

Migration and the Clash of Values: Exploring Barriers to Integration and Paths to Harmony

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Abstract:

Emigration is a persistent human phenomenon, influenced by social, political, and economic factors. It can be formal, through legal frameworks, or irregular, such as "harraga" in Maghreb societies, where migrants seek better opportunities in Europe. Irregular emigration is rising, and its implications go beyond emigration factors to cultural differences. Maghreb migrants often carry Islamic values and local languages, which can create challenges in Europe, particularly with concerns like Islamophobia and integration issues due to language barriers.

Despite these challenges, migrants contribute to Europe's economy. Efforts toward cultural integration and harmony are crucial, as migrants bring valuable cultural diversity that benefits both their communities and European societies.

Keywords: *Irregular emigration; Clash of values; Collective identity; Cultural integration.*

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- INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, emigration has been a means for individuals to achieve self-fulfillment. History recounts how emigration served as a refuge for many prophets, geniuses, thinkers, and creators to express their ideas, values, and projects. With the evolution of societies and the emergence of laws regulating emigration, frameworks were established to organize the movement of migrants between countries. Violators of these laws now face penalties, including deportation to their home countries. However, such regulations have not deterred many individuals from migrating irregularly when formal emigration becomes unattainable.

The phenomenon of emigration has garnered increasing attention due to its economic, social, political, and cultural impacts on both the origin and destination countries. The Maghreb region—comprising Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco—is a significant source of irregular migrants. This is attributed to the predominance of youth in these countries, who seek environments conducive to achieving their goals, often viewing European countries as the ideal setting for this pursuit.

A combination of social, political, and economic factors has compelled many migrants to consider irregular emigration. This trend has extended beyond individuals to entire families, risking their lives and those of their children by boarding "death boats" in pursuit of better living conditions. Despite the security measures adopted by European countries, the flow of migrants continues unabated, if not on the rise. A testament to this is that the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior revealed the foiling of illegal migration attempts by 45,015 individuals to Europe since the beginning of 2024 ¹

While most studies focus on state efforts to curb irregular emigration, this paper seeks to explore the consequences of emigration by emphasizing its cultural dimensions. Migrants represent a cultural entity, carrying a set of values and behaviors reflective of their identities. Upon reaching European countries, North African migrants face not only administrative and legal challenges but also cultural

ones. They find themselves in a society whose cultural and social peculiarities differ significantly from their own, leading to difficulties in integration within European societies.

Many European officials declare that irregular migrants pose a threat to national security. However, implicitly or covertly, these migrants are employed in various sectors, constituting a labor force that contributes to the economies of aging European countries suffering from a lack of human resources. Nevertheless, most migrants work without insurance or legal protections. Furthermore, European politicians frequently express concerns over the spread of Islam, driven by the growing number of Muslims in Europe. For instance, Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch right-wing Freedom Party, has warned of the risks Islam poses to Europe due to the increasing Muslim population. He advocates for preventive measures, stating: "Those who reject European laws, values, and constitutions should be expelled, even if it requires stripping them of their new European citizenship." This is a formal declaration of hostility toward anyone who deviates from European social and cultural norms or does not recognize cultural identities different from their own. He was prosecuted on charges of committing hate speech and discrimination for describing Islam as a 'fascist ideology' in 2007, and for calling for the banning of Koreans' entry and the deportation of 'criminal Moroccans,' but he was acquitted of those charges in June 2011²

Language also represents another cultural barrier, impeding migrants' integration into European societies. Europe imposes its official languages—French in France, German in Germany, Italian in Italy—while the original languages of migrants are deemed intrusive and unrecognized. This has led many migrants to adopt hybrid dialects that blend their native languages with official European languages, particularly in suburbs with high migrant populations. These dialects have become a means of expressing their struggles and concerns, particularly through rap music, which European radio stations often refuse to broadcast, citing its deviation from official language norms.

Faced with these cultural challenges, migrants encounter significant obstacles to their integration within European societies, exacerbating their experiences of racism and discrimination. Consequently, some moderate voices in Europe call for a pragmatic approach to addressing the migrant issue—balancing respect for their rights with optimizing their contributions to the economies of European countries.

This paper raises the following key questions:

- Are there genuine efforts by European countries to facilitate the integration of migrants into their societies?
- What cultural manifestations reflect the integration challenges faced by Maghreb migrants, in particular?

We seek to answer these questions by first addressing the concept of migration and its drivers within the framework of economic, political, and environmental factors. We then explore the challenges of migrant integration and the means to achieve reconciliation, adaptation, and successful integration into the new environment.

1. The Concept of emigration

1.1 In Arabic

The term "migration" in Arabic is derived from the verb *hajara*, which means "to distance oneself." The word hājara means "to leave one's homeland and move to another place." According to Lisan al-Arab, emigration is the opposite of connection (wasl). It is said, hajartu al-shay' hajran, meaning "I abandoned it and ignored it." emigration refers to moving from one land to another. Originally, among Arabs, emigration meant the departure of a Bedouin from the desert to cities. Historically, Arabs did not recognize political borders as we do today, but this did not mean the absence of a concept of homeland. To them, a homeland referred to the place where one lived with their tribe³.

Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi pointed to this meaning when he said:

"They migrated: meaning they left their homelands and tribes. The

origin of the term comes from *hajr* (abandonment), which is the opposite of connection (*wasl*). From this comes the term *hujr* (abusive speech), as it is something that ought to be avoided. The term *hajir* refers to the time when work is abandoned. *emigration* (*muhajara*) is mutual abandonment, and it may also mean that loved ones and relatives abandoned the person because of this religion, and he, in turn, abandoned them for the same reason, thus constituting mutual emigration."

The term *hijra* also appears in the The Holy Qur'an, as in:

"Indeed, I will migrate to my Lord"⁴ [Al-'Ankabut: 26]. "And whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many [alternative] locations and abundance. And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him, his reward has already been secured with Allah. And Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful"⁵ [An-Nisa: 100].

The concept also appears in other contexts, often referring to spiritual emigration toward Allah, aiming to seek His pleasure and turn to Him in devotion⁶.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also commanded his companions to migrate to Abyssinia to escape oppression and injustice.

1.2 In English:

In English, the concept is expressed through the following terms:

- *Immigrate* (v), *immigrant* (n), *immigration* (n): Refers to individuals who come to a foreign country intending to make it their permanent residence.
- *Migrate* (v), *migrant* (n), *emigration* (n), *transmigration*: Refers to individuals who move from one country or place to another periodically, seasonally, or for work purposes.

The distinction between the two terms lies in their implication:

- *emigration* does not necessarily imply permanent settlement; it may be temporary or seasonal.
- *Immigration* typically refers to permanent residence.

However, some scholars argue that *migration* encompasses all forms of movement within the borders of a single country. If emigration crosses national boundaries, it is termed:

- Emigration: Referring to outward or external emigration from a country.
- Immigration: Referring to inward emigration to a country from abroad⁷.

1.3 In French:

According to Webster's New Dictionary, the meanings of the verb "to migrate" (Migrate) are:

- Moving from one place to another, especially from a country or region of residence to another place for the purpose of living there⁸.
- It also refers to periodic movement from one region to another. This simplified explanation paves the way for a better understanding of illegal migration.

2. The Concept of Illegal emigration

Interest in the phenomenon of illegal emigration has grown alongside its continuous increase, despite the fact that it is not a recent phenomenon as some may believe. Rather, it has deep roots in human history. Many European countries that now advocate for the prevention of illegal emigration were, at a certain historical stage, colonial powers practicing forced displacement of the indigenous population, as in Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia. This was for the purpose of providing labor for mines and other harsh working conditions.

Although no precise definitions of illegal (or secret) emigration exist, some organizations concerned with the phenomenon have provided definitions.

The International Labour Office (ILO) defines an illegal migrant as: "Any person who enters, resides, or works outside their home country without possessing the necessary legal permits, and is thus considered an illegal, secret, undocumented, or irregular migrant."

The European Commission defines illegal emigration as:

- Any entry into the territory of a member state by land, sea, or air in an unlawful manner, using forged documents or with the assistance of organized crime networks.
- Legal entry into the European area (European Union) with a visa granted by the authorities, followed by overstaying the permitted duration or changing the purpose of the visit without the approval of the authorities.
- Asylum seekers whose applications are rejected but who remain in the country.⁹

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines clandestine emigration as:

Migration that occurs when migrants violate the conditions stipulated by international agreements and national laws. This category includes:

- Individuals who cross borders illegally, evading established controls.
- Individuals granted work permits under a contract but who violate this contract by engaging in unauthorized work or work punishable under local laws.
- Individuals who enter a country legally with a residence permit but overstay their authorized duration, thereby becoming irregular residents¹⁰.

The definitions provided by organizations and international bodies emphasize the legal aspects governing emigration processes. Any deviation from these rules constitutes a violation of immigration laws and renders the emigration illegal (or clandestine).

3. The Motivations for emigration

emigration is driven by several factors, often serving as its primary motivators. These factors can be summarized as follows:

3.1 Economic Factors:

Several economic elements act as push factors that drive migrants to flow toward Europe. These include unemployment, limited job opportunities, low wages, poor living standards, and the demand for labor in host countries. Additionally, the wide economic disparity

between the impoverished Global South and the affluent Global North, exacerbated by the effects of economic globalization, creates economic crises that are closely linked to deteriorating social conditions.

These crises lead to a lack of social stability, prompting individuals to pursue illegal emigration driven by the dream of social success and the quest for the social status they lack in their home countries. Migrants often aim to achieve personal ambitions and improve their social well-being.

3.2 Political Factors

Political conditions are among the most significant contributors to emigration. Many migrants originate from countries with authoritarian regimes that violate human rights, lack democracy, and restrict political freedom. In such environments, individuals experience political deprivation, fostering a general sense of psychological and social instability.

Deprived of political security, these individuals seek safe havens that offer dignity and freedom of expression. Furthermore, widespread political corruption in various forms is a significant factor pushing migrants to leave their homelands.

In this context, former Spanish Prime Minister “**Felipe González**” once remarked, “If I were a young Maghrebian, I would try to migrate, and if they caught me, I would try again.” This statement reflects European politicians’ awareness of the difficult conditions faced by North African youth, even though European policies of economic exploitation and continued resource plundering in the Maghreb contribute to perpetuating these conditions¹¹.

3.3 Environmental Factors

Natural or environmental geographic factors also play a significant role in increasing emigration rates. Harsh climatic conditions, such as extreme heat, drought, and natural disasters, create push factors for populations. Additionally, geographic proximity, particularly between Maghreb countries and Europe, and historical factors such as colonial

presence, have facilitated emigration flows toward European countries.

Geographical factors, therefore, play a substantial role in driving individuals to leave their homelands, fleeing harsh conditions. This has led to an increase in illegal emigration rates¹².

In developing countries, high fertility rates combined with declining child mortality rates result in youthful demographic structures. In contrast, receiving countries often experience lower fertility rates. For instance, in 1993, Italy's fertility rate was 1.3 children per woman, while Germany's was 1.4 children per woman. Consequently, migrants represent a valuable human resource for aging European nations.

Final Thoughts:

While these are some of the primary factors driving emigration to European countries, it raises questions about the integration of these migrants, particularly those from North African countries. Have the host countries provided a conducive environment for the integration of these migrants, or have they hindered them, leading to feelings of alienation that eventually evolved into hostility?

Therefore, we will examine below the main factors that hinder the integration process and deepen the polarization and marginalization experienced by migrants¹³.

4. Challenges of Migrant Integration in European Countries

Migrants—especially those from Maghreb countries—encounter numerous obstacles to integrating into European societies. These challenges often manifest as value conflicts, given that migrants come from cultural and moral *frameworks* significantly different from those in Europe. These integration challenges, deeply rooted in cultural and civilizational differences, can be summarized as follows:

4.1 Fear of Islamization (Islamophobia):

The commitment of many migrants to Islamic values through practices such as prayer, fasting, and wearing the hijab has caused concern in many European countries, particularly in France. France

hosts a significant population of Maghreb migrants and has the largest Muslim population in Europe, estimated at around 5 million people, most of whom originate from North Africa.

According to a 2015 report by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), 462,000 Algerian migrants resided in Paris, making them the largest foreign group in France, which has a total of 1.1 million Algerian expatriates¹⁴.

This demographic reality has led to restrictive laws limiting migrants' religious freedom, such as the ban on wearing hijabs in schools and public institutions. Consequently, Muslim migrants have shown increased interest in establishing private Islamic schools, particularly after the passage of the 2014 French law requiring girls to remove their headscarves in public schools. Analysts attribute this trend to the emergence of a new generation of educated, middle-class French Muslims seeking religiously aligned education for their children alongside the standard curriculum.

A 2015 survey revealed that 47% of French respondents doubted Islam's compatibility with republican values, compared to 71% for Catholicism and 83% for Judaism¹⁵. Laws such as the 2004 ban on "visible religious symbols" and the 2010 ban on "covering the face" have further marginalized Muslim migrants. When Muslims attempt to raise awareness of these issues, they are often accused of sectarianism and prioritizing their religious identity over their citizenship¹⁶.

This persistent European apprehension toward Islam and Muslims has fostered feelings of isolation among Muslim migrants. Incidents such as Quran burnings and the *Charlie Hebdo* controversy have further alienated Muslim migrants, fueling fears of losing a core element of their identity—Islam. This has led many migrants to withdraw from active social participation, preferring to reside in suburban areas, which has, in turn, nurtured a "suburban culture"¹⁷ implicitly resisting the official culture of host countries.

4.2 Language Barriers

Language poses a significant challenge to migrant integration, as most

European countries enforce their official languages as the sole means of communication and do not recognize other languages. For young migrants, language is a central component of their identity, and they often resist abandoning it as part of their cultural heritage.

Culture and identity are inherently diverse. However, many European nations, including France, often prioritize their dominant culture, rejecting and marginalizing alternative cultural expressions. Researchers like Georges Devereux and sociologist Hugues Lagrange have criticized this cultural centralism, viewing it as a form of symbolic violence¹⁸.

This cultural marginalization explains why migrants often resort to alternative dialects, such as *le verlan*, a reversed form of French slang initially used by criminals. Today, *le verlan* has become a social and linguistic phenomenon among migrant youth. While its simplicity and rule-breaking appeal resonate with young migrants, French authorities view it as a threat to linguistic norms and dismiss it as illegitimate.

The widespread use of *le verlan* highlights the exclusion and alienation experienced by migrant youth, as they seek spaces within the French cultural fabric that fails to accommodate them.¹⁹

4.3 Cultural Exclusion and Symbolic Violence

French society's cultural structures, rooted in colonial hierarchies of cultural superiority, perpetuate symbolic violence against migrants. This cultural exclusion is reinforced by political and ideological campaigns opposing migrants and foreigners. These dynamics have led to increasing social isolation, urban segregation, and stigmatization, triggering unrest, urban violence, and youth radicalization in impoverished neighborhoods with high migrant populations.

Sociologist Hugues Lagrange attributes these tensions to social and familial struggles, identity conflicts between older and younger generations, and the stigmatization of migrant youth within French society. These factors create fertile ground for ideological, political, and religious extremism.

Emigration has become a profoundly cultural issue, marked by an ethnic struggle between the values and systems of migrants and those of the host society. This conflict is politically and ideologically fueled, turning emigration into a project fraught with psychological and social failures. These failures stem from the systematic exclusion and marginalization experienced by migrants, leading to widespread dissatisfaction and disillusionment²⁰.

Thus, it becomes necessary to explore ways and methods of integration to mitigate the harm caused by this cultural rejection. We will also highlight such efforts, which have often been initiated by the host societies receiving the migrant groups, and therefore tend to primarily serve their own interests.

5. Pathways to Reconciliation

Despite efforts by European countries, particularly France, to integrate Muslim migrants across generations as citizens with full political and social rights, these countries often fall short in adhering to certain agreements that emphasize minority rights, especially when these agreements are precise and restrictive. As a result, many such agreements remain unsigned, or reservations are applied to them. Moreover, these countries rely on migrants to maintain the balance of their economies.²¹

5.1 Respect for Cultural Pluralism

The emergence of the concept of cultural pluralism in contemporary times is no coincidence but rather a pressing necessity imposed by significant social and political transformations, the escalation of violence, and violations of human rights. Liberal democracies were pioneers in adopting this concept, which later evolved into a political theory with dedicated advocates.

The term “cultural pluralism” gained prominence alongside increasing awareness of the unintended social and cultural consequences of large-scale emigration. First introduced by the

Canadian Royal Commission in 1965, the concept has received widespread support as both a progressive political framework and an article of faith. It is intrinsically tied to the values of equality, tolerance, and openness toward migrants of diverse ethnic backgrounds.²²

Cultural pluralism represents a social doctrine that serves as a positive alternative to assimilation policies. It affirms the rights of citizens and the cultural identities of minority ethnic groups, while more broadly, it highlights the value of cultural diversity.

5. 2 Recognition of the Other's Culture

Migrants are essential partners in development within host countries. Therefore, recognizing their cultures and respecting their uniqueness is vital for sustaining social partnerships.

The "culture of recognition," conceptualized by German philosopher Axel Honneth—representing the third generation of the Frankfurt School—has created a new form of human presence within the modern state. This concept ensures political representation supported by liberal freedoms for cultural groups that experience exclusion and underrepresentation in public spaces.

Recognition policies aim to bring the cultural specificities of civil society groups into the public sphere while compelling the state to acknowledge the cultural identities of its diverse groups. Cultural pluralism is thus linked to citizenship, as it becomes a critical component in recognizing different cultures to foster citizenship values among these groups. Additionally, it aligns with the notion that identity is an integral part of individual freedom, which can only be expressed within a cultural community.

5. 3 Valuing Migrants' Economic Contributions

In a conference titled *"Is emigration Beneficial for Everyone in Europe?"* IMF First Deputy Managing Director David Lipton highlighted the economic implications of emigration. He stated:

"We face a similar dilemma posed by emigration, a pressing issue in Europe with the ongoing debates surrounding emigration flows from Eastern Europe and the recent influx from the Middle East and Africa, including a significant number of refugees. While politics and science often diverge on the subject, economists generally agree on the benefits of emigration, despite public skepticism. emigration has clear economic advantages, though public perception is often influenced by cultural fears, crime, and threats to national identity."²³

He proposed three potential explanations for the public's reaction:

1. The perceived economic benefits of emigration might be less valued due to concerns over social and cultural changes accompanying emigration.
2. The public may lack awareness of the real economic advantages proven by economists.
3. Economists may not have fully captured all relevant aspects of emigration's impact.

Surveys on emigration reveal that public fears often revolve around crime and threats to cultural or national identity, reflecting a deep sense of insecurity. Economists and policymakers must not underestimate these concerns. While integrating such perceptions into economic analyses is challenging, acknowledging and addressing them is imperative.

To foster harmony between migrants and host societies, it is essential to embrace cultural pluralism, recognize the cultural identities of migrants, and value their economic contributions. Only through mutual respect, understanding, and constructive policies can both sides overcome existing tensions and build a more inclusive and equitable society.²⁴

CONCLUSION

The issue of integration versus independence is no longer a concern exclusive to migrants but has become a political challenge that troubles all Western governments hosting tens of thousands of

foreigners. The integration of migrants into Western societies faces several obstacles, including language barriers, differing education and employment systems, distinct political systems, and cultural differences.

The social repercussions of emigration in Europe vary significantly from one country to another, depending on the policies adopted toward migrants in general and irregular migrants in particular. There are multiple approaches to dealing with migrant issues within European communities. It is also crucial to emphasize that the concept of integration is not limited to migrants who have obtained European citizenship; rather, it encompasses all migrants, including those who arrived through irregular emigration.

One of the defining characteristics of the most recent generation of migrants, compared to previous generations, is their detachment from ideological differences, religious conflicts, and sectarian disputes. More importantly, this generation is often indifferent to their native language—the language of their parents and grandparents—due to their lack of familiarity with their ancestral culture in the first place.

This new reality presents a distinct scenario for the younger generation of migrants: they have fully integrated into the societies where they were born, with no significant means of connection to their parents' and ancestors' culture and heritage, as they never truly experienced or learned it.

The third generation in some European countries, and the fourth in others, is among the most responsive to the culture of their European societies. However, exceptions remain, such as the young Maghrebi population, which can be attributed to the significant presence of Moroccan communities in France. This demographic has become an integral part of French society while still preserving certain unique cultural attributes.

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- ² Al Jazeera Encyclopedia (Accessed on 26/03/2025 at 12:09 PM).
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- ⁶ Robinson, P. (2009). *Qamus al-amm al-dawli* (Translated Studies). United Arab Emirates: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research.
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- ⁷ بلال. Qarīb, Bilāl. (2010). *al-Siyāsah al-amniyyah lil-Ittihād al-Ūrubbī min manzūr aqṭābih: al-taḥaddiyāt wa-al-rahānāt* (Master's thesis, Jāmi'at al-Ḥāj Lakhḍar Bātnah, Department of Political Science), p. 4.
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- ⁹ Rziq Al-Mukhadhami, A. Q. (2012). *Al-hijra al-sirriyawa al-luju' al-siyasi* (1st ed.). Algeria: University Publications Office.P15
- ¹⁰ Salam, A. R. (2010). *Al-akhtar al-dahirawa al-kamina 'ala al-amm al-watanilil-hijraghayr al-mashru'a*, Mukafahat al-hijraghayr al-mashru'a. p.101
- ¹¹ Idem..ص 55
- ¹² Jalabi, A. (2003). 'Ilm ijtimā' al-sukkān [Sociology of Population]. 'Ammān: Dār al-Masīrah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī' wa-al-Ṭibā'ah. (p. 5)
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- ¹⁵ Al-Asqar, A. A. (2010). *Al-hijrah ghayr al-mashrū'ah: Al-intishār wa-al-ashkāl* [Illegal Migration: Spread and Forms]. Riyadh: Jam'at Nāyif al-'Arabīyah li-al-'Ulūm al-Amniyyah. (pp. 9-11)
- ¹⁶ Salam, A. R. (2010). *Al-akhtar al-dahirawa al-kamina 'ala al-amm al-watanilil-hijraghayr al-mashru'a*, Mukafahat al-hijraghayr al-mashru'a. P 9
- ¹⁷ We see this culture as the social, artistic, and political culture that emerges in suburbs primarily inhabited by immigrants or the children of immigrants. It is not merely a miniature version of their original homeland's culture, nor of the local national culture; rather, it is an entirely new hybrid culture, formed under the influences of displacement, exclusion, and the struggle for recognition.
- ¹⁸ Symbolic violence against migrants is a subtle and seemingly non-violent method used by states to impose social and political exclusion upon them, without resorting to physical coercion. It leads migrants to experience marginalization as if it were a "natural reality" or "their personal responsibility." In other words, it is an indirect and invisible form of violence exercised through language, laws, policies, and social customs, whereby a type of control or

exclusion is enforced upon a particular group without the use of explicit physical force.

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