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Europe: Whither the fortress around the mediterranean and Africa?

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper interrogates European Union (EU)-Africa relationships on international migration issues. Europe has long been branded a fortress against foreigners, despite enacting numerous legislations, policies and practices accommodating third country nationals. Recent media and humanitarian organisation reports of surging African and Middle Eastern refugees and migrants bring into sharp focus and test these immigration measures, as Europe searches for optimal solutions to the migration crisis.





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Design/methodology/approach: The paper draws on the evolving field of border studies and attempts to frame the EU-Africa relations on migration in the context of the concepts, borders, boundaries and frontiers. A thorough review and critical analysis of relevant legislations, literature and media reports on the Africa-Europe migration interface is also conducted.

Findings: The militarisation, securitisation, restrictive and, sometimes, draconian immigration regimes do not provide sustainable solutions to the migration crisis facing Europe. A rethinking around the integration and inclusion of immigrants into Europe's socioeconomic fabric, and addressing fundamental and structural weaknesses in EU-Africa relationships and respective economies is essential.

Originality/value: Theoretically, the paper attempts to understand better, the way the EU and Africa engage each other on international migration issues, in the context of border studies. Empirically, the paper positions itself in policy engagements and the quest for practical solutions by the two continents in view of the migration crisis currently facing Europe.

Keywords: borders; migration; social exclusion; social inclusion; EU-Africa migration interface, fortress Europe.

INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that between January and November 2015, approximately 1, 5 million migrants illegally crossed the European Union's (EU) external borders (European Commission, 2015) into the EU. There is evidence that migrants from Africa also constitute the increase numbers of people who migrate (legally or otherwise into Europe). For example,

“data released by the UNHCR showed that nearly one million people reached Greek and Italian territories through sea crossings. More than 2200 people were rescued in the Central Mediterranean Sea, between Libya and Italy. About 400 people tried to overcome the border to the Spanish city of Ceuta in Northern Africa on the 25th of December. More than 180 people succeeded to reach Ceuta, either by climbing over the border fences or by swimming around them. However, two people died and twelve others were injured, some severely.”¹

This increased migration has intensified the desire in the EU to strengthen a restrictive immigration regime. For instance, there is a call for EU countries to set up a European Border and Coast Guard Agency that will secure and protect the EU border against the flood of refugees and migrants (European Commission, 2015). It is in this light that in the

¹Alarm Phone (2015) the end of the year approaches — Migration toward Europe continues in high numbers. 21st–27th of December 2015; Border Flashpoint News (2015) #9 Issue 9: Week 23rd–29th November 2015





State of the Union Address on 9 September 2015, the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, declared:

“A united refugee and asylum policy requires stronger joint efforts to secure our external borders. Fortunately, we have given up border controls between the Member States of the Schengen area, to guarantee free movement of people, a unique symbol of European integration. But the other side of the coin to free movement is that we must work together more closely to manage our external borders. This is what our citizens expect. The Commission said it back in May, and I said it during my election campaign: We need to strengthen Frontex significantly and develop it into a fully operational European border and coast guard system.”

Further to this, on the 30th of December 2015, “the EU and Turkey agreed on a deal to deter refugee movements from Turkey into EU territory. In exchange for 3 billion Euros from the EU and the promise to facilitate visa-free travel for Turkish citizens, the Turkish government agreed to prevent refugees and migrants from leaving the Turkish shores to reach the Greek islands”². Several EU countries have unilaterally declared that refugees and migrants are not welcome. For example the French Prime Minister declared that “Europe cannot welcome more refugees. It is not possible.”³. Other European countries were generally tightening their borders in line with intensifying their border regimes too,⁴ with countries like Germany asserting that a ‘sensitive reduction’ to the flow of refugees in Germany⁵ was imminent. This had led to serious levels of suffering as refugees and migrants attempt to cross into Europe.⁶ It is worth noting that the refugees and migrants that use the Mediterranean Sea as a route (through Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, etc.) into Europe originate from both Africa and the Middle East.⁷

²Alarm Phone (2015) Unabated Migration Movements in all three regions of the Mediterranean Sea. *Bi-Weekly Alarm Phone Report*, 23rd of November–6th of December 2015.

³Border Flashpoint News (2015) #9 Issue 9: Week 23rd–29th November 2015.

⁴Border Flashpoint News (2015) #9 Issue 9: Week 23rd–29th November, 2015; #11 Issue 11: Week 7th–13th December 2015.

⁵Border Flashpoint News (2015) #12 Issue 12: Weeks 14th–27th December 2015.

⁶Alarm Phone (2015) The end of the year approaches – Migration toward Europe continues in high numbers. 21st–27th of December 2015; Border Flashpoint News (2015) #9. Issue 9: Week 23rd–29th November 2015; Alarm Phone (2015) Unabated Migration Movements in all three regions of the Mediterranean Sea. *Bi-Weekly Alarm Phone Report*, 23rd of November–6th of December 2015; Border Flashpoint News (2015) #9 Issue 9: Week 23rd–29th November, 2015, Euro-Border Flashpoint News #11 Issue 11: Week 7th–13th December, 2015, Euro-Border Flashpoint News #12 Issue 12: Weeks 14th–27th December 2015.

⁷BBC News (2014, September 15); UNHCR (2015). *Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean*. Retrieved from <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>; Hammond, T.G. (2015, 19 May); The Economist (2015, May 4). Everything you want to know about migration across the Mediterranean. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/05/economist-explains-6>.

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African refugees and migrants taking the journey to Europe originate from several countries in West Africa (e.g. Nigeria, Gambia and Mali) as well as the Horn of Africa (e.g. Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea), travelling through the Sahara Desert to Libya (Hammond, 2015; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2015).

While EU member states in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance are known to wage military campaigns in migrant sending countries of the Middle East such as Syria, we are unaware of similar diplomatic initiatives there between the EU and migrant sending countries that are similar to the Valletta summit on migration, which brought together leaders and representatives of the EU and African governments. The Valletta summit was held on 11 and 12 November 2015 in Malta, amidst surging numbers of refugees and migrants risking the journey across the Mediterranean Sea for Europe.

The summit discussed issues on migration, economic development and the need to strengthen cooperation and address the challenges and opportunities of migration. The political declaration and action plan adopted by the Leaders at the summit resolved to, among other things, address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement from Africa; enhance cooperation on legal migration and mobility; reinforce the protection of migrants and asylum seekers; prevent and fight irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings; and work more closely to improve cooperation on return, readmission and reintegration.⁸ The summit also agreed to implement 16 agreed-on concrete measures by the end of 2016 and, further, launched the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa).⁹ The Trust Fund aims to provide additional funds that would support the implementation of the summit's action plan. Accordingly, in a bid to address the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration, by promoting economic and equal opportunities, security and development, the Trust Fund would benefit various countries across Africa that encompass the major African migration routes to Europe including, among others, those in the Sahel region, the Horn of Africa and the North of Africa.¹⁰ Noble as they may be, the resolutions and measures that came out of the Valletta summit suggest that the EU is continuing with its political agenda to contain migration from Africa and repatriate the migrants from there that are already in Europe.¹¹ Among the EU's tools that attest to and are employed to accomplish the EU's political agenda are the Regional

⁸European Council (2016).

⁹European Council (2016) *ibid*.

¹⁰European Commission (2015) A European Agenda on Migration: A European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa – Fact Sheet.

¹¹Garavoglia (2015).





Development and Protection Programmes (RDPPs), EU Directives and EU Action Plans.¹²

This political agenda is despite the fact that European countries have over the years enacted numerous legislations, policies and practices that welcome and accommodate third country nationals in the EU. Also, contrast this with, for instance, the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS), from which majority of African migrants travelling to Europe originate) position on migration. Through its regional benchmark policy paper on regional and international migration – the 2008 ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration – informed by ECOWAS' objective to establish a link between migration and development, the Common Approach also adds an external dimension and refugee issues to ECOWAS's internal free movement of persons policy framework (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2013). As concerns the EU, the Common Approach emphasises the importance of free movement for regional integration and focuses on promoting regular migration to third countries, among other forms of movement, and the value that this holds for ECOWAS, for irregular migration, for migrants' rights, for women migrants and for trafficking (European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) 2010). Through the Common Approach, ECOWAS commits to attaining coherence in policies involving regional agreements and bilateral agreements with third countries such as the EU. The Common Approach further commits to establishing, and making operational, a regional fund to finance cross-border cooperation along with the launch of a regional territorial strategy aimed at developing new growth and development areas. Also outlined in the Common Approach is the harmonisation of development and policies related to migration, and the strengthening of dialogue between ECOWAS, transit countries and host countries. In adopting the Common Approach on Migration, West African countries clearly reflect a commitment to a comprehensive regional approach to migration and management, all of which seems to be at odds with the mentioned EU political agenda. Against this backdrop, this paper brings into sharp focus and tests the EU's immigration measures particularly in the context of EU-Africa relations around issues of migration, as Europe searches for optimal solutions to the migration crisis. Concerning the EU and its relations with Africa and in view of the stated purpose of this paper, the question is therefore asked: whether the fortress around the Mediterranean and Africa?

After this brief introduction, the rest of this paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 frames the theoretical and conceptual context for

¹²See, for example, Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals. (2008); EU Action Plan on return (2015); Communication from the EC on EU Regional Protection Programmes (2005).

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achieving the purpose of the paper and addresses the research question through a consideration of the literature and debates in the evolving field of border studies. The attempt is made to contextualise EU-Africa relations on migration issues around the concepts borders, boundaries and frontiers and to understand better, the way the two continents engage each other on international migration issues. Section 4 discusses the realities of migration and policies and positions itself in policy engagements and the quest for practical solutions by the EU and Africa in view of the migration crisis currently facing Europe. Section 5 concludes with a call for a rethink around the integration and inclusion of immigrants into Europe's socioeconomic fabric and the suggestion that addressing fundamental and structural weaknesses in EU-Africa relationships and respective economies is essential.

THE CONTEXT OF EU-AFRICA RELATIONS ON MIGRATION: SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Discussion of EU-Africa relations vis-à-vis the movement of people and the Mediterranean Sea invokes the notions of borders, boundaries and frontiers. For purposes of this paper, borders are defined as regions or lines which divide or separates countries. Examples of borders include the Canada-US border, US-Mexico border, Sino-Russian border, Afghan-Pakistan border. Boundaries can be defined as other lines within and between countries based on, among other things, ethnic, cultural or economic criteria. For example, the Asia free trade zone's extent can be regarded as an economic boundary between the countries which constitute this block and those which do not.

A frontier can be conceptualised as an 'unexplored' zone between countries, such as the Sino-Siberia zone, Alaskan region or the no-touching-zone between the Canada and USA border. In this respect the Mediterranean Sea would be regarded an ideal natural geographic boundary in which human beings cannot settle (Semple, 1911). Moreover, the sea presents a frontier, which, naturally, would present itself as a challenge for humans to cross. This border effect has, however, all the more become negated with advancements in transportation and the advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Castells, 1996). Critical questions that arise regarding the EU – Africa migration interface, include the extent to which a border, boundary or frontier actually exists between the EU and Africa. Is it even sustainable to attempt to cut off migrants from Africa headed for Europe? To attempt to engage with these clearly difficult questions, the following section considers the migration conundrum currently besetting the EU regarding migrants from the Middle East and, especially, Africa.

24 Although the vessels used by the people migrating through the Mediterranean Sea to Europe are unseaworthy and overloaded boats that are





the least representative of state-of-the-art means of transport (Lut-terbeck, 2006), the border effect of the Mediterranean Sea is farther erased by a borderless world created through increased flows of labour, capital, goods and services – or heightened globalisation. Thus Cas-tells (1996), for instance, argues that with globalisation, the ‘space of places’ is usurped by the ‘space of flows’. Arguments along this line go on to suggest that the erosion of borders is an indication that the nation-state, as it is known in the Westphalian sense, is at its end (having lost its role as a significant participant in the global economy to markets – represented by flows of factors of production – Multina-tional Corporations (MNCs), etc).¹³

According to Scholte (1996, p.49), globalisation dissolves territorial-ity in as far as globalisation is a dimension of social relations and repre-sents the emergence and spread of a supraterritorial dimension of such relations. These relations

“are circumstances *without distance* and relatively discon-nected from particular location. Globalisation has made the identification of boundaries – and associated notions of ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘far’ and ‘near’, ‘outside’ and ‘inside’, ‘home’ and ‘away’, ‘them’ and ‘us’ – more problematic than ever. To this extent, a new, non-territorialist cartography of social life is needed.”¹⁴

While the literature and, especially, public media blow up the fact that the refugees and migrants flowing to Europe are fleeing poverty, conflict and war in their countries of origin, we also see considerable consistency in the neoliberal economics laws of supply and demand at work, especially as far as concerns the so-called economic migrants. According to Brunet-Jailly (2005), flows of goods, capital and migrants limit the influence of central governments and modify their local cul-ture. In relation to culture, migrants do form networks in which, among other things, information is shared. Studies on borders have shown that culture – including language, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and place of belonging – may have one of two effects on borders (Brunet-Jailly, 2005). According to Brunet-Jailly, when the culture of communities on either side of a border differs, they, on one hand, enhance the effect of dividing territory. On the other hand, where similarities or a shared culture exist between communities or the peoples on either side of a border, the situation effectively bridges an international boundary. Through this would flow information regarding opportunities for work, notwithstanding whether that work is legal or illegal. In a study of six Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) coun-tries including France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the USA inves-

¹³See, for example, Ohmae (1996).

¹⁴Italics in original.

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tigating the sectors in which “most illegal immigrants [are] employed”, the OECD was able to identify seven core sectors in which such people worked (Garson, 1999).

The seven sectors included agriculture, building and civil engineering, small-scale industry, tourism, hotels and catering, and services to households and to businesses. Among the reasons that the report cites, behind these sectors attracting undocumented migrants are the willingness by such people to perform arduous and intensive work; the constant effort by employers to minimise costs and enhance labour flexibility; a rise in employment in sectors like agriculture, whose share in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is declining; activities in those sectors such as sanitation, cleaning and school education that are shunned by nationals; etc.

The question arises, how does information about employment opportunities in such sectors reach the would-be migrant in Africa? Even more, in view of this reality, and contrary to the EU political agenda to not only contain migration from Africa but also return those migrants that are already in Europe, the argument that borders, boundaries and frontiers are human creations grounded in various ethical traditions (Brunet-Jailly, 2005) seems valid. If this is the case, it means that borders can be hardened to keep out people considered not to be the appropriate stock of migrants or softened to achieve the opposite effect. Along these lines, the next section considers the sustainability or otherwise of attempts by the EU to fence off migrants from Africa.

EU BORDERS: SITES OF CLOSURE AND CONTRADICTORY LOGICS OF MIGRATION, NEOLIBERALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

There are several cases, where various EU countries have, unilaterally, directly or indirectly attempted to erect ‘fences’ and ‘walls’ so as to keep away African migrants. For example, between the 23rd and 29th of November 2015, the Spanish government returned Moroccan migrants. This was after around 100 people attempted to enter Spanish territory by scaling the fences of Melilla. These migrants were “brought down from the fences by ladder into Spanish territory”. They were “immediately returned to Morocco, without being identified, given the chance to claim asylum, or being given an interpreter. Spain claims it was not in contravention of human rights, because people can claim asylum at the places provided for this purpose at the border posts. People from Sub-Saharan Africa are not permitted to enter these spaces”.¹⁵ Spain undertook this action notwithstanding the regional and supranational





influence of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Court of Human Rights over member states of the Council of Europe “in the area of immigration, residence and integration of aliens through a generous application of the principle of proportionality and a liberal interpretation of provisions of the ECHR” (Lambert, 2007 as cited in Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2013). In this regard, Nshimbi and Fioramonti cite a BBC 2012 report about the 23 February 2012 European Court of Human Rights order to Italy to pay €15,000 each to 13 Eritrean and 11 Somali migrants, after ruling that Italy had violated Article Three (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) and Article Four of Protocol Four (prohibition of collective expulsions) of the ECHR, when it sent the migrants back to Libya.

The determination to send African migrants back as seen in Spain’s actions has not deterred the migrants, as there are reports that African migrants still cross at Ceuta, “hidden under cars”.¹⁶ Due to the rigid border controls at Ceuta, some African migrants have attempted to use the Canary Islands to cross over to Europe, which has attracted “police raids around El Aaiún in Western Sahara, where people attempt to cross. Many of those arrested were taken by bus to Rabat”. Despite this, other African migrants still managed to cross to Europe, for instance, between the 6th and 7th of December 2015. A significant number of African migrants crossed the Strait, amid claims that on 8 December 2015 “Moroccan coastguard recovered the bodies of 11 people whose boat capsized”.¹⁷

At Ceuta, there are many tales of African immigrants attempting to cross into Europe. Some succeed such as those who successfully reached Ceuta by boat on the 19th December 2015.¹⁸ Some pushed back as suggested by the case of deportations to Tiznit in southern Morocco, which have ‘become the norm’.¹⁹ Some are injured by barbed wire or die as illustrated by the case of drownings. Actually, international humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the UNHCR (2015) reported that 2014 had seen the highest level of worldwide displacement of people ever since records began. The year after (2015) worsened, while the situation had not changed, but expected to worsen even farther, at the beginning of 2016.²⁰ Yet others suffer unimaginable conditions and atrocious treatments.²¹ Regarding, treatment or ill treatment of African migrants, one report captured it

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¹⁶Border Flashpoint News (2015) #11 Issue 11: Week 7th–13th December 2015.

¹⁷Border Flashpoint News (2015) #11 Issue 11: Week 7th–13th December 2015.

¹⁸Border Flashpoint News (2015) #12 Issue 12: Weeks 14th–27th December 2015.

¹⁹Border Flashpoint News (2015) #12 Issue 12: Weeks 14th–27th December 2015.

²⁰Alarm Phone (2015) New Year begins with more than 60 Deaths in the Aegean Sea and in Ceuta/Spain, 28 December 2015–10 January 2016.

²¹Border Flashpoint News (2015) #12 Issue 12: Weeks 14th–27th December 2015.





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thus: "Routine of persecution the unbearable conditions of sub-Saharan migrants in the north of Morocco". This report shows that:

Due to the dramatic situation at the eastern external borders of the EU, the Moroccan-Spanish setting tends to be eclipsed. But West and Central African migrants in the north of Morocco still suffer oppression and racist violence on their way to Europe. The city of Tangiers in the north of Morocco can be seen as an example for the developments of the EU and Moroccan migration policies. Here, the current political agenda is most visible: Integration programs for sub-Saharan migrants financed by the EU to decrease illegalized border crossings in exchange for an easier access to Schengen-Visas for Moroccan citizens. Meanwhile, since 2015, it has become next to impossible to get a legal residency for people from Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire.²²

Our intention is not to provide a catalogue of the treatment or lack of it regarding African migrants attempting to cross into Europe, a catalogue of which has been done better elsewhere, but to show that erecting borders against African immigrants may not be sustainable in the long run. For instance, even if the migrants are ill-treated, deported and others drown, die or some are later rescued and returned to their countries of origin, this does not deter them from continuing migrating to Europe. The cases outlined in the previous sections clearly indicate that such African migrants continue to attempt to migrate to Europe, even if others succeed, others fail and still others die. Not even funds donated to African countries in the name of improving conditions in migrant sending countries with a view to stemming flows to Europe are, in our opinion, sufficient to achieve such ends.

What this clearly shows is that the issue of implementing a draconian and exclusivist immigration regime by EU countries against African refugees and migrants will not promote human dignity and development, but only work and succeed in violating human dignity, rights and escalate deaths. The cases at Ceuta clearly show this. The efforts at Ceuta are not isolated with respect to failed attempts to curb the flows of African migrants into Europe. Libya, for example, is the prime hub through which majority of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea reach Malta, the Italian Peninsula and Greece, where they are detained and processed. Hammond (2015) asserts that strict detention policies in Europe are sometimes alleged to have been unlawfully maintained as a mechanism for deterring would-be migrants. The effect of such measures and stricter border security measures has at best fuelled illegal methods of entry and changes in migratory routes in the Mediter-





anean Sea, according to Hammond. Clearly, the draconian and exclusivist measures by EU countries designed to curb migration from Africa are an antithesis of the spirit of sustainable development.

Against this background, it is imperative for European countries to understand that globalisation and development in transport and technology has led to spaces of flows (Castells, 1996). This leads one to consider the effects of migrants on, among others, the economy of European countries. Research suggests that migrants in the United Kingdom (UK) have positively impacted on the economy. Referring to London specifically,

“two distinct positive effects of migration are its qualitative impact on the London labour force and economy, through diversity, flexibility, international experience and skill sets; and its quantitative contribution through expanding labour supply and thus enabling employment growth and reducing upward wage pressure” (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2007, p.3).

The Guardian (2013) carried similar reports, that the UK has generally benefitted from migration. *The Guardian* cited Professor John Salt and Dr. Janet Dobson, from University College of London’s migration research unit, who argue that the call by the UK to reduce migration was “neither a useful tool nor a measure of policy effectiveness” (*The Guardian*, 2013). Another report also showed that “the government’s plan to cut net migration will damage Britain’s economy, weaken the public finances and reduce people’s take-home pay” (O’Connor, 2014). Add to this the cited OECD study (Section 2) that reported on the sectors that undocumented migrants fill in the listed European countries and in which (sectors) nationals are not willing to be employed. While it is not our intention to obfuscate any negative impacts that migrants may bring to a host country or city (such as the risks and threats associated with the spread of terrorism), it seems migrants do make meaningful contributions. It is thus possible to argue that the EU countries are frustrating the flow of people and their development potential, which could be harnessed for development in this age of globalisation.

In order to ground this discussion on cross-border interactions, boundaries and frontiers, it is worth going back to the case of Ceuta, which we extensively referred to in the previous sections. We argue that whereas culture can be an important variable in a strong political clout, it is by no means the only factor. In the case of Ceuta, the contested region between Spain and Morocco, it seems economic cross-border activities transcend culture. If this is the case, it can be suggested that based on the cross-border economic activities across Ceuta, barring African migrants may have negative economic consequences given that the cross-border interactions between Ceuta and Europe have existed over a longer period of time. In terms of cross-border economic interactions

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and sustainable development, this does not provide the best course of action to follow. The argument is not that the 'border' should not exist, but that cooperation between European and African countries should be strong so as to foster sustainable development.

To demonstrate this point, we refer to other examples elsewhere. Evidence exists that despite increased interaction and co-operation across borders, this may not always wither away the border. For example, Germany and Austria have maintained their sovereignty despite harmonisation and increased cooperation at the German-Austrian border (Brunet-Jailly, 2008). However, the case of the US-Canadian border interactions seems to suggest that the very nature of the border land is fundamentally changing. For instance cross-border interactions between Cascadia and the Great Lakes region in the Canada-US border illustrates that functional linkages in this area are changing the nature of the borderland (Brunet-Jailly, 2008). Actually, the interaction in these areas suggest that there has been a realignment of socio-cultural and ideological values and orientations on the basis of cross border activities. This shows that markets and functional linkages may transform the nature of the cross-border interaction to form a 'new' borderland, predicated on new found values and identities. We see the possibility of this in areas like Ceuta. This may provide the basis for sustainable development and not border fences and walls, from the point of view of migratory cross-border interactions.

WITHERING FORTRESS EUROPE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF SUSTAINABLE ENGAGEMENT WITH AFRICA?

The migration crisis, which continues on the shores of the EU (amidst respective EU member states' unilateral attempts to physically deter migrants as well as the EU providing funds to nip migration in the bud in migrant-sending countries) and is manifested in areas like Ceuta suggests that African migrants will continue flowing to the EU. It appears there is no amount of exclusion that will deter them from migrating to Europe, as evidenced by some who are injured, while others drown and die. Others, still, manage to cross into Europe only to be arrested and deported back to their countries. This paper has argued that, by adopting a restrictionist and draconian immigration regime against African migrants, Europe is missing an opportunity for sustainable solutions and engagement with African countries. In a region like Ceuta, there are strong and historical cross border interactions, which need to be strengthened farther, so that there is a positive flow of people from Africa to the EU. The Ceuta region presents an opportunity for the EU to test and implement immigration policies that promote an unfettered flow of people. The value of this paper is that it detects a problem in the way the EU engages with African countries on matters of migra-





tion and suggests an overhaul of immigration policies that will result in the integration of migrants from Africa for the mutual sustainable development of both regions. Otherwise, in addition to cooperation and engagement at the policy level between the EU and African countries, coupled with the provision of financial support to stem migration from its source – which to us represents a pushing back by EU states of the borders with African states into Africa – some EU states implement measures including physical barriers, (military) patrols, etc. All this adds to the reinforcement of the European fortress against Africa. However, the strength of the ‘space of flows’ supersedes such efforts and suggests that the EU and Africa should devise more effective and sustainable mechanisms to deal with migration. For as long as the fortification of Europe against migrants from Africa continues, the migration crisis on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and Ceuta will continue. In other words, Fortress Europe is not a sustainable way to deal with migrants. Else the migrants will engage in dynamic and agentive (even if they are dangerous) ways to rupture the instruments of exclusion from below, hence the question remains: whether the fortress around the Mediterranean and Africa?

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