مجلة العلوم السياسيّة

اسم المقال: التهديدات الأمنية اللاتماثلية: دراسة تأُثير الهجرة غير الشرعية على الأمن الإقليمي في منطقة البحر الأبيض المتوسط
اسم الكاتب: محمد إبراهيم فرج، أ.د. محمد سالمان طايع
رابط ثابت: https://political-encyclopedia.org/index.php/library/7514
تاريخ الاسترداد: 2026/11/02 17:55 +03

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Political Sciences Journal
Issue (68) December (2024) ISSN: 1815-5561 E-ISSN: 2521-912X

Asymmetric Security Threats: A Study of the Impact of Illegal Migration on Regional Security in the Mediterranean Region

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Receipt date: 13/6/2024 Accepted date: 19/9/2024 Publication date:1/12/2024

https://doi.org/10.30907/jcopolicy.vi68.752

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Abstract:

Illegal migration in the Mediterranean region has emerged as a complex and multifaceted security challenge with significant implications for regional stability. This study aims to explore the impact of illegal migration on regional security in the Mediterranean context, focusing on asymmetric security threats, by analyzing various direct and indirect consequences of illegal migration.

This research addresses the main issue concerning the impact of illegal migration on regional security. The primary challenge lies in how the influx of illegal migrants affects the political, economic, and social stability of Mediterranean countries.

The research utilizes a qualitative approach, focusing on in-depth analysis rather than statistical evaluation, to understand the impact of illegal migration on regional security in the Mediterranean region, considering political, social, and economic dimensions.

The findings indicate that illegal migration contributes to increased social and political tensions, which in turn fosters organized crime and terrorism. The study also reveals that cooperation between European countries and neighboring states could positively influence the reduction of security risks associated with migration.

Keywords: Asymmetric Security Threats, Illegal Migration, Regional Security, Mediterranean Region.

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مجلة العلوم السياسية
العدد (68) كانون الأول (2024) ISSN: 1815-5561 E-ISSN: 2521-912X

التهديدات الأمنية اللاتماثلية: دراسة تأثير الهجرة غير الشرعية على الأمن الإقليمي في منطقة البحر الأبيض المتوسط

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الملخص:

برزت الهجرة غير الشرعية في منطقة البحر الأبيض المتوسط بوصفها تحديا أمنيا معقدا ومتعدد الأوجه له آثار كبيرة على الاستقرار الإقليمي، تهدف هذه الدراسة البحثية إلى استكشاف تأثير الهجرة غير الشرعية على الأمن الإقليمي في سياق المتوسط، مع التركيز على التهديدات الأمنية اللاتماثلية. ومن خلال تحليل مختلف النتائج المباشرة وغير المباشرة للهجرة غير الشرعية.

تتناول هذه الدراسة الإشكالية الرئيسية المتعلقة بتأثير الهجرة غير الشرعية على الأمن الإقليمي. يتمثل التحدي الرئيسي في كيفية تأثير تدفقات المهاجرين غير الشرعيين على الاستقرار السياسي والاقتصادي والاجتماعي للدول المطلة على البحر الأبيض المتوسط.

استخدم الباحث منهجًا نوعياً، مع التركيز على التحليل المتعمق بدلاً من التقييم الإحصائي، لفهم تأثير الهجرة غير الشرعية على الأمن الإقليمي في منطقة البحر الأبيض المتوسط، مع الأخذ في الاعتبار الأبعاد السياسية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية.

تشير النتائج إلى أن الهجرة غير الشرعية تؤدي إلى زيادة التوترات الاجتماعية والسياسية، مما يساهم في تفشي الجريمة المنظمة والإرهاب. كما أظهرت الدراسة أن التعاون بين الدول الأوروبية والدول المجاورة يمكن أن يكون له تأثير إيجابي في تقليل المخاطر الأمنية المرتبطة بالهجرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التهديدات الأمنية اللاتماثلية، الهجرة غير الشرعية، الأمن الإقليمي، منطقة البحر الأبيض المتوسط.

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Introduction:

In recent years, the Mediterranean region has emerged as a focal point of discussions surrounding security threats, particularly in relation to illegal migration. The significance of this research lies in its exploration of how illegal migration impacts regional security dynamics, which is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners involved in international relations and security studies. The Mediterranean Sea which serves as a crucial border between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, is a hub for migratory movements influenced by conflict, economic instability, and environmental changes. Understanding these movements' impact on regional security is crucial for developing effective strategies.

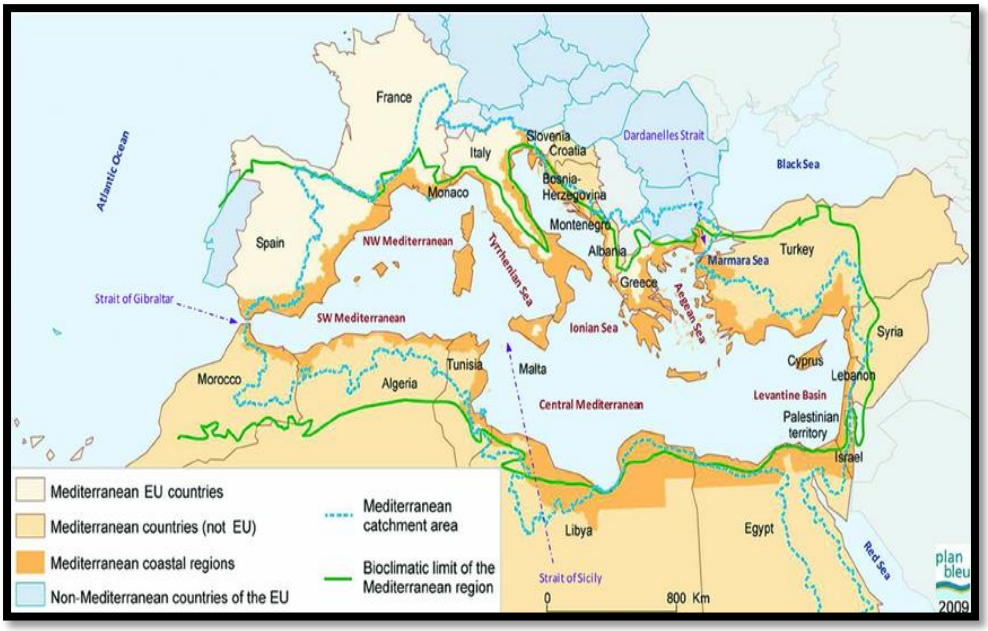


Figure (1) - The Mediterranean Region. Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Mediterranean-Region-and-location-of-the-main-Mediterranean-sea-sub-basins-adapted_fig1_257366644

This research aims to fill a notable gap in the existing literature regarding asymmetric security threats posed by illegal migration. While there has been considerable research on migration patterns and their socio-economic impacts, fewer studies have focused

specifically on the security ramifications of these migratory flows within the Mediterranean context.

This research seeks to answer the following question: *How does illegal migration contribute to asymmetric security threats in the Mediterranean region?*

The guiding hypothesis of this research is that illegal migration in the Mediterranean increases' asymmetric security threats like terrorism and organized crime by facilitating the movement of non-state actors. Irregular migration patterns, driven by political instability and economic distress, strain security resources and heighten risks. The influx of illegal migrants creates social, economic, and political challenges for host communities, emphasizing the need for a coordinated approach.

This research aims to enhance understanding of the impact of illegal migration on regional security in the Mediterranean region, providing insights into the intricate dynamics of this asymmetric security threat, thereby guiding policymakers, stakeholders, and practitioners in addressing its challenges and promoting regional stability and security. It focuses on establishing the context and importance of addressing illegal migration as a critical factor influencing regional stability and security.

Research Methodology

The study employs a comprehensive methodology to explore the intricate relationship between illegal migration and regional security dynamics.

1. Research Design

The research adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on in-depth analysis rather than statistical evaluation. This design is chosen to capture the nuanced perspectives of various stakeholders involved in or affected by illegal migration in the Mediterranean region, to understand how illegal migration influences regional security, encompassing political, social, and economic dimensions.

2. Data Collection Methods

To gain a comprehensive understanding of illegal migration's impact on regional security, the study employs various data collection methods. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with key informants, including policymakers, law enforcement officials, NGOs, and local community leaders. These interviews provided in-depth personal experiences and insights into how illegal migration affects security. Additionally, the study involves a thorough document analysis, reviewing literature, policy documents, reports from international organizations like the UNHCR and IOM, and media articles. This approach helps to contextualize historical trends in illegal migration and their implications for regional security.

3. Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis of data collected through interviews and focus groups involves several techniques. *Thematic Analysis* codes the data into themes that emerged naturally from participant responses, highlighting key patterns and insights. *Content Analysis* is applied to policy documents and media reports to identify recurring narratives and discourses related to illegal migration. This approach helps uncover prevailing trends and perspectives in the broader context of migration discussions.

4. Limitations

This study, while comprehensive, has some limitations. The subjectivity inherent in qualitative research means findings may be influenced by participant biases. Additionally, the focus on specific cases may limit the generalizability of results across the entire Mediterranean region. Despite these constraints, the study offers valuable insights into the impact of illegal migration.

Literature Review

The literature review of illegal migration's impact on Mediterranean regional security requires a solid theoretical foundation. Asymmetric security threats, characterized by unconventional tactics and irregular actors, offer a valuable lens for analyzing this

phenomenon. Theories like Arquilla and Ronfeldt's "asymmetric warfare" model (Mitrović 2019, 6-10), and Baldwin's "new security agenda" emphasize the importance of migration as a security issue, highlighting how it disrupts state security and challenges traditional security measures (Ivančík and Andrassy 2023, 26).

Migration theories like Push-Pull Theory, World-Systems Theory, and Network Theory offer valuable insights into the dynamics of migration. The push-pull theory explains factors that drive individuals away from their home countries and those that drive them towards new destinations (Van Hear et al. 2020, 19-36), while World-Systems Theory links economic inequalities to migration flows (O'Reilly 2022, 3-12). Network Theory further explains how migration networks facilitate and sustain migration processes, providing a deeper understanding of Mediterranean migration patterns (De Haas 2011, 59-69).

Mauro(2022) examines the impact of illegal migration across the US-Mexico border on national security and border management, offering insights that are relevant to the Mediterranean context. Similarly, Molland (2022) analyzes the effects of illegal migration on regional security in Southeast Asia. Their findings reveal patterns and policy responses that can be informative for understanding similar issues in the Mediterranean region.

Debattista (2023) explores the intricate migration patterns in the Mediterranean, driven by conflict, economic instability, and environmental changes. This study underscores the role of migration policies and their impact on regional security. (Lori and Schilde 2021, 1-9) investigate how illegal migration influences security policies in Southern European countries, focusing on challenges such as border control and resource allocation.

Integrating recent statistical data is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of illegal migration's impact on regional security. The UNHCR(2024) provides annual reports detailing migration flows and refugee statistics, offering a current view of trends and their implications for Mediterranean security . Eurostat(2024) also

offers valuable data on migration, asylum applications, and border incidents in European countries, which helps in analyzing the broader security impact .

The migration crisis, which saw a significant influx of refugees and migrants into Europe, had profound security implications, including challenges in border control and political tensions. (Lesser 2023, 212-228) provides a detailed analysis of this crisis, highlighting its effects on Mediterranean security. Additionally, Operation Sophia, an EU naval operation aimed at combating human trafficking and illegal migration in the Mediterranean, offers insights into policy responses and their effectiveness (Shukri 2023, 182-195).

The research is structured into three main sections to provide a comprehensive analysis:

1. Overview of Security Challenges and Migration Dynamics in the Mediterranean.

1.1. The nature and characteristics of asymmetric security threats.

The Mediterranean region faces numerous asymmetric security threats, exploiting vulnerabilities and power disparities, making traditional military strategies difficult to combat.

Irregular migration in the Mediterranean region has escalated significantly in recent years, driven by a complex mix of conflict, persecution, poverty, and environmental challenges. People from the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa undertake dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea, seeking refuge and better opportunities in Europe. This migration trend presents multiple security challenges. These include human trafficking, smuggling, the strain on limited resources in receiving countries, and the potential infiltration of individuals with malicious intent (Castles et al. 2012, 117-151).

Terrorism remains a significant asymmetric security threat in the Mediterranean region, with extremist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda exploiting political instability, weak governance, and social grievances to establish a presence in countries like Syria, Iraq,

Libya, and Tunisia. They use tactics like suicide bombings, kidnappings, and guerrilla warfare to spread fear and advance their ideologies (Reisner 2023, 209-223).

Additionally, The Mediterranean also serves as a critical transit route for organized crime, including drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking. Criminal networks exploit weak border controls, corruption, and political instability in countries like Libya, Algeria, and Tunisia, contributing to regional insecurity, and fueling violence and social unrest.

1.2.Patterns and dynamics of illegal migration.

This study provides an overview of key aspects of irregular migration in the Mediterranean region, highlighting various migration routes that have emerged over time. The Eastern Mediterranean Route involves crossings from Turkey to Greece, continuing into Europe. The Central Mediterranean Route is often traversed by migrants from North African countries like Libya and Tunisia, leading to Italy or Malta, while the Western Mediterranean Route is used by migrants from Morocco and Algeria who aim to reach Spain either by land or sea.

The push factors driving illegal migration in this region are numerous. Armed conflicts, political instability, persecution, and poverty are significant forces that compel individuals to flee their homes. Countries like Syria, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Eritrea, and others in the Sahel region have experienced various crises that serve as push factors, leading to a steady outflow of irregular migrants. Environmental challenges, including the effects of climate change, also exacerbate these conditions.

Pull factors, on the other hand, refer to the incentives that attract migrants to specific destinations. In the Mediterranean context, these include the prospect of better economic opportunities, access to welfare systems, family reunification, and the perception of higher living standards in European countries. Germany, France, Italy, and Sweden are often viewed as desirable destinations due to

their relatively stronger economies and established diaspora communities that can offer support.

Irregular sea crossings across the Mediterranean have become especially perilous. Migrants often board overcrowded and unseaworthy vessels, risking their lives on treacherous journeys. The Central Mediterranean Route, in particular, has witnessed many tragedies, with numerous shipwrecks, capsizing incidents, and deaths due to harsh weather conditions. Thousands have lost their lives while attempting to reach European shores.



Figure (2) - Migration in The Mediterranean Region. **Border Security Report. 2021. "Migration in the Greater Mediterranean Region." 2021** . https://www.border-security-report.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Migration-in-the-Greater-Mediterranean-Region-1-768x693.jpg

The migration challenges facing the Mediterranean region require a comprehensive strategy. Such a strategy must address the root causes of migration, enhance border management, foster security cooperation, and create economic opportunities to reduce migration pressures. In addition, international cooperation is essential for safeguarding the rights of migrants and ensuring humane responses to this ongoing crisis (King and DeBono 2013, 1-31).

Illegal migration is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors such as economic disparities, political instability, conflicts,

and environmental challenges. Economic disparities, such as income differences and employment prospects, drive people from disadvantaged areas to seek better livelihoods in countries with stronger economies.

The promise of higher wages, improved working conditions, and access to social welfare systems are significant draws for irregular migration. Political instability and conflicts, such as armed conflicts and civil wars, create insecurity, leading individuals to flee their homes. Social and political factors, such as discrimination, social exclusion, and lack of human rights protections, further contribute to migration. Political repression, limited access to education and healthcare, and constraints on individual freedoms further drive people to seek better opportunities elsewhere. The lack of development opportunities is a major driver of irregular migration, as individuals often feel marginalized and deprived of prospects for a better future (Jovanov 2023, 72).

1.3. International legal frameworks and migration policies.

The Mediterranean region faces a delicate balance between regional security and upholding international human rights obligations, which is shaped by key legal frameworks and migration policies. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are at the heart of international refugee law, providing essential rights such as protection against refoulement, access to employment, education, and legal assistance (Krause 2021, 610-613). However, these protections are increasingly strained by the growing numbers of displaced individuals and complex migration routes.

In Europe, The Dublin Regulation governs how asylum claims are processed within the EU, assigning responsibility to the first country a migrant enters, resulting in disproportionate pressure on frontline states like Italy and Greece. This creates friction among EU member states and calls for reform. The proposed New Pact on Migration and Asylum aims to address this imbalance and foster greater solidarity among member states (Lott 2023, 459-474).

Adding complexity to this already intricate system, The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) significantly impacts how migration policies are implemented, enshrining key human rights standards. However, the challenge lies in ensuring that these standards are consistently applied across member states, as differences in interpretation and implementation can lead to discrepancies in the treatment of migrants.

The intersection of these legal frameworks reveals a system that must constantly balance procedural demands with humanitarian principles. The European Union's Common European Asylum System (CEAS) represents an attempt to streamline these processes, but conflicts between the need for border control and the obligation to protect fundamental rights persist (Baumgartel and Ganty 2024, 98-105).

The implications of these legal frameworks for regional security and migration management are profound, as states are continually influenced by international legal obligations that call for the humane treatment of migrants and respect for human rights. Best practices for managing migration, such as comprehensive asylum procedures and regional cooperation, aim to ensure that security concerns do not overshadow fundamental rights (Abdullayev et al. 2023, 428-430). However, achieving policy coherence remains an ongoing challenge, especially in light of the increasing pressure that migration flows place on both frontline states and the broader region.

2. Impacts and Responses to Illegal Migration in the Mediterranean Region.

2.1. Potential security risks associated with illegal migration.

Illegal migration poses significant security risks at local, national, and international levels, including human trafficking, smuggling of goods and weapons, and the potential infiltration of extremist ideologies. These issues contribute to broader challenges that affect not only the countries directly involved but also global security as a whole (Beare 2012, 11-41).

Human trafficking is a significant security issue linked to illegal migration, where traffickers exploit vulnerable migrants, causing forced labor, sexual exploitation, and modern slavery. This violates human rights, strengthens organized crime networks, and contributes to drug trafficking and money laundering, undermining legal systems.

Another critical security risk involves the smuggling of goods and weapons. Criminal networks often exploit illegal migration routes to transport contraband, including drugs, firearms, and counterfeit goods. Such activities pose a direct threat to the security of nations along these migration routes, as well as the destination countries. The smuggling of weapons, in particular, facilitates the proliferation of arms, potentially aiding criminal enterprises and terrorist groups. This exacerbates national security concerns and contributes to broader global instability (Bigo 2003, 121-149).

In addition to these risks, illegal migration places immense pressure on border security and national sovereignty. Large-scale irregular migration flows can overwhelm border control systems, resulting in breaches in security and creating vulnerabilities for criminal exploitation. This compromises a nation's ability to regulate migration and protect its citizens, posing a direct challenge to national sovereignty. Effective border management is essential for maintaining territorial integrity and ensuring long-term security (Adamson 2006, 175-184).

Furthermore, the social and political impacts of irregular migration can have significant security consequences. An influx of irregular migrants can lead to rapid demographic changes, cultural tensions, and perceived strains on public services, which can erode social cohesion and create political instability. These divisions, if not addressed through inclusive policies and integration measures, can lead to conflict and unrest within societies. Governments must engage with local communities and foster dialogue to mitigate these tensions and promote long-term stability.

2.2.Social, economic, and political consequences for host communities and states.

Illegal migration has significant social, economic, and political consequences for host communities and states. It affects not only the immediate living conditions of migrants but also the broader social fabric, economic stability, and political dynamics of the region. Transit countries often face significant humanitarian challenges, such as overcrowded and unsanitary shelters and informal settlements, leading to serious health risks. Migrants in these areas lack access to essential services like medical care, education, and legal support, resulting in widespread untreated illnesses and worsening living conditions.

Transit countries also face political and operational hurdles in managing large influxes of migrants. Economic constraints, weak infrastructure, and political instability make it difficult to provide adequate support. Poor coordination between national governments, international agencies, and local NGOs can lead to inefficient aid distribution, exacerbating the plight of migrants. Stronger collaboration among stakeholders is essential to improve service provision and tackle structural limitations that hinder effective responses to migrant crises (Chamie 2020, 230-245).

The social consequences of illegal migration are equally complex for host communities. The arrival of large numbers of undocumented migrants can lead to tensions and conflict, particularly when cultural differences and language barriers exist. Competition for limited resources, such as healthcare, education, and housing, often increases, straining public services and potentially reducing their quality for all residents. Moreover, illegal migration can contribute to crime and security challenges, including human smuggling and drug trafficking, placing additional pressure on law enforcement agencies.

Undocumented migrants are especially vulnerable to exploitation due to their precarious legal status. Employers and landlords may take advantage of their fear of deportation, subjecting them to harsh

working conditions, low wages, and substandard housing. This exploitation not only harms migrants but also perpetuates social inequalities within host communities.

Enforcing immigration laws imposes significant costs on host states, straining government budgets and diverting funds from other public services. The economic burden of managing illegal migration often complicates the policy responses of host countries (Aniche 2020, 37-61).

Politically, illegal migration is a highly charged issue that can have wide-reaching consequences. Public opinion on migration can shape election outcomes and influence policy priorities, often leading to polarized political environments. Diplomatic relations among countries of origin, transit, and destination are also affected by migration policies, with disagreements over border control, asylum policies, and responsibility-sharing straining relations.

In summary, illegal migration presents a multifaceted challenge for host communities and states, with wide-ranging social, economic, and political consequences.

2.3. Responses and Policies of Key Regional Actors.

The impact of illegal migration on regional security is a complex issue that requires a coordinated approach involving international organizations, regional security initiatives, and ethical considerations. The European Union (EU) has been instrumental in addressing these challenges through policies like the European Agenda on Migration and the creation of agencies like the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). However, these efforts have faced criticism for externalizing migration control and failing to achieve equitable burden-sharing among member states (Coman-Kund 2019, 34-58).

The United Nations (UN) plays a critical role in addressing the security implications of illegal migration through its agencies, such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). These agencies work to protect migrants' rights, foster cooperation among states,

and deliver humanitarian assistance to displaced individuals. However, the UN faces difficulties in ensuring consistent implementation across different regions due to conflicting interests and priorities among member states (Raineri and Strazzari 2021, 201).

Frontex plays a significant role in managing the EU's external borders, coordinating joint operations, assisting member states with border surveillance, search and rescue missions, and conducting return operations for undocumented migrants. However, it has also faced criticism for human rights violations and lack of transparency in its operations. Allegations of pushbacks and excessive use of force during deportations have sparked widespread debate, raising concerns about whether the agency's actions adhere to international human rights standards.

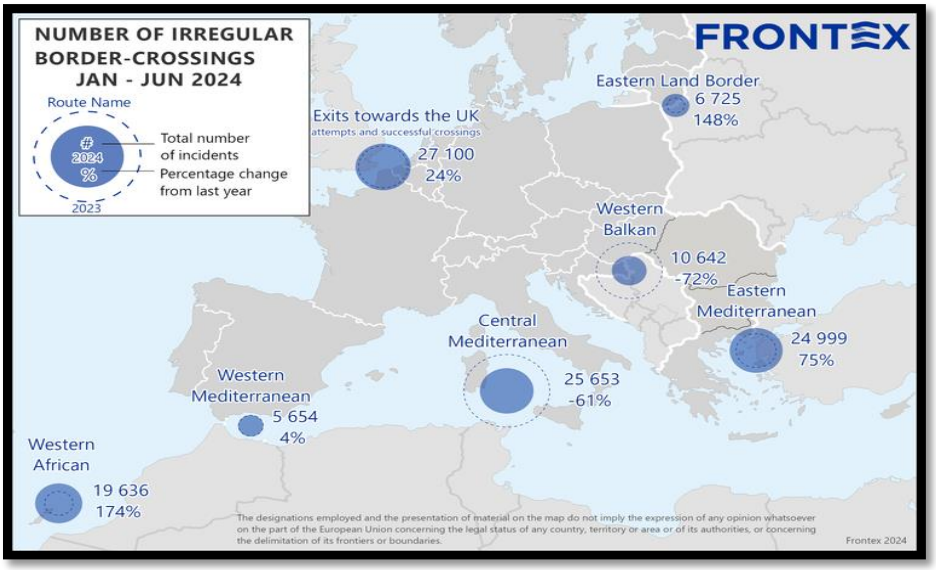


Figure (3) - EU external borders: Irregular border 2024. Frontex. 2024. "IBC 06 2024."2024. https://www.frontex.europa.eu/thumb/Images_News/2024/IBC_06_2024.prop_750x.7ba5e47a96.png

The Rabat Process, beyond Europe, represents a critical framework for dialogue and cooperation on migration between European and African nations along the Western Mediterranean route. It focuses on border management, legal migration, and combating migrant smuggling. However, the effectiveness of this framework remains

a subject of debate, as more concrete actions and stronger political commitment are needed to address the challenges posed by illegal migration.

In conclusion, tackling the impact of illegal migration on regional security, international organizations like EU and UN, Frontex initiatives, and ethical considerations are needed to ensure legal compliance and transparency (Dick and Schraven 2018).

3. Strategies and Solutions for Managing Migration and Security in the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean's migration and security issues require a comprehensive approach, including enhanced border security, regional cooperation, immigration policies, economic stability, conflict resolution, advanced surveillance technologies, and increased patrols.

3.1.Challenges and Successes in Coordinating Efforts and Implementing Strategies.

Coordinating efforts and implementing effective strategies to mitigate security risks associated with illegal migration present several challenges and successes (Kullenberg 2002, 762-767). The study will delve into them in detail:

Challenges:

Addressing the challenges of illegal migration involves several key obstacles. One of the main issues is the lack of effective cooperation among various stakeholders. Coordination among countries of origin, transit, and destination, as well as international organizations and regional initiatives, is often hindered by differences in legal frameworks, operational capacities, and data systems. Bureaucratic barriers and a lack of trust further complicate efforts to streamline collaboration.

Resource constraints also present a significant challenge, particularly for Mediterranean countries facing high migration pressures. Adequate financial, human, and technological resources are needed to manage border control, reception facilities, and asylum processes effectively. However, many of these countries struggle to allocate

sufficient resources, limiting their ability to address migration flows and mitigate associated security risks (Adamson 2006, 175-184). Human rights concerns add another layer of complexity. Balancing the need for security with the protection of migrants' rights, especially for vulnerable groups like women, children, and asylum seekers, is a delicate task. Overcrowded reception facilities and detention centers often raise concerns about living conditions and access to legal protections, making it difficult to ensure compliance with international human rights standards (Ferreira 2019).

Successes:

Efforts to manage illegal migration have seen several successes. Enhanced border control measures, such as the use of advanced surveillance technologies and joint operations between border agencies, have significantly contributed to reducing security risks. These improvements have helped intercept irregular migration routes and prevent cross-border criminal activities, aiding in the identification of potential security threats (Boswell 2003, 619-638).

Cooperation agreements, both bilateral and multilateral, have also yielded positive outcomes. Mediterranean countries, along with international organizations, have strengthened their collective response to security risks through information sharing, intelligence exchange, and joint operations. Initiatives like joint patrols and intelligence networks have led to the successful apprehension of human traffickers and others involved in illegal migration (Buckley et al. 2008, 3-11). Comprehensive approaches that address migration holistically have proved effective as well. These efforts combine border control with tackling the root causes of migration, promoting legal migration pathways, and improving reception and asylum systems. By focusing on drivers of migration and providing alternatives like resettlement programs and labor mobility schemes, these strategies have helped reduce security risks linked to illegal migration.

Nuanced Discussion on the Evolving Geopolitical Landscape:

The Mediterranean region's migration dynamics are influenced by global power realignments, regional conflicts, diplomatic relations, and economic disparities.

The U.S.-China rivalry has reshaped global geopolitical priorities, affecting trade, military strategies, and migration patterns. European and Mediterranean countries face a complex international landscape, potentially affecting migration flows and security cooperation. Regional conflicts like the Syrian Civil War have been significant drivers of migration, with many seeking refuge in Europe. Diplomatic relations play a crucial role in shaping migration management strategies, as demonstrated by the EU-Turkey deal of 2016.

Table (1) - The Evolving Geopolitical Landscape

Global Power Shifts	**The U.S.-China rivalry has shifted global geopolitical priorities, influencing migration patterns and security dynamics. This shift may affect European and Mediterranean countries' migration flows and security cooperation, potentially affecting international resources and policies for border security and migration management.**
Regional Conflicts	**The Syrian Civil War has significantly impacted migration patterns, with millions fleeing conflict and seeking asylum in Europe via the Mediterranean. Understanding these regional conflicts helps anticipate migration trends and plan effective responses.**
Diplomatic Relations	**The EU-Turkey deal of 2016 aimed to control migration from Turkey to Europe, involving Turkey's agreement to return migrants in exchange for EU incentives. Diplomatic dynamics, political tensions, and negotiations impact migration flows and Mediterranean border management strategies.**
Economic Factors	**Globalization has accelerated economic interconnections, causing migration from poorer regions to wealthier ones. Economic disparities in North Africa and the Middle East drive people towards Europe, affecting Mediterranean migration patterns.**

Source: Created by the authors.

Political tensions can alter migration flows, requiring constant recalibration of border management strategies. Economic factors also influence migration patterns, with globalization accelerating economic interconnections and economic disparities in North Africa and the Middle East driving people to seek better opportunities in Europe. Mediterranean countries often serve as entry points for these migrants.

In conclusion, the evolving geopolitical landscape is a complex web of factors that collectively influence migration patterns in the Mediterranean region. Countries must adopt flexible, coordinated approaches that consider the broader geopolitical context while maintaining a focus on human rights and security.

3.2.Policy Implications and Recommendations

Illegal migration in the Mediterranean presents significant challenges, impacting regional security and necessitating a nuanced, coordinated response. To address this complex issue effectively, several strategies must be integrated.

Firstly, strengthening regional cooperation among Mediterranean countries is essential. Enhancing information sharing and intelligence exchange will streamline joint efforts and foster burden-sharing. By establishing secure communication channels and holding regular consultations, countries can better align policies, build mutual trust, and distribute migration pressures more evenly. This collaborative approach helps mitigate the burden on any single country and promotes a unified response to migration challenges.

Equally important is the protection of human rights in migration management. Migrants, particularly vulnerable groups such as women, children, and victims of trafficking, require special protections to safeguard their rights. Implementing and enforcing standards for their treatment, ensuring access to due process, adequate living conditions, and protection from exploitation are crucial. Training and capacity-building for border officials and relevant stakeholders will equip them with the necessary skills to identify and assist victims of trafficking and abuse, ensuring that migration policies are humane and respect the dignity of all individuals (Debattista 2023).

Enhancing resource allocation is another vital aspect of addressing illegal migration. Mediterranean countries facing significant migration pressures require additional financial and technical assistance to bolster border control infrastructure, improve reception

facilities, and refine asylum systems. Promoting equitable burden-sharing within the European Union is essential to ensure that resources are distributed fairly, helping to manage the immediate challenges of migration and strengthening the capacity of affected countries.

Fostering global partnerships also plays a crucial role in managing migration challenges. Strengthening relationships with countries of origin and transit, especially in North Africa, can enhance efforts to manage migration flows and address regional security concerns. Collaborating with international organizations such as the UN and its specialized agencies provides access to global expertise, resources, and coordination mechanisms. These partnerships are instrumental in developing comprehensive strategies to address both the causes and consequences of illegal migration (Lacroix 2022, 1035-1041).

Table (2) - Recommendations for Policy Improvements

Enhance Legal Framework Integration	**Align national security measures with international legal obligations, incorporating human rights protections into border and immigration policies.**
Adopt Comprehensive Asylum Procedures	**Create and enforce fair, efficient, and transparent asylum procedures to protect the rights of individuals seeking refuge.**
Improve Coordination	**Strengthen collaboration among governments, international organizations, and NGOs to ensure security and humanitarian responses are well-coordinated.**
Implement Oversight Mechanisms	**Set up independent oversight to monitor border security measures, addressing any abuses or deficiencies.**
Invest in Support Services	**Provide resources to improve conditions in transit and detention centers, including healthcare, legal assistance, and adequate living conditions for migrants.**

Source: ***Created by the authors.***

In conclusion, addressing illegal migration in the Mediterranean requires a multifaceted strategy that balances regional cooperation, human rights protection, increased resources, and global partnerships. This approach ensures a comprehensive and humane response to the challenges of migration.

3.3.Enhancing Border Security, Improving Migration Management, and Fostering Regional Cooperation.

Effective border management is crucial for maintaining security and facilitating legitimate travel and trade. To address these needs,

enhancing border security, improving migration management, and fostering regional cooperation are essential strategies. Enhancing border security involves implementing advanced measures to detect and prevent unauthorized crossings and criminal activities. Utilizing technologies such as biometrics, surveillance systems, drones, and satellite imagery can significantly improve border monitoring and real-time situational awareness. These technologies help identify suspicious activities and unauthorized border crossings, allowing border patrol agencies to act more effectively (Csernatoni 2018, 175-200). Additionally, developing infrastructure, such as physical barriers and modern facilities at ports of entry, can enhance the efficiency of border control procedures and act as a deterrent to unauthorized entries (Gulzau and Mau 2021, 411-438). Collaboration with the private sector, including partnerships for technology development and infrastructure investment, further strengthens border security measures through innovation and resource sharing (Carr 2016, 43-62).

Aligning border security and migration management with international legal obligations and human rights is equally important. To ensure compliance with international conventions like the 1951 Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights, policies must incorporate human rights protections. This includes avoiding practices such as arbitrary detention and ensuring adequate support for migrants, such as legal assistance, healthcare, and safe living conditions. Enhancing transparency through oversight mechanisms helps maintain accountability and prevent abuses (Reviglio 2020). Improving migration management requires comprehensive policies and procedures that balance security with the rights of migrants (Adamson 2006, 175-184). Implementing regularization programs for undocumented migrants can provide legal pathways and address irregular migration challenges. Advanced border screening, including biometric verification and risk assessments, helps identify security risks while facilitating low-risk travel. International cooperation among

countries of origin, transit, and destination is crucial for effective migration management. Collaborative efforts in information sharing, border control coordination, and addressing root causes through development initiatives are key (Martin 2011, 29-49).

Fostering regional cooperation is essential for tackling common border security and migration management challenges. Bilateral and multilateral agreements among neighboring countries or regional blocs facilitate collaboration on these issues, including information sharing, joint operations, and policy harmonization (Buckley et al. 2008, 3-11). Regional integration promotes better border management by facilitating the movement of people and goods and addressing shared security concerns collectively. Creating regular dialogue platforms, such as regional conferences or working groups, allows countries to exchange best practices, share experiences, and discuss common challenges. These platforms help build trust and promote understanding, which is crucial for effective cooperation on border security and migration management (Wolff 2008, 257-260).

3.4.Case Studies and Policy Analysis

Examining Greece's refugee crisis highlights the significant effects of the EU's Dublin Regulation and the 1951 Refugee Convention on frontline states. Greece's issues with overcrowded and inadequate refugee camps illustrate the urgent need for better living conditions and procedural safeguards, as emphasized by the European Court of Human Rights. This situation underscores the broader challenges faced by countries at the forefront of migration crises and the necessity for policy reform and support (Stivas 2023, 49-72).

In the U.S.-Mexico border scenario, ethical and legal complexities of migration management are evident. Policies like family separation and detention centers have raised serious human rights concerns under international frameworks such as the Refugee Convention and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Responses from NGOs and international organizations

highlight the global challenge of aligning migration management with legal and humanitarian standards.

Turkey's handling of Syrian refugees, especially through the EU-Turkey Statement, showcases the challenges of balancing international obligations with humanitarian needs. This case underscores the need for coherent policies that address both migration management and humanitarian concerns (Lüleci-Sula and Sula 2021, 1-17).

Similar crises in other regions, such as the Andaman Sea Migration Crisis involving Rohingya Muslims and Bangladeshi migrants, and the Migrant Caravans from Central America, reveal the importance of regional cooperation and addressing the root causes of migration. The Libyan Migration Crisis in North Africa and the Sahel further illustrates the ethical challenges of managing migration from unstable regions, emphasizing the complex balance between security measures and humanitarian principles (Glouftsios 2021, 452-470).

Analyzing these case studies and comparative examples highlight the effectiveness of border security and migration management policies relative to international legal frameworks and humanitarian principles. Effective policies should align with agreements such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Dublin Regulation, and the European Convention on Human Rights. It is crucial to assess how these policies safeguard human rights, including conditions in detention centers and the fairness of asylum procedures, while also addressing the impact on burden-sharing among EU member states.

Table (3) – Case Studies

Greece's Refugee Crisis	The EU's Dublin Regulation and the 1951 Refugee Convention are being scrutinized in Greece, a major Mediterranean migration hub. The country faces challenges like overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and limited access to services in refugee camps. The European Court of Human Rights has intervened, highlighting the need for improved living conditions and procedural safeguards
The U.S.-Mexico Border	The U.S.-Mexico border situation highlights the ethical and legal challenges of managing migration and security. Policies like family separation and detention centers raise human rights concerns. International legal frameworks like the Refugee Convention and ICCPR are scrutinized. The case study examines the impact of these policies on migrants and the responses from NGOs and international organizations.
Turkey's Refugee Management	Turkey, hosting a large number of Syrian refugees, is a key case study for studying international legal frameworks and humanitarian principles. The EU-Turkey Statement has significant implications for Turkey and the EU. The case study examines Turkey's compliance with international obligations, humanitarian conditions in refugee camps, and its response to integration and support challenges

Source: Created by the authors.

Several recommendations to enhance policy effectiveness and ensure legal compliance involve aligning national and regional migration policies with international standards and revising those that do not meet these standards. Improving humanitarian conditions requires addressing identified gaps, such as enhancing living conditions in refugee camps and ensuring access to essential services. Enhancing coordination and support entails fostering collaboration among governments, international organizations, and NGOs to streamline responses and improve humanitarian aid. Finally, promoting policy flexibility involves designing adaptive policies that respond to changing migration patterns and humanitarian needs, ensuring a more responsive and humane approach. These recommendations aim to integrate legal and humanitarian considerations into migration

management, ensuring policies are both effective and aligned with international standards (Booth et al. 2020).

Table (4) – Comparative Analysis of Similar Regions

Southeast Asia	The Andaman Sea Migration Crisis (2015) in Southeast Asia involved Rohingya Muslims and Bangladeshi migrants, leading to human trafficking, boat accidents, and inadequate responses. The crisis underscored the need for regional cooperation and humanitarian aid, with countries and international organizations coordinating emergency responses and improving migrants' conditions.
Central America	The Migrant Caravans from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala highlighted the challenges of managing mass migration due to violence and poverty. The U.S. and Mexico implemented policies, including improved border security and asylum processing, highlighting the need for effective border management and addressing root causes in source countries
North Africa and the Sahel	The Libyan Migration Crisis highlights the ethical challenges of working with unstable regions and the need to balance security measures with humanitarian principles. The European Union's cooperation with Libyan authorities aimed to manage migration flows and improve detention conditions, but faced criticism over human rights concerns.

Source: Created by the authors.

Results and Discussion:

The study of the impact of illegal migration on Mediterranean regional security uncovers several critical findings and implications that offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play. By examining asymmetric security threats, migration patterns, impacts on host communities, and the effectiveness of policy responses, the study provides valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges associated with illegal migration.

Results:

The research identifies a notable increase in asymmetric security threats linked to illegal migration, with significant implications for regional stability. The rise in terrorist activities is particularly concerning, as extremist groups are increasingly exploiting

migration routes to infiltrate conflict-prone areas and gain operational advantages.

The data shows that these groups leverage the chaos and lack of effective border controls to carry out their activities, thus exacerbating the security situation in the Mediterranean region. Similarly, heightened smuggling operations have been observed, with criminal networks utilizing migration routes to transport illicit goods such as drugs and weapons. This illicit activity not only contributes to regional instability but also poses additional challenges to law enforcement and border security agencies. Furthermore, maritime security is significantly impacted by increased migration flows, leading to illegal crossings and dangerous maritime conditions that strain search and rescue operations.

The study highlights that the instability induced by illegal migration contributes to the proliferation of these asymmetric threats, which negatively affects regional security and stability.

The study also outlines distinct migration patterns from North Africa and the Middle East to Europe, driven primarily by severe economic hardship, political instability, and ongoing conflicts. Migrants' choices of routes are heavily influenced by factors such as safety and the feasibility of reaching their destinations, reflecting the dire conditions in their home countries. Economic deprivation, political unrest, and active violence in migrants' countries of origin push individuals to seek refuge in Europe.

The observed migration routes highlight how migrants navigate perilous journeys in search of stability and opportunities, with their decisions shaped by the challenging conditions they face. This understanding is crucial for anticipating shifts in migration flows and designing effective migration policies.

The study further reveals substantial impacts on host communities, including increased strain on public resources such as healthcare, education, and housing. The influx of migrant's places additional pressure on existing infrastructure and services, leading to

challenges in accommodating the growing population. The economic impact of migration is multifaceted, with notable changes in labor markets that create both opportunities and challenges for local economies.

For instance, while migration can address labor shortages and bring new skills to the workforce, it can also lead to increased competition for jobs and impact wage structures. Social integration issues also arise, as migrants face challenges related to cultural tensions, access to essential services, and community cohesion. Addressing these issues requires effective strategies to manage migration's multifaceted effects on host communities.

Policy responses to these challenges vary across Mediterranean countries. Some regions have implemented enhanced border controls to better manage migration flows, while others have focused on improving regional cooperation. Despite these efforts, significant gaps in policy implementation and coordination remain, undermining the overall effectiveness of migration management strategies. Inconsistent policy application and lack of cohesive strategies highlight the need for more unified and strategic approaches to address migration challenges comprehensively.

Discussion:

The study provides a detailed examination of the intricate relationship between illegal migration and regional security, emphasizing the need for comprehensive and coordinated responses. The rise in asymmetric security threats, including terrorism and smuggling, aligns with theories of asymmetric warfare.

In this context, non-state actors exploit weaknesses in traditional security frameworks, using migration routes for illicit activities. This underscores the necessity for advanced surveillance and intelligence-sharing to address these security challenges effectively. The findings suggest that addressing migration-related threats requires robust security measures that can adapt to the evolving nature of threats linked to migration.

Migration patterns and their drivers align with the push-pull model, where economic hardship, political instability, and conflict serve as significant push factors driving individuals to migrate, while perceived opportunities in Europe act as pull factors. This understanding is critical for designing effective migration policies and anticipating shifts in migration flows. By addressing the root causes of migration, such as economic deprivation and political unrest, policymakers can better manage migration flows and mitigate their impacts. The study confirms that migration is heavily influenced by socio-economic conditions and conflicts, reinforcing existing migration theories and highlighting the importance of addressing these underlying issues.

The significant impacts on host communities highlight the need for effective integration strategies. Managing the increased demand for public resources, navigating changes in labor markets, and addressing cultural tensions are essential for fostering community cohesion. Effective integration strategies should balance the needs of migrants with the capacities of host communities, ensuring that both groups benefit from well-designed policies. The research emphasizes the dual nature of migration impacts, which include both positive contributions and challenges. This underscores the importance of balanced approaches to migration management that address economic, social, and infrastructural challenges.

The varying effectiveness of policy responses across Mediterranean countries reveals the challenges of implementing consistent and comprehensive migration management strategies. While some countries have made progress through enhanced border controls and regional cooperation. Policy gaps and inconsistencies highlight the need for unified and strategic approaches.

Developing consistent policies, enhancing regional cooperation, and creating a coherent framework are critical steps toward addressing these gaps. A unified approach will help ensure that migration management strategies are effective and equitable across the region.

In summary, managing the impact of illegal migration on regional security requires a multi-dimensional strategy that incorporates enhanced security measures, effective migration management, and strengthened regional cooperation. Addressing asymmetric security threats and the challenges posed by migration necessitates a holistic approach that balances humanitarian needs with security concerns. By fostering greater collaboration among Mediterranean countries and developing coherent and adaptable policies, the region can better navigate the complexities of illegal migration and its impacts on regional security.

The study underscores the importance of ongoing adaptation and refinement of policies to address the evolving nature of migration and its implications for security and stability. Effective management of illegal migration will require a coordinated effort to address both the immediate and long-term challenges posed by this complex issue.

Conclusion:

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the impact of illegal migration on regional security in the Mediterranean, revealing the complex nature of asymmetric security threats, including terrorism and organized crime, that are intricately linked with the dynamics of illegal migration, which are influenced by economic instability, political unrest, and conflicts.

These factors drive irregular migration patterns that challenge conventional security frameworks and exacerbate existing vulnerabilities in the region. The nature of these threats requires a nuanced understanding of their impact on security and stability.

The study further highlights the significant repercussions of illegal migration on host communities and states, which face increased security risks, economic pressures, and social tensions.

The potential security risks, including the rise in criminal activities and the spread of extremist ideologies, compound the challenges faced by regional actors. The responses from key regional players have varied, with some successes in policy implementation, yet

many efforts are often fragmented and lack the necessary coordination to address the issue comprehensively. The social, economic, and political consequences underscore the need for a more integrated approach to managing migration and security.

To address these challenges effectively, the study recommends several strategies for improving regional security and migration management. Strengthening border security, enhancing migration management practices, and fostering better regional cooperation are crucial.

Addressing these issues requires overcoming challenges in policy coordination and resource allocation, but successful implementation of these strategies could significantly mitigate the adverse effects of illegal migration and contribute to a more stable and secure Mediterranean region.

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