

Analyzing the Multidimensional Non-traditional Security Challenges in North Africa and Regional Implication

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Analyzing the Multidimensional Non-traditional Security Challenges in North Africa and Regional Implication

Ramzi Bendebka¹

Abstract

The non-traditional security challenges in North Africa have experienced significant changes in recent years. In addition to conventional military issues, the region has experienced many problems, such as drug trafficking, illegal immigration movements, smuggling, the Arab Spring, and the consequences of the global 'War on Terror' launched after the events of 9/11. Most research on North African security concentrates on threats within the traditional paradigms of military matters and terrorism. Nevertheless, this paper considers the overall parameters of an expanded North African regional non-traditional security. It focuses on four specific issues: illegal immigration movement, water scarcity, drug trafficking, and smuggling. The study indicates that if coordinated action is not taken, the interaction of these non-conventional risks can erode the future stability and growth of North Africa.

Keywords: Non-traditional security, North Africa, Illegal immigration, Drug trafficking, Water scarcity.

Introduction

Traditional security is built around the real force functions projected through weapons and military that could only be used by a state, and it does not fulfill or comprise any element other than the use of power. However, since the end of the Cold War, economics and globalization have challenged the concept of security and forced human societies into endless war and terrorism, contributing more to the security environment.² These interconnected forces, in turn, produced a redefining of security and its sources, which have helped scholars and policymakers to broaden their understanding.³ The end of the Cold War signaled a shift from addressing security solely in militaristic terms to one that addresses non-military forms of threats, such as financial instability and violence between states and within them due to political turmoil or genocide/regional conflict. Security studies have drastically changed. Security, principally dominated by notions of military power and state sovereignty, has been threatened locally, in addition to non-traditional threats due

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² Buzan, B., Waeber, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. Pp. 75-76.

³ Baldwin, D. A. (1997). The concept of security. *Review of International Studies*, 23(1), 5-26. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210597000053>



to its emerging international nature.⁴ Such issues typically involve forms of criminality such as drug trafficking and illegal immigration, environmental degradation, and spillovers from global terrorism.⁵

This reframing of security to capture non-military threats is part of an increasing recognition that the contemporary world order is such that other issues, such as economic stability, political governance, and social cohesion, are inextricably linked with real life.⁶ This broader view of security is particularly relevant in North Africa, where traditional security concerns include military conflict and terrorism⁷ have predominated until now. Nevertheless, the nature and extent of security challenges to North African countries have changed significantly in recent years. Meanwhile, new non-traditional security threats that are vast and varied in scope have emerged.⁸

Illegal immigration represents one of the most important non-traditional security threats to North Africa. At the same time, political instability and conflict in countries of origin contribute to waves of migration through a region that functions as a primary waystation for migrants on their way to Europe.⁹ This flow of people carries enormous security-related implications not only for the countries in North Africa but also for Europe due to a compound nature ranging from cross-border crime and human trafficking to humanitarian crises.¹⁰ The consequences of illegal migration on the stability, social coherence, and economic resources are important for North African countries.¹¹

Water scarcity is another key non-traditional security challenge in North Africa. The region is the most water-scarce in the world and already has depleted renewable water resources that will be strained further by growth, ongoing climate change, and ultimately unsustainable current uses

⁴ Sheehan, M. (2005). *International security: An analytical survey*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. P. 43.

⁵ Felbab-Brown, V. (2009). *Shooting up: Counterinsurgency and the war on drugs*. Brookings Institution Press. P. 120.

⁶ Paris, R. (2001). Human security: Paradigm shift or hot air? *International Security*, 26(2), 87-102. <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228801753191141>

⁷ Ayoob, M. (1995). *The third world security predicament: State making, regional conflict, and the international system*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. Pp. 3-4.

⁸ Halili, A. (2023). Non-Traditional Security Threats and NATO's Response in the Contemporary Security Environment. *SEEU Review*, 18(2) 148-165. <https://doi.org/10.2478/seeur-2023-0095>

⁹ Koser, K. (2005). Irregular migration, state security, and human security. *Global Commission on International Migration*.

¹⁰ Tolley, H., Jr. (2011). [Review of the book *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*]. *Human Rights Quarterly* 33(3), 895-899. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2011.0031>.

¹¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2019). *World Migration Report 2020*. IOM.



of its precious nexus between energy and food, a necessary element to sustain life on Earth themselves. Water scarcity is a grave danger to agricultural productivity, food security, and human health, with fateful geopolitical dimensions for conflicts within and between nations over access to (and possession of) water resources.¹² Water scarcity connects directly to other security issues, such as migration and economic instability in the region, showing a need for more overall or holistic management of regional water resources.¹³ Drug trafficking and smuggling also constitute a major non-traditional security challenge in North Africa.

Also, North African states represent a vital transit region for international drug traffickers from South America and Asia to Europe.¹⁴ The spread of drug smuggling networks weakens the state and corrupts and funds other criminal enterprises such as terrorism.¹⁵ This is complicated by the smuggling of goods, including weapons and human trafficking, which adds to security matters, economic instability, and social unrest.¹⁶

The way of governance in some states, Weak state institutions, which frequently suffer from corruption and a lack of resources to manage their responsibilities, are preventing regional states from an adequate response. This, in turn, undermines economic growth and development, perpetuates social inequalities, and contributes to the cycle of instability and unemployment.¹⁷ Most non-traditional security threats (e.g., drug trafficking and illegal immigration) are transnational in nature. Meeting these challenges calls for cross-national cooperative action by various actors, including states, multilateral institutions, and civil society.¹⁸ Adequate responses

¹² Zeitoun, M., & Warner, J. (2006). Hydro-hegemony: A framework for analysis of trans-boundary water conflicts. *Water Policy*, 8(5), 435-460. <https://doi.org/10.2166/wp.2006.054>

¹³ International Water Management Institute (IWMI). (2007). *Water for food, water for life: A comprehensive assessment of water management in agriculture*. Earthscan.

¹⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2010). *The globalization of crime: A transnational organized crime threat assessment*. UNODC.

¹⁵ Gootenberg, P. (2008). *Andean cocaine: The making of a global drug*. University of North Carolina Press. P. 122.

¹⁶ Nadelmann, E. A. (1990). Global prohibition regimes: The evolution of norms in international society. *International Organization*, 44(4), 479-526. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300035375>

¹⁷ World Bank. (2011). *Migration and remittances factbook 2011*. World Bank Publications.

¹⁸ Newman, E. (2001). Human security and constructivism. *International Studies Perspectives*, 2(3), 239-251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1528-3577.00053>



must adopt comprehensive approaches bridging security, development and governance dimensions that are mutually interconnected.¹⁹

Beyond the near-term security implications, however, such non-traditional threats in North Africa have more significant geopolitical and strategic relevance. Its proximity to Europe and between Africa and the Middle East made it an essential global security area.²⁰ As Reuveny argues, the security of Europe directly refers to North Africa's instability regarding migration flows (which he considers as one cause for terrorism and transnational organized crime).²¹ Thus, The global community must recognize the growing security dilemmas due to non-traditional threats and take supportive measures at bilateral and multilateral levels in North African countries.²²

Hence, due to the interdependency of the majority of non-traditional security threats, including drug trafficking, human smuggling, and immigration, collaboration between states and across regions is compelled. Overcoming these challenges requires mobilizing action beyond the nation-state level, meaning states, Intergovernmental organizations or agencies, and civil society organizations should participate. Measures have to be designed following an overall concept of security and development linked with governance issues since they cannot be separated.²³

Besides the threats of the comprehensible traditional security threats, non-traditional threats in North African states are ideologically and strategically important. Many scholars have highlighted that the region's strategic position connects Africa to the Middle East and its close association with Europe, which is why it is a susceptible region regarding international security. The situation in North Africa impacts European security concerns such as migration and terrorism, specifically transnational criminal activity.²⁴

¹⁹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2004). *Water governance for poverty reduction: Key issues and the UNDP response to Millennium Development Goals*. UNDP.

²⁰ Andreas, P., & Nadelmann, E. (2006). *Policing the globe: Criminalization and crime control in international relations*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 30-31.

²¹ Reuveny, R. (2007). Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict. *Political Geography*, 26(6), 656-673. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2007.05.001>

²² Waltz, K. (1979). *Theory of international politics*. Addison-Wesley.

²³ Springborg, R. (2020). *Political economies of the Middle East and North Africa*. John Wiley & Sons. Pp. 4-5.

²⁴ Cannon, B. J., & Donelli, F. (2020). Asymmetric alliances and high polarity: Evaluating regional security complexes in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. *Third World Quarterly*.



Therefore, the discussion in this study highlights the deeply interconnected nature of non-traditional security threats in North Africa, including illegal immigration, water scarcity, drug trafficking, and smuggling. These threats significantly undermine governance, economic stability, and social cohesion. The analysis emphasizes the role of financial instability and political turmoil as key drivers, creating fertile ground for criminal networks and exacerbating vulnerabilities. Moreover, it underscores the need for comprehensive, multi-faceted strategies integrating security, governance, and development. The findings suggest that addressing these challenges requires robust international cooperation, capacity building, and a shared commitment to tackling root causes, such as poverty, corruption, and environmental degradation.

1. Methodology

The qualitative research method was used for data collection and analysis when approaching non-traditional security threats in North Africa. This data is expected to establish a comprehensive and better understanding of matters concerning illegal immigration, water scarcity, drug trafficking, and smuggling. Moreover, the study focuses on non-traditional security threats in particular countries, such as Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, which provides a clear vision of the problems in the region.

The theoretical foundation on which the article is built is based on the concept of security, which has evolved from state-centered and wars-based security to nontraditional security. They consist of economic, environmental, and social elements that identify today's globally connected and fast-moving threat system. The author emphasizes the need for an integrated approach to address challenges like illegal immigration, water scarcity, drug trafficking, and smuggling in North Africa. Analyzing these threats with the help of post-Cold War security discourse, the framework points to the interconnections between these threats and the contexts of governance, sustainable development, and regional security and calls for addressing threat causes and mitigating threats at both the national and international levels.

Data collection is done through a literature review, thus involving the analysis of articles, policy papers, government reports, international organization publications, the United Nations, and the African Union, among others. Official documents and mass media also complement the research by using document analysis to give a more balanced view of the security situation in the region. Conceptual and comparative analysis procedures are used to analyze the collected data to



distinguish patterns, themes, and variations in the non-traditional threats to the North African nations. Some techniques followed include Informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity; hence, the research is ethical and credible.

2. Findings

2.1. Illegal Immigration Movement

As previously asserted, cross-national border migration continues to persist as a security threat in North Africa due to tensions such as economic instabilities and strains, instability in political systems, and the danger of war.^{25,26} The region is the pathway for migrants who attempt to reach Europe, which in turn leads to multiple security threats both nationally and internationally.²⁷

Economic drivers, unemployment, and poverty are considered the main push factors in North African illegal immigration. Constraints such as high unemployment, underemployment, and poverty force most people, especially the youth, to move around in search of better job opportunities.²⁸ Destination countries, including Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, are frequently used because these countries are neighbors to European territories. Economic opportunities are hard to come by in their home countries, leading them to risk their lives and that of their children by traveling across the Mediterranean Sea with the help of human smugglers. The problem is that North African countries need resources to manage the flow, help migrants, and deal with migration's social and economic impacts on their societies.²⁹

Political instability and conflicts are also considered drivers for engaging in illegal immigration.³⁰ After the 2011 revolution in Libya, state structures rapidly disintegrated, providing human smugglers and armed groups with opportunities to control migrant traffic from sub-Saharan

²⁵ Collyer, M. (2006). States of insecurity: Consequences of Saharan transit migration. *COMPAS Working Paper No. 31*.

²⁶ Cornelius, W. A., & Rosenblum, M. R. (2005). Immigration and politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8, 99-119.

²⁷ Andreas, P. (2003). Redrawing the line: Borders and security in the twenty-first century. *International Security*, 28(2), 78-111.

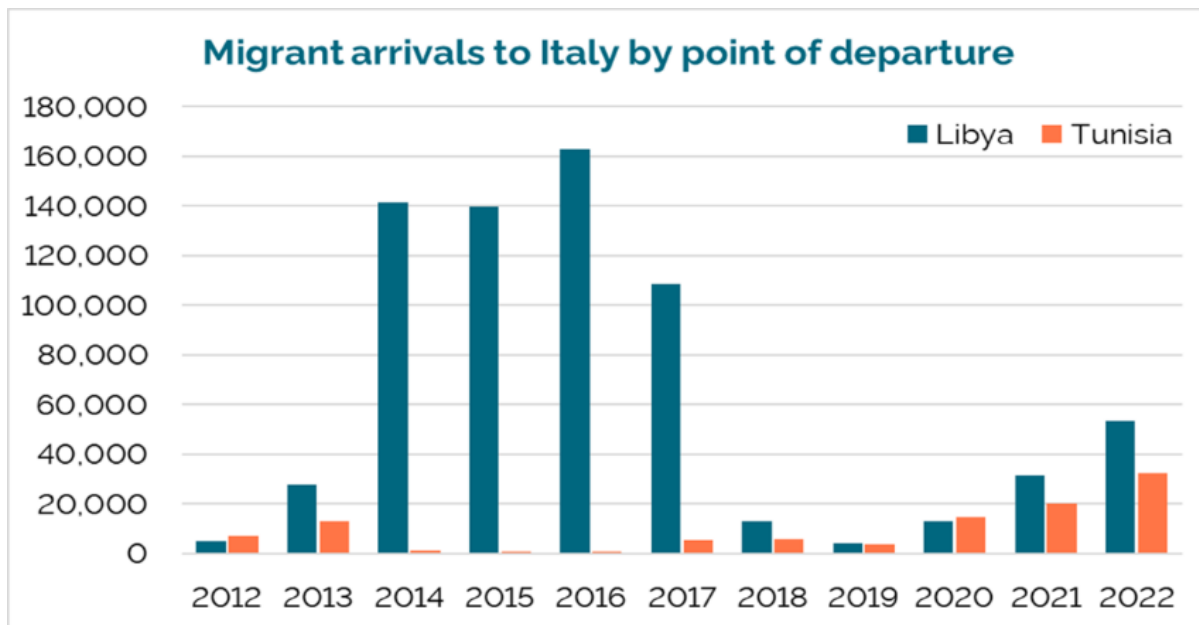
²⁸ Koser, K., & Lutz, H. (Eds.). (1998). *The new migration in Europe: Social constructions and social realities*. Macmillan. P. 23.

²⁹ Williams, P. D. (Ed.). (2012). *Security studies: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Routledge. P. 12.

³⁰ Dassah, M. O. (2017). Socio-economic Impacts of Intra-and Extra-Regional Southern African Development Community Migration on South Africa. *Ghana Journal of Development Studies*, 14(1), 255-275.



Africa. Internal conflicts and oppressive political conditions in Sudan, Eritrea, and Somalia force many people to move towards North Africa and Europe. Political instability worsens governance issues in North African states, making it challenging to address migration and ensure internal security. Also, the conflicts in the Sahel worsened the situation and had a significant impact on illegal immigration. The International Organization for Migration indicate that in 2023, almost 26% of illegal immigrants in Libya were from Niger alone, which is nearly 180000. 11 % were from Chad. Others are from Mali, Nigeria and Sudan.³¹



Source: Italian Ministry of Interior Report, 2022.

The above chart shows how many migrants came to Italy in the last ten years from their main departure points, Libya and Tunisia, from 2012 until 2022. The most recent and noticeable spike in Libyan arrivals was from 140,000 to 160,000. In 2018, the number of arrivals from Libya and Tunisia was among some of the lowest. However, illegal immigrants increased from both Libya and Tunisia, with more arrivals in total, and that shows the level of threat towards other countries.

Moreover, because of instability, smugglers operate their crime networks freely in North African countries, especially in Libya and Tunisia. Such networks are highly developed and practical, taking advantage of migrants' weaknesses and the absence of efficient state authority in

³¹ The International Organization for Migration. (2024). Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Libya Migrant Report. UN Migration.



specific areas.³² There is a high risk involved in migrating, as many people experience exploitation, abuse, and even death.³³ These networks undermine state authority and exacerbate other problems like corruption and criminality. Disintegrating these networks requires adequate cooperation from different countries and efficient law enforcement, which is challenging as many organizations lack the necessary resources and political will.³⁴

Also, the European Union's border policies and externalization strategies significantly affect the pattern of irregular immigration in North African countries.³⁵ Bilateral contracts to manage and block migration flows with North African countries have led to the securitization and militarisation of borders. Although these measures intend to reduce the influx of illegal immigrants, they also result in humanitarian catastrophes, keeping migrants vulnerable and often violating their human rights. Critics argue that instead of addressing the causes of migration, the EU focuses on border security, worsening immigrants' lives.³⁶

The welfare of irregular immigrants is threatened due to unfavorable conditions while traveling and in transit countries or due to the affiliation of those irregular immigrants with terrorist groups.³³ Evidence of physical, sexual, and other forms of abuse is prevalent, and facilities often provide minimal or no amenities. Relief efforts and rights support from NGOs and international agencies face multiple concerns, such as limited access to affected regions and scarce funds.

2.2. Water Scarcity

Lack of water resources is a significant non-traditional security threat in North Africa, devastatingly impacting social mobility, economic progression, and security. North Africa is one of the most water-deficit areas globally, facing challenges due to climate change, population pressure, and water management issues.³⁷

³² Andreas, P. (2003). Redrawing the line: Borders and security in the twenty-first century. *International Security*, 28(2), 78-111.

³³ Huysmans, J. (2006). *The politics of insecurity: Fear, migration and asylum in the EU*. Routledge. P. 20.

³⁴ Thakur, R., & Van Langenhove, L. (2007). Enhancing global governance through regional integration. In *Regionalisation and global governance* (pp. 33-58). Routledge.

³⁵ Zoubir, Y. H., & White, G. (Eds.). (2016). *North African politics: Change and continuity*. Routledge. P. 317.

³⁶ Amuedo-Dorantes, C., Puttitanun, T., & Martinez-Donate, A. P. (2013). How do tougher immigration measures affect unauthorized immigrants?. *Demography*, 50, 1067-1091.

³⁷ Rachid, A. (2023). The impact of climate change in Africa: Environmental security in the face of nature. *Remittances Review*, 8(3).



Almost all North African countries are affected by climate change, particularly water shortages. Increased temperatures, fluctuations in precipitation, and droughts impact water levels and quality.³⁸ The expansion of the Sahara Desert into areas formerly used for farming reduces water access and affects agriculture and food sources. Global warming and climate change worsen water shortages, threatening food production, human and animal health, and economic stability, potentially causing water-related conflicts.³⁹

Also, water scarcity in North Africa is exacerbated by rapid population growth and increasing urbanization rates.⁴⁰ High population levels put more demand on water for domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses. Urbanization leads to overcrowding in areas with existing social amenities, requiring significant investment to build new facilities for water supply and sanitation, which many North African states cannot afford.

Agriculture remains the leading consumer of water in North Africa, mainly for irrigation, which often results in high water loss through evaporation and seepage. Efficient water use should be a significant principle, achievable by improving irrigation facilities and using advanced technology. Still, limited resources, poor technology, weak institutions, and poor policies often hamper these efforts.⁴¹

Due to their transboundary nature, water resources like the Nile River are a significant security issue in North Africa. Competition for access to and use of these resources can trigger conflicts, as seen in the Nile Basin involving Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia.⁴² Moreover, water scarcity in North Africa has severe social, economic, and political consequences. It affects agricultural yields, leading to famine and loss of income for farming communities. In urban areas, water scarcity can cause social rivalry and weaken government legitimacy and authority as people lose access to fundamental services. Addressing water scarcity requires integrated solutions

³⁸ Odermatt, E. (2013). Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries.

³⁹ Sowers, J., Vengosh, A., & Weinthal, E. (2011). Climate change, water resources, and the politics of adaptation in the Middle East and North Africa. *Climatic Change*, 104(3), 599-627.

⁴⁰ Hejazi, M., Santos Da Silva, S. R., Miralles-Wilhelm, F., Kim, S., Kyle, P., Liu, Y., ... & Clarke, L. (2023). Impacts of water scarcity on agricultural production and electricity generation in the Middle East and North Africa. *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 11, 1082930.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Rahman, M. A. (2013). Water security: Ethiopia–Egypt transboundary challenges over the Nile river basin. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 48(1), 35-46.



involving water management, poverty alleviation, economic diversification, and good governance.⁴³

2.3. Drug Trafficking and Smuggling

Drug trafficking and smuggling are significant non-traditional security threats in North Africa, with serious repercussions for stability, governance, and public health. North Africa is often a transit route for illicit drugs, impacting crime rates, corruption, and violence.⁴⁴

Illegal drugs North Africa is a major artery for drug trafficking, with drugs from South America and Asia transiting through the region to Europe. Cannabis, cocaine, and heroin are key drugs that pass through, facilitated by poor governance, open borders, and political uncertainty.

Drug trafficking significantly impacts governance and state institutions in North Africa. Corruption is prevalent, with offenders bribing officials to conduct their business. This undermines public confidence in the government and police and fosters disregard for the rule of law. Drug sales revenue can also fuel rebel and terrorist groups. Addressing these issues requires restoring governance, enhancing policing, and combating corruption.⁴⁵

Moreover, drug trafficking negatively affects public health and society in North Africa. Increased drug availability leads to higher addiction rates, particularly among youth, causing social issues like crime, family problems, and social isolation. Existing health facilities often cannot meet the increased demand for addiction treatment and rehabilitation services. Solving these problems requires complex education, prevention, treatment, and social rehabilitation measures.⁴⁶

The following chart depicts a complicated web of drug trafficking routes, many of which pass through North African countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Egypt. Since then, these countries have become significant nodes in the trafficking routes that interconnect countries and some continents abroad. The black lines indicate major trafficking routes, with substantial links from North African states to countries on the European continent, including Spain, Italy,

⁴³ Omondi, E. A. (2014). *Environmental Scarcity and Trans-boundary Conflicts: the Case of Lake Victoria, 1994-2011* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi). Pp. 13-19.

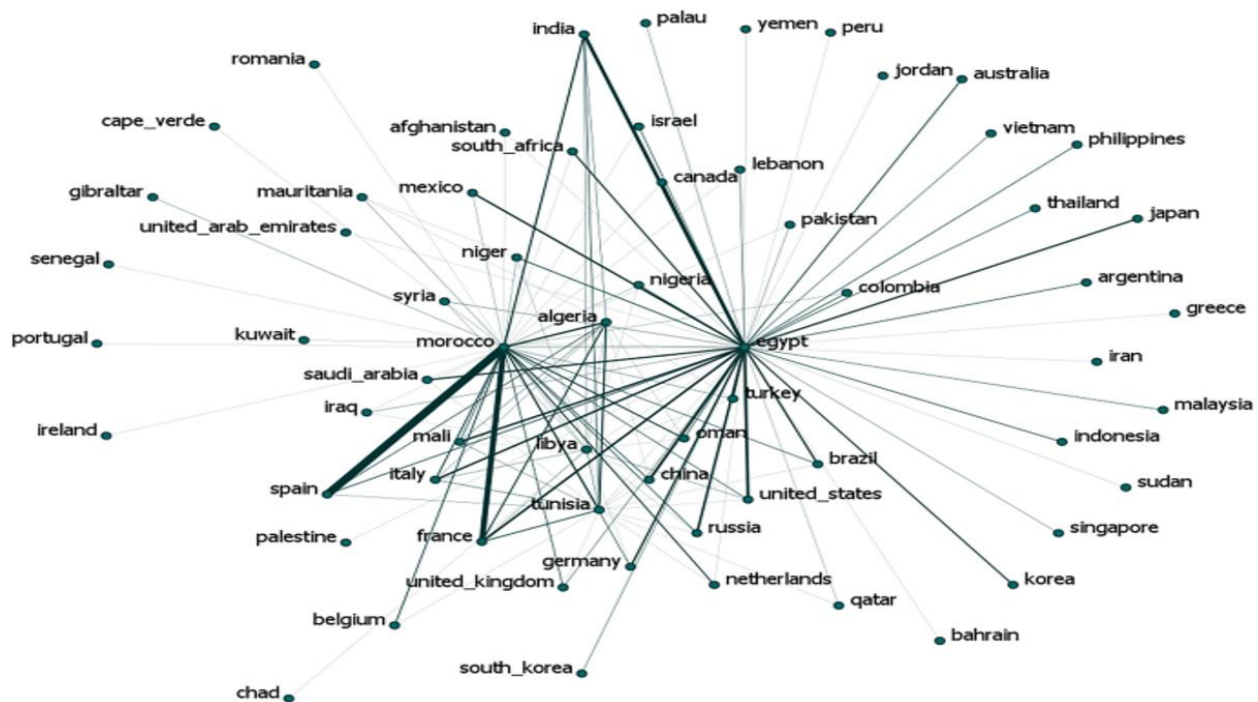
⁴⁴ Aning, K., & Pokoo, J. (2014). Understanding the nature and threats of drug trafficking to national and regional security in West Africa. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 3(1), 8-8.

⁴⁵ Warf, B. (2015). Corruption in the Middle East and North Africa: A geographic perspective. *The Arab World Geographer*, 18(1-2), 1-18.

⁴⁶ Djukanovic, V., Mach, E. P., & World Health Organization. (1975). *Alternative approaches to meeting basic health needs in developing countries: a joint UNICEF/WHO study*. World Health Organization. P. 17.



France, and the United Kingdom.⁴⁷ There are also significant routes to Middle Eastern markets, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as major global players like the U.S., Brazil, and India. This visualization highlights the many tangled networks through which drugs are smuggled and also confirms North Africa as a prominent centre for drug trafficking distribution in addition to smuggling. Therefore, the region cannot be alone in facing this massive targeting by international organized crime groups. Without assistance and collaboration, the area can be threatened more by those activities, and therefore, other regions, like Europe, will receive more danger as well.



Source: (Meneghini, 2022)⁴⁸

On the other hand, smuggling Contraband is a cross-cutting non-conventional security threat in North Africa, severely detrimental to economic stability, fostering corruption, and creating social and political problems.

⁴⁷ Campana, P. (2016). The structure of human trafficking: Lifting the bonnet on a Nigerian transnational network. *British Journal of Criminology*, 56(1), 68-86.

⁴⁸ Meneghini, C. (2022). Structure and Evolution of Drug Trafficking Networks in North Africa: The Impact of Rule of Law and Corruption. In: Savona, E.U., Guerette, R.T., Aziani, A. (eds) *The Evolution of Illicit Flows. Sustainable Development Goals Series*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95301-0_10



Types of smuggling contraband in North Africa include motor vehicles, foodstuffs, chemicals, petroleum products, medicines, and other banned goods. Arms proliferation and supplying weapons to insurgent and terrorist organizations incite violence and related activities.³³ For example, according to the Global Terrorism Index Report,⁴⁹ North Africa witnessed over 500 terrorist incidents in 2021, resulting in approximately 2,000 deaths. Supplying weapons to terrorists is a way to increase incidents and victims. Fuel smuggling also creates black markets, and the smuggling of pharmaceuticals and consumer products affects population health and the formal economy through tax losses and sales of substandard products.⁵⁰

Smuggling negatively impacts the economy by reducing legal companies' ability to compete and causing governments to lose tax revenues. It destabilizes market structures and increases social and political insecurity as governments struggle to manage smuggling's economic impacts. Preventing smuggling requires detailed economic solutions targeting price gaps and improving enforcement measures.⁵¹

Also, corruption and weak governance are invariably interlinked with smuggling in North Africa. Smugglers rely on state bureaucracy members to perpetrate illegal activities, undermining state authority. Corruption erodes public confidence in the government and fosters a culture of criminality. Combating smuggling requires enhancing governance and police quality, increasing transparency and decentralization, and launching anti-corruption initiatives.⁵²

3. Discussion

Discussion of the findings on illegal immigration, water scarcity, drug trafficking, and smuggling in North Africa highlight the complex nature of non-traditional security threats in the region. These issues are deeply interconnected, influencing each other and compounding the overall security landscape. Scholars have argued that security must be understood in a broader context beyond military threats, incorporating economic, environmental, and social dimensions.⁵³

⁴⁹ Institute for Economics & Peace. (2024). Global Terrorism Index 2024: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Pitt, M. M. (1981). Smuggling and price disparity. *Journal of International Economics*, 11(4), 447-458.

⁵² Boukhars, A. (2012). The drivers of insecurity in Mauritania (Vol. 30). Washington, DC, USA: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁵³ Buzan, B., Waever, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. P. 13.



The non-traditional security challenges in North Africa exemplify this expanded understanding of security.

The study reveals that economic instability and political turmoil are significant drivers of illegal immigration in North Africa. Migration patterns are influenced by both push and pull factors, including financial opportunities and political stability.⁹ In North Africa, the lack of economic prospects and ongoing conflicts push individuals to seek better opportunities abroad, often through dangerous and illegal means. This aligns with the findings of the study of Kwilinski, Lyulyov, Pimonenko, Dzwigol, Abazov, and Pudryk, which notes that economic hardship and political instability are the primary factors driving migration in the region.⁵⁴

Human trafficking and smuggling networks exacerbate the issue of illegal immigration. These networks are highly organized and exploit the vulnerabilities of migrants, as noted by Louise Shelley in her work on transnational crime. The presence of these networks not only facilitates illegal immigration but also undermines state authority and contributes to broader issues of terrorism and criminality. For example, in the annual report of the Mixed Migration Centre, there were more than 120 Sudanese mercenaries caught by the Sudan authority on their way to fight in Libya.⁵⁵ Such illegal movements can, therefore, impact the security of North African countries. Efforts to combat these networks require robust international cooperation and strengthened law enforcement capacities, as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasized.⁵⁶

North Africa faces severe consequences under the pressure of water scarcity, including significant socio-economic and political stakes. Among other scholars, Mark Zeitoun and Jeroen Warner emphasized water's role as a driver for conflict and cooperation in this region. Water scarcity issues are mainly due to Climate change, Rapid population growth, and unsustainable management practices.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Kwilinski, A., Lyulyov, O., Pimonenko, T., Dzwigol, H., Abazov, R., & Pudryk, D. (2022). International migration drivers: Economic, environmental, social, and political effects. *Sustainability*, 14(11), 6413.

⁵⁵ Mixed Migration Centre. (2020). Annual Report. Mixed Migration Centre.

⁵⁶ Serio, G. (2021). West Africa, North Africa, and the Central Mediterranean-Key Findings on the Characteristics of Migrant Smuggling in West.

⁵⁷ Wolf, A. T. (2007). Shared waters: Conflict and cooperation. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 32, 241-269. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.energy.32.041006.101434>



The Nile Basin is an example of transboundary issues in North Africa. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), in particular, has caused concerns about water sharing and regional stability.⁵⁸ Effective management of transboundary water resources requires cooperation, dialogue, and legal frameworks that ensure equitable and sustainable use, as the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) advocates.⁵⁹

Drug trafficking and smuggling pose significant threats to governance, public health, and regional stability in North Africa. The findings align with the research of Peter Andreas and Ethan Nadelmann, who argue that drug trafficking networks are deeply entrenched and adaptable, exploiting weak state controls and political instability. The profits from drug trafficking often finance insurgent and terrorist groups, further destabilising the region.

The public health and social consequences of drug trafficking are severe, with rising addiction rates and associated social issues.⁶⁰ Studies on the global drug trade always highlight the multifaceted impacts of drug trafficking on societies, including increased crime, family breakdown, and social exclusion. Addressing these impacts requires comprehensive strategies that include education, prevention, treatment, and social reintegration programs.⁶¹

The smuggling of various illicit goods, including arms, fuel, pharmaceuticals, and consumer goods, undermines economic stability and fuels corruption in North Africa. Vanda Felbab-Brown's work on the economics of illicit trade underscores the significant financial impact of smuggling, which distorts market dynamics and deprives governments of tax revenues.⁶² This economic disruption can contribute to broader social and political instability, making it difficult for legitimate businesses to compete.

Experts such as Robert Klitgaard note that corruption is closely linked to smuggling. They argue that corruption erodes public trust in government and creates an environment where illicit

⁵⁸ Kendie, D. (1999). Egypt and the hydro-politics of the Blue Nile River. *Northeast African Studies*, 6(1/2), 141-169.

⁵⁹ International Water Management Institute (IWMI). (2007). *Water for food, water for life: A comprehensive assessment of water management in agriculture*. Earthscan. P. 13.

⁶⁰ Kerr, T., Small, W., & Wood, E. (2005). The public health and social impacts of drug market enforcement: A review of the evidence. *International journal of drug policy*, 16(4), 210-220.

⁶¹ Thachuk, K. L. (Ed.). (2007). *Transnational threats: smuggling and trafficking in arms, drugs, and human life*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA. P. 94.

⁶² Felbab-Brown, V. (2009). P. 120.



activities can thrive.⁶³ Strengthening governance and law enforcement institutions, improving transparency and accountability, and reducing opportunities for corruption are critical for combating smuggling. This requires coordinated efforts at national, regional, and international levels.⁶⁴

This sub-regional dialogue is part of the response to the challenges in North Africa that individual nations cannot solve and require effective partnership among all parties at a regional and international level. Security threats, say academics, are dealt with at the regional level and require global cooperation. In these challenges, the African Union, The European Union, and several international institutions are vital in assisting national and regional mechanisms. Key elements to successful strategies, again in the security area but also applicable beyond it, are strengthening legal frameworks by limiting opportunities for exploitation and raising barriers.⁶⁵

The findings also highlight the importance and necessity of addressing the root causes of non-traditional security threats. This includes tackling economic instability, political turmoil, and environmental degradation, as well as promoting good governance and sustainable development. Scholars like Amartya Sen argue that human security must be linked to broader development goals, including poverty reduction, economic diversification, and social justice.⁶⁶ Integrating security and development policies can provide a more comprehensive approach to addressing the complex security landscape in North Africa.

These findings have significant policy implications. Governments in North Africa need to prioritise comprehensive strategies that address both the symptoms and root causes of non-traditional security threats. This includes investing in economic development, improving governance, and enhancing regional cooperation. International partners can support these efforts through capacity building, technical assistance, and financial support. As noted by the World Bank,

⁶³ Klitgaard, R. (1988). *Controlling corruption*. University of California Press. P. 34.

⁶⁴ Karras, A. L. (2009). *Smuggling: Contraband and corruption in world history*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Pp. 79-80.

⁶⁵ Bendebka, R. (2021). Factors Shaping Regionalism in the Middle East and North Africa: A Classical Approach. *Academia Letters*.

⁶⁶ Sen, A. (2014). Development as freedom (1999). *The globalization and development reader: Perspectives on development and global change*, 525.



effective policy responses require a coordinated approach that integrates security, development, and governance initiatives.⁶⁷

Future research should continue to explore the interconnectedness of non-traditional security challenges in North Africa. Longitudinal studies can provide deeper insights into the evolving dynamics of these threats and the effectiveness of policy responses. Comparative studies with other regions facing similar challenges can offer valuable lessons and best practices. Engaging with local communities and incorporating their perspectives can enhance the relevance and impact of research findings.

Conclusion

Non-traditional security threats in North Africa are multidimensional and require an urgent reconsideration of traditional security paradigms. Illegal immigration, water scarcity, drug trafficking, and smuggling are urgent issues, closely linked to socio-economic, political, and environmental dynamics. These threats undermine governance structures, destabilise economies, and contribute to social unrest. Additionally, the region's importance on the global stage is accentuated by its strategic position, acting as a bridge between Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. A comprehensive strategy that integrates economic development, governance reforms, and environmental sustainability will be necessary to tackle these obstacles instead of piecemeal solutions.

These threats are best addressed through regional and international cooperation. These issues are transnational and require cooperation among North African states and their global stakeholders. Characteristically, organizations like the African Union (AU) and European Union (EU) are important in building solidarity, establishing cooperation for steps towards collective security and capacity building, and facilitating resource-sharing. In addition, regional governance needs to be fortified while law enforcement mechanisms need to be reformed. Irrigation facilities need to be built to control organized crime, illegal immigration, and the fight over scarce water resources.

A sustainable approach to security in North Africa focuses on an integrated strategy to tackle the roots of violent extremism, not just its symptoms. For instance, countries in the region

⁶⁷ Bendebka, R. (2019). Regionalism From Islamic Views: The Case of the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) Region. *Journal of Islamic Economics and Development*, 4(23), 23-35.



can benefit from the Algerian experience in doing so. Addressing poverty, unemployment, and corruption is integral to addressing the causes of instability, especially in countries like Libya, Egypt, and Sudan. Moreover, strengthening public health systems and improving water management with new solutions could help alleviate gaps in tackling non-traditional security threats. For the region to attain sustainable stability, it is crucial to bridge the gaps between security on the one hand and development and governance policies on the other.

The ability of the North African region to adjust to these new security realities will have considerable implications for its future stability. While addressing immediate issues, as outlined in this report, will alleviate short-term pressures on vulnerable groups and shift the focus toward developing multi-dimensional strategies. Integrating their local, regional, and broader global efforts will be critical to achieving peace, prosperity, and security for North Africa and its interdependent global neighbours.

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