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## **DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES AND MIGRATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

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## Introduction

The planet is now witnessing a tremendous, but silent revolution: Rich countries of the North are experiencing sustained sub-replacement fertility levels while developing countries continue to exhibit rapid population growth. This contrast in demographic trends between North and South is most evident in the Mediterranean region. The current situation in the Mediterranean area brings to mind the case of the two Americas in the 1960s; at that time, Mexico had a population growth above 3 percent per year while the population of the United States grew at 1 percent annually. The resulting 2 percent differential in annual growth rates is similar to that which exists today between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

But in fact, the Mediterranean contrast is more acute because the fertility differential between Europe and the southern bank of the Mediterranean is twice as large as the gap which existed between the U.S. and Latin America.

In European countries, below replacement level fertility has now endured for nearly two decades; as a consequence, aging populations present a serious challenge to welfare systems, which were designed and calibrated several decades ago according to populations that were much younger than the present and future ones. By contrast, and in spite of a recent fertility decline, population growth remains very rapid in the countries of the Southern shore of the Mediterranean; demographic inflation is creating severe constraints on development as well as contributing to over-urbanization, massive unemployment, a worsening scarcity of land and water, and growing food dependence.

### **The Mediterranean Frontier: The Demographic Measure**

With the accession of East Germany, the EC has a population of 346 million, which accounts for 70 percent of the total population of Europe, excluding inhabitants of the former Soviet Union. Using current EC territory as a constant, its share of world population fell from 10 percent in 1958 to 6.5 percent in 1992 and is projected to decrease to only 5 percent by the year 2010. Even taken in its biggest proportions, the population of the northern bank of the Mediterranean does not exceed 800 million; approximately 500 million in Europe and 290 million in the former Soviet republics, with the latter being 20 percent Muslim. European populations are, on the whole, demographically homogenous. Excepting the predominantly Muslim populations of Albania and Kosovo, all European countries exhibit a fertility rate well below the replacement level. What prevents present populations from shrinking is largely due to their age structure, which is still relatively young and therefore more favorable to natural increases. At present, fertility differences between East and West Europe are negligible, but it seems quite possible that continued economic difficulties in the East may well engender a drop in fertility there, thus creating a disparity between the countries of Europe.

On the other side of the Mediterranean, the situation is quite different. In the most Westernized areas, a fertility decline has begun, but is not yet well advanced and the age structures are still quite young, thus embodying large potential growth. Because the Westernized areas are likely to present trends that are anomalous to the region as a whole, predictions about the rate and magnitude of a general fertility decline are tenuous. Clear signals of the onset of fertility decline are not yet evident.

At present, the Maghreb has a population of 67 million; its size being multiplied by a factor slightly less than seven during the present century, i.e. 12 million in 1900, and a projected 80 million by the year 2000. Europe's population on the other hand is expected to nearly double during this century, rising from 295 million in 1900 to 510 million in 2000. The second entity of the Southern bank is made up of Egypt and the Sudan with 29 million inhabitants in 1950, 82 million at present, 98 million in 2000, and approximately 150 million by the year 2025. The

population of 59 million has just surpassed that of France. Since the end of the Second World War, the population of Turkey has tripled. Annual population growth among the countries of the Maghreb, the Arabian peninsula, Egypt, the Sudan, and Turkey is uniformly high, somewhere between 2 and 3 percent annually. In some cases it has exceeded 3 percent due to immigration; Libya is a good example. As discussed above, some areas do exhibit a fertility decline, but the total fertility rate is rarely below 4 children per woman; Turkey is the sole exception and even there, the proportion of the population under the age of 15 remains very high at 35 to 40 percent of the population. In France, by contrast, only 20 percent of the population is under 15 years old. Demographic slackening then, in Turkey and all along the southern borders of Europe will be long in coming; the next decades will bear witness to tremendous population pressures due solely to growth momentum previously established, irrespective of any future downturns in fertility.

The countries which are further from the Mediterranean are at an even less advanced stage of the demographic transition; the pace of population growth has not yet begun to diminish. These countries are in what is known as the culmination phase, exhibiting a pace of about 3 percent per year.

### **One Billion More Africans**

Let us now consider the African continent as a whole. According to United Nations estimates, the continent's population is currently around 690 million, having increased from 220 million since 1950, and will continue to climb to over 890 million at the end of the 1990s. Given the present rate of growth and existing age structure (half the population is under 17 years old), there is a high probability that the African continent will have one billion *additional* inhabitants in the course of the next four decades. The impact of the African AIDS epidemic is not likely to substantially alter this projection.

The greatest fertility differences are found when comparing the northern and southern banks of the western Mediterranean. Here, we find people at vastly different stages of

demographic modernization. In fact, the fertility rates on the northern bank are among the lowest in the world. In Italy and Spain, the total period fertility rate has fallen to the unprecedented peacetime level of 1.3 children per woman. In the countries of the Maghreb, where the onset of fertility decline has begun only within the last one or two decades, the fertility levels are still 3 to 4 times the Spanish and Italian rates. Southern European countries have benefitted substantially from European integration: Their modernization has accelerated during the recent period and this has in turn altered their demographic behavior. Even Portugal and Greece now exhibit a lower fertility at 1.5 children per woman than does France at 1.8. By contrast, Turkey is the only country among those of the southern bank that shows a fertility less than 4 children per woman.

In sub-saharan Africa and the countries of the Middle East (excluding Lebanon, Israel, and Turkey), fertility remains very high, hovering around 6 children per woman. In this region, very few countries are experiencing the onset of fertility decline, and even where such declines are present, the trend is weak and limited to countries such as Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Kenya that have few connections with Europe, thus only a slight impact on trans-Mediterranean migration.

In regards to Northern Africa, a few changes are worthy of mention as indications of an ongoing moral transformation with likely demographic ramifications, the most important of which is the tendency to delay marriage. In Tunisia for instance, the singulate mean age of marriage has shifted from an average of 18 years in the 1950s to 24 years in 1984; similar changes have occurred in neighboring countries. (A comparable shift has also occurred in East Asia.) Related to this trend in marriage age, is a narrowing of the age difference between partners, indicating that new lifestyles, especially among urban and educated women, are encroaching upon the once male dominated world of their mothers. Even lifetime celibacy has become possible, but remains rare.

It is important to keep in mind the following conclusion: In Northern Africa, fertility has decreased, reaching an average of 4 to 5 children per woman in 1990 instead of the prevalent 7 children in the 1960s. One of the factors in this decline has been the progress in female educational attainment; by 1985 women who had attended school at least until the primary level had only three children on average. Such a trend remains fragile however in the face of economic

hardships and a conflicting ideological climate. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism is clearly capable of reversing historical developments, such as was the case in Iran under Khomeini and, to a lesser degree, in contemporary Egypt. In both cases, demographic modernization was halted under the pressure of conservative groups. Family planning programs were either abolished altogether or severely reduced.

Let us consider the case of Egypt, where economic stability remains precarious. Egypt, along with Tunisia, was the first to launch a family planning policy in the 1960s, but today, in contrast to the 1970s, the birth rate is higher than all neighboring North African countries. (A similar reversal is observable in the mortality rates.) By 1970, Egypt had achieved the lowest population growth rate in the region (2.3 percent per year). At present, Egypt's population growth rate is the highest in the region at 2.8 percent; such an observation is important because of Egypt's large share of all regional inhabitants. By the end of this year, Egypt's population will exceed that of the United Kingdom, with no signs of a population growth slowdown yet on the horizon. Egypt is thus likely to end its demographic transition with much higher numbers than previously expected. When these population trends are combined with geographic factors, Egypt emerges as a prime candidate for massive outmigration. The country is extremely vulnerable to such a phenomenon because the bulk of its population is concentrated in the Nile River Valley, which makes up only 2 to 3 percent of its land area. Can we imagine that Egyptian outmigration, which in recent decades has been directed almost exclusively toward neighboring oil countries like Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq, will remain so, and will not shift toward Europe? Already, some Egyptian immigrants are arriving in Italy and Greece and thus entering the EC. Does this flow announce a future trend?

### **The Arab World in Expansion**

The demographic transition has begun in the Arab world, but the process is slow to affect overall population growth rates. While mortality has been declining throughout the region for at

least four decades, the downturn in fertility is much more recent, thus population growth is still very high.

Even if we assume a rapid decline in fertility rates, the Arab population will experience an impressive explosion during the next few decades, rising from 71 million in 1950 to a possible half billion by 2030. The demographic balance between the Arab world and the European Community can thus be considered as reversed. In 1950, the population of the countries belonging to the EC (present territory including the former GDR) was triple that of the total for Arab countries, which span the Arabian peninsula and the Maghreb; by 2010, the once predominant European population will be overtaken. Table one shows the demographic trends of the main countries of the Mediterranean region.

Table One: Population Trends in the Mediterranean Region (in millions)

COUNTRY	1950	1990	2000	2025
"North"				
Spain	28.0	39.2	40.7	42.3
France	41.8	56.1	58.1	60.4
Italy	47.1	57.1	57.2	53.0
Yugoslavia	16.3	23.8	(24.9)	(26.0)
Greece	7.6	10.0	10.2	10.1
Total	140.8	186.2	(191.1)	(191.8)
"South"				
Turkey	20.8	55.9	66.8	87.7
Syria	3.5	12.5	17.8	34.1
Egypt	20.3	52.4	64.2	90.4
Tunisia	3.5	8.2	9.9	13.6
Algeria	8.8	25.0	32.9	52.0
Morocco	9.0	25.1	31.6	45.6
Total	65.9	179.1	223.2	323.4
EC-12 (with former GDR)	267.7	341.4	347.4	343.8
Arab World	71.4	205.1	274.6	464.0
Arab World and Turkey	92.2	261.0	341.4	551.7

Source: United Nations: World Population Prospects 1990, New York, 1991

Population will stabilize and could even decrease among the countries of the Northern bank, whereas the population of the nearby Arab world is projected to increase by more than 250 million between 1990 and 2025. Further, the number of youths on either side of the Mediterranean divide will diverge substantially, thus generating tremendous potential for migrations.

### **Demographic Complementarities, Migrations, and New Ethnic Compositions**

Let us now turn to the size of the age group 15 to 24 years old, which makes up the potential inflow of labor force entrants as well as many potential migrants. In Europe, between 1975 and 1990, the size of this age group culminated at approximately 75 million; it will decrease to about 66 million by the year 2000 and 63 million by the year 2010. On the African continent, the trends are, of course, quite different for the same age group. In 1975, at 78 million, the number of 15 through 24 year-olds was similar to that of its European counterpart; half a century later it will be six times as large-- 330 million according to the medium variant of the most recent UN population projection. It is difficult to imagine the already fragile African economics, fraught with mismanagement and indebtedness, proving capable of absorbing such a huge demographic wave without catastrophe. Even in Northern Africa, where according to UN predictions, the total fertility rate could reach the replacement level by the year 2010, the population momentum is so strong that demographic pressures will remain substantial during the ensuing decade. In Algeria for example, where the number of births has shown a decrease since the mid 1980s, tension in the labor market will not be alleviated before the beginning of the next century. Algeria, like its neighbors in Northern Africa, faces very high unemployment levels, and at present appears that it will be unable to create more than half of the number of jobs necessary to absorb its demographic inflow, even if female participation rate in the labor force remains extremely low.

In Europe, for the first time in history, the potential flow of labor force entrants (those in the 15 through 24 age group), will progressively become lower than the potential flow of leavers, which are defined as those in the age group 55 through 64 years. This phenomenon will occur in



a growing number of countries including Germany, Italy, and Spain from the end of the current decade; a chronic shortage of young workers is even possible. Due to increased educational requirements in Europe, those young male and female workers that are on the market will be more selective in their job acceptances. These workers are not likely to abide manual labor in large numbers without a significant revision of the wage scales. Thus, many manual jobs will be automated; those that cannot be left to machines, such as caring for the elderly, will increasingly be filled by low and semi-skilled immigrants. The migration of low skilled immigrants will occur side by side with skilled labor, which will always be necessary to meet sectoral shortages. (In France at present for example, there is a considerable shortage of engineers, nurses, and teachers of science and math.) Even in the context of high unemployment, the need for large numbers of migrant workers will not be greatly diminished, as is amply demonstrated by the present circumstances in Southern Europe.

On the opposite bank of the Mediterranean, the situation is quite different. Basic needs are not satisfied; one third of the labor force is unemployed. This mass of idle workers combined with the chaotic and uncontrollable growth of the cities increases the possibility of political instability. Even if the demographic slowdown currently underway in Northern Africa continues, the labor force will double between 1985 and 2010 as a consequence of past trends. What will be the fate of the millions of youth who will leave the school system? The public sector is already saturated; budget deficits and current structural adjustment programs will not permit any large scale recruitment of the unemployed into public service. The cushion created by a large informal sector, which has been relied upon in the past to ameliorate the plight of the unemployed, is by itself, relatively inelastic. Clearly, the private sector, namely the network of small and medium size enterprises will have to expand and thus develop the economy. The current fragility of this sector is well known. Furthermore, the very technological progress and acceleration in productivity growth that is needed for long term growth in agriculture, industry and services, is at odds with the needs of the swelling labor force. Even if we rule out hypothetical political crises,

the unique combination of demographic inertia and of technological transfers leads inexorably to a large increase in migratory pressure.

Population increases in the South will be capable of compensating, and then some, for the labor supply deficits emerging in the North. In fact, the level of overcompensation could be very high. By the year 2000 in the EC-12 for example, the deficit will likely lie between 1 and 2 million per year, depending on economic circumstances. While in the South, where the pace of population growth far outstrips the economic structure, surplus labor will enter the market at a rate in the tens of millions per year after the turn of the century.

In addition to the scenarios sketched above, one must also weigh migratory pressures from the former USSR, as well as from the more westernized and unstable parts of the former Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe. Even if this pressure is shorter in duration and less powerful than those originating in the South, it will nonetheless have a tremendous impact in the present decade.

Anti-foreigner sentiment is growing in Western Europe as millions of East Europeans flee economic turmoil, political upheaval, and war in the former Yugoslavia. What is the prognosis for migrants from the Maghreb and more distant cultures?

Can we conceive of a redistribution of wealth within the Arab world, which would alleviate the tensions created by the population explosion? Or should the borders of Europe be opened even further? Such scenarios deserve special attention and will likely raise important security issues. Inside the EC, the Muslim population is today between 8 and 10 million; if immigration escalates substantially, the challenge of integration will become significantly more complex. It will be increasingly difficult to think in terms of distinct national strategies. There are important differences between European culture and the Islamic tradition in the fields of family law (especially regarding polygamy and gender equality), and in the relationship between the state and religion. Because Islam is the religion of two-thirds of the non-Community immigrant population, the demographic imbalance in the Mediterranean region presents a worrisome dilemma for Europe.

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