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THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN UNION POLICIES TO COUNTER ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IN NORTH AFRICA

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Abstract: *The issue of illegal immigration from North Africa to Europe is one of the most prominent phenomena that have preoccupied analysts, researchers, and decision-makers, considering that it affects the security of countries and societies alike in North Africa, especially after the wave of protests in 2011. The proposed study focuses on two main questions: What are the repercussions of illegal immigration on the European Union? What are the most important European Union policies to address illegal immigration from North Africa? The methodology of the study employs the qualitative method since it helps provide a substantial and rich description of this complex phenomenon, tracking unique or unexpected events by analyzing the following policies: the Barcelona Process, the Schengen Agreement, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the 5+5 Dialogue, the European Neighbourhood Policy, and the Union for the Mediterranean. This article presents an analytical study of European policies to confront illegal immigration from North African countries. Finally, it is concluded the need to adopt a preventive strategy to confront illegal immigration in the Mediterranean region by addressing its causes, especially in the southern Mediterranean countries, which are considered source countries, for improving economic and social conditions.*

Keywords: *Illegal Immigration; European Union; North Africa*

INTRODUCTION

Illegal immigration is one of the research fields concerned with many different academic and knowledge fields. When scenes of illegal immigration are crowded in our daily lives, concerns and threats to the security of individuals and groups are increasing in different societies. Given the relationship of the phenomenon under study to many hazards which are with global characters, such as drugs, terrorism, extremism, and human trafficking, especially in light of the expansion and flow of these threats, and the nature of the contemporary international reality, which is characterized by the decay of entities and the birth of new social and political systems, this prompted many researchers to consider illegal immigration as one of the actual results that the international community has witnessed in the context of the current regional and international conflicts. The advent of the last decade of the twentieth century and the emergence of many transformations which are known to the international community exacerbates the problem of illegal immigration from the southern Mediterranean to the

countries of the European Union (EU), thus turning the migration issues from being economical in the past to security and political issues nowadays as it should not overlook several conditions experienced by the vulnerable and marginalized groups in the countries of the southern Mediterranean, and its connection to the phenomenon of illegal immigration, such as poverty, deprivation, the nature of political systems, the spread of epidemics, corruption, and economic weakness which suffered by these countries. All of these factors have effectively contributed to making the phenomenon one of the essential cosmopolitan issues that receive attention in international studies; it thus grabbed the attention of the media, and several civil society organizations, government, and regional institutions, especially after it became the receiving countries are concerned for these illegal immigrants.

So, the research questions are: What are the repercussions of illegal immigration on the European Union?; What are the most important European Union policies to address illegal immigration from North Africa, such as Libya, Tunis, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania?; How effective are existing European Union border control policies?; How could they be improved?

The methodology of the study employs the qualitative method since it helps provide a substantial and rich description of this complex phenomenon, tracking unique or unexpected events by analyzing the following policies, the Schengen Agreement, the Barcelona Process, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the 5+5 Dialogue, the European Neighborhood Policy, and the Union for the Mediterranean. In addition, it presents an analytical study of European policies to confront illegal immigration from North African countries.

The study has a variety of goals. It aims to figure out the motives behind illegal immigration, which may vary between political, economic, social, geographical, and demographic reasons and the repercussions of the phenomenon on European security. It also seeks to analyze several European Union policy responses that confronted the phenomenon of illegal immigration from North African countries to countries such as France and Spain. The study's central hypothesis is that the increasing flow of immigrants from North Africa negatively impacts the social life of European countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In general, Givens and Luedtke (2004) have focused on the goal of the European Union's immigration policy. Most observers have considered them a necessary component of its efforts to achieve a free labor movement. However, attempts to create a joint policy have faced political obstacles. This study explores the various barriers that prevent the establishment of a comprehensive immigration policy. It also develops a theoretical framework for coordinating immigration policies at the EU level. The study noted that the impact of political partisanship and immigrant rights on establishing a comprehensive immigration policy could vary depending on the country and issue. Also, Geddes and Niemann (2015) review the various policy issues surrounding migration and immigration in Europe. It aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current state of affairs in the region and how it affects the relationship between states. It also explores how Europe can legitimately speak of the everyday politics of migration. It also explores the various types of migration and their varying effects on the region. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of the European Union and individual states in addressing

this issue, as well as reviews the policies and politics of immigration in Europe, including the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. It also looks into the policies and politics of the new southern European countries and East and Central Europe. Nikolić and Pevcin (2022) have focused on the effects of asymmetric integration on the sustainability of the European Union's free movement agreement on open borders. It identified a structural limitation that prevents the agreement from functioning correctly. To address this issue, the authors proposed the establishment of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS). This would allow the EU to manage the influx of refugees and ensure that the agreement's provisions are correctly implemented. Also, Abbott (2018) states that the Syrian war has caused a massive burden on various countries, such as Jordan. It has also disrupted the efforts of the European Union to establish a common strategy in the area. Despite the various difficulties the region has experienced, the European Union remains committed to its role in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). As a responsible member of the international community, the EU is also responsible for its security. However, its members have a long history with multiple regional countries. Despite the various difficulties that the region has experienced, the European Union remains committed to its role in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). It is in the members' best interests to have a secure and stable region.

In particular, many studies, such as those of Davis and Gift (2014), and Felbermayr, Gröschl, and Steinwachs (2018); the two studies analyzed the effects of (the Schengen Agreement) on the European Union's free movement of people on the economy. They found that the agreement positively impacts trade by increasing the demand for foreign goods and reducing the risks associated with the business in other countries. They also noted that the agreement has led to more robust trade between peripheral countries. Also, Woertz and Lecha (2022) have focused on the rise of populism in Europe has led to political contestation in the Mediterranean region. This study focuses on the states that have turned to the sidelines to block the activities of other players. The study also finds that the heavy ideologies that populists are borrowing from are contributing to their influence, and the rise of right-wing populism over that of left-wing populism has a significant impact on the quality and quantity of political discourse. Market-liberal populism is also on the decline in Spain; the populists have a unique ability to shape political agendas and make decisions directly. They also influence the political discourse on issues such as migration.

Milcher, Slay and Collins (2007) discussed various aspects of the emergence of the European Neighborhood Policy in the western Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). They also looked into its potential economic impact. They aimed to identify the key questions that need to be resolved to induce the governments of the participating countries to adopt comprehensive reforms. Petrakos, Tsiapa and Kallioras (2016) aimed to analyze the spatial dynamics of the European Neighborhood Policy countries. It explores the various transformations in their internal and external environments. Hatab (2018) explored whether the need for stability should be pre-emptive in addressing the security requirements of the Southern Mediterranean. It also discussed the conflicting roles that the EU should play in promoting democratic norms and securing geostrategic interests. The study aimed to comprehensively analyze the multiple security requirements the EU should address to maintain its relevance in the region.

According to all addressing literature reviews, various studies have been conducted on European policies. Some of these focus on the European Union's policies, while others deal with economic issues. Some studies deal with the issue of borders. Some of these studies also deal with the refugee problem and security aspects.

MOTIVES FOR ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IN NORTH AFRICA

Economic research concentrating on justification and cost-benefit analysis is sometimes used to pinpoint the origin of illegal immigration. Undoubtedly, the desire to improve one's economic position is frequently a factor in migration.

Economic motives have a significant reason for driving illegal immigration. The standard of living is measured by the degree of society's care for the members involved in its formation. The search for livelihood to provide a secure and affluent life is one of the first and most essential motives; it leads immigrants to leave their countries and migrate to the country where they find work opportunities to earn a living, in addition to the significant disparity in the economic level between the countries exporting illegal immigrants, which often witnesses a lack of development processes, lack of job opportunities, and low wages and standards of living, in contrast to the need for a workforce in the receiving countries. A study on Arab countries in 2013 showed that countries such as Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria have 11 million people living on less than a dollar/day, which the United Nations described as extreme poverty (Youssef 2011). It is noticeable that what increases immigration activity and makes the possibility of paying immigrants low wages continually is the lack of most North African countries, in general, production centers capable of keeping pace with population growth. Thus, the unequal exchange between the two sides continues; this is what the French scientist Sauvy Alfred (1948, 18) expressed; either the wealth departs where the people are, or the people depart where the wealth is.

Also, a social motive is represented in the lack of peace and social security. This is due to the prevalence of the class phenomenon at the tribal level, sectarian or ethnic, and the majority's preference over the minority or *vice versa*. Robert Merton points out that class status plays a vital role in the migration movement, so the social motives are linked to economics in a direct correlation, low living standards have adverse social, psychological, and security effects on the society in which they develop despite being an economic factor, on the other hand, one of the severe consequences of the demographic explosion is the emergence of the problem of unemployment, which is now affecting individuals of all scientific and professional levels. Even those with higher degrees tend to seek them from abroad and fail to solve social problems such as poverty, unemployment, and domestic violence, especially against children (Chimienti 2013). As well, the political motive where the end of the twentieth century was marked by the growth of the movement of refugees, individually or collectively, as a result of wars and internal conflicts resulting from ethnic or ideological conflicts, the dangers to which civilians were exposed during the war in many regions of the world, and human rights violations, because of their ethnic, religious or political affiliations.

Due to their political acts, illegal immigrants are often forced to migrate; this is known as 'forced migration'. The southern Mediterranean region is considered one of the essential

refugee-exporting and receiving parts due to wars and internal instability, where the African continent knows conflicts of an economic nature, such as the Great Lakes conflicts, or of an ethnic character that begins within a country and then turns into disputes between states, as is the case with Lake Congo. The inevitable result of these conflicts is that tens of thousands of displaced persons, refugees, or illegal immigrants begin to move to North African countries and Europe (Cummings *et al.* 2015). The demographic motives cannot be ignored (Klabunde *et al.* 2017). The geographical proximity of the African and Asian continents to the European continent is one of the motives for illegal immigration. Europe is only 14 km from the African continent to the west (Lorca-Susino 2006). The harshness of the African climate, such as drought and the spread of incurable diseases and epidemics, is one of the causes of migration. Also, agricultural land is destroyed annually due to desertification and torrents and the invasion of locust swarms in many African countries such as Sudan, Chad, and Morocco. Population growth rates of economic growth made the southern bank of the Mediterranean look to foreign labor markets, which do not require specialized training such as the agricultural sector, cleaning work, or working in restaurants or the construction sector (Joffé 1997).

THE IMPACT OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION ON EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Security

The security dimension is considered one of the most significant impacts, which is a priority for European national security; according to the impact of the phenomenon of 'illegal immigration on this aspect, it was considered a direct security threat that must be confronted. Hence, illegal immigrants are considered a threat to the European national identity due to the transformation of illegal immigration from areas as an economic phenomenon to a security issue through social and political discourse. The phenomenon of illegal immigration has become a security issue of significant priority for European governments in light of the increasing flow of immigrants, who have come to see them as a blatant threat to European societal security through the use of a hostile discourse linking immigrants to problems of unemployment, the organized crime of all kinds, drug trafficking and terrorist threats Which prompted European countries to strengthen their efforts aimed at securitizing the phenomenon from the danger of compromising European social harmony, eroding national identity, and political and security instability (Anastassia 2016).

Immigration has also become a challenge threatening Europeans' job security. All these concerns have made immigration at the top of the agenda of many European voters seeking to control public order and internal security. Such fears have been adopted and reinforced by the media, which brings governments to the heart of the issue and makes it possible to take action.

Illegal immigration also leads to a threat to European national security through the possibility of the existence of intelligence agents and subversive elements among illegal immigrants, which leads to the emergence of terrorist cells that create conflicts and security problems in the countries receiving immigrants, as well as helping to smuggle weapons, explosives, and ammunition to European countries to destabilize its security. Also, it poses a clear threat to the security of the destination country, through the increased crime rate among

illegal immigrants, through their involvement in criminal behavior that contradicts the values of the destination countries, by engaging in gangs formed by drug-trafficking activists as the crime rate of young immigrants increases positively with their increase in the receiving societies, where these crimes are generally limited to robbery, looting, theft, sabotage of public and private property, attacks on and threats to people, as well as intentional murder (Givens 2010).

Economics

Despite the economic importance of immigration to Europe, the continent's need for labor contributes significantly to ensuring balance, especially in the European countries suffering from low demographic growth rates (Orrenius and Zavodny 2016). In the short term, illegal immigration adds pressure on the economy of some European countries, as it is a burden on public finances in terms of the expenses of receiving and deporting immigrants. On the other hand, they represent opportunities for European users and the European economy. However, they are considered the most crucial source of cheap labor; the phenomenon is a fundamental problem and imbalance in the European labor market, as it is a strong competitor to the local labor force. This results from the spread of unnecessary random labor characterized by low productivity and the emergence of a parallel market for infiltrated delivery that accepts lower wages, which often leads to widespread unemployment in European countries because of the professions and jobs taken by immigrants rejected by their original inhabitants (Baldwin-Edwards 2002).

Social Impacts

Illegal immigration affects the social and health aspects of European countries through the large numbers of illegal immigrants, which will lead to the emergence of random and chaotic neighborhoods, spreading various unethical practices, which may even affect the components and values of the society of the receiving state, in addition to the transmission of diseases carried by illegal immigrants such as AIDS, cholera and other incurable diseases (Bade, Legal and illegal immigration into Europe: experiences and challenges 2004).

Statistics indicate that the number of illegal immigrants to the EU in 2015 reached about 1.8 million immigrants (O'Leary 2016), which led to a state of deep divergence among the political trends within the European countries, so there are among those who support it, in particular, the parties that embrace the principles of humanity, and the values of freedom, equality and the right to change, and a decent living, and fulfilling the obligations with international charters which was imposed by the human rights, child and refugee agreements. For example, the informal sector in Europe depends on illegal or irregular labor availability. This means that a higher number of domestic workers also participate. Because of this, the illegal or legal arrangements commonly used to supplement and enhance the informal economy enjoy high social legitimacy (Bade 2004).

The nation's security and economy were seen as being threatened by many people, including extreme right-wing groups (Tepfenhart 2011). Many events and actions contributed to increasing the number of supporters of these groups, including; operations and the terrorist

attacks that occurred during the period from 2015 to 2016, the financial crises that occurred in some EU Member States, the UK sought to get out of the EU (Brexit), and the decline of political and economic relations with Russia against the background of its annexation of Crimea.

THE ESSENTIALLY EUROPEAN POLICIES TO CONFRONT ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

The Schengen Agreement

The Schengen Agreement takes its name from the small town of Schengen in Luxembourg, where the agreement was signed on 14 June 1985 by five countries (Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg). Before the agreement came into force, the borders between European countries were closely guarded and monitored, and passports were checked at border crossings. The Schengen Agreement guarantees freedom of movement between the countries that are parties to it, as one does not need an entry visa and is not subject to inspection or questioning of his passport (Militaru 2019).

However, the only case in which the travel document must be shown in the Schengen area is when entering the first Schengen country, known as the outer border of the site, where the passport is certified with a stamp issued by the government that entered it. No documents will be checked or stamped when crossing additional borders within the Schengen area.

The EU is faced with ensuring the continuity of movement and entry of people and goods and strengthening security to combat organized crime and illegal immigration. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the change in international politics helped implement security and develop the Schengen system, the European Border Surveillance system (EUROSUR). The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) were established and supported (Anderson 2022).

After the Arab Spring in 2011, the European Commission confirmed adherence to the Schengen Agreement and presented its proposals for strengthening and governance of external borders. The council focused on three pillars, first strengthening Schengen governance, second good partnership with Southern Mediterranean Countries, and finally, asylum policies; the focus has been on the review of the Schengen administration to address illegal immigration and ensure effective control of the external borders of all Member States (Fargues and Fandrich 2012). Also, in December 2021, the European Commission revealed its proposals to reform the Schengen Agreement governing movement between its Member States. A reform comes after long demands from those countries, with France pledging to approve it during its presidency of the EU. The targeted changes will lead to better coordination between Member States and enable them to have mechanisms to better deal with the challenges they face, whether on their external borders of the Union or internally among them. It is explained that this is consistent with the European way of life, where 1.7 million citizens live in one country and work in another. Commenting on the proposal, Vice-President of the European Commission, Margaritis Schinas, highlighted that it strengthens the European way of life. It also speeds up the response to the crises threatening the European sphere, including Covid-19, the terrorist threat, and the waves of migration since 2015 to the Polish border crisis (Commission 2021).

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in Light of the Barcelona Process

The Barcelona conference dealt with the issue of illegal immigration in the Mediterranean in the third chapter on 'Partnership in the Social, Economic and Humanitarian Fields'. The Partnership Project focuses on monitoring and analyzing the forecasts of migratory movements and their causes and impact in Europe and the Mediterranean partner countries (Joffé 2015, 309-328). The program has followed a comprehensive approach covering all demographic, economic, legal, social, and political issues. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Palestine, Tunisia, and Turkey have participated in preparing and publishing studies on various legal, economic and social fields, including the annual report on migration across the Mediterranean, 16 reports, and 37 notes for analysis, the cost of financing the first project, which ran from 2004-2007, was estimated at two million Euros (Commission Européenne 2012). The project's second edition ran from 2008 to 2011 and included all the countries above with an estimated budget of five million Euros (Commission Européenne 2012). The purpose of this project was to strengthen cooperation in the field of migration management to allow partners to find more effective solutions. In return, the project aims to establish mechanisms to encourage opportunities for legal migration, support and strengthen the links between migration and development, and intensify activities aimed at reducing human trafficking and illegal migration and managing mixed flows (Commission Européenne 2012).

The 5+5 Dialogue

In December 2003, in Tunisia, the first summit of heads of state and government of the countries of the western Mediterranean basin, which includes the five Arab Maghreb Union countries (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania) and the five Euro-Mediterranean countries (Italy, France, Portugal, Spain, and Malta) was held (Affairs 2012).

The first summit has taken a set of measures such as information exchange and technical expertise sharing between countries of origin, transit, and receiving countries to prevent and combat illegal immigration and strengthen and make cooperation more effective to fight and resist illegal immigration in the sending and transiting and receiving countries, by adopting a balanced and harmonized approach in this field, especially by developing mechanisms to resist the networks that are used in human trafficking. Then, after nine years, the countries' leaders met again in October 2012 in Malta to give new hope to the 5+5 Dialogue, overshadowed by the Arab revolutions. The summit touched on various topics such as security, defense, and economic cooperation and evaluated other areas of cooperation such as education, environment, and energy. This Dialogue was intended as a Mediterranean security initiative on the 'critical' issue of clandestine immigration (Dialogue 5+5 Research 2017).

The European Neighborhood Policy

The EU launched its neighborhood policy in October 2004, stated in the document establishing this new policy aimed to create a space of peace and good neighborliness based on the EU values and characterized by intense and peaceful relations based on cooperation

(Emerson 2004). It is noticeable in practice that this new European policy had other security goals; in particular, it coincided with the failure of some multilateral policies (the Barcelona Process) due to conflicts within the Mediterranean region. Therefore, the EU directed bilateral policies, that is, with each country separately. This European Neighborhood Policy also addressed the new threats in the European Security Strategy issued in December 2003, including illegal immigration from the southern Mediterranean (Lehne 2014, 3).

The Project of the EU for the Mediterranean

The Union for the Mediterranean is an intergovernmental institution bringing together the European Union (EU) Member States and 15 countries from the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean to promote Dialogue and cooperation. It is a project that appeared in 2007 and was announced by former French President Sarkozy as a complementary program to the mechanisms of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and the European Neighborhood Policy. It is worth noting that the outcome of Euro-Mediterranean collaboration is very meager in terms of development due to the European Union's preoccupation with the development of the countries that have recently joined it more than its interest in the countries of the southern Mediterranean (Balfour 2009).

POLICY RESPONSES USED IN CONFRONTING THE PHENOMENON OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

France

All French legislation related to immigration, after its integration into the European Union in its various stages of development, has become mainly associated with European policies, as efforts were made in the European Union to bring all the EU countries' legislation closer together and seek to make it more homogeneous, and justified this through Article 622-1 of the Code of Entry and Stay of Aliens and Right of Asylum. The same principles were adopted by the French state, whereby anyone who provides direct or indirect assistance to a foreigner or facilitates his entry and transit, as well as his residence in the French territory, shall be punished with imprisonment for five years - and a fine of 30 thousand Euros, and then the second and third paragraphs came to expand the concept of the territory to all the Schengen areas, as well as the territories of the state's party to the Migrant Smuggling Protocol, in addition to France working to coordinate with European countries, so that in 2006 it proposed with Germany a proposal that eliminates the problem of illegal immigration, in the meeting that was held in the city of the British Stratford city, in which the interior ministers of the six largest EU Member States participated, as this proposal included reviving the formula to conclude contracts with foreign workers for a limited period of time while granting high percentages of available and time-limited job opportunities to the countries that immigration seekers flee from it. It expressed willingness to cooperate about the return of illegal immigrants, and Britain, Italy, Spain, and Poland supported this scheme. Still, each country in the EU retained its right to exercise its immigration policy and the work stemming from the national sovereignty of each

country (Statewatch.org 2006). In 2010, France, through the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Codevelopment, supported the capabilities of the Greek police to confront clandestine migrants in the southern Mediterranean by sending 18 of its police to join the FRONTEX Rapid Border Intervention Team to protect European borders, especially in the Greek region, which is considered the weakest part in the EU. It was built to stop the entry of clandestine immigrants into it. As the latter takes between 200 and 300 migrants from the southern Mediterranean daily, the European Union, under pressure from the French side, is targeted to send 175 border guards to Greece.

Furthermore, that is after France sent 18 police officers to support the European rapid border intervention teams (ECRE 2010). Then, French Immigration Minister Eric Besson (2009-2010) admitted that this process lists within the implementation of European instructions that included 29 procedures to protect Europe's external borders and combat clandestine immigration; the latter was issued on February 25, 2010 (Broughton and Toucas 2011, 36). Still, this procedure is implementing the policy of "selective immigration that appeared with the advent of French President Nicolas Sarkozy to power, where he provided this concept in his election campaign" (Samers 2010).

France has paid great attention to the laws regulating employment and combating illegal immigration compared to the rest of the European countries due to its great keenness to stop the entry of immigrants from the southern bank of the Mediterranean. In addition to the human factor, it has also allocated two reconnaissance planes and four warships to monitor the Mediterranean to stop migrant boats before they reach Europe (Samers 2010).

Spain

Since Spain joined the European Economic Community in 1986, the cities of Ceuta and Melilla have been considered to belong to European territory and the front line of the so-called 'fortress Europe'. In 1993, fencing around the two cities began under the pretext of preventing illegal immigration and reinforcing and renovating these fences using advanced technologies, including infrared cameras, optical and audio sensors, watchtowers, and radar systems. The Spanish Ministry of Defense has also allocated a satellite to monitor migrant boats from Africa toward the coasts of Spain and Portugal. The 'Spainsat' satellite covers Spain, Portugal, and West African countries like Senegal, Mauritania, and Mali. Since 2001, Spain has had electronic radars along its coasts in the Strait of Gibraltar. Over 50% of foreign nationals residing in Spain did not have a residence permit (López-Sala 2009). Due to the growing concern about irregular migration, the government enacted a reform law to limit the number of foreigners staying in the country. This new law led to the creation of new restrictive measures. The law provided the Interior Ministry with the necessary information about foreigners residing in the country. It also required them to renew their Padrón registration every two years. It also established new visa categories, such as residence visa, that precludes them from working in the country. It also established a new visa category, which allowed migrants to stay in Spain for a while. This type of visa was created to allow people to work and live in the country. Before the new law's adoption, foreign nationals could not be granted a residence permit based on how long they had previously been in Spain. They could only continue to regularize their status through a provision

of the *Arraigo Social* (González-Enríquez 2009). In 2004, the Socialist Party of Spain issued regulations for implementing the Foreigners Law (Real Decreto 2393/2004). These regulations linked various categories of visas and the work permits they were linked to. Before foreign workers could start working in Spain, they had to submit their applications for work permits. They would then be able to apply for a residence and work visa. The law also provided for the regularization procedures of the workers. Foreign workers had to live in Spain for three years for social attachment. They had to show that they have either a work contract or a social insertion in their residence, which can be done through a report from the city hall or their legal migrant relatives. They could also adjust their status after two years of working in the country. The regulations provided for the regularization of various aspects of the country's underground economy. These procedures would result in the issuing of temporary residence permits. As part of the program, the regulations also aimed to address the country's large underground economy (González-Enríquez 2009).

To be considered for regularization, foreign workers had to meet specific requirements. These included having a contract with a validity of at least 6 months and having been registered with the municipality. During the program's first year, it received 700,000 applications. Of these, 578,000 were accepted, while 550,000 signed up to pay into the social security system. The regulations also changed the system's quota system, which was aimed at hiring migrants from their home countries (Levinson 2005, 47-51).

CONCLUSION

The factors driving illegal immigration in the Mediterranean region are many and varied among economic factors, such as the search for livelihood to provide a secure and affluent life is one of the first and most essential motives, in addition to the social factors represented in the lack of peace and social security, and this is due to the prevalence of the class phenomenon at the tribal, sectarian or ethnic level, as well as the political factors represented mainly in the growth of the refugee movement, individually or collectively, as a result of wars and internal conflicts resulting from ethnic or ideological conflicts.

European political and bureaucratic elites succeeded in securitizing illegal immigration and portraying it as a threat to European societal security and economic well-being, which enabled it to put forward and develop purely security procedures and policies related to illegal immigration represented in the development and improvement of systems and bodies whose function is to protect European borders, and added to them the theory of legal securitization.

It is noticeable that there is a close relationship between the variables of security and immigration, especially concerning internal and societal security. Migration flows in large numbers have become a threat to European security and negatively affect the social homogeneity of European countries, which led to a significant rise in xenophobia and Islamophobia and reinforced the theory of the clash of civilizations.

It is noticeable that the phenomenon of the spread of migration in youth, so the promotion of small and micro projects also significantly reduces the sensation of illegal immigration.

The paper suggests adopting a preventive strategy to confront illegal immigration in the Mediterranean region by addressing its causes, especially in the southern Mediterranean countries, considered source countries, for improving economic and social conditions. Also, the need for European countries to adopt an absorption strategy for illegal immigrants through assimilation and integration into Western countries and societies, taking into account their religious and cultural peculiarities and, finally, focusing on the economic and social mechanisms in the face of illegal immigration in the Mediterranean region, given that the economic and social factors are mainly behind the spread of this phenomenon and the repercussions it has on European countries.

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