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# The Long Arm of the Arab State

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## ABSTRACT

Under what conditions do authoritarian states exercise control over populations abroad? The securitisation of cross-border mobility has been a common theme in examining immigration policies in the Global North. The securitisation of emigration and diasporas in non-democratic contexts remains neglected; this is particularly true with regard to Arab states' extraterritorial authoritarian practices. This article argues that authoritarian states develop a range of migration policies that are driven by the contradictory pressures of economic and political imperatives or, put differently, an *illiberal paradox*: if a state does not expect economic gains from cross-border mobility, it is more likely to securitise its emigration policy; otherwise, it is more likely to securitise its diaspora policy. The article illustrates this trade-off via a most-similar comparison of Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco. Drawing on Arabic and non-Arabic primary and secondary sources, it sketches a novel area of research on migration and security.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The 2 October 2018 assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist, inside Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate served as a brutal demonstration of transnational authoritarian power. Khashoggi, living in self-imposed exile in the United States since 2017, proved unable to escape the long arm of the Arab state, which has developed complex mechanisms to engage with political dissent beyond its territorial borders. This dimension of states' policy-making has yet to constitute a dedicated research agenda. Scholars have identified how governments develop elaborate strategies in response to international immigration, including heightened attention to the policing of state borders, a re-evaluation of citizenship and naturalisation laws, or the externalisation of immigration processes to third states. Yet, as the Khashoggi case indicates, states – particularly outside the Western liberal democratic context – also develop practices that aim to securitise their own citizens' cross-border mobility. Therefore, if we are to move away from politics of immigration, how do authoritarian emigration states' security concerns affect their policy-making?

This article addresses this question by identifying the trade-off that authoritarian states face between migration and security: on the one hand, they wish to reap the economic benefits associated with large emigrant populations – primarily an influx of remittances, but also diaspora's investment in the home country, skills acquisition and training, a reduction in unemployment, and so on; on the other hand, authoritarian states also face the political need to maintain control of emigration flows, to monitor the movements of political dissenters, and to contain diasporas' activism abroad. Authoritarian emigration states' policy-making can best be understood via the management of the trade-off between the political imperative to prevent emigration and the economic urge to embrace it. The article distinguishes between authoritarian states' securitisation of emigration and diaspora policy and puts forth a two-pronged argument.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, if a state does not expect economic gains from its citizens' cross-border mobility, it is more likely to securitise its emigration policy: it will focus on tighter border controls, introduction of "exit" restrictions, and so on. On the other hand, if a state approaches its citizens' cross-border mobility as an economic opportunity, it is more likely to securitise its diaspora policy: it will focus on monitoring communities abroad, repressing expatriates' activism, and so on.

The article examines the interplay between migration, security, and development within authoritarian contexts in an inductive, exploratory manner. It traces how a closer examination of the securitisation of migration processes across North Africa via four illustrative cases – Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco. It begins with a review of the relevant scholarship that identifies a large body of work on the securitisation of migration, but one marked by a lack of scholarly engagement on policies developed in authoritarian states. It proceeds to examine an established theory of immigration states' policy-making – Hollifield's notion of the *liberal paradox* – and considers how it may be reformulated in order to address practices within authoritarian emigration states. A comparative case-study approach allows for a closer analysis of the securitisation of emigration and diaspora

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<sup>1</sup> For analytic clarity, I approach emigration and diaspora policy-making as distinct processes (Tsourapas 2015, 2196–97), with the former referring to processes governing the physical "exit" from a country, while the latter targeting those that are already outside the physical boundaries of the sending state.

policy-making in the Middle East building on a mix of qualitative data, including archival data, media reports in English and Arabic, as well as elite interviews. In the concluding part, the article examines how a focus on the *illiberal paradox* would allow for a fuller understanding of the trade-off between migration and security beyond the four authoritarian states examined here and paves the way for future research.

## II. THE MIGRATION-SECURITY NEXUS IN CONTEXT

While migration is not a new phenomenon, the discussion of the interplay between cross-border mobility and national security has gained significant traction only over the last twenty years. The field of security studies incorporated cross-border mobility in the aftermath of the Cold War via a focus on the *migration-security nexus* (Huysmans and Squire 2010). Insofar as national security is concerned – as opposed to human security – the literature’s main focus has been on immigration and advanced industrialised countries of destination (Weiner 1992; Rudolph 2003). Work by Copenhagen School scholars and others on *securitisation* – or, in brief, the socially-constructed notion of a specific issue as a security threat (Karyotis and Skleparis 2013) – has also come to include immigration and asylum (Bigo 2002). This is not to say that the Global South has been absent within debates on security responses to migration; rather, that there is a tendency to focus on the security implications for countries of destination, whether they are located in the West (Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989), the non-West (Whitaker 2003), or both (Greenhill 2010; Loescher 1992). The securitisation of emigration by countries of origin has yet to be explored as a separate field of inquiry.

By focusing on authoritarian emigration states,<sup>2</sup> we are able to identify two specific dimensions of securitisation: firstly, a number of states choose to securitise citizens’ freedom of movement (Alemán and Woods 2014; Dowty 1989). This was particularly prominent during the Cold War period, marked by the construction of the Berlin Wall and the German Democratic Republic’s shoot-to-kill policy towards anyone aiming to cross it (for an overview, see Tsourapas 2019, 3–18). For a number of these states, emigration constituted a major threat to economic development, as per the early literature on ‘brain drain’ (Bhagwati 1976). Restrictive emigration policies have persisted beyond the end of the Cold War as a number of countries – from Central Asian states to Cuba and from the Turkey to North Korea have sought to impose controls on their citizens’ freedom of movement. In this line of thinking, the migration-security nexus centres on the need to limit their citizens’ mobility in order to keep them under firm state control.

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<sup>2</sup> Authoritarianism is defined as per Linz’s classic definition of ‘political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones’ (Linz 1964, 255). Authoritarian emigration states include ‘the set of institutions, practices, and mechanisms regulating cross-border mobility’ developed in such systems (Tsourapas 2018a, 403).

A second dimension of securitisation that relevant literature focuses on is transnational: for Glasius, authoritarian elites project their power abroad via extraterritorial authoritarian practices, as they conceive ‘of the state as a collection of people to be governed, more than as a territorial entity’ (Glasius 2017, 2). Scholars have recently examined authoritarian emigration states’ de-territorialised security practices: they aim to repress diaspora groups abroad (Moss 2016; Adamson 2018), to develop a number of surveillance tactics in order to monitor their behaviour (Brand 2002), to mobilise pro-regime activists (Hirt and Mohammad 2017), to employ migrants as instruments of soft power (Tsourapas 2018a), or to prioritise certain diaspora communities over others (Tsourapas 2015; Koinova 2018). In this context, the migration-security nexus centres less on citizens’ cross-border mobility, for there appears an implicit understanding of cross-border mobility as an economic opportunity; rather, it focuses on those residing beyond the territorial borders of the authoritarian countries of origin.

Taken together, how may these two dimensions shed light on the interplay between emigration and security? Some see states as having abandoned emigration controls; autocracies ‘are more likely to allow citizens to travel or migrate’ and to focus their efforts on diaspora, rather than emigration, policy-making (Glasius 2017, 1). Yet, this is not entirely accurate: following the 2006 coup d’état attempt, Turkey banned the “exit” of all academics from the country; until 2013, even talk of unauthorised travel abroad carried a six-month prison sentence for Cuban citizens. One might assume that authoritarian states tend to control both emigration and diaspora communities; yet, notable cases do not fit into this expectation: Tunisia, for instance, did not exercise strict control over citizens’ emigration. Instead, elites have been particularly interested in monitoring their political behaviour once abroad (Brand 2006, 92-132). This paper presents a first attempt at overcoming this divide between emigration and diaspora politics without losing the unique insights that stem from close observation of securitisation processes in authoritarian contexts.

### III. GRAPPLING WITH THE *ILLIBERAL PARADOX*

The observation that states’ security concerns have led them to engage with cross-border mobility in different manners, with only some aiming to tightly control emigration, is not novel in the migration studies literature. Indeed, one of the main theorists of this tension within liberal democratic contexts has been James F. Hollifield, who identified an inherent contradiction in liberal democracies’ immigration policies. On the one hand, they seek to control their borders and restrict immigration because of domestic political reasons. On the other hand, they wish to encourage immigration under an economic rationale. Any attempt to understand immigration policy-making would need to consider states’ contending wishes to prioritise economics versus security demands or, as Hollifield describe it, the *liberal paradox* (Hollifield 2004). Beyond immigration, to what extent would a comparable framework allow for a better understanding of how security concerns affect emigration policy-making within countries of origin?

In contrast to Western democracies, authoritarian states are arguably confronted with an *illiberal paradox*. With regard to immigration policy-making, a number of autocracies paradoxically choose to enact liberal immigration laws (Natter 2018). At the same time, the illiberal paradox points to a trade-off between the political and economic drivers of authoritarian states' emigration policy-making: on the one hand, autocracies seek to control their borders and restrict emigration because of domestic political reasons linked to security risks or regime survival. On the other hand, they wish to encourage emigration under an economic rationale that highlights developmental gains. In this lies a tension not unlike the contradiction faced by democratic countries of destination. However, whereas the key to understanding the security dimension of the migration-development nexus within democratic immigration states lies in the liberal paradox, authoritarian emigration states need to be understood via the *illiberal paradox*. In order to maintain a competitive advantage, these states need to keep their economies open to trade, investment, and emigration; yet, this movement of people involves significant political risks.

The theoretical expectations of authoritarian emigration states' policy-making are driven by this illiberal paradox. In terms of measurement, the developmental importance of labour emigration lies primarily in skills acquisition, managing unemployment, and attracting economic remittances (cf. De Haas 2005), whereas regime stability constitutes the main security concern in authoritarian states (cf. Gerschewski 2013). Authoritarian states that do not expect developmental gains from citizens' cross-border mobility are more likely to securitise their emigration policy, for they are primarily concerned about domestic threats to regime stability. Tight controls on citizens' emigration have been instituted by numerous states that do not associate emigration with economic development – from the German Democratic Republic or the Soviet Union to, more recently, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In contrast, states that expect developmental gains from citizens' cross-border mobility are more likely to securitise their diaspora policy, for they are concerned about extraterritorial threats to regime stability. States such as Eritrea, China, or the Central Asian republics may have abandoned tight controls on citizens' emigration in order to attract economic remittances but have simultaneously securitised their diaspora policy-making.

To demonstrate the workings of the illiberal paradox empirically, I put this exploratory framework to test with a discussion of the four Arab states in North Africa: Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, examined from independence until the events of the 2011 Arab Uprisings. The objective of the case-selection strategy is the achievement of maximum variance along authoritarian emigration states' policy-making. Of the four cases, Morocco and Tunisia have consistently securitised their diaspora policy - as will be shown, this is due to the two states' consistent prioritisation of labour emigration as a form of development. In contrast, Algeria and Libya have shifted between securitising their emigration and diaspora policies, as per the expectations of the illiberal paradox framework. A basic scope condition expects the existence of consolidated authoritarian rule within the country of origin – therefore, this analysis ends in 2011 in order to exclude transitional or hybrid regimes (such as post-2011 Tunisia, Algeria or Morocco) or states embroiled in internal conflict (as in post-2011 Libya).

I employ a mix of qualitative data, including archival data and media reports in English and Arabic that I triangulate via secondary sources in English and French. I also draw on existing work on migration policy-making across the four case-studies in order to identify each country's developmental priorities. It bears repeating that the article's framework refers to labour migration, rather than forced displacement. Due to space limitations, I do not engage in long discussions on migration stock and bilateral flows; a number of excellent political demography works may be consulted on this matter (Birks and Sinclair 1980; Fargues 2004; Winckler 2009; Natter 2014).

| <b>Table 1</b>   |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Authoritarian Emigration States and the Illiberal Paradox in North Africa</b> |   |   |
| <b>Algeria</b>   | Securitisation of diaspora, 1962 – 1973               | Securitisation of emigration, 1973 – 2011 |
| <b>Libya</b>   | Securitisation of emigration, 1951 – 1969             | Securitisation of diaspora, 1969 – 2011   |
| <b>Morocco</b>   | Securitisation of diaspora policy-making, 1956 – 2011 |   |
| <b>Tunisia</b>   | Securitisation of diaspora policy-making, 1956 – 2011 |   |

#### IV. THE ALGERIAN EMIGRATION STATE

Algeria marked the first attempt by an authoritarian emigration state in the Middle East to address the tensions of the illiberal paradox. After the brutal Algerian War, the country gained independence from France in 1962 (McDougall 2017), while Algerians continued to enjoy a degree of freedom of movement between the two countries (Gillette and Sayad 1984). By 1965, over half a million of Algerian nationals resided in France. Despite rising restrictions on immigration by the French state, this number would grow exponentially via family reunification processes. The large population of Algerians constituted a significant development opportunity, primarily with regard to remittances (Trebus 1970): numerous bilateral agreements with France as well as Belgium and Germany demonstrated the economic importance of emigration for the Algerian state – at the time, freedom to leave the country was guaranteed as a constitutional right. But how did the authoritarian emigration state address potential security issues that could arise from its citizens' freedom of movement?

Algeria was the first state in the Middle East to develop an institutionalised mechanism aimed at reconciling the economic need for large-scale emigration with the security imperative for control over expatriates' political behaviour. The strategy involved the transformation of the *Federation de France* organisation belonging to the National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale*, or FLN, a major party in the Algerian war of independence) into the Friendship Society of Algerians in France (the *Amicale des*

*Algériens en France*, or AAF) in 1957.<sup>3</sup> The AAF ostensibly constituted an organisation that represented the interests of Algerian emigrants abroad, tasked with the provision of Arabic-language classes and culture to the growing expatriate community across France. It also mediated between the Algerian community and the French institutions. Early on, Algeria identified the need to reach out to those migrants who integrating into European societies. As one AAF official in France stated:

‘In Algeria the children are Arabs in an Arab milieu ... The children born in France are in a completely different milieu ... The immigrant child is a bit deprived. He feels a stranger in school, and then on holidays over there he doesn’t speak Arabic. His cousins treat him as French’ (Grillo 2006, 193).

The AAF staff were always recruited from Algeria, rather than from the expatriate community. Over the years, the organisation established offices in every part of France that had an Algerian consulate. The AAF would also organise numerous events, film shows, and annual celebrations – at some point, it even published a French-language journal entitled *L’Algérien en France* (Grillo 2006, 270). Overall, the AAF ‘enjoyed a complete monopoly of the organisation of the Algerian emigrant community in France’ (Collyer 2006, 840).

In addressing the tensions of illiberal paradox, the Algerian state identified the developmental benefits of emigration (cf. Collyer 2012); thus, it proceeded to securitise its diaspora policy. It did so via the AAF’s transformation into an extension of the Algerian state in France. The AAF provided effective surveillance of Algerians abroad, and reported directly to the Algerian Ministry of the Interior: ‘the structure of the *Amicale*’s links outside the offices resembles the cell organizations favoured by the FLN during the Algerian War. Some of those now prominent in Algerian affairs in Lyon were also active locally during that war.’ In fact, ‘this network enables the *Amicale*, and thereby the consulate, to be informed about what is happening to Algerian citizens in the quartiers and the factories’ (Grillo 2006, 270).

‘Under [President Houari] Boumediene, the Algerian state has a clear vision of the role it wants to play in Paris. Europe is divided into nine regions, themselves divided into sections. The *Amicale* employs up to five hundred people led without qualms by its first president, Mahmoud Guennez, an excellent instructor and a good organizer during the War of Independence. In 1959, this colonel was sent to France to help the FLN activists. Six years later, this "terrorist" chairs the first meeting of the *Amicale des Algériens en Europe*’ (Beau 1995, 87)

Given the responsibility to ‘maintain the allegiance’ of emigrant communities, the AAF aimed to prevent its compatriots from succumbing to the ‘cancers’ of liberalism, socialism, and communism, which were expected to plague ‘naïve’ migrants residing in ‘decadent’ host societies (Laurence 2012, 56). Its second president, Abdelkrim Gheraieb, would boast about how the AAF was tasked with monitoring dissent and reporting back to Algiers: ‘once a month, Boumediene would summon me, very worried about the actions of political opponents in France’ (Beau 1995, 88). At some point, the AAF ‘reportedly sent daily

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<sup>3</sup> The AAF later became known as *Amicale des Algériens en Europe*.



detached reports to Algiers regarding developments in the community in France' (Brand 2011, 5). Driss El Yazami, a Moroccan educated in Paris and, since 2004, the President of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights, recounts how the AAF would direct its members to harass North African expatriates affiliated with the Arab Workers Movement (*Mouvement des travailleurs arabes*, or MTA):

'They were really savages ... the *Amicale* people, they would punch us... many times, they came to take our leaflets and throw them out, all that ... And we would physically fight them many times ... Let's just say that the movement we were most opposed to ... was the AAF' (Fillieule and Sommier 2018).

A distinct policy shift in 1973 further attests to the expectations of the illiberal paradox: when increasing immigration restrictions in France and across Europe diminished the developmental value of labour emigration, Algeria shifted towards the securitisation of labour emigration. It was able to use its oil resources to relax its dependency on migration; in fact, on 19 September 1973, Boumediene banned Algerians from emigrating to France altogether (Fargues 2004, 1360). As the illiberal paradox thesis would expect, the post-1973 Algerian state put all its efforts into controlling emigration, instead (cf. Collyer 2012).<sup>4</sup> Partly because of the shift in the Algerian state's interests and partly because of domestic politics in Europe, the AAF gradually lost its power and centrality in managing the affairs of the Algerian diaspora. At the same time, the Algerian state prioritised the development of a 'discourse that discouraged emigration and policies that offered socio-economic securities as part of a nascent welfare state' (Natter 2014, 12). Overall, the Algerian experience demonstrates how the illiberal paradox sheds light onto the workings of the authoritarian emigration state: when approaching cross-border mobility as a developmental opportunity (1962-1973), Algeria attempted to securitise its diaspora policy via the AAF; from 1973 onwards, once the developmental importance of cross-border mobility diminished, Algeria shifted towards a securitisation of emigration policy, instead.

## V. THE LIBYAN EMIGRATION STATE

Oil-rich Libya is traditionally approached as a country of immigration or, more recently, transit migration (Bredeloup and Pliez 2011; for an overview of Libyan history, see Vandewalle 2012). Political scientists have examined how Libyan elites employed the status of the country both as a transit and as a host country of migrants for economic and foreign policy gains in its migration diplomacy (Tsourapas 2019, 188-196); yet, little has been written on the country's complex emigrant policy. While emigration flows never reached the high figures of other Middle Eastern and African states, Libya experienced sustained labour emigration, particularly temporary mobility of students and high-skilled professionals, dispersed across multiple host states. Initially, under King Idris, the first ruler of post-independence Libya (1951-1969), the state did not see any clear developmental benefit to cross-border mobility and chose to prioritise the control of borders and the

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<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out Algeria's rationale behind this policy shift.

provision of tight exit restrictions for Libyan citizens. The need to use migration in order to train the country's workforce was not an issue: Libya relied on foreigners (primarily Egyptian and Palestinian professionals) to staff its bureaucratic apparatus, as was standard practice with other newly-independent Arab states of the time (Tsourapas 2019, 74-77).

The shift towards perceiving cross-border mobility as a developmental opportunity for Libya came in the last few years of Idris' rule and under Muammar Gaddafi, who seized power in 1969. Eager to rid Libya of its dependence on foreigners and consolidate a process of 'Libyanisation' of the country's economy (Maghur 2010, 3), Gaddafi encouraged the emigration of Libyans for skill-acquisition purposes and expanded a programme for scholarships to study abroad. Gradually, the regime would grant exit visas to allow Libyan youth to pursue training and educational opportunities abroad (the requirement of exit visas was formally dropped in 1991). Already in 1968, Prime Minister Abdul Hamid al-Bakkoush would state that an educational priority for Libya was 'to establish specialised schools to promote competence in foreign languages, in order to enable the student to continue his higher studies abroad' (Libyan Review, 1968). 3,939 students were sent abroad in the 1976-77 academic year alone; by 1981, 2,900 Libyans were studying in the United States and some 2,000 in the United Kingdom (Ibrahim, 1987, 98). In 2010, it was estimated that approximately 12,000 students were dispatched to over 52 countries worldwide (Aldoukalee, 2013).

As the Gaddafi regime loosened the grip on emigration, the illiberal paradox thesis suggests that there arose the need to address the security vacuum with regard to emigrants' behaviour abroad. Indeed, the Libyan state gradually securitised its diaspora policy that aimed to extend control over Libyan emigrants' activities abroad (for a full analysis, see Tsourapas 2018b, 6-9). Unlike Algeria, however, the Libyan regime relied less on surveillance and more on overt violence. In the United Kingdom, this included efforts in mobilising Libyan students against potential anti-regime activists, organised by Omar Sodani in the 1980s. This is not to suggest that the Libyan diaspora was composed solely of political opponents to the Gaddafi regime – many Libyans decided not to return home for family or economic reasons, for instance; yet, the Gaddafi regime tended to view these Libyans as traitors to the state. Gaddafi would refer to them as *kullāb dāla* ("stray dogs") and promise vengeance on behalf of the state. 'Teams of rough and ready revolutionaries moved in and took over the Libyan embassies (now named "people's bureaus") around the world and began rooting out the "stray dogs" who were engaged in anti-regime activities' (Pargeter 2012, 103-4).

The long arm of the Libyan state went beyond national borders as state agents attempted political assassinations of citizens who had relocated abroad. Many of these campaigns were reportedly spearheaded by Moussa Koussa, nicknamed *mab'ūth al-mawt* ("envoy of death"). In 1980, Koussa was formally removed from his position as public envoy in London when he publicly admitted these practices to the London Times: 'We killed two in London and there were another two to be killed ... I approve of this' (*The Times*, 11 June 1980). Earlier in May, the assassin of Salem Fezzani, a Libyan living in Italy shot dead in his restaurant in Rome, declared 'I was sent by the people to kill him. He is a traitor and an

enemy of the people' (quoted in Pargeter 2012, 105). As Salem al-Hassi, once Libya's Intelligence Chief recounts:

'For years, the Gaddafi intelligence services went after opposition leaders in the capitals of many countries, in Europe, the United States and Arab countries. A great number of opposition leaders were handed over Gaddafi by Arab and European countries. A great number were kidnapped in Arab and European countries' (quoted in *Asharq al-Awsat* 2012).

The illiberal paradox arguably allows for a better understanding of how the Gaddafi regime's wish to employ emigration as a developmental opportunity contrasted with its wish to maintain firm control over all Libyans' activity. Thus, the regime addressed this paradox via the intense securitisation of Libya's diaspora policy. In a 1994 report, the United States' Department of State notes:

'Libyan nationals' right of return is theoretically fully protected, even for opponents of General Qadhafi. However, this 'right' may be more nearly an obligation; the regime often calls on students, many of whom receive a government subsidy, and others working abroad to return on little or no notice and without regard to the impact on their studies or work. Libyans who study abroad are interrogated on their return home' (US Department of State 1994).

One of the most chilling was the case of Al-Sadek Hamed al-Shuwehdy, who had emigrated to pursue an engineering degree in the United States. He was publicly executed in 1984, in the middle of a stadium full of thousands of school children and students, who had been brought in for the occasion. After he tearfully confessed that he has joined the "stray dogs," a gallows was brought into the arena and al-Shuwedhy was hanged on live state television (Black, 2011).

Overall, Algeria's shift from the securitisation of diaspora between 1962 and 1973 to the securitisation of emigration, from 1973 onwards, was reversed in the Libyan case. Libya's initial securitisation of emigration between 1951 and 1969 was replaced by the securitisation of diaspora, from 1969 onwards. As per the illiberal paradox, these shifts are dictated by domestic elites' understanding of the developmental value of emigration: Algeria's oil resources allowed it to relax its dependency on economic remittances, particularly when faced with Western European restrictions on North African labour. In Libya, Gaddafi recognised the developmental value of emigration for skills acquisition and training, rather than economic remittances; thus, Gaddafi's post-1969 aim of developing its national workforce became linked with the securitisation of the Libyan diaspora.

## VI. THE MOROCCAN EMIGRATION STATE

Labour emigration has been part and parcel of the Moroccan state since gaining independence in 1956 (see Iskander 2010). Similar to Algeria, patterns of mobility were affected by the long experience of colonialism that had led Moroccans to France, primarily through Algeria. Recruitment agreements with France and Germany in 1963, as well as Belgium and the Netherlands (in 1964 and 1969, respectively), formalised a pattern of

migration into Europe that was regulated by the Ministry of Labour. The Moroccan state, or *Makhzen*, prioritised the economic benefits of emigration early on: from 1968 onwards, state economic development plans were based on maximising labour emigration – primarily as a way to attract economic remittances, as in Algeria. The tightening of Western European immigration rules led many Moroccans to pursue employment in Libya and the Arab oil-producing countries from the 1970s onwards. More recently, Moroccans have also sought irregular entry channels into Europe.

The tensions that the illiberal paradox highlights are evident in Morocco's emigration and diaspora policies. The decision to adopt a liberal emigration policy for developmental reasons suggests a need to securitise the Moroccan diaspora. Indeed, both Mohammed V or, his eldest son, Hassan II – the two monarchs that ruled Morocco in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – extended significant resources towards the country's diaspora communities in Europe. Morocco appeared to have based its approach to Algeria, as it developed friendship societies under the *Fédération des Amicales des Marocains*, or *amicales*, from 1973 onwards. Reminiscent of the Algerian case, Moroccan *amicales* 'openly intimidated and harassed oppositional groups, and engaged in public violent encounters with opponents,' while in the Netherlands they were consistently referred to as 'the long arm of King Hassan' (Bouras 2013, 1226; cf. Van Heelsum 2002). The organisations' leaders were often recruited from the Moroccan intelligence services and would supply names of activists and trade unionists back to Rabat; these migrants would be duly detained upon their return home (Sahraoui 2015, 525). Under Hassan II, particular attention was paid to mosques, ensuring that they were loyal to the monarch's religious leadership, who is *Amir al-Mu'minin*, or the Commander of the Faithful, according to the Moroccan constitution (Obdeijn, De Mas, and Hermans 2012, 229).<sup>5</sup> Overall, the Moroccan *amicales* were tasked with preventing migrants from organising themselves politically and, by extension, becoming a force of political opposition abroad (De Haas 2007).

The timing of the Moroccan state's decision to institute its *amicales* in 1973, as Algeria shifted away from the securitisation of its diaspora policy, can be explained by the illiberal paradox framework. Morocco lacked Algeria's oil resources and considered labour emigration more important for its development – thus, the shift in the economic salience of emigration led to a stronger securitisation of the Moroccan diaspora. This is demonstrated by the fact that, unlike Algeria, the *Makhzen* also sought to avoid Moroccans abroad being perceived as political agitators by the host states; involvement in European politics would jeopardise migrants' status and, by extension, the inflow of valuable remittances into Morocco. It is not accidental that the participation of Moroccans in post-1968 French industrial strikes via the *Association des Marocains de France* (AMF), organised by exiled leader of the Left Mehdi Ben Barka, was perceived as a treasonous act by Rabat (Lacroix 2015, 91–92). Migrants who had participated in these strikes would have their passports seized upon return to Morocco (Iskander 2010).

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<sup>5</sup> Many thanks to the anonymous reviewer for suggesting this information. For additional information on the politics of Morocco's religious reforms at home and abroad, see Maghraoui (2009).

Not surprisingly, many Moroccans who did not belong to the *amicale*, or who had participated in the AMF or other organisations, were afraid to return home (*Official Journal of the European Communities* 1976). Brand describes how, ‘concerned with the image of the country abroad, the regime sought to discourage social agitation by or among its nationals.’ In fact, ‘Moroccans who were active in labor union struggles in Europe often encountered difficulties upon returning to the kingdom, having been denounced either by consular authorities or by members of the Amicales’ (Brand 2002, 9).

The *Makhzen* did not treat emigration as a politically-suspect act, as in Libya; nor did Morocco attempt to strengthen linkages with a diaspora that had integrated – albeit only partially – in European host states, as in the case of Algeria. Instead, King Hassan II tackled the illiberal paradox by treating populations abroad as “subjects,” addressing them as such and denying that they may ever lose their *marocanité*. ‘They will never be integrated’ he declared on French television in 1993. ‘I discourage you, in relation to my people, the Moroccans, from attempting a misappropriation of their nationality because they will never be 100% French’ (Sahraoui 2015, 525).

Overall, Morocco suggests a different approach to the illiberal paradox than Algeria or Libya, which did not hesitate to shift their securitisation policies in 1973 and 1969, respectively. The fact that post-independence Morocco has highlighted the importance of labour emigration in its developmental strategy led to the consistent securitisation of its diaspora policy-making. The tightening of immigration in Western Europe after 1973 led the *Makhzen* to intensify this process of securitisation via the feared *amicales*. The fourth case-study discussed below, Tunisia, pursued a similar approach to the migration-development nexus.

## VII. THE TUNISIAN EMIGRATION STATE

Finally, Tunisia is considered an archetypical emigration state, which perceived of cross-border mobility as a main mechanism for addressing structural unemployment and other political economy issues that plagued the post-independence North African state (see Natter 2015; Brand 2006). Traditional destinations initially included France and Germany, with whom Tunisian elites signed recruitment agreements in 1963 and 1965, respectively. Additional agreements with Belgium (1969), the Netherlands (1971), and Libya (1971) followed, while Italy has emerged as a major country of destination in the last three decades. Achieving high rates of emigration has traditionally been considered a developmental goal for the Tunisian state; remittances covered approximately 42% of its trade deficit in the late 1980 (Brand 2002). More than 11% of its population (or, approximately 1,2 million Tunisians) were residing abroad in 2012 (Natter 2015, 9).

The recognition that labour emigration constitutes an important instrument for economic within the authoritarian setting of post-independence Tunisia suggests – as per the illiberal paradox thesis – the securitisation of the state’s diaspora policy-making. Indeed, the Tunisian regime developed an extensive network of *Amicales des Travailleurs Tunisiens*

*en France* in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, and Nice in the late 1950s (and later in other locations within France and across Western Europe). Similar to the other two North African countries, Tunisia presented these as socio-cultural institutions (Simon 1979). They were presented as relatively innocuous institutions that sponsored ‘folk groups from Tunisia, sports teams, the celebration of certain religious occasions, and Arabic language instruction. Thus, they were meeting places where the Tunisian community could gather for events that helped preserve ties with the homeland’ (Brand 2006, 111).

Interestingly, the post-1973 Western European restrictions on immigration led to an intensification of the Tunisian state’s efforts to control its citizens abroad, as in the case of Morocco. Reminiscent of the Moroccan state’s appeals against migrants’ politicisation in their host states, the Tunisian Minister of the Interior advised Tunisians in France that ‘your role is to preserve this outstanding image of *Tunisiens résidents à l’étranger* and to fight with us against these intruders who are generally as useless at home as they are abroad’ (*Ibid.*, 112). At the same time, Tunisia’s weak post-1987 economic performance and its increased reliance on economic remittances coincided with the intensification of its repressive tactics against Tunisian expatriate communities abroad and the denial of passport renewals for political activists abroad (cf. Natter 2015). This confirms the expectation of the illiberal paradox framework.

While little is known on the activities of the Tunisian *amicales*, a broad consensus exists that they were considered to be ‘extensions of the consulates, if not the ... police’ of the Tunisian state (Grillo 2006, 193). Their ties with the ruling Socialist Destourian Party in Tunisia (*Parti Socialiste Destourien*, or PSD) were clear from early on (Bel-Air 2016). Geisser conducted interviews with Tunisians in France who argued that ‘the majority of [the institutions’] presidents were ignorant and barely knew how to read or write. They applied party orders without thinking’ (Geisser 2012). Attempts at intimidation, particularly vis-à-vis Tunisian members of the Islamist Ennahda Movement were common: ‘Yes, the Tunisian *amicale* watched us [and their leaders] would even come to see our parents in order to dissuade us from participating in this or that activity, threatening to transmit this information to the consulate’ (*Ibid.*).

What distinguishes the Tunisian state’s approach vis-à-vis the illiberal paradox from its North African counterparts lies in its attempts to address the tensions between security and economics by involving the diaspora communities in the state apparatus. In this, Tunisia did not employ explicit violence or repression abroad in the way that the Libyan or Algerian sending states. Instead, the Tunisian *amicales* followed Morocco’s example of putting forth the image of the “good citizen abroad” but took it to its logical conclusion: Tunisia aimed to implicate the migrants themselves in the enforcement of certain sets of rules and practices that, ultimately, aimed to lead to control and obedience. *Billadi*, for instance, the Arabic-language journal that was disseminated to the diaspora from 1974 onwards featured articles written by Tunisians abroad. The *amicales* did not behave in an overly top-down manner, as an extension of the state abroad; instead, by inviting Tunisian diaspora member to partake in their administration, the *amicales* aimed to become part of the diaspora itself.

This is reflected in the oft-quoted saying that *al-Tunisiyuun f-il-kharij fi qalb al-watan* ('Tunisians abroad are in the heart of the homeland').

Rather than persecuting political opponents by arresting them upon their return home – as in the cases of Algeria, Libya, or Morocco – the Tunisian state employed return migration as a reward for loyalty: select members of the Tunisian diaspora were invited back to Tunis every year in annual expatriate conferences, where they met with party and government officials. The sending state's response to the participation of Tunisians abroad in protests or demonstrations was not to exercise violence, but to task the diaspora itself with ostracising these agitators. In 1973, in his address to a group of emigrants, Tunisia's Minister of the Interior would state that 'your role is to preserve this outstanding image [of Tunisians abroad] and to fight with us against these intruders who are generally as useless at home as they are abroad' (cited in Simon, p. 144). This instrumental appeal to patriotism, which tasked diaspora members with surveying and enforcing a state-led image of Tunisia abroad, was indicative of how power also worked in a more diffuse manner within the home state itself (Tsourapas 2013).<sup>6</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSION

Relevant scholarly work has yet to examine the interplay between cross-border mobility and security outside the context of immigration policy-making in the Global North. This article engaged in a comparative analysis of four Arab states in North Africa in order to understand how authoritarian states attempt to securitise migration processes. It built on the emigration dimension of the *illiberal paradox*, which allows a focus on the tension that authoritarian states face between the economic benefits and political risks associated with cross-border mobility. In Morocco and Tunisia, state elites' view of labour emigration as vital for economic development led to consistent attempts at securitising diaspora policy-making. In fact, the securitisation of diaspora policy-making became more pronounced when remittances became more important for the Moroccan and Tunisian economies (post-1973 and post-1987, respectively). In Libya and Algeria, however, elites chose to securitise the state's emigration policy when cross-border mobility was not expected to reap developmental benefits (before 1969 and after 1973, respectively).

A cursory examination of other authoritarian states identifies similar responses to the trade-off between security and development, both within the Arab world and beyond. Those that approach cross-border mobility as a developmental opportunity – such as Jordan, Turkey, and China – have all attempted to securitise their diaspora policies to varying degrees. In light of worries about religious extremism or anti-regime political activism, they respond to the trade-off between development and security via extraterritorial authoritarian practices of repression, monitoring, and control. However, those states that do not see cross-border mobility as producing strong economic benefits – such as Iran, the Gulf

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<sup>6</sup> Brand and others consider this a strategy of *encadrement*, which refers to the unique manner with which the Tunisian aimed to govern populations abroad. For analyses on this, see Brand (2006, 92–132); Dazey & Zederman (2017).

Cooperation Council states or, in the past, Cuba or Egypt under Nasser – have been more likely to securitise their emigration policies. They attempt to tackle the trade-off between migration and security via tighter restrictions on citizens' cross-border mobility.

The illiberal paradox thesis arguably allows for a shift in the scholarly discussion on the securitisation of cross-border mobility to the Global South and offers a more nuanced understanding of authoritarian emigration states' policy-making. The exploratory framework offered in this article invites further research that will focus on in-depth, within-case analysis via single-case studies, as well as expanded cross-case comparisons. A particular area of further research could be the diversity of securitisation practices across authoritarian states – for instance, under what conditions states engage in violent repression of diaspora communities? At the same time, a second area that demands attention is the importance of the country of destination: what are the implications for the illiberal paradox thesis if the host state is a liberal democracy (as in North African migration to Western Europe) or equally authoritarian (as in Egyptian or Jordanian migration to the Gulf)? Bringing the literature on securitisation in further conversation with work on migration and diasporas would allow a deeper understanding of heretofore-unexamined authoritarian practices.

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