

The Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Illegal Migration Phenomenon and Its Impacts on Algerian Society.

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Abstract:

Although migration is not a recent phenomenon, it has intensified recently and is now a crucial component of global integration. Some sociologists have referred to our time as the "age of migration," a term encompassing both legal and illegal movement, which impacts all civilizations regardless of national rules, cultural norms, or geographic location. Due to several variables and distinct aspects of migratory patterns, Algeria is both a destination and a source country for illegal migration, a situation that has become worse and more intense there since the early 1990s. We shall concentrate on the socio-cultural aspects of illegal migration and its ramifications in this intervention, particularly the social consequences for Algerian society and individuals within it.

Keywords: migration, illegal immigration, social change, attraction and expulsion factors

Introduction:

Migration is not new; however, it has accelerated significantly in recent decades, becoming an integral part of global integration. Some sociologists have even dubbed our era the "age of migration."¹ Two migration scholars, Castles and Miller (1993), identified four essential characteristics that will define migration trends and patterns shortly:

- Acceleration: The number of migrants crossing borders will rise to unprecedented levels.
- Diversity: Host countries will accept various types of migrants contrary to their previous policies, which favored specific categories such as workers, immigrants, and asylum seekers.
- Globalization: Migration has taken on a global character, expanding to encompass numerous countries.
- Feminization: The number of female migrants is increasing, unlike previous migration movements that predominantly involved men. The rise in female migration is closely linked to changes in the global labor market, including increased demand for domestic workers, the expansion of sex tourism, and the trafficking of women's services.¹

In this paper, we will explore the nature of illegal migration and the specific socio-cultural factors that drive Algerian individuals of all age groups to adopt and promote this phenomenon, as well as its varied implications on society.

¹ -Anthony Giddens, Introduction to Sociology, trans. Fayez Al-Sayegh, 4th ed., Arab Organization for Translation, Beirut, Lebanon, 2005, p. 331.

¹ - Anthony Giddens, the same previous reference,p340

1-Definition of Concepts:

-Migration: Migration refers to the act of moving from one place to another, whether for seeking livelihood, knowledge, medical treatment, or any other benefit.² Migration is derived from the verb "hajar," which means leaving a place. Migration involves leaving one's homeland and settling in another.³ In Arabic, Ibn Manzur defines migration as leaving one land for another.

In Arabic, the term "هجرة" corresponds to three terms in English: Migration, which refers to the process or targeted movement of migration; Emigration, which refers to this movement concerning the original homeland, indicating the departure phase, i.e., the move abroad, as if it relates to the movement concerning the country of origin; and Immigration, which refers to the entry of migrants and their residence in the receiving country.¹

-Illegal Migration: The term "illegal migration," is composed of two words, "migration" and "illegal." It signifies the violation of laws and regulations governing foreign nationals' entry into a country's sovereign territory. Thus, illegal migration encompasses any movement of individuals or groups across borders outside the legal framework. It emerged in the early twentieth century and peaked after adopting border closure policies in Europe during the 1970s.² Synonyms for this term include clandestine migration and illegal Immigration. In the Arab Maghreb region, there is a term called "harka," which, among migrants, refers to burning all documents and ties connecting the individual to their roots and identity, as well as disregarding all laws and borders to reach Europe.

-Attraction or Pull Factors: Just as push factors drive individuals and groups away from their original areas, pull factors in the receiving regions attract many individuals and groups to migrate to them. Push factors alone do not represent the complete causes of human movements. There must be pull factors that encourage people to migrate. Pull factors may be natural or even just perceived. These factors are linked to the region and the community to which migrants move and lie in the feature of this era, providing the ability to move and ease of communication between any two areas in the world due to the tremendous development in communication and transportation means. Pull factors also refer to all the conditions that attract migrants seeking better job opportunities and a higher standard of living.

-Expulsion or Push Factors: These are a set of factors that have pushed individuals out of their homeland, represented by the conditions in the sending countries from political, economic, geographical, social, demographic, psychological, and other perspectives, leading to the expulsion of migrants from their homeland.¹

² - Al-Mu'jam al-Kāfī, Beirut: Al-Maṭbū'āt lil-Tawzī' wal-Nashr, 4th ed., 1993.p155

³- Al-Fayruzabadi, Majd al-Din Muhammad ibn Ya'qub, Al-Qāmūs Al-Muḥīṭ, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.

¹ -Ghanem, Abdallah Abdulghani, Migrants: A Socioanthropological Study, 2nd ed., Alexandria: Al-Maktab al-Jāmi'ī al-Ḥadīth, 2002.p103

² - Maurice, V., Dictionary of International Relations in the 20th Century, Ed. Armand Colin, Paris, 2000.p173

¹ - Al-Juhari, Yasser, Population Geography, 3rd ed., Alexandria: Manshūrāt al-Ma'ārif, 1990.p180

2-Factors of Illegal Migration: According to experts, factors of illegal migration can be categorized into push and pull factors. The most important are summarized as follows:

1-1-Expulsion Factors:

-Political Factors: Political factors are among the prominent causes of many migrations throughout history. Political factors have increasingly influenced international migration over time, as they have become a major cause of migration. Coercive political factors that lead to migration include wars and colonization. External military intervention by any country leads to external migration. Additionally, local political pressure also contributes to migration. In most developing countries, democracy is lacking, and dictatorial regimes prevail. Internal revolutions, military coups, and civil wars lead to migration abroad. Furthermore, some emergencies, such as international sanctions on a community, also contribute to migration.

Wars, conflicts, and foreign intervention have caused political instability in many parts of the African continent since the late 1980s, leading to deteriorating conditions in all aspects of life for African citizens who have no choice but to risk their lives through both legal and illegal means to achieve a degree of stability and security. The main reason for all these disruptions and conflicts lies in the aftermath of European colonization.

European colonization plundered the wealth of the African continent, both natural and human resources, and drew borders between African countries, resulting in numerous conflicts among the continent's peoples. European colonization also concluded many unequal agreements to maintain African countries in a state of economic and political subjugation. Civil wars are usually the cause of the deteriorating situation in many African countries, where reports indicate that millions are displaced due to civil wars, and only less than half of them receive humanitarian aid. There are still millions on the continent in desperate need of food aid.¹

-Economic and Social Factors: Many researchers have concluded that economic factors are among migration's most significant push and pull factors. One of the most influential factors that can affect individuals or families and prompt them to migrate is the expectation of obtaining better job opportunities, aiming for increased income and improved social prosperity by moving from lower-income areas to higher-income ones (whether migration is internal or international). The desire to enhance one's economic status, i.e., seeking better opportunities, is considered the predominant driving force in modern international migration. According to studies, only some groups or individuals feel satisfied with their economic status in their home country.

In Algerian society, discussing the economic factor cannot be separated from its direct impact on social conditions. The spread of unemployment, declining living standards, widespread poverty, noticeable class disparities, lack of job opportunities, high prices, and reduced individual income for employees, as well as delayed marriage, and the resulting social ills undermining societal values, all contribute to pushing Algerian youth to consider legal or illegal migration. This aligns with Durkheim's theory in explaining the phenomenon of clandestine

¹ - Sadiq, Hasan Muhammad Hussein, External Migration and Its Impact on Class Structure, Field Study in Qena Governorate, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Sociology Department, Faculty of Arts, South Valley University, 1998.P6-7

migration, which suggests that clandestine migrants feel unable to access the legitimate means to achieve the goals set by society for its members, either due to the lack of job opportunities or because they cannot integrate into the societal culture, thus forcing them to withdraw. This position is considered a pattern of deviance. Migration is classified, according to Durkheim's theory, into three types:¹

-Clandestine Migration as Selfish Suicide: This behavior occurs due to extreme individualistic tendencies and the individual's detachment from the culture in which they live. This type of behavior arises due to the weak degree of social solidarity within the community. The clandestine migrants do not find anyone to support them when faced with problems. Thus, covert migration becomes one of the vital strategies they set for themselves.

-Clandestine Migration as Sacrificial Suicide: This occurs when individuals are closely associated with groups or individuals committed to the idea of illegal migration.

-Clandestine Migration as Anomic Suicide: This type of clandestine migration occurs when:

-Social, cultural, and moral systems within the community disintegrate.

-Political and economic life in society becomes turbulent.

-A cultural gap emerges between goals and available means, between personal aspirations and what is available.

-Sociological analysis of illegal migration suggests that this phenomenon is associated with the following dimensions:

-Environmental pressures and the resulting breakdown in social control mechanisms and social bonds, which manifest in socially and economically low-level environments where illegal migrants live.

-Imbalance between available means and objectives for achieving these goals through legitimate channels, often leading to societal unrest, weakening social cohesion and support, and consequent deviations.

-Violation of values and standards shared by most people in society. In this regard, clandestine migration is interpreted as deviant behavior, and thus, the clandestine migrant is stigmatized by society.

-Tradition, as clandestine migration arises from the influence of admired models and the media, plays a significant role in stimulating personal motives, where individuals predisposed to migration are strongly driven by imitation towards practicing this behavior.

1-2-Attractive Factors: Attractive factors are among the most significant causes of migration and include:

-Cultural and Civilizational Advancement: Where educational opportunities are available at all levels and in various fields, attracting individuals and groups seeking to settle in advanced social environments.

Job Opportunities: In industries, trade, and services, economic conditions thrive in countries with natural resources that support the establishment and development of factories, leading to

¹ -International Conference on Media, Crises, Challenges, and Risks, Intervention by Najib Bakhous and Suad Sari titled: "Media Treatment of the Phenomenon of Illegal Immigration in Algeria," College of Communication, University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

increased demand for skilled labor, typically starting with young people and then expanding to families and relatives.

-Role of Modern Media and Communication: Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter play a dominant role among young people who aspire to the dream of a better life elsewhere, where traders and promoters of "dreams" target this vulnerable and marginalized group.

-Social and Cultural Change: Refers to all the transformations and changes that occur within social structures over some time, resulting in disruptions in roles, values, customs, and prevailing relationship patterns in society. Technological advancements, communication channels, and media outlets such as television and social media promote migration to European and Arab countries.

-Climate: Moderate climates often drive people to migrate for comfort and health reasons and to escape drought and its environmental and population impacts.

-Political Stability: The presence of a significant margin of freedom for individuals distinguishes advanced societies, where political stability, the absence of military coups, and the lack of chaos are among the essential features of these societies. It is necessary to mention here the "Black Decade" that Algeria went through in the 1990s, which led various segments of society to legal and illegal migration. Regarding attractive social and psychological factors, several considerations are closely related to levels of material and spiritual satisfaction, contentment, ambition, and aspirations.

The social and psychological factors are considered desirable conditions for their ability to satisfy material and psychological needs. European societies are not bound by social restrictions like African peoples, from which the migrating class seeks to escape, such as customs and traditions.¹

3-Impacts of Illegal Migration on Individuals and Society: International migration constitutes a depletion of human energy for the sending country and a gain for the receiving countries of immigrants. However, migration generates social, political, economic, and cultural impacts.

Social impacts on migrants include language, customs, and traditions, especially for those who do not intend to return to their homeland. That

leads to the breakdown of family ties due to the individual's distance from their family, their impression of the new society, which differs significantly from their original society, and their detachment from the concerns of their homeland and family, leaving their problems to be borne by the residents there, and marrying foreigners.

Marriage to foreigners is considered one of the significant social effects of international migration. The marital relationship between an Arab and a foreigner involves two different identities, which can lead to differences in child-rearing. The Arab spouse may lose their position as the head and father of the family, as each child may take a different direction than

¹- Al-Rabai'ah, Ahmed, Studies in the Theory of Migration and Its Social and Cultural Problems, Amman: Dar al-Thaqafah wal-Funun, 1987.P7-6

what the father desires, leading to disintegration. One study on the social effects¹ External migration revealed that 81.4% of married individuals from the study sample leave their spouses and live separately, leading to social instability and psychological burdens.

The most significant migration outcomes for the host countries include acquiring more labor force.

Among the advantages of external migration is that migrants can be ambassadors for their original culture, spreading their languages, customs, ideas, and cultural heritage.

-Deprivation of the countries from which migrants depart of some financial resources, labor force, and the efficiency of their offspring, leading to a weakening of national production.

-External migration affects national unity.

-Exploitation of migrant groups by human trafficking networks and in the -trade of sex and human organs.

-Brain drain and the resulting drain of educated forces towards attractive countries.

Conclusion:

Illegal migration and boarding deathboats have become prevalent phenomena in Algerian society, attracting all segments of society, especially youth, who require special care given the current global and national conditions. They are the driving force and necessary fuel for the country's future. Therefore, it is imperative to mobilize all national efforts from the responsible ministries, civil society, and communication media, especially social upbringing institutions, where the family is its cornerstone, followed by the mosque and then the school. It is also essential to activate all laws and recommendations to prevent this segment from drifting in search of dreams on the other side.

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