Compliance, resistance or contesting?An analysis of the evolution of the Migration Diplomacy developed by key transit states in the periphery of the European Union: Case studies of Turkey, Morocco and Belarus

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Compliance, resistance or contesting?

An analysis on the evolution of the Migration Diplomacy developed by key transit states in the periphery of the European Union

Case studies of Turkey, Morocco and Belarus

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Abbreviations

EU: European Union

ENP: European Neighbourhood Policy

EaP: Eastern Partnership

SADR: Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi

RA: Readmission Agreement

VF: Visa Facilitation

EMR: Eastern Mediterranean Route

WMR: Western Mediterranean Route

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi

NPA: Nouvelle Politique Africaine

SDF: Syrian Democratic Forces

PKK: Kurdistan Workers' Party

POLISARIO: Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

TACIS: Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent Countries

EAEC: Eurasian Economic Community

EAEU: Eurasian Economic Union

CSTO: Collective Security Treaty Organization

CEM: Coercive Engineered Migration

1. Introduction

Migration has been a fundamental part of human history, influencing the emergence, prosperity, and decay of polities. More contemporaneously since the end of the Second World War cross-border human displacements have increasingly posed a challenge for states and international organisations. In this sense, James Hollifield[1], predicted that states in the twenty-first century would be migration states, where "the management of migration flows is a central component of state functions and interests''. Albeit not yet confirming this labelling, the two last decades have been characterised by a myriad of global transnational challenges where migratory flows have undoubtedly featured prominently.

These cross-border migrations, surging from the Global South towards the Global North, are best represented by their peak in the 2015 Refugee Crisis, with 244 million migrants world-wide, which included 21 million refugees[2]. This upsurge has not diminished in the following years, and in 2022, before the outflow of Ukrainian refugees, the number of asylum-seekers had risen to 27 million world-wide[3].

These unprecedented international migratory flows have produced an incredible array of interactions, negotiations, agreements and tensions amongst states, supranational organisations, and international organisations. In this context, the concept of migration diplomacy emerged, formulated by Fiona B. Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas[4], with the objective of establishing a coherent framework to analyse the nexus between migration management and foreign policy in inter-state and international relations. By specifically focusing on the interests, the power and geographic position of the actors in international migration management they determine their capacity and manoeuvrability to leverage and issue-link in their inter-state migration and border management relations. Migration Diplomacy has been defined by the authors as "the use of diplomatic tools, processes and procedures to

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[1] James F. Hollifield, "The emerging migration state 1," International migration review 38, no. 3 (2004): 885-912.

[2] Phillip Connor, "Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015," Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, Pew Research Center, August 20, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/.

[3] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR Global Trends 2021, "Figures at a Glance," UNHCR. The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR 2022, https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html.

[4] Fiona. B. Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas, "Migration diplomacy in world politics," International Studies Perspectives 20, no. 2 (2019): 113-128.

manage cross border population mobility"[5], and identified both the ''use of migration flows as a means to obtain other goals', and also ''the use of diplomatic methods to achieve goals related to migration"[6]. Furthermore, migration diplomacy is used with two different strategies. Cooperation, when mutually beneficial agreements are sought between the states or international organisations and coercion. This latter strategy was based on the Coercive Engineered Migration concept that Kelly Grenhill had introduced and defined as "those cross-border population movements that are deliberately created or manipulated in order to induce political, military and/or economic concessions from a target state or states"[7].

1.1 Externalisation of migration and transit states of migration

With-in the European Union, the previous analytical concepts do not bear much value, as the European integration has progressively blurred the borders between state members and led them towards a harmonisation of border security and migration management. Nonetheless, it is precisely this integration process that granted the entry of migration into high politics[8], as it was classified as a national security subject instead of a home affairs issue. This securitisation of migration, defined as the social construction process that has framed migration as a threat and enabled the implementation of restrictive measures and policies towards migratory flows, has characterised the migration and asylum policies of the EU since the mid 1980's[9]. This caused a persistent intensification of external border controls with the deployment of semi-military forces to stop irregular migration from entering the common euro-space established by the Schengen Agreement and Convention

As such, by establishing the borderless Europe with a free single market, and with circulation of goods, persons, services and capital, it also established the common restrictive external borders of Europe[10], and created the transit states of migration in its periphery. The concept of transit states has been academically criticised because of its blurriness and their condition as politically constructed spaces, due to the amalgamation of two factors, their geopolitical

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[5] Fiona. B. Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas, "Migration diplomacy in world politics," International Studies Perspectives 20, no. 2 (2019): 113-128.

[6] ibid

[7] Kelly M. Greenhill, "Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement as an Instrument of Coercion; Strategic Insights, v. 9, issue 1 (2010): 4-38

[8] James F. Hollifield, Hélène Thiollet, and Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, "La politique des migrations internationales: un nouveau cadre d'analyse," Hommes & Migrations (2022): 7-28

[9] Nora El Qadim, Le gouvernement asymétrique des migrations: Maroc/Union européenne (Dalloz, 2015): 4-22.

[10] Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the securitization of migration," JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies 38, no. 5 (2000): 751-777.

situation, and the externalised migration management of their Global North neighbours. Nonetheless, the flexibility and ambiguity of the concept as much as the embedded power relationship[11] between the European Union and its neighbourhood have been described by Franck Duvell[12] as perfectly suited to describe the politics of migration in this particular geographic setting.

The relation between the supranational institutions and the countries surrounding it, are framed by the process of externalisation in the sphere of migration. This process, by which states directly or indirectly operate outside their sovereign territories[13] and seek to engage third countries in the management of the external borders of the Union and the management of the migratory flows that are directed to it, started with the Treaty of Amsterdam, in 1999[14]. That year, the member states of the EU approved to transfer the migration and asylum from intergovernmental jurisdiction to a communitarian one, with the objective of establishing a common EU policy and management. Moreover, and showcasing the importance of migration in the EU's relation with its neighbours, the 2002 European Council in Sevilla introduced a negative conditionality in the cooperation between the EU and third-countries.

Since then, "any future cooperation, association or equivalent agreement which the European Union or the European Community concludes with any country should include a clause on joint management of migration flows and on compulsory readmission in the event of illegal immigration''[15]. The negative conditionality approach meant that third countries which were perceived as non-cooperative in the sphere of migration would be downgraded in their overall bilateral relations with the EU, independently on if they were candidates to membership, prospective candidates, or states in the EU neighbourhood without membership binding.

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[11] Robyn C. Sampson, Sandra M. Gifford, and Savitri Taylor, "The myth of transit: the making of a life by asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia," Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 42, no. 7 (2016): 1135-1152.
[12] Frank Duvell, Michael Collyer, and Irina Molodikova, Transit migration in Europe (Amsterdam University Press, 2014): 6-78
[13] Sebastian Cobarrubias et al., "Interventions on the concept of externalisation in migration and border studies," Political Geography (2023): 19-47
[14] Canan Ezel Tabur, "Renewed Inter-institutional Imbalance after the Lisbon Treaty? The External Dimension of the EU's Migration Policy," PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs 18, no. 3 (2013): 13-32.
[15] Council of the European Union. "Seville European Council 21 and 22 June 2002 Conclusions." European Council - Council of the European Union, October 24, 2002. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/20928/72638.pdf.

1.2 Europeanisation: Compliance, resistance and contesting

These policies and conditionality framework with which the EU sought to engage with its neighbourhood not only responds to the externalisation of migration policy but to its 'external governance' aspiration[16]. This is understood as the attempts of the EU to Europeanise its neighbourhood by the transfer of its rules and policies through "processes of construction, diffusion and institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, shared beliefs and norms''[17], in the domestic political structures, institutions, policies and identities.

Due to research being Eurocentric, the majority of research on migration has focused on Europeanisation and the transfer of norms, values and policies from the European Union to its neighbourhood. As such, literature has identified the states as recipients of European decision-making, both in the sphere of democratisation and migration policies[18]. This is also appreciated with the over-focus that research has dedicated to host states in the West compared to the minor attention that has analysed migration flows in the Global South[19], where an immense majority of the migratory flows occur and where the majority of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees establish themselves, forcefully or not.

Yet, despite the evident asymmetry of power and the conditionality tools and mechanisms, states in the periphery of the EU are not simply passive recipients of externalisation measures and have their own agenda, objectives and cost-benefits calculations, with which they engage in migration diplomacy with the EU, resisting and contesting the big supranational institutions[20].

This can be observed through the string of events that occurred in three external borders of the EU, where migration and humanitarian crises were instrumentalised or directly generated by states in the periphery of the supranational institutions. As such, in February 2020, a new border crisis erupted between Greece and Turkey, with the Eurasian country opening its borders and

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[16] Sandra Lavenex and Frank Schimmelfennig, "EU rules beyond EU borders: theorizing external governance in European politics," Journal of European public policy 16, no. 6

[17] Vukašinović, Janja. "Illegal migration in Turkey-EU relations: An issue of political bargaining or political cooperation?." *European Perspectives* 3, no. 2 (2011): 147-166.

[18] Nora El Qadim, "EU-Morocco negotiations on migrations and the decentring agenda in EU Studies." *E-International Relations* 24 (2017).

[19] Kelsey P. Norman, "Migration diplomacy and policy liberalization in Morocco and Turkey." *International Migration Review* 54, no. 4 (2020): 78

[20] Lena Laube. "Diplomatic side-effects of the EU's externalization of border control and the emerging role of "transit states" in migration diplomacy." *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 46, no. 3 (2021): 78-105.

facilitating the arrival of its refugee and asylum-seeking population[21]. One year later, in 2021, two humanitarian crises emerged in opposed geographic locations, in the south-western and north-eastern borders of the EU. In May 2021 Spain hospitalised the leader of the Polisario[22], confronted with Morocco over the sovereignty of Western Sahara since 1975, and Morocco reacted by opening the gates to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Lastly, during the summer and autumn of 2021, Belarus orchestrated the most obvious coercive engineered migration at its borders with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, as a retaliation act for the array of sanctions that the EU had imposed[23].

These three states, Turkey, Morocco and Belarus, are geographically situated in opposed geographic peripheries of the EU, had different political regimes, and also starkly contrasted politico-legal bilateral relations vis-a-vis the supranational institution. At the time Turkey was a prospective albeit definitely stalled candidate, Morocco, had obtained a privileged advanced status and Belarus, had been imposed heavy political and economic sanctions. All of them, though, had been increasingly labelled as transit countries of migration and had resorted to coercive actions in their migration and border policies as part of their migration diplomacy strategy.

In order to understand the events, that cannot be separated from the previous process of securitisation of the borders and externalisation of migration, the thesis proposes the following research question:

How and why has the migration diplomacy developed by peripheral states around the EU evolved from cooperation to coercion?

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[21] Al Jazeera. "Erdogan Vows to Keep Doors Open for Refugees Heading to Europe." Turkey-Syria Border News | Al Jazeera, February 29, 2020. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/29/erdogan-vows-to-keep-doors-open-for-refugees-heading-to-europe.

[22] Miguel GonzálezFrancisco Peregil, "El Líder Del Frente Polisario, Hospitalizado En España." El País, April 23, 2021. https://elpais.com/espana/2021-04-23/el-lider-del-frente-polisario-hospitalizado-en-espana.html.

[23]Elisabeth.Braw "Stop Calling What's Happening with Belarus a Migration Crisis." POLITICO, November 15, 2021. https://www.politico.eu/article/belarus-border-migration-geopolitical-crisis-nato-eu/.

2. Literature review

The phenomenon of migration had traditionally received less attention by political scientists and International Relation scholars[24]. Alarmingly, and despite there being few issues as transnational as refugee and migration policies[25], it is not until the 1980's, with the start of the securitisation of migration, that the research and study of migration, traditionally a focus of anthropologists, demographers, economists, or sociologists, attracted political scientists and IR scholars. Previous to this, the relative lack of interest of IR scholars was due to the dominant approach in International Relations, realism, which underestimated the importance of migration in intra-state relations[26].

Nonetheless, with the emergence of neorealism, a nascent array of IR scholars, at the same timeframe that migration was being securitised, started concentrating on the connection between migration, security, the consequences for the sending and receiving states[27] and the effect of migration on domestic politics. Notably representing this, Mitchell S. Teitelbaum[28] and Christopher Mitchell[29] first argued that the policies of governments were used to restrain or facilitate refugee flows in managing migration flows and alerted of the significant implications for International Relations.

In a similar timeframe, Weiner[30], and focusing on security and national security, alerted to the potential threat that international migration posed for states, through the instrumentalisation of migrants and acknowledged the coercive power that this gave to states. Alas, he did not focus on the role of the sending and transit states but proposed a set of foreign policy tools that countries in the Global North could use to prevent and intervene in managing migratory flows.

Gradually though, other schools of thought introduced new perspectives to the nexus between international migration and foreign policy. Liberal institutionalism primarily focused on the

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[24]Christopher Mitchell "International migration, international relations and foreign policy." *International Migration Review* 23, no. 3 (1989): 681-708.

[25] Karen Jacobsen, "Factors influencing the policy responses of host governments to mass refugee influxes," International Migration Review 30, no. 3 (1996): 655-678.

[26] Jan Liďák and Radoslav Štefančík, "Migration Diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument," Politické Vedy, no. 2 (2022): 130-288.

[27] Gerald E. Dirks, "International migration in the nineties: causes and consequences," International Journal 48, no. 2 (1993): 191-214.

[28] Michael S. Teitelbaum, "Immigration, Refugees, and Foreign Policy," International Organization 38, no. 3 (1984): 429–450.

[29] Christopher Mitchell "International migration, international relations and foreign policy." *International Migration Review* 23, no. 3 (1989): 681-708.

[30] Myron Weiner and Rainer Munz, "Migrants, refugees and foreign policy: Prevention and intervention strategies," Third World Quarterly 18, no. 1 (1997): 25-52.

role of globalisation in cross-border migration and the increased levels of international interdependence, contrasting the mobility of goods and capital compared to persons[31] and the lack of international cooperation. Another theory participating in the debate around international migration and foreign policy is constructivism. Jef Husymans[32], focused on the ideas and concepts of national security and state identity that had led to the present securitisation and externalisation of migration in Europe. Interestingly, the co-author of migration diplomacy, Fiona Adamson, had previously approached international migration and foreign policy from transnationalism, focusing on the role of diaspora and the boundaries of nation-states[33].

Finally, in 2002, Rainer Bauböck[34] argued that because migration had eventually become a major factor in foreign policy there was a need for future research to focus on the complex relation and interaction between migration and foreign policy.

2.1 Coercive Engineered Migration

Not long after, and mentioned previously in the introduction, Kelly M. Greenhill gradually introduced new analysis after studying the Kosovo conflict, highlighting the use by Slobodan Milosevic of refugees as political and military weapons[35], and the Cuban *Balseros* Crisis in the 1990's[36]. The next few years, she gathered cases and compiled the extensive historical use of migrants and refugees by states, coining a new concept, coercive engineered migration.

In total, Greenhill identified[37] fifty-six attempts of coercive engineered migrations between 1951, when the United Nations Refugee Convention was elaborated, and 2006, and defined the concept "as those cross-border population movements that are deliberately created or

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31 Sara Wallace Goodman and Frank Schimmelfennig, "Migration: a step too far for the contemporary global order?," Journal of European Public Policy 27, no. 7 (2020): 1103-1113.
32 Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the securitization of migration," JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies 38, no. 5 (2000): 751-777.
33 Fiona Adamson and Madeleine Demetriou, "Remapping the Boundaries of 'State' and 'National Identity': Incorporating Diasporas into IR Theorizing," European Journal of International Relations 13, no. 4 (2007): 33
34 Rainer Baubock, "International migration and liberal democracies: the challenge of integration," Patterns of Prejudice 35, no. 4 (2001): 33-49.
35 Kelly M. Greenhill, "The use of refugees as political and military weapons in the Kosovo conflict" " in Raju G. C. Thomas (ed.), Yugoslavia Unraveled: Sovereignty, Self-Determination, and Intervention (Lanham, MD: Lexington/Rowman and Littlefield (2003): 15
36 Kelly M. Greenhill, "Engineered migration and the use of refugees as political weapons: a case study of the 1994 Cuban Balseros Crisis," International Migration 40, no. 4 (2002): 39-74.
37 Kelly M. Greenhill, "Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement as an Instrument of Coercion; Strategic Insights, v. 9, issue 1 (Spring-Summer 2010): 4-45

manipulated in order to induce political, military and/or economic concessions from a target state or states"[38].

The vast array of cases are localised in 5 continents (Asia, Africa, Europe, America and Oceania) and include very different contexts (war, peace, bilateral tensions, non-diplomatic recognition) and relations between the coercer (which encompasses states and non-state actors such as insurgents or NGO's) and the target state, group of states or international organisations. The diversity includes rival political regimes such as Cuba and the US, strategic allies like the US and Israel, states seeking financial aid like Albania and Nauru or the lifting of sanctions.

The author argued that the success of failure of the coercer depends on the vulnerability of the target state, identifying four factors[39]: 1) A big polarisation with-in the target country regarding the issue of migration, 2) High hypocrisy cost, explained as the contradiction between the state commitment to liberal and human rights values and the non-legal actions towards migrants, 3) Participation and ratification of the principal international conventions regarding rights of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers and finally, 4) Political criticism by the opposition of the target country regarding the government's management of the crisis.

Undoubtedly, her contribution has been much acclaimed by academia and incorporated into policymakers and non-governmental organisations discourse. Since then, and increasingly so since the Refugee Crises and recent events analysed in the thesis, a wide array of case studies using the concept and its analytical frame have been produced. Nonetheless, her work has received criticism, especially because of its framing of migration and refugees as weapons, that for Lev Marder[40], weaponizes the metaphor against refugees, stigmatising and further framing migration in a restrictive and securitised manner. Moreover, it has been partly re-appropriated by far-right movements against immigration and refugees[41]. It also garnered interest with-in military institutions that have re-interpreted the coercive engineered migration as part of hybrid

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[38] Kelly M. Greenhill, "Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement as an Instrument of Coercion; Strategic Insights, v. 9, issue 1 (Spring-Summer 2010): 4-45
[39] Kelly M. Greenhill, "Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement as an Instrument of Coercion; Strategic Insights, v. 9, issue 1 (Spring-Summer 2010): 4-45
[40] Lev Marder, "Refugees are not weapons: the 'weapons of mass migration' metaphor and its implications," International Studies Review 20, no. 4 (2018): 576-588.
[41] Sadhbh O'Malley, "The Weaponization of Population Movements on the Greek Turkish Borderzone. The use of refugees by European actors to confirm and transcend borders with the use of coercive engineered migration" (2021).

warfare[42], a concept without a consensual definition, that has gained increased attention following the string of events that have occurred since the annexation of Crimea by Russia[43].

Finally, while the work by Greenhill emphasises the coercive nature of using migrants, succeeding analysis and studies have interpreted it as only a part of the migration diplomacy developed by states.

2.2 Migration Diplomacy

The term of migration diplomacy was first coined by Helene Thiollet in 2011. In her study, paper "Migration as Diplomacy: Labor Migrants, Refugees, and Arab Regional Politics in the Oil-Rich Countries, Thiollet both identified the role of migration as a diplomatic tool that enabled or eased integration among Arab States and the role of migration as a coercive tool.[44] She examined the effects of the Gulf War of 1991 on the migration diplomacy of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Yemenis were expelled after the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organisation) and Yemen did not condemn the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

In the next few years, and influenced by the Refugee Crisis in 2015, academic production on migration diplomacy surged and finally, Adamson and Tsourapas developed the migration diplomacy framework with their paper "Migration Diplomacy in world politics''[45]. As defined by Tsourapas, Migration Diplomacy is "the use of diplomatic tools, processes and procedures to manage cross border population mobility, including both the strategic use of migration flows as a means to obtain other goals, and the use of diplomatic methods to achieve goals related to migration".[46]

Accordingly, there are three factors that differentiate migration diplomacy and therefore provide it of academic relevance and interest. Firstly, migration diplomacy focuses on the actions or inactions of states in their management of migration flows and their relation to the

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[42] Frank G. Hoffman, Conflict in the 21st century: The rise of hybrid wars (Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007): 15

[43] Tad A. Schnaufer "Redefining hybrid warfare: Russia's non-linear war against the West." *Journal of Strategic Security* 10, no. 1 (2017): 17-31.

[44] Thiollet, Helene. "Migration as diplomacy: Labor migrants, refugees, and Arab regional politics in the oil-rich countries." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 79, no. 1 (2011): 103-121.

[45] Helene Thiollet, "Migration as diplomacy: Labor migrants, refugees, and Arab regional politics in the oil-rich countries," International Labor and Working-Class History 79, no. 1 (2011): 103-121.

[46] Fiona B. Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas, "Migration diplomacy in world politics," International Studies Perspectives 20, no. 2 (2019): 113-128.

foreign policy or diplomatic goals of the state. The focus remains on the state because despite the plurality of actors in migration-related issues, it still constitutes the most important actor in regulating cross-border mobility and maintains the control of borders as part of their sovereignty. Secondly, they point out the specificity of migration diplomacy, that does not include the entirety of the migration policy or attempts of managing migratory flows by a state but only those elements of migration policy that are attached to their foreign policy. Thirdly, migration diplomacy is an international relations issue and instrument, insofar that it solely focuses on how one state achieves its objectives in relation to another state or group of states with the management or mismanagement of migratory flows.

As such, Tsourapas defines migration diplomacy as the "use of diplomatic tools, processes and procedures to manage cross-border population mobility, including both the strategic use of migration flows as a means to obtain other aims, and the use of diplomatic methods to achieve goals related to migration"[47]. Furthermore, Adamson and Tsourapas[48] divide the strategies that states implement in their migration diplomacy into two methods, cooperation and coercion. Cooperative migration diplomacy is based on beneficial agreements and arrangements between the actors, with both threats and aggression. Instead, it becomes a coercive migration diplomacy strategy when there is a unilateral approach, a resort to violence or a threat of using violence. Nonetheless, Tsourapas depicted this as a blurred spectrum, interesting to analyse.

Extremely important with-in the migration diplomacy concept, is the power relationship between states and the geographic position of the countries vis-à-vis the migratory fluxes because the migration diplomacy that a state can implement is extremely dependent on geopolitical situation and its condition of country of origin, transit or destination[49]. As such, the state's position in the migratory fluxes determines its, interest, leverages and power between and against each other[50].

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[47] Gerasimos Tsourapas, "Migration diplomacy in the Global South: cooperation, coercion and issue linkage in Gaddafi's Libya," Third World Quarterly 38, no. 10 (2017): 2367-2385.

[48] Fiona B. Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas, "Migration diplomacy in world politics," International Studies Perspectives 20, no. 2 (2019): 113-128.

[49] Kelsey P. Norman, "Migration diplomacy and policy liberalization in Morocco and Turkey," International Migration Review 54, no. 4 (2020): 1158-1183.

[50] Birce Demiryontar, "Accession conditionality and migration diplomacy: Turkey's dual identity in migration policy negotiations with the EU," European Politics and Society 22, no. 1 (2021): 12-35

In this sense, academic literature has identified migration diplomacy and the management of migratory flows as a means for Global South countries to address and counter their traditional and structural power asymmetry with the Global North[51].

Since the theorising of migration diplomacy, academic literature has slowly expanded, covering present but also historical cases and providing new insights. Tsourapas himself has dedicated himself to migration diplomacy in the Global South, focusing on migration diplomacy in the Gulf countries and showcasing the array of benefits and gains that Global South countries can obtain through migration diplomacy, exemplified with the case-study of Libya under Gadhafi in the beginning of the 21st century. Libya, after capacity-swamping Italy, obtained the lift of arms embargo by the European Union, a concession of five billion euros by Italy to develop infrastructure and a public condemnation by Berlusconi of the colonial period[52]. Moreover, for Boubakri[53] Libya is the country who profited most by linking migration policies and diplomacy, with which it achieved reinsertion into the international scene.

The developed conceptual framework has been celebrated but, as is characteristic and needed, some critical assessment, perspectives and new insights have been published despite its recent conception.

In this sense, Juliette Tolay, acknowledged the proposed framework as the ''most elaborate and comprehensive attempt at mapping out migration diplomacy''[54], but adding to the debate, she organised her critical assessment in four main points. Firstly, she critiqued the state-centrist approach, as other actors are also involved in the migratory flows or the formation of domestic migratory policies. Advancing himself to this, though, Tsourapas had adapted, and in 2021 had also introduced non-state actors in his publications, with "Migration diplomacy in the Gulf–non-state actors, cross-border mobility, and the United Arab Emirates."[55]. Secondly, and not

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[51] Lena Laube, "Diplomatic side-effects of the EU's externalization of border control and the emerging role of 'transit states' in migration diplomacy," Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung 46, no. 3 (2021): 78-105: 1-15

[52] Gerasimos Tsourapas, "Migration diplomacy in the Global South: cooperation, coercion and issue linkage in Gaddafi's Libya," Third World Quarterly 38, no. 10 (2017): 2367-2385.

[53] Hassan Boubakri, "Le Maghreb et les migrations de transit: le piège?," Migrations société 18, no. 107 (2006): 85-104

[54] Juliette Tolay, "Interrogating and Broadening the Emerging Narrative on Migration Diplomacy: A Critical Assessment," Millennium (2023): 2-12

[55] Froilan T. Malit Jr. and Gerasimos Tsourapas, "Migration diplomacy in the Gulf–non-state actors, cross-border mobility, and the United Arab Emirates," Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 47, no. 11. (2021) : 4-15

directed specifically towards the authors but the overarching literature, she believed that more historical depth is needed in the study of migration diplomacy.

Thirdly, Tolay critiques migration diplomacy for tending to focus on bargaining and tangible gains. As such, she criticised the migration diplomacy concept from a theoretical approach, in which she expressed that migration diplomacy has a realist bias and that symbols, norms and status should somehow be included. Adding to this epistemological debate, Philip Alhorn[56], applied an alternative role theory to his thesis on migration diplomacy, due to a critical perspective on the proposed rationalist and structuralist bargaining framework. Also Peter Seeberg, author with a great trajectory in international migration and foreign policy, applied a new analytical framework, historical institutionalism, in order to institutional change and adaptation in Arab countries when challenged by EU foreign security and policy[57].

Fourthly, and also related to a realist bias for Tolay, despite migration diplomacy recognising and introducing the power asymmetry in their conceptual framework, it does not trace it to its historical origins.

As such, migration diplomacy appears to be a dynamic non-rigid theoretical framework, still in the process of construction and that can be adapted to the specific approach, perspectives and cases that an author wishes to analyse. Finally, the increase of migration diplomacy analysis and studies is a recognised fact but a missing gap in the literature has been identified. While there is an incredible array of studies focusing in-depth on one particular agreement, domestic policy, bilateral tension or interaction with a migration diplomacy analysis, no sufficient attention has been devoted to the evolution of migration diplomacy in different key transit states of migration around the EU.

Sadly showcasing this, despite Turkey being the state most analysed through migration diplomacy, there is no available study on the evolution of its migration diplomacy. Moreover, while there are many comparisons of specific externalisation policies of the EU, such as visa facilitation[58] or readmission agreements[59], and even comprising different countries of the EU

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[56] Filip Ahlborn, "The Role (s) of Migration Diplomacy: The concept of migration diplomacy from a role theory perspective and the case of Morocco's 'migration roles'" (2019): 3:45

[57] Peter Seeberg and Jan Claudius Völkel, "Introduction: Arab responses to EU foreign and security policy incentives: Perspectives on migration diplomacy and institutionalized flexibility in the Arab Mediterranean turned upside down," Mediterranean Politics 27, no. 2 (2022): 135-147.

[58] Florian Trauner and Imke Kruse, "EC visa facilitation and readmission agreements: A new standard EU foreign policy tool?," European Journal of Migration and Law 10, no. 4 (2008): 411-438.

[59] Jean-Pierre Cassarino, "Informalising readmission agreements in the EU neighbourhood," The international spectator 42, no. 2 (2007): 179-196.

periphery[60], there is no study of the overall evolution of migration diplomacy for the three cases.

Furthermore, the events unfolded since the challenges brought by the migration and refugee crisis of 2015 have concentrated the majority of the academic literature examining migration diplomacy issues, with the agreement between the European Union and Turkey in 2016 featuring prominently. More recently, the migratory crisis in 2020 in the Greco-Turkish border, the migratory crisis of May 2021 in Ceuta as a consequence of Spain treating medically the Polisario leader[61] and the migratory fluxes on the borders of Lithuania and Poland after imposing sanctions on Belarus[62] have increased awareness of the European Union and its member states as migration diplomacy targets[63]. Migration diplomacy and coercive engineered literature has augmented considerably since these events, but once again, has focused specifically on how these circumstances occurred without acknowledging it as part of a migration diplomacy continuum.

Finally, analysing the evolution is of foremost importance because it will enable us to grasp the effects of the securitisation of migration, the externalisation of migration, the successive migratory flows as well as the foreign policy concerns and objectives of the three transit states of migration selected as in-case studies.

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[60] Kelsey P. Norman, "Migration diplomacy and policy liberalization in Morocco and Turkey," International Migration Review 54, no. 4 (2020): 1158-1183.

[61] Eiko Thielemann, "Does Policy Harmonisation Work? The EU's Role in Regulating Migration Flows" (2003): 11-35

[62] Ondřej Filipec, "Multilevel Analysis of the 2021 Poland-Belarus Border Crisis in the Context of Hybrid Threats1," Central European Journal of Politics 8, no. 1 (2022): 1-5

[63] Janko Bekić "Coercive Engineered Migrations as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare: A Binary Comparison of Two Cases on the External EU Border." Politička Misao 59, no. 02 (2022): 141-169.

3. Methodology

The chosen methodology for the thesis has been a qualitative case study design, which involves a detailed, in-depth and intensive analysis of a single or few cases[64]. This methodology, one of the most used in political science and IR research[65], is defined by Andrew Bennett as "a well-defined aspect of a historical happening that the investigator selects for analysis'' [66]. Furthermore, the author stated that some of the most prominent debated subjects in International Relations, such as, wars, international security or complex interaction amongst actors and with structural and agent-based variable bear advantages when studied through case study methods[67].

As this thesis has chosen three case studies, this is a multiple-case study design, with a twofold objective, The first one is, with the use of in-case narrative, to gain a profound understanding of every selected case and grasp the evolution of the analysed concept of migration diplomacy. As such, and more specifically, the selected method to study the evolution of migration diplomacy is historical narrative analysis, as it is the most adequate method to analyse the chronological dynamic[68] of a particular phenomenon over time.

Secondly, the multiple-case study design will enable us to compare and contrast amongst the three cases analysis and evolution. Moreover, and acknowledging that case studies cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, that is, the migration diplomacy developed by transit states of migration, it is useful in providing hypothesis for future research[69] with a larger case selection.

3.1 Case selection

The thesis has chosen as case-studies three states; Turkey, Morocco and Belarus. These countries have been chosen as the case studies due to four different factors. Firstly, the three

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[64] Emma Bell and Alan Bryman. "The ethics of management research: an exploratory content analysis." *British journal of management* 18, no. 1 (2007): 63-77.

[65] Arya Priya. "Case study methodology of qualitative research: Key attributes and navigating the conundrums in its application." *Sociological Bulletin* 70, no. 1 (2021): 94-110.

[66] Andrew Bennett, "Case study methods: Design, use, and comparative advantages." *Models, numbers, and cases: Methods for studying international relations* 2, no. 1 (2004): 19-55.

[67] Andrew Bennett, and Colin Elman. "Case study methods in the international relations subfield." *Comparative political studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 170-195.

[68] Matthew Lange *Comparative-historical methods*. Sage, (2012): 2-12

[69] Bent Flyvbjerg "Case study." *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* 4 (2011): 301-316.

countries are situated on the borders of the European Union, but in opposed geographic peripheries, enabling to analyse the effect of the different migratory flows through the western Mediterranean route, the eastern Mediterranean route and the eastern route. Secondly, all three countries have experienced plentiful cross-border migration management negotiations, agreements and tensions with the European Union during the 21st century.

Thirdly, there has not been a regime change in these states during the time frame that the thesis wishes to observe and consequently the evolution or the lack of evolution of the migration diplomacy cannot be explained through regime change. Moreover, the lack of regime change is not common during the analysed time frame, due to the Arab Spring in the South Mediterranean region and the considerable instability in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries.

Finally, although the three countries are located in the periphery of the European Union and share borders with the EU, they have had historically and presently very different relations with the EU.

3.2 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the thesis and with which the research question will be answered are the following:

A. Turkey, Morocco and Belarus have used a coercive strategy in relation to key cornerstones of their foreign policy.

B. Due to the securitisation, externalisation of migration and the successive migratory flows in the periphery of the European Union, migration diplomacy has provided new leverage to the countries around the EU and diminished the structural power asymmetry between them.

4. First Chapter: Turkey

This first chapter of the thesis will be devoted to analyse the migration diplomacy developed by Turkey in the 21st century. This chapter will be divided into three parts. The first one will focus on the contextualisation of the previous foreign policy and international migration policy of Turkey to understand the transformations of the AKP *(Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)*. Finally, the migration diplomacy of Turkey has been divided into two subsections of the chapter to illustrate the dramatic changes caused by the Arab Spring and the refugee crisis.

Turkey represents a unique case study that is ideally suited to analyse its migration diplomacy towards the EU due a set of factors. Firstly, it is the state that has the longest prospective candidacy to the EU, starting the process intermittently in 1963, being recognised as a eligible in 1999 at the Helsinki Council and starting the accession process officially in 2005[70].

Secondly, migration is intrinsically linked to Turkey's nation building process after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, with mobility across and with-in its borders being exploited by the state, engaging in forceful emigration of Cristian Greek and Armenian populations and welcoming the immigration of ethnic Turks and Muslims from the Balkans and Middle East[71]. Eighty years later, when the AK claimed electoral victory, migration policies were still based on the traditional nation building towards a homogeneous identity, deliberately ignoring the migration fluxes[72]. It is through the landslide electoral victory of the AK in 2002, that launched a radical transformation of Turkey, its political system and its external orientation that migration policies have emerged as part of the domestic comprehensive reforms. Importantly, these have only been feasible through the long-term consolidation of the political hegemony of the AK. Previously, the representatives seeking to reform or change the Kemalist principles, the prevailing normative framework since the foundation of the Republic, had faced intermittent military interventions (1960-61, 1971-73, 1980-83 and 1997).

Thirdly, the singular evolution of Turkey from traditionally being a country of emigration towards the state members of the European Economic Communities (ECC), predecessor of the EU, to presently being labelled as a country of origin, transit and destination, with a unique

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[70] Seçil P. Elitok, "Turkey's prospective EU membership from a migration perspective: Two steps forward, one step back?," Perceptions 18, no. 3 (2013): 1-11.

[71] Ahmet İçduygu and Damla B. Aksel, "Turkish migration policies: A critical historical retrospective," Perceptions 18, no. 3 (2013): 167.

[72] Juliette Tolay, "Turkey's "critical Europeanization": Evidence from Turkey's immigration policies," in Turkey, migration and the EU: Potentials, challenges and opportunities 5 (2012): 39-62.

geographic position at the crossroads between Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus and North Africa. This unique geostrategic emplacement has been pointed out as the prime reason for the arrival, during the last 20 years, of asylum-seekers and migrants from diverse sub-regions of Asia and Africa[73]. Additionally, and further intertwining migration and foreign relations, due to historical emigration, Turkish nationals account by far for the larger group of third-country nationals residing in the EU, and the diaspora has been a point of friction between Turkey and the receiving countries (notably Germany and the Netherlands)[74].

Finally, the timeframe of the aforementioned domestic factors coincide with the construction of the EU common and expansive migration policies that have further advanced the externalisation, in which Turkey features with a distinguished role. Moreover, since the 1990's and amid the debate and subsequent securitisation of migration, the irregular migration transiting to Europe through Turkey (between 1995 and 2009 almost 800.000 migrants were apprehended[75]) had increasingly alerted member states and the supranational institution of the EU and thus became an ever more important issue in the relations with Turkey.

4.1 International migration & foreign police

Interestingly for the thesis, since the creation of the Republic of Turkey, migration policies have been linked to the domestic political project and the external orientation or foreign policy of the state[76].

In a historical continuity the foreign policy developed by the AK has been identified as featuring strong symbiotic links between the domestic political project and the external orientation of the state[77], binding national identity to foreign policy[78]. The foundation of the Republic of Turkey had undergone a similar relation, by associating the political project of Mustafa Kemal, considered the founder of Turkey, to create a modern and secular nation-state with the almost exclusive external orientation towards the West. Moreover, the migration

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[73] Ahmet İçduygu and Damla B. Aksel, "Two-to-Tango in Migration Diplomacy: Negotiating Readmission Agreement between the EU and Turkey," European Journal of Migration and Law (2014): 7-32

[74] Şebnem Köşer Akçapar, "International Migration and Diplomacy: Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century," Perceptions 22, no. 4 (2017): 1-34.

[75] Ahmet İçduygu, "Europe, Turkey, and International Migration: An Uneasy Negotiation," Presentation at the Migration Working Group, European University Institute 26 (2011): 5-23

[76] Ahmet İçduygu and Damla B. Aksel, "Turkish migration policies: A critical historical retrospective," Perceptions 18, no. 3 (2013): 167.

[77] Graham E. Fuller, "Turkey's strategic model: Myths and realities," The Washington Quarterly 27, no. 3 (2004): 12-26

[78] M. Hakan Yavuz, "Turkish identity and foreign policy in flux: The rise of Neo-Ottomanism," Critique: Journal for Critical Studies of the Middle East 7, no. 12 (1998): 28-49

policies were part of the domestic nation-building project seeking to homogenise the population through emigration (including displacement) of non-Muslim populations and the immigration of ethnic Turks, best exemplified by the 1934 Law on Settlement.

This law, had increasingly become obsolete, and the arrival of non-ethnic Turk migratory fluxes as part of the globalisation process and the regional instability and conflicts (Iraq-Iran and Gulf wars), prompted the legislative 1994 Asylum Regulation. This enabled Turkey to obtain certain control over the refugee status determination under the mandate of the UNHCR[79], but conserved the limited geographic clause set by the 1951 Geneva Convention. By this clause Turkey does not accept legal responsibility for non-European asylum seekers, who are only allowed temporary stay.

Returning to Foreign Policy, the influence of Neo-Ottomanism[80] in the AK foreign policy is best exposed through the Doctrine of Strategic Depth. Neo-ottomanism does not resume itself to a new Foreign Policy, but is a new collective identity based on the social, cultural and religious heritage of the Ottoman Empire that is conceived as an alternative to Kemalist Turkey. The doctrine was theorised by Ahmet Davutoğlu, scholar and successively foreign policy advisor, foreign minister (2009-2014) and prime minister (2015-2016). Turkey, as a result of the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, is interpreted as possessing a historical and geographical depth, since it is located in a key Eurasian confluence zone, and at the same time, due to its religious, cultural and political characteristics, it is a nexus between the Balkans, the MENA region, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkey's position is thus outstanding, as it is at the centre of several contiguous areas of geopolitical influence that could be exploited through a multidimensional foreign policy based on good neighbourly relations.

Aligned with this intention and focusing on its pivotal geostrategic position between east and west[81], the AKP launched an alliance of civilisation discourse[82] and most importantly for this thesis, vowed to pursue the accession of Turkey to the European Union and actively embarked on a Europeanisation process, in which migration had become a crucial issue.

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[79] Ahmet İçduygu and Damla B. Aksel, "Two-to-Tango in Migration Diplomacy: Negotiating Readmission Agreement between the EU and Turkey," European Journal of Migration and Law. (2014) : 7-32

[80] Yavuz, M. Hakan. "The motives behind the AKP's foreign policy: neo-Ottomanism and strategic autonomy." Turkish Studies 23, no. 5 (2022): 659-680.

[81] Kaya A. Ayhan, "Migration as a leverage tool in international relations: Turkey as a case study," Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi 17, no. 68 (2020): 6-38

[82] Ali Bakir and Eyüp Ersoy, "The rise and fall of homegrown concepts in Global IR: The anatomy of 'strategic depth in Turkish IR," All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace 11, no. 2 (2022): 257-273.

4.2 Europeanisation: compliance and resistance

This first phase is principally characterised by the extensive reforms that led to a progressive harmonisation with EU norms, albeit some key exceptions, where Turkey presented resistance and non-compliance despite the conditionality framework. These demonstrate Turkey's own cost-benefits calculations based on two objectives, as stated out by Birce Demiryontar[83], negotiating short-term concessions through migration diplomacy while maintaining the long-term framework of accession and the ultimate benefits of membership.

The relation between Turkey and the European institutions started in 1959 and includes the Ankara Association Agreement (1963), the 1987 application to the EEC and Customs Union in 1995. In 1999 Turkey was declared a candidate state, with the accession negotiations starting in 2005 with a prominent role for migration due to the exogen processes of securitisation and externalisation of migration in Europe. Additionally Turkey presented an urgent need for reform because of an obsolete, incomplete and largely ad-hoc policy towards border management and irregular migration[84].

Due to the combined factors of the conditionality framework set by the Copenhagen Criteria and the partly liberal stance of the AK[85], the first years of the AK in power (2002-5), were of large-scale reforms in the legal system, including migration and asylum[86]. The adopted Law on Work Permits for Foreign Nationals in 2003, the amendment of the Law on Citizenship and the adoption of the protocols against smuggling and human trafficking of the United Nations highlight this. Additionally, the conditionality and the transfer of European standards was strengthened by twinning projects, by which the EU "supervised" the reforms pursued by Turkey. The eight projects starting in 2003 were focused on the institutional strengthening against human trafficking, asylum, border protection, law enforcement and migration capacity building and the set-up of seven reception and removal centres[87]. Moreover, through the

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[83] Birce Demiryontar, "Accession conditionality and migration diplomacy: Turkey's dual identity in migration policy negotiations with the EU," European Politics and Society 22, no. 1 (2021).

[84] Juliette Tolay, "Turkey's 'critical Europeanization': Evidence from Turkey's immigration policies," in Turkey, migration and the EU: Potentials, challenges and opportunities 5 (2012): 39-62.

[85] Ahmet İçduygu and Damla B. Aksel, "Turkish migration policies: A critical historical retrospective," Perceptions 18, no. 3 (2013): 167.

[86]Brigitte Suter, "Asylum and migration in Turkey: An overview of developments in the field 1990–2013," Malmö, MIM Working Papers Series 13, no. 3 (2013): 1-31.

[87] Juliette Tolay, "Turkey's 'critical Europeanization': Evidence from Turkey's immigration policies," in Turkey, migration and the EU: Potentials, challenges and opportunities 5 (2012): 39-62.

specific implementation of the Integrated Border Management Strategy in 2006, the EU was allowed access to restricted information and border operations[88].

Since the start of the accession negotiations, once the Copenhagen criteria were satisfied, the new priority, as part of the National Program for the Acquis *Communautaire*, that is, the required domestic reforms for harmonisation with the EU, was the adoption of the National Action Plan on Asylum and Migration (NAP). This Action Plan, was the equivalent of the National Program for the Acquis but in the sphere of migration, which focused on the required harmonisation with the EU asylum and communitarian migration policies and the commitment to reinforce institutions and border security against illegal migration, with the adoption of best practices (admission, readmission, expulsion). Nevertheless, even if advancing in the liberalisation of migration policies, the Settlement Law of 2006 was still tied to the traditional immigration policy that was linked to the ethnic and national origin instead of the EU immigration policy, where the emphasis was put on the civic connections and employment as a base for immigration[89].

As can be easily grasped, the migration diplomacy developed by Turkey in this first phase is limited due to the asymmetry derived from the framework of accession. The EU is the hegemonic power and sets the agenda in which membership and migration are knitted together. Firstly, it set the predetermined content and structure of the reforms, established by the Copenhagen criteria, and once this was compiled to, the new necessary harmonisation reforms on migration issues were increasingly demanding, conditioned by the politicisation of migration in European member states. Moreover, a set of specific conditionalities was imposed on the membership of Turkey, compared to eastern enlargement and Balkan countries, due to its size, geostrategic position, population[90] and cultural religious background[91]. As an example of Turkey's special case, it was the only candidate to not obtain Visa Facilitation (VF) for its citizens. As such, the space to manoeuvre and the leverage that Turkey could enact was minimal unless it was willing to stall or jeopardise its membership. As Ahmet İçduygu states

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[88] Janja Vukašinović, "Illegal migration in Turkey-EU relations: An issue of political bargaining or political cooperation?," European Perspectives 3, no. 2 (2011): 147-166.
[89] Ahmet İçduygu and Damla B. Aksel, "Turkish migration policies: A critical historical retrospective," Perceptions 18, no. 3 (2013): 167.

[90] Janja Vukašinović, "Illegal migration in Turkey-EU relations: An issue of political bargaining or political cooperation?," European Perspectives 3, no. 2 (2011): 147-166.
[91] Fırat Oktay, "Turkey's Progress towards the Adoption of Acquis Communautire," Ankara Bar Review 2, no. 1 (2009): 15-24

''specific issues of the area of migration and asylum have enormous implications for the whole accession process''[92] and therefore a mismanagement of bargaining can lead to mutual blame and reversal of the process.

Nevertheless, Turkey did present resistance, non-compliance and issue linkage in three key requirements, concerned by the lack of burden-sharing and reflecting its fear of becoming a buffer zone for migration without completing the membership process[93]. These are the lifting of the geographical clause of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the signing of a Readmission Agreement (RA) and Visa Reform. Additionally, the membership process was greatly stalled between 2006-9, with the freezing of eight chapters of the negotiation, due to Turkey's relations with the Republic of Cyprus, member state of the EU.

The lifting of the geographical clause of the Refugee Convention of 1951 is the most critical deviation from the European Institutions, as it does not consider asylum-seekers individuals that are non-European and it prevented Turkey from becoming a first country of asylum and safe third country. Turkey's reluctance to lift the clause responded, once again, to the fear of becoming a buffer zone after reforming and harmonising but without achieving membership . The National Action Plan on Asylum had set two preconditions for lifting it, amendments to legislation and infrastructures and a system of fair sharing burden between the EU and Turkey.

RA are binding bilateral and multilateral agreements that structure and harmonise the procedures between states for the return of irregular migrants[94]. In the case of Turkey, this was addressed to the return of irregular Turkish nationals, stateless individuals and third-country nationals. It is this last group of migrants that troubled the Turkish authorities because of the aforementioned concern of becoming the 'dumping ground' of the EU[95]. As such, although the negotiations on RA started with the membership negotiations, it was paused by Turkey, who used the leverage to sign bilateral RA agreements with 14 countries of origin of migrants. In the last phase of negotiations, initiated in 2011, Turkey insisted that the VF should be conducted parallelly, therefore using issue-linkage. Finally, this was not quite accomplished

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[92] Ahmet İçduygu, "Europe, Turkey, and International Migration: An Uneasy Negotiation," Presentation at the Migration Working Group, European University Institute 26 (2011).

[93] Kirişci, Kemal, and Ayselin Yıldız. "Turkey's asylum policies over the last century: continuity, change and contradictions." *Turkish Studies* (2023): 1-28.

[94] "Readmission - International Organization for Migration," accessed May 18, 2023, https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/our_work/ODG/GCM/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Readmission.pdf.

[95] Reha Atakan Çetin, "Externalization of the European Union Migration Regime: The Case of Turkey," New Political Science 42, no. 4 (2020): 538-557.

as the signing of the RA was officialised in 2013, only turning effective after three years, during which VF negotiations would be conducted but were not assured success[96].

Finally, Turkey, as part of the accession process and the harmonisation packages, had to align to the EU Schengen visa system and replace the liberal system, implemented beforehand as part of a soft power strategy, and thus render entrance to Turkey more difficult for non-EU countries. The agreement between the EU and Turkey was that it would gradually adapt to the negative countries list set by the EU. By 2005, Turkey was only five countries afar from harmonisation with the EU visa system. However, in the second part of the 2000's Turkey started reversing the policy and massively removed visa requirements for close-by regional neighbours but also for distant countries, many on the Schengen Blacklist. This counter-move was considered by Tolay[97] and Devrim[98] as part of a shift in the strategic foreign policy. As such, visa were conceptualised as a diplomatic tool to enhance the new regional status based on a multidimensional foreign policy.

4.3 The Arab Spring and Refugee Crisis: New challenges and opportunities

The series of anti-government demonstrations, protests and uprisings starting in 2011, popularly and academically coined as the Arab Spring, that led to widespread political de-legitimation and instability in the MENA region, with the eventual toppling of autocratic regimes (Tunisia, Egypt) and the eruption of civil wars (Libya, Syria, Yemen) were considered as an unexpected political earthquake by Turkey[99].

As a reaction, the Eurasian country drastically shifted to a new role. Until then, the AK had sought to attain a regional status by strategically using smart and soft power with a prominent role for the zero-problems and good neighbourly policies. The Arab Spring prompted Turkey beyond its role of model democracy in a Muslim society, pursuing to fill the perceived power vacuum with an assertive foreign policy and by interfering in the internal politics of Middle

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[96] Francisco André, Abdelhak Bassou, Cathryn Costello, and Kemal Kirsci, "Equal and effective partners?: the future of EU-Africa and EU-Turkey cooperation on migration and refugee protection." European University Institute, The State of the Union Conference (2021) : 6-41

[97] Juliette Tolay "Turkey's "critical Europeanization": Evidence from Turkey's immigration policies." *Turkey, migration and the EU: Potentials, challenges and opportunities* 5 (2012): 39-62.

[98] Deniz Devrim and Eduard Soler, "Turkey's bold new visa diplomacy," notes 1 CIDOB (2010).

[99] Kaya A. Ayhan, "Migration as a leverage tool in international relations: Turkey as a case study," Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi 17, no. 68 (2020): 6-38

Eastern countries. (Supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahda in Tunisia or the opposition to Bashar Al-Assad in Syria).

This shift is of paramount importance to perceive the evolution of the asylum and refugee policies and therefore of the migration diplomacy developed by Turkey during and since the Refugee Crisis in 2015. That year, an unprecedented massive number of asylum-seekers and refugees, representing a dramatic increase of 500 per cent respect the previous year, used the dangerous Eastern Mediterranean Route through Turkey to reach Europe. In total, there were over 1,3 million arrivals only in 2015, with the 75 per cent originating from war-torn Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan[100].

Turkey's response to the mass displacement has been severely impacted by domestic factors but principally by foreign policy. As such, Şahin Mencütek, Gökalp Aras, and Coskun[101], identified three distinct phases in the reception of refugees in Turkey. At the beginning, in 2011, Turkey assumed a short conflict and therefore followed an open-doors humanitarian approach, engaging as the mediator and model to sustain its regional religious drive and status[102]. Importantly, the Syrian refugees were not acknowledged as refugees but as guests with temporary protection, as the 1951 Geneva Convention on Status of Refugees clause impeded it. The enormous migratory flow was accepted through a religion-oriented hospitality discourse[103] that also served foreign policy interests, establishing Turkey as a receptive and humanitarian state and enabled to rise as a key actor of global migration management, assuming the presidency of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2014-5[104]. This policy, conceptualised as a strategy, has been labelled as a selective humanitarianism policy[105], as the AK accepted the refugees due to their cultural and religious background, the expected short conflict in Syria, and as a soft power instrument in the region.

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[100] Phillip Connor "Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015." Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, August 2, 2016. https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/.

[101] Zeynep Şahin Mencütek, N. Ela Gökalp Aras, and Bezen Balamir Coşkun, "Turkey's response to Syrian mass migration: A neoclassical realist analysis," Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi 17, no. 68 (2020): 4-18

[102] Kaya A. Ayhan, "Migration as a leverage tool in international relations: Turkey as a case study," Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi 17, no. 68 (2020): 6-38

[103] Seçil P. Elitok, "Turkey's prospective EU membership from a migration perspective: Two steps forward, one step back?," Perceptions 18, no. 3 (2013): 1-11.

[104] Seçil P. Elitok, "Turkey's prospective EU membership from a migration perspective: Two steps forward, one step back?," Perceptions 18, no. 3 (2013): 1-11.

[105] Umut Korkut, "Pragmatism, Moral Responsibility or Policy Change: The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Selective Humanitarianism in the Turkish Refugee Regime," Comparative Migration Studies 4, no. 1 (2016): 8-33 https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-015-0020-9.

The second phase started in 2013, as a result of Turkey's foreign policy in the region failing, its international isolation, the ongoing conflict in Syria, and the elevated economic and social costs of the refugee population. These factors incited Turkey to shift its refugee policy, slowing the migratory fluxes and urging for a redistribution, especially towards the member states and supranational institutions of the EU.

That same year, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection was introduced. It was presented as the definitive step towards a liberal immigration and asylum regulation, drafted with the support of supranational (European Commission) and international organisations (UNHCR)[106]. It established the creation of the General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM) and a management system assimilated to international and European standards, the first one in the MENA region to do so along Morocco[107]. Importantly for the refugee crisis, the law established a legal basis for the temporary status, that had previously been vague and indeterminate.

Refocusing directly on migration diplomacy, the outcome of the massive Refugee Crisis is the alteration of power asymmetry in the relations between Turkey and the EU. Turkey, due to its geostrategic location and the incredible upsurge of the migratory fluxes using the Eastern Mediterranean Route, became the hotspot transit country with more than one million migrants crossing from Turkey and thus increased its bargaining power vis-a-vis the EU as a gatekeeper[108]. This happened amidst the growing xenophobia and anti-migration populism in Europe that perceived the flux as uncontrolled and unpredictable[109]as well as linked with insecurity, economic destabilisation and the jihadist terrorist attacks occurring in Europe.

The 2015 Refugee Crisis produced what has been acknowledged as the prime example of migration diplomacy[110], the Turkey-EU Joint Action Plan of 2015, aiming to decrease irregular flows[111], which eventually led to the Turkey-EU Statement of 2016. Summarising the

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[106] Suter, Brigitte. "Asylum and migration in Turkey: An overview of developments in the field 1990–2013." Malmö, MIM Working Papers Series 13, no. 3 (2013): 1-31.

[107] Norman, Kelsey P. "Migration diplomacy and policy liberalization in Morocco and Turkey." International Migration Review 54, no. 4 (2020): 9-34

[108] Maritato Chiara, "Claiming for Moral Superiority while Bargaining with Mobility: Turkey-EU Migration Diplomacy in the post-2016 Euro-Mediterranean space," De Europa 14, no. 1 (2021): 5-29

[109] Peter Seeberg and Jan Claudius Völkel. "Introduction: Arab responses to EU foreign and security policy incentives: Perspectives on migration diplomacy and institutionalized flexibility in the Arab Mediterranean turned upside down." *Mediterranean Politics* 27, no. 2 (2022): 135-147.

[110] Fiona B Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas. "Migration diplomacy in world politics." *International Studies Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (2019)

[111] Şebnem Köşer Akçapar, "International Migration and Diplomacy: Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century," Perceptions 22, no. 4 (2017): 1-34.

agreement, it led to Turkey accepting the return of irregular migrants (refugees and non-asylum-seekers) that had crossed into Europe in exchange for: 1) financial aid (6 billion euros), 2) an acceleration of the VF road-map, that had repeatedly been demanded by Turkey, as it seriously hampered its citizens and Turkish businesses 3) the re-boosting of the accession negotiations, that Turkey at least discursively still sought to obtain, through the opening of new chapters and 4) The resettlement of one Syrian refugee to the EU for every returned asylum-seeker from Greece (limit of 54.000)[112].

Interestingly, the 2016 statement produced very different scholarly and political reactions, ranging from the belief that the EU was the main reaper of the advantages[113] to the opinion that Turkey gained the upperhand[114] or even that it constituted a prime example of a coercive engineered migration[115], as the CHP opposition to the AK similarly argued[116]. Nonetheless, this thesis argues that the 2016 agreement was based on a cooperative strategy[117], with Turkey using the newly acquisitioned leverage of mass migration fluxes to bargain financial gains and through issue linkage also revitalising, temporarily, the accession and VF negotiations. Furthermore, it also constituted a continuation of the externalisation of the EU migration and border policies[118]. On the long run, the EU benefited the most, as it put a stop to the crisis on the eastern border that was profoundly dividing the member states. Turkey, as will be shortly exposed, has not benefited from a VF, has seen its prospective membership definitely stalled, the financial allocations were also directed to non-governmental organisations instead of the Turkish government, and lastly, the number of resettled Syrian refugees was only 32.472 by 2023[119].

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[112] "EU-Turkey Statement, 18 March 2016 - Consilium." European Council - Council of the European Union, 2016. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/.

[113] Peter Seeberg "Citizenship and migration diplomacy: Turkey and the EU." In *The Middle East in Transition*, pp. 272-291. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018.

[114] Kaya A. Ayhan, "Migration as a leverage tool in international relations: Turkey as a case study," Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi 17, no. 68 (2020): 6-38

[115] Janko Bekić "Coercive Engineered Migrations as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare: A Binary Comparison of Two Cases on the External EU Border." *Politička Misao* 59, no. 02 (2022): 141-169.

[116] Ağbaba Veli 'CHP's Policy Recommendations for the Refugee Question in Turkey', Turkish Policy Quarterly 15 (2016) 3, 29.

[117] Chiara Maritato "Claiming for Moral Superiority while Bargaining with Mobility: Turkey-EU Migration Diplomacy in the post-2016 Euro-Mediterranean space," De Europa 14, no. 1 (2021): 5-29

[118] Ayşen Üstübici and Ahmet İçduygu, "Border Closures and the Externalization of Immigration Controls in the Mediterranean: a Comparative Analysis of Morocco and Turkey," New Perspectives on Turkey 60 (2019): 179–202, doi:10.1017/npt.2018.16.

[119] International Rescue Commitee. "What Is the EU-Turkey Deal?" The IRC in the EU, March 18, 2023. https://www.rescue.org/eu/article/what-eu-turkey-deal.

However, even if the official joint agreement of 2016 had been established as a result of cooperative strategy and can be viewed as a win-win outcome for the parties involved, the narrative framing the process was not as conciliatory. The AK, and Erdogan notably, since the start of the refugee crisis had largely criticised the limited performance of the EU in managing the refugee flows and the lack of burden-sharing which were pushing Turkey to the limit of its capabilities and therefore to act alone. Whilst the open-doors policy in Turkey was an example of humanitarian approach, the world's largest refugee host country with more than 3.5 million refugees, the EU was depicted as double-standards actor in relation to human rights[120].

Furthermore, not long after the agreement, over the summer, two unilateral factors, domestic and external, effectively sabotaged the gains that Turkey had accomplished[121]. In July 2016 a coup attempt against the AK government failed, which reacted with a two-year state of emergency, a massive purge with-in the public administration and strengthened authoritarianism, straining relations with the EU institutions. One month later, in the end of August, Turkey launched the first of successive military operations in the North of Syria, allegedly to fight against IS (Daesh) but primarily to prevent the territorial continuity of Kurdish-led SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) autonomous cantons and to establish a safe zone. Previously, Turkish participation had consisted in training, providing sanctuary, funding, and arming the rebel Free Syrian Army, later re-branded as the Syrian National Army.

The pretexts for the military intervention were intertwined with the refugee crisis and the Turkey-EU relations. As such, the Turkish government justification for the operation was the need to act alone based on the unkept promises stemming from the successive cooperation agreements, the necessity of creating a safe zone to welcome back the Syrian refugees in Turkey[122] and the risk of new migration flows caused by heavy fighting in Aleppo. Rather, the main driver of Turkey, in conflict with the PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party) since 1979, which has ideological and organisational links with the SDF, is the perception of a national security threat[123].

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[120] Çağla Luceli-Sula and Ismail Erkam Sula, "Migration Management in Turkey: Discourse and Practice," Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi 18, no. 72 (2021): 1-17.

[121] Janko Bekić "Coercive Engineered Migrations as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare: A Binary Comparison of Two Cases on the External EU Border." Politička Misao 59, no. 02 (2022): 141-169.

[122] Şebnem Köşer Akçapar, "International Migration and Diplomacy: Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century," Perceptions 22, no. 4 (2017): 1-34..

[123] Zia Weise "Turkey's Invasion of Syria Explained." POLITICO, October 17, 2019. https://www.politico.eu/article/8-questions-about-turkeys-incursion-into-syria-answered/.

On the same issue but advancing in time, a new threat of opening the doors was issued by Erdogan in September 2019[124], with the objective of obtaining support from the EU in its proposal of creating a safe zone 30km south of the Turkish-Syrian border. Additionally, domestic policies were also influential amid increasing politicisation of the refugee issue and the opposition victory in local elections[125].

The ongoing threats of opening the doors finally occurred in February 2020, demonstrating the evolution of the Turkish government and its use of the refugee and asylum-seeker for foreign policy key issues, the military intervention in Syria[126]. The day after the death of 34 soldiers, the biggest Turkish loss on foreign soil since Cyprus, the government announced that it had opened the land border with Greece and Bulgaria while accusing the EU of not keeping its promises. Additional, and unofficially, members of the security forces assisted the refugees in accessing and crossing the border[127]. One month later, the critical situation had ended with the sealing of the border on the 17th of March, after several meetings regarding the Idlib crisis and with the announcement of a series of measures. Once again, Turkey gained financial aid, 500 million euros, and the re-re-booting of the VF roadmap. Diplomatically, the EU accused Turkey of politicising the migrants but fought to maintain the 2016 agreement, due to the need of maintaining Turkey as a gatekeeper, with more than 3,5 million refugees in its territory[128].

These circumstances have been exemplified as an example of CEM[129] but also of the importance of the domestic facet, with the Turkish government preferring to incur in the costs of deteriorating the relations with the EU in order to content and distract its angered society, because of the military in Syria, the economic situation and the number of refugees in Turkey.

Presently, more than 3 million refugees are still established in Turkey, and Al-Assad has not only stabilised his position but re-gained legitimacy in regional politics, through Syria's re-

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[124] Deutsche Welle. "Turkey Threatens to 'open the Gates' for Refugees – DW – 09/05/2019." dw.com, September 6, 2019. https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-threatens-to-open-the-gates-to-europe-for-refugees/a-50317804.

[125] Chiara Maritato "Claiming for Moral Superiority while Bargaining with Mobility: Turkey-EU Migration Diplomacy in the post-2016 Euro-Mediterranean space," De Europa 14, no. 1 (2021): 5-29

[126] Ulusoy, Kivanç. "Testing Turkey's State Capacity: The Syrian Migration Crisis as Catalyst." *European Journal of Migration and Law* 23, no. 2 (2021): 152-175.

[127] Al Jazeera. "Erdogan Vows to Keep Doors Open for Refugees Heading to Europe." Turkey-Syria Border News | Al Jazeera, February 29, 2020. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/29/erdogan-vows-to-keep-doors-open-for-refugees-heading-to-europe.

[128] Daniel Boffey "EU and Turkey Hold 'Frank' Talks over Border Opening for Refugees." The Guardian, March 9, 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/09/turkey-erdogan-holds-talks-with-eu-leaders-over-border-opening.

[129] Jan Liďák and Radoslav Štefančík. "Migration Diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument." *Politické Vedy* 2 (2022)

incorporation into the Arab League. Meanwhile Turkey's operation continues in northern Syria principally against the Kurdish-led coalition. As such, despite the CEM occurring in 2020, the contextual factors that led to it are still in place, with the increased political polarisation in Turkey exemplified by the narrow vote in the May 2023 presidential election, where the issue of migration and refugees played had an important role.

Finally, since the membership has been definitely stalled since 2018, the conditionalities and pressure that the EU can direct to Turkey have diminished, while Turkey still has all its cards in its hands.

5. Second Chapter: Morocco

The second chapter of the thesis, focusing on the migration diplomacy developed by Morocco will follow a similar pattern to the first chapter. The first part will delve into contextualising the international migration patterns in Morocco and the state of migration policies. The following three parts have been divided according to the identified migration diplomacy phases, characterising the first one by domestic strong securitisation of migration and external compliance to the EU (2000 - 2011), followed by a shift towards a rights-based migration policy and an ambitious reorientation towards African states and organisations. The third and present phase has seen a re-introduction of restrictive measures internally, obtaining international status through migration, and the appearance of retaliative methods binding migration fluxes with the crucial cornerstone of Moroccan foreign policy since its independence, the Western Sahara.

Similarly, to the first case study, Morocco has a set of characteristics that make it an especially interesting state to analyse through migration diplomacy. Firstly, its advantageous geographic position, between the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the Great Sahara. Additionally, and of foremost importance for migratory fluxes, its North African coast is only 14 km from the South of the Iberian Peninsula, it surrounds the two Spanish enclaves on the north African coast, Ceuta and Melilla, and its Atlantic coast is situated only 108 kilometres from the Canary Islands [130]. As such, this geographic proximity to European borders, compared to other Mediterranean routes, attracts migratory flows.

Secondly, Morocco, as Turkey, has a history of migration to European states, being a major country of labour emigration throughout the 20th century, with 4 million citizens- 10% of the population[131] - in Europe. Although this trend has not diminished, the arrival of sub-Saharan migratory flows since the 1990's, has gradually transformed it into a country of origin, transit, and destination. Furthermore, the historical emigration from Moroccans towards Europe has constituted a vital economic asset through remittances, becoming crucial for its balance of payment and representing over 6 percent of the GDP in the 1990'[132]s. Moreover, this large and

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[130] Ayşen Üstübici and Ahmet İçduygu, "Border closures and the externalization of immigration controls in the Mediterranean: A comparative analysis of Morocco and Turkey," New Perspectives on Turkey 59 (2018): 7-31.
[131] Mehdi Lahlou, "Morocco's experience of migration as a sending, transit and receiving country" Istituto affari internazionali, (2015):3-8

[132] Hein de Haas, "International migration and regional development in Morocco: A review," Journal of ethnic and migration studies 35, no. 10 (2009): 1571-1593.

dispersed diaspora has traditionally been the focus of Moroccan migration diplomacy[133] and as will be exposed, it still has a very significant role in the 21st century.

Also, from an interesting historical perspective and with a key influence in the following analysed circumstances, an instrumentalised internal migratory flux, constituting a coercive engineered migration[134], was crucial for the formation of the postcolonial nation-state of Morocco. As such, the annexation of the Western Sahara region through the organisation of the Green March in 1975 by Hassan II, deemed illegal under international law, is of paramount importance for Morocco's foreign policy with reverberations to its migration diplomacy.

Finally, at the beginning of the 20th century, the EU and its member states began pressuring Maghreb countries in order to curb migration. Morocco, with its geographic location and this intense northern interest, was ideally situated to gain a series of political and economic incentives in exchange of securitising the borders.

5.1 International Migration and Foreign Policy

This subsection will elucidate the migratory and international context of Morocco previous to the analysed timeframe, the 21st century, that manifest the increased concern and externalisation of migration in the EU as an opportunity for Morocco. This notion rests on three considerations: 1) the relative geopolitical isolation of Morocco in the 1990's [135], 2) the emergence of Morocco as a transit country for migration[136] and 3) the domestic policies on migration.

The isolation of Morocco, understood as partially disconnected from the regional political dynamics, was caused by a set of African and European major political changes[137]. Firstly, in 1984, an escalation of the Western Sahara war (1975-1991), which bitterly confronted the

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[133] Mercedes G. Jiménez-Alvarez, Keina Espiñeira, and Lorena Gazzotti, "Migration policy and international human rights frameworks in Morocco: Tensions and contradictions," The Journal of North African Studies 26, no. 5 (2021): 893-911.

[134] Kelly M. Greenhill, "Strategic engineered migration as a weapon of war," Civil Wars 10, no. 1 (2008): 6-21.

[135] Katharina Natter, "The Formation of Morocco's Policy Towards Irregular Migration (2000–2007): Political Rationale and Policy Processes," International Migration 52, no. 5 (2014): 15-28.

[136] Hein de Haas, "The Myth of Invasion: Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union," IMI Research Report (Oxford: International Migration Institute, 2007): 26-67

[137] Natter, Katharina. "The Formation of Morocco's Policy Towards Irregular Migration (2000–2007): Political Rationale and Policy Processes." *International Migration* 52, no. 5 (2014): 15-28.

Kingdom of Morocco against the Polisario, an insurgent group[138] supported by its regional rival, Algeria, for the sovereignty of the ex-Spanish colony of the Western Sahara, prompted Morocco to leave the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). This organisation was the precursor of the current African Union, and by leaving it Morocco had effectively side-lined itself from African politics. Furthermore, the sub-regional organisation of the Maghreb (Arab Maghreb Union) was also stalled by the Western Sahara conflict, derived from the rivalry between Morocco and Algeria, that eventually led to the border closure in 1994, and remaining ever since.

Secondly, and because of these political circumstances, Morocco shifted its attention towards the north and submitted its failed application, based on geographical conditions, to the CEE. The European institutions though, centred their focus towards the enlargement to the south in the 1980s, amidst their democratisation process, and in the following decade, the priority became the new eastern neighbours after the fall of the Iron Curtain. As such, these restructurations of the European space meant that the economic resources, aid, and assistance as well as the political support were not directed to north-African countries.

Alas, in the same timeframe, the migration flows that would soon attract the attention of the European Institutions emerged. As such, due to the dire economic prospects caused by multiple intrastate conflicts in several West-African countries (Sierra Leone or Liberia), the end of the open-door policy in Libya, and the economic boom in Spain, migratory flows started using the West Mediterranean route, from the Maghreb to Spain, in the 1990s. Nevertheless, the migratory flows were moderate and were limited to 10.000 to 15.000 non-regular migrants per year and emigration remained incomparably more numerous than transit migration[139].

Interestingly, despite the obviousness of the migratory fluxes and its gradual transformation into a country of transit towards Europe, Morocco ignored these and even denied their existence[140]. This absence of migratory policy continued until the beginning of the 21st century. Nevertheless, migration had already been present in Morocco's foreign relations. As it hoped

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[138] The Polisario has been since the 1991 ceasefire, the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people for the United Nations.
[139] Filip Ahlborn, "The Role (s) of Migration Diplomacy: The concept of migration diplomacy from a role theory perspective and the case of Morocco's 'migration roles'"Uppsala University Master Thesis (2019), 5.
[140] Daniel Wunderlich, "The limits of external governance: implementing EU external migration policy," Journal of European Public Policy 19, no. 9 (2012): 1414-1433.

to achieve better relations with the whole EU, Morocco had accepted a bilateral readmission agreement with Spain in 1992, part of a Friendship and Cooperation Treaty[141]. Moreover, tensions caused by migration had occasionally flared up with Spain, and with the signing of the Schengen Agreement, the borders surrounding Ceuta and Melilla were securitized by the installation of fences and surveillance equipment, as part of the external border securitisation of the common euro-space[142].

Finally, the conjunction of these factors helps understand why migration was conceptualised as a strategic political and economic opportunity for Morocco at the dawn of the 21st century.

5.2 First phase: Europe's policeman

At the beginning of the present century, the pressures from Europe to control and manage the migrants transiting through Moroccan soil augmented. Compared to previous pressure and accusations which were ignored or denied by Morocco, a big narrative shift occurred. Morocco, presenting itself as a victim of history and geography[143]. Through this narrative, the Kingdom of Morocco expressed that it was not at fault for having a privileged geographic location, for the historical existence of the two Spanish exclaves on the northern part of its territory and that, therefore, Morocco was a victim of the illegal migration flowing through its territory[144]. Additionally, by relating irregular migration to sub-Saharan fluxes, the narrative contributed to blur the sensitive topic of Moroccan irregular migration[145].

The combination of this narrative with the announced willingness to become an ally of Europe in the deterrence and management of the migratory fluxes enabled Morocco to capitalise a series of gains that had been previously unattainable. As such, Morocco became the biggest receiver of financial and technical funds of the MEDA, with-in the multilateral Euro-

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[141] Sergio Carrera et al., "EU-Morocco Cooperation on Readmission, Borders and Protection: A model to follow?," CEPS Papers in Liberty and Security in Europe (2016): 4-67

[142] Sergio Carrera et al., "EU-Morocco Cooperation on Readmission, Borders and Protection: A model to follow?," CEPS Papers in Liberty and Security in Europe (2016): 4-67

[143] Nora El Qadim, "La politique migratoire européenne vue du Maroc: contraintes et opportunités 1," Politique européenne 2 (2010): 91-118.

[144] Heein. de Haas, "The Myth of Invasion: Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union," IMI Research Report (Oxford: International Migration Institute, 2007).

[145] Katharina Natter "The Formation of Morocco's Policy Towards Irregular Migration (2000–2007): Political Rationale and Policy Processes." *International Migration* 52, no. 5 (2014): 15-28.

Mediterranean Partnership, the precursor of the bilateral European Neighbourhood Policy in the South Mediterranean[146].

Morocco's engagement with its European partners was demonstrated by its complete disposal to participate bilaterally in the co-management of the border control system set-up by Spain, funded by the EU agencies, called SIVE (Integrated System of External Surveillance), established in 2002 at the south of the Iberian Peninsula and around the Canary Islands[147].

On the domestic front, in 2003 the first piece of migration and asylum legislation was finally introduced, characterised by the political context of its implementation. As such, the Immigration Law 02-03, produced in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Casablanca, criminalised and repressed irregular migrants and those who supported them[148]. From ignoring the migratory fluxes Morocco shifted to establishing hefty fines, prison sentences and organising punitive responses as massive returns and deportation operations[149]. This outwardly non-humanitarian and securitised policy to please Europe, and thus obtaining better economic and political benefits, caused the 2005 October events, when at least 15 migrants were killed by security forces on the borders of Ceuta and Melilla[150]. The extensive use of coercive methods and force, as well as the unlawful removal towards the no-man's land between Algeria and Morocco, amongst several human rights violations, were followed by a domestic and international out-cry and condemnation, internationally shaming Morocco and gaining the reputation of Europe's gendarme[151]. Corroborating this, before EU councils and bilateral summits, Morocco was known to carry out coincidental shows of strength to exemplify its efficiency[152].

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[146] Bosco Govantes, "Morocco at the European Neighbourhood Policy: the settlement of a privileged relationship," Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos (2018): 22-54

[147] Lahlou, Mehdi. *Morocco's experience of migration as a sending, transit and receiving country*. Istituto affari internazionali, 2015.

[148] Sarah Wolff, "The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements: Insights from Morocco and Turkey," European Journal of Migration and Law 16, no. 1 (2014): 69-95.

[149] Mercedes G. Jiménez-Alvarez, Keina Espiñeira, and Lorena Gazzotti, "Migration policy and international human rights frameworks in Morocco: Tensions and contradictions," The Journal of North African Studies 26, no. 5 (2021): 893-911.

[150] Norman, Kelsey P. "Between Europe and Africa: Morocco as a country of immigration." *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 7, no. 4 (2016): 421-439.

[151] Nizar Messari, "Morocco's African foreign policy," Future Notes MENARA Project 12 (2018): 3.

[152] Nora El Qadim, "La politique migratoire européenne vue du Maroc: contraintes et opportunités 1," Politique européenne 2 (2010): 91-118.

The response that Morocco enacted was two-fold. On one side, Morocco declared that it was just a small link with little control in the overall migratory flux[153] and attempted to shift the burden to the EU, asking for further economic assistance to effectively combat sub-Saharan irregular migration[154]. In the long run, the aftermath of the 2005 crisis was envisioned as an opportunity to re-emerge on the international stage by altering its diplomacy of migrations. Despite a reinforcement of its criminalising legislation and its fierce border management, with 9000 supplementary agents and the participation of the army[155] and frequent deportations, Morocco presented itself as a migration mediator between the North and South, between the EU and Africa.

This new strategy, conceptualised to instrumentalise migration as the driving force to upgrade Morocco's regional status, was also a product of the pathway to find an equilibrium between a hard stance to satisfy European partners and not downgrading its relations with African states because of ill-treatment of its citizens in Morocco. In an amazing short-term success, in 2006 Morocco co-convened and hosted the first Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development which would give path to the Rabat Process. This international forum enabled a European participation in African border management, the equating between migration and development (and therefore, more funding)[156] and the first bypassing of the institutional obstacle of the AU, due to Morocco's departure in 1984[157].

Also in 2005, but focusing on bilateral relations, the EU-Morocco Action Plan was created, as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy[158], with migration with a security-related approach being one of the pillars and with the following priorities: 1) updating Moroccan legislation, 2) Signature of readmission agreement 3) Effective co-management of migration flows and 4) Dialogue on visas and strengthening of border management.

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[153] Yousra Abourabi et al., "La politique migratoire du Maroc comme instrument de sa diplomatie africaine," AFRIQUE (S) 68 (2019).

[154] Irene Fernández-Molina and Miguel Hernando De Larramendi, "Migration diplomacy in a de facto destination country: Morocco's new intermestic migration policy and international socialization by/with the EU," Mediterranean Politics 27, no. 2 (2022): 212-235.

[155] Sarah Wolff, "The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements: Insights from Morocco and Turkey," European Journal of Migration and Law 16, no. 1 (2014): 69-95.

[156] Nora El Qadim, "The Funding Instruments of the EU's Negotiation on External Migration Policy. Incentives for Cooperation?," in EU external migration policies in an era of global mobilities: Intersecting policy universes (Brill Nijhoff, 2018), 341-363.

[157] Sarah Wolff, "The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements: Insights from Morocco and Turkey," European Journal of Migration and Law 16, no. 1 (2014): 69-95.

[158] Federica Bicchi, The impact of the ENP on EU-North Africa relations: The good, the bad and the ugly (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010).

It is precisely through this bilateral framework and the positive conditionality derived from it that Morocco has benefited from being Europe's selective policeman and has permitted it to bargain without fear of sanctions, as in the Barcelona framework of the 1990's, or of endangering its membership prospects, as in the previous case of Turkey. Thus, Morocco being recognised as the most compliant and effective Maghreb country in cross-border and migratory flows management translated, through issue linking, to economic gains, receiving 200M euros per year[159].

Furthermore, whilst the cooperation with the European Institutions was much praised, Morocco refused to sign a readmission agreement (RA), the EUs priority[160], showcasing its autonomy and the alteration in the power asymmetry. As such, between 2000 and 2010, there were 15 unsuccessful negotiation rounds despite the successive allocation of financial and technical incentives for development[161]. The economic and political costs as well as the predictable deterioration of the relations with sub-Saharan states and their stance on the Western Sahara have been singled out as the probable reasons[162].

Nevertheless, and finalising this first phase, Morocco's strong commitment to Europe's migratory concerns and interests was rewarded with the Advances Status in 2008, the highest bilateral relation with the EU, and the first one for a non-European country[163]. This status reflected the wish to strengthen bilateral relations in a series of spheres (political, economic, aid) and the privileged role of Morocco in the EU's neighbourhood.

5.3 Balancing between the North and new ambitions in the South

The Arab Spring rapidly spread to Morocco in the beginning of 2011, where the 20th of February Movement, a spontaneous civil society mass movement, sustained massive demonstrations that eventually led the ruling monarch, Mohamed VI, to propose a reform of the Constitution. The new Constitution, adopted by referendum in July, expanded the powers

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[159] Younes Belfellah, "Le Statut Avancé Maroc-UE: Bilan, enjeux et perspectives," Centre Arabe de Recherches et d'Études Politiques de Paris, Séminaire Relations Arabo-Européennes (2018): 7.

[160] Sarah Wolff, "The politics of negotiating EU readmission agreements: Insights from Morocco and Turkey," European Journal of Migration and Law 16, no. 1 (2014): 69-95.

[161] Leonhard den Hertog, "Funding the EU–Morocco 'Mobility Partnership': Of Implementation and Competences," European Journal of Migration and Law 18, no. 3 (2016): 275-301.

[162] El Qadim, Nora. "La politique migratoire européenne vue du Maroc: contraintes et opportunités 1." Politique européenne 2 (2010): 91-118.

[163] Laurent Beurdeley, "Un renforcement inédit des relations bilatérales Maroc/UE: l'octroi du statut de partenaire avancé." *Revue de l'Union Européenne* 544 (2011): 57.

of the Parliament and Prime Minister and slightly limited the powers of the sovereign, was committed to respect, and extend human rights. Furthermore, it recognised the plurality of the Kingdom of Morocco, and emphasised its belonging to the African continent compared to previous promotion of Arabic and Islamic identity[164].

With this quick reform of the political and legal framework, Morocco presented itself as a model of a transition to democracy and respect to human rights in North Africa. The EU, ever in the quest of transferring liberal democratic values and norms to its neighbourhood, declared that it would support Morocco in the process, also with the continuous allocation of funds through the ENP.

On the domestic legislative front, the pivotal issue of human rights in the protests of 2011 and their prominence in the drafting and setting of the new Constitution were very evidently in contradiction to the punitive migration and asylum law of 2003. In 2013 the king suddenly announced a new piece of legislation that culminated with the adoption of the National Migration and Asylum Strategy (SNIA) in 2014[165]. The declaration and the SNIA suggested a radical legal turn-around, with prominence and respect for human rights and international law in the management and integration of migratory flows from a humanist approach and based on a global shared responsibility. If until then, the politico-legal framework was criminalising irregular migration it now appeared to welcome it, which raised praises from the three external parties involved: human right observers and UN system, sending African countries and Europe[166].

This much celebrated comprehensive migration policy and regularisation process, unique in a host developing country[167], was officially declared as emanating from civil society[168], but has also been alternatively explained by the influence of four factors. The first one has a domestic focus, as it sought to co-opt the critics that had organised in the aftermath of the 2005 events in Ceuta and Melilla.

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[164] Mohamed Madani, Driss Maghraoui, and Saloua Zerhouni, The 2011 Moroccan constitution: A critical analysis (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2012).

[165] Tachfine Baida, "Morocco's Migration Policy at Stake: Between Foreign Policy Gains and Human Rights Costs" (2020).

[166] Mercedes G. Jiménez-Alvarez, Keina Espiñeira, and Lorena Gazzotti, "Migration policy and international human rights frameworks in Morocco: Tensions and contradictions," The Journal of North African Studies 26, no. 5 (2021): 893-911.

[167] Norman, Kelsey P. "Between Europe and Africa: Morocco as a country of immigration." *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 7, no. 4 (2016): 421-439.

[168] Kelsey P. Norman, "Between Europe and Africa: Morocco as a country of immigration," The Journal of the Middle East and Africa 7, no. 4 (2016): 421-439.

The three other factors are external, and firmly intertwine the new migration law with the foreign policy of the Kingdom[169]. Firstly, the National Council on Human Rights (CDNH), was presenting their report on migrant's rights to the monitoring committee in Geneva[170] and thus, by the unanticipated and strangely coincident announcement, Morocco prevented further international shaming as had occurred during recent years with reports from local GADEM and Médecins sans Frontières[171]. Moreover, the new law had the objective of establishing the country as a global actor on migration issues with-in international organisations and the cooperative frameworks[172].

The second external factor was conditioned by the need and desire to maintain the partnership with Europe. As the announcement ensured human rights of migrants and their regularisation, it also recrafted Morocco's image through the introduction of human development and civil society participation discourses[173]. Furthermore, the SNIA framework offered an integration to irregular migrants that would translate on a reduced pressure on the EU borders[174].

Carefully balancing between the shift to humanitarian migration policies and the preservation of its privileged relationship with the EU, Morocco signed the Joint Declaration for Mobility Partnership in the same timeframe, in 2013, with four main objectives: 1) More effective management of the labour migration, 2) Strengthening of the cooperation on migration and development, 3) The resuming of the RA negotiations both on Moroccan nationals and third-country nationals and 4) The respect for international instruments on protection of refugees.

A wide array of incentives including a financial package, technical assistance on legal migration, diminishment of fees for remittances and diaspora investment, and specific visa facilitations for business and students were incorporated into the Partnership Agreement[175].

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[169] Myriam Cherti and Michael Collyer, "Immigration and Pensée d'Etat: Moroccan migration policy changes as transformation of 'geopolitical culture'," The Journal of North African Studies 20, no. 4 (2015): 590-604.

[170] Sara Benjelloun, "Morocco's new migration policy: Between geostrategic interests and incomplete implementation," The Journal of North African Studies 26, no. 5 (2021): 875-892.

[171] Mercedes G. Jiménez-Alvarez, Keina Espiñeira, and Lorena Gazzotti, "Migration policy and international human rights frameworks in Morocco: Tensions and contradictions," The Journal of North African Studies 26, no. 5 (2021): 893-911.

[172] Sara Benjelloun, "Morocco's new migration policy: Between geostrategic interests and incomplete implementation," The Journal of North African Studies 26, no. 5 (2021): 875-892.

[173] Marco Allegra, Irene Bono, Jonathan Rokem, Anna Casaglia, Roberta Marzorati, and Haim Yacobi, "Rethinking cities in contentious times: the mobilisation of urban dissent in the 'Arab Spring'," Urban Studies 50, no. 9 (2013): 1675-1688.

[174] Tachfine Baida, "Morocco's Migration Policy at Stake: Between Foreign Policy Gains and Human Rights Costs" (2020).

[175] Nora El Qadim, "The symbolic meaning of international mobility: EU–Morocco negotiations on visa facilitation," Migration Studies 6, no. 2 (2018): 279-305.

Despite these benefits, gains for Morocco compared to the cost of accepting a RA roadmap were modest. Focusing specifically on mobility partnerships, Mohamed Liman and Raffaella Del Sarto[176], argue that the European Union took advantage of the political vulnerability of Morocco in the aftermath of the Arab Spring to exert more pressure and attain its priority, signing RA with its periphery.

Finally, this declaration must also be understood as part of the new African strategy of Morocco that had been partially damaged by the former criminalising migration law of 2003 that had turned Morocco into Europe´s policeman [177]. Once again, migration management was conceptualised as an opportunity but instead of a north-centred external orientation and a heavily securitised approach it would be directed towards west and sub-Saharan Africa through a humanitarian approach and global shared responsibility narrative, setting Morocco's comeback[178]. As founder of the OAU, Morocco had vested itself in regional integration but the escalation of the Western Sahara conflict in the 1980's and the African consensus on *uti possidetis*[179], sent Morocco into a self-imposed shunning. This was officially reversed in the middle of the 2000's, when a renewed strategic move to strengthen the political and economic ties between Morocco and the rest of Africa, was launched.

The New Africa Policy had the following priorities: 1) Re-joining the African Union to pragmatically neutralise the SADR (Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic) diplomatically and to propel its aspiration of becoming a regional power[180]. 2) To build consensus for the new autonomy plan conceived for the Western Sahara 3) To engage in fruitful south-south economic cooperation and development. Highlighting these efforts, by 2015, 40% of Morocco's foreign direct investment was directed to sub-Saharan countries[181].

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[176] Mohamed Limam and Raffaella A. Del Sarto, "Periphery under pressure: Morocco, Tunisia and the European Union's Mobility Partnership on migration," Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Research Paper No. RSCAS 75 (2015).

[177] Sara Benjelloun, "Morocco's new migration policy: Between geostrategic interests and incomplete implementation," The Journal of North African Studies 26, no. 5 (2021): 875-892.

[178] Fatima Ait Ben Lmadani (dir.), (2016), La politique d'immigration. Un jalon de la politique africaine du Maroc ? Cas de la régularisation des migrants subsahariens (Rapport - version avril 2016). Rabat : Association Marocaine d'Études et de Recherches sur les Migrations (AMERM).

[179] Arpan Banerjee, "Moroccan Entry to the African Union and the Revival of the Western Sahara Dispute," Harvard International Law Journal 59, no. 2 (2017): 33-37.

[180] Irene Fernández-Molina and Miguel Hernando De Larramendi, "Migration diplomacy in a de facto destination country: Morocco's new intermestic migration policy and international socialization by/with the EU," Mediterranean Politics 27, no. 2 (2022): 212-235.

[181] Said Sadiqi, "Morocco's Foreign Policy Treads on the Shifting Sands of Africa," MIPA Institute, 2018,

Two features of the African new policy stand-out for the thesis. The first one, is the shift in the Western Sahara policy of Morocco, focusing on long-term objectives and enabling the kingdom to participate in multilateral forums and bilateral summits without the issue being a diplomatic limiting burden[182]. Secondly, the central role of migration in the strategy of the New African policy. Migration management has been the key issue with which Morocco has circumvented the institutional obstacle of the AU and emerged as a continental leader in the formation of a common African posture linking migration and development. Knowingly, the design and conception of migration affairs and strategy was re-allocated from the ministry of Interior to the ministry of Foreign Affairs[183].

Returning to the SNIA, its relevant institutional measures include the creation of the Migratory Affairs Department and the Office for Refugees and Stateless People (BRA). Furthermore, two messy regularisation campaigns were organised, by which around 50.000 people were regularised in two phases, between 2014 and 2016. These regularisation campaigns were much celebrated in the African countries of origin, but they have been pointed out as a mid-term failure, limited in its conditions and applicability and not ensuring integration. Moreover, the institutions put in place as the BRA are still not functional and the asylum processes are managed by the UNHCR[184].

5.4 Contradictory re-securitisation and surfacing of coercion.

The balance displayed by Morocco in the previous phase between several binaries[185] in their migration diplomacy was considerably successful. Despite heavy criticism internally, the radically new law and self-crafted regional and international image had enabled the Kingdom to satisfy both the northern and southern external orientations, based on tailored securitised and humanitarian-based approaches to migration management combined with differentiated policies and narratives towards origin, Africa, and destination countries, the European Union.

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[182] Andreas Wüst and Katharina Nicolai, "Cultural diplomacy and the reconfiguration of soft power: Evidence from Morocco," Mediterranean Politics (2022): 1-26.

[183] Nora El Qadim, Le gouvernement asymétrique des migrations: Maroc/Union européenne (Dalloz, 2015).

[184] Kelsey Norman P. "Between Europe and Africa: Morocco as a country of immigration." *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 7, no. 4 (2016): 421-439.

[185] Irene Fernández-Molina and Miguel Hernando De Larramendi, "Migration diplomacy in a de facto destination country: Morocco's new intermestic migration policy and international socialization by/with the EU," Mediterranean Politics 27, no. 2 (2022): 212-235.

Relatively quickly, though, this balance was altered by three influential factors that reshaped Morocco's relations with the EU and therefore its migration diplomacy. Firstly, the Advanced Status of 2008 had cemented an array of free trade agreements between the EU and Morocco, including its internationally contested southern territories of the Western Sahara. In 2015 and 2016, successive judicial appeals by the European Union Court of Justice (CJUE) sentenced that the Western Sahara and its maritime sovereignty could not be included in the Morocco-EU Agreements[186].

Infuriated by the attack on its national sovereignty, Morocco responded in two ways. The roadmap and the negotiations towards an RA set by the Mobility Partnership of 2013 was effectively immediately stalled and the first unambiguous threats related to migration appeared. The then Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, and current Prime Minister Aziz Akhannounch, publicly questioned "why would Morocco continue acting as a gendarme, blocking the African emigration to Europe, if Europe does not want to work with Morocco?"[187].

The second and third factors are linked. The 2015 and 2016 Agreements between the EU and Turkey had a direct effect on Morocco's migration diplomacy and on the migration flux on its territory, the Western Mediterranean route. Undoubtedly, the deals between Turkey and the EU, during the refugee crisis, were a live demonstration of the blurriness or even disappearance of European and international norms and values in front of a negotiation based on the preponderance of political and economic bargaining. Morocco, as other peripheral and transit states took note[188]. Moreover, as stated throughout the thesis, the closing of a migratory route has direct effects on the alternatives. As such, the closing of the Eastern route because of the 2016 Agreements between the EU and Turkey gave renewed importance to the Western Mediterranean route that subsequently gave more leverage to Morocco.

This migratory and political trend would not diminish and the blocking of the Central Mediterranean route, through Libya and Tunisia, by the newly elected far-right populist Minister of Interior of Italy in 2018, would further augment the use of the Western

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[186]Jose Alejandro del Valle Gálvez. "Ceuta, Melilla Gibraltar y el Sáhara Occidental. Estrategias españolas y europeas para las ciudades de frontera exterior en África, y los peñones de Vélez y Alhucemas." *Peace & Security-Paix et Sécurité Internationales (Euromediterranean Journal of International Law and International Relations)* 10 (2022): 14.

[187] Javier Otazu (2017) Marruecos advierte a la UE de las consecuencias si no habla con Una Sola Voz, La Vanguardia. Available at: https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20170206/414056941698/marruecos-advierte-a-la-ue-de-las-consecuencias-si-no-habla-con-una-sola-voz.html (Accessed: 04 June 2023).

[188] Irene Fernández-Molina and Miguel Hernando De Larramendi, "Migration diplomacy in a de facto destination country: Morocco's new intermestic migration policy and international socialization by/with the EU," Mediterranean Politics 27, no. 2 (2022): 212-235.

Mediterranean route. The recorded crossings from Morocco to Spain by Frontex[189] exemplify this, from an usual 7704 in 2015, to an increase of more than 23000 in 2017 and an all-time high in 2018, with 56245 irregular crossings. In this progressive increase, in every period, Moroccans and Algerians were always the first or second most represented nationality.

Before this increase, amidst the critical point of the crisis in the east Mediterranean, Morocco had still benefited as one of the main recipients of the aid instruments raised by the European Union in 2015 and 2016. The main one for Morocco, which had comparatively moderate migratory flows, was the European Union Trust Fund (EUTF). This fund was directed to address the root causes for irregular migration in Africa, therefore it received the funds as an origin country[190]. After, in 2018 and with the migratory surge, much of the aid was reallocated to border security and capacities, as a transit country.

In this same timeframe, and just before the re-securitisation of migration, the new African policy scored an outstanding set of successes in 2017 and 2018. Propelled both by the new migration policy and the status as an international mediator of migration, Morocco was welcomed to the pan-African organisation in 2017. Moreover, as the regional model for migration management, the AU designated Morocco as the African Union "Champion" of Migration and mandated it to permanently host the African Observatory on Migration[191].

This regional status would be reinforced by the hosting of both the Global Forum on Migration and Development and the Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact for Migration, under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, in December 2018[192]. This proactive role on the regional and international stage of migration issues was accompanied by Morocco´s new report "For an African Agenda on Migration", that advocated for a new humanist Afrocentric approach to migration, that would conceptualise migratory flows as an opportunity for

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[189] "Migratory Routes," Western Mediterranean Route, accessed June 4, 2023, https://frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-routes/western-mediterranean-route/.

[190] Lorena Gazzotti, Mercedes G. Jiménez Álvarez, and Keina Espiñeira, "A 'European' Externalisation Strategy? A Transnational Perspective on Aid, Border Regimes, and the EU Trust Fund for Africa in Morocco," in Migration Control Logics and Strategies in Europe: A North-South Comparison, ed. by Gabriella Lazaridis and Charalambos Tsardanidis (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 69-89.

[191] Lorena Gazzotti, Mercedes G. Jiménez Álvarez, and Keina Espiñeira, "A 'European' Externalisation Strategy? A Transnational Perspective on Aid, Border Regimes, and the EU Trust Fund for Africa in Morocco," in Migration Control Logics and Strategies in Europe: A North-South Comparison, ed. by Gabriella Lazaridis and Charalambos Tsardanidis (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 69-89.

[192] Sara Benjelloun, "Diplomatie migratoire du Maroc. La nouvelle politique migratoire ou la formation d'une politique publique engagée pour soutenir la politique étrangère du Maroc," GéoDév 8 (2020).

development instead of a destabilising factor in need of control[193]. For Benjelloun[194]Morocco had the ability of exploiting the global issue of migration, turning it into a soft power instrument. Likewise, Wissing argues that the new narrative had limited potential and that it was deployed for strategic national objectives[195].

Furthermore, and contradictorily, while embracing the humanist narrative in the regional and international stage, Morocco's migration policy underwent a harsh re-securitisation. With the aforementioned upsurge of migratory flows in 2018, becoming the most used migratory route into Europe[196], the EU pressured Morocco to block irregular arrivals. Despite an official rebuke, Morocco would follow suit, with an increase of border control and surveillance but also internal and extremely violent operations to disperse migrants. The camps around the Spanish enclaves were destroyed and the migrants were re-allocated to the south, left in the no-man's land between Argelia and Morocco or directly expelled. Following this, the Alaouite government introduced a list of electronic visas for African countries, criticised by these as following Europe´s diktat.

Nonetheless, in 2018 Morocco bluntly refused to engage in the EU latest proposal, the regional disembarkation arrangements, the newest initiative to process the intercepted irregular migration before it even arrived to the EU, a further step in externalising migration and perceived as a threat to the sovereignty for Maghreb countries[197]. In any case, this represented the first time that Morocco straightforwardly decided to not negotiate with the EU compared to the transactional traditional attitude, as per with readmissions.

The securitisation of 2018 had the desired effect and most of the migratory flow in 2019 and during the pandemic was redirected to the dangerous Atlantic route towards the Canary Islands and the Western Mediterranean route but departing from Algeria.

The final episode to be analysed by this case study of Morocco occurred in 2021. In April, Spain had hospitalised under a false identity Brahim Ghali, the leader of the Polisario and the

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[193] Tachfine Baida, "Morocco's Migration Policy at Stake: Between Foreign Policy Gains and Human Rights Costs" (2020).

[194] Sara Benjelloun, "Diplomatie migratoire du Maroc. La nouvelle politique migratoire ou la formation d'une politique publique engagée pour soutenir la politique étrangère du Maroc," GéoDév 8 (2020).

[195] R. Wissing, "An African agenda on migration. A piece of Morocco's migration diplomacy," Home, available at: https://nomadit.co.uk/conference/vad2022/paper/64059 (accessed June 4, 2023).

[196] "Migratory Routes," Western Mediterranean Route, accessed June 4, 2023, https://frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-routes/western-mediterranean-route/.

[197] Tasnim Abderrahim, "The securitisation of the EU's migration policies: what consequences for southern mediterranean countries and their relations with the EU," Euromed survey 9 (2018): 96-103.

SADR[198]. This not only led to a grave deterioration in the bilateral relations between Spain and Morocco but also to a unilateral relaxation and absence of the control of the borders around the Spanish exclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Morocco alleged that this relaxation was due to the personnel tiredness in the Ramadan month but the Moroccan ambassador to Spain, Karima Benyaich, directly linked the hospitalisation of Ghali with the migrant crisis at Ceuta and Melilla "there are acts that have consequences in the relations between countries"[199], clearly pointing to a retaliatory act because of a perceived attack on national sovereignty.

Finally, this act constituted an example of coercive engineered migration, recording the highest ever irregular entry into Ceuta and Melilla in a day. This orchestrated migratory flux had a short-term benefit, with Spain allocating to Morocco 30M [200] euros to stop non-regular migration and an alleged long-term concession. One year later, following the Trump administration decision in 2020, the Socialist government of Spain approved the Moroccan plan of autonomy for the Western Sahara[201].

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[198] Miguel González Francisco Peregil, "El Líder Del Frente Polisario, Hospitalizado En España," El País, April 23, 2021, https://elpais.com/espana/2021-04-23/el-lider-del-frente-polisario-hospitalizado-en-espana.html.

[199] Ashifa Kassam, "Spanish PM Vows to 'restore Order' after 8,000 Migrants Reach Ceuta," The Guardian, May 18, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/spanish-pm-vows-restore-order-migrants-reach-ceuta.

[200] Maria Martín (2021) *España APRUEBA dar 30 millones de euros a marruecos para frenar la inmigración irregular*, El País. Available at: https://elpais.com/espana/2021-05-18/espana-entregara-30-millones-de-euros-para-ayudar-a-marruecos-para-frenar-la-inmigracion-irregular.html (Accessed: 04 June 2023).

[201] Miguel Muñoz (2022) *Sánchez se pliega a Marruecos y acepta una autonomía para el Sáhara occidental*, Público. Available at: https://www.publico.es/politica/sanchez-pliega-marruecos-acepta-autonomia-sahara-occidental.html (Accessed: 04 June 2023).

6. Third Chapter: Belarus

The third and last case study of the thesis is dedicated to the evolution of the migration diplomacy developed by Belarus. Since the proclamation of independence in 1991, the newly founded state did not attract major academic attention regarding migratory flows originating, until the recent 2021 refugee crises on its borders with the member states of the EU: Lithuania, Latvia and Poland.

Precisely because the migration diplomacy is determined by the volatile relationship with the EU, the present chapter has been organised in accordance to the vicious intermittent periods of rapprochement and sanctions, linked to the electoral misgivings and post-electoral violent crackdowns of 2004, 2006, 2010 and 2020. As such, the first subsection will introduce the first coercive migration discourse. The second will discuss Belarus with-in the ENP and the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The third one will focus on the sanctions and deterioration of relations until the emergence of the conflict in Ukraine, which enabled Minsk to temporarily acquire a new role. Finally, the last subsection will discuss the progressive worsening of relations between the EU and Belarus after 2020 elections and until the hand-book example of coercive engineered migration in 2021.

As for Turkey and Morocco, a set of characteristics produce an interesting but starkly different study. Compared to the mentioned case studies, Belarus does not have an especially privileged geographic situation, as it is a middle-sized country in the European Plain. What makes it remarkable is its position between Russia and the European Union, with more than 1.200km of shared border since the 2004 Polish and Baltic enlargements[202], and its strategic role as a key energy transit location sandwiched between two large and competitive neighbours[203].

The differences between cases is further remarked as per their history and political status. Belarus, except for a brief period in 1918, had never been independent until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Politically, it is an exception, notoriously labelled as the "last dictatorship of Europe", with Aleksander Lukashenka serving as President since 1994. In the two following years, 1995 and 1996, two internationally non-recognized referendums enabled the President

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[202] Marta Pachocka, "Importance of Migration and Border Management Issues for the Cross-border Cooperation Poland–Belarus–Ukraine in the Period 2014–2020 under the European Neighbourhood Instrument," Eurolimes 21 (2016): 89-106.

[203] Elena Korosteleva, "The limits of EU governance: Belarus's response to the European Neighbourhood Policy," Contemporary Politics 15, no. 2 (2009): 229-245.

to dissolve parliament, to amend the constitution (officialising Russian language and re-introducing soviet national symbols), and control over the Constitutional Court[204].

These actions enabled Lukashenko to consolidate power and put an end to the previous timid political and economic liberalising reforms as well as the cautious foreign policy, turning Belarus into an exception among post-soviet states[205]. Westwise, the European Communities (EC), did not recognize the referendums nor the new parliament and decided to not ratify the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), signed in 1995. Importantly, and because of this, the only established bilateral framework between the EU and Belarus was the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) signed by the EEC and the Soviet Union in 1989[206].

Conversely, during the same period, a set of binding bilateral agreements were concluded with Russia. In 1995, both the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and the agreement to establish Russian army bases in Belarus were signed. The next year, the Community of Belarus and Russia was founded and led to the creation of the vague Treaty of the Union of Belarus and Russia in 1998, with both states maintaining independence. As per the post-soviet supranational institutions, both countries, along with Ukraine, buried the Soviet Union and established the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Since then, Belarus has joined the successive Russian-led defence (CST and then CSTO) and Eurasian economic (EAEC and then EEU) alliances.

Nevertheless, despite Belarus being the post-soviet state that has integrated the most economically, politically and with-in the defence umbrella of Russia, it has sought to retain autonomy. This autonomy, intertwined with the highly subsidised post-soviet economy and the integration process, has led to tensions in the Belarus-Russia relationship[207]. In this sense, Elena Korostoleva[208] argues that the EU alternative funding and integration project have been used as a pressure and leverage tool in the Belarus-Russia relations.

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[204] Giselle Bosse, "EU–Belarus relations in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy," in The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy, ed. Sieglinde Gstöhl (Routledge, 2017), 290-301.
[205] Giselle Bosse, "European Union policy towards Belarus and Libya: old and new double standards?," in The European Union Neighbourhood: Ten Years into the New Millennium, ed. Meltem Müftüler-Baç and Yannis A. Stivachtis (Ashgate, 2013), 83-88.
[206] Yuliya Miadzvetskaya, "'Code of Absence': EU-Belarus Legal Framework," European Foreign Affairs Review 27, no. 2 (2022): 8.
[207] Elena Korosteleva, "The limits of EU governance: Belarus's response to the European Neighbourhood Policy," Contemporary Politics 15, no. 2 (2009): 229-245.
[208] Elena Korosteleva, "The limits of EU governance: Belarus's response to the European Neighbourhood Policy," Contemporary Politics 15, no. 2 (2009): 229-245.

In the migration sphere, the cases of Morocco and Turkey also differ from Belarus, as no relevant historical relation of migratory fluxes between Belarus and the EEC or EU existed and therefore diaspora politics remained weak at the beginning of the 21st century. Moreover, migration data, as in all Former Soviet Union, was negligible and the absence of a state border with Russia, complicated analysis[209]. Despite this, the liberalisation of migration in Belarus and its stability, when compared to ethnic conflicts and rampant economic recession in other ex-soviet states, attracted considerable migratory fluxes in the 1990's[210]. This trend capsized, and once again opposed to the other cases, Belarusian labour emigration was not headed to the EU but to Russia, which absorbed close to 90 per cent of the migrants due to the absence of visa regime and language barrier[211].

Lastly, the eastern enlargement, the process of border securitisation of the EU, and the intention of transferring and promoting liberal democratic normative values to the eastern neighbourhood created the intriguing evolution of bilateral interactions followingly analysed.

3.1 NATO enlargement, economic aid and surfacing of the first coercive threats

The eastern enlargement of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the reaction by Belarus is a complicated subject and cannot be correctly examined due to the thesis limitations. Despite this regrettable fact, it is important to introduce it as it caused the emergence of the first coercive threat discourse related to migration. As such, and since claiming the Presidency of Belarus, Lukashenka had been extremely critical and outspoken about the threat that the eastern enlargement of NATO supposed for Belarus and Russia. Moreover, Belarus, that shared a border with the north-Atlantic alliance due to Poland's membership in 1999, was conceptualised as the first west-flank defence of Russia[212].

In this sense, the Prague Summit of NATO in 2002 was convened to begin the accession talks of the three Baltic countries, within a group of seven ex-socialist states. Lukashenka declared

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[209] Alexander Chubrik and Aliaksei Kazlou, "Costs and Benefits of Labour Mobility between the EU and the Eastern Partnership Partner Countries-Country Report: Belarus," CASE Network Studies and Analyses 462 (2013): 11.

[210] Eberhard Bort, "Illegal migration and cross-border crime: Challenges at the eastern frontier of the European Union," Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (2000): 12.

[211] Alexander Chubrik and Aliaksei Kazlou, "Costs and Benefits of Labour Mobility between the EU and the Eastern Partnership Partner Countries-Country Report: Belarus," CASE Network Studies and Analyses 462 (2013): 11.

[212] Peter Szyszlo, "Countering NATO expansion: a case study of Belarus-Russia rapprochement" (PhD diss., Carleton University, 2001), 122.

his intention to personally attend the summit, which was rejected by the Czech Republic by denying him a visa. At the time, the EU was in the process of issuing a blacklist for the targeted officials as a consequence of the 2001 presidential re-election, due to alleged fraud, the expulsion of observers from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) and human rights violations[213].

Lukashenka's reaction to being rebuked was a threat to that would make Europeans "crawl and ask for our co-operation on drugs trafficking and illegal immigration"[214]. By then, Belarus had approximately 150.000 migrants[215], with a large number of refugees from Chechnya. The threat remained discursive but was the first case of a coercive engineered migration by Belarus's President.

Two years later, in May 2004, Lukashenka issued the same migration coercive threat but with a different objective, financial resources. This resulted in a failure for Lukashenka as the EU spent 500M in increasing the security of the external borders of the EU. Furthermore, allegedly, it served as an added pretext for the creation of Frontex in October 2004[216].

The same month, a referendum to enable Lukashenka to run for a third consecutive term, and a parliamentary election took place, and were declared as neither free nor fair by the OSCE. Additionally, the first post-electoral demonstration was harshly repressed and produced a new visa ban, directed to the responsible officials[217].

3.2 Belarus in the European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership

Before introducing the ENP, it is important to note that despite the EU isolation policy towards Belarus, the Technical Assistance to the CIS (TACIS) had provided moderate technical funding and cooperation[218].

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[213]Jan Marinus Wiersma, "Belarus-The assessment of a mission," Helsinki Monitor 13 (2002): 146.

[214] Stephen Castle, "Europe-Wide Travel Ban for 'abusive' Belarus President," The Independent, November 16, 2002, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/europewide-travel-ban-for-abusive-belarus-president-127902.html.

[215] Kelly M. Greenhill, Weapons of mass migration (Cornell University Press, 2010), 66.

[216] Greenhill, "Weapons of mass migration," 78.

[217] Carolynne Wheeler, "Belarus Faces Eu Wrath for Disputed Poll Result," The Guardian, October 19, 2004, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/oct/19/eu.russia.

[218] Fredo Arias-King, "The Genesis of the European Union's Relations with Ukraine and Belarus," Demokratizatsiya 14, no. 4 (2006): 535.

In 2004, the ENP was launched in order to strengthen the stability, security and prosperity in the south and east neighbourhood of the EU[219]. The periphery of the EU is characterised by its geographic and cultural heterogeneity but also by the shared interest that the neighbours have in the EU. All except Belarus, who expressed no desire for EU membership and had established a partnership with Russia. Despite this, the EU shifted from its isolation policy established in the end of the 1990's to a democracy promotion based on a negative conditionality approach.

Belarus presence with-in it was somewhat ambiguous as it was considered a partner but was excluded from the Action Plans and the bilateral tailoring[220]. As such, while Moldova or Ukraine were focused upon to upgrade the PCA relations, Belarus was acknowledged as relevant from a security approach. As such, a first Cross-border Cooperation (CBC) Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine was established between 2004-2006 with 45M euros of funding to promote cross-border management.

Further along, 2006 was a particularly interesting year for the bilateral relations between the EU and Belarus, perfectly showcasing the cyclical relation and the EU conditionality. In March, a new presidential election, with a non-surprising huge Lukashenka victory, was protested by the opposition, which was strongly repressed. The EU reacted by expanding the visa ban, specifically targeting Lukashenko and applying an assets freeze. Furthermore, Belarus was intentionally forgotten in the "Strengthening of the ENP Programme" of the Commission. To that effect, it published a "'Non-Paper'' in December, a 12-point political acquis that reflected the requirements that Belarus had to implement[221]. For Bossell,[222] the EU policy was flawed by contradiction, as the proposed negative conditionality framework did not add any incentives or benefits for Belarus and its elite.

Nonetheless, although these requirements were not satisfied, two factors in 2007 prompted a rapprochement between the EU and Belarus. Firstly, in January, a new energy crisis between Russia and Belarus erupted due higher energy prices, closer to market prices, and the negotiations on the eventual acquisition of Beltransgaz, the state-owned Belarusian company,

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[219] Clara Portela, "The European neighbourhood policy and the politics of sanctions," in The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy, ed. Tobias Schumacher (Routledge, 2017), 270-278.

[220] Giselle Bosse, "From 'villains' to the new guardians of security in Europe? Paradigm shifts in EU foreign policy towards Libya and Belarus," in European Security Governance and the European Neighbourhood after the Lisbon Treaty, ed. Stephan Keukeleire and Tom Delreux (Routledge, 2013), 88-109.

[221] Clara Portela, "The European Union and Belarus: Sanctions and partnership?," Comparative European Politics 9 (2011): 486-505.

[222] Giselle Bosse, "A partnership with dictatorship: Explaining the paradigm shift in European Union policy towards Belarus," JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies 50, no. 3 (2012): 367-384.

by Gazprom, the majoritarily Russian state-owned energy corporation[223]. These measures, that would have seriously hampered Belarus's sovereignty and economic viability, heavily dependent on the subsidised prices to produce and re-export, demonstrated that the Union Treaty was indeterminate and the Customs Union partially inoperative[224].

The combination of the declining bilateral Belarus-Russia relations with a domestic factor, the release of several political prisoners, enabled a rapprochement with the EU. Consequently, the EU delegation in Minsk was inaugurated and bilateral settings concerning energy were launched. This positive trend in the EU-Belarus relations continued in 2008, when the parliamentary elections were allowed to be supervised by the OSCE and the EU suspended the travel and visa ban. Furthermore, the previous ad hoc energy bilateral framework was concluded with a joint EU-Belarus declaration on energy.

This temporary phase enhanced the participation of Belarus with-in the Eastern Partnership (EaP), alongside Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. This partnership framework was projected to reinforce the ENP eastern dimension, with a shift towards a critical engagement policy, that is, the combined use of ''carrots and sticks'', incentives and pressures in its relationship with Belarus[225]. For Belarus, the EU had become its main export market in 2008, and unofficially[226], it had grown wary of Russia after the Georgia War and the successive gas tensions.

Moreover, this shift led to a more pragmatic EU policymaking with its neighbouring states. Queerly, when considering the future developments, border management was considered as an example of successful cooperation with-in the complicated bilateral EU-Belarus relation[227]. On the other hand, the focus on cross-border concentrated Belarus's criticism towards the EaP, as

[223] Rainer Lindner, "Friendship" blockaded: The Russia/Belarus conflict is a post-Soviet turning point, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, no. 2/2007 (2007): 3.

[224] George Polglase-Korostelev, "The Union State: a changing relationship between Belarus and Russia," Journal of the Belarusian State University. International Relations 2 (2020): 38-46.

[225] Eric J. Ballbach, "The End of Critical Engagement: On The Failures of The EU's North Korea Strategy," Real Instituto Elcano Paper (2019).

[226] Dzianis Melyantsou et al., "BELARUS: From Discord to Humming the Same Tune?," in European Union Institute for Security Studies, ed. Stanislav Secrieru and Sinikukka Saari (2019): 22.

[227] Katsiaryna Yakouchyk and Alexandra M. Schmid, "EU-Belarus Cooperation in Border Management: Mechanisms and Forms of Norm Transfer," in EU Borders and Shifting Internal Security: Technology, Externalization and Accountability (2016): 121-138.

it poorly funded economic development projects no political benefits had been experimented apart from the cyclical removal of sanctions[228].

Also in this timeframe, a new CBC Programme was launched for the 2007-2013 period, this time implemented through ENP Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and increasing funds to 170M euros. It is important to highlight, once again, the comparatively moderate migratory flux. In all the eastern route, in 2008, there were 2635 recordings of illegal crossings[229].

Finally, with member states and the EU seeking gradual democratisation, Commissioners and foreign ministers promised financial assistance as an incentive for the holding of free and fair presidential elections in 2010. Moreover, only 21M euros out of the 600M had been allocated to Belarus by then and could be used as leverage[230].

3.3 Re-sanctioning and re-rapprochement

These efforts were not successful as the elections produced the same result. Another massive albeit dubious victory for Lukashenka and a tremendously violent crackdown on the opposition protesting, with the arrest of several hundred people, including presidential candidates[231]. Unsurprisingly, new visa ban and assets freeze was announced by the EU, but, following the new pragmatic approach, the policy of critical engagement continued through the EaP[232]. Also in 2010 and preventing a future Free Trade Agreement with the EU, the Eurasian Customs Union (EEU) was established in 2010 with Russia and Kazakhstan, pursuing further economic integration[233].

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[228] Larissa Titarenko, "Belarus and the European Union. From confrontation to the dialogue," CSE Working Papers 18| 01: febbraio 2018 (2018).

[229] *FRONTEX - European Border and Coast Guard Agency. "Migratory Routes." Eastern Borders Route, 2017. https://frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-routes/eastern-borders-route/.*

[230] Clara Portela, "The European neighbourhood policy and the politics of sanctions," in The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy, (Routledge, 2017), 270-278.

[231] Yuliya Miadzvetskaya, "'Code of Absence': EU-Belarus Legal Framework," European Foreign Affairs Review 27, no. 2 (2022): 25.

[232] Giselle Bosse, "From 'villains' to the new guardians of security in Europe? Paradigm shifts in EU foreign policy towards Libya and Belarus," in European Security Governance and the European Neighbourhood after the Lisbon Treaty (Routledge, 2013), 88-109.

[233] Alexander Chubrik and Aliaksei Kazlou, "Costs and Benefits of Labour Mobility between the EU and the Eastern Partnership Partner Countries-Country Report: Belarus," CASE Network Studies and Analyses 462 (2013): 19.

Moreover, due to Lukashenko not being personally invited to the 2011 summit of the EaP, Belarus did not attend[234]. That same year, new restrictions on organised civil society and the imprisonment of opposition activists in Belarus instigated a new visa ban and asset freeze targeting 150 officials. Belarus reacted by demanding the departure of the heads of the EU and Polish diplomatic corps. Consequently, all member states of the EU recalled their ambassadors[235].

This deterioration of the relations continued until 2014, when Belarus acquired a new role as a conflict mediator, taking a neutral stand on Russia's annexation of Crimea and the protracted conflict in Eastern Ukraine[236]. As such, the multilateral efforts to resolve the crises were held in Minsk, which bears the name of both unfulfilled agreements (Minsk I and Minsk II). The active neutrality stance by Belarus was acclaimed in Brussels, which subsequently pursued a normalisation of the relations. Most importantly, a first negotiation between Belarus and the EU regarding a Visa Liberalisation and a Readmission Agreement started in 2014. By then, the five other countries within the EaP had already signed a mobility partnership, a visa and readmission agreement[237].

Also in 2014, a new ENI was launched to support the ENP and EaP in the 2014-2020 period, with special emphasis on the Cross-border Cooperation (CBC), with 170M euros of funding. The programme had four priorities, with emphasis on the safety and security, focusing on border management, border security and migration management. The CBC was aimed particularly at cross-border cooperation instead of the overarching external relations, as is the case of the ENP[238].

The bilateral relations between EU-Belarus continued ameliorating in 2015 as a result of political prisoners being released ahead of the presidential elections, and despite these being non-democratic, the absence of post-electoral violence. The EU reacted by first softening the sanctions, then lifting and finally suspending them, acknowledging Lukashenka's intention to

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[234] Clara Portela, "The European neighbourhood policy and the politics of sanctions," in The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy (Routledge, 2017), 270-278.
[235] Giselle Bosse, "EU–Belarus relations in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy," in The Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy (Routledge, 2017), 290-301.
[236] Dzianis Melyantsou et al., "BELARUS: From Discord to Humming the Same Tune?," in European Union Institute for Security Studies, ed. Stanislav Secrieru and Sinikukka Saari (2019): 12-29
[237] Marta Pachocka, "The foundations and the institutional framework of the EU and EAP states' relations in the field of migration and asylum," Eurolimes Supplem (2016): 224-242.
[238] Marta Pachocka, "Importance of Migration and Border Management Issues for the Cross-border Cooperation Poland–Belarus–Ukraine in the Period 2014–2020 under the European Neighbourhood Instrument," Eurolimes 21 (2016): 89-106.

function as a bridge and dialogue facilitator between Russia and the EU[239]. In 2015, Belarus enhanced better relations with both. Towards the East, it entered the successor of the ECU, the Eurasian Economic Union. Towards the West, the EU-Belarus Coordination Group was unveiled to further engage bilaterally, with the objective of serving as the platform of negotiation as there was no overarching agreement[240].

The surge in the bilateral relations was also transferred to migration, with the Mobility Partnership negotiations concluding in 2015 and being signed one year later. This established the flexible non-legally binding framework for cooperation on migration with visa and RA negotiations continuing. In the case of Belarus, a greater focus was put on visas, as Belarus was the country with the highest number of Schengen visa applications per capita, reaching 752.782 in 2015[241]. On the contrary and highlighting the disparity in migratory flows in the EU periphery, amidst the refugee crises in the Mediterranean, the eastern route had only 1920 crossings in 2015 and 1384 in 2016[242]. Surprisingly, no academic or journalistic article has related the migration policies negotiations with the famous EU-Turkey negotiations of 2015 and 2016. Nevertheless, because of the importance and the bargaining nature of this agreement, this was undoubtedly acknowledged not only in Morocco but in all of the peripheral states of the EU.

Related to visa, in 2017 and owing to the good-neighbour relations, Belarus introduced visa-free regime for European countries, and the number of visitors doubled with respect to the previous year[243].

Finally, after five years and six rounds of negotiations, a final agreement concerning readmission and visa liberalisation was accomplished in 2017. As the majority of countries in the periphery, notably the previous case-studies of Turkey and Morocco, accepting readmission was costly. Interestingly, as in other cases, the EU established a direct correlation and issue-linking between the visa liberalisation and readmission. Belarus, after resisting negotiations,

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[239] Dzianis Melyantsou et al., "BELARUS: From Discord to Humming the Same Tune?" in European Union Institute for Security Studies, ed. Stanislav Secrieru and Sinikukka Saari (2019): 12-29

[240] Yuliya Miadzvetskaya, "'Code of Absence': EU-Belarus Legal Framework," European Foreign Affairs Review 27, no. 2 (2022).

[241] Press Release. "EU Launches Mobility Partnership with Belarus." European Commission - European Commission, October 13, 2016. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_16_3426.

[242] FRONTEX - European Border and Coast Guard Agency. "Migratory Routes." Eastern Borders Route, 2017. https://frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/monitoring-and-risk-analysis/migratory-routes/eastern-borders-route/.

[243] Dzianis Melyantsou et al., "BELARUS: From Discord to Humming the Same Tune?" in European Union Institute for Security Studies, ed. Stanislav Secrieru and Sinikukka Saari (2019): 12-29

accepted, but argued that a transitional period to prepare the infrastructure, technical assistance and funding, and logistics support for interior and border corps was necessary[244].

The transitional period for implementation was 2017-2022 but the readmission and visa liberalisation were signed in 2020[245]. The visa cost was reduced to 35 euros, waived certain categories, and introduced certain benefits and facilities for procedures[246]. The readmission was established and concerned the three groups of irregular migrants: stateless, Belarusian citizens and third-country nationals.

3.4 Ultimate sanctions and coercive engineered migration

Only one month after the entry into force of the agreements, the 2020 August Presidential election would change the course of bilateral relations. Once again, the elections were not free nor fair for the OSCE. The opposition protests, however, were more massive and sustained than ever before, as was the state repression and extensive human rights violations. In a last cyclical dynamic, new sanctions were re-imposed on Belarus in three different rounds, in October, November and December 2020, due to the continuation of mass demonstrations, labelled as the biggest in Belarus history, and the state continuous violent repression of them. Moreover, the EU called for new elections, refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of Lukashenka. The European Parliament, on its side, openly recognized the Coordination Council for the Transfer of Power, created by presidential candidate Tsikhanouskay, as the interim representative.

Although the situation had slowly de-escalated, in May, the Belarus government forced a commercial Ryanair flight from Athens to Vilnius[247], with opposition activists on board, to land and subsequently arrest them. Because of this, a new packet of sanctions was imposed by the EU to individual but also state-owned companies and specific economic sanctions on goods.

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[244] Larissa Titarenko "Belarus and the European Union. From confrontation to the dialogue." CSE Working Papers 18| 01: febbraio 2018 (2018): 212

[245] European Commission. "Press Corner. Visa Facilitation and Readmission: The European Union and Belarus Sign Agreements." European Commission - European Commission, January 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pt/ip_20_6.

[246] European Commission. "Press Corner: Visa Facilitation and Readmission: Agreements with Belarus Now in Force." European Commission - European Commission, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1239.

[247] Anton Troianovski and Ivan Nechepurenko, "Belarus Forces down Plane to Seize Dissident; Europe Sees 'State Hijacking,'" The New York Times, May 23, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/23/world/europe/ryanair-belarus.html.

As a response, the government of Belarus organised what is the most blatant example of a coercive engineered migration. As in previous 2002 and 2004, it started with a declaration by Lukashenka threatening to flood the EU with irregular migrants and drugs[248]. This time though, a complex operation involving a high diplomatic activity, with massive issuing of tourist and hunter visas, and active collaboration by airlines, Belavia and travel agencies, principally state-owned Tsentkurort, opened numerous direct flights to Minsk from the Middle East, majoritarily from Iraq but also Turkey, EAU or Lebanon, had attracted thousands of asylum seekers to Belarus during the 2020 summer[249].

Once the migrants arrived in Minsk, they were hurriedly brought to the borders with state members of the EU, Poland and Lithuania. It has been difficult to determine the quantity of migrants that were used in the operation but, in 2021 there were 8184 irregular crossings compared to 677 in 2020. In total, there were, allegedly, 42.741 attempts of crossing the EU border, with the crises peaking during the Autumn 2021. Coincidentally, the Parliament of Belarus had suspended the Readmission Agreement in September[250].

As per Belarus's objectives, these were probably threefold, as no definite explanation has been published or leaked. Firstly, there was the objective of retaliating against the EU for supporting and legitimising the organised oppositions since the 2010 election[251]. Secondly, the lifting of the sanctions that had been increasingly imposed. And thirdly, regaining legitimacy in the West. Additionally, it sought to gain economic incentives to act as a gatekeeper for the EU. Focusing on these circumstances, the looming shadow of Russia[252] has also been suggested influential actor[253], arguing that Belarus had progressively lost autonomy since the 2020

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[248]Marc Bennetts "Lukashenko Willing to Flood EU with Drugs and Migrants to Stop New Sanctions." The Times & The Sunday Times: breaking news & today's latest headlines, May 27, 2021. https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lukashenko-willing-to-flood-eu-with-drugs-and-migrants-to-stop-new-sanctions

[249] Elisabeth Braw, "Stop Calling What's Happening with Belarus a Migration Crisis." POLITICO, November 15, 2021. https://www.politico.eu/article/belarus-border-migration-geopolitical-crisis-nato-eu/.

[250] Yuliya Miadzvetskaya, "'Code of Absence': EU-Belarus Legal Framework," European Foreign Affairs Review 27, no. 2 (2022): 23.

[251] Ján Liďák and Radoslav Štefančík, "Migration Diplomacy as a Foreign Policy Instrument," Political Sciences/Politické Vedy 2 (2022).

[252] "Belarus Migrants: Poland PM Blames Russia's Putin for Migrant Crisis," BBC News, November 9, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59226226.

[253] Ondřej Filipec, "Multilevel Analysis of the 2021 Poland-Belarus Border Crisis in the Context of Hybrid Threats," Central European Journal of Politics 8, no. 1 (2022): 1-18.

election, increasingly relying on Russia. These proponents also argue that these events constituted a hybrid warfare attempt[254].

Nevertheless, and while more facts will hopefully substitute theories on what really happened, there are two non-questionable certitudes. The first one, that this remains the prime example of a coercive engineered migration, with a state orchestrating the transport of asylum-seekers from de-stabilised regions towards the borders of their objective. Secondly, this attempt of coercive engineered migration was a complete failure for Belarus. Both Lithuania and Poland approached the crises from a highly securitised perspective, issuing questionable state of emergencies and generalising non-legal pushbacks[255]. The EU, despite the flagrant illegality of these actions and the criticism of human rights and international organisations, fully supported these actions. Moreover, the EU provided 700.000 thousand euros for humanitarian assistance and 200M on border security for its border states[256].

While this coercive engineered migration threw the EU in many human right and migration policy contradiction[257], its decisiveness in applying a securitised approach and the low hypocrisy cost for Lithuania and Poland, enabled it to not succumb to the pressure of the challenger, Belarus. The government of Belarus, on the other hand, as a result of the failed action and its role in the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, effectively closed the minimal chance of normalising its relations with the EU and definitely orbited towards Moscow.

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[254] Janko Bekić, "Coercive Engineered Migrations as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare: A Binary Comparison of Two Cases on the External EU Border," Politička Misao 59, no. 02 (2022): 141-169.

[255] Lorenzo Tondo, "In Limbo: The Refugees Left on the Belarusian-Polish Border – a Photo Essay," The Guardian, February 8, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/feb/08/in-limbo-refugees-left-on-belarusian-polish-border-eu-frontier-photo-essay.

[256] Christa Wesselink, "Stateless, Rightless and Weaponized. The European Union's human rights contradictions in the EU-Belarus border crisis" (Master's thesis, 2022), 34.

[257] Wesselink, "Stateless, Rightless and Weaponized," 55.

7. Conclusions

The three case studies have showcased how the securitisation and externalisation of migration in the European Union and the pretended Europeanisation is not a one-way track, and that this process has someway backfired, as the states around the EU have acquired new leverage, by being conceptualised and politicised as transit states of migration, and have complied, resisted and contested selectively, according to their own agenda and objectives.

Turkey, the most analysed state in migration diplomacy, demonstrated at first quasi-total compliance to the EU, cornered by its desire of membership but with the fear of liberalising its migration policy and becoming a buffer state outside the EU. With the advent of the Arab Spring and subsequent Refugee Crisis, its migration diplomacy became triply intertwined by the domestic politics, the military intervention in Syria to stop Kurdish expansion and its increased status as migration gatekeeper for the EU. Undoubtedly, it adopted a coercive strategy, first through threats and then through actions, when it needed support from the EU in its foreign policy in Syria and also as part of domestic politics, preferring to incur in a deterioration of relations with the EU than face internal dissatisfaction.

The second case, Morocco, has for this thesis, had the most benefits through its migration diplomacy strategy, selectively using cooperative and coercive methods externally and securitisation and human-rights approaches to migration domestically. By securitising its border and migration flows, it first contented the EU, which granted it an Advanced bilateral status. Then, seeking a grand entry back into regional politics, it adapted its approach and became an example of humanitarian policies and a migration mediator between the Global North and South. Finally, the coercive threats and actions have all appeared when the key issue in its foreign policy, the Moroccan sovereignty of the Western Sahara, was put into question.

Belarus, is the different state in this multiple-case study, with extremely moderate migratory fluxes, a convulsed relation with the EU practically since its independence, and geopolitically trapped between two alternative big neighbours, the EU and Russia. Nonetheless, as Giselle Bosse states[258], the EU acts and demands differently depending on which periphery it addresses itself to, applying a normative approach and severe liberal democratic and human rights conditionalities in its Eastern Neighbourhood. As such, the migration diplomacy by Belarus

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[258] Giselle Bosse "European Union policy towards Belarus and Libya: old and new double standards?." In The European Union Neighbourhood: Ten Years into the New Millennium, pp. 83-88. Ashgate, 2013.

has been tied to the ups and downs of its bilateral relation with the EU. Most interestingly, it is the only state that applied a coercive approach only based on an economic objective without a key foreign policy concern.

Finally, while all have implemented a coercive methods during the observed timespan, they acted differently. While Turkey and Morocco enabled the migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers to progress towards the border and opened the gates, Belarus organised a thousand-kilometre airbridge to send the refugees to the border. Additionally, its role in the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has effectively broken the development of a possible new migration diplomacy. Morocco and Turkey, on the other hand, despite having very different migratory fluxes and having used coercive strategies, remain a central piece for the externalisation of migration due to their geographic position, These two states, will undoubtedly continue incurring in migration diplomacy, seeking to gain benefits and advantages with the EU while enhancing their foreign policy objectives in Africa and the Middle East. As has been identified with the thesis, a considerable potential for coercive actions by Morocco and Turkey are respectively, the Western Sahara and the intervention in Syria, related to the domestic long-lasting Kurdish question.

Lastly, new research should focus on how states in the periphery of the European Union. Facing the same incentives and pressures, learn from and about each other's negotiations, tensions, actions and strategies with the EU.

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