



New Route to the West

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The illegal immigration of non-Western peoples, I predict, will become an all-consuming issue in every Western country.

As Western birth rates plummet, as communication and transportation networks improve, and as radical Islam increasingly rears its aggressive head, Europeans, Americans, and others worry about their economic standards and the continuity of their cultures. After ignoring this issue for decades, reactions in Europe especially have sharpened of late.

- The [French lower house of parliament](#) passed a tough new immigration law.
- Austria's interior minister, [Liese Prokop](#), has asserted publicly that 45% of her country's Muslim immigrants "cannot be integrated," and admonished them to "choose

another country" in which to live.

- The Dutch minister of immigration, [Rita Verdonk](#), has withdrawn citizenship from Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Muslim-born immigrant who became renowned as a critic of Islam.

But the most dramatic, agonizing, and consequential developments for immigration to the West are taking place along the remote west coast of Africa. The area has emerged as a main springboard for would-be emigrants to access the riches of Spain and then all Europe.

West Africa's role is a new one. Until late 2005, emigrants gravitated to Morocco, in part because, separated by the Straits of Gibraltar, it is a mere eight miles away from Europe. Also, they could easily sneak into the Spanish enclaves of [Ceuta and Melilla](#). At worst, they could reach

the Canary Islands, a Spanish territory 70 miles off the coast of West Africa. All of these served equally well as a gateway to all of Europe. But no longer: Under intense Spanish and EU pressure, Moroccan authorities cracked down hard on illegals to the point of [dumping them without provisions in the desert](#). The same forbidding inhospitality reigns in the Western Sahara, a territory to Morocco's south fully under its control. Meanwhile, the European Maritime Border Guard Corps patrols the [Mediterranean Sea](#) with increasing efficiency.

That made Mauritania, south of the Moroccan-ruled areas and one of the poorest, most isolated countries in the world, the new transit point of choice. Africans and other would-be European migrants, especially [South Asians](#), began turning up in [large numbers](#). [Nuadibu](#) (population: 90,000) found itself hosting more than 10,000 transients in early 2006. Under pressure from Spain, the Mauritians also cracked down.

Ever resourceful, migrants repaired farther south, now to Senegal. The Canaries run takes less than a day from Morocco but three days from Mauritania and seven to 10 days from Senegal. Notoriously rough seas off West Africa can easily overwhelm the open wooden fishing boats and their single outboard engines as they cover the 900 miles. The Spanish ambassador-at-large for humanitarian issues, [Manuel Pombo](#), has reported that up to 40% of those attempting to reach the Canaries die en route. The head of the Red Crescent in Mauritania,

[Ahmedou Ould Haye](#), has called it "collective suicide." Another [observer](#) sadly predicted, "Three months or so later, some of these sorry vessels may creep into the Caribbean – as ghost ships, or worse."

These gruesome odds notwithstanding, the [waves of immigration](#) keep growing, in large part because once they land on Spanish territory, their reception is so accommodating and [few illegals are ever deported](#). (A head of emergency services in the Canaries, Gerardo Garcia, has compared landing there to [going on holiday](#).) On [May 18](#), a record 656 people landed in the Canaries, or one-seventh of the total number of arrivals in all of 2005. "It is [almost like an invasion](#)," a volunteer in the Canaries lamented, Agence France-Presse reported.

Hoping to stem the immigration tide at its source through deportation agreements, Spanish diplomatic delegations offer West African countries financial aid in exchange. But African governments resist this, appreciating the remittances from Europe as much as they dislike the bad publicity of large-scale expulsions. These palliatives cannot possibly solve the tensions as have-nots try to crash the haves' party.

[Rickard Sandell](#) of the Royal Elcano Institute in Madrid has predicted that the migration now under way could signal the prospect of an African "mass exodus" and armed conflict. What one sees today "is only the beginning of an immigration phenomenon that could evolve into

one of the largest in history. ... the mass assault on Spain's African border may just be a first warning of what to expect of the future."

Thus begins the first chapter of what promises to be a long and terrible story.