

## Executive Summary

# The relationship between migration, refugee crises and democracy



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## **Executive Summary**

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Migration and asylum are significant phenomena in the Arab region, which is both a source and destination. The Arab region undergoes intra-regional migration, particularly to the Gulf States, and external migration, particularly to Western Europe. While these phenomena are not unique to the Arab world, the region exhibits distinctive characteristics influenced by its political landscape.

#### *1. Interrelationship between Migration, Asylum, and Democracy:*

- The study explores the bidirectional relationship between migration/asylum and democracy, examining how democratic or undemocratic regimes influence migration flows and vice versa.
- Authoritarian regimes in the Arab region, such as those in Iraq and Libya, have historically prompted significant refugee movements due to oppressive political environments.
- Resistance to democratization, rather than the pursuit of democracy, has been a primary driver of displacement and asylum in recent years, as seen in Syria and Sudan.

#### *2. Impact of Crises on Migration:*

- The term "crisis" is often misused in the context of migration. True crises are temporary, whereas ongoing situations, like the Palestinian issue, are better described as persistent conditions.
- The influx of Syrian refugees into Europe was labeled a crisis, but European researchers argue that it did not meet the criteria of a crisis, suggesting a need for careful terminology.

#### *3. Securitization Theory:*

- The securitization of migration frames it as a national security threat, often without substantial basis. This discourse legitimizes extraordinary measures and curtails democratic freedoms.
- Language plays a crucial role in securitization. Terms like "illegal immigration" criminalize migrants and shape public perception negatively. This discourse is used to justify restrictive policies.

#### *4. Economic and Social Implications:*

- Refugees and migrants are often scapegoated for economic issues despite evidence showing that they do not occupy the same different labor market as citizens and that they do not significantly impact unemployment or wages.

- In many Arab countries, the informal labor market exacerbates discrimination against migrants and refugees, who lack labor rights and are doubly disadvantaged.

*5. Inflation of Migration Figures:*

- Governments often exaggerate migrant numbers to foster a climate of fear and justify authoritarian measures. This tactic is employed globally, not just in the Arab region.

*6. Cultural and Racial Disparities:*

- Neoliberal policies contribute to racial and cultural fault lines, replacing economic inequalities with cultural ones. This shift fuels right-wing populist movements and undermines democratic values.

*7. Policy Recommendations:*

- The rhetoric surrounding migration and asylum needs to be challenged to prevent the legitimization of discriminatory practices.

- Democratic governance must be strengthened to combat the adverse effects of neoliberal policies and ensure equitable treatment for all.

To sum up, this research highlights the complex interplay between migration, asylum, and democracy in the Arab region, emphasizing the need for nuanced and humane policies that uphold democratic principles and human rights.