Irregular Migration under the EU Global Strategy between Peace and Security: The case of EU-Morocco Partnership

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Abstract

This paper studies the EU Global Strategy's effectiveness in achieving the objectives of peace and security through societal and state resilience using the case study of the EU-Morocco Partnership on Irregular Migration. Irregular Migration in the last decade or so has become of paramount importance for the union's security and stability. While mainly sought through a security-dominated approach, the issue of irregular migration is under the EUGS expected to be tackled through a comprehensive agenda targeting both long term peace and immediate security needs. Tackling the root causes behind irregular migration by seeking mutual interests and sustainable security between the EU and Neighbor Countries, especially in Africa, is described to bring about fruitful and long-term solutions. Adopting the Critical Constructivist framework, this paper finds out that besides the inconsistencies in the EU' Global strategy and EU's discourse and practice, issues related to Morocco's domestic development which parallel the union's limited relational power and a lack of a balance of interests between the union and Morocco in the EU' externalization policy challenge the union' effectiveness in dealing with irregular migration. A security-dominated approach along with a prioritization of strategic interests through selective engagement stands in the way of the realization of the EU Global Strategy's objectives in the case of Morocco to local and transit migrants.

Keywords: EU Global Strategy, Peace and Security, Irregular Migration, EU-Morocco Partnership

1. Introduction

In the context of a geopolitical turn in international relations both at the regional and international levels, the European union traditionally defined as a normative, liberal, or civil actor at least discursively has had its foreign policy as well as its role in safeguarding the peace and security of the European borders and citizens questioned (Roger, 2009). Having lived its first major crisis since its foundation through the British Referendum, the European Union has taken a strategic turn in its foreign policy redefining its identity and role to prioritize the European interest and well-being through principled pragmatism and resilience. EU's new identity designed through the EU global strategy does not retrieve towards isolationism nor towards realpolitik, rather it seeks responsible and selective engagement abroad to regain the EU's credibility both at the domestic and international levels. The increasing interdependence between the peace and security of the European Union and that of its surrounding neighborhood has been manifested through the issue of irregular migration which remains a complex and contested topic both at the level of the EU as well as between the EU and its partner states.

The EU Global Strategy (EUGS) is 'theoretically' designed to cope with the root causes behind irregular migration for the long-term stability of the union. However, reviewing both the EUGS and the EU's foreign policy choice on the issue of irregular migration in the case of Morocco shows that the EU is more oriented towards dealing with irregular migration through the 'dot' notion of security as in the Foucauldian sense of building limits rather than on the promotion of 'Benthamian' peace which consists of bridging borders and building a positive relationship between peace, security, and surveillance. This is especially important considering that mobility while from the perspective of the nation states is a bridge of sovereignty right from the perspective of the migrants it is a way to life, opportunity, and prosperity.

Taking the deadly road to the zone of peace, justice and prosperity has in the recent years become a commonly favored option for the Moroccan youth who has lost hope in building a future in their own home country. The rise in irregular migration from Morocco is a reaction to domestic patterns of domination ranging from political to socio-economic, with rising levels of inequality and poverty. In this sense, irregular migration becomes as in Barrington Moore's words a form of 'Exit' or 'Flight' in the face of domination (Moore, 1996). Coping with irregular migration flows would as a result necessitate tackling its root causes which the EU has not been able to successfully achieve in the case of Morocco given its prioritization of strategic, self-interest and narrowly defined security limited on border control and surveillance at the expense of sustainable peace and prosperity in Morocco. The case of Morocco is chosen given the country's increased geopolitical significance for the union interests, especially related to irregular migration and the African strategy. Morocco's strong will to deepen relations to a status of a privileged partnership as well as the long-rooted partnership with a unique position in the region in terms of democratization efforts of the EU highlights the importance of assessing the EUGS in light of the case of the partnership with Morocco. Being the only country with direct borders to the union, Morocco has earned increasing importance in the subject of peace and security both related to the African continent, the MENA as well as Europe. Increased shared interests in the recent decade between Morocco and the EU with the increased geopolitical agency of Morocco and the mutual interdependence between the two partners on several issues have served to give impetus to their bilateral relations.

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This article argues that the EU's policy choice towards the management of irregular migration in the case of Morocco serves to exacerbate the existing issues leading to irregular migration rather than the opposite. It also argues that the reasons for the EU's inability to cope with the issue of irregular migration in the case of Morocco are two folds. First of all, there exist theoretical and practical contentions around the key concepts of the EU Global Strategy mainly principled pragmatism, the bottom-up approach, selective engagement, and state-society resilience. Second, the EU's prioritization of strategic interests defined in terms of immediate security needs as based on Foucault's 'Dot' rather than Benthamian 'peace' has contributed to reducing the EU's relational power towards Morocco to make effective changes in the political and socioeconomic levels. This consists of externalization policy and the targeting of Morocco as a potential 'Buffer zone' for unwanted transit migrants, the neglect of Morocco's own context, needs and interests. Most importantly, the neglect of the issue of the integration of the youth bulge in Morocco is further challenged by the EU's outsourced responsibility of 3rd country nationals to Morocco.

The article looks at the issues through an analytical reasoning on irregular migration, how the EU's global strategy functions, and finally how the EU-Moroccan partnership can contribute towards peace and security.

1.1. Irregular Migration

The movement of people from developing countries to developed ones has in the recent years characterized and challenged international relations. Irregular migration in the form of illegal entry or overstay has in the last decade become a major concern for the EU policymakers considered a breach of the union's area of security and justice, a threat to the union's coherence and stability (Kicinger, 2004). Traditionally belonging to domestic politics, irregular migration has since the events of 9/11 gained importance in the international agenda of security due to its linkage with terrorism in the American political discourse. However, it was not until the failure of the Arab Spring and the subsequent 2015 peak in irregular migration flows to EU's borders that the issue became of primary concern for the union. Representing a threat to the sovereignty of member states faced by both physical as well as sociological destabilizations, the interdependence between the EU's stability and that of its neighborhood came to be increasingly nuanced.

The EU's foreign policy towards the South, long criticized for strengthening authoritarianism rather than reforming it, has in the last decade brought about seismic changes for the union' itself questioning its purpose and effectiveness both abroad and at home. Efforts to change the neighborhood through different instruments such as the EMP and the ENP have not brought about fruitful results for the region's population nor have they been in favor of the European citizen interest. Increasing flows of migrants intensified the EU's failure not only to bring about changes abroad but also to safeguard the European space of justice and security promised to the European citizen.
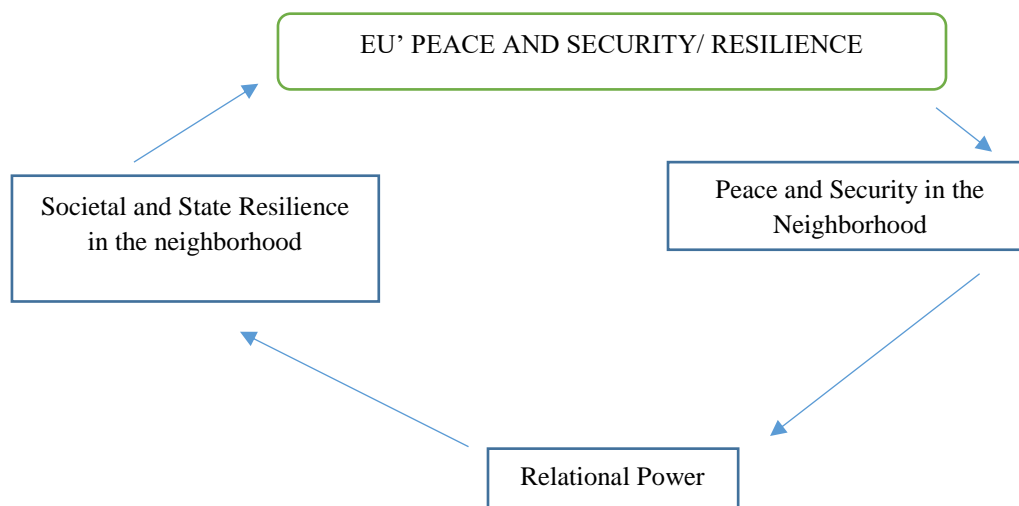
Physical, sociological and socioeconomic frontiers' intrusion by the presence of the 'other', leading to the rise of Euroscepticism and anti-EU motivated far right has made irregular migration a subject of an 'existential concern' for the union (Ceccorulli and Lucarelli, 2017).

As stated by Weiner, (1993) "refugees and migrants may be perceived as a threat to the country that produces the emigrants, that which receives them, and the relations between the sending and the receiving". The absence of an international regime that deals with migration and a common policy on irregular migration at the EU level due to sovereign states' preference to generate policies on the issue unilaterally under Article 79/5 of the TFEU makes dealing with the issue especially complicated (EU Parliament, 2021). However, these policies designed to secure the union's space of justice and security while they also involve and carry consequences for partner countries generally do not consider the consequences and the concerns of these policies on countries of the neighborhood. A narrowed focus on the EU's interest in the marginalization of the perceptions and concerns of 'others' along with a continuity of an asymmetric, security-dominated approach still characterizes the union's strategy towards irregular migration.

In the face of the several structural challenges facing the union, the EU has designed the Global Strategy to preserve and promote its continuity at the domestic, regional, and international levels. The peace and security of the EU under the EUGS are defined to be dependent on the EU's role and effectiveness abroad, especially towards the South. Defined as the internal-external nexus, this mutual dependency of peace and security between the EU and the neighborhood is most evident on the issue of irregular migration whereby people seek entry to the Union's zone of justice and peace in the face of domestic challenges ranging from wars, socioeconomic or even environmental issues. The interlinkage between the issue of irregular migration and terrorism as well as irregular migration and political developments both as cause and effect has also created an interdependence between the EU's security and that of its neighborhood. For this reason, the EU in the global strategy designed the approach of principled pragmatism to primarily meet its security needs and that of the European citizen. Additionally, foreign interference is designed to be conducted through the concept of a bottom-up approach and selective engagement. The resilience of the union and its neighborhood is the central objective of the EU Global Strategy. (EUGS, 2017).

As stated by Robert Schuman in his famous speech at the launching of the European Integration project (1950) "Europe will not be made all at once or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity". Seventy-two years later, the EU was again confronted by geopolitical and

structural challenges with seismic effects on its unity and solidarity but which also reminded the EU decision-makers of the importance of maintaining the EU strong and united in the face of a changing world. The adoption of the EUGS, which was a result of the strategic thinking initiated by the EU's High Representative Mogherini, came as a result of several structural and geostrategic changes at the regional and global levels which also had extended effects on the union's domestic affairs.

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   │ Resilience               │              │ Neighborhood             │
   │ in the neighborhood      │              │                          │
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                         │   Relational Power   │
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Figure 1: Peace And Security Process Under EUGS

1.2. The EU Global Strategy

Most importantly, the EUGS is believed to be a response to a crisis of sovereignty of the union within three dimensions: Defense, borders and currency (Sanahuja, 2019). The EUGS is thought of as a compass for the EU's foreign policy that is believed to provide a strategic direction to face a structural environment that is characterized by a variety of challenges that are complex and contested. The complex and contested nature of the issues that are emerging in the world despite the connectivity has resulted in more division rather than cooperation. In this context, the EUGS is designed to provide policy coherence for the EU foreign policy both across the different policy areas and themes as well as regions (EUGS, 2019). Most importantly, the EUGS is believed to solve the dilemma between interests and values around the EU foreign policy and to overcome the negative experience of the history of western interventionism in the Global South. The main factors behind the design of the EU Global Strategy are to promote policy direction, strengthen political unity as well as the effectiveness of EU's external action (Tocci, 2016).

The EUGS is believed to allow the EU achieve its full potential at the international level by becoming a leading actor in the field of diplomacy and international security both at the level of Europe and worldwide. The EU's power in the last decade has been challenged on multiple fronts including the domestic, regional and global levels. Most importantly, the interdependence between these three levels in the case of the EU has made it especially challenging for the union. The rise in structural changes has brought the agency of the EU under question by its citizens. This not only involved the effectiveness of the union abroad, especially in the MENA region, but most importantly in being able to protect the European citizen and territory. EU's normative identity and power having been its trademark at the international level was heavily criticized and weakened with the rise of the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring, which is seen as a version of Europe's 30 years war, was besides all a manifestation of the failure of the EU's foreign policy in the past decades. The Arab Spring brought about unprecedented theoretical and practical challenges to the union. Besides the security challenges that directly affect the EU due to the connectivity between the union and its neighborhood, the Arab Spring's most important challenge was the political and 'normative' role of the EU in the Neighborhood. Being a non-traditional state, the EU in the international system has had an exceptional position characterized by its adoption of norms and liberal values as interests in its foreign policy. This was especially different from the approach adopted by the US which was either crude interventionism or pragmatism. Based on the key concepts of resilience, principled pragmatism and relational power, the EU Global Strategy aims at designing a new role for the union at the global and regional levels. Based on the EUGS, the EU's definition of power emphasizes the capacity to effect change through a relational level that is based on an agent-agency equilibrium of influence. The EUGS while increasing the EU's responsibility towards its security, that of its neighborhood and the multilateral system also increases the partners' agency importance in effecting their change under the support of the EU. A bottom-up approach that focuses on supporting local actors of change envisions a redirection from focusing on governments to civil society actors. In a context of an overall turn towards power competition and geopolitics, the union through the EUGS accords itself the responsibility and mission to safeguard a rule-based global order and democratic change in the neighborhood

through responsible engagement. The resilience of state and society, principled pragmatism and relational power are the key concepts in the EU's redefined identity and role (Tocci, 2016).

The issue of migration as subject to internal-external nexus has in the EUGS been argued to be the primary foreign policy objective necessitating the effective implementation of the EUGS foreign policy instruments. Under the EUGS, the management of the migration issue is supposed to go beyond the management of the frontier and securitization to rather focus on tackling the root causes. This is supposed to be completed by promoting peace and sustainable security through a bottom-up approach based on resilience and principled pragmatism and guided by a joined-up approach and an internal-external nexus. The EUGS has also emphasized on the importance of equality in partnerships in line with the adoption of relational power as the cornerstone of the EU's new identity which highlights a relationship of influence between the agency and the agent. The EU' also recognizes through the EUGS the importance of promoting fruitful partnership that is based on shared prosperity due to the increased importance of neighbors and the neighbors of neighbors for the union's peace and security. This is mainly in relation to Africa and MENA regions whose levels of security, prosperity and peace directly reflect on the EU's. Adopting an African strategy to increase EU positive involvement in the continent, the EUGS has linked the interests of the union with those of partner states envisioning a less asymmetric and more inclusive approach.

1.3. The EU-Morocco Partnership Over Irregular Migration

Irregular migration in the partnership between the EU and Morocco consists of both migrants of origin as well as transit migrants mainly Sub-Saharan Africans. Both types of migration have increased in unprecedented ways as an effect of the Arab Spring changes. The shift of the migration gate for Sub-Saharan Africans from Libya to Morocco and Morocco's direct borders with the EU has in the recent years made it one of the most active and dangerous routes to the EU. As for irregular migrants of Moroccan youth and minors, it has also increased in an unprecedented way in recent years as an effect of the country' inconsistent development and progress at the socioeconomic and political levels. Additionally, while the EUGS promises to deal with the root causes of the issue, the case of Morocco is a manifestation of the EU's lack of effectiveness due to the continuing dilemma around its pragmatic approach between strategic interests and normative ones; that is between security priorities and promotion of long term peace and sustainable security.

2. Theoretical and Practical Contentions around the Concepts of the EUGS

2.1. Principled pragmatism

The EUGS is mainly valued for adopting the principled pragmatism approach that combines both values and interests. Designed as the modus operandi of the EUGS, principled pragmatism is believed to blend both idealism and pragmatism (Colombo, 2021). Originally rooted in the concept of Realpolitik as coined by Rochau (1868) in opposition to utopianism and which is supposed to serve as a

guiding light of political action that does not move in a foggy future but in the present field of vision … it also does not consist its task to be in the realization of ideals but in the achievement of concrete ends. As such it knows to content itself with partial results if the complete attainment is not achievable (Serena, 2020).

Providing both vision and flexibility, principled pragmatism was adopted as an approach that would unite the EU member states who were divided between those calling for a more pragmatic even armed union and those who were in favor of conserving the union's normative identity. The security community and development community within the EU had different perceptions of the issues facing the union. Bringing EU member states and communities together while adapting the union to change and conserving its identity could be afforded through the choice of principled pragmatism that fostered consensus rather than division.

Applied to irregular migration, principled pragmatism implies an emphasis on the EU's pragmatic interests in migration deals by forwarding and prioritizing the EU's interests. According to Juncos (2017), the EU's pragmatic approach implies that democratization would be done on a case-by-case basis which makes a philosophical contention between being principled and being pragmatic. It further argues that one cannot be both principled and pragmatic at the same time. The EU promises to not only act according to universal values but to be the global beacon of democracy in the world in a time that is dominated by geopolitics and competition over global and strategic power. The EU, however, cannot abide by universal values and advocate them while at the same behaving pragmatically.

Responsibility, flexibility and comprehensiveness are three important variables in the design and implementation of principled pragmatism. Responsibility is shifted from the EU to local actors, flexibility is developed in consideration of uncertainty and complexity. In parallel, the constant need to make changes and adopt different approaches to issues and comprehensiveness is designed through the joined-up approach which is also based on both connectivity and complexity.

The EU's choice of moving towards pragmatism reflects more of a US-driven approach towards the MENA than a European one. This is based on the prioritization of strategic and self-interests and a realistic assessment of the strategic environment away from idealistic aspirations attached to liberal ideology. The realistic assessment of the strategic environment shall guide the EU foreign actions abroad, where and to what extent shall the union be involved. However, principled pragmatism leads to both theoretical and practical issues.

The contention around principled pragmatism is mainly towards the idea of being committed to universal liberal values while also being pragmatic. First of all, it remains unclear how would the EU balance interests and values in the cases where it intervenes. Second, on what basis would the EU choose to be involved or not? Considering the selective engagement principle and the move from the Morocco-Ukraine model to Tunisia-Georgia, it infers that the EU's approach under the EUGS does not seek a balance between interests and values but rather seeks interests where strategic goals are at stake and values where they are not. This infers a continuation of the EU's old foreign policy approach rather than pragmatism as a balance between interests and values. Some scholars have also criticized principled pragmatism as a new western strategy to remove barriers to a liberal market without the accusation of neo-colonialism (Joseph, 2013). Following this approach, the EU's foreign policy in cases where strategic objectives are dominant can result in a rise in resistance rather than resilience. This is an important and contentious point about the EU's Global Strategy in the South as it will further be discussed through the case of Morocco in the analysis section of this research.

2.2. State and societal resilience

Being a key part of the EU's principled pragmatism and the primary organizing concept of the EUGS, resilience was previously applied to EU's environmental policies to infer recovery from environmental crises and the promotion of environmental stability. The concept first appeared in the EU foreign policy with the EUGS as part of the union's strategy for principled pragmatism. As mentioned in the Council of the EU 2013, resilience is designed to allow citizens and especially children to be able to fulfill their full potential. A shared responsibility between the EU and the local actors is developed in line with the belief that the transfer of knowledge from abroad without the focus on the development and involvement of the local capacity would not bring about change.

Table 1: Societal Resilience vs State Resilience

Societal Resilience- Peace	State Resilience: Security/Stability
Social Stability	Sovereignty
Socio-economic development	Border control and Boundaries (Non-Physical borders)
Education and health	National integrity
State-Society relations	Defense and security
Political pluralism, elections, freedoms, and justice	
Good governance	

Designed to apply separately to state and society, the EUGS defines resilience as states' and societies' capacity to change and reform in the face of crises (EUGS, 2017). Societal resilience entails political participation, human rights protection, strong civil societies as well as sustainable development. On the other hand, state resilience refers to the stability and effectiveness of state institutions (Tocci, 2020). Given that state resilience is based on stability while societal resilience is based on change and reform and considering the contemporary need for stability for the EU's strategic needs, the concept of resilience carries the risk to be employed in favor of stability rather than for change and reform which tends more towards realpolitik than towards resilience.

The union's strategy to balance state and societal resilience and how to effectively influence partner states under what is termed relational power to provide room for societal resilience remains unclear. This is especially challenging related to the context of the MENA region where the dominant trend consists of a strengthening of authoritarianism rather than the opposite. Extending resilience to normative change remains ambiguous and in comparison to the democratization approach, it is not only less transformative but also opens further space for ambiguity around measuring change and transformation in cases of authoritarianism (Sanahuja, 2019). Despite the EUGS binding resilience to democratization with a prioritization of the former, democratization remains different from resilience and it puts clear standards and criteria for the EU's credibility as well as the state in the process of reform. The level to which a state is resilient is different from the level of state democratization, this is mainly because resilience cannot be operationalized and as a result would be difficult to measure. This carries the risk to be less ambitious in the name of being 'realistic'. Resilience due to its origin in the US national security has also been interpreted by some scholars to be a turn to 'realpolitik (National Security Strategy, 2015). It also carries the risk of narrow interpretation that would bend more on security than on normative reform. The turn to realpolitik stems from the assumption that the EU would turn a 'blind eye' to governments failing political reform. Others, however, have linked resilience to democratization due to the bottom-up approach (Adolfson, 2018).

The concept of resilience is also perceived to be ambiguous and as carrying the potential of securitization (Tocci, 2016). Through the resilience approach issues that have not previously been perceived through a security lens could become so. This argument is made on the basis that the concept of resilience has over the past decade become a quasi-universal answer to problems of governance ranging from climate change to children's education, indigenous history, development, and terrorism. For this reason, under the approach of resilience democratization, governance and security have become increasingly intertwined. This argument is also supported by the fact that

the concept besides becoming an important part of the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, it also appears in several documents of American National Security since 2015 (Biscop, 2016).

2.3. Selective engagement

The EUGS' replacing Morocco and Ukraine with Tunisia and Georgia and among sixteen partner countries listing only two as potential success stories have brought about criticism of the strategy to be inconsistent with its optimistic aspirations as well as to being mainly of strategic, interest-based, and security-oriented approach. The selective approach raises doubts about the union's ability to effectively implement the EUGS as it is envisioned. Implementing state and societal resilience especially and seeking a holistic approach towards the issue of irregular migration that effectively deals with the root causes remained a source of doubt given the union's practical approach as well as the strategy's inconsistencies that highlights the dominance of security and strategic approach. The strategy is also subject to criticism for the vagueness of the concepts of resilience and principled pragmatism and its general objectives for which the strategy does not specify the tools (Bargues, 2021).

Concerning irregular migration, the EUGS envisions building partnerships that would address the root causes of irregular migration, promote legal migration and mobility, protection for Asylum seekers, counter migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings as well as facilitate returns, readmission, and reintegration. In line with these objectives, the EU launched the largest investment plan for Africa and the EU neighborhood to create jobs, and promote sustainable growth in fragile areas in the region with a focus on youth and women. The EU also boosted support for African cooperation mechanisms under the framework of African solutions to African problems and in sight of building a partnership of equals with the African partners. To nurture societal resilience in the continent, the EU also boosted support to civil society, deepening work on areas such as education, culture, and the youth.
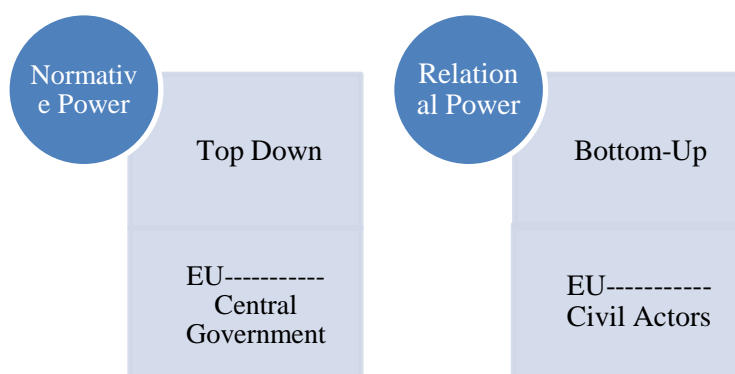
2.4. Bottom-up approach

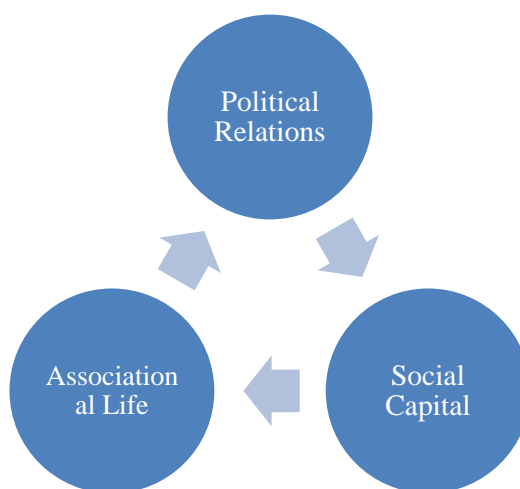**Figure 2: Normative Vs Relational Power**

Figure 3: Cycle

The EUGS through the bottom-up approach positions associational life, civic culture, and civil actors to be of a central position to change the political relations and social capital. However, the EUGS leaving aside the political relations element ignores the fact that associational life and cooperation are to a large extent dependent on and is reflective of the general relations at the social, economic, and political levels.

The political context and political relations variable, however, is not covered by the EUGS which centers its focus on promoting change from the bottom with the assumption that associational life, civic culture, and civil actors

for change would promote the required change for the long term even if that would take more time. However, associational life is itself a reflection of the general political and socioeconomic context in which it functions. In a general context that is characterized by patterns of domination and inequalities, one shall not expect cooperation at the societal, institutional, and bureaucratic levels. In a context that is characterized by patterns of domination and where civil society is limited rather than promoted expecting to achieve change from the bottom to the upper level that is the political level remains theoretically and practically problematic. Besides associational life, economic growth and performance are also influenced by the level of trust, cooperation, and effective governance in the country. Civil society would promote and foster these variables in a context that is already set to bear such results. That is a context that is not characterized by the domination of patterns of power relations at the political, social, and economic levels instead where social, and political cleavages have been overcome to achieve more equality and representation.

3. Irregular Migration and the Prioritization of 'Security Interests' at the Expense of Long-Term Sustainable Peace and Security

Since the 2015 refugee crisis, migration policy has moved from being a reserve to member states' sovereignty to becoming a commonly shaped policy. The relation between migration and security in general and terrorism in specific was especially emphasized in the Maastricht Treaty where internal and external nexus became more highlighted in the union's foreign policy objectives. The saliency of the issue was emphasized in the Lisbon Treaty through Article 2 whereby the union shall "offer its citizens an area of freedom, security, and justice". The securitization of migration in the EU's policymaking was mainly fostered by the union's enlargement policy, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent attacks on European capitals with a parallel increase in radicalism among Muslims of Europe, the aftermath of the Arab spring and the attached flows of migrants. EU's reaction to the increased flow of irregular migrants has mainly focused on increasing border control and security mechanisms which have remained limited in coping with the issue.

For this reason, the council's conclusions have classified migration as a major strategic priority which root causes must be addressed by the union through foreign policy. The EU's policies on the migration issue have since 1990-2000 been mainly driven by security concerns creating a path dependency that would be difficult to reverse. In 2005, the EU developed its first global approach to migration designed in response to labor market needs while curbing irregular migration (EU Commission, 2015).

To avoid this situation's turning into further crises with culminated crises threatening the European Union project, the union has worked on outsourcing this burden and responsibility to foreign policy and relations with neighbors. This was mainly conducted through the externalization policy and the more for more approaches. Signing mobility partnerships with partner countries was the EU's approach to rewarding compliance on the side of partner countries.

Turning its focus to the Mediterranean Sea route, the union has carried out efforts to control migration by cooperating with non-EU member states. These partnerships are organized around the European Agenda for Migration of 2015 and the European Agenda on Security designed to guide the action of the union in the absence of a common policy on migration. The European Agenda for Migration acknowledges the important contribution of legal migration to the EU' economic development in line with the demographic challenges facing the union and emphasizes the importance of cooperation with 3rd countries through Mobility partnerships and externalization policy. The European Migration Agenda has four main pillars which consist of; reducing the incentives for irregular migration with a focus on root causes behind it in non-European countries with better application of return policies, dismantling smuggling and trafficking activities (Willermain, 2016). Second, the EAM emphasizes the better management of external borders through solidarity towards member states such as Greece and Italy. A new policy on legal migration to fill the future economic needs of the EU given the demographic decline in Europe. This is sustained through the creation of the blue card that would target attracting migration in high-skilled employment

Besides the issue of conditionality, Mobility partnership agreements prioritize member states' concerns and interests over those of partners by prioritizing member states' national policies designed according to Article 79/5 of the TFEU which accords the member states the exclusive right to decide on the volumes of admission of 3rd country nationals seeking entry for work. Mobility partnerships also remain political agreements and are not legally binding, participation of member states is also voluntary. Mobility partnerships also remain limited in effectively curbing the issue of irregular migration management among EU member states as well as between EU and non-EU partners (Yildiz, 2016).

The EU migration policy remains especially contentious due to the externalization approach. According to Boswell,(2003) "externalization of migration control refers to policies that shift the place where the control of travelers take place from the border of the state into the individual is seeking to within the countries of origin which also referred to as 'policing at distance'". Collier, (2018) on the other hand sees that through the externalization policy, the EU is holding accountable 3rd countries for holding assets to Europe. The externalization policy is based on the internal-external nexus which based on the nature of the migration issue has

made border control move from domestic policymaking to becoming a prior field for foreign policy and intertwinement between domestic and foreign policy.

Carried mainly through the EU-Turkey deal and compacts launched with African countries, the externalization policy has been criticized both in terms of ethics, effectiveness, and legal principles. Considered to be a breach of both European and international law, the externalization policy besides offering short-term results also contradicts the EU's objectives of democracy and the EU's normative profile, especially related to EU objectives in the EUGS and the policy has been severely criticized.

The perception of Morocco as a buffer zone for EU's unwanted migrants has, however, led to a rift in relations with the country refusing to serve as the union's border policeman. Burdened by its development issues and the youth integration in the job market with importantly high rates of unemployment leading to social issues, the responsibility of controlling the EU borders emphasizes the continuity of asymmetry in interests in the partnership in favor of the EU security and short-term goals.

EU's approach predominantly prioritizes the EU's preferences and interests that stem from its context and needs for which it seeks to externalize the border control and the migrants through a partnership with Morocco. In the case of Morocco, irregular migration of Moroccan citizens is more than a security issue but a more comprehensive one that requires the development and reform of the country at several levels. Morocco being a country in the process of development that has witnessed important liberalizations and changes with the coming to the throne of King Mohammed VI is also a post-colonial country that is still seeking to achieve its national integrity as witnessed by the case of Western Sahara, Ceuta and Melilla. Morocco's path to reform and liberalization is quite a recent one and issues at the social, institutional, and political levels still stand on the country's ability to achieve prosperity on equal terms.

The domination of the EU's interests over the partnership with Morocco not only results in irregular migration as a result of an increase in the patterns of domestic power and domination, but it also results in inhibiting Morocco from achieving meaningful progress by imposing on it interests that go against its own. Besides the burden of the transit migration given the country's youth situation and limited socioeconomic infrastructures in comparison with the EU's, Morocco's development has been closely tied to its foreign policy towards South-South Cooperation and foreign policy towards the African continent. Morocco's role as a potential 'buffer zone' for transit migrants while making its socioeconomic issues worse is also putting at stake its African strategy due to the rising contentions with African states in negotiating returns or conditions of stay of the transit migrants. This not only puts at stake Morocco's key national interest related to Western Sahara but also its prospects for development through meaningful regional cooperation with the African Union member states under the auspices of South-South Cooperation for the development of South solutions to South problems.

4. The Externalization policy

The Externalization policy limits 3rd country nationals' freedom of movement, resulting in serious human rights breaches of those migrants in addition to the unequal shifting of EU member states' migration burdens to neighboring countries unequipped for it (Yildiz, 2016). This is also done with no consideration of the consequences that this can have on 3rd countries' quality of life, peace, and stability as well as the situation of those 3rd country nationals who generally end up mistreated.

The externalization policy based on the European Migration Agenda is perceived by scholars as an instrument of the EU to outsource asylum claims to 3rd countries rather than promoting the well-being of the migrants or the partner states. Put differently, the EAM and externalization policy have made neighboring countries buffer zones for the EU's unwanted responsibilities.

This approach emphasizes the EU's old asymmetric approach in its relations with partners that were initiated with the ENP's idea of transferring responsibility as a shared responsibility. According to Yildiz (2016), based on its perception of the neighborhood as a source of insecurity, the union heavily focuses on its interests and objectives in the migration policy. The EU discourse on sharing common burdens with 3rd countries on migration has not only been criticized by scholars but also by 3rd countries themselves already struggling with their stability issues including political contestations. EU's persistent asymmetric approach towards the neighborhood has also brought to the surface the argument on the EU's inability to effectively promote stability in the region as manifested by the Arab Spring results.

The Externalization policy cannot be said to be an effective approach to the long-term solution of the issue of migration. Instead, it carries the danger to limit the union's capability of achieving the EUGS objectives. This also implies that the union will carry on importing instabilities from neighboring countries and further exporting them to 3rd countries of transit to meet its immediate security concerns causing further instabilities.

5. The EU's approach and the exacerbation of the domestic root causes behind irregular migration in Morocco

Despite the important advances achieved by Morocco, reforms initiated in 2011 show incomplete implementations, and the EU's action plan in Morocco's are characterized by a persistence of inefficiency and limited results. The persistence of the informal institution of corruption, the lack of successful integration of the youth bulge into the country's socioeconomic system and the development of its social capital in parallel to the

general economic development are important issues behind the migration flows of the youth. The domestic issues in Morocco show both the consequences of the EU's prioritization of geostrategic and pragmatic interests over normative ones in the case of Morocco as well as the ineffectiveness of the Bottom-up approach in constructively bringing about change by focusing on local civil actors while siding the political element. The striking contrasts between the Morocco's General Development Progress and the society's development indexes especially the situation of the youth is a major reason behind irregular migration. Additionally, Morocco's approach towards protests and demonstrations and calls for reform and jobs around the country after 2015 shows a significant variation from that of 2011. The use of force, imprisonment, and limitations on freedoms of assembly and protests show the regression in the country's democratic and human right progress rather than the opposite.

5.1. The Return of the 'makhzen'/informal state

The issue of the youth social, economic, and political integration has become a major topic for Morocco in 2017-2018 following the several youth outbreaks that took place in the country. Having resulted in a major malaise among the population, the Hoceima uprisings in 2017 have raised several questions about the substantial depth of Morocco's reform and more importantly the Moroccan intention to substantial reform. Also known as Morocco's second Arab Spring wave, the uprisings came after long years of state ignorance towards the area in which it has barely been present providing very limited services to the population if any in terms of education, health, and public administration. Besides this, the state's reaction to the protests through violence remains to this day a source of ambiguity about Morocco'ss democratization process. The protest outbreak in 2017 in Morocco was more intense than in the Arab Spring context and was also approached differently. The state response unlike in 2011 was not dialogue, negotiation, and reform instead a security-oriented approach which dealt with the protests as a threat to national peace and security. These events forced a majority of the Moroccan youth to seek migration to Europe through illegal and dangerous paths. In some cases, the youth issue also carries the danger of desperate young people finding refuge in radicalism or joining terror groups.

For Morocco, the focus and support of the civil actors instead of influencing the central government are done as an alternative approach to previous EU's involvement which has had mixed results due to the persistence of the informal power, known as the **_Makhzen_**. The 'Makhzen' which is the local name given to the state in Morocco is according to Maghraoui, (2001), a prominent legacy of the reign of King Hassan II. The Makhzen existed for centuries before the coming of the current king Mohammed IV to rule providing the administrative and legal framework. Most importantly, the Makhzen provided the Moroccan Sultans' with the military manpower to extend or enforce their authority when necessary. The Makhzen which under King Mohammed VI existed as an informal state due to the initiation of reforms by the king up to his coming to the reign is still functioning in nexus with the formal state and institutions. The Makhzen is especially recognized by state forces' interventions through the use of force in protests and demonstrations. The Makhzen which is the oldest mechanism of exercising political power and authority in Morocco is still in place in parallel with the introduced 'democratization processes' by the state post-Arab Spring. According to Maghraoui, (2001), the persistence of the Makhzen power is one of the main reasons behind the ineffectiveness of reforms and the slow pace of progress in civil liberties, press freedoms, and political progress.

5.2. The Persistence of the informal institution of corruption and incomplete reforms

Many of the legal reforms in Morocco remained ink on paper. Despite the remarkable efforts and progress at several levels, Morocco is still categorized as a 'semi-authoritarian/partly free' country. The incomplete political and democratic reform added to the overall economic inequalities especially touching the youth stands in the way to Moroccan sustainable peace and security. For this reason, migration in all its forms, regular or irregular especially to Europe has become an inevitable option for the country's youth looking for a better future by crossing the sea through 'Pateras'[2].

Good governance has since the initiation of the 2011 Constitution become a priority objective for the government with an important place given to the Ministry of General Affairs and Governance in terms of sectorial coordination. Morocco has also in cooperation with international actors such as Transparency International became actively engaged in the fight against corruption and money laundering. However, despite the efforts made by both the EU and Morocco in the field of corruption, Morocco still ranks significantly high although it has made significant progress in terms of social, political, and economic reforms as well as public governance and basic rights. According to International Transparency, Morocco still ranks 87 among 180 countries which shows the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of the efforts made so far to cope with the "informal institution" of corruption in Morocco resulting into the country's many legal and other initiatives for progress in subjects such as women rights and others to remain incomplete.

Reports on the first phase of the country's 2015-2025 anti-corruption strategy show that several projects done in cooperation with the EU delegation in Morocco (30 out of 89) remain behind schedule (CPI, 20021). It remains, however, unclear whether the reason for the persistence of these practices is related to social practices, the limited effectiveness of the judicial system and framework on the topic, or issues with the development of public

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[2] The Spanish name given to the small fish boats used by illegal migrants to cross the sea borders across the Mediterranean to European borders and which carry heavy dangers to human life.

administrations. Issues of development especially socioeconomic development have come to carry critical importance for the stability of both Morocco and the EU. Having a large youth population, Morocco has been unable to efficiently coordinate between professional training, the educational system, and market needs. The amount of inactive and unemployed youth causes a heavy burden on managing the sea borders with Europe which remains heavily crossed despite the works done on preventing the transits and the smuggling networks. 89,000 attempts of irregular migration have been prevented by Morocco in a single year which is also proof of the critical role Morocco has and the efforts it employs in the service of the EU' border security objective (Jachtemi, 2018). Several studies have shown that Moroccan youth do not trust civil society associations and their ability to make a change in the political and socioeconomic reality. In the same manner, a disinterest in elections and a highly negative perception of politics and political representatives highly dominate (Rapport du Conseil Economique, 2018). On the other hand, youth in Morocco are major actors in the organization of movements of protests and opposition that take place outside the traditional institutional system. The use of alternative music production through rap has become a major platform for voicing opposition views, despair, and youth matters targeting the politicians and the business elite.

Immigration of Moroccan youth both through illegal and legal ways caused the country a serious brain drain and conflict with European member states especially Spain on irregular migration given the important amount of migrants of Moroccan origin. As noted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), among 38,000 arrivals by sea, 7000 of them were Moroccan. On her latest visit to the country to negotiate immigration, Ylva Johansson (EU Commissioner) noted that half of the illegal migrants having arrived on Spanish shores were of Moroccan origin (Reuters, 2020).

To tackle the socioeconomic situation in Morocco, the EU' socioeconomic program in morocco seeks the formation of 10 million citizens and to increase the level of insertion and professional integration of graduates to 75% by 2021 (EU commission, 2016). The human capital in Morocco remained especially challenged and challenging due to the striking contrasts in the country's macroeconomic indicators mainly the whole economic GDP, the level of poverty, and unemployment.

These issues are a reflection of the unsuccessful political reform in Morocco and the persistence of weak state-society relations. Building trust and cooperation among society and between state and society are highly dependent on the general context of equality, representation, and democracy. A lack of these and a domination of patterns of power at the political and economic level marginalizing an important majority of the population mainly the youth is the main reason for the rise and persistence of the practices such as corruption, lack of trust in civil society, and actors; consequently, the rise in irregular movement. To change this reality and its attached consequences, the political variable should not be neglected along with the bottom-up approach for change. Additionally, adding to such a context the EU' security-oriented approach of using Morocco for the EU's transit migration interests further reduces the union's relational influence on the government and further challenges the country's already fragile socioeconomic infrastructure which cannot be claimed to serve the purpose of mutual peace and security; rather the opposite.

6. Conclusion

The EU's approach towards irregular migration through the case of Morocco shows that unlike the objectives outlined in the EUGS, the EU in practice carries a strategy that is path-dependent with the union's traditional practices. That is a security, self-interest-based narrow approach that failed to bring about long-term, stable and peace-oriented results. EU's irregular migration approach as assessed through the reading of the strategy and the practice shows not only a gap between the EU's rhetoric and practice but also within the global strategy itself. Besides neglecting the country' own perception and interests on the issue of migration, the EU approach works against the promotion of resilience in the country, against the country's national interests as well as the union's objectives as described in the EUGS. The prioritization of security by externalizing border control and transit migrants to Morocco not only prioritizes strategic interests in the cooperation over normative ones but also limits the union's effectiveness and relational power in bringing about change in the country. Considering that Morocco' is a source of important irregular migration flows, the externalization of border control to Morocco and the adoption of a Bottom-up approach to interference at the neglect of domestic patterns of politics does not serve the purpose of the stability of both the EU and Morocco. Instead, it contributes to exacerbating patterns of political and economic dominations that are at the origin of irregular migration flows from Morocco related to its youth bulge.

The choice of the deadly road through 'patterns' to the zone of peace, justice, and prosperity is itself a manifestation and expression of the youth' democratic aspirations at the political and socioeconomic levels not being satisfied by their home country. To tackle this issue, the EU needs to integrate the political variable in its strategy which is the key component on which other variables such as civil society depend. The activity of civil society is itself dependent on political liberalization. In a context of political and economic patterns of domination, society is less prone to cooperate than to resist. It is the general political and economic context that reflects on issues such as corruption, social malaise, or irregular movement which are forms of resistance to the patterns of power they are unable to change. In such a context, investing in civil actors alone cannot be promising to fulfill

the required change given the dominating lack of trust as in civil actors themselves, political and state institutions as is the case among the Moroccan youth. The EU's preference for adopting a security-oriented approach to meet its border and frontier needs for transit migrants exacerbates these factors along with its 'bottom-up' approach rather than serve the purpose of long-term peace and sustainable security for itself and Morocco.

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