solace:** For those who perish, the media portrays their families finding solace in the belief of martyrdom and an "everlasting paradise." While tragic, this framing

reflects the complex coping mechanisms employed by families grappling with unimaginable loss.

Understanding the Harragas phenomenon requires moving beyond media narratives and delving deeper. Research on:

- **Frequency and nature of human rights abuses**
- **Root causes of irregular migration in Algeria**
- **Effectiveness of existing policies and interventions**

Can inform more comprehensive solutions. Addressing the socio-economic factors driving despair, fostering legal migration pathways, and ensuring humane treatment for all migrants are crucial steps towards a future where desperate gambles are replaced with dignified opportunities.

By critically examining media narratives, engaging with broader research, and exploring potential solutions, we can contribute to a more informed and nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by Harragas. This knowledge can ultimately pave the way for a future where human rights are upheld, and safe and dignified migration pathways are available for all.

III.2 beyond Borders & Security: Understanding Media Narratives of Irregular Migration in Tunisia:

Tunisia's relationship with irregular migration is complex and multifaceted, shaped by historical factors, security concerns, and political developments. This text analyses the media's perspective on this issue, highlighting key themes and potential areas for further exploration.

Porous Borders, Enduring Networks:

- **Security-centric approach:** Traditionally, managing migration flows prioritized security, particularly due to volatile relations with Libya. However, the Libyan border's porosity, fostered by historical smuggling networks and tribal ties, presented a constant challenge.
- **Pre-2011 dynamics:** Despite stricter official controls, smuggling routes outside designated checkpoints remained active, facilitated by experienced networks. This highlights the limitations of solely security-based solutions and the enduring influence of historical factors.¹⁹

2011 Upheaval and Media Attention:

- **Shifting tides:** The political turmoil in both Tunisia and Libya in 2011 triggered significant migratory flows. While Libyan war refugees sought safety in Tunisia, Tunisians saw an opportunity to leave amidst domestic instability.

Media spotlight: These events brought irregular migration to the forefront of media attention, prompting government responses.

Beyond Security: A Complicated Picture:

- **Politicization of aid?:** The text suggests that Tunisian governments may have strategically leveraged the situation to secure European aid, raising concerns about the potential politicization of migration issues.
- **Humanitarian concerns:** Despite efforts like refugee camps, the tragic reality of many succumbing to perilous journeys on unsafe vessels underscores the need for more comprehensive solutions that address humanitarian concerns alongside security.

Moving Forward: Towards Nuanced Narratives and Effective Responses:

- **Critical analysis:** A critical examination of media narratives is crucial to understand how they frame the issue, shape public perceptions, and influence policy responses.
- **Beyond security:** While security remains a concern, effective solutions require addressing the root causes of irregular migration, such as economic disparities, political instability, and limited legal migration pathways.
- **Regional cooperation:** Collaboration between countries in North Africa and the European Union is essential to

develop sustainable solutions that respect human rights and promote safe and legal migration.

By delving deeper into these dimensions, we can move beyond solely security-focused approaches and work towards sustainable solutions that prioritize human rights, regional cooperation, and addressing the underlying factors that push people to undertake such dangerous journeys.

How Increased Controls Reshaped Smuggling Routes

Tunisia's efforts to manage irregular migration flows have historically prioritized a security-centric approach, often involving tightened border controls. While this strategy may have achieved some level of deterrence, it also triggered unintended consequences, leading to a **diversification of smuggling routes, methods, and departure points.**²⁰

From Porous Borders to Diversified Networks:

Prior to stricter controls, Tunisian beaches served as readily accessible launchpads for irregular migration journeys, with smugglers capitalizing on the country's extensive coastline. Notably, the port of Haouaria, situated at the northwestern tip facing Sicily, was a frequent departure point due to its geographical proximity to Italy, despite the inherent navigational challenges.

Echaab Newspaper's Zone-Based

Analysis: Echaab, a Tunisian newspaper, provides a valuable framework for understanding these diversified departure points by dividing them into three distinct zones:

- **The northern zone:** Encompassing the Cap Bon peninsula and the Gulf of Tunis, this zone witnessed a surge in activity due to its proximity to Italy and numerous small coves offering potential launch sites.
- **The eastern zone:** Spanning the coastline from Sfax to Sousse, this zone saw increased use as authorities intensified controls in the north. Its numerous fishing ports and less stringent security presence made it an attractive alternative.
- **The southern zone:** Primarily concentrated around Zarzis and the Kerkennah Islands, this zone experienced a rise in activity due to its proximity to the Italian island of Lampedusa. However, its distance from mainland Europe and harsher weather conditions limited its overall appeal.

A Multifaceted Challenge:

While understanding the evolving landscape of departure points is crucial, it is essential to recognize that security-centric approaches alone cannot effectively address the complex phenomenon of irregular migration.

Addressing the root causes, such as economic disparities, political instability, and limited legal migration pathways, is equally important in finding sustainable solutions. Furthermore, fostering regional cooperation between North African countries and the European Union is vital for developing humane and rights-respecting responses to this ongoing challenge.

By delving deeper into the economic, political, and social factors driving irregular migration, alongside analyzing the evolving tactics of smuggling networks, we can move beyond simplistic narratives and work towards more comprehensive and effective solutions.

A Zone-Based Analysis of Irregular Migration Departure Points in Tunisia

Tunisia's coastline serves as a complex launchpad for irregular migration journeys across the Mediterranean. Echaab newspaper sheds light on this phenomenon by dividing departure points into three distinct zones, each with unique characteristics and dynamics.

Zone 1: The Lure of Proximity

- Encompassing the Cap Bon peninsula and the Gulf of Tunis, this zone beckons migrants due to its proximity to Italy. Kelibia's mere 60 km distance from the Italian island of Pantelleria exemplifies this allure.

- Beaches and ports alike function as departure points, highlighting the adaptability of smuggling networks. In 2006 alone, this zone witnessed 1260 departures, representing a significant portion of the overall migration flow.

Zone 2: The Historical Hub of the Sahel

- Stretching along the Greater Sahel region, this urban tourist area boasts a long history as a migration hub. Numerous ports and beaches, including those near Ben Hmid, Moknine, Sayada, Chebba, Skhir a, and Sidi Mansour, facilitate clandestine departures.
- This zone's established infrastructure and familiarity among smuggling networks contribute to its continued use.

Zone 3: The Southern Gateway

- This zone, spanning from the Gulf of Gabes to the Libyan border, holds historical significance as a transit point for trade and migration. Since 2011, it has emerged as a major departure zone, capitalizing on its proximity to the Italian island of Lampedusa and the Kerkennah Islands.
- The inclusion of Djerba Island and the Zarzis-Ben Guerddene region reflects the growing prominence of this southern route.

Beyond Geographical Demarcations: The Interconnected Landscape

- **Libya as an Extension:** The analysis recognizes the interconnectedness of migration networks, highlighting the crucial role of Tunisian networks, particularly those in the south, collaborating with their Libyan counterparts.

- **Dynamic Departures:** Recognizing that departure points are not static, the text emphasizes the adaptability of both smugglers and migrants in selecting launchpad locations based on evolving strategies and circumstances.

Beyond Zones, Towards Solutions

This zone-based analysis by Echaab newspaper provides a valuable lens for understanding the intricate landscape of irregular migration departure points in Tunisia. However, it is crucial to remember that tackling this complex issue requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond geographical demarcations. Addressing the root causes of irregular migration, such as economic disparities, political instability, and limited legal migration pathways, remains paramount. Additionally, fostering regional cooperation and implementing humane and rights-respecting responses are essential steps towards a more sustainable solution to this ongoing challenge.

By delving deeper into the social, economic, and political realities driving irregular migration, alongside analyzing the evolving strategies of smuggling networks, we can move beyond simplistic narratives and work

towards more comprehensive and effective solutions for all those seeking a better life across the Mediterranean Sea.

IV. The Mediated Migrant: Navigating News Narratives in a Complex World:

The media acts as a mirror reflecting societal dynamics, shaping how we perceive complex issues like migration. This text delves into the ongoing challenge of fostering accurate and inclusive representation of migrants in the news landscape.

The Contextual Challenge: Legacy and Adaptation

- **Embedded influences:** The text acknowledges the media's dependence on internal processes and context, highlighting how these factors shape news production, dissemination, and reception. This underscores the need for an in-depth understanding of the media ecosystem before advocating for change.
- **Deliberative deficit:** It posits that many media organizations haven't adequately adapted to the changing realities of migration. This "dearth of discussion" on key topics like multiculturalism and migrant inclusion suggests a reluctance to engage in the necessary critical reflection and innovation.

The Power of Narratives: Setting Agendas, Shaping Perceptions

- **Undeniable influence:** The text recognizes the undeniable impact of the media on public and political attitudes towards migration. Its agenda-setting and framing abilities shape how citizens understand the world and their place within it, making media representation crucial.
- **Beyond simplistic solutions:** The text cautions against simplistic approaches to changing media narratives. It acknowledges the inherent complexity of the issue and warns against assuming easy solutions like increased migrant visibility without addressing deeper structural concerns.

Moving Towards Inclusive Representation: A Multifaceted Approach

- **Engaging the media:** While the European Agency for Fundamental Rights' (FRA) recommendation to engage the media is acknowledged, the text suggests a more nuanced approach. It emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts that go beyond simply encouraging participation and aim to address the underlying factors influencing media narratives.
- **Beyond visibility:** While increasing migrant visibility is important, the text calls for a more comprehensive strategy

that tackles issues like unconscious bias, discriminatory practices within newsrooms, and a lack of diverse perspectives in editorial decision-making.²¹

A Shared Responsibility

Ultimately, achieving fair and inclusive representation of migrants in the media requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the contextual challenges, recognizes the power of narratives, and adopts a collaborative strategy that engages not just the media, but also policymakers, educators, and civil society.

By fostering critical dialogue, promoting media literacy, and advocating for inclusive newsrooms, we can work towards a media landscape that accurately reflects the complexities of migration and contributes to a more just and equitable society.

Nuancing the Migrant Narrative in the Media

While increasing the visibility of migrants in the media seems like a logical step towards fostering more inclusive narratives, the complexities of the issue demand a deeper dive. This text explores the limitations of solely focusing on visibility and advocates for a multifaceted approach to achieving accurate and fair representation.

Deconstructing the Visibility Paradox

- **Negative portrayals despite presence:** Existing research

underscores the counterintuitive reality that increased "visibility" of migrants doesn't automatically translate to positive portrayals. Even with frequent presence in the media, migrants can be subject to intense negativity and harmful stereotypes.

- **Voices matter, but context is crucial:** While amplifying migrant voices through participation as sources or journalists is valuable, the text cautions against a simplistic view of its impact. While voices certainly shape narratives, they interact with other crucial elements that influence media representation.

A Multifaceted Approach

- **Addressing structural bias:** The text posits that achieving genuine inclusivity requires tackling deeper issues beyond just visibility. Unconscious bias within newsrooms, discriminatory practices, and a lack of diverse perspectives in editorial decision-making all contribute to biased narratives. Addressing these structural issues is paramount for systemic change.
- **Critical media literacy:** Empowering audiences with critical media literacy skills is crucial. By equipping individuals to decode narratives, identify biases, and demand diverse perspectives, we can foster a more discerning and engaged media landscape.

- **Collaborative solutions:** Achieving sustainable change necessitates collaboration between various stakeholders. Advocacy groups, policymakers, and media professionals must work together to promote inclusive newsroom practices, address unconscious bias, and encourage responsible reporting that avoids harmful stereotypes and generalizations.

Towards a More Reflective Media Landscape

Simply increasing migrant visibility in the media is not a magic bullet. By acknowledging the limitations of this approach, recognizing the power of context and structural factors, and advocating for a multifaceted strategy that empowers both media producers and consumers, we can pave the way for a media landscape that truly reflects the complexities of migration and contributes to a more just and equitable society.

IV.1 How the Italian Press Frames Migration

This lines delves into the unique perspective of the Italian press on migration, analyzing its focus on push factors, proposed solutions, and underlying assumptions.

Push Factors Under a Spotlight:

- **Limited context:** Compared to other nations, the Italian press prioritizes

immediate causes of migration, such as war, conflict, and instability. While offering a concise explanation, this approach may neglect deeper structural and economic factors driving migration flows.

- **Terrorism and instability:** References to IS/terrorism highlight a specific security concern within the Italian narrative, potentially fueling anxieties and influencing public perceptions.²²

Seeking Solutions beyond Borders:

- **Collective EU response:** Unlike other countries, the Italian press emphasizes the need for a unified European approach, acknowledging the complexities of managing migration through individual efforts. This reflects Italy's geographical position as a frontline nation facing Mediterranean crossings.
- **Focus on search and rescue:** The Italian press places significant emphasis on humanitarian solutions, advocating for enhanced search and rescue operations to mitigate the tragic loss of life at sea. This focus underlines Italy's longstanding role in Mediterranean migrant rescues.

Stabilization with Caveats:

Libyan stability as a priority: The mention of stabilizing conflict zones primarily refers to Libya, suggesting a potential conflation of

regional stabilization with establishing a strong central authority to stem departures from Libyan shores. This raises questions about addressing the root causes of instability within Libya itself. .

Beyond the Frame: Nuances and Considerations

- **Limited pull factor discussion:** While push factors like conflict receive attention, the text highlights a potential gap in discussing pull factors within the Italian media narrative, such as potential opportunities or vulnerabilities that draw migrants towards specific destinations.
- **Unveiling underlying assumptions:** Further analysis could explore the underlying assumptions shaping the Italian press's framing of migration, such as perceptions of European responsibility, security concerns, and cultural anxieties, to provide a more complete understanding of the media landscape.

By critically examining the Italian press's portrayal of migration, we can gain valuable insights into both the complexities of the issue and the specific challenges faced by frontline nations like Italy. This understanding is crucial for developing more comprehensive and effective responses to a global phenomenon with significant humanitarian and political implications.

IV.2 A Spanish Lens on Migration: Examining Sourcing Patterns in the Press

This lines analyzes the unique sourcing patterns in Spanish newspapers covering migration, highlighting their distinctions from other countries and potential underlying factors.

A Global Dialogue with a Local Twist:

- **Spanish anomaly:** Unlike other nations studied, Spanish press coverage features a surprisingly low proportion of domestic political voices. They are even outnumbered by foreign political sources, making Spain a unique case in our sample.
- **The Right holds the reins:** Within domestic political voices, the People's Party (PP) dominates, especially in right-wing papers. Even in El País, they claim two-thirds of appearances by Spanish politicians.²³

Framing the Debate: Beyond Borders:

- **EU at the center:** This high ratio of foreign to domestic political sources, coupled with an overwhelming emphasis on government representatives, suggests that most political debate is framed as occurring between the Spanish government and other EU states, or even between various EU member states themselves.
- **Internal dialogues limited:** The few internal debates focus on criticism from the

left regarding the PP's policies on "hot returns" and treatment of migrants. .

Geography Shapes Narratives:

Proximity plays a role: The prominent focus on migrants attempting to enter Spanish territory likely explains other distinct aspects of coverage. The identification of "Sub-Saharan Africa" and Morocco as leading origins for migrants and refugees reflects Spain's geographical proximity to these regions.

Beyond the Numbers: Unveiling Nuances:

- **Beyond visibility:** While the low number of domestic political voices is striking, further analysis could explore if and how other actors, such as NGOs, experts, or civil society organizations, contribute to the Spanish media's portrayal of migration.
- **Unpacking the silence:** Understanding the reasons behind the limited internal debate on migration policy in Spain requires deeper investigation into potential factors like political polarization, media ownership structures, and public opinion dynamics.

By critically examining the sourcing patterns in the Spanish press, we gain valuable insights into how media in different countries frame and navigate the complex topic of migration. This analysis contributes to a broader understanding of the diverse media landscapes shaping public

perceptions and policy debates on this global issue.

Conclusion:

Imagine a kaleidoscope of voices: news anchors in crisp suits, passionate bloggers on crackling screens, satellite dishes whispering stories across borders. This is the media landscape of the Arab world, a vibrant tapestry where migration and policymaking collide and interweave. New actors, from Gulf titans beaming entertainment to local activists igniting debates, disrupt the old guard, empowering audiences and rewriting the rules of engagement.

To navigate these turbulent waters, to foster harmony between migrants and host societies, we must jettison simplistic narratives. Media portrayals that stoke fear with sensationalism must be countered by responsible journalism that amplifies understanding with nuance. Governments can be vital lighthouses, proactively communicating accurate information that dispels myths and illuminates the positive contributions immigrants bring. Let's choose to build bridges of knowledge, not walls of fear. Let's embrace diverse perspectives, weave narratives rich with empathy and complexity, and challenge ourselves to see beyond the surface. Only then can we truly navigate this ever-shifting sea of images, forging a future where understanding and respect pave the way forward.

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- 17 - Many desperate young Algerians, aspiring to life of high standards, security and higher education, have resorted to illegal immigration across the sea to promising destinations such as Spain, Italy and other European countries, fleeing joblessness and uncertainty at home.
- 18 - In my opinion, he [the would-be illegal immigrant] is a victim. We need to stop for a moment and discuss with these Algerians who venture in the sea for an unpredictable adventure, we can see in them only victims, their stories are so moving that we are sometimes tempted to take sides with them.
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