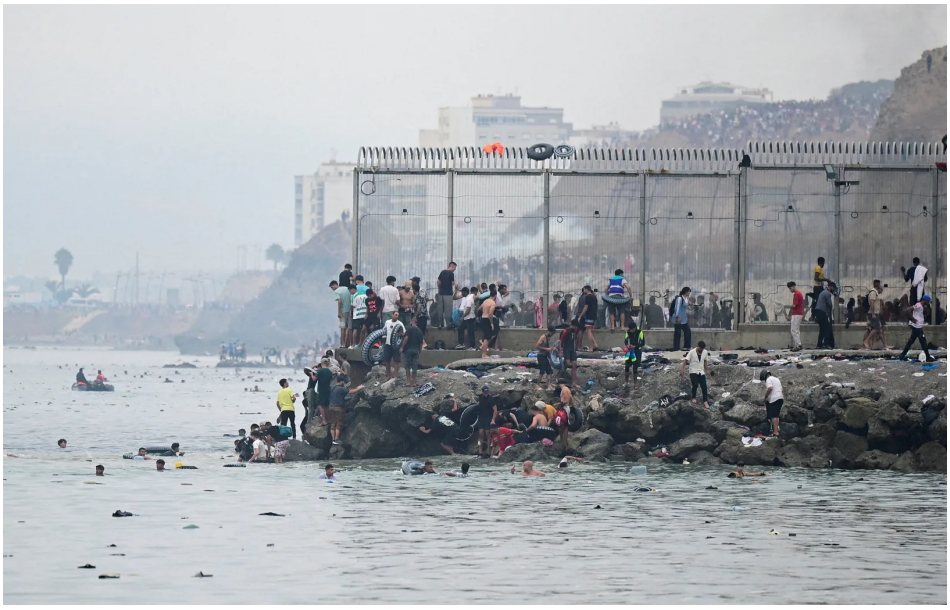


The Mystery of Ceuta and the Geopolitical Use of Migratory Flows. Is This the New Frontier of Hybrid Warfare?

Published on 01/08/2026

Tens of thousands of people simultaneously crossing the border, overwhelming barriers in a few hours; local police forces mysteriously turning a blind eye, or even encouraging the passage; cross-accusations between governments, the sovereign right-wing pointing fingers at "welcoming" policies, and international diplomacy holding its breath.

The chaotic scenes witnessed in **Ceuta**, the Spanish enclave on African soil, are not just a humanitarian and border crisis: they starkly and disturbingly pose one of the most complex questions of contemporary security: **are we facing an episode of hybrid warfare?**

The Ceuta Case: What Really Happened?

The dynamics leave little room for chance, at least at first glance. In a single day, nearly 50,000 migrants surged towards the borders of Ceuta. Usually, Moroccan authorities maintain a tight grip on that area to prevent such concentrations. This time, according to testimonies gathered on the ground, police officers allowed migrants to pass almost unhindered, enabling them to overwhelm the Spanish fences with disarming ease.

Immediately, the “war of narratives” erupted:

- **The European right and the White House** accused Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of having “opened the doors of Europe” with overly lenient migration policies and the recent regularization of over a million migrants.
- **The Spanish government** rejected the accusations, pointing fingers at human trafficking networks that cynically exploited a recent Spanish Constitutional Court ruling to spread misinformation and attract the desperate.
- **Many analysts**, however, see the hand of the Moroccan state behind the scenes.

The Geopolitical Temptation: Is Morocco Using Migrants as a Weapon?

This is where the debate inevitably slips into the realm of **hybrid warfare**—that gray area where states use unconventional levers (cyberattacks, disinformation, energy crises, or indeed, the instrumentalization of migratory flows) to strike a political rival without crossing the threshold of open armed conflict.

There is no shortage of clues pointing to Rabat. Many observers link the move to Spain's recent diplomatic push to reconnect and strengthen ties with **Algeria**, Morocco's historic rival, culminating in institutional visits to assess the importation of Algerian gas.

“It is impossible for nearly 50,000 people to cross the border in a single day without Morocco having a hand in it”, explains Lorenzo Gabrielli, a researcher at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, recalling a similar script already seen in 2021. A pressure tool, a political warning disguised as a spontaneous crisis.

On the other hand, Moroccan analysts are cautious: a crisis of this magnitude risked ruining the celebrations for *Throne Day* and sending contradictory messages to international investors. But

the overlap between regional diplomatic tensions and the sudden explosion of borders fuels the suspicion that migration was, if not planned in detail, skillfully tolerated and maneuvered as a tool of geopolitical pressure.

Hybrid Warfare and the “Plausible Deniability” Factor

The hallmark of hybrid warfare is *plausible deniability*: the aggressor state acts by exploiting third-party actors (in this case traffickers, disinformation networks on social media, or the desperation of the migrants themselves) so that it is impossible to prove direct state orchestration beyond any reasonable doubt.

Whether or not Moroccan authorities ordered the gates to be opened, the structural reality does not change: **European borders remain extremely vulnerable to being used as geopolitical clubs.**

Whether it is a deliberate action by Rabat to punish Madrid on the Algerian axis, or an explosive cocktail of fake news on social media, traffickers' cynicism, and political opportunism, the end result dangerously resembles a hybrid attack. Europe, torn internally between the narrative of “open ports” and the fear of invasion, finds itself once again disarmed in the face of a crisis that is not fought with cannons but uses human beings as political bullets.

News link: https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/31/world/europe/migrants-surge-morocco-ceuta-spain.html?unlocked_article_code=1.11A.8-iZ.1UnZalwF9GmY&smid=nytcore-ios-share