

Migration, Development and Democracy
Nexus:
The Case of Tunisia

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Abstract

This thesis provides a theoretical and empirical analysis of Migration, Development, and Democracy nexus in Tunisia. The aim will be to answer the following research question: how much does the socio-economic and political development of the country influence its migration flows to Europe? Additionally, a second point will be to identify which policies, initiatives, and projects should be implemented to ensure legal, regular, and safe migration while simultaneously creating development opportunities in the country of origin.

This research provides an in-depth analysis of theories concerning the Migration-Development Nexus and examines the relationship between the European Union and its Southern Mediterranean Neighbours on the matter. Subsequently, it conducts a detailed examination of the Tunisian case study. It offers a comprehensive analysis of the country, studying the political, economic, social, and migratory evolution of Tunisia from its independence to the present day. Emphasis is placed on the moment of the fall of the Ben Ali regime in 2011 and the country's democratic transition process, but a focus is also placed on how migration flows have changed since the Arab Spring.

To answer the first research question, the reasons why Tunisians emigrate are examined and the profile of the typical Tunisian migrant is outlined. The most relevant results underline that in Tunisia it is mainly young, male, and educated people who leave their country of origin. Among the main causes of emigration are the country's socio-economic problems, youth marginalization, and high unemployment rates. A qualitative interview with a young Tunisian migrant has been conducted as a testimony that corroborates the findings, although it is certainly not enough quantitatively.

Moreover, empirical research is undertaken to answer the second point concerning the policies and initiatives that should be implemented. In this regard the "Youth Empowerment Project (Phase II)" initiative, funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, has been examined. This project entails the creation of employment and training opportunities for young Tunisians at risk of irregular emigration. Furthermore, an additional interview was conducted with the members of the Local and Social Development team of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Tunis: the interview offered an overview of the current projects concerning the migration and development nexus that AICS is currently undertaking in Tunisia. Finally, future

projections and perspectives on the evolution of the migration-development nexus in Europe are presented, with a specific emphasis on the critical role of the democratic and humanitarian components in the negotiation of migration agreements.

Introduction

In an era marked by unprecedented global mobility, widening socioeconomic disparities, and increasing concerns about the quality of democracy and the respect of human rights, examining the Migration, Development, and Democracy Nexus, provides valuable insight into the dynamics of migration and the underlying reasons for people's decisions to leave their home countries. Furthermore, adopting this approach as a study lens is essential for the formulation of effective policies capable of addressing the growing challenges associated with migration and development.

This thesis has the aim of studying and analysing the correlation between migration, development, and democracy in Tunisia. What this document intends to investigate is how the socio-economic and political development of the country influences the choice of its inhabitants to leave. In addition, the work proposes to study and analyse which types of migration and development policies and projects should be implemented and which initiatives should be preferred to turn emigration itself into a source and driver for development in Tunisia.

The first chapter presents the literature on the topic and illustrates the main theoretical approaches to the Migration-Development Nexus. Various migration scholars argue that, contrary to common belief, when a country begins to grow and progress, migration flows from that country increase in the short to medium term. Emigration from that country will only decrease in the long term when the country becomes an advanced nation. An advanced nation does not merely mean a country with a high GDP and ongoing economic growth. On the contrary, it implies the attainment of a certain quality of life typically characterized by indicators such as the reduction of social and local inequalities, the presence of a publicly accessible education system, the existence of a robust healthcare system, and a labour market capable of integrating all segments of the population. Furthermore, the political and democratic components are also crucial in features of human development. A nation is typically considered progressive and developed when the fundamental freedoms and rights of citizens are guaranteed, when there is political stability, transparent public administration, and an absence of corruption. Clearly, to reach this level of development, which

would also entail a subsequent decrease in emigration flows from that country, decades are required. Therefore, the idea of reducing migration flows in the short or medium term through increased migration and development initiatives is a claim that is not practically feasible, precisely because the desired results can only be achieved in the long term. Indeed, migration and development projects should be understood as initiatives that support and accompany countries of transit and origin in their development processes. Mostly, they can be understood as projects to prevent and reduce irregular and dangerous migration through the creation of opportunities and alternatives. But they should not be intended as initiatives to reduce migration flows in general. On the contrary, the nexus should be conceived as aiming to reap the benefits of migration, not to eliminate it.

The second chapter introduces the case of Tunisia. The country has been chosen because, after years of progressive political development, especially after 2011, Tunisia appears to be returning to an authoritarian and repressive system, interrupting the fragile process of democratic transition. Moreover, on the economic front, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown to the world the country's weaknesses and vulnerabilities, characterized by inflation, high public debt, and a rising unemployment rate. Finally, in the field of migration, the country is at the centre of the current debate regarding the steep increase of irregular arrivals towards Italy, but also concerning the management of sub-Saharan migrants and the numerous violations of migrants' rights. Therefore, the chapter will first present the methodology that will be used for the case study analysis, consisting of a highly theoretical initial part in which Tunisia's evolution from its independence from France in 1956 to the present day will be analysed, followed by an empirical section where data will be collected through interviews and development cooperation projects. The second chapter will continue with the historical analysis of Tunisia, addressing the country's political and economic evolution and its efforts to become a democratic and developed nation. The chapter will also provide an overview of migration flows between Tunisia and Europe since 1956 and explain how they have changed over time.

The empirical part will be addressed in the third chapter, which aims to answer the research questions. After an initial historical and theoretical analysis serving as a foundation, the challenges that Tunisia is currently facing are presented. These include the halt in the democratisation process, the severe economic crisis, and the failure to manage the migratory phenomenon. Furthermore, the typical profile of Tunisian migrants and the main reasons that lead young Tunisians to leave their

country are outlined. This investigation is useful for understanding how Tunisia's socio-economic and political development impacts the lives and choices of its citizens. The analysis will, therefore, respond to the first research question and will be conducted through the examination of surveys and documents obtained from institutions such as EuroMesSCo¹ and Arab Barometer². These entities have conducted quantitative surveys and interviews with the Tunisian population to understand what they perceive as the most pressing issues, what reasons might drive them to emigrate, whether they would consider emigrating irregularly, what are the issues surrounding European migration policies, and what are their priorities for cooperation with the EU. After conducting this preliminary analysis, it has emerged that Tunisians perceive socio-economic issues as more urgent than political ones. Youth unemployment is the primary driver pushing young people to seek better living conditions in Europe. To further enhance the value of the contributions and analyses provided, an interview was conducted with a Tunisian migrant who arrived irregularly in Lampedusa. This interview was based on a qualitative methodology. Indeed, it was carried out with a single migrant to obtain a precise and sincere account of the irregular migration journey from Tunisia to Italy. The interview was conducted entirely in French to make the interviewee feel at ease and to avoid communication issues. The experience confirmed the results already analysed and highlighted an additional issue concerning the perception that Tunisians have of European policies. According to Tunisians, European policies are too focused on containing migration flows and protecting borders, while too little emphasis is placed on addressing the root causes of migration. More job and training opportunities should be created in Tunisia. The interview raises this concern and underscores the lack of trust in cooperation, as well as in the Tunisian government, which is considered corrupt and incapable of managing funds. This interview aims to provide a detailed account of the migratory experience and was obtained, therefore, while its strength lies in the quality of the information received, it has the limitation of not applying to the entire Tunisian migrant population. However, it is noteworthy how reliable the testimony is, as it confirms the results reported by other quantitative surveys conducted on a larger segment of the population.

After identifying the main causes of emigration and the typical profile of Tunisian migrants, what emerges is that as the country progresses, emigration flows increase. This confirms what was elucidated by the theories in the first chapter, which emphasized that when a country is in the process of development, emigration increases because young people have greater ambitions and

¹ EuroMeSCo is the largest network of research institutes and think tanks in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

² Arab Barometer acts as a key player for quantitative research on Middle East countries.

prospects that their country is not yet able to offer. This is particularly evident in the case of Tunisia.

The second research question is also addressed in Chapter Three. The question aimed to understand which migration and development interventions could be useful for creating development in the country of origin. First and foremost, the need of the Tunisian population to produce projects and initiatives aimed not so much at enhancing border security but at creating development opportunities is analysed. In this regard, a project funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and implemented by IOM called "Youth Empowerment Project (Phase II)," is examined. The data for this project were provided by the Ministry itself, following an internship experience at Office V of the Directorate General for Italians Abroad and Migration Policies. The analysis of this project has shown what interventions are being carried out to create job and training opportunities for young people at risk of irregular emigration, particularly in the most vulnerable regions of Tunisia. IOM's reports highlight the main results of these interventions and emphasise the success of this initiative.

To better understand the universe of migration and development projects in Tunisia, a further interview was conducted with the AICS (Italian Agency for Development Cooperation) team in Tunis, specifically with the team of experts in Social and Local Development. The methodology used in this interview is also qualitative in nature. The talk aims to gather information and insights from experts at AICS in Tunisia regarding their projects related to migration and development. In addition, the approach used in this qualitative research also involves open-ended questions to collect in-depth information about the possible evolution of the nexus in the future. The interview focuses on various aspects, including the projects being implemented, their impact on the local population, and the experts' opinions on the migration-development nexus. The responses provided by the interviewees offered valuable insights into the projects' outcomes, indicators used to measure impact, and the broader context of migration and development in Tunisia. What emerged is that AICS, also in partnership with IOM, is running several initiatives and projects in the field. The first project that was addressed during the conversation is very similar to the one financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Therefore, the focus was on a second initiative called MobiTRE, which deals with using the Tunisian diaspora to generate development in the country of origin. The interview also delved into the challenges and future directions of the Migration-Development

Nexus, indicating a qualitative exploration of experts' perspectives rather than quantitative data analysis.

The final section of this thesis analyses how European policies have evolved, attempting to shift the paradigm from a purely security-oriented approach to one more focused on development and on addressing the root causes of migration. While many successes have been emphasized, the remaining challenges are also taken into account. In fact, despite the EU's efforts to change the paradigm, the practice of externalizing migration flows is still in place. In the context of the Tunisian case, it is emphasized that after 2011, the EU attempted to focus more on the causes of irregular immigration, increase funding for development projects, and provide support for Tunisia's democratic transition. However, from the analysis of the latest agreement signed in July 2023 between the EU and Tunisia, the security approach returns. Therefore, what is evident from this final analysis is that the EU and its Member States are still in the process of shifting paradigms, but the transition is not completed. Proof that this change has not taken place, is the fact that the EU still signs migration agreements with undemocratic regimes which do not respect migrants' rights to protect their borders. These agreements damage the EU's reputation and credibility as a democratic bastion and champion of fundamental rights. Moreover, they also can reduce the EU's influence, casting doubt on its real commitment to upholding these principles. Finally, despite challenges stemming from intent, there have been advancements, as the EU attempts to adopt a more multilateral, tailored, and inclusive approach to migration phenomenon. This is also witnessed by the recent conference on migration and development held in Rome on 23 July 2023 which launched the "Rome Process", a strategic comprehensive, inclusive, multi-annual platform for collective action.

The Migration and Development Nexus

In this first preliminary chapter, the correlation between migration and development will be analysed and the Migration-Development Nexus introduced. The literature and the various theoretical approaches regarding this controversial relationship will be presented. Finally, the chapter explains the main effects that migration has on both origin and destination countries in terms of development within the Mediterranean basin and especially which are the main development-related drivers of migration in the area.

The chapter argues that although migration and development are undoubtedly interconnected phenomena, this does not imply necessarily a direct relationship between them. An increase in development does not necessarily mean a decrease in migratory flows. Therefore, the widely held rhetoric that suggests this direct relationship is not always true, or at least not in the short term. Indeed, it can be stated that this reasoning is true when a country manages to become highly advanced. In fact, when a country has a good level of human development, not just economic development, its citizens may be less inclined to leave it because there are employment opportunities, political stability, respect for human rights, and a high level of essential services such as education and healthcare. However, when a country is in the process of development, this situation has not yet occurred, and people are inclined to migrate. Therefore, the document proposes to address migration and development in conjunction. In other words, development policies should not be pursued without considering the variable of migration, just as migration policies should not be implemented without considering the level of development in the country of origin and the potential benefits that migration can generate if well-managed. Additionally, in the last section, reference is made to the MENA region, highlighting the differences in development between the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Socioeconomic, demographic, and political inequalities between the Mediterranean countries shape the migratory flows that occur in the area.

In conclusion, this chapter argues that cooperation and migration policies should be treated together by political actors, as different aspects of the same larger planning process. This would result in bridging the gap between the hard division between development aid on the one hand, and policy for migratory control on the other. Such a coordinated strategy for migration and development would be of special significance in the Mediterranean region, where flows of people from the Southern shore of the Mediterranean but outside the EU trying to reach Europe, intersect European funds meant to support social and human development overseas. Therefore, this preliminary chapter is crucial for identifying the challenges and opportunities that arise for the formation of European policies based on the migration-development nexus. Additionally, the chapter provides a fundamental theoretical framework for the analysis of the case study that will be examined in the next chapter.

1.1 The Migration-development Nexus.

International migration is a global phenomenon that impacts the lives of most people producing crucial socioeconomic, political, and cultural implications in both origin and destination countries. As a result of increasing globalization and interconnection between states, migration has become a major issue on global political agendas and an integral part of the current global economy (Siddiqui, T. 2012). The number of international migrants is constantly growing and in 2020 it has been estimated by the United Nations that international migrants would make up 3.6% of the global population, amounting to 281 million (UN DESA, 2022). However, in an increasingly interconnected world, even millions more are indirectly impacted by the phenomenon, through family ties, economic exchanges, and cultural connections. In this section, migration will be presented as a process that produces changes affecting both the individuals themselves, and the development of the countries involved. The crucial connection between migration and development is confirmed and strengthened by the inclusion of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (OECD, 2017). Nowadays, migration is therefore an essential component of development, and it is “*almost impossible to envisage development without migration just as it is almost impossible to envisage migration without some kind of development*” (Skeldon 1997). In order to accomplish that, an explanation of the relationship between migration and development will be provided.

The most difficult task when dealing with migration and development is to begin with definitions, as these two phenomena are in fact extremely difficult to define. Indeed, there is no universally agreed definition of migration or migrant, but several specific definitions have been developed over time (IOM, 2022). The UN Migration Agency (IOM) made an effort to provide the widest and most inclusive definition of migration, defining it as “*the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State*” (IOM, 2019). This simple statement is intentionally vague and broad because it is intended to include in itself all possible types of migration. However, as it is extremely general, it does not specify the character that movements can have. In fact, movements can be international or within national borders; they can be caused by voluntary reasons, or they can be forced, therefore produced by factors such as conflicts, climate change, and persecution. In addition, the duration can also vary, some migrations are permanent, others temporary with the intent to return to the country of origin. The focus of this thesis will be on international and voluntary movements, as the aim of the document is precisely to

investigate what kind of impact migration produces in terms of development in both the country of origin and destination. Additionally, the thesis also proposes to understand if the level of development of a country affects the decision to migrate of its citizens and how it impacts migration patterns more in general. Indeed, when individuals decide to leave their country of origin for another one, they of course produce a change in both home and host countries. The impacts are several, as people's movements have effects on the demographic structure of the countries involved, on the labour markets, on the demand and supply for workers, but they also produce several alterations within the social, political, and cultural fabric. In order to reap the benefits of the phenomenon, it is important to have good management of it, as migration can certainly bring opportunities— as it increases the labour force, rises the number of the young population, promotes multiculturalism – but at the same time, if poorly managed, migration can pose serious challenges such as the *brain drain*³ effect at home or the inability to integrate immigrants within destination countries (Bastia, T. and Skeldon, R., 2020).

Before proceeding, it is also important to define what is meant here by development. For our ultimate purposes, development here is intended as human development, which does not necessarily coincide with economic growth. It is, however, more likely to occur in advanced economic conditions and in countries with greater resources, as it is related to the improvement of living conditions – services, nutrition, education, general health, good quality of life, etc. – within a given country, but it is also connected with the level of freedom, rights, and political stability of the territory (UNDP, 1990). Indeed, in 1990 the Human Development Index was elaborated, by the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, exactly to underline the necessity to distinguish development from economic growth alone. This index is still used today by the UN to assess the level of human development in every country of the world. Indeed, it evaluates human achievements in three key dimensions: life expectancy, education, and standards of living (Ul Haq, 1992). Furthermore, in 1998, human development has also been defined as “*an increase in individual rights and capabilities*” (Sen, 1998). Indeed, the Nobel prize winner, Amartya Sen, noticed that the process of development is not only related to wealth and capacities but also to rights and freedoms, as it is democracy and the protection of human rights which allow individuals to freely develop their ideas, skills, and attitudes. Definitely, free health care, free education, free-thinking, and other

³ The European Commission has defined brain drain as “the loss suffered by a country as a result of emigration of a (highly) qualified person”. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/brain-drain_en

fundamental freedoms are basic requirements for people to develop. Hence, in describing his definition of human development, Amartya Sen asserts that there are five interconnected sorts of freedoms which are all related to the enhancement of individual skills, they concern freedom in the political and economic sphere, the presence of social opportunities in the country, transparency within the public sector, and security of the territory and people (Leelavathi et al, 2012). Therefore, even if the Human Development Index, is the most used in measuring human overall improvements, also other kinds of indicators are important to rate additional dimensions of development, such as the political dimension, assessed by the Democracy Index, which evaluates the degree of democracy, political rights, and civil liberties within a country⁴, or the Corruption Perceptions Index, which is related with the dimension of transparency as it measures the level of perceived rate of corruption within the public sector ⁵. In sum, development is a process that involves an expansion in the general living standards, conditions, and capabilities of individuals. However, people are not passive beneficiaries of change, but active agents who are able to shape reality with their lives, choices, experiences, and work.

Therefore, after briefly introducing the concepts of migration and human development, it is possible to understand how they are interlinked. Undoubtedly, international migration plays a pivotal role in the transformation of societies exerting a profound influence on their evolutive trajectories introducing valuable skills, unprecedented opportunities, bringing new ideas, and merging cultures. Cross-border migration, particularly from developing to advanced countries, has significant impacts on several dimensions related to development, indeed it produces consequences firstly on the migrants themselves, then on the country of destination, and finally within the home country (Koczan et al., 2021).

The migrants themselves are the first group to be impacted by the process, as it typically enables them to earn higher incomes and better living conditions when they move from developing countries to richer economies. However, this is not always the rule, as migrants are often downgraded or paid less than natives once they arrive in the host country. In addition, has been demonstrated by the OECD that notably immigrants live in poorer conditions than natives. Moreover, they are more likely to be unemployed, overqualified for the jobs they hold, live in small and overcrowded housing, and have greater difficulty in accessing basic services such as health and

⁴ The index is measured by the Freedom House institute, <https://freedomhouse.org/>

⁵ The Corruption Perceptions Index is used by Transparency International <https://www.transparency.org/en>

education compared to native citizens (European Union, 2018). The phenomenon of downgrading often occurs due to lack of language proficiency, and incompatibility of educational qualifications, but usually also to the inability of the host country to integrate the migrant within its society and to offer socio-economic opportunities. Additionally, migration does not only produce outcomes that can benefit or undermine development, but it is also the consequence of level of human development of a country. Indeed, migrants are impacted by their country of origin's development level, which pushes them to the decision to migrate. As a matter of fact, the drivers of migration are often development-related, especially if in the definition of human development is also included the respect of fundamental freedoms, human rights, and democratic values (OECD, 2017).

Secondly, migration has a direct impact on the destination country's labour markets, productivity, and innovation, in fact when a country receives migrants, it basically increases the number of individuals within its borders and also workers within its labour market, and this surge could produce effects on wages and allocation of workers among different sectors. But the extent of these effects depends considerably on how well the country is able to absorb the foreign population within its labour market, and the outcomes rely on the kind of market under analysis, and particularly much rest on the rigidity or flexibility of the market taken into account. Furthermore, a crucial role is played by the category to which the migrant belongs, since individuals, based on the degree of education received, skills acquired, and work experience, can be considered low-skilled or high-skilled workers. If the majority of incoming migrants are low-skilled, then they will directly impact the low-skilled labour market. This may cause a change in the wages of people working in those sectors; however, the phenomenon can also produce an adjustment in the allocation of the workforce. Indeed, it has been observed that in Europe, the arrival of low-skilled migrants leads natives to shift towards high-skilled job positions. Therefore, the impact of migration on the labour market of the destination country is not something determined, which obeys an absolute law. On the contrary, it is difficult, or if even impossible, to produce a universal model for migration effects. This is because situations change a lot depending on several factors, such as the profile of the migrants, the reasons for moving, time, the countries of origin, the destinations, and so on. Nevertheless, the status acquired by the migrant upon arrival is also important. For example, an individual who arrived irregularly, will be more likely to work in the informal sector. However, it can be said that much relies on the successful integration of the migrant into the host society, the rigidity of the destination country's labour market, and the skills possessed by the migrant itself (Parek, R. and Vargas-Silva, C. 2018). Another impact of migratory flows, as anticipated, is that

they alter the demographic structure of the host country. This is because immigrants encourage population growth firstly by simply increasing the number of individuals living within the country. Additionally, most immigrants, particularly those coming to the EU, are young people aged 20 to 30 years, this means they increase the youth population of the nation, modifying its demographic pyramid. This somewhat offsets the negative effects of an ageing population⁶ and a decreased labour force in the destination country. Moreover, migrants typically have different fertility rates and household formation patterns compared to the native population, and this contributes to changing the demographics of the area as a whole (Philipov, D, and Schister, J., 2010). However, migration also promotes the meeting of different cultures. In fact, international migrants often come from religious, historical, social, and linguistic backgrounds that are totally different from the ones of the host countries. This encounter is not necessarily a successful and peaceful one, and often results in confrontation and clashes with the native population that are not positive, as migrants can be seen as a danger in terms of preserving the national identity. In addition, for the fact that migration also impacts the fiscal and welfare system of the country of destination, migrants may be perceived as a burden by the host society. These tensions are usually fueled by racism, xenophobia, and anti-immigration rhetoric, these feelings, not only may provoke clashes but also constitute an additional barrier to the integration of foreigners into the host society and diminish the opportunities for development and the benefits that the phenomenon could bring to the destination country (Hugo, G., 2005).

Lastly, migration produces several outcomes in terms of development in the countries of origin. Foremost, emigration of course decreases the supply of workers in the homeland, and this can help economies that are suffering from unemployment and at the same time have large populations and high youth rates. Additionally, it may produce a rise in the wage level, basically the opposite effects that immigration provokes in destination countries (OECD, 2016). However, the most tangible benefit of emigration surely is represented by remittances. The latter, consist in the money that migrants send to their families remaining in the country of origin⁷. The World Bank estimated that in 2022 remittances from low and medium-income countries increased by 4.9% compared to 2021,

⁶ According to the UN, population ageing is a macro-trend caused by the decline of fertility rates and the rise of life expectancy and longevity, this process results in a huge increase of older people and a gradual shift of population pyramid towards older ages. Population ageing is also the celebration of human development as it is due to better health, greater socio-economic progress, and quality of life. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). *World Population Ageing 2019: Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER.A/430).

⁷ Remittances are usually understood as money or material goods, which migrants send home. However, intangible assets, such as ideas, knowledge acquired abroad, share social capital, may also fall into this category.

confirming the growth trend that had peaked in 2021. As for remittances globally, in 2022 they reached almost 800 billion dollars, confirming themselves as the main source of external financing for low and medium-income countries, exceeding the amount allocated to development funds, but also surpassing the foreign direct investment (World Bank, 2022). Remittances naturally are a significant source of inflows, and they are especially relevant in low-income countries, where they represent between 15 and 20 percent of GDP (World Bank, 2022). Moreover, remittances are particularly crucial for poor families and households and for developing countries in general, as they have considerably lowered poverty rates and improved nutritional and educational outcomes in many countries in Asia and Africa. However, they may also have other detrimental repercussions that, over time, could impede or prevent the growth of the recipient countries. Indeed, the other side of the coin is that the money received disincentivizes people to demand economic and social reforms needed for economic recovery and increasing employment, thus leading to greater political disengagement and less pressure on governments. Furthermore, remittances – especially in countries where women are not particularly employed – can lower female labour force participation rates, by providing significant amounts of substitute income for families. In the end, they are still private funds, thus despite their immense importance for developing countries and for families, they can also produce inequities and undesirable effects. Nevertheless, they still represent the clearer, more obvious, and least controversial link between migration and development (IMF, 2021). In sum, as regards the countries of origin, the main benefit of emigration is constituted by remittances and by the hope that young workers employed abroad can eventually return with new knowledge and skills acquired outside. Contrarily, the main concern of developing countries is that those who emigrate for voluntary and economic decisions usually belong to the most wealthy, educated, and skilled group of the local population. Therefore, this kind of emigration leads to the *brain drain* effect that consists of highly skilled emigration followed by a significant loss of skilled workers in the country of origin, the phenomenon of course results in a disadvantage for the home countries and especially for the developing economies. Moreover, over the past 30 years, emerging countries have continued to experience tremendous pressure on labour supply, due to the high number of young people and the low number of job opportunities. Developed countries have instead boosted their demand for skilled migrants from developing nations. This has resulted in a significant and growing absolute salary gap between the two areas for qualified workers. This has over time made advanced countries increasingly attractive to skilled workers while it has decreased the attractiveness of countries of origin. So, this has caused not only a loss of human capital, but also

negative effects in terms of innovation, productivity, economic growth, and human development in countries of origin (Berger, 2022).

Finally, several arguments and discourses can be made regarding the positive or negative effects that migration may bring in terms of development to the countries of destination, origin, and to the migrants themselves, however, it all depends on the specific situation analysed, the country taken into account, the capacity of the system to integrate foreigners, and the rigidity/flexibility of the labour markets. Reasonably, the more developed a country is and the more it will have the necessary means and resources to absorb unbalances produced by migration and to create an integration system able to incorporate the foreign population into its social and economic fabric. On the contrary, the less developed a country is, the more it will have difficulties in dealing with migration, integration, and externalities. The correlation between migration and development appears to be clear at this stage, however, the relationship is much more controversial and not always obvious (Bastia, T. and Skeldon, R. 2020). As much as migration has an impact on development, migration is also affected by it. Indeed, this document is devoted to an examination of the pivotal role that development plays in the decision-making process of migration and in the identification of the main aspects of development which are mostly influential on the decision. The root causes of migration, such as unemployment, conflicts, wars, climate change, labour markets, political persecutions, lack of human rights protection, and so on, are indeed all development-related variables, especially if considered under the broad definition of human development provided above. Even if the rates and causes of emigration vary greatly between nations, emigration rates typically indicate the level of development of a nation. Under this assumption, it is crucial to highlight the fact that public policies and programs may have an impact on the decision to emigrate. However, the relationship between policies and emigration is not always clear-cut since the outcomes of similar programs might vary depending on the country in which they are carried out. Therefore, when development programs and policies are drawn up, policymakers and international actors must look very carefully at the concrete needs of the country in which those policies are to be implemented. Precisely because, each nation and population have its own peculiar characteristics and necessities, so it may need the development aid in one sector, for example enhancing education, fostering social protection, supporting democratic transition, reducing unemployment by creating jobs, or providing courses that train the population in the required skills, and so on. In short, a list of priorities for action should be made so that the programs could be seriously effective in increasing development. In addition, it is not only the decision to adopt a given policy rather than

another affecting emigration rates, but it is the combination of the multiple policies that is more likely to have an impact on the decision to emigrate (OECD, 2017). The effectiveness of institutions and political stability also influences migration decisions, and it is not accidental that emigration rates are greater in nations with higher degrees of corruption. In this regard, unsuccessful growth strategies frequently lead to emigration. Some governments' inability to carry out sufficient economic and social reforms motivates a portion of the population to migrate. On the other side, when a nation reaches a particular degree of economic prosperity, its citizens begin to leave the country in greater numbers. This is because more development leads to better levels of education and more general wealth. Consequently, people will have higher expectations and more money, so they would be able to afford the expenses of travel and the cost of living outside. As a matter of fact, the highest emigration rates are not seen in the poorest nations, which is understandable given that migration is an expensive and selective process (OECD, 2016). Thus, when creating the nation's development strategies, these linkages between such public policies must be considered. It is crucial to emphasize this aspect also to find sustainable policies and measures to address the main challenges usually produced by migration. Definitely, this document stresses the need for a shared management of migration focused on the Migration and Development Nexus, in order to address the political and socio-economic drivers for migratory flows in the countries of origin and transit, to promote legal channels, tackle irregular migration and human trafficking and to promote the sustainable development of people. To make this strategy truly effective and above all sustainable, and thus lasting over time, it is necessary to understand the real and concrete needs of countries, understanding their diversity and their own development and migration patterns. Hence, the Migration and Development Nexus refers to the complex and interdependent relationship between migration processes and the socioeconomic development before mentioned. However, it is not intended just to point out the positive or negative impacts that migration can bring in terms of economic development to the host or origin populations, but it underlines that migration management should be focused on fostering development in all the countries involved in the process, to make international migration truly sustainable, regular, and safe, in order to avoid the possible externalities. Finally, the nexus is intended to emphasize the importance of using policies that treat migration and development as interconnected phenomena, thus supporting unified policies not treating them as separate policy fields in the international arena. However, the relationship constitutes a highly broad and controversial topic that dominated the debate on migration issues over time, as will be analysed in the following section.

1.2 Literature review: Discourse on the migration and development nexus.

The correlation between migration and development, and especially the idea that migratory flows produce effects in terms of human development is undoubtedly not a new one. However, for a long time, the debate on this connection was largely limited to observing the consequences that migration brings in terms of economic development to both origin and destination countries. The Migration and Development Nexus, as analysed in the previous section, has been introduced only in 2002 by Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, Van Hear, and Engberg in their research titled “*The Migration-Development Nexus: Evidence and Policy Options*”. They aimed to demonstrate that migration and development, although largely interdependent, were still treated as two separate policy fields. According to them, as the areas are deeply related and co-dependent, they should also be coordinated to avoid expensive interventions with counterproductive outcomes (Ninna Nyberg-Sørensen, Nicholas Van Hear, Poul Engberg-Pedersen, 2002).

The debate on the relationship has always been controversial and the opinion of scholars differs significantly, especially in the view of migration as an opportunity or a challenge. Particularly in the past – but also to some extent nowadays – the discourse was reduced to a dichotomic and polarized debate on all positive or negative effects that international movements could produce in both the countries of origin and destination. Additionally, the various theories over the correlation were principally anchored in the idea of development understood solely as economic growth.

The main macro distinction concerning the early theoretical approaches is to divide the theorists between functionalists and historical-structuralists (De Haas, H. 2021). According to functionalists, although there may be cases of forced migration, most often emigration is a voluntary choice that individuals make for mostly economic reasons (Ravenstein, 1889), and following a careful cost-benefit analysis. Indeed, under this paradigm migrants are treated as rational actors who make rational and logical choices (De Haas, H. 2021). One of the most widely and well-known theories that falls under the functionalist paradigm is that of *push and pull factors*⁸. The latter can be considered part of this approach as it is based on the assumption that the decision to migrate stems

⁸ The complete name of the theory is Theory of migration, postulated by Lee in 1966.

from a cost-benefit calculation between the factors that drive individuals to leave their country of origin – usually economic causes, but also wars, conflicts, persecution, underdevelopment– and the attractive determinants that lead the migrants to choose one country over another – political and economic stability, good chances of finding employment, high wages, good standard of living (Lee, 1966). Although the push and pull factors theory is the best known today, the leading during the 1950s-60s was the *Neoclassical Migration Theory*⁹, which also adheres to the functionalist perspective. Indeed, it suggests a link between global labour supply and demand, and international migration. Countries with a shortage of workers and high demand for labour will have high wages that entice immigrants from countries with a surplus of workers but little demand for labour, which will also have low wages, which drives people to emigrate. Even under this statement, migrants continue to be treated as rational actors in their pursuit of better opportunities and perspectives abroad, and migration as a phenomenon mainly motivated by economic reasons. In addition, functionalists believe that markets naturally tend towards equilibrium, so the positive outcomes of migration will always outweigh the negative ones. In support of this general enthusiasm and optimistic outlook, it was hypothesized that the labour shortages produced by the exodus of too many workers away from the Global South will be however absorbed, thank the creation of a new equilibrium between capital and labour in the long run (Lewis, 1954). Hence, even in the country of origin, the negative effects produced by emigration, such as the brain drain effect and the loss of human capital, will be neutralized by the counterbalanced flow of remittances, ideas, skills, and knowledge. The functionalist paradigm, however, was influenced by the migratory patterns that existed in Europe at the time. In fact, at the end of World War II, the main movements were characterized by low skilled workers from Southern and Eastern Europe, but also from North Africa, towards North-Western Europe which was experiencing a great economic recovery. The great majority were temporary migrant workers, expected to return to their home countries after a period of employment (Hansen, R., 2004). Therefore, scholars belonging to functionalism tended to link immigration to economic growth, as they noticed that temporary labour migrants, even known as *guest workers*¹⁰, benefited industrialized economics by bringing low skilled and low paid workers. According to them, temporary migration also favoured countries of origin through the

⁹ Postulated by Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970).

¹⁰ A guest worker is an immigrant who is granted permission to reside and work temporarily in a host nation. The expression "guest worker" is most often linked with its German equivalent, "*Gastarbeiter*," which refers to the mostly Turkish workers who were allowed entry into West Germany following World War II to assist in the nation's infrastructure rebuilding. From: Parry, S. (2023). Guest Worker | Migrant Labor, Immigration & Employment Definition | Britannica Money. Encyclopedia Britannica | Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/money/guest-worker>

collection of remittances that foreign workers send back to their families and the higher skills they put at the disposal of their country once they would return home (Kindleberger, 1967). These assumptions increased the narrative over the possible existence of a positive relationship between migration and development, typical of the functionalist thinking of the 1950s-1960s. However, criticism downplayed these accomplishments. Starting from the 1970s, historical-structuralists underlined that migrants who decided to return brought little benefit to their home countries because they had been mostly employed in low-skilled sectors abroad. Additionally, remittances failed to foster development beyond consumption. Few returning citizens made successful investments able to produce economic multiplier effects, such as the creation of new jobs for the local economy. At the same time, it was highlighted that the integration of guest workers within host societies was almost non-existent, and even foreign workers were not guaranteed many rights, this produced several social problems, such as the spread of racism and xenophobia in host countries (King, R. and Collyer, M., 2016). This pessimism led to a more general critique of migration-led growth, resulting in the emergence of the historical-structural paradigm characterized by Neo Marxism, Dependency Theory, and World Systems Theory. They all rejected the idea that migration could benefit development for everyone, and the main studies emphasize the disadvantages of the poor states, which would be further impoverished by emigration and the loss of human capital, especially by the emigration of the most skilled workers. Furthermore, according to several scholars, this loss would not allow developing countries to develop. Their studies are usually characterized by the accredited belief that industrialized and developing nations hold unequal amounts of economic and political power. Moreover, globalization and the expansion of capitalism have also worsened and exacerbated this condition of inequality. Because of their disadvantageous location within the global geopolitical system, undeveloped nations are unable to modernize and make progressive advancements toward economic development. As a result of these shared beliefs, research made during the 1970s-1980s focused on the concepts of dependence and brain drain, frequently arguing that the two phenomena were inversely related, and that migration resulted from underdevelopment and strong dependence on advanced countries. In sum, the brain drain from developing to developed nations causes large and severe losses to the world's poorest nations in terms of economic progress and human capital, whereas migrant movements mostly benefit only the already developed nations (De Haas, H. 2008). In the final analysis, due to their blatant optimism or harsh criticism of the development paradigms of the time, neither functionalists nor Neo-Marxists explored the relationship between migration and development properly. In this regard, an important exception was played in 1971 by the scholar Wilbur Zelinsky who gives a major theoretical

contribution with his Mobility Transition Theory. This theory is crucial for the purposes of this thesis, as it linked for the first time, migration flows with the level of demographic and socioeconomic development of a country. So, for the first time, other dimensions of development were considered. According to Zelinsky, even mobility follows a transition that depends on the type of society under analysis, and in which development and demographic stages that society is at ¹¹. The model predicts that demographic shifts, economic development, and even state formation initially increase internal (rural-to-urban) and international emigration. Only when countries achieve advanced development levels does emigration tend to decrease alongside increasing immigration, leading to a shift from net emigration to net immigration countries. So, the author identifies five different kinds of societies in the various stages of the mobility transition. In the first stage, *premodern traditional societies* are identified, they are very primitive forms of societies as industrialization has not occurred yet and both fertility and mortality rates are considerably high. At this stage, women have many children because they also have many chances to die, due to the lack of technologies, poor medical advancements, high rate of illiteracy, and bad hygiene. These kinds of societies are really underdeveloped and characterized by a low level of emigration, which is little or absent. In the second phase, *early transitional societies* are described, in which fertility is still very high but mortality declines rapidly thanks to the first developmental progress. Furthermore, industrialization starts and with it also the first improvements in public health appear. At this stage migration increases a lot, especially internal migration from the countryside to cities, as people are now in search of better job opportunities and standards of life. However, at this stage, major outflows of emigrants towards near and attractive foreign destinations are also recorded. The third stage is characterized by the so-called *late transitional societies*, in which fertility too begins to diminish together with the progressive reduction of mortality rates. In this kind of society emigration also declines, while rural emigration has almost disappeared. The fourth phase coincides with *advanced societies*, in which fertility and mortality are both stable and low, rural-to-urban migration is substituted by urban-to-urban and emigration with immigration of unskilled or semi-skilled workers from developing countries. The last stage is the one of the *future super-advanced societies* in which mortality and fertility are at an all-time low, societies are super progressing and immigration of laborers continues while emigration comes to a standstill (Zelinsky, 1971). This theory is considered revolutionary for that time, because for the first time, in addition to simply

¹¹ Zelinsky draws on the 1945 theory of Demographic Transition, which linked trends in birth and death rates within a society to levels of human development (thus economic growth, good education, technology and medical breakthroughs).

listing the push factors for leaving or enumerating the various economic benefit or disadvantages that migration brings with it, the level of human development of the country is analysed more comprehensively. Particularly the theory underlines how much the overall level of development influences the decision to migrate within a country. Furthermore, for the first time was emphasized that it is not extreme poverty and total underdevelopment that increase migration flows. In fact, in the first phase of transition, there is an absence of migration, precisely because under such conditions of underdevelopment it is too costly to migrate, and the idea of moving does not even occur to people with no education and without any professional expectations. Therefore, Zelinsky not only departs from the typical dichotomous discourse over the economic benefits or disadvantages of migration, but he also analyses development under new dimensions considering also the cruciality of the level of fertility, the quality of the healthcare system, the reduction of mortality, the level of technology and the overall progress of a country. However, despite the enormous contribution this theory gives to migration studies, the Mobility Transition Theory also exhibits weaknesses. The first one was the fact that it pretends to be a universal theory, but it is almost based on the European experience. In this aspect, it shares similarities with neo-classical migration theory by suggesting a single linear path toward development, which does not accurately reflect the reality of how migration and development affect different regions. The hypothesized sequence of mobility change is less appropriate in modern emerging countries, which experience demographic transition more quickly than historical northern Europe. The belief that migration is a recent phenomenon, basically born with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution presupposed an immobile peasant past. While historical research shows that there was a high level of mobility within the traditional peasant societies. So, this idea that capitalism uprooted stable village communities for the first time is refuted (Skeldon, R. 2014). Despite these criticisms, the core concept of the Mobility Transition Theory remains valid, in fact, there is a complex relationship between specific forms of migration and broader socio-economic and demographic development processes (De Haas, H. 2008). Starting from the 1990s the debate began to shift slightly, when academics and other migration scholars began to point out the serious limitations in the theoretical framework and research design of earlier studies. More empirical studies and transnational research were made and a more nuanced viewpoint on the migration-development relationship was adopted. However, as in previous decades, political leaders did not implement policies to treat migration and development as two interconnected fields, even if the link between the two phenomena was now evident. In particular, even though it was clear that migration did not bring serious drawbacks to advanced countries, especially if destination countries had good integration systems and flexible

markets, migration was still perceived as a threat and used in political rhetoric. Moreover, migration was also still considered as the product of extreme poverty, despite academics stressing that it was not so much extreme poverty the primary driver of migration, but rather the period of transition from a completely poor and underdeveloped country to one that is on the verge of developing. However, the policies that were decided to be adopted in the European context were mostly development support measures and money in exchange for lower migration flows from transit countries, and very few moves were made instead to improve integration systems in the destination countries. The first academic wave that begins to identify the need to deal with migration and development together also in politics, appears in 1997, when the concept of *co-development* was introduced by the Algerian-born French political philosopher Sami Nair. The French scholar defined co-development as “*a proposal for integrating immigration and development in a way that migration fluxes will benefit both the country of origin and the country of destination. This is, a consensual relationship between two countries that will allow migration to the country of destiny not to imply an equivalent loss in the country of origin*” (Nair, 1997). The new theory highlighted that development and migration should be supported by proper policies rather than being considered as distinct political domains. Co-development was officially introduced into European political discourse, for the first time in 1999, during the Tampere Summit, where the European states made clear that the EU’s overall approach to migration required to address also the political, social, and development concerns in the countries of origin and transit. Therefore, the new European approach to migration was also aimed at eliminating poverty, improving housing and work options, preventing wars, bolstering democratic states, and upholding human rights, empowering women, and so on. In addition, to advance co-development and partnership with third nations, the Union and its Member States chose to contribute to the Union's internal and exterior policies by being more consistent (Tampere Council Conclusions, 1999). Despite the commitment to promoting co-development, the EU’s policy remained firmly anchored with the objective of reducing migration flows. Consequently, the provision of development funds destined for third countries was used more as a security tool instead of a genuine development policy that could actually benefit both home and host countries. So, rather than a diffusion of the Migration-Development nexus, in the early 2000s, there was a proliferation of the Migration-Development-Security nexus (Ranieri, L. Rossi, A., 2017). Recent debates on international migration in Europe present a dual perspective. On one hand, there is a desire to maintain restrictive measures on immigration due to concerns about its impact on the labour market and social cohesion in recipient countries. On the other hand, there is an emerging interest in adopting a more tailored approach to fight the root causes of

migration. Since 1999, the EU's migration policy has emphasized cooperation and burden-sharing with third countries about asylum and irregular migration. However, the dominance of the securitization approach to migration in EU policymaking has overshadowed discussions on the Migration- Development nexus, such as co-development initiatives in the 1990s (Üstübici, A. et al. 2020). European funds were therefore allocated to increase aid in third countries, but without really fostering the political and human development and without even adopting measures in the European countries to make the integration of migrants into host societies sustainable and feasible. Indeed, very few funds have been allocated to the integration of migrants in the destination countries (Carlotti, M., 2006). Thus, despite the recognition of the need to integrate migration policies with development ones, migration flows were still considered as a threat to development in the host country, and development cooperation was used as a measure to reduce flows. Moreover, in the 2000s, the idea that massive migration stemmed from extreme poverty was still predominant in the political debate, however, this assumption is not supported by evidence. In fact, as Zelinsky had already anticipated in 1971, migration flows actually increase when a country begins to develop, not when a country is extremely poor. This is because absolute poverty does not even allow people to finance travel expenses. Furthermore, the desire to leave the country of origin to find better jobs and life opportunities also stems from new ambitions due to the greater education system, socio-economic and political advancements in the country. Indeed, retaking the Migration Transition Theory, contemporary migration scholars elaborate on the idea that human development generally results in rising levels of migration, since progress gives individuals new capacities and skills, however, development also creates new aspirations and desires within the population (De Haas, H., 2007). Growing levels of education, accessibility to the internet and social media, greater freedoms, and a free market, usually correspond with an increment of material aspirations. For instance, young people will no longer be attracted by agricultural ambitions, but they will want to work abroad and earn enough money to afford a comfortable life. Particularly after having received a good level of education, the young will be more inclined to leave their country of origin, especially if unemployment is still high at home and wages are low. These elements contribute to the paradox that, in low-income countries, economic growth, and more human development usually foster emigration in the short and medium periods. However, at a later stage, when these societies achieve a high level of development emigration levels typically decrease. This results in an inverted-U-curve relationship between development and migration (De Haas, H. 2020). Recent studies have

evaluated this hump theory¹², offering a more nuanced perspective on how development influences people's decisions to move from low-income nations. However, trying to explain emigration by merely looking at the correlation between income level and the likelihood of emigration, means oversimplifying the phenomenon. Therefore, the decision to emigrate can be made because of political issues, conflicts, climatic factors, and so on. The choice may also result from an emulation effect. In fact, an individual may adopt the decision because takes as an example someone who left before, was successful abroad and can even provide help once arrived at destination¹³. Also, demographic factors are crucial in the decision; for example, if there are too many young people and a high level of youth unemployment within a given country this may lead to increased youth emigration (Angenendt, S. et al., 2017). Therefore, the reasons that push an individual to migrate, can be countless – and not always voluntary – and it must be considered that greater human development is necessary, not so much to relieve migratory pressure, but to create alternatives at least to irregular and dangerous routes that every year endanger and cause the death of thousands of people. However, interventions must be targeted at meeting the real concerns and needs of the population. Moreover, to be effective, development aid must seek to be sustainable and long-lasting, so that the sending countries can continue to develop and evolve independently over time.

In sum, migration is a disputed topic, and its connection to development is even more controversial. The common myth that more development leads to less migration is frequently the foundation of policy discussions and international policies addressing migratory flows. Academic writing, however, casts doubt on the accuracy of these presumptions. Higher economic and human development levels have been shown to be connected with higher overall levels of migration rather than causing a reduction in migratory flows, at least in the short and medium term. In other words, only after a prolonged period of sustained development, emigration begins to decline (Ranieri, L. Rossi, A., 2017). This discussion suggests that development cooperation may be a useful tool to pursue political stability, democratic values, economic growth, higher education, socio economic opportunities, health care, and services in the countries of origin, but in order to work properly, it must be targeted to meet the real needs and demands of those specific population. Therefore, not

¹² In the 1990s, the expression "migration hump" emerged. It is based on the observation that rising emigration rates are frequently associated with rising per capita incomes in developing nations.

¹³ When talking about the emulation effect, the size of the diaspora counts: the larger it is and the more it will encourage emigration. Indeed, the extent of the community of immigrants from a certain place of origin to a given destination country, affects how easily prospective migrants can learn about the work and housing markets in the destination country.

ephemeral responses that run out in time, but concrete solutions that allow the country to be able to pursue its own development path over time. Finally, migration and development do not mutually exclude one another but strengthen one another. Therefore, it cannot be the objective of development cooperation to reduce migration as a whole. Instead, the Migration-Development nexus should strive to prevent forced, unsafe, and irregular migration as far as possible, by fostering opportunities and alternatives in the home countries and promoting voluntary, safe and legal forms of migration that can contribute to mutual development (Angenendt , S. et al, 2017). The nexus must be understood as a relationship that can promote sustainable and lasting development in countries of origin, transit and destination. In this regard, migration-development policies should not be limited to countries of origin and transit, but also to countries of destination. Indeed, as analysed in the previous section, a rigid labour market and a poor integration system increase the externalities of migration and decrease its benefits in terms of human progress and economic growth. Furthermore, a lack of integration leads to social unrest and racism and precludes peaceful coexistence between cultures.

1.3 Development and youth migration in the Mediterranean.

After having introduced the link between migration and development, and the main literature on the topic, this section will provide an overview of the relationship that concerns the Mediterranean region. Since, as pointed out in the previous sections, each geographical region is characterised by a certain type of migration and a certain level of development. A special focus will be devoted to the Euro-Med area and relationships as it is crucial to give an introductory context for the case study of Tunisia.

The Mediterranean Sea has been compared, since the 1990s, to the *Rio Grande* between Europe and Africa, serving as a migratory border that divides two vastly different regions in terms of economy, politics, culture, and demographics (King, R. 1996). Indeed, the Mediterranean region has always been characterized by multiple identities and by its diversity. However, over the past two centuries, economic disparities among Mediterranean countries have grown, leading to clear distinctions between advanced/rich countries and underdeveloped/poor zones and exacerbating the stark divide between the northern and southern shores (Ambrosetti, E. and Strangio, D. 2016). The Northern Mediterranean countries, belonging to the Southern states of the European Union, are economically wealthy and integrated into the international economic system. In contrast, the Southern

Mediterranean countries, particularly Northern African states, face challenges with low economic growth and employment rates, remaining on the margins of the global economic landscape (Giordano, 2021). Furthermore, the distinctions between the two shores extend beyond just economic aspects. Indeed, the demographic trends in the area also show considerable variations. The northern region is currently dealing with an aging population and low or absent population growth due to a significant decrease in birth rates and a remarkable rise in life expectancy. This region has effectively undergone its demographic transition. In contrast, the southern region is at a distinct stage of this process. Despite the reduction in both birth and death rates, southern nations are still encountering population growth due to their high historical fertility rates and the circumstance that the decline in fertility occurred sometime after the decrease in mortality. (Ambrosetti, E., 2020). Moreover, differences among the regions also concern cultural and political aspects. However, while in the past these differences were seen quite positively, nowadays they are usually considered a source of contrast. For example, while in the past cultural dissimilarities were regarded as a helpful factor in enhancing shared prosperity in the area and additionally, they were also considered as a core part of the Mediterranean identity, at present days perspectives tend to interpret these divergences as contentious, particularly concerning religious identities, cultural differences are therefore perceived more as a threat than an asset. Another relevant distinction, sometimes the source of problems, is the divergent political landscape of the two shores. Indeed, the North consists of stable and democratic states respectful of human rights and the rule of law, whereas the South countries struggle with internal conflicts and often fail to uphold rights compatible with Europe's fundamental values (Giordano, 2021). As a result, due to its distinct traits as a boundary that separates two regions characterized by significant disparities in human development and demography, the Mediterranean basin stands as one of the regions most profoundly impacted by migration complexities (Ismaili Idrissi, B. and Moufti, S., 2019).

From the 1990s onward, security discourses have taken centre stage in the European Union's political discussions regarding migration throughout the entire region. This perspective views migrants as potential threats to the economy, security, and overall development of destination countries, leading to a predominant focus on border control in various European policies. As a result, the EU's approach to migration within the Mediterranean has been heavily influenced by the Migration-Security nexus, which has tended to overshadow the humanitarian and developmental relationship with migratory flows (Panebianco, S. 2022). As demonstrated in the previous sections, there is a general reluctance on the part of both countries of origin and destination to see migration

as an opportunity for development. Indeed, several Middle East and North African (MENA) countries as well as European nations have difficulties in recognizing emigration and immigration as positive phenomena which could produce new socioeconomic opportunities, better allocation of the workforce, and that could enhance economic prosperity. In addition, these concerns are accompanied by fears about the potential impact on wages of native workers with lower qualifications, as well as the strain on social services required to facilitate the integration of migrants within the destination countries.

Throughout history, the European Union and Southern Mediterranean countries have engaged in bilateral and multilateral relations, primarily under the framework known as the Barcelona Process. This process was initiated in November 1995 and involved the EU Member States along with 14 Mediterranean Partner Countries¹⁴. The objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), as defined by the Barcelona Declaration, revolved around three key areas. The first chapter aimed to establish a common area of peace and stability by strengthening political and security dialogue between the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries. This was crucial to foster peaceful relations and address security concerns in the region. The second goal of the partnership focused on creating an area of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership. It involved gradual steps towards establishing a free trade zone by the year 2010, aimed at promoting economic cooperation and prosperity for both regions. The last aspect emphasized fostering connections between people through social, cultural, and human partnership (Yildiz, U., 2012). In 2005, the EU's Barcelona Process faced criticism from both Southern Mediterranean countries and EU academics and civil society organizations for its perceived inefficacy in responding to regional events and real development needs. Despite signing Association Agreements¹⁵ and implementing trade-related reforms with Mediterranean nations, issues such as insufficient financial support, unequal trade liberalization, and limited focus on political reforms and human rights hindered the effective execution of policies. In particular, the EMP was a failure as the EU asked the Southern Mediterranean partners to open up their economies but without significant facilities or membership

¹⁴ The Southern Mediterranean partner countries involved were Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine (representing the Palestinian territories), Syria (currently suspended due to the Syrian civil war), Tunisia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia.

¹⁵ Association agreements are bilateral agreements that the EU signs with third countries putting the basis for an intense cooperation. As part of its standard practice, the EU commonly enters into Association Agreements with countries that accept the condition to implement reforms in various areas, such as politics, economics, trade, and human rights. In return, the EU may provide certain benefits to the partner countries, which could include tariff-free access to some or all EU markets for goods, including industrial products and agricultural items. Additionally, the EU may offer financial or technical assistance to support the partner country's efforts in implementing the agreed-upon reforms.

perspective, indeed there was no major lowering of the tariffs and no major increase in trade between 1995 and 2005 in the area. So, five years before the deadline of 2010, there was no real shared area of prosperity. In 2008, the Union for the Mediterranean was launched, maintaining the same cooperation chapters from the Barcelona Process, but introducing a co-presidency system to ensure shared ownership of policies and more equality among the partners. Nevertheless, the new initiative also faced criticism for not providing significant added value and lacking concrete measures to address vital issues like migration, terrorism, religious intolerance, and human rights protection (Comelli, M. et al., 2009). In addition, despite the EU's promise that it would tackle the growing challenges of migration by focusing on integration and development in the countries of origin and transit, actually, the practice demonstrates a progressive shift towards a security approach. Throughout the 2000s this attitude about migration emerged, and it was even reinforced after the terroristic attacks of 11 September 2001 which enhanced the security conception and management of migration (Benjelloun, S., 2022). Moreover, association agreements have also shifted towards a secure and restrictive approach over time. Initially, preventive measures to tackle illegal migration¹⁶ were not even included in the agreements signed with Morocco and Tunisia in 1995 and 1996. However, after 2000 they were incorporated into the agreements signed with Lebanon, Egypt, and Algeria, indicating a growing emphasis on security-related concerns in the region (Jaulin, T., 2010). The EU's enlargement in the 2000s, which expanded the European borders, presented a significant challenge for the Union in managing relationships with new neighbours and addressing new security threats. The enlargement, combined with the new security-oriented approach, has contributed to the emergence of a new dividing line between countries considered European and non-European, developed and underdeveloped, and made even more evident the existing gap between Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries (Smith, K.E. 2005). Indeed, in 2004 the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched – also to address the challenges produced by the enlargement, the creation of new members, but also new borders and neighbours. The President of the European Commission stated in 2002, the ENP was “*more than a partnership but less than a membership*” (Prodi, R. 2002 - SPEECH/02/619). The main ambiguity of this new policy was produced exactly by the fact that it was directed towards integration with the Union and convergence with the European model and *acquis*, however, accession does not figure as ultimate objective (Amato, A. 2008). Within the ENP the EU offers its neighbours a preferential relationship through conditionality, based on a reciprocal adherence to

¹⁶ such as border control, visas requirements, and repatriation

European values such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, good governance, market economy principles, and sustainable development (Rieker, P. 2012). Therefore, Southern Mediterranean states should benefit from closer economic and political integration with the EU “*in return for concrete progress demonstrating shared values and effective implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms, including aligning legislation with the acquis*” (European Commission, 2003)¹⁷. Nonetheless, the European Union's capacity to bring about significant change in the neighbouring regions has been limited, and the outcomes of its policies since the initiation of the ENP in 2004 have been minimal (Schneider, M. 2010). Indeed, despite it was created to enhance cooperation and economic integration between the two shores of the Mediterranean, the ENP was unable to really fill the gap between the European countries and its neighbours, and particularly it was incapable to foster real human development in the MENA region. Moreover, it was not perceived as a real partnership between equals, but rather as an attempt to “*Europeanize*” the countries of North Africa and the Middle East without even giving them the opportunity, in the event of efficient reforms, to join the European “club” as parity members (Schneider, M. 2010). The most obvious sign of failure of the ENP has been the outbreak of the Arab Spring in the 2010s, which demonstrated the area of the Mediterranean was anything but stable, as characterized by strong social, economic, and political tensions. The Arab Spring was a sequence of demonstrations, revolts, and armed insurrections that swept through a significant portion of the Arab world. Originating in Tunisia as a reaction to corruption, dictatorship and economic challenges, these protests subsequently extended to other nations, including Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain. Certainly, despite their subsequent trajectories according to the country, the uprisings share significant commonalities in their driving forces. A volatile mix of factors has served as a collective underlying motivation behind these insurrections. These factors encompass issues like widespread lack of democracy, unemployment, particularly among the younger population, escalating social disparities, pervasive government corruption, nepotism, the erosion of human rights and dignity, the denial of fundamental freedoms by ruling regimes, shifts in demographic patterns over recent decades, and an exacerbation of economic challenges due to the 2008 global financial crisis and escalating food prices (Özekin, M. and Akkaş, H. 2014). This witnessed the EU's inability to promote economic and human development among the Southern Mediterranean partners, its inadequacy in fostering democracy and peace in the region, but also its lack of influence in the area. However, despite the violence and even though the protests showed an

¹⁷ European Commission (2003): Wider Europe Neighborhood, COM (2003).

evident deficiency of political stability, the uprisings were nevertheless seen in the eyes of the Union, as a democratic event or at least as an opportunity to establish democracy as they were aimed at overthrowing the authoritarian regimes. So, the EU decided to use this democratic moment to truly spread democracy to the partner countries. In this regard, the ENP underwent a revision in 2011 to address the significant changes occurred in the area, which led to a reordering of the scale of priorities in Euro-Mediterranean relations. In the first place, the ENP review has implied that the EU recognized the need to provide its neighbours with greater resources to accompany the democratic transitions in the countries and to foster human development (Gozzi, G. 2018). In the process of revising the ENP, the European Commission opted to strengthen the concept of conditionality, introducing a *'more-for-more'* strategy that links financial assistance to democratic reforms. This approach hinges on the idea that nations making more substantial and accelerated progress with reforms will receive increased support from the EU. Initially, the EU allocated substantial funds to facilitate democratic transitions. Notably, the EU-Tunisia Task Force was a prominent proposal, aiming to provide 4 billion Euros to bolster the transition from 2011 to 2013 (similar task forces also occurred for EU-Jordan and EU-Egypt in 2012). A fundamental anticipation underlying this renewed emphasis on democracy is that encouraging stability in the Mediterranean region would, among other things, lead to reduced migration toward the EU from more stable countries. Again, under this logic is possible to identify the reasoning that more development leads to less emigration, but as explained in the previous sections it is not always the rule, especially at the very beginning of the development process. Furthermore, to incentivize countries toward democratization, the promise of enhanced mobility has been extended to those embracing reform. This change in the approach to mobility and migration seemed to soften the rigid migration-security nexus and appeared to shift the focus to the migration-development-democracy nexus. The intersection of EU democratization policies and migration is evident in the 2011 review of the ENP. This review pivots on a novel framing of the conditionality principle named "deep democracy". This entails components such as open elections, safeguarding freedom of expression, assembly, and association, combating corruption, and establishing the rule of law, among other aspects. To achieve these objectives, the strategy involves providing incentives in the form of foreign aid, improved trade relations, and increased mobility¹⁸ (Gozzi, 2018). The EU also established a fund for democracy and did so to include civil society more in the relationship with those countries, and to develop a more tailored approach. So, the overall strategy here was to return

¹⁸ This approach was indeed called the 3 M: money, market and mobility.

to the initial logic of the Mediterranean partnership, the idea of accompanying the southern Mediterranean countries towards the process of democratization to increase not only prosperity but also peace and stability in the region. However, despite the EU's objectives to achieve deep democracy, and to contribute to more equitable, and prosperous societies, the ENP progress report of 2014¹⁹ underscores the deficiencies and inefficacies of its strategies concerning both the southern and eastern neighbours. Particularly these strategies failed at achieving social inclusiveness and human development, but also to spread democracy in the post-Arab Spring societies, the only success story was considered Tunisia. It's important to emphasize that the 2011 revision prioritized the advancement of inclusive socio-economic progress. However, this emphasis primarily materialized in extending the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) jurisdiction to the region. The intention was to foster job creation through amplified trade, investment partnerships, and heightened engagement in public-private ventures, even when human rights concerns were glaring. Regrettably, this approach ultimately fell short of yielding the anticipated outcomes of sustained economic growth and substantial democracy (Grossi et al. 2015). The 2014 report clearly showed that even the 2011 review had not been sufficient to change the situation in the Union's neighbouring countries. Moreover, several international events also testified that the area was far from secure and solid. Indeed, Libya had become a failed state, in Egypt the democratic project collapsed after the military coup in 2013 and the establishment of the al-Sisi government, while Syria was in the midst of a long civil war. Tunisia was regarded as a unique democratic success story, yet the country was and still is far from achieving a full democratic transition and the problems of corruption and economic instability that had been among the causes of the Arab Spring are still present. Moreover, the eastern neighbourhood also showed strong signs of insecurity and instability. The apex was undoubtedly the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. Furthermore, as evidence of this situation of general unrest and conflict, in 2015 Europe was hit by the so-called refugee crisis. The European Union realized that the 2011 revision of the ENP had not been sufficient to enable the Union to be an effective and influential actor in its neighbourhood. Therefore, a further revision of the ENP was published in 2015. An interesting point here is that the Euro-Med relations return to a more security-based approach. Indeed, the review identifies security and stability as a key priority in both the eastern and southern dimensions of the European neighbourhood, and at the same time, the new strategy seeks also to introduce

¹⁹ Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social Committee and the Committee of the regions. Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2014. https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/pdf/2015/joint-communication_en.pdf

greater differentiation in the approach towards specific countries. Thus, since the early years of the 2000s, the Union has modified its policy towards its neighbours several times to promote stability and democratic principles, however with little or no success. In addition, the EU's approaches to migration have also changed according to the circumstances and international events. In fact, there have been times when the security-based approach prevailed and periods when a less restrictive approach succeeded. The first paradigm is based on the migration-security nexus and relies on increased border controls, returns, and the practice of externalization. The latter consists in outsourcing and transferring the boundaries of control of a sovereign nation through the involvement and responsibility of third-party countries. (Afailal, H. and Fernandez, M. 2018). Basically, the EU, to curtail irregular migration and more broadly, prevent migrants from accessing the legal jurisdictions of its member states, signs agreements and memorandum of understanding with third countries, usually transit countries. These documents are designed to impede departures towards the EU territories (Frelick, B, Kysel, I.M., and Podkul, J., 2016). In exchange, the Union usually gives to third countries facilities, such as visa liberalization, money, funds to foster development, and so on. This approach anchored to the Migration-Security nexus, has been largely criticized especially for the fact that the EU or its Member states made deals and signed agreements also with non-democratic regimes²⁰. Thus, these practices aimed at the security and protection of European borders are part of the restrictive approach, which has prevailed the most. The second approach, on the other hand, focuses on eliminating the root causes of migration using development cooperation and aid instruments, therefore, it should rely on the Migration-Development-Democracy nexus. Therefore, the restrictive approach dominated the European scene, especially after the terrorist attacks and the period after the big bang enlargement of 2004. Instead, after the Arab Spring, seen as an opportunity for democracy and development in the MENA region, the Union tried to shift towards a smoother approach in respect of migratory movements and tries to focus more on the root causes of migration, the spread of democracy and development in the countries of transit and origin. However, the refugee crisis of 2015 makes the Union oscillate again between these two paradigms, as on the one hand, the EU wants to protect its own borders and thus prioritize security, on the other hand, it wants to contribute to the development of partner countries, and to the elimination of the root causes of migration by using a more tailored approach.

²⁰ Among the most criticized was the EU-Turkey Memorandum of Understanding in 2016. But also, the MoU between Italy and Libya in 2017.

It is notable at this juncture that despite the efforts to establish a prosperous and stable Mediterranean region, neither economic nor political stability has been successfully attained. Moreover, the underlying issues which led to the 2011 uprisings continue to persist as ongoing challenges in most of the Arab Mediterranean countries and the gap between north and south of the area is far from being filled. Consequently, migration remains a pressing and pivotal concern in Euro-Med relations. Indeed, nowadays the Mediterranean still serves as a major route to reach the EU. Migrants and asylum seekers embark on long and dangerous journeys daily, crossing the various pathways across the Mediterranean. Of these, the central Mediterranean route represents the most crowded and dangerous one, typically utilized by migrants from North Africa endeavouring to enter Italy, and to a lesser extent Malta. In the context of this document, as the case study of this thesis will be on Tunisia, the central Mediterranean route holds particular relevance. As anticipated, the two shores of the Mediterranean remain characterized by differences and disparities giving rise to various forms of migratory movements within the area. Firstly, the central Mediterranean is surely still the scene of forced migration caused by wars, crises, natural disasters, and political persecutions. Secondly, voluntary economic migration is largely widespread in the area, particularly irregular migration produced by differences concerning the distinctive labour markets and the divergent demographic trends. Finally, many countries that in the past used to be exclusively and traditionally typical for being exporters of workers, such as Morocco and Tunisia, while continuing to be countries of emigration, are also increasingly becoming transit and destination countries for migrants from other areas, outside the MENA region, especially from Sub-Saharan Africa (Triulzi, 2022). Nevertheless, scarce resources and poor management of migration in these countries lead to an increase in irregular departures, insufficient integration, and the impossibility of peaceful coexistence. However, despite these being the main typologies of movements, today it is increasingly complicated to distinguish between them, as the push factors are often mixed. Both refugees and migrants are increasingly leaving their home countries following the same routes, making it harder to draw a clear line between the two. This surge in mixed migration is bringing about diverse and far-reaching effects on nations of origin, transit, and destination. As a result, it is presenting new and intricate challenges for governments, humanitarian agencies, the European Union, and the international community at large (Wittenberg, L., 2017). Although the EU has always received a high number of immigrants from the South of the Mediterranean and in particular from the Arab Mediterranean countries, it was the 2011 Arab Spring that changed the nature and trend of the flows. One of the most complex and interesting effects concerning the region has been the phenomenon of youth emigration. In fact, one of the most interesting indicators when studying

migration in the Euro-Mediterranean area is to see how, excluding the movements of people living in other areas and using the Mediterranean countries as transit countries, the main reasons for migration in the MENA countries are voluntary, economic and above all concern young people and even more young people who have received a high level of education. Despite the EU has engaged in dialogues and partnerships with MENA countries about migration and youth, and notwithstanding the same young people demonstrated and overthrew their governments in 2011 precisely in order to have a better future, economic opportunities and political stability, managing youth emigration has remained a challenge for both the shores (Sanchez-Montijano, E and Girona-Raventos, M. 2017). Wage differentials, diverse demographic patterns, and high youth unemployment in the Southern Mediterranean, indeed, still represent the major drivers of voluntary economic migration from the area (Ben Ahmed, 2021). The differences mentioned earlier between the north and south of the Mediterranean are crucial to understanding the kind of migratory patterns concerning the area. Firstly, a great difference is found in demographic patterns. Indeed, in the north, the population is declining and getting older, while the south is characterized by a young and growing population despite the progressive decrease in fertility rates. It can therefore be said that the south of the Mediterranean is experiencing a *youth bulge*, defined as an increase in the number of young people within a nation, conventionally in the 16-25 or 16-30 age groups (Giordano, 2021). The problem with this bulge is that younger societies with weak labour markets and poor socio-economic opportunities are more prone to extremism, conflict, and risks of instability. Such risks are indeed compounded by high unemployment rates which lead to socio-economic discontent (Adelaja, A. and George, J., 2020). Indeed, the main problem is not the high number of young people in a society per se, but the fact that the labour market in the southern Mediterranean is unable to employ all young people, and this situation creates high unemployment and dissatisfaction. In fact, the region has among the highest levels of youth unemployment because it is unable to integrate many young people into the local labour market. Despite the changes brought about by the Arab Uprising, many North African youth continue to struggle with inactivity, lack of social mobility, and a sense of hopelessness. This has led to a state of "*waitthood*," where young people feel trapped and unable to access opportunities for education, employment, and family life in their countries of origin. This condition is exacerbated by a broken social contract between the state and its citizens, as well as a socio-economic system perceived as rigged. Therefore, despite the 2011 riots asking for a renewal of the system, actually, there was no radical socio-economic and political transformation of the area. The Moroccan government has attempted to address waitthood through various policies, such as raising the minimum working age and promoting youth participation in

politics. However, these efforts have not effectively addressed the core issues. So, youth bulge and waitness are in a certain sense linked to migration, as young people seek better opportunities abroad due to a lack of prospects at home (Bonci, A. and Cavatorta, F., 2021). In 2016 the EU conducted a survey, the SAHWA Youth Survey, in five Arab Mediterranean countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia to identify the push factors behind the phenomenon of youth immigration to the EU. The European project conducted interviews and analytical assessments involving a total of 9.860 young individuals, approximately 2.000 per country. The ambitious survey delved into a wide spectrum of topics, including but not limited to education, employment, social integration, political participation, migratory movements, and the role of public policies and international cooperation. (Weber, W., Queralt I Sans, T et al, 2021). Among the major results, the study reveals that the desire to emigrate between young people accounts for 21% of the regional population surveyed, but the percentages differ when analysing country-specific data: 8% in Morocco, 16% in Lebanon, 17% in Egypt, 26% in Algeria, and a striking 53% in Tunisia (Sanchez-Montijano, E and Girona-Raventos, M. 2017). France emerges as the most favoured EU destination – especially preferred by Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians – followed by Germany, and Italy. The appeal of these countries lies mostly in perceived labour opportunities there. The attractiveness of the European Union varies from country to country. Indeed, other research shows that Germany proved to be the preferred destination for Syrian refugees and Lebanese migrants due to the openness of its borders, good job opportunities, and cultural openness (Hager, A. 2021). A deeper look into education levels reveals that individuals with middle and primary education express the strongest desire to emigrate. Interestingly, youth with higher education levels usually display less willingness. However, this trend also varies by country. For instance, Tunisia sees a prevalence in the opposite direction with 38% of primary-educated youth wishing to emigrate compared to 59% of those with higher education (Sanchez-Montijano, E and Girona-Raventos, M. 2017). Therefore, even individuals with higher education can show a strong desire to leave their country of origin, exactly because they highlight the lack of professional opportunities at home as the main driver for emigration. This pattern confirms the *waitness phenomenon* described earlier. Indeed, students who received a good level of education but who cannot find an equally good job at home could be even more frustrated and eager to migrate than those with a lower level of education. Moreover, for what concern the drivers of youth migration, lack of experience, and inadequate training opportunities are prominent factors for student emigration in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, and Lebanon. Additionally, the employment factor is likewise decisive in the choice to migrate. In fact, unemployed youth are normally much more inclined to emigrate than employed peers across the

region. However, even this tendency may vary by country due to diverse employment landscapes. Unemployed youth in Algeria and Tunisia are particularly motivated to emigrate, while Lebanon and Egypt see a higher desire among employed youth, due to job precariousness at home (Sanchez-Montijano, E and Girona-Raventos, M. 2017). An interesting point to make is that as far as young people living in the Mediterranean area are concerned, the determining factors in choosing to migrate are much more socioeconomic than political. Economic reasons are significant drivers of youth emigration, encompassing limited professional prospects, poor living conditions, low income relative to foreign countries, and the desire to support the family. Indeed, the SAHWA survey shows that these four economic factors are consistently cited as the main reasons for emigration across the region, with 48.2% pointing to the lack of professional opportunities. Education-related factors, particularly the mismatch between education and the labour market, are also noteworthy. Additionally, while scholarly literature indicates that political factors significantly contribute to migration, the SAHWA data underscores that political motivations hold little importance for youth from the Arab Mediterranean countries contemplating emigration, with only 0.5% citing them as a reason (Sanchez-Montijano, E and Girona-Raventos, M. 2017). The table below indicates the main causes of emigration in the Arab Mediterranean countries.

	Tunisia	Morocco	Lebanon	Egypt	Algeria
Lack of professional opportunities	34	20	0	48	13
Poor living conditions	21	18	19	11	21
Inadequate opportunities for study and training	12	9	9	5	11
Income lower than abroad	12	16	26	26	10
Lack of opportunities to gain experience	5	9	0	2	22
Help the family	5	16	4	5	17
Escape family pressure and problems	4	9	27	1	6
Political and security circumstances	3	3	0	0	0
Other	4	0	15	2	0

Figure 1: Source: SAHWA Youth Survey 2016 (2017). Elaborated by Sanchez-Montijano, E and Girona-Raventos, M. 2017.

Addressing the challenges faced by youth in the Arab world is crucial for both regional and global stability. The economic and political costs of widespread youth unemployment are related to potential losses in GDP and political unrest. The current situation of many Arab youth feeling trapped in a prolonged *pre-adulthood* phase could lead to emigration, brain drain, social discontent,

and inadequate housing conditions. These issues stem from a lack of opportunities and the government's failure to support youth development. The Arab Spring protests in countries like Tunisia and Egypt underscore the urgency of addressing these concerns. Governments must recognize that the frustrated youth are demanding change and may continue to do so, potentially leading to further demonstrations and social transformations in the future. The unfulfilled promise of adulthood is a pressing concern that cannot be ignored, as the growing number of marginalized youths has the potential to drive significant change on a global scale (Mulderig, M.C., 2013). Understanding what the root causes of migration are, is crucial to consider which areas and sectors need to be addressed to make cooperation aid truly effective and concrete, to develop successful migration policies, and to make the Migration-Development nexus effective. Finally, considering the main drivers is decisive also to offer alternatives to irregular migration. In fact, the survey also aims to investigate this aspect, asking young people from these five countries whether they would be willing to undertake the journey irregularly. Irregular emigration is contemplated by a minority, with just 19% confirming they would pursue it if possible. In particular, Moroccans and Algerians show higher inclinations for irregular emigration. However, it is important to consider that this disposition might be underreported (Sanchez-Montijano, E and Girona-Raventos, M. 2017). The most interesting thing behind the project is that it has been a useful tool to really understand the concrete needs of the young population in the Arab Mediterranean countries a few years after the uprisings. However, the results confirm that the protests do not change so much the situation for what concern the marginalization of the youth. Moreover, in order to have a more updated vision of the situation of emigration from the Southern Mediterranean countries toward Europe, in 2022 another investigation has been founded by the EU. The project, titled "EUROMED Migration V programme" investigates the propensity and the reasons to emigrate in 12 Southern Partners²¹. In a comprehensive examination, it was determined that the primary rationale cited for individuals desiring both regular and irregular emigration is rooted in economic factors. This inclination was observed across various countries, with an average of approximately 60% of respondents emphasizing economic motives. Subsequently, the pursuit of educational opportunities emerged as the second most prevalent reason. Notably, this trend is remarkably diminished among those inclined toward irregular migration. Conversely, individuals expressing a willingness to migrate without official documentation exhibited a higher prevalence of political and corruption-related motivations. This pattern was particularly pronounced in Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan, where both

²¹ Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, the Palestinian Territories, Sudan, Kuwait, and Yemen.

those favouring and opposing irregular migration were predominantly driven by economic considerations, with over 70% of respondents falling under this category. Analysing socio-demographic predictors has been observed that the three main explanatory variables which have the greatest influence on the choice to migrate are: gender (the individual is much more likely to be male) exhibited significance in 11 out of 12 countries considered, youthfulness consistently showed significance across all 12 countries, and possession of a university degree displayed significance in 11 countries. Furthermore, the model underscores the significant impact of individuals' perceptions regarding their economic and political context. Across 8 of the 12 countries, pessimism concerning the economic prospects of one's own country exhibited a positive correlation with contemplating emigration. Moreover, perceptions of democratic governance within one's country yielded a negative effect in 9 countries, whereas perceptions of corruption yielded a positive effect in 8 countries (Dennison, J. 2022).

In conclusion, the crucial aspect of these two documents lies in the presentation of perceptions and drivers of migration within the Mediterranean. Precisely, the surveys analyse the main causes of emigration from the Arab Mediterranean countries to Europe and illustrate the concrete needs of the population leaving their country of origin. It is clear from the examinations, that the profile of the migrant in the area is a young man, educated, and motivated by the desire to pursue better overseas prospects. Furthermore, this section also demonstrates how the Arab Spring proved to be a failure, as it has been unable to bring about real socio-economic change in the area. Indeed, the region is still characterised by economic crises, political instability, and youth marginalisation. Therefore, the current migration flows around the Mediterranean certainly include young people in search of better living conditions, and who are also willing to leave irregularly. However, the Mediterranean is currently characterised by a disproportionate increase in irregular migration. The arrivals are mainly from non-Mediterranean countries that use the MENA region as a transit area. The lack of resources, together with a poor integration system and ineffective migration management in the Arab Mediterranean countries, make the situation in the area even more critical. Indeed, the arrival of migrants from other African countries, such as the sub-Saharan area, is aggravating the political, economic, and social situation, already unstable. Furthermore, the high level of unemployment, discontent among the young population, and the economic crisis and fomenting social unrest and preventing a peaceful coexistence, in countries such as Tunisia. Lastly, also the weak political stability and the lack of democracy throughout the region fit into this context. Therefore, this section has shown that, concerning the Mediterranean area, youth exclusion from politics and work

experience remains a major, though not unique, challenge that needs to be tackled to reduce uncontrolled youth emigration, keep the brain drain from the southern Mediterranean under control, and offer alternatives to irregular migration. Hence, these results are essential to work to on building efficient policies aimed at genuinely improving and fostering human development in the region, addressing the root causes of migration, providing aid to the local and migrant population, and working on building sustainable and long-lasting alternatives to irregular and dangerous migration patterns. Indeed, the core purpose of this thesis is to create a new knowledge on migration, development, and policy. The next chapter will open the case study of this thesis, namely the case of Tunisia. This country has long been regarded as the only achievement of the Arab Spring. It is in fact the country from where the uprisings have originated and the only one where democracy would seem to have been established. However, recent economic, political, and social upheavals also exacerbated by the covid pandemic, and the current migration crisis are increasingly casting doubt on whether Tunisia is truly a story of democratic success and achieved human development.

Case study: Tunisia

The primary objective of this chapter is to provide an introductory overview of Tunisia, which serves as the case study in this thesis. It aims to delineate the historical background of the country since its attainment of independence from France in 1956, encompassing the nuanced trajectories of its political evolution, economic development, and patterns of migratory movements. The findings arising from this comprehensive analysis hold pivotal significance in addressing the two core research questions of this thesis, specifically pertaining to the extent to which Tunisia's political and socioeconomic developmental status influences the dynamics of its migratory flows. Moreover, it endeavours to explore avenues through which the European Union can design and enact migration policies and initiatives within Tunisia that not only managed migration but also stimulate development within the country. To address these inquiries, this chapter undertakes the critical task of delineating a comprehensive profile of Tunisia, an indispensable preliminary step in comprehending the intricate interplay of the Migration, Development, and Democracy Nexus within the Tunisian context.

In the first section the methodology used for the investigation of the case study will be illustrated. Then a specific paragraph will be devoted to the historical struggle to reach democracy and

Tunisian path toward modernization and progress. Finally, the last part of the chapter describes the evolution of the migratory movements between Tunisia and the EU member states.

One of the main findings of this analysis was that the country experienced its first 50 years of independence under two dictatorial regimes, precisely the one of Bourguiba and the other of Ben Ali. The Arab spring in 2011 represented a revolutionary moment, as in 2011 Tunisia succeeded in imposing a democratic form of government, however democracy is still imperfect, and the democratic transition process is still ongoing in the country. In addition, it was noted that Tunisia has endeavoured to become a developed country, both through the implementation of educational reforms and through economic policies that have focused on the progressive liberalisation of the economy. Nevertheless, the country still presents major challenges, especially in terms of unemployment and still has a labour market that is unable to integrate young people. This preliminary exploration has been fundamental to examine how Tunisia's political and socio-economic development levels has influenced its migration patterns since 1956. The main result has been that economic challenges were much more influential than political ones in Tunisians' decision to leave their country of origin. It was also observed that migration was used, especially during authoritarianism, as an instrument to control the dissent abroad and as a tool capable of producing development, through the sending of remittances and through the reduction of labour supply in Tunisia. However, on the other shore of the Mediterranean Sea, the EU has tried to limit Tunisian immigration through policies focused on the Migration-Security nexus rather than focusing on the creation of development and alternative opportunities. However, after 2011, the Union sought to mitigate its policies and support the democratic process in the country.

In conclusion, this chapter emphasizes that socioeconomic development remains a challenge for Tunisia, and it also influences and shapes its migratory patterns. However, European development policies should not be understood as aimed at reducing migration flows, but they should foster development itself. The Migration-Development nexus works in two directions, the first is to create development, and the other is to exploit migration to create progress, and thus in the case of Tunisia to understand how emigration can be turned into an opportunity for development. Hence, migration and development should be linked in policy and intended as a way to create development opportunities. Moreover, the nexus must be strengthened to create alternatives to irregular migration and dangerous journey. Migration should not be a coercive choice but rather an opportunity, the work that needs to be done in Tunisia is to address the root causes of irregular immigration, expose

the risks of these journeys and above all create concrete alternatives in the country. The proposed approach seeks to establish a more equitable and effective partnership between Tunisia and the EU, centred on the Migration-Development-Democracy nexus, indeed the chapter emphasizes the complexities and opportunities for both Tunisia and the EU in managing migration and fostering co-development while upholding democratic principles.

2.1 Methodology

This thesis aims to explore the Migration, Development and Democracy Nexus in Tunisia. While the previous chapter analysed the link more in general, this section will look specifically at Tunisia and offer a needed background for the empirical analysis of the nexus in this country. The research questions that this document wants to investigate, as described in the introduction, pertain to two central inquiries: the impact of Tunisia's political and socio-economic development on the configuration of its migration patterns, and secondly, the strategic actions that the European Union and its Member States should implement to concretely foster co-development in accordance with the Migration-Development-Democracy nexus previously outlined.

The level of development of a country certainly influences and shapes the type of migration that a given country will experience. In the case study of Tunisia, the country finds itself in an interesting situation, as despite its socio-economic and political development having advanced, Tunisian emigration to Europe, particularly Italy has concurrently increased. Furthermore, among the key findings of the analysis, it will become evident that motivations linked to economic and social development carry more weight than political considerations in the decision to emigrate. Analysing the profile of the typical Tunisian migrant, it emerged that he usually is young man fleeing youth unemployment, running away from rising prices and the cost of living costs, and condemning social and local disparities. Political factors will also emerge in the investigation, with perceived corruption and distrust in the political class playing a role, albeit to a lesser extent.

Moreover, this document will demonstrate how European migration and development policies should focus on managing Tunisian emigration and its diaspora as catalysts for generating development in Tunisia. This involves promoting legal emigration, establishing channels for remittance transfers, and engaging the Tunisian diaspora in the country's economic recovery. However, a central issue that will be addressed pertains to the growing concern of irregular

immigration towards Europe. It will be underscored that development and migration policies must also prioritize the creation of viable alternatives to irregular migration routes. These alternatives must be tangible and concrete, such as supporting local businesses, job creation, and providing young people with training for the local labour market.

Tunisia has been selected because it is the Mediterranean country in which the Arab Uprisings started first, and the only one in which democracy was implemented. This is the reason why, according to various scholars, Tunisia represented the only success story from the 2011 protests (Benstead, L.J., 2022). However, the current situation and recent events make that statement doubtful and leave us questioning the level of human development truly achieved by the country. Indeed, despite progress since the Jasmine revolution, Tunisia still faces political and economic barriers, weak governance, high unemployment, and corruption. Among the most serious events, in 2021 President Kaïs Saïed dismissed the Prime Minister and suspended the Parliament, leading to worries about breaches of the constitution and raising concerns of a return to an authoritarian system. This made it clear that democracy in Tunisia is far from perfect. In addition, the political instability in which the nation is pouring is also accompanied by heavy socio-economic challenges, that had already been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Veron, P. 2021). As a matter of fact, the issues that led to the outbreak of the protests in Tunisia are still in place. The economic problems persist, the youth are still marginalised, democracy is imperfect, and the level of unemployment continues to be high. In this situation of general insecurity and instability, social pressures and migration challenges are also part of the picture. In fact, the country is currently at the centre of the international and European political debate with regard to the staggering increase of irregular migratory flows to Italy. As far as the migration field is concerned, Tunisia is involved in two main processes. On the one hand, Tunisia is still a country of emigration, in fact Tunisians who leave their land to reach Italy and other EU countries in search of better opportunities, are still plenty. On the other hand, Tunisia is increasingly becoming a transit and destination country for mainly sub-Saharan migrants fleeing their countries of origin for a wide variety of reasons, especially humanitarian ones. Therefore, Tunisia is currently affected by both the brain drain process and issues concerning integration and migration management. Indeed, the country continues to lose a great number of its most educated and highly skilled young people, who cannot find a decent work in Tunisia and therefore go abroad – even irregularly – in the hope of better conditions (Yoms Sbaa, M., 2023). In addition, the country is grappling with a very high number of migrants and asylum seekers from other parts of Africa, and it is showing itself completely inadequate to

respond to such humanitarian emergencies by resorting to gross violations of human rights and being unable to provide for their integration and assistance. Furthermore, President Saïed in February 2023 started accusing sub-Saharan African immigrants of fostering violence, crime, disrupting the Tunisian demographic composition and altering its national identity. This rhetoric provokes social tensions and racist attacks across the country. Ironically, this is the same political rhetoric also used in Europe by far-right parties against non-communitarian immigrants, so even against Tunisians (Moderan, O., 2023).

Therefore, referring to the research method used in this thesis, this document will mainly focus on the analysis of Tunisian emigration. After providing a historical overview of the country path to development and struggle to democracy, this chapter is going to explain the evolution of the migration flows between Tunisia and the EU. The rest of the document will be devoted to analysing the current challenges that the country is facing today and at the exploration of the Migration-Development-Democracy nexus in Tunisia. The next chapter, indeed, delve into this analysis and further investigate the profile of the typical Tunisian migrant. The main factors that drive Tunisians to leave their country of origin will be investigated and will be pointed out that these factors are all development-related ones, especially linked to the high unemployment rate and the marginalisation of young people. In order to provide more empirical support for the results obtained from the analysis, a section will be devoted to the interview of a young Tunisian migrant, whose testimony confirms and corroborates the results. After the identification of the drivers, the initiative YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (PHASE II)” funded by the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation will be presented. The examination of the project is crucial because it is taken as an example of a sustainable strategy for overcoming the security paradigm that is often implemented by the European Union. In fact, the project is based on the identification of the main drivers of emigration, it is aimed at addressing the root causes of the phenomenon and at producing concrete alternatives to irregular migration. The point of this thesis is not to assert that increasing Tunisia's development will necessarily reduce migration flows from Tunisia. In fact, as stated in the first chapter, greater development can initially coincide with increased wealth and therefore greater migration possibilities. Instead, the core idea behind of this thesis is precisely the opposite: development policies must foster development itself and should not be construed as a means to reduce migration flows; otherwise, they would constitute security policies and, furthermore, would be counterproductive. Hence, what this document aims to support is that migration and development programs are necessary to harness and leverage the benefits of migration. This concept

applies to both origin countries and destination countries, so that through appropriate integration programs, immigration challenges can be transformed into development opportunities. Regarding Tunisia, even though it has also become a country of transit/immigration, in this document, it is treated mainly as a country of origin. Therefore, the development programs under analysis focus on creating new ways to reduce the negative externalities of the emigration phenomenon. There are various ways to achieve this, such as supporting projects that exploit the diaspora, and therefore involve expatriates creating more channels for investment in Tunisia. Other approaches may include circular mobility programs or programs aimed at creating alternatives within Tunisia. These alternatives address the root causes of Tunisian emigration, such as youth marginalization and unemployment, with the goal of preventing irregular and dangerous migration routes in the Central Mediterranean. Often, economic migration is perceived as a voluntary choice. However, this document illustrates – also through the testimony of a young Tunisian who arrived in Italy irregularly – how for young Tunisians, migration has become almost a forced choice, pushing them towards irregular migration routes. The YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT exactly addresses one of Tunisia's structural problems: youth unemployment, and it aims at analysing the root causes of irregular immigration while creating jobs and training courses to young Tunisians in order to offer concrete alternatives to irregular migration routes, which often result in the loss of lives at sea.

Hence, the thesis proposes a more equitable and more effective partnership between Tunisia and the EU based on the Migration-Development-Democracy nexus to replace the previous Migration-Security approach. The democratic aspect of the nexus should not be overshadowed. Indeed, the EU has always fought to spread democratic principles in its partner countries, as seen in the previous chapter. However, it has also found itself entering into agreements with countries that are anything but democratic, such as Turkey or Libya, in order to stop irregular migratory flows. This practice has been widely criticised as it rendered the Union incoherent, as it effectively signed agreements that financed dictatorships to protect its borders. Therefore, the current halting of Tunisia's democratic transition – characterized by political instability, risk of a return to authoritarianism, and the human rights violations via a vis sub-Saharan migrants – pose a serious challenge to the future relations with the EU.

2.2 Tunisian path to development and the struggle for democracy

Before proceeding with the broader reasoning on the Migration-Development-Democracy approach, it is appropriate to identify Tunisia's political and socio-economic challenges to better understand the country's needs and priorities. In order to provide a comprehensive picture of Tunisia, this section is devoted to the study and presentation of the country's political and socioeconomic background.

First, it should be emphasised that the political history of Tunisia that will be analysed in this section starts from the country's independence. The colonial period began in 1881²², when the country became a French protectorate, and ended in 1956 when Tunisia became an independent republic. Although it will not be addressed here, the French colonial period had several effects on the development of the country. In fact, it was France's mismanagement of the territory and resources, that contributed to the strong imbalance between the various Tunisian regions. Indeed, the coastal areas were mainly developed and urbanised, while the rural and interior areas were characterised by poverty and underdevelopment. This unequal treatment persists today and the various governments that have been installed after independence have not been able to bridge the gap (Pepicelli, R. 2021). The political history of independent Tunisia until the Arab Spring is mainly characterised by its two authoritarian Presidents Habib Bourguiba and Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. The former ruled from 1956 to 1987 while the latter from 1987 to 2011. Bourguiba's charisma was enormous, so much so that even though he was ultimately a dictator, he is still considered the face of Tunisian independence, the first leader of a free country, and the modernizer of Tunisia. In fact, before Bourguiba, the various Tunisian nationalist political movements, such as *Les Jeunes Tunisiens* founded in 1907 or the *Destour Party* of 1920, of course, wanted some recognitions from France such as the preservation of the 1861 Constitution²³, recognition of the Arab-Islamic identity, and representation in the Parliament, however they had not yet openly expressed independence claims. When the Destour Party disbanded in 1934, Bourguiba's Neo-Destour Party was created and full independence was instead actively asked for (Pepicelli, R., 2021). The establishment of the

²² Precisely on May 12, 1881, with the Treaty of Bardo which authorized the French military presence in Tunisia.

²³ Introduced by Mohamed al Sadok Bey (1859-73) in 1861, this document stands as a significant milestone in history. It marked the inception of the first written constitution in the Islamic world. With a preamble consisting of a declaration of rights, this constitution of 1861 outlined a system featuring a limited and hereditary monarchy. The bey held the position of head of state, while the government was led by the prime minister of the bey's cabinet.

independent state of Tunisia was formalized through the signing of the Franco-Tunisian Protocol in 1956. Few days after a Constituent Assembly was elected with the task of crafting a national Constitution. Following these developments, Habib Bourguiba assumed the presidency of the New Republic in 1957, however, it wasn't until June 1959, that the Constituent Assembly ratified the first Constitution of an independent and free Tunisia. The Assembly intended to reinforce the state's independence and elevate the people's sovereignty. However, the definitive version of the Constitution, officially promulgated on June 1, 1959, established a presidency endowed with extensive powers²⁴. Notably, the President held the authority to appoint the Prime Minister, among other wide-ranging prerogatives (Alexander, C., 2016). The Constitution mirrored the extensive authority the President had consolidated, with government officials being directly accountable to him. The President possessed the ability to enact laws in the absence of the assembly, and the scope of presidential emergency powers remained intentionally ambiguous. Despite the establishment of a Council of State meant to oversee and constrain the Executive, it remained inconspicuous and ineffective. Bourguiba's administration had evolved into an exceedingly personalized regime, and by the end of 1959, all sources of opposition to the government had been eliminated (Vandewalle, D. 1980). However, despite the enormous power in his hands, in 1957, upon assuming the presidency of newly independent Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba inherited also a nation facing profound economic turmoil and significant political rifts. His approach, in clear contradiction to the more conservative faction of the party, was defined as progressive, centralized, and secular, aligned with Western principles, and aimed to lead the country out of crisis. (Pepicelli, R., 2021). The period following Tunisia's independence ushered in a new era of socio-political advancements. Tunisia has often been considered a progressive Arab state particularly due to its historical tradition of reforms aimed at reshaping politics, education, the economy, and the military. The immediate post-independence landscape in Tunisia was predominantly characterized by the personality of Bourguiba and the alternation between reformist and progressive initiatives on one hand, and authoritarianism and personalization of power on the other. This is the reason for the strong contrast between the deep admiration that most Tunisians feel towards their first leader, and the gradual establishment of a dictatorship, which tended to overshadow his achievements and credibility (Logan, T. P., 2012).

²⁴ "The Tunisian Constitution." *Middle East Journal*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1959, pp. 443–48. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4323169> . Accessed 25 Aug. 2023.

Bourguiba embarked on an ambitious journey of societal transformation centred around modern values and norms, often referred to as the nation-building project. This endeavour aligned with Western ideals and Enlightenment principles, reflecting his admiration for Europe and his commitment to Western-style modernization (Pizzardi, I., 2003). He executed a series of reforms to modernize the nation, while simultaneously curbing the influence of traditional Islamic expressions. Certainly, Tunisia's historical Islamic heritage underwent a secular transformation. This shift was particularly notable during the era of the French Protectorate and became even more pronounced under the leadership of Habib Bourguiba (Wolf, A., 2017). To achieve his goals, Bourguiba implemented a range of reforms that included women's empowerment, educational restructuring, economic policy changes, and modifications to Islamic law and practices. With the Code of Personal Status (CPS) introduced in 1957, several significant changes were introduced. Polygamy was eliminated, divorce could only be granted through legal court processes, and marriage necessitated the complete agreement of both individuals involved (Sfeir, G. N. 1957). Furthermore, Bourguiba recognized the crucial role of education in modernizing the country. Indeed, his government placed significant emphasis on reforming the education system, emulating the French model. Indeed, the new leadership aspired to provide universal access to primary education and undertook revisions of the curricula in various traditional institutions. Additionally, in 1958, Bourguiba nationalized several traditional Islamic institutions such as the Zaytuna University (Da Wood Sofi, M. 2018). About the country's critical economic situation – inherited from the French misrule, which never had an interest in advancing Tunisia economically and industrially – the government tried unsuccessfully to revive the situation by implementing various economic reforms. Bourguiba, like several of his nationalist counterparts in the Arab World, did not enter power with a fully developed economic strategy for Tunisia's development. During his rule, economic policies were primarily reactive and evolved through four distinct stages. The first one was implemented during the very early post-independence period, and it was marked by efforts to reduce economic dependence on France, increase economic sovereignty, and reduce external influences on its economy. The second phase, implemented in the 1960s, was instead characterized as an attempt at socialist transformation. However, this ideological approach to economic policy had adverse consequences and did not lead to the desired outcomes. Given the clear failure of this experiment, in the 1970s, Tunisia attempted a model of state-led industrialization accompanied by the participation from the private sector. This approach sought to foster economic growth by leveraging both state resources and private investments (Murphy, E., 1999). Despite the success in creating numerous new jobs through industrialization, many of these positions demanded only basic skills and offered

low wages. Consequently, these jobs did not provide significant opportunities for workers to acquire technical skills. The expansion of new industries also failed to alleviate the persistently high unemployment rate, which remained high throughout the 1970s. This issue is often referred to as urban unemployment, affecting those who left rural areas in search of better prospects in the cities. Two additional factors contributed to the worsening of the economic situation and overall discontent. First, in the 1970s, due in part to policies promoting women's literacy, many women began seeking employment too, increasing the number of people seeking jobs. Second, there was a notable economic disparity between the coastal and inland regions that was never effectively addressed by the government. Indeed, most industries were concentrated along the coast, particularly around Tunis, further exacerbating regional inequalities. The result of this situation was the emigration of numerous Tunisians, initially to Europe and later to the Arabian Peninsula. The socio-economic policies implemented in the late 1960s and early 1970s generated widespread discontent among the population. Rather than witnessing improvements in living conditions promised by socialist initiatives, people experienced growing oppression from the ruling party, which increasingly displayed authoritarian tendencies. This marked a significant shift away from the envisioned socialist progress (Calcavecchio, S. 2013). Finally, the last phase of Bourguiba's economic reforms concerned a stabilization program which was implemented in the Mid-1980s, in response to economic challenges. This program aimed to address economic imbalances, stabilize the country's finances, and promote sustainable economic growth (Murphy, E. 1999). Furthermore, Bourguiba's years in office were marked not only by unsuccessful economic policies and increasing dissatisfaction among the population, but also by a gradual tightening of political control, growing authoritarianism, and increased repression. A notable instance of this trend occurred in January 1963 when the government imposed a ban on the Tunisian Communist Party (PCT). Just two months later, the Neo-Destour Party officially established a one-party system (Alexander, C. 2016). The collapse of the socialist economic agenda, which was championed by Ahmad Ben Salah, the first Secretary General of the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), resulted in criticism of the government. This led the Tunisian president to undertake a series of drastic measures. Initially, Bourguiba removed Ben Salah from his position, subsequently, he levelled accusations of treason against him, and ultimately Salah was sentenced to ten years of hard labour. In this tense climate, there was a widespread sense of disappointment with the government's economic policies, and doubts were raised about the effectiveness of the Bourguiba's model of development in ensuring national stability and prosperity. In addition, the noticeable increase in authoritarianism witnessed by the one-party rule led to a progressive decline in popular political engagement, particularly

among young people. These years of economic hardship marked the beginning of the Islamist resurgence²⁵. For the first time, strong signs of disillusionment with the government emerged, and the student community, which felt the negative impacts of economic policy failures more acutely than others, provided a fertile ground for this sentiment. The education reform, which had been touted as a cornerstone of the Bourguiba revolution, had failed to generate employment opportunities for young people (Calcavecchio, 2013). During the 1970s, the increasing claims for decent employment opportunities significantly exceeded the available supply for workers, leading Tunisian university graduates and even those who left the education system earlier, to grapple with the same unemployment challenges. The slogan of the time, which was shouted by young people, testifies to the economic frustration of the time: "Education or not, a future there is not." (Waltz, S. 1986). A low moment in Bourguiba's career occurred in 1971 when he discovered himself to be politically and physically weak. In addition to the purges against Ben Salah and his supporters, several ruling party members were gradually removed or dismissed. The number of important people in the president's inner circle decreased as a result. Over time, Bourguiba started to assemble a team of technocrats without any background in politics. As a result, the party and the government developed into a tightly knit system for progressing careers, recruiting ambitious people who attained and held positions by proving their commitment to Bourguiba. This situation paved the way for the easy designation of Bourguiba as president for life in 1974 (Alexander, C. 2016). However, the now evident authoritarian state started to show cracks by the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. The administration, already under pressure, was ill-equipped to handle an increasing wave of political fervour among Islamists, which was fuelled by resentment over political exclusion and rage at economic marginalization. When oil prices dropped, the debt load increased to unmanageable levels, and the president, who was growing more and more frail, was unable to take any meaningful action other than to attribute all of his country's problems to subversive Islamist schemes (Murphy, E. 1997). The economic and political crisis, which had been escalating, reached a breaking point on November 7, 1987, when a coalition of party members and military officers carried out a coup d'état, deposing President Bourguiba. This marked the end of a prolonged era of authoritarian rule and a 30-year dictatorship. Power then passed into the hands of

¹⁰⁴ Bourghiba's so-called 'secularising' action had not solved the problem of the relationship between Islam and the regime, between religion and politics. Islam as religion and tradition was well established in Maghrebi society, especially among the non-bourgeois strata. In the early 1970s, a Tunisian Islamic movement was growing, which soon revealed itself as one of the main political opposition forces in the country. The Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique, headed by Rached Ghannouchi, had fed on that part of Tunisia left out of the benefits generated by the economic development process.

former Prime Minister Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who became the new President of Tunisia. Bourguiba's removal kindled hopes for democracy, freedom, and economic revitalization. Unlike his predecessor, who had never publicly committed to democratic reforms, Ben Ali positioned himself as a proponent of democratization and ushered in a new era characterized by democracy and a full commitment to popular sovereignty. The Destourian Party, which had been renamed the Destourian Socialist Party during Bourguiba's socialist phase, underwent a further transformation with Ben Ali and was renamed the Constitutional Democratic Rally, to confirm the democratic turning point. Additionally, the constitutional provision that allowed presidents to remain in power for life was abolished (Wolf, A. 2017). However, it quickly became clear that the promised reforms would never happen, and paradoxically the democratic conditions of the country worsened under Ben Ali. Albeit, initially, the new leadership effectively undertakes several political reforms, i.e. some political parties that had been banned with Bourguiba were legalized, although not the Islamic movement, which remained outlawed. Efforts were made to establish a national dialogue and implement electoral reforms. However, the pace of political reform was slower than anticipated, and moreover, these reforms were only a façade, as in reality, a fair and real party competition was totally impossible. Indeed, the Constitutional Democratic Rally had too much power and too overwhelming a majority, multipartyism was thus prevented. Additionally, the security apparatus expanded and was increasingly employed against Islamist groups and secular opposition. Some members of the opposition, who had initially been hopeful, became disillusioned by the limited nature of political reforms and their co-optation into the regime's agenda. Nevertheless, in this climate of oppression, there was room to revitalize Tunisian political society, which, feeling oppressed and deprived of its freedoms, began to organize. National organizations, associations, and societies, though subject to state constraints, contributed to a culture of civic engagement. Although on the political level, it was now clear to everyone that authoritarianism had returned, or rather, that it had never gone away; concerning the economic development of the nation, President Ben Ali's tenure did see significant achievements in the economic realm. Indeed, Tunisia started down an upward trajectory of economic restructuring under the new government. Effective actions to control inflation were implemented and measures were taken to diversify exports and production. The country was successful in regaining its international credit rating, restoring the state finances, and lowering budget deficits. Reevaluating the state's role was necessary due to the economy's reorganization. Reforms to the public sector, privatization, liberalization of the economy, and subsidy reductions were put into place. The concept of social provision was altered to include aid for the most defenceless groups in society. In this way, the economy started stabilizing. Despite

these successes, issues like poverty and unemployment, particularly among lower-income people, persisted. Additionally, industry diversification progressed more slowly than anticipated, and foreign investment tended to favour only some sectors, finally, the privatization process was dragged down by resistance within the bureaucracy and the requirement for adequate legal and administrative institutions (Murphy, E.C., 1997).

In the first years of Ben Ali's regime, the administration was able to enjoy successes in the economic field, however, many challenges were still present. These were exacerbated at the beginning of the 2000s when several events caused the weakening of the dictatorship. At the international level, there was the global crisis of 2008 and the subsequent eurozone crisis, which had very serious repercussions on Tunisia's domestic economy. In fact, the European recession affected the Tunisian economy, producing a decrease in exports and lower expansion in services. The Euro-zone crisis was exacerbated in 2010 which further declined the tourism revenues and closed both local and foreign businesses as the international credit crunch continued. The European recession had repercussions on the Tunisian economy. There was an increase in unemployment as the economy struggled to create jobs, especially for educated employees. Secondly, the number of low-paying jobs in the informal sector increased, and finally, regional and income inequities were exacerbated. In fact, the number of unemployed individuals was sky-high, and the most impacted were mainly young people. Youth unemployment was 23% but youth graduate unemployment was even higher, corresponding to 37%. These high rates, together with the declining purchasing power, rising costs of life and basic products, mounting household charges, contributed to aggravating the difficulties of Tunisians. Moreover, the situation was also intensified by the feeling of injustice felt by young people, especially the more educated ones, who, in addition to seeing their efforts unrewarded, did not feel represented by a corrupt and non-transparent regime that allocated jobs on the basis of favouritism and recommendations (Saidin, M.I.S. 2018). In this scenario lies precisely the seeds of the Jasmine Revolution that broke out in December 2010, precisely on 17 December, when a young street vendor called Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in front of the local administration building in the city of Sidi Bouzid. This act generated huge reactions within the Tunisian population, as the video went viral online, in this way this action did not remain an isolated event but was quickly followed by protests and other similar revolutionary acts. In fact, Mohamed Bouazizi's suicidal act was repeated by other young people, such as 24-year-old Hussein Nagi Felhi or 34-year-old Lotfi Guadri, who killed themselves while shouting enough about misery and unemployment. The protests began in December 2010 and ended quickly, on 14 January 2011.

Within the Tunisian Uprising, two different moments can be identified. The first one was at the beginning of the protests, in December, when all the protests have as their common denominator socio-economic demands, the denunciation of unemployment and poverty. This first wave of riots was characterised by huge societal participation, organisation via social media, and clashes with the police. The second period of the revolution started in January when protesters began to demand political changes and condemn the oppression of the regime. During this phase, protests took place in front of government buildings or police stations. There was a growing feeling and need to overthrow the dictatorial regime and establish a new democratic and just government. On 14 January, a delegation of lawyers started a powerful pacific manifestation that reached the Interior Ministry building, the symbol of the regime, which quickly became surrounded by protesters. The police responded with grenades and tear gas. However, on the same day, Ben Ali dissolved the government and left the country (Kuznetsow, V. 2022). Since the departure of Ben Ali, the process of democratic transition in Tunisia commenced. However, the initial years of this transition were marked by tensions and protests, primarily stemming from conflicts between those who sought a complete break from the authoritarian past and members of Ben Ali's party (the Constitutional Democratic Rally) who aimed to establish themselves in the country's new political scene. Particularly, during the presidency of Fouad Mabezaa, Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi (former member of the RCD) formed a government that included members of the Constitutional Democratic Rally, leading to protests and demonstrations and the final resignation of M. Ghannouchi. Overall, the period of transition from 2011 to 2014 was unstable, witnessing the rotation of four Presidents and five Prime Ministers (Masri, S. 2017). In October 2011, Tunisia held its first elections for the Constituent Assembly, tasked with drafting the new Constitution. These elections saw the moderate Islamist party, Ennahda, emerge as the leading political force. Ennahda had been marginalized from the political scene for many years, under both the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes, with its members persecuted and identified as part of a violent and retrogressive movement. Ennahda's victory indicated that the processes of westernization and secularization, initiated by Bourguiba in 1956, had not completely eradicated the country's long-standing Arab-Islamic identity. After years of violent repression, the 2010-2011 protests surprised both leaders and underground supporters of Ennahda. Indeed, despite being on the political sidelines for decades, the party still enjoyed a broad support network. Officially re-founded on March 1, 2011, the party advocated for the preservation of religious identity, emphasized the need for fair economic redistribution, and called for concrete compensation to victims of the regime. For all these reasons, the party soon became popular. In addition, the fragmentation of Tunisia's political scene and the

high number of secular parties contributed to Ennahda's victory and its establishment as the dominant political force (Wolf, A. 2017). The revolution had indeed created a highly fragmented and confusing political landscape, with 112 parties approved for the constituent elections and 162 others excluded. The major fractures and issues on which parties clashed consisted of the following dichotomies: religious state/secular state, Arab identity/Tunisian identity, and progressivism/conservatism (Masri, S. 2017). However, although the differences between the parties concerned fundamental issues in the state-building process, Tunisia managed to find a compromise among the various political forces, demonstrated primarily by the cooperation and coalition government formed by the Islamist Ennahda party and the secular parties of the Congress for the Republic and Ettakatol. Together, they formed the Troika²⁶ coalition in 2011, which dissolved in 2014. This compromise was crucial for the country's democratic transition. Indeed, scholar H. Alaoui defines the pacted democracy as the best way to transition from authoritarianism to democracy, as without compromise, the nation risks descending into conflict again. However, he also emphasizes that while it may be the best way, it is not without challenges (Alaoui, H. 2022). The success of the pact is evident in the excellent results of the Constitution ratified in 2014. The new Tunisian Constitution, apart from guaranteeing advanced freedoms and rights compared to other Arab countries, recognized Islam as the official religion but not as the state religion. Sharia law was not incorporated into the constitution, and the country remained a civil state (Masri, S. 2017). The 2014 Constitution represented a stronghold of rights and was the first popularly debated constitutional document in Tunisia. In 2014, Tunisia thus became a civil state that recognized and ensured equal rights for men and women, freedom of speech and conscience, an independent judiciary, citizens' right to healthcare, and a progressive redistribution of resources (Masri, S. 2017).

In conclusion, following the fall of the Ben Ali regime in 2011, Tunisia managed to initiate its process of democratic transition and achieve several successes in terms of human and political development. Notably, the country succeeded in guaranteeing numerous rights and freedoms that were previously unimaginable for a state that had endured 55 years under dictatorial regimes. Freedom of speech, press, and association were recognized for the first time; women began to play a more prominent role in political life; a groundbreaking constitution was drafted, and free elections

²⁶ It was the unformal name for the coalition which ruled in Tunisia after 2011. The alliance was between Ennahada CPR and Ettakatol. The President of the Republic was a CPR member: Moncef Marzouki; the Prime Minister was a Ennahada component: Hamadi Jebali; while Ben Jafar, the secretary General of Ettakatol, was the Speaker of the National Constituent Assembly.

took place in 2011, 2014, and 2019. Thus, in the eyes of perhaps overly optimistic Western observers, Tunisia appeared to be the sole democratic success story from the Arab Spring. However, when analysed more closely, this success reveals its fragilities. The 2014 constitution, advanced in terms of rights and freedoms, acknowledged rights that the Tunisian state was not yet capable of ensuring for its citizens, such as the right to work, health, water, or to live in a clean environment. Economically, the country remained in the same pre-revolution situation, facing a growing economic crisis and a high unemployment rate. New democratic governments had failed to create new jobs and uplift the economy. Furthermore, recent political developments have shown clear signs of democratic regression, starting with the election of President Kaïs Saïed in 2019, exacerbated by the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, it was for the first time, internationally highlighted the true economic and political vulnerabilities of the country (Pepicelli, 2021).

2.3 Evolution of migration flows between Tunisia and Europe.

In the previous section, the transition of Tunisia from an autocratic country to a democratic state was discussed, along with the country's path and challenges in achieving greater social and economic development. The purpose of this section, on the other hand, is to explain how migratory flows in Tunisia have evolved over time. The aim is to study the connection between migration and democracy, as well as to understand how the socioeconomic and political development of the country has influenced Tunisian emigration.

Firstly, it is essential to mention that during the colonial period, from 1881 to 1955, Tunisia was a country of immigration. In fact, the phenomenon of emigration became significant only after independence and intensified after the Arab Spring. Under French protectorate, many French nationals emigrated to Tunisia, with France itself clearly encouraging emigration to consolidate its influence and sovereignty over the territory. The French in Tunisia became landowners, cultivators, and breeders (Natter, K., 2015). However, the French population was not the only foreign community in Tunisia; indeed, many Italians between 1900 and 1914 left Italy for the North African country. The reasons motivating Italians to leave their homeland were primarily related to the favorable conditions for Italians in Tunisia and the higher wages than in certain areas of Italy, such as Sicily and Sardinia. Additionally, Tunisia was an attractive destination because it easily allowed individuals to become landowners, while in Italy, the same individuals mostly had prospects of

cultivating the land without ever owning it (Fauri, F. 2021). However, the Italian presence in Tunisia diminished significantly after World War II. During the war, France had already confiscated many assets from Italian residents. Furthermore, the Paris Peace Agreement of 1947 allowed the victorious powers, including France, to obtain reparations from Italy, directly seeking recourse on Italian assets within their jurisdiction. Therefore, in this case, the rule applied also in the colonial territories (Constituent Assembly, Session No. XXIII, June 27, 1947). Consequently, many Italians were deprived of their lands and material assets, and many left the country. However, it was the period following independence when the most stringent immigration laws were introduced. In the first 10 years after independence, around 70% of foreigners, including Italians, had left Tunisia (Natter, K. 2015). The reasons for stricter immigration rules and repressive treatment of the foreign population were certainly linked to feelings of revenge after years of French domination and a desire for freedom, feelings typical of the period of decolonization. In the wake of these sentiments, nationalism and anti-colonialism grew stronger, leading the new Bourguiba government to pass laws allowing the expropriation of foreigners' belongings and possessions. Furthermore, during Bourguiba's socialist period, lands were nationalized, particularly from 1964 onwards, and all foreign territories became state-owned (Fauri, F. 2021). At this point, it should not be forgotten that the Bourguiba regime, and later Ben Ali's, remained dictatorial regimes in which human rights were widely violated, let alone migrants' rights. In this regard, several authors have identified a connection between migration and democracy. In general, it has been observed that a democratic country is generally more inclined to liberalize immigration and respect human rights. Conversely, a dictatorial regime is more inclined to violate the rights of migrants and pursue more restrictive migration policies (Natter, K. 2021). At this point, it becomes clear why, after independence, Tunisia ceased to be a country of massive immigration. Furthermore, the disastrous economic situation in post-independence Tunisia no longer made it such an attractive destination, especially when considering that many European countries, including Italy, in the 1950s were experiencing rapid economic growth and industrialization, a phenomenon that would later be referred to as an economic miracle. Migration trends, therefore, reversed. In fact, after 1956, Tunisian emigration to Europe increased dramatically. In particular, since the 1960s, when the country began signing bilateral agreements with France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. These agreements concerned the recruitment of Tunisian temporary workers and benefited both destination countries and Tunisia. Indeed, post-war Europe needed low-cost labour, while Tunisia needed to alleviate its high unemployment problem, especially among the youth. Additionally, the remittances that Tunisians sent to their families back home benefited the country's

economy. From 1969 to 1973, there was an emigration boom, especially towards France. In fact, despite not having a tradition of emigration, in the two decades after independence approximately 250,000 Tunisians left their country for Europe. The main causes of emigration were due to structural unemployment within the country and the disappointment with the establishment of a dictatorial regime after years of colonial rule (Natter, K., 2014). After 1973, flows decreased following the oil crisis and the subsequent tightening of European migration policies. Unlike France, Italy in the 1980s did not yet have laws regulating the entry of foreign workers. Thus, Italy's economic growth, geographical proximity, and favourable legal conditions contributed to directing Tunisian emigration towards Italy. However, from the 1990s onwards, there was greater regulation and consequent restriction of immigration. In France, the first laws requiring visas for foreign citizens were introduced in 1986²⁷. Italy followed suit in 1990²⁸. However, irregular immigration continued massively (Fauri, F. 2021).

Therefore, referring to the migration-development-democracy nexus, it can be noted that the Tunisian dictatorial regimes of Bourguiba and Ben Ali favored the emigration of the population, at least until the 1990s, in order to reduce the unemployment problem and boost the economy through remittance sending. In this way, international migrations became a structural component of the country's labour market (Natter, K., 2014). However, the regimes closely monitored emigration and the Tunisian diaspora to control and suppress any potential political dissent that could arise abroad. This control became very strong, especially under Ben Ali. In fact, in 1988, the Office for Tunisians Abroad was created, tasked with monitoring the diaspora and providing assistance to the families of expatriates remaining in the home country. Other tools were also created to facilitate investments and the sending of savings to Tunisia. Additionally, a national day for Tunisians living abroad was established, along with television programs created specifically for Tunisians abroad (Natter, K. 2015). Moreover, from the early 2000s, Tunisia was an active partner in both formal and informal dialogues on migration and border management with the EU. Clearly, the search for solid alliances was not the only reason why Ben Ali decided to cooperate with the Union on the issue of irregular emigration. Indeed, the Tunisian president also wanted to consolidate his coercive power over the Tunisian population by exerting greater control over the borders and legitimizing his regime in the eyes of international arena. Furthermore, in a context of globalization and following demands for economic openness, the regime welcomed the opportunity to increase control under the guise of

²⁷ Law 86-1025 of 1986, commonly referred to as the Loi Pasqua.

²⁸ Law 39/1990 commonly referred to as the Legge Martelli.

promoting stability and the efficiency of the country's economy. In addition, with the pretext of having the task of managing common security challenges, the Ben Ali regime further tightened national regulations and limited personal freedoms. This, of course, also allowed him to suppress dissent more easily, which was widespread due to growing social inequalities, youth unemployment, and increased poverty. However, already in 2008, social tensions increased significantly due to the growing economic crisis and the evident corruption within the regime. In January 2008, massive protests erupted against the lack of transparency within public authorities, the increase of youth unemployment, the dramatic growth of socio-economic inequalities and social marginalization. The mobilization was brutally suppressed by the police and the army, and many demonstrators were killed, imprisoned, or tortured. Some of them fled to Algeria, while others reached Europe. The protests of 2008 explain the regime's need and urgency to contain possible further protests both within the national territory and abroad. The tightening of policies on irregular immigration and the fight against clandestine flows implemented by Ben Ali were positively evaluated by Italy and the EU. While, from the regime's perspective, these provisions managed to mitigate the impact of the 2008 uprisings, at least for a few years, and consolidate its legitimacy and reliability in the eyes of European political actors, diverting attention from the ongoing human rights violations in Tunisia (Cassarino, J., 2014). The EU's cooperation with the Ben Ali regime remains one of the most controversial aspects of European migration policies. In fact, since the 1990s, the EU has pursued policies that prioritize blocking irregular flows and managing borders, clearly adopting the migration-security nexus over the migration-development-democracy nexus. Striking deals with non-democratic regimes, that violate the rights of both migrants and their own citizens, is one of the aspects that continue to undermine the Union's credibility and consequently reduce its influence (Smith, M.E., 2016). When referring to EU cooperation with Ben Ali, as well as with other regimes in the Mediterranean region, the incompatibility between the European demands and the prevailing political situation in the area is evident. Indeed, it is hardly credible to expect a dictatorial and repressive regime to genuinely put into practice the European reforms, that concerns the introduction of democratic institutions, the respect of the independence of the judiciary, the protection of human rights, the observance of the rule of law and so on. However, in 2011, the Ben Ali regime fall, and the internal situation of Tunisia deteriorated, leading to an exponential increase in irregular emigration from Tunisia to the EU territories. Subsequently, due to the worsening economic crisis, the peak of unemployment, and a lack of border controls due to the collapse of the regime, there was a surge in arrivals. Indeed, after the Arab Spring, a substantial change in Tunisian migration patterns was observed. More significantly, there was a marked increase in flows,

primarily consisting of young, well-educated individuals. At the European level, an attempt was made to seize the positive aspect of the revolution, namely that it represented a democratic moment that had succeeded in dismantling a dictatorial regime. In the realm of migration, a less security-oriented approach was adopted by the EU, focusing more on consolidating democracy after years of dictatorship. Therefore, the Tunisian revolution led to a dizzying increase in migration flows, especially irregular emigration. This dramatic increase is evidenced by the fact that in the period from 2000 to 2010, Italy recorded an average of 1,700 irregular Tunisian migrants per year. In 2011 alone, the number of Tunisians who emigrated irregularly to Italy amounted to 28,000 individuals. The increase in flows was interpreted by the EU as an opportunity to strengthen cooperation on migration matters, which had started with Ben Ali (Natter, 2015). The Tunisian revolution and the Arab Spring led to a revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2011 and prompted the EU to launch the so-called SPRING program. The latter aimed to support the countries involved in the revolutions, including Tunisia, in their democratic transition process, while simultaneously cooperating on economic, political, and social issues. For the period 2011-2013, 445 million euros were allocated to Tunisia for development assistance, with the majority of funds used to enhance business competitiveness (56%) and promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth (28%). Only 9% of the funding was dedicated to addressing unemployment and social protection challenges, while the remaining 7% was allocated to support the democratic transition. In 2012, the EU and Tunisia signed an additional Action Plan for the five-year period 2013-2017. This plan granted Tunisia the status of a "Privileged Partnership," which generally envisaged increased cooperation between the EU and Tunisia in various areas, with the three pillars of political cooperation, socioeconomic integration, and people-to-people contacts remaining central (Ayadi, R. and Sessa, E., 2016). Furthermore, since 2011, the EU reinforced existing instruments for supporting civil society, such as the Civil Society Facility, and created new programs, such as the European Endowment for Democracy. Therefore, 2011 proved to be a year of hope for democracy in MENA countries and a turning point in the European approach to the migration phenomenon. However, this hope in the Arab Spring as events that would bring democracy and stability to the region turned out to be a disappointment. Despite Tunisia being considered the only success story of the revolutions and successfully establishing a democratic government, a constitution, and respect for human rights, economic instability remained a crucial problem that has yet to be resolved and which still shapes the nature of Tunisian emigration today. Additionally, the political transition remains incomplete. Despite the progressive increase in freedoms, rights, and democracy, the political change has not been accompanied by an economic revolution. The result of this process

has been growing disillusionment, especially among the youth but also among the rest of the population, with the Tunisian revolution. In fact, the post-Arab spring governments have been unable to address the growing economic crisis, alleviate poverty, and reduce unemployment. Moreover, young Tunisians, who were the protagonists of the revolution, remain unheard of and on the fringes of the country's economic, social, and political life. This condition decisively characterizes Tunisian emigration, which from 2011 to the present day is still characterized by educated Tunisian youth who, disillusioned and disheartened, leave their country of origin in search of better opportunities abroad. Tunisian youth are educated and aspire to a future that meets their expectations, which have also increased due to the spread of the internet and social media, showing them what they could achieve outside their home country. This analysis compellingly demonstrates how migration, development, and democracy are indeed interconnected phenomena that need to be addressed together to formulate effective policies and achieve concrete results.

Exploring the Migration, Development, Democracy Nexus in Tunisia

This chapter will provide a theoretical and empirical analysis of the case study on Tunisia. Throughout the document, the relationship between migration, development, and democracy in the country will be explored, and theoretical analyses will be corroborated by empirical evidence, particularly through interviews and the analysis of a project funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and implemented in Tunisia.

In the first section, the chapter provides an overview of the current political, economic, and migratory issues affecting Tunisia and its population. It covers several critical aspects, including the shift in Tunisia's political landscape, the economic challenges of the country exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise in irregular migration to the EU.

The document also reports Tunisians' evaluation of European migration policies and shows the perspectives of Tunisian migrants and their motivations for leaving the country, giving an insight into the human side of these issues. Particularly, the second section includes an interview with a 30-year-old Tunisian migrant who arrived in Italy in June 2023 irregularly. His journey highlights the socioeconomic drivers of migration from Tunisia, including high youth unemployment and poverty.

The interviewee emphasizes that young Tunisians face challenges finding jobs and building an autonomous life in their home country. The young man also highlights the dangers of irregular migration across the central Mediterranean route and underscores the desperate choices some Tunisians make despite knowing the risks. In this regard the chapter stress the cruciality of implementing information campaigns on the risks of the journey, however the campaign must be followed by the delivery of concrete alternatives to irregular migration, such as the creation of job opportunities or incentives to continue studies.

Hence, a third section is devoted to the analysis and exploration of an Italian initiative realized in Tunisia. The paragraph discusses the Youth Empowerment Project (Phase II) implemented by IOM and funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. It aims to address youth unemployment in Tunisia and the risk of irregular emigration. The project focuses on socio-economic needs and operates in areas with high percentages of unemployment and high emigration rates, offering vocational training, education opportunities, and community engagement to empower at-risk youth. As the project is still ongoing, the text highlights some initial achievements, including a vocational training fair that attracted thousands of young Tunisians. The project represents an alternative approach to migration, focusing particularly to the development side. However, the chapter also emphasises the challenges related to Tunisia's political situation and human rights issues.

In conclusion, analysing the evolution of the relationship between the EU and Tunisia in migration field, the document criticizes the sidelining of the democratic component when signing migration and readmission agreements. In the final section, this chapter illustrates the European use of the migration-development nexus, noting that the EU often instrumentalises development aid as a tool to alleviate migration pressures on its member states. Additionally, it also mentions the positive step forwards that has been made, such as the new focus on the root causes of migration, the establishment of new initiatives and creation of new multilateral forum for debate, such as the recent Process of Rome.

3.1 Tunisia nowadays: political, socio-economic challenges and current migration trends.

The challenges Tunisia is currently facing are not entirely new. Indeed, both at the political and socio-economic levels, the issues that are affecting the country are similar to those encountered in

the post-independence period. Among these, the most significant concerns are the risk of a return to authoritarianism and the severe economic crisis. Particularly, the latter is also characterized by a high unemployment rate and by the failure of all Tunisian governments since 1956 to concretely integrate young people into the Tunisian job market. Indeed, the issue of youth marginalization and economic exclusion is a structural problem of the Tunisian labour market, which has several impacts on the social, economic, and migratory spheres. As a matter of fact, together with the political and economic challenges, the country is also affected by difficulties on the migration field. In this front, Tunisia is facing both the issues of being a country of origin, transit, and destination. Particularly relevant for the purpose of this document is the Tunisian emigration, remarkably toward the EU, because the aim of this thesis is to evaluate the impact of development on the decision to leave Tunisia and additionally to find possible cooperation policies which could address the migration-development nexus. Emigration is surely not a new phenomenon considering the Tunisian background, as it has been observed since the country's independence. However nowadays the phenomenon is turning more controversial as leaving the country is increasingly becoming a forced choice because Tunisia is unable to offer real socioeconomic opportunities to its citizens. Therefore, an introductory section on Tunisia's current political and socioeconomic challenges is essential for understanding how to develop future policies following the migration-development-democracy approach. As previously mentioned, the connection with the country's political situation is crucial in the definition of these policies. Firstly, this link is essential because the level of democracy and respect for human rights influences the overall human development in the country. Furthermore, potential violations of fundamental freedoms, that may increase in Tunisia under Kaïs Saïed, could become possible future drivers of emigration toward the EU. In addition, for the EU and its member states, entering into agreements with a non-democratic country and sending funds to a government that violate human rights is problematic, controversial and especially incoherent because it goes against the very founding principles of the Union.

In the previous chapter, Tunisia was described as the only Arab country where the revolution of 2011 had succeeded. Indeed, the country had managed to overthrow authoritarianism and implement a form of democratic government. In particular, the Tunisian Constitution of 2014 stated in the preamble, that the document had been drafted *“With a view to building a republican, democratic and participatory system, in the framework of a civil state founded on the sovereignty of the people, exercised through the peaceful alternation of power through free elections, and on the principle of the separation and balance of powers, which guarantees the freedom of association in*

conformity with the principles of pluralism, an impartial administration, and good governance, which are the foundations of political competition, where the state guarantees the supremacy of the law and the respect for freedoms and human rights, the independence of the judiciary, the equality of rights and duties between all citizens, male and female, and equality between all regions” (Tunisian constitution, 2014). Therefore, Tunisia was considered by Western eyes as an exception among Arab countries, and a bastion country for human and political rights in the MENA region. Although its democratization process presented significant obstacles – such as internal corruption, an economic crisis, social disparities – the country was still seen as safe and free. Freedom House, which, as seen in Chapter 1, assesses the level of democracy and freedom worldwide, considered Tunisia a free country until 2021. This institute conducts its analyses on the various territories of the world and assigns scores to the countries on the basis of various indicators. Specifically, it considers a total of 25 indicators, classified into 10 indicators concerning political rights and 15 on civil liberties, with a maximum of 4 points that can be assigned to each indicator. Therefore, with a total of 25 indicators, 100 is the maximum score that can be attributed to a completely democratic and free country. Depending on the score obtained, a state is considered not free, partially free, or free²⁹. Tunisia, although not with very high scores, was still considered a free country until 2021. From 2022, the country became a partially free state, and the score began to decline. In 2023, Tunisia was assigned a score of 56/100 due to a significant reduction in political rights. In this category, evaluations are made concerning the electoral process, political pluralism, voter participation, and the government's functioning (including corruption and transparency). So, this negative score, suggests that there has been a halt to the democratisation process in the country. To understand this reduction, a reference must be made to the 2019 elections.

In 2019, the country, considered “*the youngest democracy in the world*” (Yerkes, S., 2019), was called upon to vote both for the President of the Republic and for the Parliament. After the elections, the Parliament was highly fragmented because many political parties participated in the competition, but no one had managed to obtain the majority required to form a government on its own. Additionally, some traditionally strong political parties came out of the elections weakened. The Nidaa Tounes party, to which the former President of the Republic Caid Essebsi belonged, obtained only 3 seats, while Ennahda - still the country's leading political party - obtained only 52 seats, compared to 89 gained in 2011 (The Carter Center, Election Report 2019). This clearly

²⁹ Freedom in the World Research Methodology. (2023). Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/freedom-world/freedom-world-research-methodology>

showed the population's disappointment with the Tunisian political class and the parties that had governed up to that point. In fact, these parties had failed to achieve the goals of the revolution, namely completing the democratization process, reviving the economy, ending the youth marginalization, creating more jobs to address the high unemployment rate. Broken promises have produced an exhausted, angry, and alienated population. The country's economy had deteriorated, and damaged by rising inflation. Additionally, in 2018, austerity measures were implemented to cope with the country's high debt, however these tools heavily burdened citizens, contributed to increase poverty and dissatisfaction with the political elite. Furthermore, the country's democratic transition process was already in danger since 2017 when a law granting amnesty to former officials of Ben Ali's regime was passed. This provision allowed the old and corrupt political class to return to prestigious public positions. This clearly increased the Tunisian people's disillusionment with politics and their conviction that government corruption was so deep-rooted that not even the revolution could eliminate it. Another factor that contributed to the alienation of the population from politics was given by the use of violence by the police to suppress protests demanding political, economic and social change. The Presidential elections confirmed this trend of mistrust toward a political class seen as corrupt and incapable of reviving the country's economy. In fact, the new President, Kaïs Saïed, was an independent politician who did not belong to any political party, and who had no contact with the political class that had governed up to that time. This President therefore represented an important hope for change for the citizens. However, just a month after the elections, Tunisia, like the rest of the world, was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic (Petkanas, Z. 2023). The pandemic helped show the world the true fragility of the country. President Saïed imposed multiple confinement and closure regulations during 2020, that while they had a positive effect on the health system – as they greatly helped contain infections and deaths – on the other side they give a lot of power to the President and diminished individual freedoms. Additionally, the country's economic crisis was exacerbated, and the pandemic made the inequalities between different areas of the country even more evident. These local disparities, present since colonial times, had never been bridged (Pepicelli, R. 2021). From a political point of view, disagreements between the President, Prime Minister, and the Speaker of Parliament³⁰ over constitutional issues

³⁰ After the 2019 elections, no political party had enough votes to govern alone, but even forming a government coalition was complicated as it was necessary to involve many parties to obtain a stable majority. In 2020, Elyes Fakhfakh from the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties was appointed Prime Minister but had to resign after only a few months because he was implicated in a scandal. In 2020 Saïed appointed Hichem Mechichi, an independent, as Prime Minister, while the Speaker of Parliament was Ghannouchi, leader of Ennahda. The clashes on constitutional issues were between Mechichi and Ghannouchi against Saïed.

started immediately, in particular the divergences were related to the separation of powers and the boundaries between the executive and legislative branches. These issues could only be resolved by the establishment of a Constitutional Court, which did not yet exist in Tunisia. In 2021, the Parliament finally adopted a resolution to introduce it, but the President decided not to approve it. Clearly, this was already a particular signal undermining the process of democratisation of the institutions. Indeed, in 2021, the authoritarian turn and the Saïed's hyper-presidentialism began to take shape. The President first invoked a state of emergency, as allowed by the 2014 Constitution, and therefore for a period of 30 days, during which he suspended the Parliament and removed the Prime Minister from his office. A veritable presidentialist coup occurred when the Saïed decided to extend indefinitely the 30-days period. Additionally, the President assumed the control over the judiciary and intensified repressive forces of the state. The Parliament, which had already been suspended, was dissolved, and the 2014 Constitution was replaced by a short Presidential decree. On July 25, 2022, Saïed called for a referendum on a new Constitution that expanded even more the Presidential powers, eliminating legislative and judicial oversight. Indeed, the new Constitutional text, which passed with a positive vote in the referendum, makes Tunisia an ultra-presidential state, as the President no longer has to share executive power with the Prime Minister and can appoint judges, including those of the future Constitutional Court. Furthermore, from 2023, the President launched an open repressive campaign against his political opponents, culminating in the arrest of Ghannouchi, former Speaker of Parliament and leader of Ennahda (Petkanas, Z., 2023). These events demonstrate that the country's democratic process has not only stalled but has regressed. This situation is concerning because, as seen, the limitation of democracy and, above all, human rights, significantly undermines individuals' security, human development, and progress prospects.

In addition to the dramatic circumstances previously described and the democratic regression of the country, there is a further obstacle concerning the Tunisian development path. Precisely, the problem is related with the poor economic performance of the country, indeed the concerns related to the economic recovery have not been addressed properly since the collapse of the Ben Ali regime. Not only the post-revolution parties did not manage to provide an economic revival of Tunisia, but according to data from the World Bank, after 2011 the country's economy has even declined. The situation significantly worsened with the arrival of the pandemic in 2020, which caused a sharp contraction of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by -8.8% in 2020. Despite some hint of recovery in 2021, the country registered again a decrease in 2022. Furthermore, the country has also been hit by an unstoppable inflation which resulted in a general rise in prices and especially

in the cost of food products. The situation has been exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which contributed even more to the rise in prices. Simultaneously, unemployment levels have remained high in 2023, particularly among young people (38.8%) and those with a high level of education (24%). Poverty rates have also increased, with one-sixth of the country's population now classified as impoverished, and recurring food shortages have become a widespread issue. The financial difficulties of state-owned companies are becoming increasingly apparent, with several facing the risk of bankruptcy. To address these challenges, the Tunisian government has implemented stricter austerity measures, even stricter than those already implemented in 2018, with the aim of qualifying for support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and initiating an economic recovery process. The Afrobarometer, which is a survey research network, conducted a survey of 1,200 adult Tunisian citizens to investigate the population's satisfaction with the economic policies carried out under Kaïs Saïed. Among the main survey findings, it is noted that the government's major challenges are economic management, unemployment, and poverty. According to the surveyed population, the government is performing poorly or, in any case, ineffectively in terms of stabilizing prices, creating jobs, and reducing economic inequalities (Najib Ben Saad, M., 2023).

The political and economic context of Tunisia undeniably shape the country's migratory path. This is confirmed by the fact that since 2022 the flow of irregular migrants from Tunisia to Italy has increased dramatically and Tunisia has replaced Libya as the first country of departure. Indeed, the lack of economic opportunities for both migrants and Tunisian citizens, together with political instability and gross violation of human rights, inevitably influence the choice of individuals to leave the country in search of better possibilities abroad.

As repeatedly stated, Tunisia is involved in two main migratory phenomena. On one hand, it is a destination/transit country inundated with sub-Saharan immigrants usually seeking to reach Europe, while on the other, it continues to be a relevant country of origin. Concerning the arrival of sub-Saharan migrants, Tunisia has become a popular destination due to its proximity to Europe and the fact that it does not require entry visas for many citizens of sub-Saharan countries. Despite emphasizing the connection between democracy and the liberalization of immigration in the previous chapter, particularly asserting that more democracy equals more rights for migrants, this has not been the case in Tunisia. In fact, following the fall of the Ben Ali regime, migrant rights were not expanded, and more permissive migration policies were not implemented. Even though

political parties immediately after 2011 declared their intent to regulate asylum and improve the management and protection of migrants on Tunisian territory, the Tunisian security-centric approach remained unchanged. Indeed, despite the country ratifying the 1951 Refugee Convention (Geneva Convention) already in 1956, Tunisia still has not established a proper set of national laws to regulate asylum, as a result, the process of determining refugee status is currently carried out by UNHCR in accordance with its mandate (UNHCR, 2016). Paradoxically, European pressures focused on enhancing border security and controls to reduce irregular flows played a role in slowing down the process of reforming migration management according to a more humanitarian approach. Clearly, not only external pressures but also the domestic situation in the country. Particularly, terroristic attacks in Tunisia since 2015 have contributed to create a security narrative of migration, strengthening the migration-terrorism nexus (Natter, K. 2022). Finally, Saïed's recent rhetoric against sub-Saharan migrants has also increased feelings of hatred, racism, and resentment against migrants, who historically have always been scapegoated during situations of economic and political hardship. Consequently, sub-Saharan migrants arriving in Tunisia have few rights and opportunities, often suffer violence and racist attacks, and they also must compete in an environment where Tunisia is unable to provide them with adequate protection (El Ghali, A. 2022).

Having briefly illustrated the first aspect of migration to Tunisia, this section will now be dedicated to the analysis of the second phenomenon, namely Tunisian emigration. As repeatedly emphasized, the focus of this document revolves around emigration, as the aim of the thesis is to investigate how the level of Tunisian development influences the migration flows that prompt Tunisians to leave their country of origin. Additionally, the document aims to analyse interesting types of migration-development policies which can be useful in making Tunisian emigration a driver for development.

First and foremost, it is important to reiterate that from the 1950s to the present day, Tunisian emigration has prevailed over immigration. In fact, in 2020, it was recorded that the Tunisian diaspora amounts to 900,000 expatriates, corresponding to 7.6% of the country's population. Conversely, in the same year, it was measured that immigrants in the country amount to 60,000, or 0.5% of the total population (European Training Foundation, 2021). In particular, Tunisian emigration has primarily targeted the European Union (EU), with France being the primary destination. For the purpose of this analysis, it is crucial to provide a precise profile of the typical Tunisian migrant to understand which development-related aspect most influenced the decision to migrate.

Firstly, the initial waves of Tunisian migrants from the 1950s to the 1970s were predominantly characterized by young men who migrated for work-related reasons to Europe, which required low-cost labour for post-war reconstruction. The typical migrant was, therefore, male, young, with limited educational background or work experience, and the type of employment was usually temporary. From the 1970s to the 1980s, emigration to the old continent saw a shift toward more family reunifications, involving the movement of women and children. Finally, from the 1980s to the present days, there was a notable increase in emigration by highly educated Tunisians. These migrants were increasingly educated and possessed higher skills. Therefore, the underlying reasons for emigration have consistently been rooted in economic factors. Even during the 50 years of dictatorship, while political motives could occasionally play a role, it was primarily the economic crisis and high unemployment that drove the Tunisian population to leave their homes. Despite the economic concerns which persist since the country's independence, Tunisia anyway experienced economic and social development marked by an increase in GDP and higher levels of education and services since the 1990s. However, it is essential to underline the fact that the increase of socio-economic development of the country coincided with more emigration to Europe. Indeed, has been recorded that from 1990 to 2019, there was a 75% increase in outward movements (European Training Foundation, 2021). This confirms the theory presented in the first chapter, which suggests that as a nation begins to develop, its population may increasingly desire to emigrate. This is because, with higher education and greater wealth, expectations rise. However, these expectations cannot be fulfilled at home in the short period, as the country is still in the process of development and not yet at an advanced stage. Particularly, the Tunisian case until 2019 was exemplary in this regard. Despite providing a relatively high level of education compared to other countries in the MENA region and participating in the democratization process with a progressive Constitution, the emigration rate remained consistently high. However, more emigration is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. As mentioned in Chapter 2, emigration, especially during Ben Ali's regime, was viewed as a resource due to the remittances that Tunisian citizens abroad sent home, they aided the country's economy, and the reduction in the labour force helped with unemployment. Historically, Tunisian emigration has been addressed through two main approaches, one aimed at promoting emigration through legal channels, such as signing agreements with the EU and other countries, and the other aimed at maintaining strong relationships with expatriates, so that Tunisians abroad could decide to invest in Tunisia, send money and remittances at home. Clearly, with the increase in the number of expatriates, the volume of remittances has also increased, reaching its peak in 2021 at \$3.08 billion, constituting 6.6% of Tunisia's GDP (World Bank 2023).

Therefore, this analysis shows a dual relationship: not only is the socio-economic level of Tunisia the cause of the decision to emigrate, but emigration itself can be used as an engine for development. Moreover, it is also interesting to observe how the collapse of dictatorial regimes did not lead to a reduction in migration flows. This suggests that, in Tunisia, political and democratic factors have not played as significant a role in the decision to emigrate as socio-economic needs. Disillusion and alienation with an imperfect democracy incapable of providing economic recovery and concrete alternatives have been a driving factors to leave, rather than political motives alone. The most disenchanted from politics are the young people who remain one of the most excluded and marginalized groups within the country. Indeed, the same young people who were the protagonists of the revolution are now the most affected by unemployment. Tunisia faces a structural problem that no government has managed to solve so far, which is precisely the marginalization of its youth, which still represent a large portion of the society. These young people are frustrated by the fact that their hopes and expectations for the future remains unfulfilled. The high rate of youth unemployment described earlier is concrete evidence of this. The average age of the Tunisian migrant has, in fact, decreased after the Arab Spring, from 25.8 to 24.1 years old (Zuccotti, C.V., et al. 2018). The absence of job opportunities is the main driver pushing young people to leave Tunisia, and in some cases, to embark on perilous sea routes. The lack of concrete alternatives to migration, especially in certain rural and particularly impoverished areas, has been the main driving force for young people to emigrate irregularly. While, in general, most Tunisian migrants are young, educated, and skilled, it has been observed that the propensity for irregular migration is higher among young people who are poor and have lower levels of education. In 2018, studies conducted by the Arab Barometer revealed that 41% of Tunisian migrants would be willing to leave Tunisia irregularly, a notably high figure. Of this 41%, the majority are male (53%), and their level of education is at most secondary school (Abufalgha, M. 2022). It is essential to emphasize that the Central Mediterranean route, connecting Tunisia to Italy, is one of the most perilous migration routes globally. This is because often, those organizing these illegal journeys are smugglers and traffickers who do not employ suitable means of transportation. To comprehend the level of danger to which migrants are exposed in this migration route, it is necessary to consider that, from 2014 to the present, approximately 28,087 deaths have been recorded by IOM along this route, with 2,078 losses reported in 2023 alone (IOM, 2023). The primary causes of death continue to be drowning, as a result of the frequent shipwrecks, followed by a lack of food and water as the second leading cause. Thus, even though, as highlighted, migration often carries positive connotations, it takes on a negative aspect when individuals are compelled to undertake these

perilous journeys. Clearly, if an individual decides to embark on such a journey, the motivations may either stem from inadequate awareness of the risks associated with irregular immigration or fleeing from an even worse situation. Policies connecting migration and development cannot afford to overlook this aspect. Indeed, besides devising policies that generate wealth through facilitating remittances and circular migration, on-field interventions must also be conducted. These interventions should aim to raise awareness about the risks associated with irregular migration, create concrete alternatives at home to prevent further loss of human lives, and to ensure that as few people as possible are forced to take this kind of path.

On the other shore of the Mediterranean, the European countries and Italy in particular, find themselves swamped by a high number of irregular migrants departing from Tunisia. Therefore, to find sustainable solutions for both Tunisia and the EU, a fair cooperation in the area must be increased. A crucial point, according to the Migration and Development approach, is to identify the needs of both parties involved in order to provide concrete solutions, alternatives to irregular movements and fostering human development. Identifying priorities is therefore decisive in avoiding expensive and counterproductive interventions and promoting co-development solutions in the area. However, EU interventions have almost always been aimed at prioritizing European interests and thus focused on protecting borders and reducing irregular flows. A recent survey implemented by EuroMeSCo in 2021³¹, revealed a mismatch between European fields of action and priorities for the Tunisian population. The survey results unveil that the EU concentrated its efforts primarily on enhancing border control and addressing irregular flows. It is noteworthy that Tunisians participating in the survey ranked the reinforcement of border management as the least important aspect of a possible cooperation with EU countries. In fact, they instead stressed the importance of creating concrete alternatives in Tunisia, and thus jobs, and socioeconomic opportunities, to concretely address the root causes of Tunisian emigration. In second and third place, combating smuggling and human trafficking, and promoting regular migration channels were listed as key priorities (Veron, P. 2021). As confirmed by the survey, the immediate concerns for the country are largely related to socio-economic development, lack of economic prospects, political instability, unemployment, and corruption. So, the critical point of cooperation between the EU and Tunisia, is precisely the fact that the relationship has always focused on security-related matters. Even if some projects more focused on addressing the root causes, supporting the

³¹ EMM5-EuroMeSCo Euromed Survey. Available at: <https://www.euromesco.net/euromed-survey/euromed-survey-2021/>

democratic transition of the country and fostering economic revival were implemented, they were always intended as defeating the causes to reduce departure. A type of reasoning that is questionable, because as demonstrated, it is not always true that more development means less migration. Such kind of cooperation is therefore unbalanced and does not really take into account the interests of all the parties involved in the dialogue. An unbalanced relationship will inevitably fail and will not even lead to the desired results. Indeed, despite the European efforts to work on strengthening borders and controls, irregular arrivals are de facto increasing.

In conclusion, this section has outlined the main challenges Tunisia is facing today. These issues include the halt in the democratization process, the threat of a possible return to authoritarianism, the growing economic crisis, and unemployment. Moreover, the section has analysed the concerns which arise from the increasing number of sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisian territory who experience lack of protection, human rights violations, and no opportunities. Finally, the text showed the concerns related to Tunisian emigration, as the phenomenon, which is usually positive, becomes problematic if it converts in a forced choice achieved in an irregular and dangerous way, due to a lack of concrete alternatives at home. The next section will be very brief and will feature the testimony of a young Tunisian who left his country to reach Europe irregularly. His testimony confirms these trends outlined so far and is useful in understanding how national and European policies should focus on making migration a sustainable choice and promoting development in both receiving and sending countries. After the brief testimony, initiatives and projects that link development and migration themes will be explained, serving as a valuable example of the migration-development nexus.

3.2 Experience of a young Tunisian in Italy.

This section is going to provide a testimony of a young Tunisian who left his country of origin to reach Europe. The primary objective of this interview was to gain comprehensive insights into the motivations, experiences, and perspectives of a 30-year-old Tunisian individual who recently migrated to Italy in June 2023. The interview served to validate and substantiate the findings and arguments concerning Tunisian emigration previously discussed in the analysis.

The methodology used in this interview has been qualitative, the participant was selected deliberately to align with the demographic profile outlined earlier in the evaluation. This profile

encompassed characteristics such as being a young male with a secondary education background, yet lacking university attendance, as these attributes are recognized to elevate the likelihood of engaging in irregular migration. To ensure the interview's effectiveness, it was conducted in French, ensuring effective, open and honest communication. To maintain ethical standards, informed consent was obtained from the participant, who was fully apprised of the interview's objectives and purpose. The participant's anonymity and personal information were rigorously safeguarded to protect their privacy and safety. Throughout the interview, respect for the participant's experiences and viewpoints was diligently maintained, with no judgment or bias. Moreover, a semi-structured interview format was chosen to facilitate flexibility and a conversational atmosphere. While specific questions were prepared in advance, this format allowed for the exploration of emerging themes and follow-up questions in response to the participant's input. The interview topics spanned a wide range, encompassing the reasons behind the decision to migrate, personal experiences encountered during the migration journey, factors influencing the selection of the migration destination, perceptions regarding development cooperation between European countries and Tunisia, and opinions regarding domestic governance and issues of corruption.

However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. Firstly, the interview featured a single participant, limiting the extent to which findings can be generalized. Nonetheless, it provided valuable firsthand insights. Secondly, the participant's experiences and views were based on their individual circumstances and perceptions, which may not be wholly representative of the broader population of Tunisian migrants.

Therefore, with the aim of validating and supporting what was previously expressed in relation to Tunisian emigration, this section reports an interview with a 30-year-old Tunisian. The young man underwent a dangerous journey in a small and overcrowded boat to reach Europe. When he arrived in Lampedusa, he was accepted and welcomed by the Italian Red Cross. However, in August, he left Italian territory in hopes of finding better job opportunities in France. The young man precisely fits the profile delineated earlier as he is young, male, and he has received secondary education but did not attend university. These characteristics, according to the Arab Barometer survey, make him more inclined to undertake an irregular journey. Conversely, adverse variables for undocumented departure, would be being female and having received a university education.

Regarding the reasons that drove the respondent to leave Tunisia, only socioeconomic reasons emerged from the interview. Indeed, according to him socio-economic drivers consistently outweigh political motivations. Moreover, the young man stated, "*the reason for immigration is solely to improve living conditions*". In relation to the situation in his country, he added that Tunisia may seem like a safe country, but in his view, "*security does not solely lie in the absence of war*", "*Tunisia is safe, but there is poverty. There is illness*," he continued, "*if you work both day and night, but all of this is not enough to feed yourself and your family, there is no security*". The young man mostly referred to his professional experience in the Tunisian tourism sector, which is poorly compensated and requires around-the-clock work.

The respondent was also asked how much influence the level of education received had on the decision to emigrate. He believed that education was not such a relevant variable in the decision, because it is unemployment, not education, that truly drives young people away from Tunisia. He stated, "*Even if you study and get good grades at university, but then you have no job, how do you earn a living? The grades you get at school are not currency and are insufficient to survive*". Furthermore, he emphasized that when a young person in Tunisia obtains a diploma, it takes years, at least 5-10 years, before finding employment. Additionally, he reported that some of his friends who studied at university and have found jobs, usually managed to find employment in professional fields other than the one they studied. He also explained that for young people nowadays it is impossible to build an independent life, buy a house, get married, and start a family in Tunisia. Migration, therefore, becomes a forced choice to lead a decent life. From the interview, it emerged that the reasons that drove him to leave were indeed the lack of job opportunities, a sense of duty toward his parents, and above all, poverty. In this regard, he quoted a widely used saying in Tunisia, which reports, "*Si la pauvreté était un homme, je l'aurais tué*" which translates to "*If poverty were a man, I would have killed it*". he continued, "*the cost of living in Tunisia is so high that it leads people to choose to cross the sea and risk their lives*".

His testimony confirmed the dangerous and precarious nature of irregular travel on the central Mediterranean route. He attested to having crossed the Mediterranean Sea on a small, overcrowded boat, saying, "*You travel at night, fearing drowning, unable to move your feet, facing death every second, thinking about your families, and at the same time, remembering God*". This impressive testimony brought to light a further aspect. The fact that the Central Mediterranean route is dangerous is not new, what is shocking is that the young man was aware of the perilousness of the

journey before setting out, knowing that this route was called "*the journey of death*". However, he still decided to embark on it. This underscores how economic migration, often associated with voluntary movements, has become an obligatory and coerced choice for Tunisians.

The young man also emphasized the powerful attraction that Europe holds for Tunisian migrants. He stated, "*Europe is challenging, but it guarantees rights to the oppressed and protects children. It respects workers' rights, and that's why people would risk their lives to come here.*". Regarding the choice of the destination country, he described Italy as a welcoming country and as a place that he loves, however also as a country where it is not easy to integrate and find work. Indeed, the young man said he had received an effective first reception upon arrival, but then he was alone and unable to find work quickly, partly because he had no contacts within the Tunisian community, and then because integration in Italy is not easy. Therefore, with the winter season approaching, he decided to go to France, where knowledge of the language might facilitate his job search.

In the final phase of the interview, he was asked for his opinion on development cooperation between European countries and Tunisia. The feedback received was extremely negative. The young man stated that he had no trust in genuine cooperation because, in his view, "*there will always be a colonizer, and European countries, especially France, have no interest in making Tunisia a developed country.*". Another problem he encountered concerned domestic mismanagement of funds. According to him, political corruption in Tunisia is seriously high, and even if there were genuine cooperation efforts to reform and assist the country, a true recovery would not be possible due to negligence and a lack of transparency in administration.

From this interview, important results emerged. Firstly, the previous findings obtained from theoretical analysis and surveys were confirmed. That is, the issues related to development and migration in Tunisia concern the lack of economic and social opportunities, especially for young people. Additionally, the testimony also confirms that poverty in the country is increasing, and the economic situation of Tunisia is also exacerbated by rising prices and the high cost of living. Political factors are not yet perceived as significant drivers for leaving the country. However, there is a strong sense of disillusionment and mistrust towards the Tunisian political class. Distrust is also evident in a lack of confidence regarding the administration and management of European funds.

At this juncture, after analysing and observing how the socio-economic level of Tunisia impacts its migration flows, it is necessary to focus on the second research question of this thesis. The inquiry wants to investigate which kind of policies and initiatives should be implemented and financed to address properly the Migration and Development nexus. The correlation between migration and development in politics is a contentious and controversial topic. Indeed, the European development projects are often financed with the aim of reducing irregular migration flows. However, this reasoning presents some problems as it is purely rhetorical and has no evidence in reality. In fact, in order to truly reduce irregular flows the country would have to transform itself from a developing country to an advanced, safe, politically and economically stable nation. Clearly this transition cannot take place solely through development cooperation projects and therefore the country remains developing, in this way its migration flows will not change. Indeed, it was noted since the first chapter of this document that it is actually at the stage when the country begins to develop that its flows increase. It is clear at this point that the goal of the migration-development policies cannot be to reduce migration flows, but to implement policies that turn migration into an opportunity for development. Hence, to harness the benefits of migration and leverage them to generate progress. Several policies of this nature already exist, primarily involving the facilitation of remittance transfers, the strengthening of circular migration, and engaging the diaspora in the economic recovery of the country of origin. However, recent years have witnessed a steep increase in irregular migration, necessitating the formulation of different strategies. Alongside these policies, there is a need for on-the-ground interventions aimed at creating new development opportunities in the country of origin. In addition, the social and economic reintegration into the Tunisian social and economic fabric of migrants who are repatriated from Europe or voluntarily return to Tunisia must also be addressed. They must be placed in contexts that offer them alternatives, otherwise they risk a second irregular departure. To make a tangible difference and yielding concrete results, these policies should be directed towards creating employment opportunities in Tunisia and providing young individuals with the necessary training to align their acquired skills from school or university with the actual demands of the labor market. Furthermore, implementing informational campaigns about the risks associated with irregular immigration is of paramount importance. However, such campaigns must be accompanied by the provision of viable alternatives to the perilous journey, as relying solely on information dissemination proves ineffective, as demonstrated in the case of the young Tunisian interviewed. In the forthcoming section, the Youth Empowerment Project (Phase II) funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by IOM, will be presented. This project serves as an exemplary model of how these policies should operate, aiming to counter

irregular and perilous migration while simultaneously fostering development in the country of origin.

3.3 Project description: YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (PHASE II).

This section will allow for a closer look at how a development cooperation project works and what are the crucial steps to be taken into consideration. As mentioned, the priorities and interests of the population in which the project will be implemented are the basis for the construction of the initiatives and the strategy to be used. In this case, the socio-economic needs and the high rate of youth unemployment are seen as key priorities for Tunisia. The initiative YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (PHASE II) implemented by IOM and financed by the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is an ongoing project started on 1st February 2022. It has a duration of 36 months, and it will end on 31 January 2025. It was designed based on the success of a similar initiative “Enhancement of socio-economic reintegration opportunities for youth at risk of irregular re-emigration and other vulnerable groups through market-oriented skill trainings and community development supporting”, also funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and implemented by IOM since 1 August 2020. Both initiatives are being implemented after a previous analysis concerning the priorities of the Tunisian population, the level of development of the country, and the migration trends in Tunisia.

The first Project is taking place in the areas of Sfax and Mahdia, the main ports and migration hubs of the country, and aims precisely to support the reintegration of migrants once they have returned to Tunisia to avoid a second emigration and to help the most vulnerable young people at risk of emigration to seek employment and integrate them into the Tunisian labour market. Initially, Tunisian institutions were contacted, visited, and diagnosed by IOM, then initiatives were designed to encourage cross-sectoral coordination and ensure the most effective integration of young people at risk of emigration. Among the main priorities in the two regions were the need for action in the field of education, to prevent and intervene in the high drop-out rate, and in the field of vocational training of young people. The main project activities include the establishment of counters for educational/vocational guidance and counselling in youth centres. Additionally, all the various partner facilities, (i.e., youth centres, training centres, high schools, and schools) were made more attractive through the introduction of innovative courses, workshops, and clubs. One of the main objectives was to encourage young people who had emigrated and then returned to resume their

studies in Tunisia. These initiatives have borne very positive results in the first phase of their implementation, so much so that just in the period from 15 to 28 December 2021, 118 young people were accepted into vocational training centres in these areas, 51 young people who had dropped out of school in the past returned to study with the aim of enrolling in training courses, 184 young people at risk of dropping out decided to continue their studies in order to acquire a minimum basic level, and another 76 decided to undertake private vocational training courses. The success of this Project, which is still ongoing, led to the decision to develop another one in the areas of Tataouine and Médenine³².

To understand the rationale behind these projects, it is needed to list the results of the analysis carried out by IOM on Tunisia, on its level of development, and the migration challenges it faces. The investigation showed approximately the same results previously analysed. The country is grappling with a severe economic crisis that has been made worse by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis is compounded by factors like a growing population, and an economy that is not expanding enough to provide jobs for the increasing number of youths entering the workforce each year. Furthermore, young people are still marginalized and excluded from the political discourse. The persistent unemployment problem, particularly among the youth, is a key reason why many Tunisians are leaving the country, mainly for Europe. Women and people in the country's interior regions also experience disproportionately higher unemployment rates compared to men. This situation of economic instability, as anticipated, also affects the migration field. In fact, the common profile of a Tunisian irregular migrant is a young, unmarried, male, educated but without a job. The decision to migrate irregularly is mostly driven by the desire to escape poverty for 90% of migrants, and 72% seek better job opportunities. Family and social problems are also significant factors for 54% of migrants, as reported by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013)³³. However, more recent evidence suggests that young women and children are increasingly attempting to irregularly cross the Mediterranean as well. These challenges contribute to young people resorting to desperate measures, like embarking on perilous journeys to Europe. The number of young Tunisians attempting to enter Europe irregularly has notably risen over the past few years. Indeed, Tunisia is still a country of strong emigration with a high proportion of Tunisians living

³² All the data reported come from the project proposal, reports and follow up activities recorded by IOM and provided the Italian minister of foreign affairs.

³³ ILO and MDG (2013). Youth Employment and Migration. Country Brief: Tunisia.

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ed_emp_msu/documents/publication/wcms_219632.pdf

abroad, mainly in Europe. In the course of 2020, the number of departures from Tunisian shores also decreased due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, irregular departures from Tunisia to Europe resumed already during the second half of 2020, reaching an increase of 180% for crossings in the Mediterranean Sea between March 2020 and the same period in 2021 (AICS Report, 2021)³⁴. Notably, irregular migration from Tunisia to Italy saw a dramatic increase since 2020. In 2021, 15.671 Tunisians arrived irregularly in Italy, compared to 2,654 registered in 2019. Even as of 31 December 2022 the number of Tunisians arriving irregularly in Italy had reached 18.148³⁵. The reasons behind this surge are multifaceted and interconnected, involving economic, social, and political factors, all of which were exacerbated by the pandemic. Therefore, the complex array of reasons behind irregular migration from Tunisia necessitates a tailored response that effectively addresses the situation.

To address the issue of irregular emigration to Europe, the Youth Empowerment Project Phase II aims to provide support and guidance to at-risk youth, particularly those attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea irregularly. The lack of legal migration pathways encourages youth to repeatedly try irregular crossings. The project aims to create a comprehensive mechanism to empower such youth and collaborate with Tunisian authorities and local institutions. The project's focus is on enhancing socio-economic opportunities for at-risk youth through market-oriented skills training and community development. Additionally, it seeks to build the capacities of youth at risk, especially those not in education, employment, or training (NEET), through vocational training to address the drivers of irregular migration. Its main goal is to develop structural interventions that strengthen national capabilities for providing empowerment services to youth. The proposed action builds on the successes of Phase I in Mahdia and Sfax and extends its reach to the Governorates of Tataouine and Medenine. The ports of Sfax, Zarzis (located in Medenine Governorate), and Mahdia are the three primary departure points for irregular migration to Italy. These three ports contribute to 26%, 15%, and 14% of all irregular departures, respectively. The area of Tataouine, instead, is located inland, and it is one of the poorest and more marginalized regions of Tunisia. This is the reason why Tataouine Governorate is believed to be a significant origin point for irregular

³⁴ AICS (2021). Rapporto annual. AICS TUNISI. Tunisia, Libia, Marocco e Algeria. https://tunisi.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/RapportoAnnuale_2020_AICSTunisi.pdf

³⁵ Data provided by the Italian Minister of Interior and available at: <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero>

migration, driven by the lack of socio-cultural and economic prospects for Tunisian youth in the region.

The project's activities will be implemented by IOM in partnership with several Tunisian authorities such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Professional Integration, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Women, Family, Children and Seniors, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, private sector, NGOs and service providers working with youth, National Agency of employment, Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training, local authorities of Sfax, Mahdia, Tataouine, and Medenine. The outcomes of the initiative are outlined as follows:

Outcome 1: Young individuals who are at risk of engaging in irregular emigration will be provided with opportunities to access local services and participate in activities that aim to foster their social and economic integration within their communities. In order to do that, *the project identifies the main drivers of irregular emigration in the new target area and the main barriers to socioeconomic integration.* This involves a gender-sensitive situational assessment of the adolescent and youth population in the targeted regions, which will inform tailored programs addressing the needs of youth at risk. So, the first phase of the project will therefore consist of *workshops and dialogues with youth organizations and stakeholders in order to create a strategy for action.* Local, public and community actors in the areas and communities will be supported to develop effective interventions and programs to support the inclusion of the youth population.

Outcome 2: During the project, *local, public and community actors will be supported to develop and implement interventions that provide alternatives to irregular migration.* In the proposed initiative, two new geographic areas will undergo an initial evaluation of labour market demands, including identifying the skills required and assessing the available workforce. This assessment will also consider *potential discrepancies between required skills and available workforce skills, and the strategies to address these through professional training will be explored.* This evaluation will take place at the project's outset and aims to provide an overview of the situation, guiding decisions on potential actions to enhance the socio-economic circumstances of youth in the targeted regions. Additionally, a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Forum and exchange meetings will be arranged. These events will involve organizing a *Forum on Youth, Employment, and Social Responsibility* in collaboration with local youth organizations. Furthermore, one-on-one *meetings*

with representatives from existing educational institutions will be conducted to highlight the specific challenges that young individuals face. Additionally, the feasibility of incorporating youth into educational programs will be evaluated. Similarly, *bilateral meetings with representatives from local businesses* in the regions will be held. The aim here is to create awareness about the distinct difficulties experienced by both male and female youth. Moreover, these meetings will assess the willingness of businesses to cooperate in developing CSR initiatives. Specifically, the potential for a pilot program focused on recruitment and capacity building, tailored to the needs of these companies, will be explored.

Outcome 3: *To equip targeted youth with relevant skills and competencies to facilitate their access to the labour market.* In order to do that 200 additional youth³⁶ at risk of irregular emigration will be selected for the project. Among the requirements, they should be Tunisians, at least 30% of the selected people must be female, their age should be in the range of 12-30 years, they should have a residence in one of the four areas covered by the two projects, they must show interest in the activities and also their personal and family situation will be taken into account. After having selected the beneficiaries, *the people selected will be involved in cultural and sports activities to enhance community involvement, they could also have access to psychosocial support.* Then, the beneficiaries will be *involved in educational and employment initiatives.* In particular, they will be included in the *formal education system, they have to participate in training courses, apprenticeship programs, pre-employment courses, and re-skilling training.*

The project will also establish partnerships and coordination mechanisms with various stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, vocational schools, and the private sector. It will also monitor progress and adapt the project to changing circumstances. The project ultimately aims to empower at-risk Tunisian youth by providing them with alternatives to irregular migration through skills development, community engagement, and socio-economic opportunities.

Through the follow-up reports produced by IOM, although the project is still ongoing, it is already possible to assess some of the results achieved. The first available report assesses the results accomplished during the period 1 February 2022 and 31 July 2022. It shows that in the reported

³⁶ other 200 young people will be added to the existing project phase 1.

period, the first workshops and meetings with partners were organised to analyse the peculiarities of the project regions and recognise the main factors of irregular migration in order to define the strategy for action. What emerged is that a significant portion of the population in the Tataouine and Medenine areas rely heavily on the informal economy for their livelihoods. The informal sector is closely intertwined with both legal and illicit forms of cross-border trade with Libya. The smuggling of gasoline from Libya, for instance, provided jobs for approximately 5,600 individuals, and the border area served as a primary source of employment, especially given the limited availability of other formal job opportunities in the regions. Furthermore, both in Tataouine and Medenine, there are noticeable discrepancies when compared to other regions of the country. These divergences manifest in the insufficient availability and quality of public services such as healthcare, education, and public transportation, as well as the prevalence of widespread structural unemployment. Additionally, the poverty rate in these two regions, standing at around 18%, surpasses the national average of 15.6%. Notably, Tataouine's unemployment rate in 2019 was the highest nationwide, reaching 28.7%, nearly double the country's average. Moreover, this region also holds the highest percentage of unemployed university graduates across the nation. This situation has contributed to elevated high school dropout rates in both areas. In addition, after conducting an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic issues in the areas of intervention, the National Youth Observatory developed a mapping of all existing services for young people, which will be digitised so that it can be easily consulted by everyone (young people, students, parents, career counsellors). However, the most remarkable achievement of this project since now concerns the first National Vocational Training Fair, an activity that IOM was able to organise thanks to the cooperation with the Tunisian authorities. This was an outstanding achievement as 245 exhibitors were brought together for the first time, including public and private vocational training and employment agencies and various private companies. This event, which took place from 24 to 26 June 2022, attracted the attention of more than 7.000 young Tunisians, who participated in the event and had the opportunity to get in touch with companies and public institutions that presented them with job offers and training courses. During the event, 990 young people enrolled in training programmes, while 29.355 candidates attended vocational training courses.

In conclusion, during the reporting period, the project was formally presented to national and local institutions and to civil society organizations, through coordination and consultation meetings. All stakeholders involved in the project have expressed great appreciation for the project's approach, focused precisely on the Migration-Development nexus, and highlighted the crucial importance of

finding immediate alternative solutions for young Tunisians. The project can thus be considered as an empirical example of a different approach to migration. In fact, it departs from approaches solely aimed at preventing migration by sending funds to curb departures but is geared towards building real and concrete alternatives in Tunisia, aimed at addressing one of the country's major problems, namely youth marginalization and unemployment. Nevertheless, Tunisia faces multiple problems, as do the push factors that compel individuals to leave their country every day. In addition, to build sustainable cooperation with Tunisia, several challenges remain in place. Among these is the authoritarian drift the country is undergoing and the numerous human rights violations against sub-Saharan migrants, which make potential agreements and funding between the EU and Tunisia controversial. Therefore, although challenges and problems are still ongoing, this initiative is a starting point for a different kind of solidarity partnership, as it breaks away from the classical European security approach and instead insists on the development dimension of migration.

3.4 Interview with the Tunisia Team, Social and Local Development Sector at the AICS

Headquarters in Tunis.

In the study of various migration and development policies and projects, it is necessary to consider the existence of a vast universe of numerous entities that interact with each other and collectively contribute to the creation and implementation of initiatives aimed at strengthening the link between migration and development. There are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that typically operate directly in the countries of origin, transit, and destination; there is the EU which funds various initiatives; there are the United Nations that carry out different types of interventions through their agencies such as IOM and UNHCR. Finally, individual states also fund projects and delegate implementation to other entities. In the example of the "Youth Empowerment Project (Phase II)," previously analysed, the initiative was funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, but it was implemented by IOM, which developed it in the field.

Therefore, to better understand the universe of migration and development projects in Tunisia, this section reports an interview conducted with the AICS (Italian Agency for Development Cooperation) team in Tunis, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, specifically with the team of experts in the social and local development area. In particular, the interview took place following a phone call with Andrea Agostinucci, head of Social and Local Development in Tunisia. During the call, projects that AICS is currently promoting and carrying out in the country were

presented. Specifically, the "My Country, My Future: Empowering Youth in Tunisia on Alternatives to Irregular Migration" project and the "MobiTRE Migration as a Resource: Mobilization of the Tunisian Diaspora and Stabilization of Disadvantaged Communities in Tunisia" initiative. These projects are of crucial importance for this thesis because they focus on the two aspects addressed during this document, namely, how to carry out initiatives that can create development in the country of origin while also providing concrete alternatives to young Tunisians at risk of irregular migration. Furthermore, the second aspect is how to transform emigration into a development opportunity for the country of origin. The second initiative, in this sense has been particularly interesting because, while the first follows a very similar pattern to "Youth Empowerment project (Phase II)" already analysed, the MobyTRE project focuses on the use of the Tunisian diaspora as an engine to create development and investments in Tunisia. After receiving information about these projects, it was decided to conduct an interview to learn about the results of these initiatives and the opinions of experts in this field. The methodology used in this interview is qualitative in nature. The aim of the talk is to gather information and insights from experts at AICS in Tunisia regarding their projects related to migration and development. In addition, the approach used in this qualitative research also involves open-ended questions to collect in-depth information about the possible evolution of the nexus in the future. The interview focuses on various aspects, including the projects being implemented, their impact on the local population, and the experts' opinions on the migration-development nexus. The responses provided by the interviewees offered valuable insights into the projects' outcomes, indicators used to measure impact, and the broader context of migration and development in Tunisia. The interview also delved into the challenges and future directions of the migration-development relationship, indicating a qualitative exploration of experts' perspectives rather than quantitative data analysis.

AICS Tunisia implements and finances various types of projects in Tunisia to promote economic, rural/local, and social development in the country. The 2022 annual report mentions several initiatives carried out by the agency, totalling 40 ongoing projects in the country.

The "**My Country, My Future: Empowering Youth in Tunisia on Alternatives to Irregular Migration**" program, in partnership with IOM, is an initiative designed to address the root causes of youth emigration and offer alternatives to irregular migration routes. The initiative specifically targets young people between the ages of 15 and 29 in the governorates of Kairouan, Monastir, Gafsa, and Tozeur, identified as priority geographical areas due to a high tendency towards

emigration. Part of the project activities, carried out in collaboration with the Tunisian Ministry of Youth and Sports, also aim to strengthen the role of social aggregation and assistance to young people in the Youth Centres (Maisons des Jeunes). During the interview, questions were asked about the main criteria and indicators used to measure the impact of this initiative on the local population, especially on young Tunisians, and what concrete results have been achieved by the project so far.

"The indicators/criteria used to measure the impact of the initiative on the local population (especially young people) and on the country's development are as follows:

- The percentage of young people enrolled in and attending the 'Maisons des Jeunes' who, after being involved in project activities, are able to develop a personal (academic) and/or entrepreneurial project.

- The percentage of young people involved who are able to identify the main factors driving them to migrate irregularly.

- The number of entrepreneurial projects to be created by young people (a total of 40 young people will be directly involved by IOM in awareness, support, and training activities).

In general, IOM estimates that 20,000 young people (residents in the project's target delegations) will benefit from the awareness activities that will be carried out during the project's implementation. Indeed, IOM plans to organize a series of debate meetings on alternatives to irregular migration, with the contribution of 'local youth influencers' who will be given the opportunity to share their own success stories. Another criterion that will be used in the evaluation phase concerns the number of new aggregation activities/spaces that will be created to stimulate neighbourhood life. Finally, the ability of local actors (operators of the Youth Centres, etc.) to support and guide young people in the development of their personal projects will be evaluated."

The second question posed to the AICS Tunis team concerns specifically Tunisian emigration. As it has been analysed in this document, that emigration from Tunisia to Europe is still a widespread phenomenon. Through the study of Tunisian migration flows, it has been mentioned several times that the Tunisian diaspora can positively influence the economic development of the country,

traditionally through remittances. In this context, AICS has funded an innovative project that actively involves the Tunisian diaspora in development actions. The initiative "**MobiTRE: Migration as a Resource: Mobilization of the Tunisian Diaspora and Stabilization of Disadvantaged Communities in Tunisia**," implemented by IOM, focuses on engaging Tunisians residing in Italy as potential investors to generate employment in Tunisia. This project has been considered a success and has led to the approval of a second phase. In this regard, the experts were asked about the concrete results achieved in the first phase. For example, how many job opportunities were created, which sectors were mainly involved, and who the main beneficiaries were. In this regard, the experts reported that *“a mapping of the Tunisian diaspora in Italy was carried out, which allowed the identification of potential investors. The Italo-Tunisian association Pontes, based in Turin, subsequently completed and published a study entitled 'Mapping of Tunisians Residing in Italy: Socioeconomic Profile and Propensity to Invest in Tunisia.’”* As for the concrete projects that have been realized, it was emphasized that *“38 investment projects were supported, involving both TRIs (Tunisians Residing in Italy) and small Tunisian entrepreneurs residing in the target regions of the initiative (Medenine, El Kef, Jendouba, and Tataouine). Another 20 entrepreneurial projects were supported, selected even among those that had not found partners among the TRIs in a previous phase, through non-repayable mini grants (up to a maximum of 30,000 Tunisian dinars)”*. In addition, in the target regions, *“4 forums were organized, one in each target region of the intervention, to promote entrepreneurship and investment by Tunisians residing abroad. The forums, organized in collaboration with the National Employment and Self-Employment Agency (ANETI), the Office of Tunisians Abroad (OTE), and the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Investments (APIA), allowed the organization of training seminars for the creation and management of start-ups for young entrepreneurs and potential new entrepreneurs, as well as the exhibition of products and services offered by the new small and medium-sized enterprises supported by the project. The events were highly successful, involving an average of 200 people each. In addition, a series of informative webinars aimed at the diaspora were organized to provide them with practical information about the possibilities and the legal framework governing investments in Tunisia. Finally, a series of trade events were organized - two Christmas fairs in Tunis (2020 and 2021), logistical support, and the preparation of stands at the craft fairs in Kram (2021 and 2022) and at Artigiano in Fiera (Milan 2021) - which allowed selected entrepreneurs to showcase their products and find new markets through wholesale orders, partnership requests, invitations to fairs, business opportunities in craftsmanship, and international marketing opportunities.”* Among the various proposed activities of the initiative, there was also a

campaign to raise awareness about irregular migration. In fact, it is reported that in this context, “an awareness campaign called 'ESSHIH' on the risks associated with irregular migration and aimed at young people was organized, in close synergy with the ARISE project (currently being implemented by IOM with funding from the DG HOME of the European Union). Specifically, through MobiTRE, support was provided for 10 mini projects carried out by Tunisian civil society actors and local institutional partners, aimed at providing information on employment and professional integration opportunities in Tunisia, possibilities for legal migration processes, and the realities experienced by irregular migrants once they arrive in Europe (exploitation, marginalization, repatriation, etc.). The sessions and workshops organized within each micro-project allowed an average of 60 young people to participate in person and 250 to connect online.”. It was also noted that ‘the Project mobilized an investment in Tunisia by the TRIs of TND 1,766,790.99, equivalent to approximately EUR 546,645.13, in various sectors, mainly textiles, services, crafts, construction, paraprofessional production, and essential oils. The employment impact as of June 2022 was 220 expected jobs (formally registered with regular contracts). However, the micro and small enterprises started thanks to MOBI-TRE have further potential in terms of jobs, which could amount to between 100 and 150 additional new jobs.”.

This part of the interview was particularly significant for the investigation. Indeed, throughout the document, the precarious condition of the Tunisian labour market and the high unemployment rates, especially among young people, has been emphasized. It has also been analysed in the course of the chapter that this precarious condition in a society, that is still developing, leads many young people to feel compelled to emigrate irregularly. Therefore, on the one hand, the need to address the root causes of migration to create alternatives to irregular immigration has been emphasized. Still, at the same time, the crucial aspect of considering the migration-development link in a broader and more sustainable perspective, not solely aimed at reducing irregular flows, has also been highlighted. Indeed, the link must be understood as a series of policies, initiatives, and projects aimed at harnessing the benefits of migration. The migration phenomenon must be seen as an opportunity and not as a threat, but to achieve this, it must be managed in such a way that it becomes a source of development for both destination, transit, and origin countries. Therefore, both the initiative funded by MAECI and these two projects demonstrate concretely how the international community, and in these three cases, Italy, is acting to meet the concrete needs of the population while simultaneously addressing the root causes of irregular immigration. However, what also emerges at the same time is that the migration-development link is still anchored to externalization and containment practices

of irregular immigration. In this regard, the AICS experts were asked about the direction future projects will take in relation to the migration-development link and what political trends are currently emerging. To this question, an extensive reflection on the main challenges that will need to be addressed and how the migration-development link should be reformed was presented. *“We believe - in line with current trends and in response to the increasing complexity of the migration phenomenon - that in the current conditions, the link between migration and development must be renewed and strengthened by integrating a series of elements.”*. First, it must be emphasized and reiterated that the migration phenomenon is constantly evolving and changing, and therefore, its management becomes more complex and challenging. *“Migration is no longer a homogeneous and unidirectional process; territories that were exclusively or predominantly the source of migration flow are now territories (also) of transit and destination. The externalization of border control and the emergence of certain countries as intermediate spaces (between origin, transit, and destination of migrations) add to the complexity of the phenomenon. The 'actors' of migration themselves constitute increasingly diverse groups (refugees, IDPs, asylum seekers, economic migrants, unaccompanied minors, minorities, etc), as do the conditions they live in and the logics that govern their choices.”*.

Regarding the migration and development initiatives, the importance of continuing projects that intervene in the development conditions in countries of origin is reiterated. However, it must also be understood that, as the migration phenomenon is changing, the various initiatives must be updated. At the core of the nexus, the crucial aspect in the country of origin is to continue to support the *“creation of opportunities for stable and decent work and universal access to quality services, through the strengthening of training offerings linked to the needs and development potential of the private sector, more efficient administrations, and more inclusive and transparent governance systems. These elements govern the integration and socioeconomic stabilization of the most vulnerable and marginalized categories in the country of origin and are essential elements to reduce young people's propensity to migrate, especially irregularly.”*. However, it is also noted that other problems are emerging, especially in countries like Tunisia, which are no longer exclusively emigration countries but also destination and transit countries and cannot manage these migration movements on their territory. *“For example, in the Tunisian context, the sensitive issue of the integration of migrants in transit is an emerging problem. On this front, initiatives should be created that are not purely containment or humanitarian assistance for migrants but that, in some way, fall within the migration-development link and, therefore, facilitate access to services and*

training and professional inclusion projects for migrants, as opportunities to stabilize groups of sub-Saharan migrants. Conversely, this category is still, at best, invisible and inaccessible to such services and support measures”. Furthermore, the experts observe that, for the proper management of migration, the general narrative of the phenomenon must also change. This shift is necessary to seize the benefits and opportunities that migration produces. *“A second aspect is linked to the very notion of migration, which cannot be interpreted and addressed exclusively as a problem and therefore negatively through processes and tools aimed at preventing it or countering its outcomes. A central theme is that of labour mobility within legal labour migration flows, which must also be interpreted from a perspective of circularity and reciprocity to avoid the simple transfer of specifically qualified labour force according to the needs of more developed countries. The latter point, in addition to being highly selective and, therefore, exclusive, also risks leading to the depletion of human capital and skills in the countries of origin and transit”.*

In conclusion, it is highlighted that the migration-development link must be understood and reformed not only as a series of projects aimed at reducing migration flows but as initiatives aimed at creating real development and transforming migration into an opportunity. To interpret migration as a positive phenomenon, the migration-development link is necessary, but to do so, this link must be reformed or at least integrated. *“The tendency to interpret migration and therefore mobility under the lens of development processes, and therefore not only as a problem but as part of the solution, also requires placing these phenomena in a context of growing integration and interdependence between local fabrics and contexts. Projects focused on vocational training and the promotion of employment and enterprise from the perspective of addressing the root causes of migration must be combined with the promotion of diversification processes and the development of sectors, social and technological innovation, energy and digital transition, the recognition and integration of skills within a framework of equal partnership between territorial systems. In this perspective, mobility can contribute to fuelling these processes, resulting in increased job opportunities and quality of life in the territories of origin of migration, which, in turn, allows the prevention and mitigation of its negative and less sustainable effects”.*

Among the main outcomes arising from this interview, certainly the indicators considered to measure the impact of migration and development initiatives and the tools used to evaluate the projects listed by the interviews has been particularly relevant. For example, it is essential to check how many people benefit from the activities, how many young people actually show enthusiasm

and participation in the proposed programmes, how much investment is actually made by Tunisians abroad, how much progress is generated, how many jobs are provided. Furthermore, the projects implemented by AICS in partnership with IOM confirm that concerning Tunisia, the most noteworthy projects revolve around involving young people in the Tunisian job market and fostering Tunisian entrepreneurship. Therefore, this interview reaffirms that one of the most significant challenges related to migration and development in the country concerns the marginalization of young people and the lack of opportunities in the country of origin, which may drive young people to migrate, even irregularly.

Additionally, from the final analysis on the nexus, it becomes evident that there is a need to renew the approach to migration and development and broaden it to encompass other aspects of the migration phenomenon. It has also been emphasized how Tunisia migratory pattern has evolved. Particularly it has been declared that the country is to not only a country of origin but also a transit country. Hence, the link should also address the integration, management, and opportunities to be provided to sub-Saharan migrants passing through Tunisia. In the forthcoming concluding section, it will be seen that despite significant improvements made by the EU and its Member States concerning the migration-development nexus, many issues persist. Notably, it will be highlighted that the securitization paradigm has not been completely overcome yet.

3.5 Shifting Paradigms: The Evolution of EU Migration Policies and the Challenge of Upholding Democratic Values

The issue of migration has always been a debated topic. In the European context, migration and asylum are shared competencies among Member States and the Union. On one hand, states aim to maintain control over their territorial sovereignty, while on the other hand, they recognize the importance of providing shared responses and jointly managing the broad challenges posed by migratory pressures. Since the 90s, migration has been “Europeanized” from a security perspective, indeed the primary needs were to protect European borders, combat human trafficking, hinder irregular immigration, and establish readmission agreements with third countries. Notably, in the early 2000s, irregular immigration was associated with terrorism, leading to the reinforcement of security-oriented approaches. However, over the years, the EU has also sought to open up to dialogue with both countries of origin and transit, especially with its neighbours, to enhance

cooperation, establishing equitable partnerships, managing challenges, and finding common solutions. Therefore, the Barcelona Process and later the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) were launched to broaden cooperation with neighbours along the Southern Mediterranean shore, to promote peace and stability in the region. Within this context, the Rabat Process (2006) aimed to create a platform for jointly addressing development and migration challenges. However, throughout this document, it has been observed that the EU has prioritised its interests over priorities of the partner countries. Therefore, it concentrated more efforts on addressing challenges such as reducing migration flows and combating irregular migration, over the creation of legal channels for migration, improving European's integration system, and strengthening the migration-development nexus. This approach has proven unsuccessful, failing to effectively contain migration flows or bring stability to the MENA partners. Regarding Southern Mediterranean countries, this failure was exacerbated by the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011. These events highlighted the ineffectiveness of EU policies and prompted a revision of the ENP, which was further revised in 2014. However, the 2015 refugee crisis and the continued fragmented management of migration illustrate that the EU is still far from adopting a sustainable and enduring approach to migration (Benjelloun, S. 2022).

Concerning Tunisia, especially after 2011, the country became a clear priority for the European Union and its Member States in the context of migration. European concerns focused on the sharp increase in migration flows following the fall of Ben Ali's regime, leading to a migration policy oriented toward border protection and limiting irregular flows. Since 2011, Tunisia began ratifying bilateral agreements on the topic of returns, known as readmission agreements, with highly involved European countries such as Italy and France. As previously mentioned, in 2012, the EU also signed the 2013-2017 Action Plan with Tunisia, which aimed to secure a Privileged Partnership and increase cooperation on economic, political, and social development. Indeed, after the fall of Ben Ali, Tunisia possessed the requirements to establish a closer relationship with Europe (De Bel-Air, F., 2016). In 2014, a Mobility Partnership between the EU and Tunisia was established. This partnership facilitated the procedure for obtaining visas for Tunisian citizens seeking to move to Europe, provided better information for Tunisian citizens about job and training opportunities in EU countries, simplified the recognition and conversion of academic and professional qualifications. Both parties committed to improving their integration systems and leveraging migration for development, including empowering the Tunisian diaspora abroad to contribute to Tunisia's development. Regarding irregular migration, negotiations for an agreement on the readmission of

irregular migrants were initiated. The EU and Tunisia pledged to intensify cooperation in preventing human trafficking and migrant smuggling while enhancing security, travel documents checks and border management (European Commission, 2014). However, this Mobility Partnership faced significant criticism from Tunisian civil society. They argued that the agreement was unfair as it primarily favoured already privileged Tunisians with educational backgrounds, while providing limited employment opportunities. Moreover, critics argued that what the EU offered was not enough in comparison to what Tunisia had to provide, including stricter border controls, cooperation with Frontex, and readmission agreements (De Bel-Air, F., 2016). It became evident that even after 2011, following the ENP's revision, the EU's new approach to migration had not substantially changed. Externalizing borders remained the EU's top priority, while for Tunisia, emigration was not as relevant as the economic, political, and social challenges. Indeed, the migration-development nexus, while frequently theorized in European conferences, is still highly instrumentalized to mask security and containment policies. While the World Bank and the United Nations view migration as a phenomenon that can bring development, the EU has often used this nexus to alleviate migratory pressure on its member states (Guidi, M., 2016), an approach that proved ineffective.

However, some changes appear to be underway. In particular, over time, the EU has shown the need to also focus on the root causes of migration and not only on security issues. It has also repeatedly emphasised the need to accompany partner countries in democratisation and development processes and to adopt more differentiated policies and a more tailored approach according to the specific needs of countries. On July 23, 2023, an international conference on migration and development was organized in Rome. The conference was strongly supported by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Tunisian President Kaïs Saïed. The event was attended by the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission, along with various representatives from Mediterranean countries and international organizations. During the conference, the shared commitment to addressing the root causes of irregular immigration, especially political, socioeconomic, and environmental factors, was renewed. The importance of establishing safe and legal migration routes and more robust efforts to combat human trafficking and smuggling was emphasized. Furthermore, the need for a more tailored approach based on each nation's specific needs was stressed. Initiatives and projects aimed at creating socioeconomic opportunities, job creation, support for local businesses in origin and transit countries were welcomed. Moreover, during the conference also emerged the necessity to reinforce and support the role of migrants and

diasporas as development actors, including through investments, skills circulation, faster and cheaper remittance transfers, and the financial inclusion of migrants. However, despite the positive step forwards, also the necessity of preventing and curbing irregular migration has been mentioned as well as the need to further strengthen border controls. This conference, which launched the so-called Rome Process, thus demonstrates, on the one hand, the will to overcome the security paradigm in favour of the migration-development nexus, on the other hand, it still remains anchored to the arguments of security and prevention of migration flows.

Despite President Saïed's expressed support for the Rome Process, to the extent that Tunisia will host the next event to ensure its continuity, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the EU and Tunisia signed on July 16, 2023, appears to resemble previous migration externalization treaties, albeit with some novelties. This agreement has been portrayed by European leaders as a departure from externalization because, unlike previous agreements, this MoU also focuses on other pillars and stresses the importance of the developmental component of migration. Indeed, other topics are addressed by the document, such as agriculture, circular economy, digital transition, air transport, and investments. The migration dossier is, however, a core part of the agreement. The MoU gives particular attention to the migration-development nexus. The EU commits to establishing regular channels for Tunisian workers to enter and ensuring greater access to research and exchange programs such as Erasmus+. However, it appears that the nexus is still being instrumentalized for containment purposes, as the Tunisian government will cooperate and facilitate returns, while the EU will finance and support Tunisian border control (Barna, L. 2023). Moreover, what is most concerning about this agreement is the sidelining of the democratic component. Throughout this document, the role of democracy and respect for human rights in migration management has been emphasized, and the thesis investigated precisely the relationship between migration, development and democracy. During the analysis, the EU's willingness to support Tunisia's democratic transition process and support the implementation of the rule of law and respect for human rights was also examined. Therefore, signing migration agreements with countries that notoriously do not respect migrants' rights is clearly controversial and problematic for the EU. While this document has only briefly mentioned the mistreatment suffered by Sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia, a more detailed examination would have revealed the serious humanitarian situation in the country. This agreement provides substantial funds to a government that is becoming undemocratic, fails to respect human rights, and, crucially, enforces discriminatory and degrading treatment against Sub-Saharan migrants. In fact, there was no shortage of criticisms

of the Memorandum, primary form humanitarian associations and NGOs, but the debate has also been intense within the European Parliament. In particular, the EU legislators criticized the EU Commission for its failure to acknowledge the increasing evidence of mistreatment of sub-Saharan migrants by Tunisian authorities, which include unlawful pushbacks, racist declarations from the President, racial attacks, and violation of fundamental rights (Gwyn Jones, M., 2023). What appears clear from this final analysis is that both the European Union and its Member States, are still in the process of completely abandoning the practice of externalizing migration. To the extent that, to protect their borders, they even come to terms with undemocratic states that do not respect human rights. Clearly, when migration agreements – which include provisions on the protection and respect of migrant rights – are signed with countries that notoriously disregard these rights, they damage the EU's reputation and credibility as a democratic bastion and champion of fundamental rights. Such agreements can reduce the EU's influence, casting doubt on its commitment to upholding these principles. However, some progress has been made especially regarding strengthening the link between migration and development. In fact, new policies have been created to promote development in the countries of origin and new tools and instruments to turn emigration into an opportunity for development. Despite challenges related to intentions, some advancements have been made as the EU and its member states are seeking to adopt a more multilateral, tailored, and inclusive approach, as evidenced by the Rome Process. Additionally, the initiatives and projects mentioned are important steps paving the way for the introduction of a new, more sustainable approach.

Conclusion

The research conducted in this document highlights the controversial nature of the connection between migration and development. The common myth that more development leads to less migration often underpins political discussions and international policies addressing migration flows. However, academic writings question the accuracy of these assumptions. Higher levels of economic and human development have been shown to be associated with overall higher levels of migration, rather than causing a reduction in migration flows, at least in the short to medium term. In other words, only after a prolonged period of sustained development does emigration begin to decrease. This discussion suggests that development cooperation can be a useful tool to pursue political stability, democratic values, economic growth, higher education, socioeconomic

opportunities, healthcare, and services in countries of origin. However, the goal of development cooperation cannot be to reduce migration overall.

Migration, development, and democracy nexus should be intended as a positive approach to the migratory phenomenon. The aim is to try to prevent forced, insecure, and irregular migration as much as possible by fostering opportunities and alternatives in countries of origin and promoting voluntary, safe, and legal forms of migration that can contribute to mutual development. This correlation should be understood as a relationship that can promote sustainable and lasting development in countries of origin, transit, and destination. In this regard, migration and development policies should not be limited to countries of origin and transit but should also concern destination countries. In fact, in countries with rigid labour markets and poor integration systems, the externalities of migration increase, while the benefits decrease. Moreover, lack of integration leads to social tensions and racism, hindering peaceful coexistence among cultures.

In the case of Tunisia, it has been observed that emigration usually has positive effects on Tunisian society, as it is related to an increase in remittances and a reduction in unemployment at home. However, analysing the current phenomenon, it has emerged that emigration from the country increasingly follows irregular paths. It has also been noted that the progressive human, economic, and political development of the country has increased migration flows from Tunisia to Europe. This trend confirms what has been previously expressed by academics, namely, that when a country begins to develop, its population is more likely to emigrate because they have higher life expectations that their home country cannot yet guarantee. In Tunisia, emigration mainly concerns young people who are completely marginalized and excluded from the Tunisian job market but are educated and aspire to better living conditions abroad. However, if emigration was once predominantly a voluntary choice in Tunisia, now, after the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, problems related to local inequalities, increasing poverty rates, and unemployment are obliging young Tunisians into forced migration. More and more often, young Tunisians embark on irregular journeys across the Mediterranean. Through conducting an interview with a young Tunisian who migrated irregularly to Italy, it was observed that he was aware of the dangers of the journey but chose to take the risk rather than live without work and in a condition of poverty. In this context, the connection between migration and development in the country must operate in a way that supports local development and aims to create concrete alternatives for young people at risk of irregular migration. The objective of these initiatives should not be solely the reduction of arrivals

but rather the genuine cooperation for development and the desire to protect young people from risky experiences, human trafficking, and all the dangers faced by migrants along the Central Mediterranean route.

Through the study of the Youth Empowerment Project Phase II, financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by IOM, it has been observed how migration and development initiatives can address both issues, namely, reducing irregular immigration and providing social and economic development in the country. The project is still in progress, but during the period under consideration, it has achieved significant results. A National Vocational Training Fair was organized, attracting more than 7,000 young Tunisians. This event led to the enrolment of 990 young people in vocational training programs and the participation of 29,355 candidates in training courses. Additionally, the project actively involved numerous local actors, Tunisian authorities, civil society organizations, vocational training institutes, schools, and the private sector. A digital database for young people was also created, allowing them easy access to information about educational and job opportunities. These numerical results reflect the success of the project in promoting youth employment and providing concrete alternatives to irregular emigration in Tunisia. The project is, therefore, an example of how migration and development policies should be oriented. Another example is provided by the activities carried out by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Tunisia. In an interview with the AICS Tunis team, an initiative aimed at involving the Tunisian diaspora in creating investments and activities in their home country was discussed. This project, called MobiTRE, has achieved several successes, leading to the initiation of a second phase. During the first phase of the initiative, significant results were achieved. A detailed mapping of the Tunisian diaspora in Italy was conducted, identifying potential investors. Furthermore, 38 investment projects were supported, involving both Tunisians in Italy and small Tunisian entrepreneurs in the target regions of the project. This resulted in an investment in Tunisia of approximately TND 1,766,790.99 (equivalent to approximately EUR 546,645.13) in various sectors. Four forums and webinars were organized to promote entrepreneurship and investments. Moreover, an awareness campaign against irregular emigration called 'ESSHIH' involved young Tunisians. Overall, the project had a significant impact on the economic development of Tunisia and the involvement of the Tunisian diaspora.

The migration-development nexus can, therefore, be interpreted as a series of initiatives and projects that intervene both in the decision to migrate, providing concrete alternatives in the country

of origin before departure, and afterward, by trying to transform emigration into development opportunities for the home country.

However, the connection still presents challenges. Firstly, as highlighted in the interview with AICS experts, migration is changing. Countries are no longer exclusively countries of origin; for example, in the case of Tunisia, the country is also an important transit country for sub-Saharan migrants trying to reach Europe. Therefore, development policies should also aim to improve the development of integration systems, providing services and opportunities for migrants as well. This step forward has not yet been fully realized, and in Europe, the connection is still used as a tool to reduce irregular arrivals. Nevertheless, compared to the past, progress has been made.

The final section of this thesis analyses how European policies have evolved, attempting to shift the paradigm from a purely security-oriented approach to one more focused on development and on addressing the root causes of migration. While many successes have been emphasized, the remaining challenges are also taken into account. In fact, despite the EU's efforts to change the paradigm, the practice of externalizing migration flows is still in place. In the context of the Tunisian case, it is emphasized that after 2011, the EU attempted to focus more on the causes of irregular immigration, increase funding for development projects, and provide support for Tunisia's democratic transition. However, from the analysis of the latest agreement signed in July 2023 between the EU and Tunisia, part of the security-oriented approach reemerges. Therefore, what is evident from this final analysis is that the EU and its Member States are still in the process of shifting paradigms, but the transition is not completed. Indeed, they still sign migration agreements with undemocratic regimes that do not respect migrants' rights to protect their borders. These agreements clearly damage the EU's reputation and credibility as a democratic bastion and champion of fundamental rights. Moreover, they also can reduce the EU's influence, casting doubt on its commitment to upholding these principles.

Finally, despite challenges stemming from intent, there have been advancements, as the EU attempts to adopt a more multilateral, tailored, and inclusive approach to migration phenomenon. At the end of this thesis, the Rome Process has been mentioned. It is a strategic, comprehensive, inclusive, multi-annual platform on collective action, launched by the Conference on Development and Migration held in Rome on 23, July 2023. The Rome process is founded on the common understanding that a committed, coherent, and comprehensive response is required to support

political stability and foster social and economic development, address the root causes of forced displacement, make a major contribution to promote legal migration, prevent and tackle irregular migration and human trafficking across the broader Mediterranean region.

Summary

In the contemporary global landscape characterized by unprecedented mobility, increasing economic disparities, and growing concerns about democracy and human rights, the Migration, Development, and Democracy Nexus emerges as a critical framework for understanding the complex dynamics of migration and its drivers. This perspective is crucial for the formulation of effective policies to address the multifaceted challenges posed by migration and development.

This thesis focuses on unravelling the intricate relationship between migration, development, and democracy in Tunisia. It seeks to explore how the country's economic and political progress influences the migration choices of its residents and identifies policies that can potentially harness migration as a catalyst for development.

Contrary to conventional belief, academic discourse suggests that higher levels of economic and human development are often associated with increased migration in the short to medium term. The decline in emigration typically occurs in the long term when a country achieves advanced development, characterized by economic prosperity, social equality, accessible education, robust healthcare, and strong democratic institutions.

The case of Tunisia provides a unique context, as it experiences political transitions and economic vulnerabilities, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Paradoxically, our research reveals that as Tunisia progresses economically and politically, migration, including irregular pathways, tends to rise. This phenomenon aligns with scholarly theories, emphasizing the role of heightened expectations and prospects as drivers of emigration in developing nations.

This thesis addresses two core questions. Firstly, it explores the factors shaping Tunisian emigration, with an emphasis on socioeconomic drivers. Secondly, it examines migration and development interventions aimed at promoting local development and offering alternatives to irregular emigration.

In this regard, the document examines the main challenges Tunisia is currently facing, outlines the typical profile of Tunisian migrants, and investigates the primary reasons for emigration. This investigation highlights that the main difficulties that influence migratory patterns are

unemployment, poverty, and inequalities. Therefore, the socioeconomic problems outweigh political concerns. Moreover, Tunisians who decide to leave their country of origin are usually young, male, and educated. They feel marginalized and excluded from both political debate and labour market. The findings are confirmed also by a qualitative interview conducted with a 30-year-old Tunisian. To answer the second research question concerning migration and development interventions, the "Youth Empowerment Project (Phase II)" is analysed, providing insights into initiatives aimed at creating employment and training opportunities for young Tunisians at risk of irregular migration. Moreover, the document includes an interview with experts from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Tunisia, offering valuable insights into migration and development projects, their impact, and the experts' perspectives on the nexus.

Finally, the thesis evaluates the evolution of European policies in addressing migration issues, shifting from a security-oriented approach to one more focused on development and addressing root causes. Despite notable achievements, challenges persist, as externalization practices remain in place. The analysis of the latest agreement between the EU and Tunisia in 2023 reveals a reemergence of security-oriented approaches, indicating that the transition is ongoing. Signing migration agreements with undemocratic regimes that neglect migrant rights to protect borders poses reputational risks for the EU, potentially diminishing its influence and raising questions about its commitment to democratic values. In conclusion, the thesis underscores that both the EU and its Member States are in the process of transitioning away from purely security-focused approaches, though this transformation is not yet complete. Progress has been made, particularly in aligning migration and development policies. Despite challenges associated with intent, these endeavours reflect a more multilateral, tailored, and inclusive approach to addressing the complexities of migration and development.

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Appendices

Interview 1

Transcript of the interview with the youth Tunisian migrant

Good morning, if you don't mind, I would like to ask you some questions for an interview as part of my thesis on Migration and Development in Tunisia. Firstly, I would like to ask you some general questions about your home country:

1. Could you tell me a bit about your home country? We've been hearing a lot lately about the political and economic crisis in Tunisia. What are the main issues that the population is experiencing? Are you concerned about a return to an authoritarian regime in your country? Or is the economic crisis the biggest worry for citizens?

“Tunisia is a safe country, but security doesn't come from wars. In Tunisia, no matter how hard you work, you end up with no money. That is not security. The right to life is a duty. In Tunisia, it's true, there's no war, but there's illness. There's poverty. You work both day and night, yet your salary is still not enough, especially if you have a family to feed. The high cost of living makes people dare to die and cross the seas. There's a saying that “if poverty were a person, I would kill it”. Poverty makes you take risks when you see yourself living in a country where even the living can't afford to buy”.

2. Are there many people in your country who would like to or decide to emigrate? If yes, are there more men or women who emigrate? Young people or adults? People who have studied or those who haven't. Why, in your opinion?

“In every era and always in the past, immigration was reserved for the young. Now the saying is the same. Only a minority of Tunisians love Tunisia because they have money, but the great majority live in miserable conditions there. Those who have completed their studies and excelled decided to emigrate, because even if they have brilliant grades, if they have no money, who pays the bills? Several students search job for 5 to 10 years until they forget what they studied. Additionally, life forces them to work in a different field than their studies, and these things have become apparent to the point that young people now know their fate when they finish their studies. Europe

is difficult, but it grants rights to the oppressed and is gentle to children. It gives workers' rights, which is why people risk their lives".

3. So, in your opinion, what are the main reasons for emigration in your country? Generally, what do people who emigrate expect?

"The reason for emigration is solely to improve living conditions, so the main reasons are socioeconomic, rather than political. Usually, Tunisians go to Europe because within the EU territories every person has a right to life. On the contrary, in Tunisia it has become impossible for young people to build a house or even get married. Therefore, under these conditions, in Tunisia there is no protection for the right to life, to have a home and a family. You can't find your rights. Conversely, emigration lead a decent life, and nothing more".

4. In your opinion, what are the areas in which we should cooperate more on with Tunisia to offer and create better socio-economic opportunities to young people and the population in general?

"This is not possible as long as corruption is internal, even if you cooperate to reform and help Tunisia, corruption is inside. This means that if funds arrive, they are mismanaged. Moreover, Tunisia's wealth goes abroad to France while its population continues to suffer or emigrate. If Tunisia's wealth stays internal, its people will be better off, but whoever governs it will sell it. I think there will always be a colonizer as long as all the wealth leaves the country, and the people suffer. Honestly, I think Tunisia will never become a developed country, except through its own wealth".

Now, I would like to ask you about your personal experience:

5. What level of education/professional experience did you acquire in Tunisia?

"I studied, I have a second level education, but then I decided to leave my studies and not go to university. I was then employed in the Tunisian tourism sector. In particular I worked in a nightclub where the pay was miserable, and I had to work both night and day".

6. At what age did you decide to leave your home country?

“At the age of 30. I decided to leave my country of origin to try to improve my living conditions and look for a better job in Europe”.

7. Can you tell me about your experience as a migrant? How did you arrive in Italy? What difficulties did you encounter during your journey?

“The difficulties are when you board a small boat with many people, you leave at night, you walk in the water, you can't move your feet, you face death every second, you could drown, you think of your mother, your father, your sisters, your youth, and at the same time, you always remember God in a journey called the “journey of death”, either arrival or death. That's migration, and that's what I experienced. My mother was always in my eyes. Honestly, all I have in life is my mother. I would die for her. It doesn't matter”.

8. Before you left for Europe, were you informed about the type of journey you were going to undertake by the central Mediterranean route? or did you underestimate its danger?

“Yes, I was aware of it before I left. I knew that the name given to that route was 'the journey of death'. but by then I had decided to take it.”

9. One last question before I let you go. Did you find it easy to integrate into Italy?

“I love Italy and the Italians very much, but I didn't find anyone to support me or help me find work or accommodation there. I decided to go to France to search, because the winter season is tough in Europe, and I don't want the cold to kill me. But if there's a country I love after my own, it's Italy, but I haven't had the chance there. There, I honestly got tired, and now I'm 30 years old. I know that life won't be easy at first, but I've chosen to face it, no matter the circumstances. I will face it with all my heart. Well, God won't truly forsake us”.

Interview 2

Transcript of the Interview with the AICS team in Tunisia.

*To be noted, the interview took place after a phone call in which Dr. Agostinucci had outlined the projects that were taking place in Tunisia. So, the interview consisted of two targeted questions on the projects, and an open question on future visions on the migration-development nexus.

1. AICS Tunisia implements and finances various projects in Tunisia aimed at promoting economic, rural/local, and social development in the country. The 2022 Annual Report mentions several initiatives carried out by the agency, totalling 40 ongoing projects in the country. The program "**My Country, My Future: Empowering Tunisian Youth on Alternatives to Irregular Migration,**" in partnership with IOM, is an initiative designed to address the root causes of youth emigration and provide alternatives to irregular migration routes. What criteria/indicators are used to measure the impact of the initiative on the local population (especially youth) and on the country's development? What concrete results have been achieved so far by the initiative?

"The criteria/indicators used to measure the impact of the initiative on the local population (especially youth) and on the country's development are as follows:

- Percentage of youth enrolled/attending the "Maisons des Jeunes" who, after participating in project activities, are able to develop a personal (academic) and/or entrepreneurial project.*
- Percentage of involved youth who can identify the main factors driving them to migrate irregularly.*
- Number of entrepreneurial projects to be created by young people (a total of 40 young people directly involved by IOM in awareness, mentoring, and training activities).*

In general, IOM estimates that 20,000 young people (residents in the project's target delegations) will benefit from the awareness activities conducted during the project's implementation. Specifically, IOM plans to organize a series of debate meetings on alternatives to irregular migration with the contribution of "local youth influencers" who will have the opportunity to share

their success stories. Another criterion used in the evaluation is the number of new aggregation activities/spaces created to stimulate neighbourhood life. Finally, the ability of local actors (operators of Maisons de Jeunes, etc.) to support and guide young people in the development of their personal projects will also be assessed.”

2. In Tunisia, emigration to Europe is still a widespread phenomenon. Through the study of Tunisian migration flows, it has been observed how the Tunisian diaspora can positively influence the country's economic development, traditionally through remittances. In this context, AICS has funded an innovative project actively involving the Tunisian diaspora in development actions. The initiative "**MobiTRE: Migration as a Resource: Mobilizing the Tunisian Diaspora and Stabilizing Disadvantaged Communities in Tunisia**," implemented by IOM, focuses on engaging Tunisians residing in Italy as potential investors to generate employment in Tunisia. This project has been considered a success and has led to the approval of a second phase. What concrete results have been achieved in the first phase of the project (e.g., how many job opportunities have been created, which sectors have been primarily involved, who were the main beneficiaries)?

“During the first phase of the project, the following concrete results were achieved:

- A mapping of the Tunisian diaspora in Italy was conducted to identify potential investors. The Italo-Tunisian association Pontes, based in Turin, subsequently completed and published a study titled "Cartography of Tunisians Residing in Italy: Socioeconomic Profile and Propensity for Investment in Tunisia.”

- Thirty-eight investment projects were supported, involving Tunisians residing in Italy (TRI) and small Tunisian entrepreneurs in the target regions of the initiative. All these projects were registered with the national trade register as new business entities.

- Twenty entrepreneurial projects were supported, selected from those that had not found partners among the TRI in a previous phase. These projects received non-repayable grants (up to a maximum of 30,000 Tunisian dinars).

- Four forums were organized, one in each of the target regions of the intervention (Medenine, El Kef, Jendouba, and Tataouine), to promote entrepreneurship and investment by Tunisians residing

abroad. These forums, organized in collaboration with the National Employment and Self-Employment Agency (ANETI), the Office of Tunisians Abroad (OTE), and the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Investments (APIA), included training seminars for the creation and management of start-ups for young entrepreneurs and potential new entrepreneurs. The events were highly successful, involving an average of 200 people each.

- A series of informational webinars targeting the diaspora were organized to provide practical information on investment opportunities in Tunisia and the legal framework governing investments.

- Beneficiaries were supported in participating in various trade events, including two Christmas fairs in Tunis (2020 and 2021), logistical assistance and booth preparation at craft fairs in Kram (2021 and 2022), and participation in Artigiano in Fiera (Milan 2021). These events allowed selected entrepreneurs to showcase their products and explore new markets through bulk orders, partnership opportunities, invitations to trade fairs, opportunities in the craft sector, and international marketing opportunities.

- An awareness campaign called "ESSHIH" on the risks of irregular migration was organized, targeting young people, in close synergy with the ARISE project (currently being implemented by IOM with funding from the EU's DG HOME). Through MobiTRE, support was provided for 10 micro-projects carried out by Tunisian civil society actors and local institutional partners. These projects aimed to provide information on employment opportunities and professional integration in Tunisia, legal migration processes, and the experiences of irregular migrants upon arrival in Europe (exploitation, marginalization, repatriation, etc.). The sessions and workshops organized within each micro-project engaged an average of 60 young people in person and 250 online.

- A 'Guide for Investors in Tunisia' was developed for Tunisians residing abroad, and training was provided to public service agents involved in investment in the target regions.

- An official launch ceremony for the guide took place on October 15 with a hybrid event (in-person and online) in Milan.

It is worth noting that:

- *The project mobilized an investment in Tunisia of 1,766,790.99 TND, equivalent to approximately 546,645.13 EUR, in various sectors, primarily textiles, services, craftsmanship, construction, para-pharmaceutical production, and essential oils.*
- *As of June 2022, the project is expected to generate 220 formal job opportunities. The micro and small businesses established through MOBI-TRE have the potential to create an additional 100 to 150 new jobs.”.*

3. Within the Memorandum of Understanding 2021-2023, the issue of migration was addressed in relation to the funding of packages of initiatives dedicated to tackling the root causes of migration. In your opinion, in which direction will future projects regarding the migration-development nexus move? What trends are currently emerging?

“We believe, in line with ongoing trends and in response to the increasing complexity of the migration phenomenon, that the nexus between migration and development must evolve and strengthen by integrating a range of elements. Migration is no longer a homogeneous and unidirectional process; territories that were exclusively or predominantly the origin of migration flows are now also transit and destination areas (the example of Morocco is significant in this regard). The externalization of border control and the emergence of various countries and territories as intermediate spaces (between the origin, transit, and destination of migration flows) that are difficult to manage add to the complexity of the phenomenon. The same 'actors' in migration constitute increasingly diverse groups (refugees, IDPs, asylum seekers, economic migrants, unaccompanied minors, minorities), as do the conditions they live in and the rationales guiding their choices. At its core remains the inescapable link between creating stable and decent employment opportunities and universal access to quality services. This includes strengthening training offerings aligned with the needs and development potential of the private sector, more efficient administrations, and more inclusive and transparent governance systems. These elements underpin the socioeconomic integration and stabilization of the most vulnerable and at-risk groups and are essential to reducing the propensity of young people to emigrate. In this regard, there is a sensitive issue in the Tunisian context, related to the integration of migrants in transit through

measures to combat migration that go beyond purely containment or humanitarian assistance and protection (such as facilitating access to services and vocational inclusion projects as opportunities for stabilizing groups of Sub-Saharan migrants who are, in the best cases, invisible and unreachable by such services and support measures).

A second aspect is linked to the very notion of migration, which should not be interpreted and addressed exclusively as a problem but as part of the solution. Central to this is the mobility of labour within legal labour migration flows, which should also be seen in terms of circularity and reciprocity to avoid simply transferring highly skilled labour according to the needs of more developed countries' labour markets. This approach risks being highly selective and elite-driven, leading to the depletion of human capital and skill sets in the countries of origin and transit. The so-called 'talent partnerships' promoted by the EU fall within this framework and, at least in theory (though it appears that many member states proceed quite casually to train and import qualified labour according to the demands of their respective labour markets), involve supporting processes of circular and integrated mobility through a range of measures complementary to individual youth mobility that have repercussions on the productive fabric of the origin countries. For example, the promotion of investments and support for entrepreneurial projects, including partnerships between the diaspora representatives, technological and commercial partnerships between businesses, technical partnerships between research centres and institutes, universities, and training centres. The trend toward interpreting migration, and thus mobility, in the context of development processes—seeing it not only as a problem but as part of the solution—requires placing these phenomena within a framework of increasing integration and interdependence between local contexts and territories. In this sense, 'local development,' beyond the apparent contradiction between the terms, is the key to sustainable mobility, which, in turn, can change the paradigm of the migration-development nexus. Projects focused on vocational training and the promotion of employment and entrepreneurship, in the context of combating the root causes of migration, must be associated with processes of diversification and the development of value chains, social and technological innovation, energy and digital transition, and the recognition and integration of skills within a framework of equal partnerships between territorial systems. In this perspective, mobility can contribute to fuelling these processes, resulting in increased job opportunities and improved quality of life in the countries of origin of migration, thereby preventing and mitigating its negative and less sustainable effects.”