

ALGERIA: MIGRATION FLOWS

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Abstract

Algeria holds a marginal place in terms of international migration which constitutes one of the oldest phenomena in the world. It has ratified all the United Nations international conventions and has been working to promote regular migration since 2003. As concerns skills mobility, Algeria is much more faced with a severe brain drain namely of physicians than with a brain circulation or skills mobility.

Key words: Algeria, Migration, Europe, Irregular migration.

Introduction

How important are migrations for Algeria? Does Algeria infringe international laws? How many Algerians are involved in illegal migration abroad? How many foreigners are involved in illegal migration in Algeria? Does Algeria benefit from remittances? How is Algeria affected by brain drain?

Algeria holds a marginal place in terms of international migration. The country has become a fortress with a very strong control of the borders.

It has ratified all the United Nations (UN) international conventions. These conventions and agreements are transposed in our national legal frameworks relating to the protection and the promotion of the foreigners' rights, as well as the protection of the Algerian citizens' rights abroad.

Algeria has been working to promote regular migration since 2003 and conducts permanent struggle against all forms of irregular migration both Nationals and foreigners in breach of the legislation relating to conditions of stays in Algeria.

Remittances inflows are quite low and the probability of remittances' decay is very high in the near future. The largest recipient country is Egypt

in North Africa, but the most important is Lebanon as remittances are a significant share of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Concerning skills mobility, Algeria is faced more with a severe brain drain, namely of physicians than with a brain circulation or skills mobility.

1. Algeria within international migration

International migration constitutes one of the oldest phenomena in the world. However, up to now, its measurement remains approximate, despite the sophistication of the statistics tools.

Algeria has a marginal place in terms of international migration with 0.7 % of Algerians abroad in relation to the global migrant population (UN-DESA, 2015). On the one hand, Algerians residing abroad represent 4.4% of the population residing in Algeria (2015). On the other hand, the percentage of foreigners in Algeria (242.4 million) is estimated (according to UN data) to 0.62 % of the Algerian population in 2015 (38.9 million). With this (Entry/exit), Algeria represents more a country of departure than a host one.

Country data are generally different. UN data are derived from country of habitual residence while countries include data by nationality. According to consular data, there was 2,1 million Algerians abroad in 2015.

Our estimate from different sources gives a presence of more than 300 000 foreigners in Algeria, half of them refugees (Saharawi and others).

Algeria is not a main migratory route to Europe due to the rather long distance from the Algerian coasts with the northern shores of the Mediterranean, comparing to other countries, such as Tunisia, Morocco or Libya.

The efforts made by Algeria to secure its land borders these five years are enormous. In fact, the security in the borders with the Sahel and Libya has been strengthened. As for Tunisia, it has set an increased border control on its boundaries. Morocco has closed its borders since 1994. The security of the maritime borders by the Coast Guards are also added to that. The air borders are still very secure. Algeria has thus become a very watched fortress.

Criminal economy exploits any flaw in our «security belt» and its actors represent a greater danger to our security than the few thousands of border migrants engaged in seasonal migration.

2. The legal framework - the foundation of international migration

Algeria has ratified all the fundamental United Nations Conventions, including the 1990 Convention on Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. It has also signed regional treaties (AMU) Arab Maghreb Union, (AU) African union and bilateral agreements with countries where there is a high density of its nationals. The Algerian legal framework includes all these clauses. Our legislation is far from being perfect. Though it is about to be improved.

3. Promoting regular migration

Whether it is in entry or exit, Algerian protects the largest share of migrants. They have access to all the services of the Algerian State.

3.1. Algerian migrants abroad

Our emigration is ancient. The root causes of departures relate to forced migration colonial policies. The Push-pull theory cannot explain this migration. Algerians were not attracted by France but were forced to migrate and join the French Army during World Wars (I & II) and for the reconstruction of France during the Post-War Boom (Glorious Thirties) 1945-1975.

We have reached the fourth Generation of Algerians settled and born in abroad. Social networks are currently contributing to the attraction of new departures.

All the data of our emigration flows, especially to France, indicates that the «Family reunification» constitutes the principal form, in particular that of the «French Family Members», with the highest rate in the last ten years.

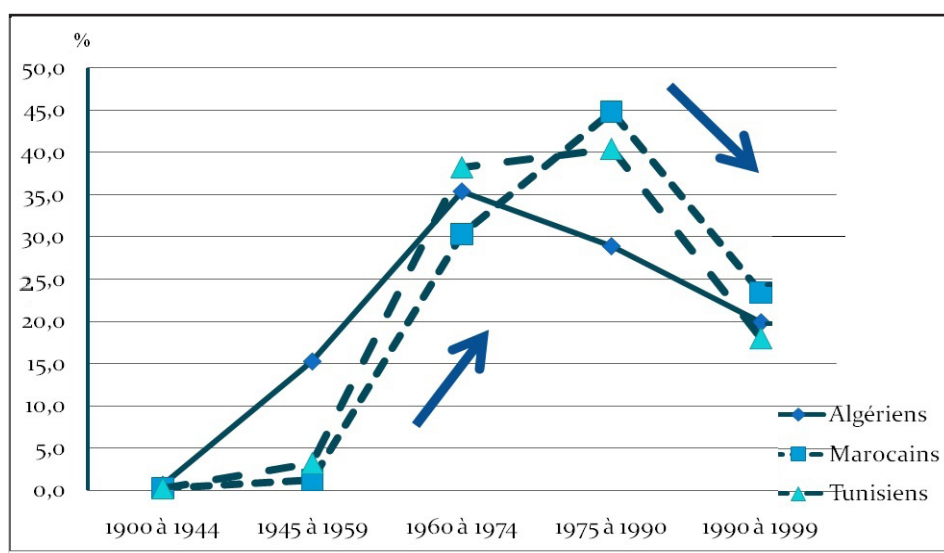
The flow of departures from Algeria is estimated at an annual average of 50,000 new migrants over the last ten years. Though migra-

tion routes are diversified, France remains the top destination country for Algerians.

It is also in France that the majority of our students go to pursue studies, due to the ease of language.

Eight countries (out of the 72 host countries) receiving Algerian migrants account for 94 % of the volume of the Algerian migrants. Hence, Algerian migrants are concentrated in some countries.

Figure 1. Historical trends of Algerian emigration to France (20th Century)



Source: MIREM, 2007.

3.2. Migration of foreign workers to Algeria

Migration flows to Algeria are also old. Algeria was above all a country of immigration with settlers from France and immigrants from Italy and Spain. After independence, there was high level of return to the countries of origin. Then, during the nineties (90s), most foreigners have left the country. It was only during this century that a new immigration pattern would appear in Algeria.

The entry flow is estimated around an average of 10 000 migrants these five last years, of which more than 75% come from borders. The rest are workers imported by foreign firms. There is a stock of 77 000 economic migrants in Algeria (DZA Report, 2015).

The naturalization of foreigners is still a marginal phenomenon. The majority of foreigners in Algeria come from the Arab countries. However, the majority of migrant workers currently in Algeria come from China, these Chinese workers represent 64% of foreign workers in Algeria.

4. The Fight against Irregular Migration

Irregular migration comes both from Algerians abroad and from foreigners in Algeria. The «undocumented» or other «clandestine», notions are rather stigmatizing. We used the notion of irregular migrants. These forms of migration are estimated to be statistically immeasurable. The stock is revealed during the process of regularization.

Administrative sources also provide further insights: intercepted by the police at the borders or the Gendarmerie or those which have been of a judicial or administrative decision.

Algeria does not have a global regularization strategy. The regularization, like the naturalization of migrants, is an exception.

4.1. Algerian migrants in an irregular situation abroad

There is very little data available on irregular Algerians abroad. Through the NGOs' reports, there would be less than 3,000 people placed in the retention centers in France in 2015 which is almost zero in relation to the volume of our Nationals registered with the consuls.

The data published by FRONTEX needs to be revised. The determination of nationalities of the people intercepted on different “migratory routes” must be done according to international recognized process, involving the responsibility of the countries of origin.

Additional information is also used, namely the volume of people who are expelled (different forms, on arrival, intercepted at the start, or placed ...). We have estimated an average of 5 people /day in the early 2000s for Algerian migrants.

We have also developed a list of 14 obstacles to be overcome by migrants for those (*Harraga*) to reach the northern shores of the Mediterranean from the Algerian coast. This form of irregular migration by sea is dominant among young people, especially men. Social Networks migration, with a strong assumption of the influence of their «peers» can explain partially the phenomenon.

4.2. Foreigners in irregular situation in Algeria

Border migration is a very old practice between Algeria and its south Saharan neighbors (Mali and Niger). This new phenomenon is observed during the first decade of this century. We have contributed in a survey on this phenomenon in 2007. (CISP/SARP, 2007).

Figure 2. Map of the Sub-Saharan Migrants: a typology by departments in Algeria

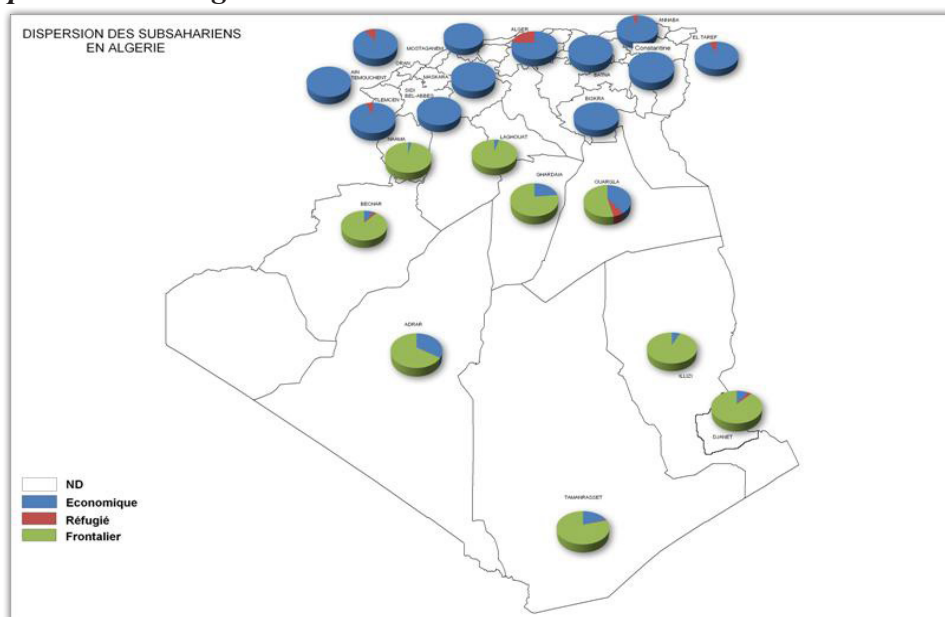
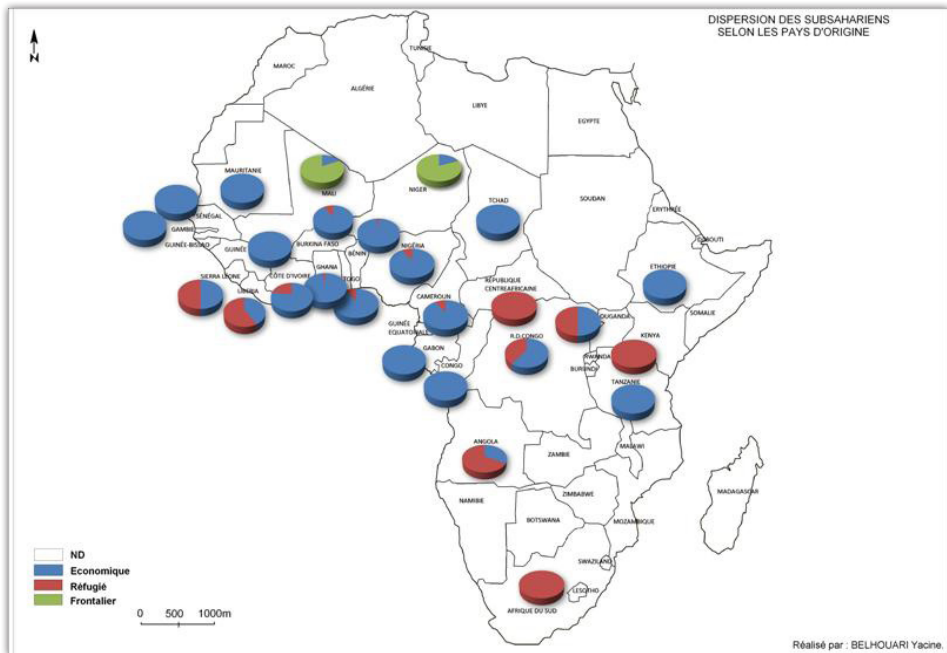
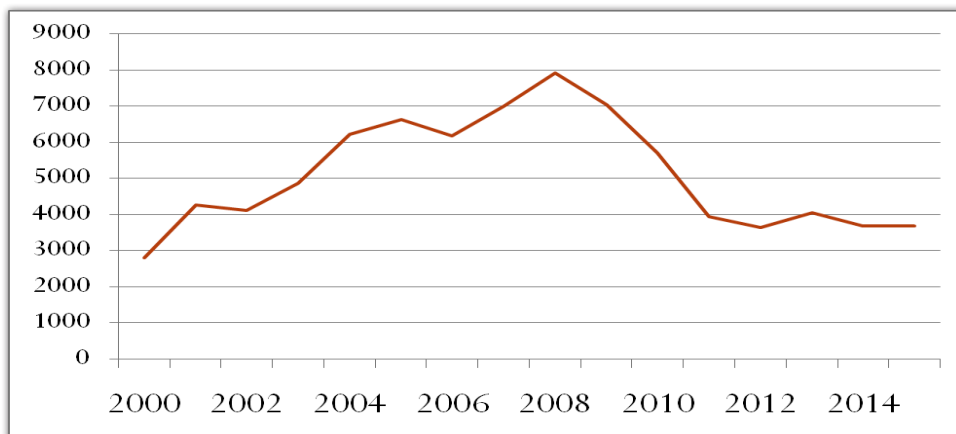


Figure 3. Map of the Sub-Saharan Migrants in Algeria by Country of Origin



According to security sources, the volume of immigrants in irregular situation in Algeria recorded a recovery in the recent years.

Figure 4. Trend of interceptions by the National Gendarmerie from 2000 to 2014.



Source: Gendarmerie Nationale, data (2015).

Most of the intercepted are from neighboring countries, Mali (overstay) and Niger (who engage in begging). To illustrate the case of nationals of Niger, the data observed (in 2015) 15,000 migrants on the way to Algeria and the same volume on the way to Niger.

For the nationals of Niger, Algeria sets up a return program at the request of the Nigerian authorities, respecting the human rights of migrants. A team of social workers, doctors and psychologists accompanied these returnees. Despite this organization, there are still some flaws.

The maps 2 above, based on the results of this survey, illustrates the typology of migrants in Algeria and in the Countries of origin.

5. Migration-Development: Remittances and Skills Mobility

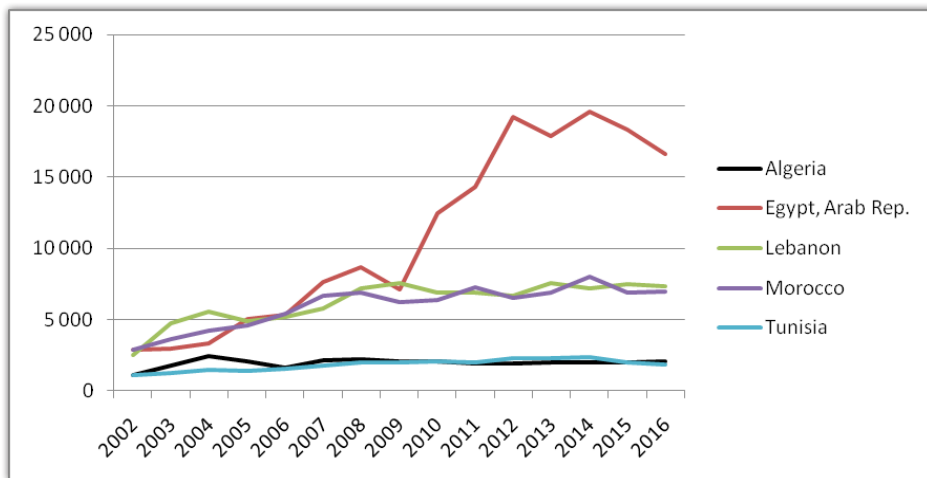
Since its independence, and even during the struggle for national liberation, Algerian migrants have a strategic place and a leading role in the development policy of the country. For this paper, we outlined the following two themes.

5.1. Remittances inflows

Remittances played an important role in the early years of Independence until the recovery of resources by Algeria, in particular the nationalization of hydrocarbons. Then, Algeria had even launched a strategy of return for the migrants with a reintegration program. Since then, remittances have a marginal share in Algeria's external revenues.

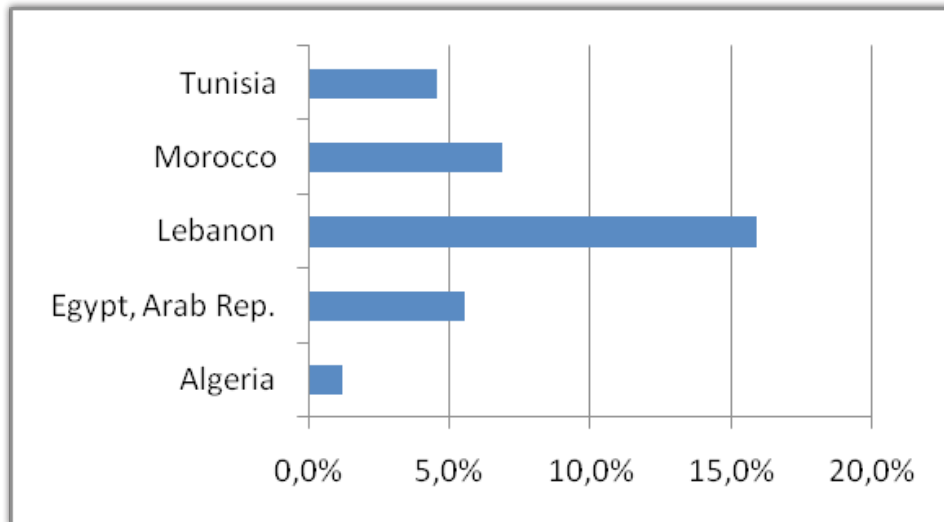
The level of transfers, observed by the World Bank, is quite low in relation to our community abroad, barely 1.2 % of GDP in 2016, compared with 4.6 % for Tunisia and 6.9% for Morocco or 15.9 % for Lebanon. It is also true that the volume has increased sharply, 200 dollars in the 1970s to more than 2 billion US\$ in 2016. The following graphs illustrate the trend of remittances since the 2000s from some selected Arab countries in comparison to Algeria.

Figure 5. Trends in remittances to selected countries from 2002 to 2016 (Mn US\$)



Source: Designed based on World Bank database, 2017.

Figure 6. Remittances of selected Arab countries by Share of GDP



Source: Designed by the author based on World Bank database, 2017.

Analysis of the components of remittances shows that 10% was sent from workers (personal) and 90 % from retirees (institutional). This trend would ultimately lead to remittances decay in the end.

5.2. Mobility of Skills or Brain Drain?

Skill mobility is a universal phenomenon because scientific progress innovation needs all workers highly skilled.

A recent study (CREAD / ILO, 2016) on Algeria indicates that there is more Brain Drain than Skills Mobility or Brain Circulation. This phenomenon is a consequence of the «Talents' War» triggered by hunters from some northern countries. Our study highlighted a «hidden» trend of Brain Drain. Most studies focused mainly on engineers. We revealed another trend: that of physicians seems to be also quite important.

Table 1. Distribution of Maghreb Migrants by High Level

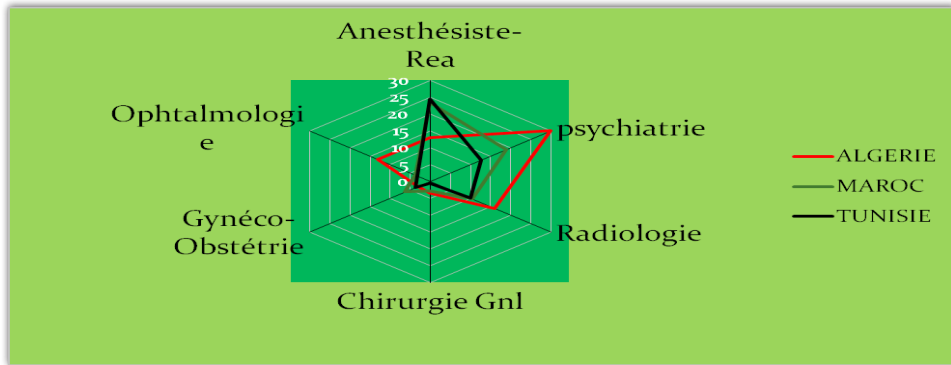
Level/ Country	Algeria	Tunisia	Morocco	Total
High Level	95 630	26 782	87 294	209 706
Of which <i>Physicians</i>	17 658	5 106	5 106	27 871
<i>BA Holders</i>	21 034	4 961	4 961	30 956
<i>Engineers</i>	14 115	6 787	6 787	27 689
<i>High Technicians</i>	44 255	17 325	52 407	113 987
<i>Technicians</i>	17 762	8 891	8 891	35 543
Total High Level	139 885	44 107	139 702	323 693
Total Migrants	453 395	230 402	640 046	1 323 843

Source: Designed from INSEE Employment Survey Data, 2002 (France)

The volume of the Maghrebian doctors in France has slightly exceeded that of engineers. Doctors from Algeria are more than double of that of the neighboring countries. This finding is not in itself an indication of Brain Drain.

To provide a Brain Drain rate we ran an in-depth analysis, taking into account not only the location of the training but also the specialties of physicians established in the host country.

Figure 7: Brain Drain Rate of Physicians By specialties from the Maghreb Countries to France



Source: CREAD/ILO - 2016, Algeria.

For Algeria, three profiles have high rates: that of psychiatrists, radiologists and then ophthalmologists.

Conclusion

From this study, the lessons to be learnt are:

1. Dealing with the Migrant Profile. There is a need for a better management of student mobility to fight against Brain Drain process.
2. Considering the international migration in general and the scientific one in particular. Two essential elements are noted in our analysis. There is a need for setting a migration research program and producing a national database on migration.
3. Reviewing the remittances and Brain Circulation. Remittances decay is a very high probability, so Diaspora's Investment seems to be the ideal track for the future.