The interests of Morocco in EU Migration Cooperation

Migration Patterns, Securitization, and Morocco's National and External Policy Agenda

2000-2017

Thesis
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Date: 05-07-2019
Word count: 13,810 (incl. footnotes, excl. bibliography)

Index

Introduction

The European Union (EU) has been working together with African countries to manage migration in various ways over the past years. During the migration crisis of 2015 the migratory movements across the Mediterranean from North African countries to the EU took on unprecedented heights. With these increasing numbers of irregular migrants came new attempts of the EU to regulate these migratory movements. Although many proposed solutions to manage these migratory movements focused on increasing EU border security, a new focus on cooperating with African countries to tackle migration can be observed.[1] The 2015 EU agenda on migration reflects this shift. Next to the focus on increased security the EU border with the establishment of an EU Border and Coast Guard Agency and with that the increased capabilities of the already existing Frontex agency, the agenda also focussed on working together with countries of transit and migrant origin to tackle international smuggling networks, to focus on return and reallocation of migrants within those countries and on building on to the already existing partnerships with these countries when it comes to development.[2] At the state of the union of June 2018, the commission once again stressed the importance of working together with the countries of transit and origin to properly regulate migration movements in the future and to ensure the return of certain irregular migrants.[3]

Theoretically the aims of the EUs agenda on migration regarding working together with third countries should be a preferred solution by all of the partners involved as it would limit instability within both North Africa as well as the EU. The question remains however, whether or not such partnerships have been proven to be effective in the past and whether or not these policies are always in the interest of the third countries with whom they are negotiated. The increased focus on return policy for example, could be detrimental for transit countries, as the return centres build on their ground could become overpopulated and unmanageable.[4] The increased focus on securing migration and criminalizing the movement of people could also lead to human right violations in such countries like in Libya.[5] Recent developments in the international community, in which EU Member States are involved, revolve around discussing and formalizing the rights of migrants. The UN backed intergovernmental conference that took place in December of 2018 in Marrakesh, is such an

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[1] H. Crawley, & B. K. Blitz, 'Common agenda or Europe's agenda? International protection, human rights and migration from the Horn of Africa', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2018) 1-17, there 1-3.
[2] EU Commission (240), 'A European Agenda on Migration', (2015).
[3] J. Juncker, Speech: State of the Union 2018 (2018).
[4] United Nations (A/CONF. 231/3), 'Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration', 30 July 2018, 19.
[5] V. Badalič, 'Tunisia's Role in the EU External Migration Policy: Crimmigration Law, Illegal Practices, and Their Impact on Human Rights', *Journal of International Migration and Integration* (2018) 1-16.

international attempt to agree on the adaptation of 'The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration' and to ensure the human rights of migrants.[6]

To give perspective to these recent developments concerning EU-Africa migration policy, a closer look at previously negotiated partnerships between the EU and African countries is necessary. For this research project Morocco has been selected. This country has been chosen because of its viewpoint on migration partnerships with the EU, the interest in such policies within the country itself and the countries position as an important regional actor. Its role as a migrant transit country can also provide interesting insights into its concerns and interests towards sub-Saharan refugees and economic migrants.[7] These different viewpoints will help to address the following research question:

> In what ways have the interests of Morocco influenced the cooperation with the EU concerning migration, in the period 2000-2017?

By taking a closer look at securitization theory, previous cooperation between the EU and Morocco concerning migration policy and the role of regional power constructions, it is possible to shine light on the interaction between EU foreign policy and the interests of North African migration transit countries, in particular Morocco. The expected outcome of this study is that there are several reasons for Morocco to agree to migration cooperation with the EU, such as securing their borders themselves, because of transit migration and receiving development aid, but also to position themselves as an important regional actor. It is expected that these interests have influenced the said agreements, instead of only the EU pushing its own agenda in such cooperation. The timeframe for this research has been selected in order to provide a long-term perspective to the issue of the interests of migration transit countries within international migration cooperation and to show that their national interests have not only recently influenced their cooperation stance towards migration management, but that these interests have also driven past policies.

Literature Review

This study will engage with three separate academic debates and provides innovative insights and new perspectives onto all of them. The three topics that will be addressed are: the

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[6] United Nations, 'Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration', 30 July 2018.

[7] S. Hamood, 'EU–Libya cooperation on migration: a raw deal for refugees and migrants?', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21(1) (2008) 19-42.; Badalič, 'Tunisia's Role in the EU External Migration Policy'.; S. Wolff, 'The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements: Insights from Morocco and Turkey', *European Journal of Migration and Law* 16(1) (2014) 69-95.; N. Reslow, 'The role of third countries in EU migration policy: The mobility partnerships', *European Journal of Migration and Law* 14(4) (2012) 393-415.

securitization of migration, EU-Africa migration cooperation and the study of Morocco as a regional actor.

Security-Migration Nexus

The scholarly debate about migration in recent years has shifted towards a discussion about the relationship between migration and security. Most studies focus on the theory of the securitization of migration.[8] A school of thought that has had a great impact on this debate is the Copenhagen School. Scholars belonging to this school, such as B. Buzan, O. Wæver, and J. De Wilde, have theorized security as being broader than the military context and perceive it as something that is mostly socially constructed.[9] The migratory movements across the Mediterranean towards the EU and the policy reactions to these movements can be described in terms of securitization theory. The theory from the Copenhagen School suggests that an issue can be transformed into a security issue or even a security threat, regardless whether this is the case.[10] In this case, the transformation consists of the movement of people being constructed as a public threat. In this sense, refugees and economic migrants become phenomena that are perceived as dangerous to society, unless they are controlled in some way. This allows for placing the control of migration onto the policy agenda.[11] The research in the developing policy area of EU migration management is thus important to understand the securitization of migration in the EU. Since the migration crisis, the EU's discourse on migration policy has increasingly justified and normalised coercive and extensive migration policies, especially those concerning the external border, as necessary due to security concerns.[12] By cooperating with third countries within the neighbourhood of the EU, it has tried to make these third countries responsible for the reception and control of migratory movements. This so-called externalization policy of the EU can be found in their recent Mobility Partnership agreements that mostly focus on subsidizing migration management projects within these partnering countries.[13]

   The examination of the externalisation of migration policy by the EU and the agreements with North African countries can provide more insight into the construction of

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[8] J. Huysmans, 'The European Union and the securitization of migration', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 38(5) (2000) 751-777.; O. Wæver, *Securitization and desecuritization,* Copenhagen: Centre for Peace and Conflict Research (1993).

[9] B. Buzan, O. Wæver & J. De Wilde, *Security: a new framework for analysis* (1998).

[10] Idem.

[11] M. Geiger & A. Pécoud, 'The politics of international migration management.', In; *The politics of international migration management* (2010) 1-20.; J. Huysmans, *The politics of insecurity: Fear, migration and asylum in the EU* (2006).

[12] C. Boswell, A. Geddes & P. Scholten, 'The role of narratives in migration policy-making: A research framework', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 13(1) (2011) 1-11.

[13] S. Carrera, J. P. Cassarino, N. El Qadim, M. Lahlou & L. den Hertog, 'EU-Morocco Cooperation on Readmission, Borders and Protection: A Model to Follow?', *CEPS Papers in Liberty and Security in Europe* (2016) 1-18.

migration as a security threat not only within the EU, but also in its neighbourhood. The interests for security measures in Morocco, as a transit country in particular should be examined further.

EU-Africa Migration Cooperation

Various scholars have researched the cooperation between the EU and African countries of migration transit and origin. The negotiations and agreements concerning the Mobility Partnerships between the EU and its southern neighbourhood have been part of the EU's policy area of the 'Global Approach to Migration and Mobility' (GAMM). The EU has agreed such Mobility Partnerships with Morocco in 2013 and Tunisia and Jordan in 2014. Talks with other countries in North Africa and the Middle-East have started and it is the EU's aim to expand the Mobility Partnerships to various countries.[14]

Due to the fact that third countries are vital actors within EU migration policy, it is important to research why these countries agree to cooperate with the EU through agreements such as the Mobility Partnerships. The article from Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier from 2004 describes various ways the EU can influence third parties. One of which is through the use of external incentives. The authors argue that these external incentives are best used to explain the adoption of EU rules in their neighbouring countries.[15] The use of incentives or conditionality can also be seen within EU external migration policy. As N. Reslow argues in her article, the incentives that the EU offers within the Mobility Partnerships can be an important reason for West African countries to agree to cooperate. Visa facilitation for example, is a powerful incentive for third countries to accept readmission agreements.[16] With the importance of such incentives and conditionality, many scholars have argued that the agreements are rather one sided and mostly follow the EU policy agenda.[17] Scholars in that regard see the framing of EU migration policy as being in the sole interest of the EU and not its partners. It is argued that, although development oriented policies have slowly been integrated within EU external migration policy, it is the securitization of migration that still

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[14] P. Seeberg, 'Mobility Partnerships and Security Subcomplexes in the Mediterranean: The Strategic Role of Migration and the European Union's Foreign and Security Policies Towards the MENA Region.', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 22(1) (2017) 91-110, there 91-93.

[15] F. Schimmelfennig & U. Sedelmeier, 'Governance by conditionality: EU rule transfer to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe', *Journal of European Public Policy* 11(4) (2004) 661-679.

[16] Reslow, 'The role of third countries in EU migration policy', 398.

[17] S. Carrera & R. Hernández I Sagrera, 'Mobility Partnerships: "Insecurity Partnerships" for Policy Coherence and Migrant Workers" Human Rights in the EU', In; R. Kunz, S. Lavenex & M. Panizzon (ed.), *Multilayered Migration Governance: The promise of partnership* (London 2011) 97-115.; M. Limam & R. Del Sarto, 'Periphery under Pressure: Morocco, Tunisia and the European Union's Mobility Partnership on migration', E*UI Working Paper RSCAS* 75 (2015).

dominates the policy area.[18] Research into the agreements between the EU and its partners has highlighted the human rights concerns that seem to be lacking within these agreements, as well as the lack of consideration of migrant agency and the interests of the individual partner countries.[19]

Regarding the interests that these Mobility Partnerships serve, multiple scholars thus argue that these partnerships with Northern African countries have only been partially successful and that they mostly enhance the EU's foreign and security policy goals. The failure to negotiate the partnership agreements with states in the Middle-East is partially the result of the reluctance of those countries to comply with the standards of the EU.[20] In 2012 it was argued by S. Angenendt that for the Mobility Partnerships to be the future of a successful EU external migration policy, a balance had to be achieved between the interests of the EU, third countries and the migrants themselves. In his article he raised the point that partner countries should not be pressured into readmission schemes through the agreed Mobility Partnerships with the EU.[21] Some scholars do however provide evidence that some partnering countries have specific interests and goals within the partnership agreements. F. Tittel-Mosser explains this by demonstrating that third countries that agree to control migration on behalf of the EU gain a powerful position within negotiations, as the EU becomes reliant on their effective control over migratory movements. This possibility of third countries to pursue their own political and economic interests within partnership agreements is labelled by Tittel-Mosser as 'reverse conditionality'.[22] This thus leads to the conclusion that certain third countries might have a more strategic and powerful position within EU external migration cooperation than is often ascribed to them within the broader academic debate. Therefore the examination of the interests of one of the partnering third countries, namely Morocco, will give an interesting insight into the way in which third countries can strategically position themselves opposite of the EU within migration cooperation negotiations.

Morocco as a regional actor

Academic literature about the regional power structures within the Maghreb-Sahelian region has mostly focussed on the relationship between the two most important actors: Algeria and

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[18] S. Lavenex & R. Kunz, 'The migration–development nexus in EU external relations', *European Integration* 30(3) (2008) 439-457.
[19] Hamood, 'EU–Libya cooperation on migration', 19-42.; Badalič, 'Tunisia's Role in the EU External Migration Policy'.; Wolff, 'The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements'.; Crawley & Blitz, 'Common agenda or Europe's agenda?',.
[20] Seeberg, 'Mobility Partnerships'.
[21] S. Angenendt, 'Mobility Partnerships – the Future of European Migration Policy?', *Migration & Development* 1(2) (2012) 216– 228.
[22] F. Tittel-Mosser, 'Reversed Conditionality in EU External Migration Policy: The Case of Morocco', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 14(4) (2018) 349-363.

Morocco. As Y. H. Zoubir points about, these two regional actors have different political and foreign policy interests. This division within the region has prevented further economic integration. Zoubir further argues that the Maghreb region should be seen as a regional network in which the decisions of the involved actors directly affect the foreign policy agendas of the other actors. This is the case because of the power reach of the countries within this regional system. Due to the fact that their power reach remains mostly limited to countries within their proximity, their priority to get involved with other countries lies primarily within the direct regional context.[23] L. Martinez and R. A. Boserup, have evidenced that the political divisions within the region have recently started to become less rigid due to transformations taking place within the region concerning security, such as the political turmoil happening within Libya. However, Martinez and Boserup do stress that the issue of the Western Sahara has remained a key hurdle within the foreign relations between Morocco and Algeria.[24] M. Hernando de Larramendim has built on this line of argument in his 2019 article by stating that the power vacuum that was left by the overthrowing of Qadaffi in Libya has propelled the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco to stretch even further than the regional context and now concerns the entire African continent. However, because of Algeria's reluctance to involve itself far beyond its own borders, Hernando de Larramendim argues that this has recently left room for Morocco to position itself as the most important regional actor. The government in Rabat has sought to present itself as a stabilizing factor towards the EU and a good cooperation partner within the region.[25] The desire of Morocco to promote itself as an important regional actor has also led to the recent focus of Moroccan foreign policy towards sub-Saharan Africa. N. Messari points out that Morocco has tried to strengthen its ties with African countries by investing in the region and presenting itself as a leader within various fields. This is not only the case because Morocco wants to increase its regional powers, but also to gain more support for the Moroccan stance on the Western Saharan issue and Morocco's increased interests to re-participate in the African Union.[26] This study will add to the debate about Morocco as a regional actor by focussing on the way in which the country has tried to strategically use its migration policy within their foreign

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[23] Y. H. Zoubir, 'Algerian-Moroccan Relations and their Impact on Maghribi Integration', *The Journal of North African Studies* 5(3) (2000) 43-74.

[24] L. Martinez & R. A. Boserup, 'Beyond Western Sahara, the Sahel-Maghreb Axis Looms Large', In: R. Ojeda Garcia, I. Fernández-Molina & V. Veguilla (ed.), *Global, Regional and Local Dimensions of Western Sahara's Protracted Decolonization* (New York 2017) 143-163.

[25] M. Hernando de Larramendi, 'Doomed regionalism in a redrawn Maghreb? The changing shape of the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco in the post-2011 era', *The Journal of North African Studies* 24(3) (2019) 506-531.

[26] N. Messari, 'Morocco's African Foreign Policy', *Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture. Future Notes* 12 (2018) 1-6.

relations towards sub-Saharan countries in order to get a reputation as a good hosting country for sub-Saharan migrants, while simultaneously increasing their regional power and influence.

By analysing the interests of Morocco in EU migration cooperation through the lens of securitization and the role of Morocco as a regional actor, this study can give insight into the debate that thus far has mostly focussed on the EUs interests to securitize the policy area and externalize its borders. It thus broadens the understanding of how securitization and the national and foreign migration policy interests of Morocco have shaped the EU-Morocco cooperation framework. The study aims to give an innovative insight into how third countries can pursue their own interests within migration partnership agreements with the EU.

Structure, Method and Material

To answer the research question, this study will include a case study of EU migration cooperation policies with one North African country, Morocco. To analyse the interests in migration partnerships, the study is composed of four main chapters. Chapter one gives an overview of the history of Morocco as a country of immigration, emigration and transit. The second chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the historical and current cooperation between the EU and Morocco in the field of migration. The third chapter looks at the way in which migration has not only been securitized by the EU, but also by Morocco and how this securitization plays a role in the power dynamics between the two actors. It will also demonstrate that Morocco's national policies regarding migration closely align with the EU policies regarding irregular migration. The last chapter aims to demonstrate that Morocco has used its external migration policy, especially when it comes to the sub-Saharan region, to position themselves as strong regional actor and a good cooperation partner.

By dividing the research into these four parts an interesting insight can be given to the interests of Morocco within EU migration cooperation. Next to that, this research will give a good understanding of the interplay between the interests and the realities of migration in Morocco and the EU-Morocco Mobility Partnership agreement. The research will also show that Morocco has an interest in positioning themselves strategically as a powerful regional actor. To achieve this, the study uses a mixed method approach consisting of discourse analysis, policy analysis and the analysis of quantitative data. Discourse analysis will mostly be used to identify the discourse within cooperation agreements between the EU and Morocco, the discourse within national migration policies and the discourse within additional sources such as speeches that frame the respective migration policies. The above mentioned

policies will also be analysed through a policy process lens to identify the interests of the different stakeholders within the documents and the negotiations attached to them. Finally, quantitative data, such as migration numbers and the amount of investments towards certain policies will serve as additional evidence to the arguments given within this study.

1. Historical and current migration patterns in Morocco

<u>Introduction</u>

To get a better understanding of Morocco's interest in migration cooperation with the EU there first needs to be an overview of the historic context. Therefore this chapter provides a brief history of Morocco as a country and will then proceed to give information about the different migration patterns throughout its history.

The kingdom of Morocco dates back to the eight century and is located at the North-West of the African continent. During the nineteenth century European states became interested in the region and became important actors, the influence of France was especially noteworthy. At the start of the twentieth century this French influence was solidified when the kingdom of Morocco became an official protectorate of France in March 1912 by the signing of the Treaty of Fez. Within the same treaty protectorate rights were given to Spain to rule over the northern and southern zones of the Sahara.[27]

The protectorate rule of France over Morocco did not last long as the Moroccan Nationalist already asked for independence in the year 1956, claiming that they had the sovereign right to choose who would rule over them. After the declaration of independence the country was soon cleared from foreign control. Even though Morocco became independent, there is still a territorial dispute over the Western Sahara of which some parts are claimed by Morocco. To this day this territorial dispute causes regional and international tension and therefore influences the domestic and international policies of Morocco.[28]

Despite the territorial dispute, the relation with the EU has been strengthened in the past decades and Morocco has become one of the closest allies within the European Neighbourhood. The country even applied to join the European Economic Community (EEC) in the past, but was denied entrance due to the fact that the country is not geographically part of Europe. However, due to Morocco's close historic ties with certain European states and the fact that it is strategically located nearby the European continent this has resulted in a history of emigrations from Morocco to European states. In the last few decades the migration flows from and to Morocco have taken a prominent place within the international system of migration. The migratory movements within Morocco are considered highly diverse and to

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[27] Ö. Bilgili & S. Weyel, 'Migration in Morocco: History, Current Trends and Future Prospects.', *Paper Series: Migration and Development Country Profiles* (2009) 1-62, there 7-9.
[28] Idem.

understand the current dynamics within these migratory movements from and to Morocco a short historic context of these migrations is in place.[29]

History of Emigration to the European Continent 1960-present

During the 1960's many Moroccans immigrated to countries in Western Europe. They were recruited to do unskilled labour that could not be filled by the European workforce. This migration was mainly focussed on France, but the Netherlands started recruiting many Moroccan workers as well. Later this type of migration was expanded towards Germany and Belgium and from the mid 1980's also geared towards Spain and Italy. Despite the assumption that many of these Moroccan workers would return after a few years to their home country, a large number of the so called 'guest workers' ended up settling in the European countries because of stricter migration policies and economic downturn in the 1970's. Due to the practice of family reunification, family formation and the Moroccan migrant networks, the number of Moroccans residing in the European countries did not decrease but rather increased despite stricter migration policies. This resulted in the fact that the group of Moroccan migrants became one of the biggest migrant communities within Western Europe of which most currently live in France followed by Spain.[30]

The large Moroccan communities within Europe have intensified the links between the European continent and Morocco. One way in which this can be seen is in the stream of remittances that flows from many western European countries towards Morocco. The influx of foreign currency into the Moroccan economy is vital to keep it balanced. In the 1990's the remittances were already 6.4% of the GNP of Morocco, proving their necessity for the economy. The stream of remittances has increased over the years and has become a relatively stable factor of the Moroccan economy, which can be explained by the ongoing labour migration to the EU and strong trans-generational ties between the communities within two regions.[31] Within migration cooperation agreements with the EU there are thus strong incentives for Morocco when it comes to making it easier for Moroccans to migrate and work within the EU through visa liberalization as this can thus benefit the Moroccan economy.

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[29] M. Collyer (ed.), 'Migration and Development: The Euro-Moroccan Experience', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35 (10) (2009) 1555-1570, there 1555-1556, 1559-1561.
[30] H. De Haas, 'International Migration and Regional Development in Morocco: A Review', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 35(10)* (2009) 1571-1593, there 1574.
[31] Idem.

The History of Morocco as a Country of Transit and Destination 1990-2010

Whereas Morocco is historically known as a country dominated by emigration, since the 1990's it has also transitioned into a destination and transit country for migrants from sub-Saharan and Western-African countries. Even though these migratory movements to Morocco are relatively recent there were already highly-educated migrants moving to Morocco right after its independence. These migrants came from sub-Saharan countries such as; Mali, Zaire (now known as Democratic Republic of Congo) and Senegal. They moved to Morocco to study or to work. However, these numbers remained limited till the 1990's.[32]

The immigration flows towards Morocco changed drastically between the period of 1990 and 2010, as more migrants moved towards Morocco with the main goal to find work there or to eventually cross-over into the EU. During this period these migrants took specific routes to come to Morocco. One of the main routes was through Mauritania, but other pathways included traveling through Niger or crossing the Algerian border nearby the town of Oujda. For the migrants that managed to not get detected and avoid being detained by Moroccan police, the journey into Europe could be achieved by traveling to the northern border of Morocco where the two enclaves of Spain, Ceuta and Melilla, are located. These land crossings into EU territory are a relatively safe option compared to the Mediterranean border crossings.[33] (See figure 1)

For the irregular migrants that ended up settling within Morocco, this seemed to have been a somewhat involuntary decision, motivated by the fear of getting arrested either in Morocco or at the Spanish border. An arrest would mean that these migrants could be sent back to their countries of origin. Another reason why certain irregular migrants decide to settle in Morocco is the fact that they might not have the financial capacity to pay the human traffickers organizing their travel into Europe. Because of these reasons Morocco became not only a transit country during this period, but also a destination for the poorest migrants, for whom staying in Morocco was still preferred above going back to their country of origin. Most of these migrants have found work in low-paid and low-skilled jobs within Morocco.[34]

From the 1990's onwards this type of migration into Morocco gradually increased, but the year 2006 seems to have been a vital turning point when it comes to irregular border crossings via the Moroccan-Spanish border. In table 1 it can be observed that irregular border crossing increased, hitting a high in 2003 and remained high until 2005. A drop in the number of irregular migrants can be observed in the year 2006. This drop was mostly caused by

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[32] H. De Haas, 'Morocco. Country profile 16', *Focus MIGRATION* (2009) 1-11, there 4-5.
[33] Idem.
[34] Idem, 4-10.

increased security efforts of the Moroccan authorities after the summer and autumn of 2005, when hundreds of migrants tried to violently cross the Spanish border at the fences of the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. As a consequence of stricter regulation, the amount of irregular border crossings was significantly reduced as it became very difficult to get through Moroccan territory either by land or by sea without getting detected.[35] This left many migrants with no choice but to settle in Morocco. In 2009 the number of irregular migrants residing in Morocco was estimated to be between 10.000 and 20.000 people. These irregular migrants mostly came from Mali, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Nigeria and Gambia. During this time there were also migrants arrested and deported from Morocco and sent back across the border. This practise of the *refoulement* of migrants was estimated to concern about 15.000 cases in 2005.[36] These deportations were a sign of the increasingly stricter stance on migration from the Moroccan government and its increased efforts to secure its borders, which will be expanded upon in chapter three.

Table 1: Evolution of the irregular migration from Morocco, 2000-2010 **Source:** M. Lahlou, 'Morocco's Experience of Migration as a Sending, Transit and Receiving Country', *Istituto affari internazionali* (2015).

Year	Moroccans	Foreigners	Total
2000	9,353	15,056	24,409
2001	13,327	13,100	26,427
2002	16,034	15,363	31,297
2003	12,493	23,851	36,344
2004	9,353	17,252	26,605
2005	7,914	21,894	29,808
2006	7,091	9,469	16,560
2007	6,619	7,830	14,449
2008	4,651	8,735	13,286
2009	2,672	7,531	10,203
2010	Nd	10,233	10,223

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[35] M. Lahlou, 'Morocco's Experience of Migration as a Sending, Transit and Receiving Country', *Istituto affari internazionali* (2015) 1-19, there 9-10.

[36] M. Mghari, 'La dimesion démographique et économique des migrations. CARIM Mediterranean Migration Report 2008-2009', *Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute* (2009) 219-228.

The Current Situation 2010 - Present

As was explained in the paragraphs above, the history of Morocco as a migration country is complex and Morocco as a country often takes on various roles either as country of origin, transit or as country of settlement. Since the end of 2010 a new factor came into play that changed the make-up of the migratory movements towards Morocco significantly. This factor was the increasing unrest within the MENA region caused by the 'Arab Spring'. Due to the unrest and the resulting refugee crisis – mainly refugees from Syria but also Libya – there was a new group of people crossing the Moroccan border. Therefore in addition to the influx of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, Morocco now also needed to deal with more migrants coming from the east.[37]

In 2014 the irregular border crossings to the EU were counted at 7,842. Even though this is still small in comparison to the amounts registered between the periods 2000-2005, you can clearly see a rise in the amount compared to the numbers of 2009 and 2010 seen in table 1. Something else that is noteworthy is the fact that the total number of irregular crossings of the EU border increased in the period 2013 to 2014 from 107,365 to 283,532, almost tripling the number. So, despite increased willingness of migrants to cross the EU border, at the start of 2014 there was only a small rise in irregular crossings from Morocco to Spain compared to the other EU borders.[38] This can be explained by the fact that other routes were more desirable for the refugees or by the fact that the effort of Morocco to secure their borders efficiently had paid off. However, that does not mean that no migrants made it into Morocco and in table 2 below you can see the number of recognized refugees by the UNHCR in 2015. It is clear that the number of recognized Syrian refugees within Morocco in 2015 is significantly higher than the number of other types of refugees. Moreover, when comparing table 2 to table 1 it becomes clear that not all people from certain countries were recognised as refugees by the UNHCR, as table 2 shows the number of asylum seekers divided by country. In 2017, 60% of the 6.000 migrants present in Morocco came from Syria, which shows that even though the Western Saharan route was used less compared to the Eastern Balkan route or the North African Mediterranean route until 2017, that the Syrian refugees still had a significant influence on the makeup of the migrant population within Morocco.[39] In chapter three and four it will be shown that the increase of irregular migrants within Morocco and

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[37] Lahlou, 'Morocco's Experience of Migration', 3.
[38] Idem, 12.
[39] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (U.N.H.C.R.), '2017 Planning Summary: Operation Morocco', *Global Focus – U.N.H.C.R* (2017).

their declining socio-economic situation has pushed Morocco to a more human rights oriented national migration policy in the last few years in order to be able to deal with the issue.

Table 2: UNHCR: Number of refugees/Persons in need of int. protection in Morocco March 2016.

Syria	2,927
Yemen	461
Ivory Coast	281
DR Congo	150
Iraq	131
Central Af. Rep.	95
Others	232

Table 3: UNHCR: Number of asylum seekers in Morocco March 2016.

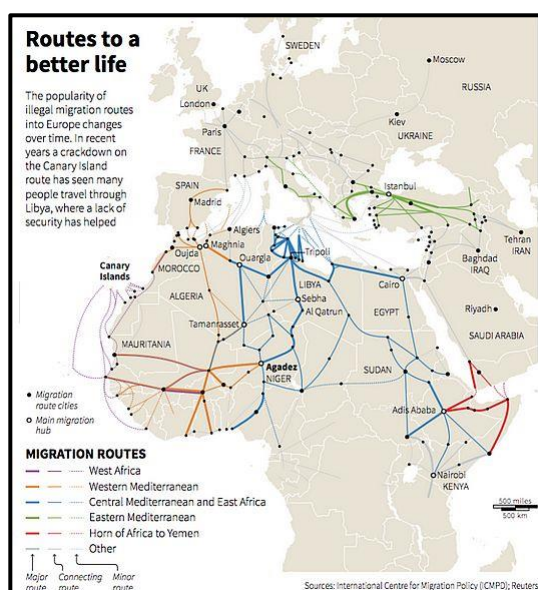| Cameroon	410
DR Congo	318
Ivory Coast	308
Guinea	215
Mali	126
Central Af. Rep.	109
Others	424

Figure 1: Main migration routes to, through and from Morocco **Source**: International Centre for Migration Policy and Reuters.

16

<u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter has shown that Morocco has a long history when it comes to different migration patterns. It also demonstrated that even before structured cooperation between the EU and Morocco took place and before the refugee crisis in 2014, the numbers of irregular crossings between the EU and Morocco was the highest in the period 2005-2006 and was successfully brought down to lower numbers. The next chapter will provide information about the way in which cooperation between the EU and Morocco has played a role in the lowering of the number of migrants and also focusses on the interests of Morocco in these EU-wide or bilateral agreements. The third chapter will demonstrate that mostly domestic policies, which concern Moroccan interests, have resulted in the stricter regulation of migrants.

2. The Cooperation between the EU and Morocco on Migration

Introduction

In the previous chapter we have seen that the strategic location of Morocco, namely on the African continent in the neighbourhood of the EU, has led to different forms of migratory movements between the two actors. There has, in the last few decades, been cooperation between the two actors on the economic as well as the political level. Recently however there has also been increased cooperation between the two actors in the area of migration policy. This chapter will give a short context of the history of this cooperation. After that, the contents of the 2013 EU-Morocco Mobility Partnership will be analysed. With an in-depth analysis the interests of both parties in such an agreement can be shown. It will also become clear that Morocco has leverage over the EU and was thus able to shift negotiations concerning migration cooperation towards their interests.

After the establishment of the Schengen area and thus a common EU external border, the governments of the EU Member States have increasingly tried to restrict migration from third countries. These developments also had an effect upon the possibilities for migrants coming from Morocco. The Spanish entry into the European Community in 1986 especially impacted these migratory movements, as it became more difficult to cross the Moroccan-Spanish border due to European Union legislation. In 1991 Spain imposed visa requirements for Moroccan citizens to cross the border, which in turn led to the decrease of circular migration between the two countries and to an increase of irregular migration. On top of that, due to the protection of the EU external border, Spain implemented increased surveillance and control over the Spanish-Moroccan border in 2002. As was demonstrated in chapter one, this increased policing at the borders resulted in increasing numbers of irregular migrants between the countries until 2006. The increase in irregular migration over the years due to the reinforcement of the EU external border however also stimulated the two countries to work more closely together on surveying the border and resulted in a bilateral agreement on readmissions as early as 1992. These cooperative agreements can however not be seen outside of the context of the EU and Spain's increased participation within the European project during this period. The EU namely actively funded Spain's efforts to secure the Spanish-Moroccan border. This can be observed in the fact the cooperation on border management between Spain and Morocco has been funded by EU agencies, such as Frontex, throughout

the years.[40] Although the cooperation between Spain and Morocco has been the most extensive, other EU Member States have also negotiated bilateral readmission agreements with Morocco concerning the readmission of Moroccan nationals. These countries are Germany, who established an agreement in 1998, France, which negotiated agreements in 1993 and 2001, Portugal, which established an agreement in 1999 and Italy who achieved such readmission cooperation with Morocco in 1998 and 1999.[41]

The establishment of bilateral agreements instead of EU-wide agreements with third countries fits in with the way in which the EU has tried to regulate migration and secure their external border. It has been easier for the EU to enforce border protection on a basis of bilateral agreements between its Member States, for example the bilateral cooperation between Italy and Libya, instead of making difficult agreements between all Member States of the EU and third countries unanimously. [42]

In the case of Morocco this can further be illustrated by the fact that negotiations between the EU on a readmission agreement have previously stranded, despite the good cooperation between the two actors in different policy areas. The negotiations about an EU-Morocco readmission agreement started in 2000 and in 2001 a draft text for the agreement was established. However, the signing of such an agreement did not happen and in 2003 negotiations reopened again, after discussion took place inside the EU-Morocco Association Council. The following negotiations took place between 2003 and 2013 in which fifteen rounds of formal negotiations occurred. These negotiations remained unfruitful until 2013 when a political agreement was reached on the establishment of a Mobility Partnership. [43]

Even though formal agreements between the EU and Morocco on the cooperation on the issue of migration were not established until 2013, there was a constant dialogue on migration issues between Moroccan officials and the High-Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration. This working group was established in 1998 and proposed action plans for countries dealing with transit migration and emigration towards the EU. The countries for which action plans were made included: Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Albania and Morocco. These action plans provided statistical data about migration patterns within the above mentioned countries and gave an overview of the measures taken to combat irregular migrations within these countries by the EU and its Member States. The action plans also proposed concrete measures to the included countries to combat unwanted migratory

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[40] Carrera, Cassarino, El Qadim, Lahlou & Den Hertog, 'EU-Morocco Cooperation on Readmission', 3-5.
[41] Wolff, 'The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements', 77-80.
[42] Hamood, 'EU–Libya cooperation on migration', 19-42.
[43] Wolff, 'The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements', 77-80.

movements that fitted within the EU policy framework on Asylum and Migration. Yet, the action plans were not discussed with the countries for which they were made and were only presented to them by the EU working group.[44]

The Moroccan authorities often concluded that the action plans were unbalanced and put too much focus on security. The officials were concerned that Morocco had to be the policemen for the EU without getting enough in return. In 2002 the EU in turn offered 70 million in order to develop certain regions of Morocco to achieve an agreement within the readmission negotiations. These financial incentives were however not enough and the European Commission realised that something more had to be offered besides financial incentives to ensure a good cooperation on readmissions with the Kingdom of Morocco. The conclusion was that EU Member States had to be willing to offer visa liberalizations to Morocco and thus enable easier access to the European labour market to Moroccan citizens. The inclusion of visa liberalizations and the negotiations surrounding this happened simultaneously with the negotiations between the EU and Morocco on a Deep and Comprehensive trade agreement between the two actors and with the Action Plan for Morocco for the period 2012-2016 from within the European Neighbourhood Policy. During this period of negotiations the Arab Spring and the apparent necessity of a readmission agreement with Morocco played an important role in convincing the EU Member States of the importance of including visa liberalization agreements as part of a package deal with Morocco. This eventually resulted in the aforementioned agreement on the Mobility Partnership between the EU and Morocco.[45]

The 2013 EU-Morocco Mobility Partnership

The EU partnerships are part of the EU´s 'Global approach to Migration and Mobility', which sets out the aspects of the EU´s external migration policy.[46] The Mobility Partnership with Morocco was the first agreement to be established with a country located in the MENA region, instead of the eastern neighbourhood in which agreements were reached earlier. Countries with which the EU has established a Mobility Partnership are: Morocco, Moldova, Cape Verde, Georgia Armenia, Tunisia and Egypt. The negotiations with Senegal failed to reach a conclusion and were discontinued in 2009.[47]

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44 Reslow, 'The role of third countries in EU migration policy', 393-395.
45 Wolff, 'The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements', 77-80.
46 EU Commission, 'The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility', COM (0743) final (2011).
47 Reslow, 'The role of third countries in EU migration policy', 393-395.

The countries that concede to such a partnership need to fulfil certain commitments towards the EU, which may include the readmission of their own nationals as well as the readmission of third country nationals that have irregularly crossed the EU's external border. In turn, the partner countries may benefit from the EU's commitment to promote legal schemes for circular migration or visa liberalization to the EU territory. The partnerships offer a comprehensive framework to bring together multiple projects concerning the migration management in the third countries. Next to that they also include multilateral and bilateral agreements and projects between the third country and different EU Member States.[48]

The EU-Morocco Mobility Partnership sets out four main objectives to which the EU and the Kingdom of Morocco have agreed:

- 'To manage the movement of persons for short periods and legal and labour migration more effectively, taking into account, with regard to the latter, the labour market of the signatories.
- To strengthen cooperation on migration and development in order to exploit the potential of migration and its positive effects on the development of Morocco and European countries.
- To combat illegal immigration, networks involved in the trafficking and smuggling of human beings, and to promote an effective return and readmission policy while respecting fundamental rights, the relevant legislation and ensuring the dignity of the people concerned.
- To comply with duly ratified international instruments concerning the protection of refugees.'[49]

To achieve these goals the agreement sets out various projects, either coordinated and/or financed on EU level or by individual EU Member States. The projects that are included in the annex of the partnership are not definitive and can change according to a changing migration environment. The individual projects itself however do align with various overarching themes that say a lot about the way in which the two parties have agreed to achieve the above outlined goals of the Mobility Partnership. In total there are 37 of these overarching project themes, in which more detailed plans are encompassed within.[50]

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[48] Idem.

[49] Council, 'Joint declaration establishing a Mobility Partnership between the Kingdom of Morocco and the European Union and its Member States', Doc. 6139/13 (2013) 4.

[50] Idem.

The analysis of the contents and language of the EU-Moroccan Mobility partnership and the plans encompassed within, gives insight into the discourse of the EU when it comes to migration cooperation with third countries. A clear shift is visible within the document from a control and security themed migration policy, towards a more development and flexible mobility oriented policy agenda. The term 'mobility' is, for example, mentioned 40 times, out of which only 15 times within the term Mobility Partnership.[51] The fact that the term was used within the title of the agreement further emphasises the focus on the concept of mobility. This emphasis on mobility can be explained by a shift in the EU stance on migration cooperation and a shifting stance towards the securitization of migration on which they have previously focused when it came to externalizing the EU border.[52] However, the influence and interests of the third country in question, Morocco, might have contributed to this apparent focus on the developmental and mobility aspect of the agreement. The mobility focus can namely also be observed in the projects that are listed. One of the overarching themes illustrates the focus on circular migration and allowing better access to the EU labour market for Moroccan citizens. The plan states:

'To reinforce the role of Moroccan nationals in the EU in contributing to the development of Morocco, in particular by mobilising Moroccan expertise within the EU, and to support their development initiatives for Morocco in collaboration with the relevant institutions and bodies of both parties'[53]

Another theme outlined in the annex again focusses on increased mobility between the two actors and hits at a more flexible visa regime for Moroccan nationals. It states:

'To pursue cooperation between the EU Member States and Morocco on simplifying the procedures for access and legal stays (including the possibility of issuing multiple entry and longer-term visas, and waiving administration fees for certain categories of people).'[54]

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[51] Wolff, 'The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements', 77-80.
[52] Carrera, Cassarino, Qadim, Lahlou & Den Hertog, 'EU-Morocco Cooperation on Readmission', 1-18.
[53] Council. 'Joint declaration establishing a Mobility Partnership', 42.
[54] Idem, 33.

The security dimension of the Mobility Partnership is mentioned less often, the term 'control' for example only occurs 3 times and the term 'security' a mere 12 times.[55] The focus and aim of the EU to externalize their borders and to help neighbouring countries with strengthening their border security to combat illegal migratory movements is not completely excluded from the agreement though. An overall project theme for example, articulates the following aim for the EU:

'To support Morocco's efforts and enhance its capacity at the legislative, institutional and operational level in order to prevent and combat illegal migration, the trafficking of migrants and the smuggling of human beings.'[56]

Despite the fact that the EU has tried to negotiate a readmission agreement with Morocco since 2000, no binding agreement has been reached yet. The following statement is made within the Mobility Partnership plans regarding the topic:

'To resume negotiations between the EU and Morocco in order to conclude a balanced readmission agreement, with provisions relating to third-country nationals together with accompanying measures and reconciling the need for operational efficiency with the requirement to respect the fundamental rights of migrants. It will be essential to promote active and effective cooperation with all regional partners in order to support efforts in this field.'[57]

On top of the lack of certainty when it comes to the finality of a readmission agreement, there also isn't a binding agreement for eventual visa liberalizations within the Mobility Partnership. Despite this lack of a legally binding agreement, there is a political commitment made to renegotiate such visa facilitation. It states:

'To open negotiations between the EU and Morocco, in accordance with the signatory parties' internal procedures, for the conclusion of an agreement to facilitate the issuing of visas, with a view to ensuring more fluid mobility between the EU and Morocco.'[58]

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[55] Wolff, 'The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements', 77-80.
[56] Council, 'Joint declaration establishing a Mobility Partnership', 20.
[57] Idem, 19.
[58] Idem, 15.

It is clear that the topic of an EU-wide readmission agreement, for Moroccan citizens as well as third country nationals that have resided within Morocco, and the topic of visa liberalization have been too complicated and politically charged to make binding agreements on. Therefore, the Mobility Partnership remains a non-binding political declaration between two parties to work together to achieve mutual goals. The academic literature has thus defined the agreements as constituting of some form of soft law.[59] The fact that Morocco was able to leave the topic of readmissions out of a legally binding agreement and the fact that the country has not committed to any formal obligations, but only to constitute a greater dialogue on the topic, illustrates that the country does have some form of conditional power over the agreement and cannot be easily overruled by the EU's interest. This thus disputes the idea that the EU can impose its norms within such agreements without the interests of the third countries in question being taken into account.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has shown that third countries to some extent have interests within the Mobility Partnerships. In the case of the EU-Moroccan Partnership it is clear that Morocco has leverage to stir the Mobility Partnership towards their interests. This is clear, because when their interests were not taken into account during the negotiations on a readmission agreement between Morocco and the EU in the period 2000-2013, Morocco refused to agree on cooperation. When further reaching incentives were included in the mobility package in 2013, Morocco did agree to cooperate and to eventually commit to reconsider a readmission agreement. The non-binding aspect of the agreement further works in the favour of Morocco and in the next chapter it is demonstrated that besides the incentives offered by the EU, the non-binding aspect of the partnership and the leverage used by Morocco, Morocco itself enjoys other positives sides to the Mobility Partnership. The political declaration namely closely aligns with Morocco's national migration policy interests and not just with the EU migration management policy framework.

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[59] Carrera & Hernández i Sagrera, 'The externalisation of the EU's labour immigration policy', 28.

3. From securitizing Migration to a Humanitarian policy in Morocco

Introduction

The cooperation between the EU and Morocco has been solidified within the in 2013 established Mobility Partnership. Although, as discussed in chapter two, the interests of both the EU and Morocco are included in the Mobility Partnership, such as a possibility of visa liberalization and a readmission agreement, no binding obligations were included. This chapter tries to demonstrate that the interests of Morocco go further than just the economic and the mobility interests brought up in the Mobility Partnership. Through the analysis of Morocco's national migration policy since the year 2003, it becomes possible to further identify the Moroccan interests within international migration cooperation schemes. The content of this chapter demonstrates that the Moroccan ideas about migration control and development closely align with the interests of the EU in this area, especially when it comes to the ideas about border protection and migration control. However, more recently humanitarian issues have been put more prominently on the Moroccan agenda.

The start of migration control in Morocco

Coordinated Moroccan migration policy really started in 2003, when on January 16th a first draft of the new migration law was proposed to the parliament. This law can be seen as the start of Morocco's efforts to control irregular migration at their borders, but also as a way to respect the countries commitments with their neighbour Spain to manage migration flows towards that country. On the one hand the newly introduced law, named law 02-03, marked the start of Morocco's strategic use of migration policy within their foreign relations. This is the case, because it managed to achieve the Moroccan foreign policy goals at the time to lower tensions between Morocco and Spain through the positive efforts of Morocco to restrict irregular crossings at their mutual border. In this sense, Morocco started to use their migration policy to reaffirm their role as a regional actor. Therefore it can also be seen as the start of the 'diplomacy of migration', with which Morocco attempted to use irregular migration as an asset to their bargaining power within their foreign relations.[60] On the other hand, the new law marked the start of a securitization discourse on migration within the country itself and within its national migration laws. This securitization discourse started, due to the fact that the Moroccan government had to find a way to legitimize the restrictive 02-03 law.[61] To analyse

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[60] K. Natter, 'The Formation of Morocco's Policy Towards Irregular Migration (2000–2007): Political Rationale and Policy Processes.' *International Migration 52(5)* (2014) 1-15 there, 5-9.
[61] Idem.

how the new law was framed within Moroccan national discourse, first the contents of the law and its migration control efforts will be shown.

The goal of law 02-03, as already mentioned, was to restrict irregular migration within Morocco. This is clearly visible when analysing the law in question. Article 21 and 22 of the law lay out the provisions for when a person can be deported from Moroccan territory. This is the case when a non-national enters the country without permission and thus crossed the border illegally or when a person stays within Morocco without the right documentation or with falsified documents. Article 22 further points out that people violating the rules could be prohibited to re-entre into the Moroccan territory for up to a year.[62] These two articles within law 02-03 clearly set out to criminalize irregular entry and stay within Morocco, something that was not the case before the enactment of the law. This criminalization of irregular migration and the enforcement of border protection is further set out in article 34, in which the detainment and deportation of non-nationals without permission to enter or stay on the territory is described.[63] Article 34 thus further establishes a framework in which migrant detention centres, transit zones and border checks become a staple of Morocco's migration policy, with that enforcing a security driven migration control policy. These restrictive provisions clearly link to the way in which the EU tried to securitize migration during this period and the way the Union enforced increasingly stricter migration laws and stronger border protection. For example, the EU's establishment of the Frontex agency in October 2004 in order to better secure the external border of the Union and Spain's implementation of their maritime and border surveillance system in 2002.[64]

However, although the policy of Morocco and the EU closely align during this time, it is not a clear case of Morocco just taking over the EU stance on migration control or Morocco being pushed by the EU to restrict irregular border crossings at their mutual border. This can be demonstrated by the national interests of the Moroccan government to increase security measures concerning migration. Something that is clearly visible in the way in which the Moroccan government tried to frame law 02-03 within the national discourse. Because, despite the fact that the introduction of such a restrictive law was not very popular among the citizens of Morocco itself, as many Moroccan citizens relied on irregular cross-border movements as a form of income, the Moroccan government was successful in politicizing the issue of irregular migration and making it a priority on the national agenda. The government

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[62] Parliament of Morocco , Law 02-03 related to the entry and stay of foreigners in Morocco and to irregular emigration and immigration (2003), Article 21-22.
[63] Idem, Article 34.
[64] Lahlou, 'Morocco's Experience of Migration', 6.

did this by highlighting the national security concerns surrounding irregular migration of foreign nationals. The effort was aided by several coinciding bombing incidents in Casablanca on the 16th of May 2003, in which 33 people were killed. Although unrelated to the law concerning irregular migration, the attacks did help with the efforts to get citizens behind the new restrictive policies.[65] This national security frame can be seen in article 25-26 of law 02-03, as it gives grounds for the expulsion of people who are considered a threat to public order. This includes non-nationals who are suspected of activities related to terrorism.[66] Article 51-53 further put emphasis on the dangers of cross-border organised crime and human trafficking related to irregular migration.[67] Relating irregular migration of economic migrants with threats to national security such as human trafficking and the dangers of terrorism clearly sets out a way to justify the restrictive migration control laws.

Next to framing irregular migration as a national security risk, the government set out to frame the issue as a solely sub-Saharan issue, thereby neglecting the impact the law would have on the mobility possibilities of Moroccan nationals. The government presented Morocco as being the victim of transit migration and painted irregular sub-Saharan migrants as being a socio-economic threat. The framing of migration as a sub-Saharan problem achieved the desired effects of overshadowing the problem of youth unemployment under Moroccan nationals at that time. The way in which law 02-03 restricted their possibilities to leave Morocco to generate income in another country was neglected within public discourse surrounding the law.[68] Article 50 of law 02-03, that prohibits the irregular exit of the Moroccan territory, was presented in a way as if it would only affect non-Moroccan nationals, when in reality it could result in heavy penalties for Moroccan nationals as well as sub-Saharan transit migrants that tried to exit Morocco outside of a designated border check or without the proper documentation.[69]

So, although the restrictive migration laws introduced in 2003 within Morocco benefitted the EU and its security driven migration policy at that time, the law also benefitted the Moroccan government. They were namely able to successfully employ migration policy within their foreign relations, but were also able to shift the national narrative about migration towards a security driven discourse. This allowed the government to emphasise national security and the need to reduce irregular migratory movements from sub-Sahara Africa, while also overshadowing the effects that such restrictive laws would have on their own population.

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[65] Natter, 'The Formation of Morocco's Policy', 5-9.
[66] Parliament of Morocco, Law 02-03, Article 25-26.
[67] Idem, Article 51-53.
[68] Natter, 'The Formation of Morocco's Policy', 5-9.
[69] Parliament of Morocco, Law 02-03, Article 50.

However the 2005 incidents at Ceuta and Melilla, as described in chapter 1, slowly started to shift the public attention towards the human rights problems inherent within the Moroccan migration policy and law 02-03. After receiving critique from non-governmental organisations, civil society and the international community, Moroccan migration policy finally shifted towards a more humanitarian direction in 2013, with the introduction of a new national strategy.[70]

Current Moroccan migration policy

From 2013 onwards, the position of the Moroccan government towards migration changed drastically. This followed after a report on the dramatic state of the humanitarian rights of migrants within Morocco was released by the International Delegation for Human Rights, the National Human Rights Council and the International Organisation for Migration in Rabat in 2013. In September of that year subsequent reports containing solutions to the problems presented in the first report were given to King Mohammed VI. Following that, the King stated that a new overarching asylum and migration policy should be created to better guarantee the human rights of migrants within Morocco.[71] As a consequence of the announced change in policy, a new Immigration and Asylum policy was presented in 2014 by the Council of Government. This *Stratégie Nationale d'Immigration et d'Asile* (SNIA) contained 27 goals and 81 detailed actions to tackle the issue of irregular migrants rights and living conditions within Morocco. [72] One of the main propositions within the new strategy related to the regulation of irregular migrants and refugees within Morocco. Where before, due to law 02-03 irregular migrants and refugees were criminalized, detained and deported, a significant component of the new strategy was to try and regulate these migrants. This meant that at the end of 2014 17,916 migrants were regulated and 643 asylum seekers had been given asylum in Morocco. [73] After the regulation efforts in 2014, more regulations followed in 2016 and 2017.[74]

The context of the introduction of the change in policy is interesting when comparing it to the goals and projects proposed in the 2013 EU-Morocco Mobility Partnership that was signed just months before the new Moroccan migration strategy was proposed. As chapter 2 has evidenced, there was a clear shift within the Mobility Partnership from a security driven

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[70] Lahlou, 'Morocco's Experience of Migration', 3-14.

[71] Tittel-Mosser, 'The Unintended Legal and Policy Relevance of EU Mobility Partnerships', 355-359.

[72] Moroccan Ministry for Moroccans residing abroad & Migration Affairs, Stratégie Nationale d'Immigration et d'Asile (2014).

[73] Lahlou, 'Morocco's Experience of Migration', 14.

[74] Tittel-Mosser, 'The Unintended Legal and Policy Relevance of EU Mobility Partnerships', 356.

migration approach to a more development and mobility focussed migration policy. In a study done by F. Tittel-Mosser, interviews were conducted with EU officials as well as government officials from Morocco responsible for the Mobility Partnership negotiations. Tittel-Mosser points out, that EU officials were surprised by the humanitarian turn within the Moroccan migration policy, because of the fact that they refrained from putting such protections for migrants within the Mobility Partnership even though the EU tried to push for such an approach.[75] This suggests that Morocco's position on its migration policy changed within a rather short period of time or that Morocco purposefully did not mention their will to go into a more development and human rights focussed direction in order to retain a more strategic negotiation position.

As pointed out in chapter 2, the non-binding aspect of the Mobility Partnership worked in Morocco's interests. The withholding of their supposed will to create a more humanitarian migration policy, could have also worked in their favour in order to prevent any binding agreements within the Mobility Partnership concerning human rights protections. Due to the flexible nature of the Mobility Partnership however, the EU has been able to include projects within the annex after its completion. These projects added after the conclusion of the Mobility Partnership agreement closely align with the new migration strategy of Morocco. For example, the added inclusion of the two MIEUX projects within the Mobility Partnership. These projects actively put EU funds towards increased capabilities of the Moroccan institutions concerned with implementing the new national strategy. Another project is aimed at the implementation of one of the main national migration strategy goals, namely to increase capacity to facilitate the integration of irregular migrants within Morocco. This project got included in the Mobility Partnership annex in 2015, so after the initial negotiations.[76] Next to that is the fact that the National Human Rights Council emphasizes the need of external funding in order to successfully implement its goals.[77] The EU was able to ensure this funding to Morocco in 2016 by granting a maximum of 135 million euros reserved for the successful implementation of the Moroccan migration strategy and supporting for the social protection programme in Morocco.[78]

From these communalities between the Moroccan national strategy goals and the aims presented in the Mobility Partnership added projects, it is clear that Morocco benefits from

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[75] Idem, 355-359.

[76] MIEUX, 'Morocco: Integration of refugees and asylum seekers', https://www.mieux-initiative.eu/en/actions/153-morocco-integration [accessed, 18-06-2019].

[77] Tittel-Mosser, 'The Unintended Legal and Policy Relevance of EU Mobility Partnerships', 357.

[78] EU Commission, 'Décision d'Exécution de la Commission du 15.12.2016 relative au programme d'action annuel 2016-partie 3 en faveur du Maroc à financer sur le budget général de l'Union', C 8836 final (2016) 4.

EU funding and knowledge in order to increase their own national migration management policies. Despite the fact that the funding of these projects might also benefit the EU, as it makes Morocco a more desirable country of destination for (transit) migrants, it is the Moroccan national policy that has driven the direction of EU funded projects included in or added to the Mobility Partnership. This thus shows that the aforementioned flexibility of the Mobility Partnerships allows the EU to adapt their policy and funding to their partnering countries according to changing policies. However, this flexibility also implies that the partnering country can seemingly have an upper hand in placing their national policy and interests at the centre of the projects funded by the EU.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has provided evidence for the fact that the national policies concerning migration of Morocco have always worked in the interests of the country itself and were at the basis of starting a securitization discourse within the country itself. Although both the 2003 policy as well as the 2013 policy closely align with the EU international migration policy agenda of first prioritizing migration control and later focussing more on development and human rights, the Moroccan government has always manoeuvred itself in a way that is beneficial for their national migration agenda or for their negotiation position within their foreign relations policy.

4. Morocco as an Important Regional Actor

<u>Introduction</u>

In chapter 3 it was established how Morocco´s national migration policy has always fitted within the EU´s agenda on the topic, especially Morocco's latest turn towards more humanitarian laws regarding migrants. This study has also demonstrated how Morocco strategically played its cards in order to prevent binding agreements and yet still benefitted from EU funding promoting Morocco's national migration agenda. In this chapter it is explained how Morocco´s foreign policy interests and their desire to be an important regional power, have increasingly played a role within their shifting migration policy. By showing Morocco's African oriented foreign policy, it becomes more apparent why the country decided to opt for a more humanitarian treatment of (sub-Saharan) migrants in order to be viewed favourably by their partner countries towards the south. The chapter also highlights that Morocco has come to terms with the fact that they are not just a country of migration transit anymore, but have become a country of destination as well. This has peaked the countries interests to invest in the countries of migration origin.

<u>Morocco and its envisaged regional role</u>

Although Morocco has a history of being involved within the African continent, they were a for example a founding member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Likewise, Morocco has had strong relations with certain African countries such as Senegal and Gabon. Next to their strong connection to francophone countries, Morocco has also had an important influence on the Western African branch of Islam.[79] In the last few decades the foreign relations of Morocco with the region have deteriorated though, because of the territorial dispute over the Western Sahara. This dispute eventually led to Morocco's withdrawal from the OAU in 1984. Since King Mohammed VI was named the King in 1999, there has yet again been a new surge to prioritize strong ties with the other African countries. This policy has however been limited by Morocco's desire to establish strong bilateral ties with countries on the African continent that support Morocco's stance towards the Western Sahara. Therefore a continent-wide policy towards sub-Saharan Africa has not really found any footing. The governmental elite within Morocco has in recent years further noted that Morocco's absence from decision making institutions on the African continent such as the African Union has limited their power reach in the region. It did not only weaken its strategic

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[79] Messari, 'Morocco's African Foreign Policy', 2.

position regarding their political position towards the Western Sahara, it also narrowed their ability to present itself as a regional leader and influence the political direction of the region. This fear has propelled Moroccan diplomacy to go beyond their ties with francophone African countries and try to establish strong relationships with all countries on the continent, despite whether or not they support Morocco on the Western Saharan issue. The decision of King Mohammed VI in July of 2016 to reapply for membership of the African Union can be seen as the consequence of Morocco's new attempted continent-wide African policy. The outcome of this was the eventual readmission of Morocco into the African Union in 2017.[80]

Morocco's changing migration policy can also be viewed as a tool to establish stronger bonds with sub-Saharan countries and as a way to present Morocco as an important regional actor. The Speech from King Mohammed VI at the 28th African Union Summit in 2017 illustrates the narrative that Morocco has adapted within their foreign relations towards African countries. The manner in which the King tries to frame Morocco as an important regional leader within the African continent becomes immediately clear when he starts his speech. The King opens by saying:

'[…] Morocco's action to be refocused in Africa to show how indispensable Africa is to Morocco and how indispensable Morocco is to Africa. […] It is time to return home; at a time when the Kingdom is among the most developed African nations and when a majority of Member States looks forward to our return, we have decided to join our family again.'[81]

This quote clearly illustrates that the King wants Morocco to play an important role within the region and has therefore applied to re-enter the African Union. He positions Morocco as belonging to the African 'family' while also singling Morocco out as being among the most developed. Later in his speech king Mohammed VI tries to link Morocco's efforts to manage migratory movements and especially their recent turn towards more humanitarian migration policies with the development of the African continent. He states:

'All this constructive action to help migrants has bolstered Morocco's image and strengthened the bonds we had already forged. Some say that, through this

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[80] Hernando de Larramendi, 'Doomed regionalism in a redrawn Maghreb?', 522-524.
[81] King Mohammed VI, Full Speech of at the 28th African Union Summit. Available at: http://www.maroc.ma/en/royal-activities/full-speech-hm-king-28th-african-union-summit [accessed, 18-06-2019].

commitment, Morocco is seeking to gain leadership in Africa. I tell them that it is to Africa that the Kingdom is seeking to give the leadership.'[82]

The Moroccan government thus tries to paint Morocco as a leader within the region that is attempting to help migrants. King Mohammed VI further tries to promote the countries positive stance towards sub-Saharan migrants residing within Morocco by mentioning the government's efforts to reform their restrictive migrant policies for more humanitarian oriented policies. The king mentions the migration policies in Morocco in the following way in his speech:

> 'In my country, sub-Saharan citizens are received according to the conditions previously announced: several regularization operations have been launched; more than 25000 people benefited from the first phase. The second phase was successfully launched just a few weeks ago, in the same spirit of solidarity and humanism. […] We are proud of these actions. They were necessary, vital for these men and women who have suffered too long due to their life in hiding. We are acting to stop these people from living on the fringes of society, with no work, no healthcare, nowhere to live and no access to education.'[83]

Just like the outtake above, other government officials have tried to frame the reforms of the Moroccan migration policies since 2013 within Morocco as being specifically beneficial for sub-Saharan migrants and have emphasised Morocco's role as a regional power within African cooperation. In an interview for a Moroccan newspaper in December 2016, the minister of Moroccans residing abroad and Migration affairs, Anis Birrou, made the following remarks concerning the philosophy and goals of the new Moroccan migration policy. He simply stated that:

> 'Immigration is a plus for society', It is clear that the government of Morocco had the desire to frame the new migration policy in positive terms of increasing cultural diversity and development.'[84]

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[82] Idem.
[83] Idem.
[84] Les Inspirations Eco, 'Interview Anis Birrou 20 December 2016', 22.

The 2013 national migration strategy also uses this positive development and societal diversity framing throughout the entire document.[85] The following quote from the introduction implies that the new humanitarian policy is designed to establish better lives for sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco due to the situation in the countries of origin. The quote further indicates that this new strategy is designed to respect the 'privileged' relations with sub-Saharan countries. It states:

> 'The privileged relations that unite Morocco with the countries of sub-Saharan Africa are not only political and economic. […] In view of the prevailing situation in some of these countries, many of their citizens immigrate to Morocco in a legal or illegal manner. Once a point of passage to Europe, our country has now become a destination of residence.'[86]

The quote above also acknowledges that Morocco has become a country of destination to sub-Saharan migrants. By presenting and framing their new migration policy in the positive manner that the speeches, interviews and policy documents have done, Morocco has been able to transform their inevitable status as a country of destination, into a narrative about stronger sub-Saharan connections and regional development. In this way the Moroccan government makes sure that Morocco achieves a good reputation regarding the topic within the region and can thus enhance its power as a regional actor.

Despite the positive framing of Morocco's national migration policies, the fact remains that the country still tries to block transit migration towards the EU. By doing this the Moroccan government disadvantages sub-Saharan migrants that want to travel to the EU. The win-win narrative regarding African diplomacy that Morocco has tried to push thus has its limits. Thus far however, Morocco has been a smart player by enhancing its strategic position towards the EU regarding their foreign and national migration policy, as described in chapter 2 and 3, as well as encouraging stronger diplomatic ties with African countries.

Opening up to sub-Sahara Africa

Besides framing their new migration strategy as being favourable for sub-Saharan countries and thereby improving their image within the region, Morocco has also found other ways to strengthen their ties with other African countries. Their diplomatic interests within the region

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[85] Moroccan Ministry for Moroccans residing abroad & Migration Affairs, Stratégie Nationale d'Immigration et d'Asile (2014).
[86] Idem, 3.

have been supported by various African oriented policies that aim to open Morocco up towards sub-Saharan Africa. Two of these policies will be discussed below in order to illustrate the way in which Morocco tries to use its soft power by offering economic incentives within the region and henceforth becoming an important regional actor. The two foreign policies analysed are: Morocco promoting investments within sub-Saharan countries and the encouragement of the legal migration of sub-Saharan students by the Moroccan government.[87]

One of the main elements of Morocco's African diplomacy is the increase in economic ties between Morocco and sub-Saharan countries. This can be seen in the way in which the government of Morocco has agreed Bilateral Investment Treaties (BIT) with various sub-Saharan countries. By making such investment agreements, mutual rules are established that are meant to create a favourable investment environment. These BIT's are not only limited to francophone countries with which Morocco already has strong ties such as Senegal and Mali, but are also extended to English speaking countries like Nigeria, with which Morocco agreed a BIT in 2016.[88] All of the above mentioned countries with which Morocco has a BIT, are also countries of which the nationals make up a large portion of the irregular migrants living in Morocco. Investing in these countries thus can be beneficial to Morocco to reduce migration and increase economic development in the region. This aim is also explained within the BIT's. The agreement with Nigeria states:

> 'Recognizing the important contribution investment can make to the sustainable development of the state parties, including the reduction of poverty, increase of productive capacity, economic growth, the transfer of technology, and the furtherance of human rights and human development.'[89]

Investing in sub-Saharan countries thus seems to be a priority for Morocco. This can further be shown through the increase in trade between sub-Saharan countries and Morocco, which grew 12,8% between 2000-2015. The total investments of Morocco in the countries on the African continent represented 40% of their total foreign investments in 2015. These investments were done in many different sectors such as; construction, mining, banking and

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[87] Messari, 'Morocco's African Foreign Policy', 2-6.
[88] Bilateral Investment Treaty, Senegal-Morocco (2001).; Bilateral Investment Treaty, Mali-Morocco (2014).; Bilateral Investment Treaty, Nigeria-Morocco (2016).
[89] Bilateral Investment Treaty, Nigeria-Morocco (2016) 2.

telecommunication. Because Morocco has made targeted investments within sub-Saharan Africa they can now be seen as an important player within the economic market.[90]

Another way that the Moroccan government has tried to invest in sub-Saharan countries is by investing in the younger generation of these countries. They have done this through the increased offerings of scholarships towards sub-Saharan students meant for Moroccan public universities. This not only offers these young people a chance to develop, it also establishes a strong connection between the Kingdom of Morocco and the future generations of the various sub-Saharan countries. Thereby the provision of grants to students and allowing this legal migration fits perfectly within Morocco's new African oriented foreign relations diplomacy. The number of sub-Saharan students in morocco has grown significantly over the past years, with in the academic year of 1994-1995 only 1040 sub-Saharan students were registered to a public Moroccan education institution and in the academic year of 2013-2014 5160 students were registered. Most of these students come from French-speaking African countries with the most students being Senegalese nationals.[91]

This increased mobility among sub-Saharan students can additionally provide an interesting perspective to the long-term migration strategy of the Kingdom of Morocco. By offering legal pathways for migration towards the country while simultaneously contributing to the development of sub-Saharan countries in the future, the irregular sub-Saharan migratory movements towards the Moroccan Kingdom might be reduced in the next few decades. So again, we see a way in which Morocco tries to strategically use its migration policy to further its goals within their foreign policy agenda while positioning themselves as an important regional actor. This time not by focussing on irregular sub-Saharan migrations, but instead by focussing on high-skilled migration flows.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained how Morocco has used its national shift towards a more humanitarian focussed migration policy to push a narrative about Morocco as an important regional actor. On top of that it is demonstrated how Morocco further uses its new human rights oriented migration policy to further its foreign policy goals to establish stronger ties with other African countries. Especially their framing of the national policy as being primarily beneficial to sub-Saharan migrants pushes the envisaged image of Morocco as a good partner country to sub-Saharan countries. Next to that is the fact that their other investment policies

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[90] Messari, 'Morocco's African Foreign Policy', 2-3.
[91] J. Berriane, 'Sub-Saharan students in Morocco: determinants, everyday life, and future plans of a high-skilled migrant group', *The Journal of North African Studies* 20(4) (2015) 573-589, there 573-577.

have been beneficial to build these stronger relationships, but are also in Morocco's national migration interests to reduce the irregular migration of sub-Saharan nationals by stimulating economic and societal developments in countries of migration origin.

Conclusion

Through a case study of Morocco's interests within EU migration cooperation, this study has argued that third countries can indeed have interests within EU cooperation agreements. This thus disputes the discourse within the wider academic debate that third countries are a mere vehicle for the EU's policy agenda that has primarily focussed on the securitization and externalisation of their migration policy. On top of that, this research has evidenced that third countries do not only have interests within such partnerships with the EU, but can have a strategic position while negotiating an agreement. This suggests that third countries have the leverage to actively steer negotiations towards favourable outcomes for them. The findings of this research imply that migration cooperation agreements with the EU are not as one-sided as previously often assumed.

The strategic position of the Moroccan government in the dynamic interplay between the EU and Morocco within migration cooperation agreements has been evidenced by the way in which Morocco has repeatedly steered the migration cooperation framework towards their own national and foreign policy goals. This for example happened while securitizing their borders in 2003 as well as in 2013 when they opted for a more humanitarian policy. Both times these policies did indeed align with the agenda of the EU, but were simultaneously fitting the agenda of Morocco itself. By Morocco strategically negotiating the Mobility Partnership as being a non-binding agreement, the Moroccan government was able to make sure the dynamic agreement could fit their future national and foreign migration policy agenda. On top of that, this study has proven that Morocco's interests within the agreed Mobility Partnership go further than just the economic and mobility incentives offered by the EU such as EU funds and an increase in visa-liberalization. The interests of Morocco must namely also be viewed through the lens of Morocco's foreign policy goal to establish themselves as an important regional actor and as a good partner towards the EU as well as towards sub-Sahara Africa. This is the case because Morocco has used EU funding to support their new migration strategy that conveniently provides better support for sub-Saharan migrants at a time in which Morocco tries to strengthen its ties with these sub-Saharan countries. At the same time they still manage to please the EU by fulfilling their role as gatekeeper by limiting migratory movements towards the EU external border.

Although this study has limited itself to a case study of one of the more powerful actors within the region, it would be interesting to take a closer look at other third countries that might not have as much leverage towards the EU and see if the findings of this study still

apply in a broader sense. Such future studies can ensure a better and more comprehensive understanding of how third countries within Africa can influence EU migration cooperation agreements. Insightful cases that can inspire future work might be Ghana, with whom negotiations about a Mobility Partnership failed to reach a conclusion and Tunisia, who similarly to Morocco agreed a Mobility Partnership with the EU while also implementing a new national migration strategy directly after. The study of the national and foreign policy interests of third countries within the EU migration cooperation framework, might give a good insight into how third countries are able to pursue their national interests within such agreements. This is especially relevant at a time in which the EU has emphasised the importance of cooperating closely with countries of migration origin and transit to manage migratory movements in the future.

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