

CAN BORDERS, WALLS AND FENCES DETER FORCED MIGRANTS? COMPARISON OF FUTURE POLICY TRAJECTORIES AND IMPLICATIONS IN EUROPE AND ISRAEL

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Abstract

Over the last three years forced displacement has reached the highest recorded level since World War II. Indeed, the numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers across the globe have increased dramatically. The purpose of this review paper is to describe current policy trajectories regarding forced migration and to discuss the efficacy of border control in preventing forced migrants from arriving in Europe and Israel. Attempts on the part of Israeli and European authorities to "secure" or "protect" the borders have quite clearly failed. Nevertheless, although walls do not address the origins of tensions or conflicts, countries continue to roll out more of the same in response to the escalating "refugee crisis". This paper discusses possible future steps to break this vicious cycle and replace the "illegality industry" model with an alternative global "positive policy" model to generate hope for a way out among forced migrants.

Keywords: *borders, forced migration, refugees*

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2017 the number of international migrants—persons living in a country other than their country of birth—reached 258 million or 3.4% of the total world population. In 2000 migrants constituted 9.6% of the population of high-income countries; by 2017 this percentage had risen to 14%. Ten percent of all international migrants are refugees or asylum seekers (26 million). Two-thirds of all international migrants live in twenty countries, and half of them reside in ten countries only. Out of every ten international migrants, six reside in Asia (80 million) or Europe (78 million) (United Nations 2017). In the present paper we focus on forced migrants living in Europe and Israel.

In considering migration, migrants generally react both to push and to pull factors. Alongside push factors such as political or ethnic conflicts in their countries of origin, there migration is also motivated by pull factors that offer hopes of upward mobility and a higher standard of living elsewhere (Castles & Miller, 2009; Lev Ari, 2008; Rebhun & Lev Ari, 2010). Voluntary migrants willingly choose to move in reaction to pull factors in the destination

country (Lev Ari, 2008; Mingot & da Cruz 2013). Forced migrants, on the other hand, particularly refugees, react to push factors in their countries of origin (Castles & Miller, 2009). Another group of forced migrants includes those who are pushed out of their countries not only by political persecution but also by environmental disasters (such as floods and earthquakes) or development projects (Ionesco, Mokhnacheva, & Gemenne, 2016). According to the International Displacement Monitoring Centre, each year since 2008 around 26.4 million people have been displaced from their homes by disasters brought on by natural hazards. That is, people also migrate to flee the impact of climate change on their homelands (IDMC, 2015; O'reilly, 2013). According to estimates, by 2050, 200 million people will have been displaced by factors related to climate change (Lanktree, 2015).

Human trafficking, particularly of women and children, for exploitation purposes is another form of forced migration. Forced migration usually involves illegally smuggling people into destination countries. While forced migration usually stems from political conflict or persecution, voluntary migration derives from economic motives (Betts 2009). Thus, migration motivations can be based on economic, political or other causes. Those motivated by both political and economic reasons are called "asylum seekers", defined as follows: "People who have crossed an international border in search of protection, but whose claims for refugee status have not yet been decided. Asylum seekers sometimes live in a drawn-out situation of uncertainty and inactivity, since determination procedures and appeals may take many years" (Castles, 2006: 9).

Thus the terms "asylum-migration nexus" or "mixed migration" refer to various forms of migration: irregular, transit and smuggling. Migrants from a single country may include people who have a genuine claim to refugee status and others who do not, especially when that country is simultaneously affected by persecution, armed conflict, political instability and economic collapse. Forced migration has been a major feature of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Despite legal definitions regarding forced migration, particularly refugees, the distinctions between forced migration or voluntary economic migration are not clearly delineated (Mingot & da Cruz, 2013).

Global forced displacement in 2015 reached the highest level recorded since World War II. The number of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people across various regions of the world, from Africa to the Middle East and South Asia, increased dramatically. The vast majority of these refugees continue to be hosted by developing countries, particularly those close to the refugees' countries of origin (UN, 2016). According to United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) figures for 2016, 65.3 million people have been forcibly displaced, including 21.3 million registered refugees who have fled their home countries to escape conflict or persecution (Falk, 2016).

The purpose of this narrative review paper is to describe and discuss current policy trajectories and implications regarding forced migration across the globe (mainly in Europe), particularly in the unique context of Israel. The paper refers to various theories and data sources: International Organization of Migration (IOM), United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and Israeli sources: The Knesset Research and Information Center and Israel's Population, Immigration and Border Authority. We analyse the efficacy of border control in preventing forced migration and compare the situation in Israel and in Europe. We also elaborate on future policy trajectories that may be more useful in preventing people from emigrating from their homelands while at the same time may improve the lives of those who have already immigrated.

2. POLICY TRAJECTORIES AND BORDER CONTROLS AGAINST FORCED MIGRATION

One of the challenges posed by international migration is how to regulate the movement of people across their borders. Some recent international migration is irregular or illegal, and its scope is much greater than in earlier decades. Governments strive to regulate migration through rigorous bilateral, regional and international policies. Yet migrants have become transnationals (Castles, 2007; Rebhun & Lev Ari, 2010) in that they are more mobile and thus able to maintain enduring relationships with various social networks in two or more societies at once, thus undermining their loyalty to a sovereign nation-state. Hence, contemporary migration may become resistant to governmental control, which has been calling for new policies, both local and international (Castles & Miller, 2009).

State control over migration has a long history. In the last few decades, particularly among neoclassical economists in the US, migration has been perceived as determined by market forces. Yet border controls and other policy trajectories always intervene with the so-called free market forces. Political decisions regarding "unwanted" migration acutely increased following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, with migration control shifting to become international and secure. Despite intensive efforts by developed countries to control migration, this issue has become quite problematic (Castles, 2007). The 9/11 terrorist attacks also changed the process of "opening" borders into one of "hardening" borders. Hardening refers to building any kind of closure system to prevent undesired entrance or immigration flows. Hardening does not mean complete closure but rather the attempt to control all cross-border movements and to direct them to appropriate checkpoints (Rosière & Reece, 2012).

Across the globe, building walls has become the political strategy favoured by nations convinced that barriers are the only way to deal with difficult neighbours. Figure 1 depicts the expansion of walls, barriers and fences worldwide. When the Berlin Wall was torn down, there were 16 border fences around the world. Since then, 40 countries across the globe have built fences, with the majority citing security concerns and prevention of illegal migration. More than 30 of those decisions were made following 9/11, with 15 in the last two years (Reece, 2016; The Economist, 2016; Tomlinson, 2015).

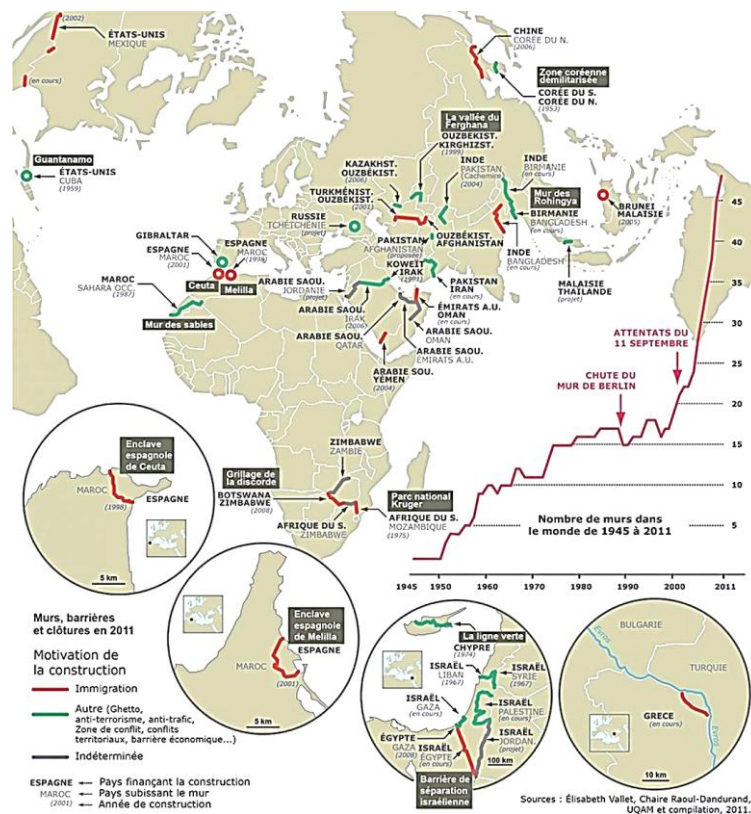


Figure 1: Map of the world's major physical barriers (Source: Fisher (2014))

Walls separating countries are nothing new. The idea of walling off a nation either to stop immigration flows or to block foreign invaders has had broad historical appeal, from Roman Emperor Hadrian's stone wall to Israel's West Bank barrier. Often, however, walls are more symbolic barriers than practical ones. The Germans simply marched around the French Maginot Line to invade Belgium, and the Manchurians repeatedly broke through the Great Wall of China (Chandler, 2015; Melvin, 2015).

Prior to the modern era, most boundaries were military lines that marked the extent of defended territorial boundaries. At that time it was not possible to map large territories and the Westphalian notion of mutual recognition of sovereignty had not yet been adopted. Instead, barriers were chiefly constructed at strategic sites to prevent the forward movement of an opposing army (Rosière & Reece, 2012).

The end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 led to the long-awaited development of a "global village" characterized by the free movement of goods, people, and information. But the last few decades have also been marked by global fragmentation, symbolized by the silent multiplication of dividing walls throughout the world (Agnew, 2009; Bruce, 2001; Shafer, 2007).

In Europe, the tightened migration regimes of the 1970s did not immediately lead to the rise of irregular land and sea migration. In fact, such migration hardly existed in Europe before the 1990s, when Europe began implementing a border security model similar to the US model. This shift towards border security began with the Schengen agreement on free movement, which—largely for political and symbolic reasons—entails reinforcement of the EU's external borders. Yet this treatment of certain types of migration as a threat or risk has itself generated

novel risks and "centrifugally" dispersed them away from the "core" border security actors (Andersson, 2016).

Globalization was supposed to tear down barriers, but security fears and widespread refusal to help migrants and refugees have fuelled a new spate of wall-building across the globe, with a third of the world's countries constructing barriers along their borders. Particularly during the last two years Europe has taken measures to reduce the negative consequences of the migration crisis, which has become one of the "hot" issues on the European Commission's agenda. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, European countries have built or initiated 1,200 km of anti-immigrant fencing. Most of the building began in 2015. Many of these walls separate EU nations from states outside the EU bloc, but some are between EU states, including members of Europe's passport-free zone. These barriers generated security guards, cameras and surveillance equipment, all of which make it harder for people to make their cases for being granted asylum (Reuters, 2016).

The measures taken included stopping those who organize irregular migration, improving external border controls, formulating return and readmission policy, and instituting common rules for managing the return of irregular migrants. According to Amnesty International, Europe now leads the way in erecting walls to keep people out and has shown that border walls can work—perhaps not as well as claimed, but well enough (Amnesty International, 2015).

After numerous European nations erected border fences to stop the flow of refugees, the number of asylum seekers arriving in Germany dropped by over 60 percent in the first quarter of 2016 compared to the fourth quarter of 2015 (Baczynska & Ledwith, 2016). Furthermore, the number of first-time asylum applicants in Europe decreased by 47% in the first quarter of 2017 compared with the same quarter of 2016 and by 21% compared with the fourth quarter of 2016. Overall, the number of persons from non-EU countries seeking asylum in Europe during the first quarter of 2017 reached 164,500, 143,000 fewer than in the same quarter of 2016 (Eurostat, 2017).

The EU's refugee strategy is essentially one of building Fortress Europe, as explicitly stated in the recent EU-Turkey deal. Yet even on its own terms, the EU is failing. Asylum seekers are still being detained in overcrowded conditions, EU pledges to deploy asylum officials to process their claims are not being fulfilled, and the relocation process for those refugees who made it to Greece before the March 20 deadline is failing badly (Hughes, 2016). It should also be noted that when people do talk about the "refugee crisis," they mainly refer to people fleeing Syria. However, thousands of Africans risk their lives every day to reach Europe by crossing the Mediterranean crammed into tiny rubber and wooden boats that often capsize, risking suffocation and drowning. In 2016, the number of refugees and migrants who drowned in the Mediterranean in an attempt to reach Europe was the highest on record, primarily due to 4,578 deaths in the central Mediterranean, compared to 2,913 in all of 2015 (IOM, 2017). The Migration Agency reports that 7,511 migrants and refugees entered Europe by sea during the first five weeks of 2018 (Table 1), compared to 10,078 arrivals across the region during the same period last year. As of February 4, total deaths in the Mediterranean in 2018 now stand at 390, compared with 257 at this time last year (IOM 2018).

Table 1. Sea Arrivals in Europe—2018 and 2017 compared (1 January–4 February)

MEDITERRANEAN DEVELOPMENTS				
TOTAL ARRIVALS BY SEA AND DEATHS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN 2017-2018				
	1 JANUARY – 4 FEBRUARY 2018		1 JANUARY – 4 FEBRUARY 2017	
Country of Arrival	Arrivals	Deaths	Arrivals	Deaths
Italy	4,723	315 (Central Med. route)	8,427	228 (Central Med. route)
Greece	1,501 (as of 03/02)	0 (Eastern Med. route)	1,651	1 (Eastern Med. route)
Cyprus	0		N/A	
Spain	1,287 (as of 31/01)	75 (Western Med. route)	N/A	28 (Western Med. route)
Estimated Total	7,511	390	10,078	257
Data on deaths of migrants compiled by IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre. All numbers are minimum estimates. Arrivals based on data from respective governments and IOM field offices.				

(Source: IOM 2018)

In the following section, we describe the circumstances surrounding the arrival of forced migrants from Africa to Israel and policy implications regarding their stay in Israel, particularly those relevant to border control tactics.

3. FORCED MIGRATION FROM AFRICA TO ISRAEL: CHARACTERISTICS AND MOTIVES

Israel does not perceive itself as a destination country for migration of non-Jews. The government has frequently stated that the only avenue for migration to Israel is through the Law of Return. Therefore, any migrant to Israel who has no Jewish lineage is subject to status regulation under the Entry to Israel Law or the Anti-Infiltration Law. Accordingly, foreign nationals who arrived in Israel by crossing the border with Egypt and did not do so through a legal border crossing were detained under the Entry to Israel Law and the Anti-Infiltration Law (Hotline for Refugees and Migrants, 2016).

In the 1990s, Israel opened its gates to labour migrants. The outbreak of the first Intifada and the subsequent security measures banning Palestinian labourers from entering Israel led to a labour vacuum. Economic considerations led employers in the construction and agricultural sectors to pressure the government to permit the entry of foreign workers as an alternate source of cheap labour (Bartram, 1998). At the outset of labour migration, Israel, like Europe, viewed the influx of foreign workers as a passing phenomenon and a cheap, available and temporary labour force. Yet, as was the case in Europe, many of the workers remained in Israel, brought their families to the country or started new families and turned their temporary stay into permanent residence (Klinger, 2009).

The major route to Europe takes asylum seekers from Africa through the Sahara Desert to war-torn Libya, where they often board unseaworthy vessels bound for Italy (Figure 2). During the early 1990s, after Israel had opened its gates to labour migrants and following the bloody war in the Congo and the civil wars in the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Liberia, refugees from African countries began arriving (Gabison & Elran, 2013; Martins, 2009). Despite life-threatening risks, the vast majority of these refugees entered by crossing the border with Egypt in the Sinai desert. This migration from Africa received encouragement not only from Israel's

tolerant migration policies but also from the fact that Israel is a democratic and relatively affluent nation. Israel is accessible to African migrants by foot and therefore constitutes the closest, most convenient and relatively most inexpensive refuge for African refugees (Paz, 2011). The traffickers' two main routes to Egypt from Kassala involve driving to Aswan via Wadi Halfa in Sudan or via a route north of Port Sudan. From Aswan, the traffickers move the migrants to Ismailia, 150 kilometers northeast of Cairo, before reaching the Suez Canal and crossing into Sinai. See Figure 2 - major route of Eritrean asylum seekers.



Figure 2. The major route of Eritrean asylum seekers (Source: Laub, 2016)

Table 2 shows the African asylum seekers' main countries of origin. Eritrea is the leading country of origin, followed by Sudan and other African countries.

Table 2. Main groups of asylum seekers in Israel by country of origin, 2016

	Country		
	Other African countries	Eritrea	Sudan
Number	3,338	30,009	8,130
Percentages	8	72	20

Source: Israel's Population, Immigration and Border Authority, April 2016

This stream of refugees continued until the mid-2000s. Yet since the numbers were small, the State of Israel did not perceive the refugees as a particular threat and therefore did not take steps to stop them (Paz, 2011; Soffer, 2012). Only towards the end of 2005 did the migration figures begin changing. Due to the hostile measures of the Egyptian government directed at Sudanese citizens living in Egypt, including imprisonment and forcible return to their countries of origin, the stream of Africans crossing into Israel from Egypt via the Sinai border turned into a torrent (Allam & Slackman, 2005; Ben-Dor, 2008; Martins, 2009).

Since 2005, around 60,000 asylum seekers, mostly from Eritrea and Sudan, have entered Israel by crossing the border from Egypt (Kalir, 2015; Rubin, 2017). As seen in Figure 3, the migration of only a few dozen people per year turned into a massive wave of thousands of refugees each year (Israel's Population, Immigration and Border Authority, 2018).

Most of the refugees came from Eritrea, South Sudan, the Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia, all Muslim countries hostile to Israel (Bazelon, 2008; Omri, 2011; Tal, 2007). Today, there are 40.3 thousand asylum seekers in Israel, mostly (71%) from Eritrea and a fifth from Sudan. Since the end of 2013, Israel has also offered to pay African asylum seekers \$3,500 to leave the country, and between 2014 and 2016, 13,000 asylum seekers voluntarily left Israel for a third country (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

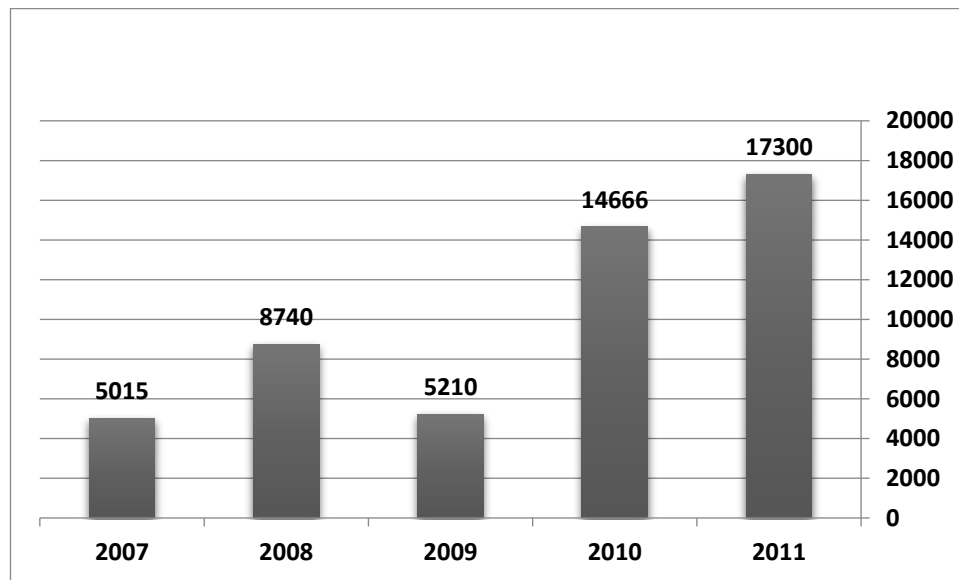


Figure 3. Data on migration from Africa to Israel: 2007-2011 (Source: Israel's Population, Immigration and Border Authority (2018))

The flow of refugees from Africa derives not only from security and economic instability, but also from environmental disasters. Desertification, for example, results from a combination of over-exploitation of land for agriculture and grazing and general drying out processes originating in global warming and a drop in precipitation. The immediate victims of desertification are the weakest nations, among them Senegal, Sudan and Ethiopia (Baker, 2015; Rozen, 2015). Migration from African countries is not only related to violent conflicts of one type or another but also to poverty, lack of occupational prospects and citizens' loss of faith in the authorities (Lamble & Graham-Harrison, 2016). Growing social, economic, political and defence inequality between African nations and the West also encourages migration (Sofer, 2012).

Agreements signed as early as 2004 between European nations and Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi constitute another factor that influenced migrants to attempt to emigrate to Israel. The objective of these agreements was to stop the migration route from Africa via Libya *at all costs* (Car, 2011; Noll & Giuffré, 2011). This route had served as the main gate for migration from Africa to southern European countries (Paoletti, 2010).

Other factors that amplified the wave of migration have to do with improvements in transportation means that made migration easier, faster and cheaper, as well as with improved communication that intensified the urge to take advantage of opportunities and helped the migrants stay in touch with their families in their countries of origin. As a result, each year the stream of migrants from Africa entering Israel via Egypt increased (Nathan, 2010).

In the next section we describe Israeli government policy trajectories, particularly the erection of the southern barrier built to prevent forced migration from Africa to Israel.

4. POLICY TRAJECTORIES REGARDI

NG FORCED MIGRATION TO ISRAEL AND THE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN BORDER

In 1906, British officers drew the international border between Israel and Egypt, marking the area between Rafah and Aqaba as the border separating the British and Ottoman Empires (Brawer, 1988). This border, 240 kilometres in length, was drawn as a straight line on the map, without any demographic or geographic factors taken into consideration. The border was marked on the ground, but no fence or barrier was built there (Biger, 2001). In 1982, as part of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, the new border was marked by boundary stones and in some places by a low barbed wire fence. Due to its low height and the shifting sands that covered it over time, this fence did not present an obstacle to passage.

At that time, the only ones interested in building a massive border barrier between the two countries were those battling drug smuggling from Egypt to Israel and the trafficking of women (Goldschmidt, 2006). Thousands of women were smuggled across the unguarded border each year, mostly from Eastern Europe, to work in brothels in Israel (Sadeh, 2011). The smugglers were mainly Bedouins who lived in the Sinai Peninsula close to the border and were familiar with the best places to traffic people across the border, as well as Israeli Bedouins (Butcher, 2005), who also engaged in smuggling drugs and weapons (Reisen et al., 2013). Until 2007, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the government of Israel objected to building a massive border barrier, mainly due to budgetary considerations. At that time, labour migration had not taken on dramatic proportions.

In the period from 2007 through 2011, around 65,000 African forced migrants crossed the border from Egypt to Israel (Finkelstein, 2014; Gabison & Elran, 2013). The great majority demanded to be recognized as refugees who had fled their countries of origin. The State of Israel preferred to treat these migrants as “infiltrators” or “foreign workers.” In contrast, human rights organizations demanded that the migrants be considered asylum seekers and refugees who had been forced to migrate to flee persecution in their countries of origin (U.S. Department of State, 2011; Ziegler, 2011).

The Israeli government’s term “infiltrators” is used to describe people who enter Israel illegally rather than via recognized border crossings. This term, derived from the Anti-Infiltration Law, had been used in Israeli society since 1954 and served primarily to define those who entered Israel from hostile nations to carry out criminal acts that threatened national security and public safety (Feinstein International Center, 2012). Today the use of the term “infiltrators” reflects the attitude of policymakers in Israel towards the migrants from Africa. This attitude considers the migrants a significant strategic threat to the national interests of the State of Israel. Unlike terms such as “illegal migrants” or “asylum seekers,” this term lends justification to the government’s firm-hand policy.

The government of Israel was not enthusiastic about building a border barrier, mainly for financial reasons. According to Israeli officials, an African can earn a year’s salary in his home country by working two days in Israel (United States Senate, 2017). Yet ultimately, political and public pressure generated a negative image of a government incapable of overcoming “the refugee problem” (Goldstein, 2010; Sofer, 2008). This pressure, together with security motivations generated by the collapse of Mubarak’s government in Egypt in early 2011, forced the government to build a barrier. The failure of the new regime in Cairo to control anarchy in the Sinai Peninsula compelled the Israeli defence system to add more sophisticated security components to the barrier (Harel, 2011).

The government of Israel offered numerous justifications for blocking asylum seekers from crossing its border with Egypt. These included concerns for sovereignty and security, as well as national, social, demographical and health issues (Finkelstein, 2014; Klinger, 2009). The Israeli government claims that 99 percent of Africans in the country are economic migrants (referred to by the Israeli government as “infiltrators”) and not “genuine” refugees (Feinstein International Center, 2012). The first justification for the policy trajectory regarding forced migrants from Africa was the sovereign right to control migration. No nation can permit the absorption of an unsupervised flood of migrants. Nationalism is based upon safeguarding the nation’s borders and controlling those who enter and are allowed to settle in the country, in line with the interests of the citizens. Illegal border crossing creates a national security problem (Gabison & Elran, 2013). The second justification was based on security considerations: If the borders are open to refugees, they are also open to terrorist organizations seeking to enter Israel to carry out terrorist activities. Worldwide experience has proven that there is a connection between migration and terrorism. The fact that many of the infiltrators were Muslims and that some had passed through enemy nations on their way increased suspicions of their involvement in terrorism. While no direct connection between the infiltrators and terrorism had yet been proven, the infiltrators did pay a great deal of money to the Bedouin smugglers in Sinai and among other things this money was used to purchase weapons (Paz, 2011; Soffer, 2012).

A third justification for the policy trajectory was the issue of national identity. The State of Israel defines itself as a Jewish state, and the need to maintain a Jewish majority is fundamental. In any case, the country has major demographic problems that have implications regarding its ability to maintain its character as a Jewish and democratic state. Illegal migration is perceived as another threat to the country’s unique character. It was unclear whether the thousands of migrants that entered each month from countries with no border with Israel were labour migrants or asylum seekers. From the demographic perspective, this situation differed tremendously from that of a relatively small number of people who crossed Israel’s borders fleeing real and immediate danger (Avineri et al., 2009; Finkelstein, 2014).

The fourth consideration was social. The citizens of Israel, primarily the residents of south Tel-Aviv, have paid an unbearable price for the tens of thousands of forced migrants, who they perceived as trampling their rights. The asylum seekers live mainly in Israel’s economic periphery, where the cost of living is low and population density is high, leading to battles over places to live and over territory. The crowded living conditions of the asylum seekers have placed a great burden on the dilapidated infrastructures in these weakened areas and increased the distress of the neighbourhoods’ old-time residents. Crime and violence have risen sharply in the areas where the migrants settled (Paz, 2011).

Health considerations constitute the fifth justification for policy trajectory. Infectious diseases have practically disappeared from the Western world thanks to modern health systems. Yet the prevalence of diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis in the migrants’ countries of origin created a threat of contagion among the Israeli population (Avineri et al., 2009).

The massive border fence built between 2011 and 2013 changed the reality along the border. Originally planned for socioeconomic reasons—to block the infiltration of refugees and asylum seekers from Africa—the fence was redesigned in the wake of political changes in Egypt that created the need to defend the country against security threats (Mitnick, 2013).

The fence ranges in height from five to seven meters. Building it posed a complex engineering challenge because its route crosses sand dunes, hills and rocky areas. The fence is made of steel and has deep foundations and sharp blades on the top to prevent people from digging under or climbing over. Through a combination of radar technologies, sensors, cameras

and observation posts equipped with night vision devices, the fence was intended to block the passage of work-seekers, terrorists and smugglers from Sinai to Israel (Hamilton, 2012; Schwartz, 2013).

Building the fence had an immediate impact on migration from Africa to Israel. At the height of the infiltration, more than 17,000 migrants entered Israel from Africa in a single year—2011 (Miskin, 2013). At the end of 2012, as construction of the fence advanced, the numbers of asylum seekers dropped dramatically, from 10,440 in 2012 to 120 in 2013 to 42 in 2014 (Figure 4).

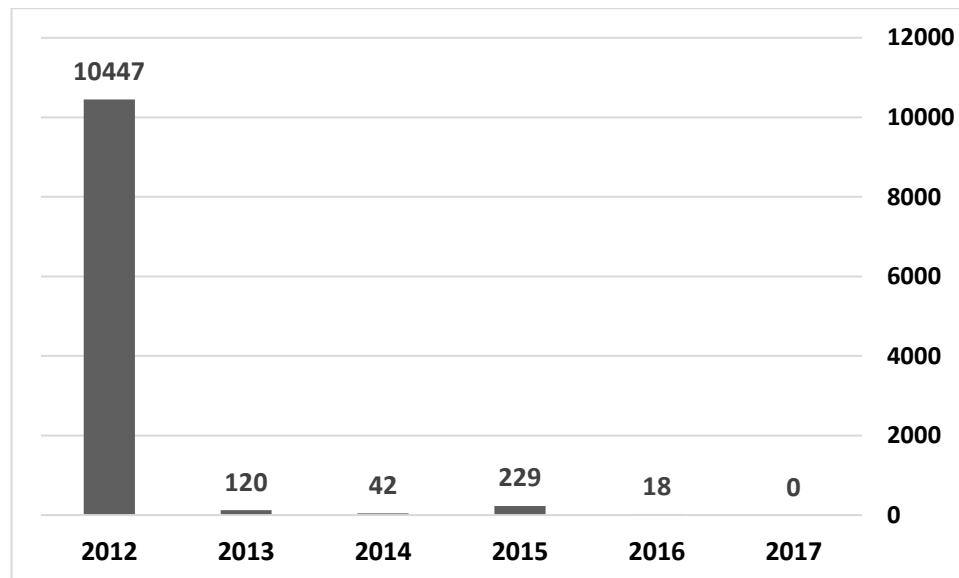


Figure 4. Impact of building the fence on number of forced migrants to Israel
Source: Israel's Population, Immigration and Border Authority (2018)

In 2015, the number of people seeking to enter Israel at its border with Egypt began to increase, with 213 illegal entries recorded that year. According to Israeli officials, the number of illegal entries rose because crossers began to use ladders at a particular section of the border to climb over the fence. To address this new tactic, Israel increased the height of the fence, rendering the ladders ineffective (United States Senate, 2017). In 2016, only 18 asylum seekers entered Israel, a 99 percent decrease compared with previous years, and in 2017 no asylum seekers crossed the border (Israel's Population, Immigration and Border Authority, 2018). The effectiveness of the security fence has forced adversaries to seek other means of entering the country. In particular, tunnelling poses challenges to effective security fencing in Israel (United States Senate, 2017).

The border barrier is not the only measure implemented by the Israeli government in its attempts to stop the wave of migration (Nathan, 2011). Other measures, mostly publicly and legally controversial, are intended to reduce the attractiveness of migrating from Africa to Israel (Human Rights Watch, 2014). These include passing new laws permitting the imprisonment of migrants for 18 months in detention facilities built especially for this purpose, making conditions for staying in Israel tougher, making the welfare systems less accessible, prohibiting work permits and making attainment of refugee status more difficult (Kuttner & Rozen, 2015). Furthermore, Israel has adopted a policy of giving financial compensation to asylum seekers who are willing to leave Israel for African countries where their lives are not in danger (Soffer, 2013).

The brutal treatment of Eritreans and Sudanese in the Sinai by mafia-style Bedouin families who extracted ransoms with torture and rape certainly has served as a deterrent. At the same time, Egypt is demonstrating an increasing propensity to deport Eritreans to their home country, despite risks that they will be jailed and abused when they are returned. The route through the Sinai and Israel has been closed. This has left Libya—and to a lesser extent Egypt—as the only viable routes for Africans, and both are becoming more difficult (Plaut, 2017).

After the fence was built, Israel had to cope with the immigrants who had already settled in the country, particularly in south Tel Aviv. In the final section of this paper we discuss the implications of current policy trajectories, both in Europe but particularly in Tel Aviv, and offer some possible future alternatives for coping with desperate forced migrants from Africa.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Although the fence along the Egyptian border with Israel significantly reduced the number of migrants from Africa to Israel, it appears that this situation is only temporary. To a large extent, it stems from the war being waged by the Egyptian army against terrorist organizations in Sinai, which blocks migrants' access to the border.

In the meantime, Bedouin smugglers are also learning to overcome the obstacle of the border fence. A tunnel dug under the border fence was recently discovered. The push factors motivating migrants from several African countries have not changed. These migrants continue to flee wars, poverty, disease and hunger. They are also motivated by the significant differences in standard of living and personal safety between the third world and the first. People who want to cross a border badly enough will find creative ways to circumvent a wall, even if it means taking greater risks by crossing elsewhere.

Where are the forced migrants today? The 38,000 African asylum seekers currently in Israel have found ways to support themselves, despite an increasingly difficult host environment. Recently (February 2018) the Israeli Population, Immigration and Border Authority began issuing deportation notices to asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan who are not being held in the Holot detention facility. The notices are issued to men without children when they come to renew their residence visa. Citizens of Eritrea and Sudan are required to renew their visas every two months. Upon seeking renewal, they will be issued their last two-month visa along with a letter stating that during this period they are expected to leave the country; otherwise they will be forbidden to work and can expect to be incarcerated indefinitely. Authority personnel will suggest that they leave either for Rwanda or for their native countries (Haaretz, 2018). This new policy has raised significant discussion and protests in Israeli society regarding its moral legitimacy, particularly in light of the fact that many Jews were not allowed to enter asylum countries during World War Two.

Furthermore, the border fence and the dangers of the Sinai desert have not stopped the wave of migration. Those forced migrants who cannot enter Israel still strive to find other destinations in Europe through dangerous Mediterranean crossings (for details see the IOM 2018 report). Their migration path has been diverted in the direction of Libya. From there the migrants endanger their lives crossing the Mediterranean to reach Italy. An Eritrean asylum seeker explained: "People were travelling to Israel because it was the only way, and now they're travelling to Europe because it's the only way" (IRIN, 2013).

While globalization diminishes borders, rich states are paradoxically attempting to strengthen their boundaries. Faced with streams of migrants they feel they cannot control, they erect walls in an emergency attempt to reassure their populations who seek ways to channel the flow of migrants. Yet the new walls provide only *a sense* of security, not real security.

Preventive migration policies, particularly those aimed at deterring migration, appear to matter little. At best, direct controls like border fences and detention can divert the flow of migrants, essentially passing the buck from one country to the next. Apparently, these measures are not capable of preventing migration in an absolute sense. It may be harder and more expensive, but migrants will find another route (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2016). Andersson (2016) rightfully stated: "Despite Europe's mass investments in advanced border controls, people keep arriving along the continent's shores under desperate circumstances. European attempts to 'secure' or 'protect' the borders have quite clearly failed, as politicians themselves increasingly recognize—yet more of the same response is again rolled out in response to the escalating 'refugee crisis'" (Andersson, 2016: 1055).

Therefore, some possible future policy implications that might break this vicious cycle should be considered. In line with Andersson (2016), in order to replace the reproduction of the "illegality industry" with an alternative global model for mobility, short-term consideration should be based on the assumption that migration, in its various forms, is a structural phenomenon that punitive border policies will not solve. Instead, positive policies should be adopted to re-establish legal entry pathways, such as issuing humanitarian visas, resettling refugees and offering labour migration programs.

Adopting positive policies that create hope for a way out and generate willingness to return to home countries among forced migrants, alongside cooperation with non-European host countries, might diminish smuggling and violence, to be replaced by control and cooperation among governments. Long-term goals should include the involvement of EU institutions concerned with migration and borders in order to "normalize" migration (Andersson, 2016).

Meanwhile, Israel and Europe have to deal with those who have already arrived. Convincing 193 nations to agree on the best way to handle the twin problems of migrants and refugees is not easy. While refugees already have legal protection and rights under international conventions, there is no such consensus on economic migrants—namely asylum seekers—and many richer countries refuse to change this situation (Falk, 2016).

In the long run, walls do not address the origins of tension or conflict. They are a black-and-white answer to very complex situations. Walls tend to create the illusion of a safe solution for the powerful people on the "good side" by separating "us" from "them." Meanwhile, people living on the "wrong side" of the wall often focus on devising and planning (dangerous) ways of getting around it by tunnelling under it, crossing the desert or crossing the seas. By alienating people who are on the "wrong side," walls contribute to their frustration and anger and thus further increase tension and deepen misunderstanding. A wall creates a generation of "those who are without" papers, status, or rights—people who are trapped on the other side. The weak often end up becoming stronger: Because they on the neglected side, they have much less to lose.

Walls are not a solution to Europe's or to Israel's forced migration problem. Thus, we propose a positive policy for the future that will require international, inter-regional and local interventions and cooperation in order to diminish the desperate need to emigrate on the one hand and to encourage people to return to their homelands on the other.

We suggest future research trajectories that will encourage positive policy towards forced migrants. For example, a comparative study between Israel and Europe might track several groups of refugees and asylum seekers who managed to return to their home countries and resettle there. This future study should use qualitative and quantitative methods to track the characteristics of success or failure in their reintegration back home. Is their success or failure affected by personal traits or by local political and social factors? What are the reasons for their return and what can be done internationally to further encourage these forced migrants to return? How can their experience in Israel or Europe contribute to their reintegration and what skills they have acquired in these host societies? What can be done in the future? These study

trajectories will contribute to theories regarding return migration, and in particular will help decision-makers cope with the migration problem that so far seems only to generate further alienation, violence and mutual fear between "us" and "them"—which only create higher and more aggressive fences and walls.

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