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The Nexus Between EU External Migration Policies and the Democratization of Southern Mediterranean Countries. A multi-layered analysis with Morocco as a case study

Luisa Faustini Torres

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Para Clara,

por ser minha força e luz

por me fazer querer ser minha melhor versão cada dia

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Abstract

What is the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of Southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs)? Although being two essential components of EU external action and central elements within Euro-Mediterranean relations, little is known about how these two macro processes of international affairs intertwine. This research thesis aims to start fulfilling this gap through a qualitative multi-layered analysis, taking Morocco as a case-study. This country has a long-standing history of 'cooperation' with the EU on migration policies being conceived as a paradigmatic case among SMCs. This study is composed by three articles, each examining one layer of this interface (i.e., policy narratives, policy practices and stakeholders' perceptions), as well as an introduction and a conclusion. The first article explores EU policy narratives, identifying EU assumptions and expectations about this nexus. The second one analyses EU policy practices through the case study of Morocco, focusing on understanding how the interplay of these policy fields is unfolding on the ground. The third article provides an assessment of Moroccan local stakeholders' perceptions regarding EU policy implementation and impact on the country. Overall, the three articles draw on different sources of data obtained through desk research (policy documents, reports and academic literature) and fieldwork, which have been thoroughly analysed in the Software Nvivo and combining different qualitative methodologies and techniques. Finally, whereas the introduction frames and contextualizes the overall research question and presents the research design, the conclusion is mainly dedicated to identifying the policy gaps between the different layers and reflecting upon how the externalization-democratization nexus fits within the EU normative agenda.

Resumen

¿Cuál es el nexo entre las políticas de migración exterior de la UE y la democratización de los países del sur del Mediterráneo? Aunque son dos componentes esenciales de la acción exterior de la UE y elementos centrales dentro de las relaciones euro mediterráneas, poco se sabe sobre cómo estos dos macroprocesos de las relaciones internacionales se entrelazan. Esta tesis tiene como objetivo comenzar a llenar este vacío a través de un análisis cualitativo multicapa, tomando a Marruecos como caso de estudio. Este país tiene una larga historia de "cooperación" con la UE en materia de políticas migratorias que se concibe como un caso paradigmático. Este estudio está compuesto por tres artículos, cada uno de los cuales examina una capa de esta interfaz (es decir, narrativas, prácticas y percepciones de *stakeholders* locales), así como una introducción y una conclusión. El primer artículo explora las narrativas políticas de la UE, identificando los supuestos y expectativas de la UE sobre este nexo. El segundo analiza

las prácticas políticas de la UE a través del estudio de caso de Marruecos, centrándose en comprender cómo se está desarrollando la interacción de estos campos políticos sobre el terreno. El tercer artículo proporciona una evaluación de las percepciones de los stakeholders marroquíes con respecto a la implementación de la política de la UE y su impacto en el país. En general, los tres artículos se basan en diferentes fuentes de datos obtenidos a través de la investigación documental (documentos oficiales, informes y literatura académica) y trabajo de campo, que han sido analizados a fondo en el Software Nvivo y combinando diferentes metodologías y técnicas cualitativas. Finalmente, mientras que la introducción enmarca la pregunta general y presenta el diseño de la investigación, la conclusión se dedica principalmente a identificar las brechas entre las diferentes realidades del proceso político y a reflexionar sobre cómo el nexo externalización-democratización encaja dentro de la agenda normativa de la UE.

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1. INTRODUCTION

> *"Ill-functioning democratic structures, weak institutions, the absence of the rule of law and bad governance are all major push factors for forced migration". (EU Commission, 2002)*

> *"[...] the EU policy contradicts its own efforts in democracy promotion, that is to say its normative agenda to promote political reform in its immediate neighbourhood. By externalizing the fight of illegal migrants the cooperation in migration issues acts as a bargaining power of authoritarian elites like the Libyan regime in order to avoid any substantial liberalization of state and power". (Demmelhuber, 2011)*

> *"If the EU cares about the democratization of Morocco? No, the EU only cares about its own interest, which is "that migrants stay in their countries", nor saving lives, nor any other kind of policies". (Interview with male representative from cooperation agency, Rabat, 2019)*

When the Barcelona Process was launched in November of 1995, it intended to transform the Mediterranean region into a common space for peace, stability, and prosperity (Barcelona Declaration, 1995). Since its inception, both the strengthening of democracy and the management of migration have been incorporated as central pillars within this Partnership. At this point, the European Union was emerging in the international system as a normative power and multilateralism was at its peak. On the southern shore of the Mediterranean, however, populations were living either under strict authoritarian rule or civil war. At the same time, and coinciding with the opening of EU internal borders, migration was progressively becoming a key foreign policy and security issue, making the EU rely increasingly on the cooperation of its authoritarian neighbours to keep it under control.

Twenty-five years later, the objectives set in Barcelona remain far from attained (Soler I Lecha, 2020). Unlike the envisioned 'ring of stable and well governed friends' (Dandashly, 2018), the region resembles more of a 'ring of fire' (Haukkala, 2017) and a 'buffer zone' (Collyer, 2016). If anything, the democratization motif increasingly seemed

to become part of a rhetorical cacophony whereas the externalization and securitization of migration control gained growing centrality within Euro-Med policies and politics. However, even if considered as two central pillars of EU foreign policy and Euro-Mediterranean relations – both now and back then – the links between migration policies and democratization of countries in this region are still broadly unknown.

Although each of these macro international processes have been extensively analysed by the literature, they have remained mainly as isolated research fields. As a result, knowledge and evidence about their relation is in general dispersed, anecdotal, and hypothetical. This research is an attempt to start fulfilling this gap bridging these policy fields and respective literatures. Nowadays, the pairing of policy fields has become commonplace in global and regional policymaking (Sørensen-Nyberg, 2012). However, other equally important debates have been prioritized and thoroughly analysed, such as the migration-security and migration-development. The 25th anniversary of the Barcelona process presents itself as an opportunity to discuss this other nexus that has remained at the margins of debates. Likewise, now that the EU has consolidated itself as an international and regional actor, mainly in terms of migration policies, it seems like a good time to critically reflecting upon the EU normative agenda and its role in Euro-Med politics and policies.

Therefore, the main goal of this research consists of exploring the nexus between the externalization of EU migration policies and the democratization of southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs). Through a qualitative multi-layered analysis, it explores different facets of this nexus (policy narratives, policy practices and perceptions of local stakeholders), revealing how these two macro processes of international affairs might be related, at which levels and by which mechanisms. Moreover, it relies on a broad range of qualitative data obtained through desk research and fieldwork – such as policy documents, reports, interviews, empirical literature, and press releases – which have been carefully analysed by the Software *Nvivo* combining different methodologies and qualitative data analysis techniques. Likewise, this research has an interdisciplinary approach, merging theoretical tools and frameworks from the fields of international relations and political science.

Such a multifocal and interdisciplinary perspective is considered as an added value for the current state of research not only because it provides a greater understanding regarding this nexus, inserting it within the broader agenda of migration policy and Euro-Mediterranean studies. In fact, I believe its contribution somehow transposes the boundaries of empirical research. On the one hand, it allows for the identification of the gaps between the different layers within the policy process, something that would be essential for producing coherent, effective, and sustainable EU external policies for the local contexts where they are being implemented. On the other hand, it enriches and feeds into the debate about EU normative agenda, which even if longstanding should be constantly updated and challenged, incorporating new reflections and elements into it.

1.1 EU External Migration Policies: the Quest to Push the Border Southward

In December 2019, the European Union (EU) announced a new financial package for Morocco (around €101,7 million) to support this country's fight against irregular migration and human trafficking (EU Commission, 2019). This recent act is the utmost example of a policy process that endured for the last two decades[1], namely: the development and implementation of EU external migration policies towards Southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs)[2]. Most experts in the field agree that the Tampere Council in 1999 inaugurated this approach for dealing with 'irregular' migration flows, since it introduced for the first time at the EU level the necessity of a "comprehensive approach to migration addressing political, human rights and development issues in countries and regions of origin and transit" (Council of the European Union, 1999).

What differentiates these policies from other restrictive migration regimes is that they seek the sorting out and curbing of migrants before they arrive at the EU territory (Guiraudon, 2001). The argumentative logic behind them can be summarized in these few words: "before coming and letting them enter, it is better not to let them leave" (Zapata-

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[1] Some authors refer to early forms of externalization dating from the 70's, such as, visa policies, pre-screening practices, readmission agreements and the concept of 'safe third countries' (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2017).

[2] Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt.

Barrero, 2013, p.2). Thus, the overall goal is to prevent migrants' departures from their origin and transit countries and to keep irregular migration routes closed (Casas-Cortes et al, 2014). In this sense, such process implies the deployment of efforts to manage the flows not through controlling EU (territorial) borders[3] but through dislocating the border away from EU territory, in this case, Southward.

These policies are associated with a process that has been mainly referred to the literature as 'externalization'[4] of EU migration and asylum policies: a strategy that consists of both outsourcing (delegating) and extra-territorializing (through remote control) border management and migration control towards other actors and territories, mainly towards neighbouring countries of origin and transit of migration[5] (Guiraudon, 2001; Lavenex, 2006; Casas et al, 2011). For being framed as such, SMCs have been hosting most of these policies and serving different goals vis-à-vis the EU (Seeberg, 2017; Carrera et al, 2015). This becomes evident by observing the great number of cooperation agreements, dialogues and policy instruments developed between the EU and these countries under the framework of cooperation on migration control (See Table 1.1 in Annex).

The process of 'exporting' migration policies towards SMCs has its own specificities and dynamics, which are related to structural features of the region context and its history but also to policy dynamics as well as interests and identities of the actors involved. Some particularities are related to the fact that the relations among the EU and these countries is characterized by a colonial heritage and a centre-periphery structure[6] (Pace and Roccu,

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[3] In a first moment, efforts were concentrated in controlling EU external borders and building what some authors critically refer to as 'fortress Europe' (Geddes 2000; Ferrer-Gallardo and Van Houtum 2014) or 'gated community' (Van Houtum and Pijpers, 2007), alluding to the intense militarization and fencing out of EU territorial borders.

[4] Other terms have also been used to refer to this process such as 'external dimension' (Boswell 2003, 2005), 'external governance' (Lavenex and Uçarer, 2002, 2004; Lavenex, 2006) and 'extra-territorialisation' (Rijpma and Cremona, 2007).

[5] It is important to punctuate that these categories are not fixed and might be inaccurate in some cases, since some countries considered in this research are, or are being transformed into, countries of immigration. However, I am interested in these countries as they are perceived and framed within these categories in the context of the development and implementation of EU external migration policies.

[6] The postcolonial debate shaping North-South Mediterranean relations is longstanding (Pace and Roccu, 2020; Salem, 2020). Within migration studies, there has been a growing impetus to include the postcolonial approach (Nair, 2013; ODwyer, 2018), however, within most scholarly discussions on Mediterranean migration studies this framework is still not enough present There is, however, a resurge of this debate today, in part due to the way the Black Lives Matters movement is penetrating in Europe (Stone, 2020).

2020; Fernández-Molina, 2018). However, at the same time they are also marked by a 'high asymmetrical interdependence', meaning that in case the relation was broken, both parties would incur in high costs (Aghrout, 2000). For this reason, to understand the dynamics behind the process of externalization towards SMCs, it is important to bear in mind the broad policy and political context within which these relations develop.

1.1.1 Policy context: between inducing collaboration and negotiating compliance.

The externalization of EU migration policies is mostly known for being complex and multifaceted, involving a range of policies and practices designed to prevent or stop migrants from leaving third countries and reaching European territory. Within the process of externalization authors have mainly identified two distinct approaches: the 'root-cause' and the 'remote-control' (Boswell, 2003; 2005; Zapata-Barrero, 2013; Yildiz, 2016). The first one, remote-control approach, is a security-based, short-term, and reactive approach, which aims mainly at curbing and controlling migratory flows through 'externalizing traditional tools of control' (Gabrielli, 2011; Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2006), which include: border control, construction of detention centres, offshore processing systems, visa checks prior to departure, readmission agreements, safe third country rules. The root-causes approach, on the other hand, is a preventive and long-term strategy that aims to shape people's decision to move as well as their destination through improving the living conditions in the countries of origin (Boswell, 2003; Brochmann, 2004). Policies within this approach aim at addressing the drivers of migration, such as development aid, refugee protection and conflict prevention (Stock et al, 2019).

Despite the great variety of approaches and instruments, one facet these policies have in common is that they rely largely on a work of 'collaboration' or 'joint ownership' between the EU and countries of origin and transit of migration. This means that their development and implementation presuppose the creation of policy tools, cooperation frameworks and spaces of dialogue between the EU and SMCs. Most importantly, the EU needs instruments and means, levers and incentives, for co-opting these states to engage in activities of border control and migration management. A frequent tool used by the EU

to induce compliance is conditionality — a model of external incentive that works through a strategy of reinforcement by reward, such as membership[7], financial and technical aid, conclusion of cooperation agreements etc. (Lavenex and Uçarer, 2004). Thus, in the most common scenario, the EU exploits its authoritative (advantageous) position, mainly in terms of material power, vis-à-vis SMCs and offers incentives to acquire compliance.

Both the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)[8], contain an inherent element of conditionality: the '*more for more*' approach. In this sense, the EU may promise financial and technical assistance, material donation as well as development aid in exchange for collaboration with migration control. In general, monetary offers seem to be one of the most important incentives provided by the EU (Migreurop, 2017). Apart from financial aid, the EU might also offer Mobility Partnerships[9], which is in fact considered as "one of the most lucrative EU offers for the 'good performers'" (Völkel, 2014). The main idea behind this initiative is rewarding countries of origin and transit with visa waivers (Visa Facilitation) in exchange for collaboration in migration control and mainly in readmitting citizens that entered the EU irregularly (Readmission Agreements) (Trauner and Kruse, 2008).

In addition, specifically regarding the negotiation of Readmission Agreements, the EU may also impose sanctions on countries that refuse to cooperate (Ibid), such as reducing financial assistance. This possibility was further confirmed by the launching of the European Agenda for Migration in 2015, which foresees imposing sanctions on uncooperative states (Commission, 2015). In general, the EU follows a 'carrot and stick' strategy, alternating 'bribery and blackmail', to induce third countries to host measures and undertake migration controls on its behalf (Webber, 2017).

However, the existence of conditionality, rewards and sanctions imposed unilaterally by the EU, does not imply that SMCs compliance is easy, straightforward, or even assured.

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[7] A particularity of Euro-Med cooperation is that EU membership is not an option to be offered as a reward.
[8] These are two of the most important overarching policy frameworks for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on migration issues.
[9] So far, only Morocco (2013) and Tunisia (2014) have been granted with such a partnership in the region. Despite that, the literature calls attention to the fact that promises attached to Visa Facilitation agreements were never fulfilled.

On the contrary, the development and implementation of EU external migration policies is closer to a 'border gaming' than 'policy transference'. It involves a considerable level of bargaining and negotiation, that is, a constant struggle of power, in which several geopolitical, diplomatic, and domestic variables play a role. In fact, as underlined by Zaragoza-Cristiani (2016), third countries' domestic preferences and interests are key determinants of their willingness to cooperate or not with the EU, and they usually have a "broad range of asks" (Castillejos, 2016). Thus, third countries are not simply receptors and executors of EU policies but rather play an active role in the definition of EU external migration policies (El Qadim, 2010).

Overall, if in principle such collaboration would be based on an attempt to construct a 'common' or 'burden-sharing' approach, some authors highlight that instead of "sharing the burden" of migration control, the EU is more likely to be "shifting the burden" towards these countries (Yildiz, 2016, p.81). This would be mainly because cost and risks seem to be much higher for third countries. Moreover, it has been argued that sometimes these policies appear to be basically serving EU interests (Ibid), which is problematic considering that neighbouring countries are not only passive actors and recipients of policy proposals, having interests of their own as well as agency (Reslow, 2012; El Qadim, 2015).

Despite the differences that might exist between EU and neighbouring countries interests, as Cassarino (2005, p.226) articulated it: "[…] the growing externalisation of the EU migration and asylum policy has been gradually conducive to the emergence of unprecedented forms of interconnectedness between the EU and MNCs [Mediterranean non-member countries]". In fact, due to this policy process the relations among these actors have been transformed and new variables have been introduced into the political game. Migration has become a key theme of Euro-Mediterranean affairs, altering and conditioning the relations between actors along the two shores. Therefore, the consolidation of the externalization as EU dominant paradigm for dealing with migratory flows represent an important shift not only in terms of migration management but also EU foreign policy towards, and its relationship with, its Southern neighbours – confirming the idea that border externalization has geopolitical implications (Lemberg-

Pedersen 2017). Most importantly, SMCs became key players in EU external migration policy (Reslow, 2012), which seems to have turned out to be a crucial variable for their internal and external relations.

1.1.2 Political contexts: between promoting democracy and controlling migration.

The Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood is mainly characterized by a general lack of democratic governance (Pace 2009) or put in another way, by a persistence of authoritarianism (Szmolka, 2017). Most countries of origin and transit in the region, except for Tunisia[10], are classified as non-democratic when considering the data from the most prestigious indexes measuring democracy worldwide (see Table 1).

Table 1. 1 Status of democracy in the Southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood

Country/Index	Freedom House (2019)	EIU Democracy Index (2018)	Polity IV score* (2016)
Algeria	34/100 (Not Free)	3.50 (Authoritarian Regime)	2
Morocco	39/100 (Partially Free)	4.99 (Hybrid Regime)	-4
Tunisia	69/100 (Free)	6.41 (Flawed Democracy)	7
Libya	9/100 (Not Free)	2.19 (Authoritarian Regime)	-77*
Egypt	22/100 (Not Free)	3.36 (Authoritarian Regime)	-4

Freedom House: aggregated score ranges from 0 (least free) to 100 (most free). It also gives a status: not free, partially free and not free. *EIU Democracy Index:* scores are on scale of 0-10, ranging from the most authoritarian to the most democratic. *Polity IV*: The score of Polity IV includes many indicators. I chose to display the POLITY score, which is computed by subtracting the AUTOC score from the DEMOC score; the resulting unified polity scale ranges from +10 (strongly democratic) to -10 (strongly autocratic). *This code indicates an 'interregunum' period, which indicates a period of anarchy, of foreign policy intervention to re-establish political order.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Moreover, all these countries have experienced important processes of political transformation in the last decades, which had its apex around the Arab Uprisings. Despite the initial optimism brought by these events, some authors argue that there has been no wave of democratisation in the region afterwards, but rather 'ebbs and flows' of a 'wave

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[10] Out of these countries only Tunisia is considered to have successfully transited towards a democratic regime after the Arab Uprisings.

of political change' (Szmolka, 2017). Authors point out that, it is in general too soon to classify some transitions as successes (Tunisia) or others as failures (Egypt) (Bauer, 2015). Moreover, there is also the case of Morocco and Algeria, which were able to contain the minor democratizing tendencies that erupted with protests (Seeberg, 2015). Finally, the case of Libya is by far the most exceptional as with the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime the country slipped into a civil war that is technically ongoing.

Regardless of outcomes, the political events indicated signs, or at least created expectations of political transition and democratization (Pace, 2009), both within these countries and the wider international community. Moreover, it certainly represented a crucial moment for the population, which against the outdated belief that Arab societies are inherently illiberal and antidemocratic (Pace and Cavatorta, 2012), could demonstrate that Southern Mediterranean societies wish for functioning democratic systems (Dandashly, 2019). Something that has not faded away since there still persists a high level of political and social unrest within the region (as can clearly be seen by the protests in the Rif region of Morocco in 2016-17 and the upheavals in Algeria throughout 2019).

Since democracy is a basic principle upon which the EU is founded and a core feature of its internal and external identity, EU foreign policy towards its southern Mediterranean neighbourhood is guided by a strong normative component and democracy is an 'essential-element' at the core of policies and agreements vis-à-vis these region (Baracani 2005; Cassarino, 2012; Hollis, 2012; Pace, 2014). In fact, throughout the last decades, the EU has become a key and active actor of democracy promotion (Manners, 2002). As a result, the EU has developed several foreign policy instruments promote democracy towards the region, such as (just to mention few) the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in 1994, the European Neighbourhood Partnership (ENP) in 2004, the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity (PDSP) and the European Endowment for Democracy (EDD), both in 2011. Currently, EU external action on the field is guided by the "EU strategic framework for action plan on human rights and democracy".

Despite the existence of all these tools, in general most research appoint to a gap between EU pro-democracy rhetoric and practice (Bicchi, 2009, 2010; Dimitrovova, 2010; Kostanyan, 2017). In other words, there is broad consensus around the idea that although democracy has been highly present in the EU official discourse it has done little in practice to advance it. The lack of success related to the advancement of EU normative roles and goals in the southern neighbourhood has been related to inherent paradoxes and contradictions of EU policies (Crawford, 2015; Pace, 2009). Authors argue that EU policy lacks coherence and that the intersection with other policy fields comes at the expense of EU democratizing objectives (Abdalla, 2016). In general, they consider that EU normative goals clashes with its realist's self-interests, which means that security, political stability, migration, as well as commercial and energy interests, end up being placed over the goal of promoting political reform (Youngs, 2001, 2009; Crawford, 2015; Noutcheva, 2015). The literature indicates that EU priorities are being placed in areas that differ from democratization.

As a result, most studies indicate that the promotion of democracy towards the Mediterranean neighbourhood has broadly failed (Youngs, 2001; Bicchi, 2010), being in general and in the best case a 'very slow work in progress' (Pace, 2009). Surprisingly, though, according to the 9th Euromed Survey, the promotion of democracy (rule of law and good governance) is perceived as the most important dimension of SMCs' relationship with the EU (Dandashly, 2018). This means that despite its poor performance, the EU still holds a certain credibility and is still perceived as the most attractive player in the region (Ibid).

The 'Arab uprisings' in 2011 represented a crucial moment. Apart from the obvious consequences that they brought to the internal political context of SMCs, it has also made the context of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, mainly in terms of migration, even more complex (Bauer, 2015). As a result, these developments posed new challenges for the EU foreign policy and its relations with its neighbourhood, raising many questions concerning the involvement of the EU in the region and the consequence of its external action towards SMCs and their processes of political change (Börzel et al, 2015).

On the one hand, the Arab uprisings presented itself as an opportunity for the EU to reconfigure its strategy towards its neighbourhood. This is mainly because such events exposed the failures of EU policies (Pace, 2014, p.22) in relation to its capacity of bringing about change in the region (Abdalla, 2016). Thus, these events marked the "re-launch of EU 'normative ambitions' for the Arab countries" (Seeberg, 2015, p.41; Bauer, 2015), since the paradigmatic approach did not seem to work anymore in a context characterized by increased complexity and unpredictability (Ibid). The EU had to face a context in which complex power relations were emerging, and to deal with new actors, some of which were democratically elected and others that were struggling to guarantee their survival (Seeberg, 2015).

On the other hand, these events made the region more unstable and insecure (Seeberg, 2013). This new context has been linked to the significant rise in population movements mainly within the region but also towards Europe in a context characterized by insufficient or even lack of border controls (Ibid), leading to what has been mainly referred to as the 'EU migration crisis' after the pick of arrivals during 2015[11]. Confronted with this unexpected setting, the EU reaction was to continue its cooperation with countries in the region in terms of migration control (Trauner and Cassarino, 2018), instrumentalizing the 'EU migration crisis' to deepen even more the scope and reach of its external migration policies in SMCs. In fact, the launch of the European Agenda on Migration in the uprisings of 2015 and of the hotspot approach in the autumn of 2015 indicated that a 'hardline outlook' was being promoted at the institutional level (Maccanico, 2020). The approval of the EU Trust Fund for Africa in this same year also followed the EU necessity to have new tools and approve new agreements with countries of origin and transit.

Therefore, mainly after the 'Arab Uprisings', migration gained growing centrality in Euro-Mediterranean relations (Dandashly, 2015), even "pushing aside, or affecting

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[11] The relation between the Arab Uprisings and increased migration flows is contested (Awad, 2020). However, according to Greenhill (2016, p.318), the important element here is not raw numbers but "the potential power of unregulated migration to make people and governments feel insecure and under threat". However, calling it a 'crisis' is considered problematic and is usually implemented to justify exceptional measures (Garces-Mascareñas, 2016).

cooperation in many policy areas" (Abderrahim, 2018), mainly democracy promotion. At the same time, these events elucidated the structural problems faced by most countries in the region: the lack of democratization, the endurance of autocratic regimes and high political instability. The fact that EU external migration policies develop in such a context should not be neglected. Even more if considering EU foreign policy normative commitment with the promotion of democratic values. This indicates that migration policies and democratization processes are two central issues of Euro-Mediterranean relations that are likely to have a complex and intricate linkage. However, despite the complex, undemocratic or even conflictive political contexts within which these countries are embedded, after more than twenty years of continuous externalization little is known about the links between this process policies and the democratization of SMCs – neither regarding EU narratives nor about the actual policy implications on the ground. And it is precisely at the intersection and interrelation between these two policy fields that this thesis' research puzzle is placed.

1.2 Research Questions and Goals: Nexus as a Focus of Analysis

This thesis is inspired and motivated by the idea that there are two policy and political processes that are central in the context of Euro-Mediterranean relations: on one hand, the development of EU External Migration Policies and the consequent involvement of SMCs in its implementation, and on the other, the processes of democratization and political transformation going within countries in the region (or the lack of it). Most importantly, it is built upon the assumption that there is a nexus – a connection, a link – between these processes that far from being straightforward and uncontested is likely to be complex, nuanced, and multifaceted and for these reasons ought to be further explored. Nevertheless, despite their policy and political relevance, the literature has paid scarce attention as to how these policy fields intertwine. There is, of course, a great amount of accumulated knowledge about these fields, but they have remained mostly as two parallel debates. This research aims to extract the focus out of each individual field to focus on the nexus between them, bridging the two branches of literature.

This is not to say that the linkages between migration and democracy or democratization have been ignored by the scholarly. In fact, such links have been explored in works on 'political remittances' (Piper 2009), migrants as political actors (Itzigsohn and Villacrés, 2008) and agents of democratization (Kessler and Rother 2016; Rother, 2016) as well as in studies that analyse the role of 'diaspora politics' (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a) and 'migrants' transnational political practices' (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b, Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei, 2018). However, even if such a connection has been established in these works, it has been restricted to the micro-level and has not considered the linkage between migration policies and democratization as two macro processes of international affairs. This means that, in broader terms, such a nexus remains under-researched. This becomes even more evident when comparing it to the pairing of other policy fields equally relevant within Euro-Mediterranean relations and migration policymaking.

The academic debate about EU external migration policies, for example, has revolved mainly around the axis migration-development (Van Hear and Nyberg Sørensen, 2003; Piper, 2008; Lavenex and Kunz, 2008; Eylemer and Semsit, 2007; Nyberg Sørensen, 2012; Wise, 2018; Pinyol-Jiménez, 2012) and migration-security nexus (Faist, 2006; Pinyol-Jiménez, 2012; Fakhoury, 2016) and the tensions inherent to their articulation. Recently, the debate regarding the migration-climate change nexus (Thalheimer and Webersik, 2020) also seems to have been growing in importance within this field. Even though democracy and democratization appear to be an important pillar of EU external migration policies under the '*root-causes*' approach – since the structural conditions of countries of origin are believed to work as push-factors for migration – the debate about the migration-democratization nexus in this context has been either side-lined by the security approach or subsumed into the developmental debate. In any case, it has not succeeded in being considered as an object of analysis within this field of study.

Within the field of Mediterranean politics, the dominant debate has been, by far, about the security-stability nexus (Roccu and Voltolini, 2018; Dandashly, 2018), which is believed to be the master frame shaping the EU's approach towards the Southern Mediterranean affecting different policy areas. The security-development nexus has also been considered as relevant for policymaking in a global sense (Stern and Öjendal, 2010),

and for the EU external action in specific (Smith, 2013, Gänzle, 2012). Once again, the debate seems to revolve around security, stability, and development, leaving the pairing of migration policies and democratization in the margins of discussions.

As it can be perceived, the idea of 'nexuses' has become commonplace in national, regional, and global policymaking (Sørensen-Nyberg, 2012, p.63), leading to the pairing and analysis of different policy fields. This means that the notion of "nexus" here is taken as the focus of analysis. According to Stern and Öjendal (2010) the idea of "nexus" seems to provide a policy framework for acutely needed progressive policies designed to address current complex policy challenges. Stern and Öjendal (2010, p.6-7) suggest seeing the pairing of policy fields as: (1) the tools of scholars and policy analysts, utilized for describing and analysing macro processes in international affairs and for generating knowledge; (2) the concepts used by various actors in attempts to prescribe processes and determine outcomes; and (3) discursive constructions producing the realities that they seem to reflect, and thus serving certain purposes and interests.

Therefore, the main research question that this thesis aims to answer is the following: what is the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs? In other words, to what extent and in which ways have these macro processes in international affairs been related? Its main goal consists of analysing the migration policies-democratization nexus, providing theoretical insights, analytical tools, and empirical evidence on the topic – placing it within the research agenda of migration policymaking and Mediterranean politics alongside the other nexuses mentioned above. Specifically, it aims to unfold and expose the relations that emerge and are constructed between these two policy fields and the mechanisms behind them at different levels of analysis, as will be detailed in the research design session.

This approach is considered as an added value for the current state of research for three main reasons, two empirical and one normative. Firstly, this research expects to engage and contribute to the growing literature around EU external migration policies impacts on third countries, and in particular the stream of research that claims the need to incorporate a systemic view of the analysis of externalization effects on these actors. That

is, to those that defend the imperative of analysing any positive/negative, long-term/short-term, and unintended political, economic, and social effect of these policies to the specific contexts where they are being enforced (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2017; Burlyuk, 2017; Concord, 2018; Andersson and Keen, 2019). This is mainly because the effects of externalization are likely to go far beyond migration management (Stock et al, 2019).

Secondly, since both migration control and democratization are essential components of EU foreign policy directed towards its neighbourhood this work could contribute to the debates and concerns related to horizontal coherence in EU external policy, that is, about the consistency among EU different policies, objectives, and instruments. On the one hand, the literature has been overwhelmingly critical about the lack of horizontal coherence of EU's policy vis-à-vis the neighbourhood, since objectives and instruments do not seem to mutually reinforce each other (Kostanyan, 2017). On the other hand, authors mention the complex nature of international migration and its sensitivity to interactions with other policy areas (Wunderlich, 2013), which should represent a challenge for policy coherence in the field. In this sense, the research proposed would allow for further inquiry into the effects of EU external migration policies on other areas of cooperation, in this case, EU democracy promotion. Ultimately, then, it could help further understanding the shortcomings and/or advancements of the EU when it comes to its influence as an actor exporting and supporting democracy in its neighbourhood.

Thirdly, apart from the analytical and empirical contributions, this thesis has potential contribution to a normative debate. In fact, this thesis' research questions are inspired and motivated by a normative assumption, in particular the idea that democracy is currently accepted as the best system for states and societies, being a desirable outcome that all countries should wish for. This belief is also shared by the EU since democracy is one of the Unions fundamental values, that it aspires to promote both internally and externally. This does not imply, however, that the type of democracy that other populations aspire/need and the one that the EU promotes/support are always and necessarily the same. Therefore, this thesis provides an opportunity for contributing to the EU normative agenda by enquiring how EU migration policies fit into this long-lasting debate.

Finally, I argue that this research has the potential to providing a contribution beyond the field of migration studies, in particular to contribute both empirically and theoretically to the fields of EU external action, democratization and Euro-Mediterranean politics. In fact, this work presents itself as a proposition for looking beyond the migration field and dialoguing with other disciplines, mainly international relations, and learning how they can contribute to migration studies and vice-versa.

1.3 The 'What': Defining Analytical Choices and Concepts

Before moving on to explain the theoretical framework, methodology and the three articles that will make up the thesis, it is important to justify two main analytical choices and clarify the main concepts that permeate the entire research.

1.3.1 The EU as a supranational actor

It is important to underline that even though EU external migration policies have been carried out by EU member states unilaterally, our analysis is mainly constricted to the EU as an international actor. The EU has been recognized in the literature – although not without controversies – as an international actor, a "partial superpower", which exercises state functions, changing and influencing the world order (Hill et al, 2017). Mainly, the notion of the EU as a power is related to its capacity of having an impact either unintentional or deliberate (through active foreign policy) on other actors within the international system (ibid). Moreover, this impact is not only related to EU material power but also to its capacity of extending rules and governance towards third countries (Lavenex and Uçarer, 2004). The EU has also been considered and considers itself as an important and influential actor particularly when it comes to the promotion of values such as democracy and human rights (Meyer, 2007). Therefore, even if acknowledging its non-monolithic nature (Collyer, 2016), in this research I take EU external migration policies as developed and implemented by the EU as a supranational actor, with capacity of influencing the international system, negotiating, and inflicting change. This does not mean, however, that the EU has only be treated as a unified block nor that actors within it have been completely disregarded. On the contrary, when relevant, and information was

available, the role of other actors such as EU institutional bodies and member states have been considered and discussed in the analysis.

1.3.2 The Southern Mediterranean as a subregion

While acknowledging that externalization is a broad strategy targeting many actors, such as candidate countries (e.g., Turkey) and other partner countries (e.g., Russia), the scope of the analysis has been narrowed down to the policies directed towards the European neighbourhood, and specifically Southern Mediterranean countries. This area, together with the countries from the Eastern Partnership[12], has been, and continues to be, a priority in terms of EU external migration policies, being the geographical space where most efforts have been concentrated, both politically and financially (European Commission, 2011). Although the region also includes Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel (Middle States), here we will not be considering these countries since the regional dynamics that operate within them are very specific, such as the conflict in Syria and the conflict between Palestine and Israel, which have had a significant impact on their migration system. Thus, here we focus on the Mediterranean subregion that encompasses the countries of Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia. The idea of Mediterranean subregion (Seeberg, 2017) evokes the geopolitical notion that the countries pertaining to it share certain features and dynamics mainly in terms of migration and the role they play vis-à-vis the EU.

1.3.3 EU external migration policies

EU External migration policies is the most common term used by the EU to refer to those migration policies that fall under the scope of EU external action. In most cases, they are, implemented beyond EU formally constituted borders or at least intended to produce effects beyond this scope (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2017). As mentioned above, these policies are associated with a process that has been mainly referred to by the literature as 'externalization'. Although broadly used, there is some debate in the literature concerning

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[12] Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

the limits and adequacy of this term, since it mostly implies a top-down process and downgrades the agency of third countries. Therefore, I give preference to using the term EU external migration policies, which does not imply that this term is neutral either. However, the concept externalization is also applied on some occasions since even if contested, this term has been broadly used by the literature, policymakers, and the press (Stock et al, 2019).

Beyond the terminology used, what is important to clarify is how this process is conceptualized here. Following Lemberg-Pedersen (2017, p.40) definition, 'externalization' refers to a complex and multifaceted policy process "whereby some states utilize their political and economic power to initiate the extraterritorial export of their migration control priorities, while other states, more or less willingly, accept to host such measures". According to Stock et al (2019, p.3), it is "best conceptualised as a set of policies and practices generative of specific social mechanisms". In this sense, it should be seen as a process that is composed of different narratives and discourse, a broad range of state and non-actors, practices and regulations. However, even if composed by different practices, the 'externalization' is conceived as an international practice in and of itself (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2017), since the conjunction of different practices and social relations that emerge from it may be different if considered individually.

Finally, it is important to understand that the 'externalization' is the result of power relations and struggles among a multiplicity of actors that go beyond national actors, such as ministries, bureaucratic networks, or courts as well as by non-national actors, supranational entities like the EU, international NGOs or global military and security industrial companies (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2017). Therefore, far from the idea of 'policy transference' the development and implementation of external migration policies is better framed as a 'battlefield', "in which different actors are positioning themselves in order to gain access and control over mobility and resources, settlement and its governance" (Stock et al 2019, p.4). And what is most important to bear in mind, "In these battles, it is not always the traditional destination states in the Global North who are succeeding eventually in accumulating power over (im)mobility" (Ibid, p.5).

1.3.4 Democratization

In simple terms, democratization refers to the process through which countries change from a non-democratic political regime to a democratic one (Dahl, 1971; Huntington, 1991; Whitehead, 2001). For some time, it used to be characterized as a linear process comprising three main consecutive stages: liberalization, transition, and consolidation (Pridham, 1995). However, even in the 2000's, the idea that any country moving away from autocracy was 'in transition' towards democracy – the transition paradigm – lost momentum (Carothers, 2002). This was mainly due to the persistence of authoritarianism observed during the Third Wave, appointing to the necessity of explaining continuity and not only change. Within this context, the authoritarian resilience paradigm gained impetus, turning the focus to the mechanisms that permitted rulers (mainly in the MENA region) to survive and keep their hold on power (Cavatorta, 2010) for a remarkable amount of time (Burnell and Schlumberger, 2010).

Such focus on authoritarian resilience began to be questioned by the time of the Arab Uprisings. Despite not delivering the expected results, such events accentuate the fact that social-political changes have occurred in the region with a considerable impact on governance. In other words, they indicated that there was change within the continuity and brought the discussion on democratization back to the table. In general, the literature seems to have "oscillated from democracy-spotting to studying authoritarian persistence" (Cavatorta, 2010, p.219). Moreover, both paradigms seem to have shortcomings, with neither being capable (on their own) of predicting and explaining events such as the Arab Uprisings (Cavatorta, 2015).

Considering this, here democratization is conceptualized as a non-linear (Brown, 2011), long-term and macro-systemic process (Risse and Babayan, 2015). It is conceived as a movement in a continuum, from which the optimum outcome is a transition to democracy, but not the only one possible, since it could also lead to processes of "de-democratization" (Tilly, 2007) and a transition towards new forms of government (i.e., liberalized autocracies) (Escribà-Folch and Wright, 2015). Thus, democratization refers to an ongoing process of political transformation that aims at democracy but "can go backwards

and sideways as much as forward, and do not do so in any regular manner' (Carothers, 2002, p. 15). This implies assuming that between democracy and autocracies there would be a grey zone of different political regimes, such as hybrid regimes[13] (Hinnebusch, 2015), and several processes of political change (Szmolka, 2015).

Finally, this research is guided by the assumption that there is a linkage between EU external migration policies (an external variable) and the democratization of 'sending and transit' SMCs (mainly conceived as an internal process). Thus, a final premise attached to this concept is the relevance of the international context for the establishment of democracies (Huntington, 1991; Pridham, 1995; Whitehead, 2001; Brown, 2011). Although democratization is mostly perceived as a "domestic affair par excellence" (Schmitter, 2004, p.27), since it involves power transference across political actors and elites, the literature has increasingly acknowledged the importance and effect of the international dimension on impeding or enhancing democratization processes (Yilmaz, 2002; Levitsky and Way, 2005, 2006, 2010; Tolstrup, 2009, 2013; Hill, 2016; Teorell, 2010). This means that democratization is conceived as a process connected to international politics and policies.

1.4 Theoretical framework: moving towards a multidimensional, interdisciplinary, and decentralized framework

Following the main logic guiding this thesis, which ultimately aims at bridging two policy fields and literatures (EU external migration policies and democratization), its overall theoretical framework is also inspired and guided by such intersection and expects to provide theoretical insights and contributions to both literatures. In the next two subsections I summarize the main theoretical gaps and challenges this research presents as well as the path chosen to overcome and move beyond them in order to answer the proposed questions.

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[13] Many authors agree that hybrid regimes, also known as authoritarian-democratic hybrid (Stepan and Linz, 2013) or competitive authoritarian (Levitsky and Way, 2010) constitute a fourth basic regime type alongside with democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian regimes (Hinnebusch, 2015), being a very common political condition.

1.4.1 Studying EU external migration policy impacts: theoretical gaps and challenges

First, it is important to underline that this research is mainly framed within the debate about EU external migration policies and, above all, the discussions and theories about its impacts on countries of origin and transit of migration. Since the external dimension of EU migration policies was formally announced in 1999, during the European Tampere Council, scholars from different fields (mainly European, law and regional studies) started analysing and questioning the effects of this paradigm change within their respective knowledge area (Boswell 2003; Lavenex and Uçarer 2004; Gammeltoft-Hansen 2006; Trauner 2011).

The classic theoretical debate has revolved around how this process presupposes the deployment of efforts to manage the flows not through controlling the border but through moving the "border" more and more far away from the EU territory. Such discussions have been broadly moulded by concepts such as Zolberg's (1999) notion of "policies of remote control", which until today is evoked when referring to these policies. Likewise, at least in a first moment, researchers have been broadly concerned with understanding the consequences of this innovative way of thinking about borders and migration management to the fields of EU politics and policies. Mainly, they have provided explanations of how externalization, as a policy process, consisted of moving the "border" *upward*, towards the realm of EU policymaking (Guiraudon, 2000) and *outward*, towards the realm of EU foreign relations (Lavenex 2006). This means that, to a certain extent, the debate around EU external migration policies impacts has been highly Eurocentric, since efforts have been concentrated mainly on analysing their impacts on the EU, its member states and institutions, that is, on the countries of reception, who are designing and implementing the policies (Ardittis and Laczko 2008) and not on the countries of origin and destination, who are overwhelmingly hosting them.

Third countries started to be included in the debate mainly by those works that focused on the process of externalization in terms of transference of responsibility and extension of policy and governance towards these new actors (Adepoju *et al*, 2009; Casas *et al*,

2011; Zapata-Barrero, 2013). Researchers have been dedicated to understanding such impacts through applying theoretical frameworks such as 'external governance' (Lavenex and Uçarer, 2004), 'Europeanization beyond the EU' (Schimmelfennig, 2012) and 'external horizontal differentiation' (Schimmelfennig et al, 2015) – or combination of them (Yildiz, 2016). Even though this literature brings third countries into the debate, it could be argued that it still holds a Eurocentric approach since its main concern is with the degree to which policies have been efficient in extending EU governance, values and institutions while disregarding local actor's agency, and the appropriateness and outcomes of policies to their specific contexts (Wunderlich, 2010). Thus, even when third countries have been considered as an object of analysis, the focus has been mostly restricted to the perspective of the EU and its member states.

Such critic is also tightly related to the difficulty in moving beyond the effectiveness framework, that is, beyond framing the subject in terms of success or failure, which seems to be a common occurrence in the field of EU external performance (Tömmel, 2013; Burlyuk, 2017), and in the field of migration policies in particular (Czaika and de Haas, 2013). Apart from misleading (Prestianni, 2018; Andersson and Keen, 2019), the biggest problem with this focus seems to be the tendency to neglect policies' broader effects and particularly their unintended consequences (Burlyuk, 2017). In fact, when some evidence is presented, they overwhelmingly appoint to the negative outcomes these policies produce in terms of migrants' lives (Spijkerboer, 2007; Gabrielli, 2014; Fargues and Di Bartolomeu, 2015), rights (Lutterbeck, 2006; Ceyhan, 2002) and livelihoods (Maccanico, 2020). Even though highly revealing, these findings are still restricted to the micro-level and the short-term, which means that they have important limitations, mainly in what concerns the level of analysis.

On the one hand, these limitations might be related to an intrinsic difficulty in proving a link of causality between a policy and its unintended effects and of isolating the impact of a certain foreign policy, since both domestic actors and structural context might influence the outcome. This means that it can be a great challenge to define 'if and how' EU external migration policies are responsible for a certain impact on third countries (Yildiz, 2016, p.19). On the other hand, the fact that especially political scientists have

arrived late to the debate on EU external migration policies might explain the lack of theoretical tools to advance knowledge on the topic. In general, migration has been broadly disregarded by other policy fields such as international relations and comparative politics, partially for being considered for a long time as a matter of low politics (Mitchel, 2012). After the 11 September 2001 attacks, however, migration gained increasing attention from IR scholars, mainly for becoming a matter of high politics in the global security agenda (Ibid). Such change of status was also perceived in the Euro-Mediterranean context, where migration started to be broadly included by political scientists in their studies about the region's policies and politics, not only empirically but also theoretically.

Therefore, the present study aims to engage with this growing literature on EU external migration and contribute to advance the knowledge on their impacts on countries of origin and transit in the southern Mediterranean neighbourhood. Most importantly, it aims at overcoming the current theoretical limitations and broadening the possibilities of studying the effects of these policies on the *meso* and macro levels and how it overlaps with other areas of study, in this case, democratization. It does so by leaving behind the mostly restrictive, unidimensional, and Eurocentric framework that has guided most research so far and moving towards a multidimensional, interdisciplinary, and decentralized framework.

1.4.2 Disentangling the migration-democratization nexus: incorporating policy narratives, practices and local stakeholders' perspectives

This thesis' theoretical framework is broadly guided by three main conceptual and analytical assumptions that have been already discussed in previous sessions: (1) that the EU external migration policy is a complex policy process, (2) that both EU external migration policies and democratization are tightly connect to international politics and (3) that EU external action is typically Eurocentric, particularly towards its 'neighbourhood' (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, 2020). Hence, to disentangle the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs I resort to a multidimensional, interdisciplinary, and decentred framework that looks at the research

puzzle through distinct perspectives. Apart from complexifying the analysis and expanding our knowledge on the subject, I argue that such a framework allows overcoming, at least partially, the Eurocentrism embedded in most analysis of EU policies and engagement with its neighbourhood.

On the one side, this multidimensional perspective is inspired by the idea – broadly accepted in the field of public policy analysis – that the policy process is a messy and complex political process, in which actors with different values, policy interests and narratives, perceptions and beliefs that interact over time (Sabatier, 2018). On the other side, it is also motivated by the hypothesis raised by many authors in the field of EU external action that a gap would exist between EU rhetoric and the reality unfolding on the ground, that is, between policy discourses/narratives and policy outcomes/effects (Bicchi, 2009, 2010; Dimitrova, 2010; Kostanyan, 2017). A gap that is likely to be connected to the lack of reflexivity regarding EU colonial past and its legacies on EU external action, which would also work towards diminishing the Union's normative resonance and its functional efficiency (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, 2013; 2015).

Both notions would be particularly acute in the case of migration policymaking (Völkel, 2014; Fernandéz-Molina and De Larramedi, 2020), which many times intents to conciliate competing values, interests, and objectives (Boswell and Geddes, 2011). As a result, policies in this field tend to be seen as incoherent and ambiguous, and on occasion, even as a failure (Czaika and de Haas, 2013). In addition, the distinction between policy effectiveness and effect provided by Czaika and de Haas (2013, p.6) comes at high value for the multidimensional perspective pursued here, according to them:

> "the key difference between effectiveness and effect is that the former is linked to a desired effect and the latter to the actual (objective, descriptive) effect. Thus, the term 'effectiveness' makes a relation to policy objectives, and thus adds an evaluative and, hence, inherently subjective dimension to the analysis of the 'effects' of migration polices. So, a policy may have an effect, but this effect may be judged as too small to sufficiently meet the stated policy objective or may even be in the opposite direction to the intended effect".

Most importantly, these authors claim that for assessing the character and effectiveness of immigration policies, an analytical distinction should be made between policy discourses, policies on paper, policy implementation and policy impacts.

Finally, although this thesis does not engage systematically with post-colonialism in both analytical and normative ways, it does have a decentring theoretical and empirical ambition, one that intends to move the policy analysis towards a less Euro-centric and state-centric approach. Moving in this direction implies considering the reactions and perceptions of the different actors involved in migration policymaking, mainly to whom such action is directed (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, 2020), that is, those in countries of origin and transit of migration (Stock et al, 2019). This is deemed even more necessary if considering that EU external migration policies are accused of being broadly unilateral and top-down, disregarding key stakeholders in the target countries (Pastore and Roman, 2019).

Therefore, and following the main theoretical insights about the policy process provided above, I incorporate three levels of analysis to assess the nexus between EU external migration policies and democratization of SMCs: (a) policy narratives, (b) policy practices and (c) local stakeholders' perspectives. These layers have been chosen for its increased relevance in the fields of policy analysis and international relations and mainly for its capacity of revealing how these macro policy processes of international affairs have been related at different and complementary levels of analysis.

The focus on policy narratives is related with its acknowledged centrality within the policy process. Mainly with the argumentative turn in the field of policy analysis, researchers started to pay special attention to the role of concepts and storylines in framing the policy process (Brock et al, 2001). Policy narratives (Roe 1994), as a type of story, has been increasingly considered in policy analysis for its capacity of providing an understanding of policy problems and their configuration. Moreover, apart from having the potential to disclose actors' beliefs and assumptions about such 'problems', narratives have gained increased centrality within the field of international politics for its relationship with international actor's identities (Sommers, 1994; Johansson-Nogués,

2018). In other words, for its capacity of revealing how the articulation of narratives is important for the construction of the self and of the other and to the project of an identity internationally. Therefore, far from being mere rhetorical artifacts, narratives are considered here for their capacity of shaping the policy process, international actor's identities and producing real material consequences (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). Besides, such an inclusion makes even more sense considering the normative facet of this work.

This work focuses on policy practices, that is, on the policy implementation and its consequences on the ground, is to a large extent related to the comparative perspective it provides sided with a narrative analysis. The discussion about policy rhetoric *versus* policy outcomes in the field of EU external action has been a long and consolidated one and introducing this dimension would be a necessary step for making a worthwhile contribution to the topic. This focus is also related to the recent 'practice turn' in IR (Cornut, 2015). According to this trend, research in IR should emphasise the process rather than statis and provide an understanding of the world as performative and anchored in the material underpinnings of the social (Bueger and Gadinger 2015). Such facets, apart from providing a different form of knowledge can also offer a distinctive perspective of power politics in international affairs (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014).

Finally, the move towards a multidimensional and fresh framework should imply necessarily moving beyond the Eurocentrism embedded in EU policy action and analysis. In order to do so, I argue the importance of following a decentring agenda (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, 2013; Nicolaïdis, Sebe and Maas, 2015; Keukeleire and Lecocq, 2018, Nicolaïdis, 2020) and de-colonize and re-construct the research about these topics. Here, this effort passes through engaging with the voices and understandings of stakeholders in countries of origin and transit of migration, that is, listening to others' perceptions on the EU and its action abroad (Lenz and Nicolaïdis, 2019). According to this agenda, this would be the only way of supporting a more effective EU external action vis-à-vis its southern Mediterranean neighbourhood, that is, to apply a multilogical approach to both policy development and implementation (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, 2020). Therefore, apart from including EU policy narratives and practices, this framework aims to go

beyond and engage with the perspective of third countries and start to break the colonial legacies that hunts both the analysis and practice of EU external action.

1.5 Research Design: A Multi-Layered Analysis with Morocco as a Case Study

Considering the theoretical framework presented above, in this research I propose looking at the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs through three layers (levels of analysis): EU policy narratives, which involves looking into policy beliefs and assumptions, policy practices, which focus on policy implementation and effects and perception of local stakeholders, which incorporates a critical evaluation of these policies (see Figure 1). I argue that this multi-focal perspective allows for the assessment of different perspectives within the same reality. The thesis is composed of three articles and although each of them represents an independent body of work, together they aim at providing answers to the overall question proposed through representing a specific layer and a specific level analysis of the same reality, one that portrays the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs. Therefore, the main proposal is to provide a multi-layered analysis of this nexus.

Figure 1.1: A Multi-layered analysis
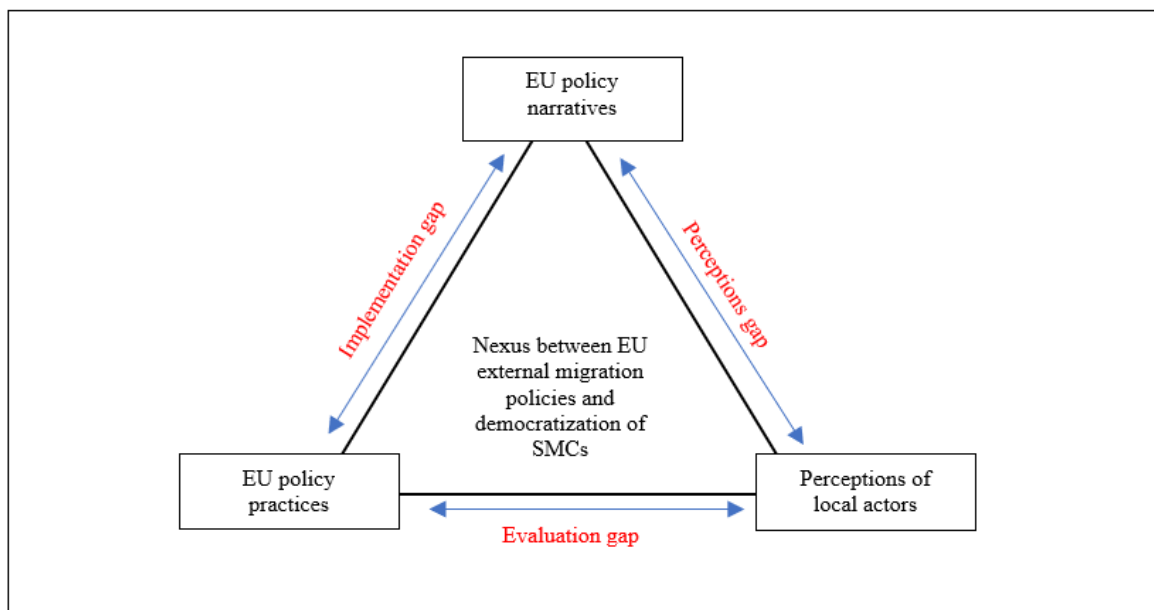
Source: author own elaboration.

Even if each article explores one of the layers portrayed above, this does not imply the absence of dialogue among these dimensions since they are connected and are mutually constituted. In fact, one of the main objectives behind this multi-layered analysis is being able to identify the existence of gaps between the different policy realities as well as hints of how they could be addressed. Inspired by the work of Czaika and de Haas (2013.), I consider the existence of three gaps: (1) the *implementation gap*, that is, the discrepancy between policy narratives and policy practices; (2) the *evaluation gap*, or the disparity between policy practices and how local stakeholders assess their local effects; and (3) the *perceptions gap*, that is, the differences between the policy narratives and the critical assessment of local stakeholders. Although being incorporated transversely throughout this thesis, the discussion about the gaps is mainly included within the general conclusions. Therefore, the analytical distinction is not only important at the level of the policy process but also in relation to the stakeholders involved in it. In sum, and most importantly, this sort of division would allow differentiating between types of policy gaps.

In broad terms, all three articles applied an in-depth qualitative approach to their analysis. The choice for a qualitative approach is related to the fact that I am interested in looking acutely into social and political relations and mechanisms as well as meaning and perceptions. Such an approach is deemed as the most adequate for this goal (Collier and Brady, 2004) through providing detailed and qualitative knowledge to meaningfully analyse and assess different realities (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018). In general, the research relies on different sources of qualitative data obtained through desk research and fieldwork – such as policy documents, interviews, press releases, reports and empirical literature. All data has been carefully uploaded and analysed in the Software Nvivo, which allows us to carefully track each process of the data analysis to ensure coherence, reliability and replication. Moreover, different policy and qualitative data analysis techniques have been used. In theoretical terms, the research combines concepts, theories and tools from public policy, comparative politics and international relations.

The **first article** (Chapter 2: Another nexus? Exploring narratives on the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of the Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood, p.50) explores the **layer of EU policy narratives** on the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs. Through applying a Narrative Policy Analysis approach (Roe 1994) it exposes EU beliefs and assumptions regarding the relations between these two processes. Drawing on longitudinal and interpretative content analysis of EU official documents covering the period between 1995 and 2018, this study seeks to expose the main narratives casted by the EU on the issue and to identify if there has been consistence or change in the stories and arguments over time and, in particular, before and after the 'Arab uprisings'.

The next two articles continue to explore this nexus but this time both concentrate on Morocco as a case-study. Morocco has been chosen since it constitutes a paradigmatic, although non unique case among countries in the Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood (den Hertog, 2017, El Qadim, 2010). This country has a longstanding history of 'cooperation' with the EU in migration issues and has been sometimes even conceived as a 'laboratory' of EU policies towards the region (Van Hüllen, 2019). In this sense, it is taken as a representative case of the region to capture possible regional dynamics, learn lessons and serve as a pathway for researching similar cases. The main idea is that if something is unfolding in Morocco, it is likely to be happening somewhere else in the Southern Mediterranean too.

Thus, **the second article** (Chapter 3: Hindering democracy through migration policies? The nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of Morocco, p.101) concentrates on another layer: **EU policy practices**. In specific, it aims to unfolding the process of policy implementation and its effects in this country. Such analysis is done in two steps. First, by suggesting a theoretical framework to empirically explore the 'practical' nexus between EU external migration policies and democratisation of SMCs. Second, by applying this framework to analyse EU practices in Morocco. The study of the Moroccan case is based on a documentary analysis of different sources of qualitative data, mainly: empirical literature, NGO reports, EU policy documents and press articles. Since empirical research on authoritarian regimes might be challenging and

evidence hard to trace, it is important to underline that this analysis does not aim at giving definitive answers but at drawing hypotheses and explanations that could be investigated by future research. Most importantly, it aims to get us closer to understanding the extent to which there is a gap between EU policy narratives and practices (implementation gap) and how wide and deep it might be.

The **third article** (Chapter 4: Decentring EU foreign policy analysis: How local stakeholders perceive the effects of EU external migration policies on the democratization of Morocco?, p.153) investigates the **third layer, which is the perception of local stakeholders**. More than once the EU has been accused of not taking the perspective of local stakeholders into consideration, preferring a top down, hierarchical and unilateral approach for the development of its policies. In fact, the absence of this perspective in EU policy making is a probable explanation to why many policies in this field are considered as ineffective or even counterproductive. Thus, in this article I argue for the necessity and added value of decentring and multi-levelling (Fisher-Onar, N. and Nicolaïdis, K., 2020; Triandafyllidou 2020) the analysis of EU foreign policy impacts by considering the perspective of local stakeholders in target states. In particular, it proposes to include the perception of these actors into the debate as another and essential layer of the reality within the policy process. In other words, it aims at assessing how different local stakeholders – that embodies different roles in the EU-Moroccan migration governance – critically evaluates these policies and its effects on these countries democratization. The analysis is based on data gathered from extensive fieldwork in Morocco during 2019, in which different multiple stakeholders involved in the Moroccan migration governance have been interviewed.

The last chapter is dedicated to the conclusion of the thesis (p.193). Apart from summarizing the outcomes of each of the three articles, underlining their main contributions and how they portray this nexus, here the gaps between the different layers are also identified and discussed. Moreover, it provides a self-evaluation and consideration of the main limitations of the work presented and the new avenues of research it sets forth. Finally, it aims to end as it began, by providing a reflection of the repercussions of this research for the EU normative policy agenda.

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1.7 Annex

Table 1.2 EU external migration policies in the Southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood: cooperation framework (based on Carrera et al 2015)

	Algeria	Egypt	Morocco	Tunisia	Libya
Mobility Partnerships **Year**	-	-	✓ [2013]	✓ [2014]	-
Readmission Agreements **Year of negotiating mandate**	- [2002]	-	- [2000]	- [2016]	-
Migration Profile	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Migration Dialogue	-	-	✓	✓	-
Rabat Process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Africa-EU Dialogue	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Association Agreement (Year of implementation)	✓ [2005]	✓ [2004]	✓ [2000]	✓ [1998]	-
ENP (Year Action Plans)	✓ [n/a] *	✓ [2007;2017]	✓ [2005;2013]	✓ [2005;2012]	✓ [n/a] *
JDMI	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
EUTF Projects	✓ 5	✓ 1	✓ 7	✓ 1	✓ 10

*Both Alegria and Libya – unclear relation with the ENP. Libya has remained so far outside of the ENP structure, despite being considered as a potential participant (Fernández-Molina 2018).

Faustini-Torres, Luisa. Another nexus? Exploring the linkages between EU external migration policies and the democratization of the Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood. Comparative Migration Studies. 2020;8(9):22pp. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0165-z

2. ANOTHER NEXUS? EXPLORING NARRATIVES ON THE NEXUS BETWEEN EU EXTERNAL MIGRATION POLICIES AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD

2.1 Introduction

With the end of the Cold War and especially after 09/11 terrorist attacks, democratization became a major topic within the foreign policy discourse in Western countries. As a result, democracy promotion and other related values, such as good governance and human rights, became a key priority of Western governments and a central issue framing its external relations, as it is the case of the European Union [EU]. Already in 1992, the EU introduced 'respect for human rights and democracy' as an essential element clause of its relations with third countries. Moreover, there is a broad agreement in the literature that the EU presents itself to the world as a normative and benevolent actor promoting democratic principles worldwide (Manners, 2002). Likewise, since Tampere Council in 1999 and through a process broadly referred by the literature as 'externalization'[14], migration control progressively became an essential feature of EU foreign policy. In fact, during the past two decades, the development of the external dimension of EU migration policies was consolidated as the main strategy for dealing with migration flows from the Global South[15].

This becomes even more evident when considering the specific context of EU relations with countries in the Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood [16] (i.e. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya). This region has been, simultaneously, a priority for EU external migration policies (Commission, 2011e) and a target of democracy promotion

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[14] Other terms have also been used to refer to this process such as 'external dimension' (Boswell, 2003), 'external governance' (Lavenex, 2006) and 'extra-territorialisation' (Rijpma and Cremona, 2007).

[15] This term refers to the countries that are mostly, although not necessarily, located in the Southern Hemisphere. Here this term is used meaning the countries classified as belonging to the "underdeveloped", "developing", "dependent" world.

[16] Although the region also includes Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Israel, here I will not be considering these countries since they are influenced by regional dynamics that would bring unnecessary complexities to the analysis, such as the conflict in Syria and that between Palestine and Israel.

efforts (Cassarino, 2012; Pace, 2014). The advent of the 'Arab spring' in 2011 and the 'migration crisis' in 2015-16 made this region even more complex, especially with regard to the interaction between externalization strategies and democratization. However, despite being essential components of EU's external action and central elements of EU relations with the neighbourhood, little is known about how these two policy dimensions intertwine within EU official narratives.

It has been suggested that when the external dimension of EU migration policies was first designed, back in 1999, it was regarded as a comprehensive approach, guided by two overarching narratives: the '*remote-control*' or '*securitized*' approach and the '*root-causes*' or '*preventive*' approach[17] (Boswell, 2003; Zapata-Barrero, 2013; Yildiz, 2016). In the first one, migration is framed through security discourses, whereas in the second it holds a strong developmental discourse on its core (Fratzke and Salant, 2018). As a result, the academic debate about EU narratives behind these policies has revolved mainly around the axis migration-development (Van Hear and Sørensen-Nyberg, 2002) and migration-security nexus (Pinyol-Jiménez, 2012) as well as the tensions inherent to their prioritization and articulation.

Even though democratization appears to be an important pillar of EU external migration policies under the '*root-causes*' approach, the debate about the migration-democratization nexus in this context has been either side-lined by the security discourse or subsumed into the developmental debate. Moreover, it is not surprising to observe that the migration-development nexus, and in particular what concerns economic aspects of development, such as poverty and unemployment, has been the dominant paradigm within the *'root-causes'* approach. This could be related to the tendency of reducing migration to an economic act (Van Hear and Sørensen, 2002). As a consequence, more political '*root-causes*', such as democratization and human rights promotion have not received as much attention.

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[17] Apart from these two, the literature also underlined the existence of a third, although less applied, approach: the '*managerial approach*' (see Aubarell et al, 2009).

In this article, I argue that it is necessary to go beyond this dichotomy and explore another nexus that is still under-researched: the one between EU external migration policies and the democratization of the southern Mediterranean neighbourhood. This is mainly because despite being a compilation of many policy narratives, it seems that not all stories behind these policies have been equally acknowledged or understood. Thus, this research presents itself as an attempt to start fulfilling these gaps, something that could be considered as crucial step for further disentanglement of the logics and consequences of the externalization of EU migration towards this region.

The article has been divided as it follows. I begin by introducing the Narrative Policy Analysis [NPA] approach, the main framework applied for exploring this nexus. At this point, I justify the reasons for following this approach and its adequacy for delving into this policy field. The goals, methods and data sources behind the analysis are also explained. In the following section, I present the main findings by describing the different narratives identified and the nexus configuration embedded in it. Particular emphasis is given to the different arguments and stories encountered throughout time and among EU institutional bodies. Finally, in the conclusion, I discuss the implications of this nexus for the broader debate of EU external migration policies, raising hypothesis and indicating future research lines based on the first mapping presented here.

2.2 The Narrative Policy Analysis Approach

To investigate how EU external migration policies and democratization intermesh in the context of EU-Mediterranean relations, I chose to follow a theoretical approach that sets narratives in the centre of the policy process, applying mainly the NPA approach provided by Emery Roe (1994). This choice was motivated by three main rationalities.

Firstly, an important premise in this research is that policymaking is not linear (Sabatier and Weible, 2018). This implies that EU external migration policies are conceived here as a messy and complex policy process (Guiraudon, 2003)[18], that is, as part of ongoing

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[18] Guiraudon (2003) exposed in a seminal article the power competition among diverse actors in the development of the EU immigration and asylum policy by applying the 'garbage can model', indicating

processes of negotiation between multiple actors over time (Roe, 1994), which hold different values, perceptions, and policy interests (Sabatier and Weible 2018), and whose interactions are constrained by power relations (Brock et al, 2001). To investigate this sort of policy processes, one needs to address questions such as 'how problems and solutions are defined, by whom and with what effects' (Keeley and Scoones, 1999; Wolmer, 2006).

With the argumentative turn in the field of policy analysis, the literature that uses policy frame as a key analytical tool to answer these questions gained increased relevance (Brock et al, 2001). Since then, researchers started to pay special attention to "the ways in which particular concepts or story-lines 'frame' what and who is taken into consideration in and excluded from policy deliberation" (Ibid, p.5). Rather than being perceived as a random act, policy framing is conceived as the conscious and intentional selection of language and meaning to influence political debate and decision-making (Bicchi, 2010). In this sense, the importance of different practices of policy framing and styles of storytelling for policy process analysis should not be underestimated (Wolmer, 2006).

The NPA approach focus on one particular type of story, which are policy narratives (Kaplan, 1986; Roe, 1991, 1994). On the one hand, "narratives are the lifeblood of politics" (Mcbeth et al, 2007, p.88), playing significant roles within the policy process and being essential for understanding policy issues and their configuration. On the other, narratives are also simplified and programmatic tales of cause and effect, which provide a diagnosis of the problem as well as definition of its solutions (Wolmer, 2006). This makes them predictable and testable sources of study, that is, "written words that can be easily documented and tracked through a temporal perspective" (Sabatier and Jenkings-Smith, 1993 p.16 quoted by McBeth et al, 2007). Thus, looking into narratives allows digging into the policy process of EU external migration policies in a structured manner without neglecting its complex nature.

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that the process would be more complex than the simple interaction between high-level decision makers would suggest.

The second reason for choosing the NPA is the fact that it "requires uncertainty, complexity and polarization as a continuing precondition for analysis" (Roe, 1994, p.17). *Uncertainty* means lack of knowledge about what matters and how things are related. Many researchers agree that migration policies are usually characterized by a high degree of uncertainty towards the dynamics, root-causes (Gent, 2002) and effects of migration (Boswell et al, 2011). *Complexity* refers to the internal intricacy contained in the issue and its interdependence to other policy issues. This also seems to be the case of migration policies, mainly because it is interconnected to several other issues, such as development, trade, security, conflict etc. This can be further confirmed by the debates and concerns related to external policy coherence, which refers to the complex nature of international migration and its sensitivity to interactions with other policy areas (Wunderlich, 2013).

There are reasons to believe that this case might also involve a certain degree of *polarization*, which denotes the concentration of groups around the extremes of the policy issues (Roe, 1994). Authors have underlined the fact that when 'going abroad' with its migration policies and instruments, the EU is not a monolithic actor (Geddes and Lixi, 2018); contradicting the idea that policymaking at this level occurs without controversies and ambiguities. In fact, EU different institutional bodies would often have different understandings of migration and its challenges, thereby developing their actions based on different priorities (Ibid).

The Commission has been one of the leading actors behind the formulation and implementation of EU external migration policies. Within this institutional body, the Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) has been at the driver's seat of the EU external migration policy (Carrera et al 2015, p.45). This is important because, the DG HOME tends to give higher priority to migration control and security in comparison to other DGs such as DG International Cooperation and Development (ibid). Another important actor, the Council – led mainly by Justice and Home Affairs officials – also tends to adopt a security-driven approach to migration (Ibid). Unlike the previously mentioned, the Parliament has been, since the beginning, critical to the focus on security and control and to the inconsistency between addressing root-causes and curbing migration (ibid). However, despite the changes introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon in

2009, authors underline that the role played by this institutional body is still limited and ad hoc (Carrera et al, 2013).

The final reason for using NPA as the main theoretical framework is related to the gap between rhetorical commitment and practice, that is, between policy intentions embedded in the policy narratives and its outcomes. However, the fact that narratives might remain at the rhetorical level does not imply that they are less important or insignificant. In fact, they may actually play many roles – such as instrumental (Roe, 1994) and legitimizing (Vega, 2017) roles – and produce real material consequences (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). Most importantly, understanding narrative political strategies would be essential for studying policy change in a complex environment (McBeth et al 2007, p.104). Primary policy beliefs tend to be much more stable over time despite their representational inaccuracy and/or the existence of contradictory evidence (Roe, 1994). On the contrary, narrative political strategies are much more dynamic (McBeth et al, 2007). Consequently, both change and consistence should be considered as an object of inquire.

2.3 Goals and Methods of Analysis

Strictly speaking, the NPA consists of four consecutive steps[19]. However, in this article the empirical analysis has been restricted to the first two, which focus on (1) the identification of narratives that are dominant in the issue and (2) the identification of other narratives that either "do not conform to the definition of story (non-stories) or that run counter to the controversy's dominant policy narratives (counter-stories)" (Roe, 1994, p.3). A further aim was to investigate if there has been consistence or change in the stories and arguments over time and among different actors.

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[19] (1) Definition and identification of stories and narratives (2) Identification of other narratives: non-stories and counter-stories (3) Comparison and generation of meta-narrative and (4) Creation of new policy narrative.

2.3.1 Data sources

The analysis was based on longitudinal and interpretative content analysis of key official documents shaping EU external migration policies and Euro-Mediterranean relations. Documents were selected following two logics (see Table 2.5 at the Annex for a complete list). The first one consisted of choosing the documents indicated by the literature and the EU itself as being the key ones shaping EU external migration policies and relations with the Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood. The second one derived from the process of inter-textual reading.

The timeframe considered ranges from 1995 to 2018. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, launched through the Barcelona Process in 1995, was chosen as the starting point since it marked not only the institutionalization of EU-Mediterranean relations but also EU compromise with the advancement of human rights and democracy in the region (Fernández-Molina, 2018). Moreover, it was when the EU declared its intentions of creating an area of security, peace and stability and shared prosperity in the neighbourhood for the first time (Barcelona Declaration, 1995), particularly attaching democratization and migration control to the advancement of these goals.

For the diachronic comparison, one main time marker was considered: the year 2011 and the so-called 'Arab spring'. These events have been selected because they configured an unprecedented moment in relation to processes of democratization and political change in the southern Mediterranean, raising many questions concerning the involvement of the EU and its member states in the region. In this sense, the 'Arab spring' would fit into the definition of *policy spaces*, which are "moments in which interventions or events throw up new opportunities, reconfiguring relationships between actors within these spaces or bringing in new actors and opening up the possibilities of a shift in direction" (Grindle and Thomas 1991 quoted by Brock et al 2001, p.22). Additionally, although most of the literature indicates continuity of policies before and after the uprisings (Teti, 2012), here I follow the idea that this continuity should not be taken for granted and that research should pay attention to specific policy fields as well as subtler changes within the narratives (Roccu and Voltolini, 2018). However, two other key moments have also been

kept in mind for the analysis: the '*cayucos* crisis' in 2005 and the 'migration crisis' in 2015-16.

Documents were classified considering the year they were issued, and the main EU institutional body involved in their production (See Figure 1.1). This classification allowed for the cross-tabbing of coded fragments, which was essential for having a clear idea of the origin and sequence of statements and the comparison of narratives across time and among actors.

Figure 2.1 EU official documents per year of publication
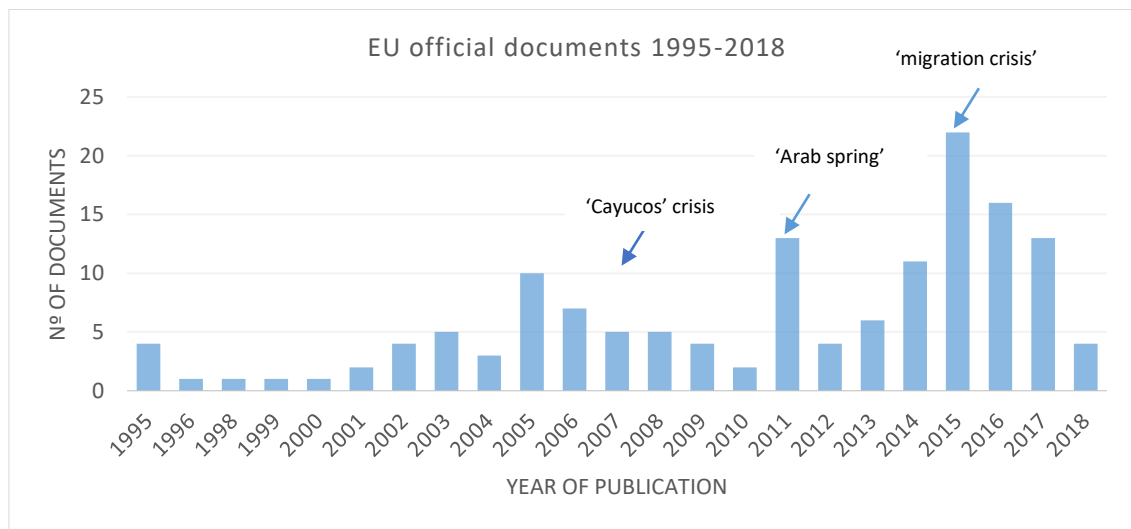
2.3.2 Data coding and analysis

The main unit of analysis were policy narratives. According to Roe (1994, p.34-35), narratives might appear in the format of a classic *story*, with beginning, middle, and end, or in the format of an *argument,* with premises and conclusions. In order to identify and compare the most relevant stories and/or arguments, I used the software for Qualitative Data Analysis *Nvivo,* where all the collected data (official documents) were uploaded, classified, coded and analysed.

Data was coded combining both deductive and inductive approaches. I started identifying the 'meaning units' (fragments of data of one or more paragraphs in which meaning is found or constructed) using a first list of codes (labels) based on concepts extracted from the NPA (theory-led deductive approach). In this sense, the main structure searched

within the data were 'problem statements', which consisted of the main parental node from which all others would derive (see figure 2.2). Usually, a 'problem statement' would contain the definition of the problem (diagnosis) and the proposed solution (treatment), asserting a causal(s) relationship(s) between X and Y. Other related elements have also been coded: (a) assumptions and premises and (b) scenarios ('*prognosis'*) (see figure 2.3). Both are considered to have an influence in the configuration of the problem diagnosis and treatment.

Figure 2.2: Coding Map containing the main 'parent' and 'child' nodes used to code official documents.
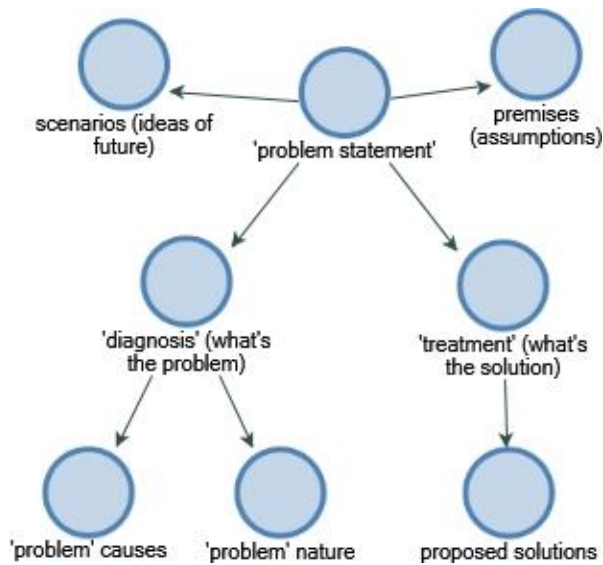
Source: Author's own elaboration using the software *Nvivo*.

Figure 2.3: Example of coded 'problem statement'

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The coding list evolved and changed as research progressed and new insights and conceptual directions were revealed by the data, indicating important categories that should be aggregated, combined or withdrawn from the analysis (inductive approach). This means that the final coding scheme took several days to be completed and was followed by the constant annotation of decisions taken (see Figure 2.7.1 at the Annex).

The analysis of the coded data was done in two phases (Saldaña, 2013). The first was dedicated to the careful reading and interpretation of 'problem statements' in order to uncover the main narratives. The second concentrated on their comparison – in terms of time and institutional body – in order to identify possible counter-narratives and/or change (See tables 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 in the Annex).

2.4 EU External Migration Policies and Democratization of the Southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood: What Nexus?

Before describing the narratives uncovered and the nexus embedded in them, it is important to punctuate some general features concerning their nature. First, narratives have been dispersed and fragmented throughout EU official documents, appointing no clear pattern to when and where references to this nexus are likely to be found. This lack of focus could be an indication that this link does not seem to be a priority to the EU, being solely rhetoric.

Secondly, although several documents refer to this nexus, some important ones do not make any explicit reference to it. An example is the recently issued European Agenda on Migration (Commission, 2015a). Consequently, even if narratives do exist, their inclusion within EU official discourse seems to be still a matter of ambiguity and controversy, especially if in comparison to the narratives of the migration-development and migration-security nexuses. An indication is that out of 143 documents, 43 have been coded under the child node '*root-causes-democratization*', 86 under the '*root-cause-development*' and 83 under the '*remote-control*' one. This finding does not imply that narratives concerning the '*democratization-migration*' nexus are less important, but it does suggest the prominence of the other two, as already indicated by the literature.

Another observation should be made regarding the definition of democracy. Since democratization refers mainly to the process through which countries achieve a democratic system, this is undeniably a key concept. In general, the EU conceives democracy positively and assumes it as a desirable goal. Moreover, democracy is usually associated with other values, mainly good governance, respect to the rule of law and human rights. However, it is interesting that even if conceived as a central value and an essential element of EU relations with the southern Mediterranean, democracy is neither straightforwardly defined in the documents analysed nor perceived as something that needs further explanation. This means that the EU is, to a certain extent, assuming its universality.

Despite this, researchers stress that there would be a deep disagreement between the EU and its partners in the South concerning the concepts of democracy and human rights (Aliboni, 2004). Such disagreement would not only be conceptual but also political, due to discrepancies in how to actually achieve it (ibid). It is argued that the EU conceives (liberal) democracy as a Western value leaving aside other (mainly Arab) narratives on democracy (Sadiki, 2004). In general, this is important because the lack of a clear definition of democracy on the one hand, and the lack of agreement and inclusion of other perspectives from the South on the other, has already been associated with EU shortcomings in terms of democracy promotion in the region (Jonasson, 2013).

2.4.1 EU Policy Narratives before the 'Arab spring': lack-of-democracy-as-root-cause narrative

From the analysis of 'problem statements' extracted from EU documents from 1995 to 2010, one dominant narrative could be identified. Within it, the main 'problem' the EU has been concerned with, was irregular and forced migration. Mainly, documents refer to the challenges posed by the 'massive arrival of immigrants' and the 'exodus of refugees' coming from or through southern Mediterranean countries. Both sorts of flows are portrayed as having destabilizing effects and posing security problems to the EU, although refugee flows are considered as less problematic.

Such 'problem' has been associated with many 'causes', among which 'structural causes' have been conceived as central ones. It is argued that irregular and forced migration is rooted in particular social, political and economic conditions in the countries of origin (push-factors). This means that alongside the more acknowledged economic drivers (i.e., poverty, unemployment) the EU also identifies political drivers as a main cause of population displacement in the region.

On the one hand, dictatorship or lack of democracy and related factors such as poor governance, disrespect to the rule of law, human rights abuse, political persecution, generalized corruption etc., are believed to be at the source of migration flows from neighbouring Mediterranean countries:

> "Ill-functioning democratic structures, weak institutions, the absence of the rule of law and bad governance are all major push factors for forced migration" (Commission, 2002).
>
> "Believes that massive immigration is a result of [inter alia] human rights violations […] political persecutions, political instability, corruption and dictatorships in many of the countries of origin" (Parliament, 2006).

On the other hand, lack of democracy is considered a source of instability and insecurity, conditions that have also been associated by the EU with the increase of irregular and forced migratory flows. In fact, the EU underlines the idea that political drivers are not independent but instead, they are linked with other drivers, such as poverty, development, stability, security, etc. The EU emphasizes the idea that migration has multiple and complex causes and for this reason should be addressed by a comprehensive approach (Parliament, 2006, 2007; Commission, 2002, 2006). This means that autocracies or ill-functioning democracies would be one among many interlinked push-factors of migration.

If lack of democracy is perceived as a driver of migration, its advancement in the neighbourhood is seen as a central and favourable condition for EU goals of controlling migration at the source. Thus, a main argument found within EU narrative is that such structural condition in sending countries should be a matter of concern. Already in 1995,

the Commission argued that "Defending and promoting human rights is also a means of tackling the huge movements of population which are caused by crisis and conflict" (European Commission, 1995). Similarly, in 1999 it was stated in a European Council that:

> "The European Union needs a comprehensive approach to migration addressing political, human rights and development issues in countries and regions of origin and transit. This requires […] consolidating democratic states and ensuring respect for human rights, in particular rights of minorities, women and children" (European Council, 1999).

The Parliament also defended the necessity of supporting the consolidation of democracy in third countries for achieving these same goals in the report on the Creation of the High-Level Working Group (European Parliament, 2000).

Apart from being an end in itself, since it would address structural political drivers of migration, democratic development is considered to be source of stability, security and peace, conditions that are also positively associated by the EU with the decrease of migration flows. Likewise, democratization could also eventually lead to more development – which would mean addressing socio-economic drivers, such as poverty, unemployment and inequality.

The importance of these policy areas and the inter-links between them become even more evident when considering the main policy frameworks for cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area. Both the launch of the Barcelona Process in 1995 and the European Neighbourhood Policy [ENP] in 2004 had within their main goals the promotion of stability, security and prosperity in the region. A necessary condition for the fulfilment of these goals would be strengthening democracy and respect for human rights. As a result, both initiatives had within their core the promotion and support for democracy in the neighbourhood (Barcelona Declaration, 1995; European Commission, 2005a, 2004). The ENP specifically, when announced, created many prospects for democracy promotion (Khakee, 2010),to the point of being conceived as the Union 'newest democratization tool' (Barbé and Johansson-Nogués, 2008). Regardless of the actual fulfilment of these goals, the idea of creating a "ring of well governed countries" (Commission, 2004) is key

for EU's objective of promoting stability and prosperity in its Southern neighbourhood and consequently, in its borders.

Finally, two important ideas about the future (scenarios) found in the EU narrative seem to have helped configuring and reinforcing the narrative. The first scenario is that irregular migration is not expected to decrease; on the contrary, it is set to continue or even accelerate, mainly because it is rooted in structural features of the Mediterranean that are unlikely to disappear in the short-term (Commission, 2002). This prognostic reinforces the argument of applying long-term and comprehensive solutions tackling the structural drivers of migration, among which lies the promotion of democratization.

The second scenario is related to the successive migration 'crises' and the raise of migrants' death toll. In particular, two 'crises' had a symbolical impact in the narrative and triggered policymaking processes within the EU in the middle 2000's. The first one occurred mainly during 2005, when the number of migrants crossing the fenced borders of Ceuta and Melilla (two Spanish enclaves in the Northern coast of Morocco) raised considerably (New York Times, 2005; The Guardian, 2005). In this process, several migrants ended up severely injured and 13 were reported dead[20] due to the excessive force and use of 'dissuasive' equipment by the police at both sides of the border. The second one, known as the '*cayucos* crisis', happened in 2006, when more than 31,000 migrants (a record number) reached the Canary Islands successfully after sailing the Atlantic from the shores of Mauritania and Senegal in fishing boats (*cayucos*). Spanish immigration officials estimated that at least 6,000 people have died or gone missing while attempting to make this risky crossing during this same period (BBC, 2006).

At this point and in face of these scenarios, the EU started perceiving the situation of irregular and forced migration with a sense of urgency, underlining the necessity of taking action and stopping the human tragedy that was taking place in its borders. Already in 2005, which coincided with the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration

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[20] According to newspapers and NGOs reports, most migrants died from injuries caused by shots with live ammunition and one died from injuries caused by a rubber bullet (Amnesty International, 2006). Both Spanish and Moroccan authorities have neither claimed nor been hold responsible for these killings (The Guardian, 2010), which the EU referred to as 'tragic events' (Commission, 2005b).

(Commission, 2005a), the EU launched the Global Approach to Migration (GAM) (Council, 2005). This new framework intended to respond to the need for a balanced, global and coherent approach that could face the short-term challenge of reducing illegal immigration and the loss of lives and at the same time recognize the importance of tackling the root-causes of migration (Ibid). As a result, the EU defended the necessity of not only 'combating' but also 'preventing' these flows putting emphasis on the "urgent need to combat the root-causes of migration" (Paris Declaration, 2008).

Therefore, the nexus observed in the dominant narrative could be summarized as it follows (see figure 2.4): the EU perceives lack of democracy as a root-cause of migratory and refugee flows. This means that EU promotion and support to democratic consolidation in 'sending' countries in the southern Mediterranean is believed to contribute to addressing the migratory 'problem' – i.e., irregular and forced migration – since it addresses the main structural factors causing and perpetuating it, directly or indirectly. This means that the EU considers democratization as part of its 'solution pack' within its migration policy goals and strategies.

Figure 2.4: Nexus configuration between EU external migration policy and democratization of Southern Mediterranean countries (pre-'Arab spring'): lack-of-democracy-as-root-cause narrative.
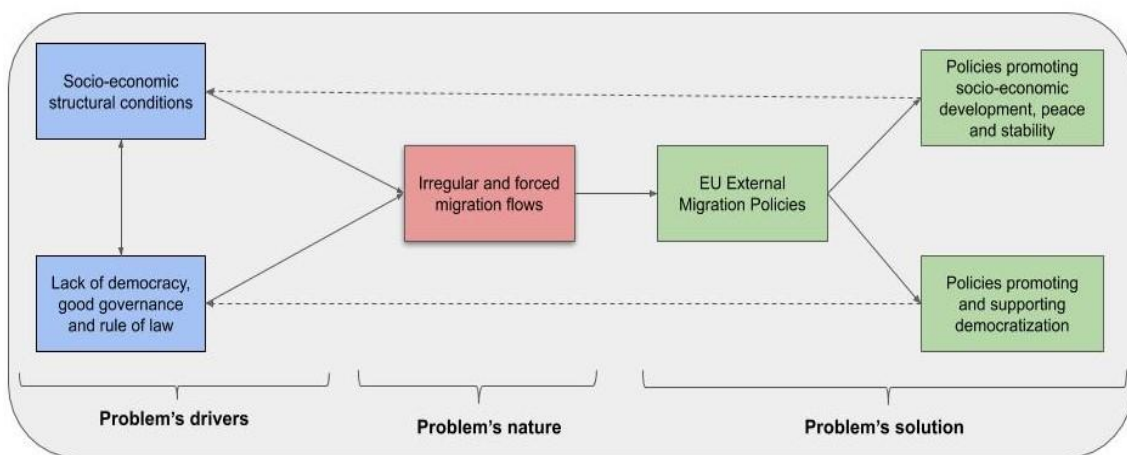
Source: Author's own elaboration

2.4.2 EU policy narratives post- 'Arab spring'

2.4.2.1 The first years (2011-12): continuity despite change

At the time that the 'Arab spring' in 2011 started to unfold, transforming the political and social landscape of the Mediterranean, the core story sustained by the EU continued to be the same. Irregular and forced migration remained a central problem for the EU that ought to be fought and prevented. Similarly, lack of democracy continued to be professed as an important structural push-factor of migration and refugee flows.

For this reason, providing a solution to this problem would pass through supporting the democratization processes unfolding in the southern Mediterranean. In fact, EU first reactions to the Arab uprisings were actually in this line, reinforcing the existing narrative. Among EU main initiatives was the launch of the "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity" (Commission, 2011a), which was an intent to take a qualitative step forward in EU relations with its southern neighbours and to provide short-term support to the democratic change unfolding in the region (Bauer, 2015). Under this new framework, the EU reconceptualised democracy and redesigned its strategy for democracy promotion.

Another development in this direction was the revision of the ENP in 2011[21]. An important aspect of this revision is related to the introduction of a 'new policy' of conditionality: the 'more for more' approach (Pace, 2014), which is embedded in the ENP idea of implementing a positive conditionality tool (Abdalla, 2016). According to this policy, the EU would be willing to offer the 'three Ms' (money, mobility and market) to countries that advanced significantly in terms of political reforms:

> "Increased EU support to its neighbours is conditional. It will depend on progress in building and consolidating democracy and respect for the rule of law. The more and the faster a country progresses in its internal reforms, the more support it will get from the EU" (Commission 2011b).

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[21] The revision was already ongoing before the advent of the Arab uprisings; however, these events made it more pertinent (Delcour and Soler i Lecha, 2018).

Here it is already possible to spot some small changes in the narrative due to the introduction of new elements in the proposed solutions, which apart from not modifying its core elements, have even worked to reinforce them. First, the idea of building a stronger partnership with the people, mainly through giving greater support to the civil society in Mediterranean countries was introduced (Commission, 2011b). Second, promoting people-to-people contact across the Mediterranean was proposed as a way to support burgeoning democratisation in North Africa (Commission, 2011c, 2011d, 2011e). In other words, the EU should enhance the positive effects of migration in terms of promoting human development and democracy in fragile states (Parliament, 2011a). In fact, at this point the GAM was renewed, becoming the Global Approach to Migration and *Mobility* (Commission, 2011e). This updated version reaffirmed the externalized approach introduced in 2005, giving enhanced focus on better organizing and promoting mobility of third country nationals (ibid). The problem is that this sort of partnership foresees the conclusion of visa facilitation agreements for promoting the mobility of a certain sector of the population (usually an educated elite) in exchange for the conclusion of readmission agreements for promoting the return of another sector of the population (usually unresourceful undocumented migrants) (Brocza and Paulhart, 2015; Reslow and Vink 2015). Thus, far from promoting further democratization, these initiatives might even end up promoting discrimination and inequality within Mediterranean societies (Boratynski et al 2006). Finally, a special emphasis has also been given to the role of the youth in the process of democratization (Commission, 2012; Council, 2012). Finally, a special emphasis has also been given to the role of the youth in the process of democratization (Commission, 2012; Council, 2012).

At this point, it seems that the events unfolding in the region provided an empirical validation of the dominant narrative, reinforcing the need for promoting democracy in order to stem and prevent irregular and forced migration. Thus, in a certain sense, these events led to a continuity of the narrative despite the changes unfolding in the region, marking the "re-launch of EU 'normative ambitions' for the Arab countries" (Seeberg, 2015, p.41; Bauer, 2015).

2.4.2.2 The aftermath of the 'Arab Spring' and the 'migration crisis': towards a narrative dualism

As previously described, the first years of the 'Arab spring' created opportunities for strengthening the dominant narrative. However, some key variations could already be perceived in the years that followed the revolutions and especially in the context of the so-called 'migration crisis'.

An important element of change concerns the nature of the problem. Although the idea of 'mass influx' of migrants has always been present in the EU narrative, from 2015 onwards it gained a new input. This is closely related to the perception of flows as being uncontrolled, growing and mixed (i.e., as containing both displaced people and economic migrants). Moreover, since then, the EU stresses to be facing a crisis configured by an "unprecedented influx" of migrants, referring to it as the "biggest refugee crisis since the WWII". In fact, Geddes and Hadj-Abdou (2018) emphasized how the use of the word *crisis* would reflect EU difficulties for dealing with this 'new' context in the neighbourhood and the necessity of providing solutions accordingly. At the same time, these authors also highlighted how the EU started perceiving this reality of external migratory pressure as the 'new normal', that is, as something that is unlikely to change in the near future.

Concerning the causes of these migratory flows, the EU places a new emphasis on the instability variable, which would arise from the contexts of war, armed conflicts, violence as well as situations of political and economic crises that could be appreciated all across the Mediterranean at the time. This means that structural factors are complemented with other drivers believed to be more 'circumstantial' and 'transitory'. Another novelty is that the EU seems to be concerned with sources of instability that might come from outside the security domain, such as poverty, sense of injustice, corruption, and a general lack of social and economic development in countries of origin, especially among the youth (Commission, 2015a). Most importantly, these destabilizing socio-economic conditions are believed to be exacerbated in a situation of lack of democratic principles (Parliament, 2011a, 2011b).

In this context, supporting and promoting democracy (and related values) in the Mediterranean is still conceived as a solution to the migration problem not only because it would address structural political conditions in the region, but also because it would be a way of tackling instability and insecurity:

> "Migration flows arising from instability are a challenge for the European Union. Wars and armed conflicts, ethnic tension, systematic violations of human rights - such as the refusal to allow people to practise their religious faith - natural disasters and the lack of proper economic and democratic structures are the main causes of this type of migration flow." (Parliament, 2015)

Considering this new scenario, it could be argued that the dominant narrative has changed slightly in comparison to the two other periods aforementioned; mainly due to the increased emphasis on the elements of crisis and instability, which moved to the centre of the narrative. Still, it should also be noticed that the narrative's core elements and causal logic have remained the same. This clearly indicates that lack of democracy continued to be framed as a root-cause of migration despite the introduction of these mediating variables (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Nexus configuration between EU external migration policy and democratization of Southern Mediterranean countries (post-'Arab spring' and 'migration crisis'): lack-of-democracy-as-root-cause narrative (version 2.0).
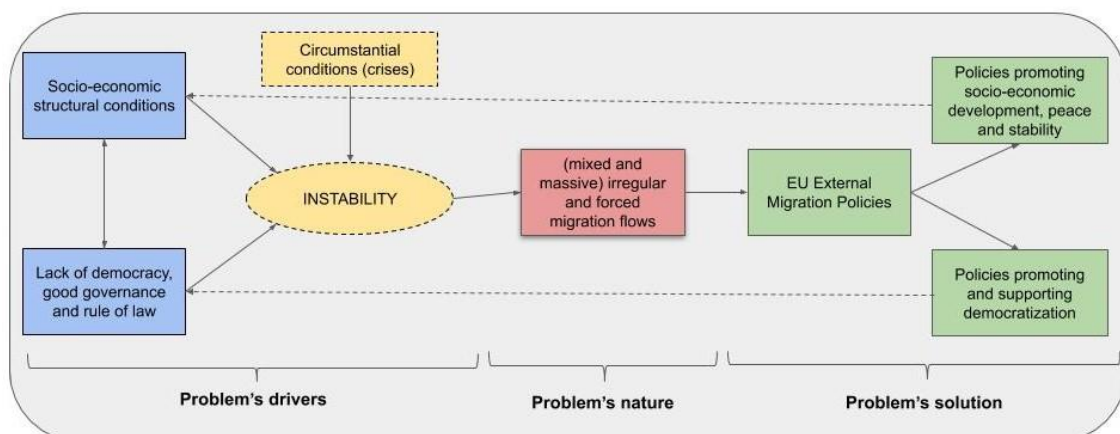
Source: Author's own elaboration.

The analysis revealed that this new context not only led to the reconfiguration of the dominant narrative but has also led to the emergence of a 'different' and 'contradictory' narrative, whose core arguments runs counter the ones found so far in the dominant narratives. Mainly, the EU started to link the historic events unfolding in the region – the Arab uprisings – with the unprecedented augmentation of migration flows heading towards Europe.

Even if not explicitly mentioned, behind this argument is the idea of *refugee hump*. Similar to the phenomenon of *migration hump,* according to which successful development would induce more and not less migration (Commission, 2002), *refugee hump* explains how "democratization" and "democracy promotion" may lead to an increase in migratory flows. This is mainly because processes of democratization and political change may be a source of instability, social upheaval and uncertainty and, at least in the short/medium term, produce an escalation in forced migration (Schmeidl, 2001 quoted by Van Hear and Sørensen, 2002). However, differently from the literature, the EU considers these processes as key drivers of both 'forced' and 'irregular' (i.e., 'voluntary') migration. Some fragments extracted from Commission documents help illustrating how the EU constructs this argument:

> "The events in the Southern Mediterranean bring hope for a better life for millions of people in our neighbourhood, as well as for greater respect of human rights, pluralism, the rule of law and social justice. As is often the case for democratic uprisings, they may also entail, in the short and medium term, upheaval and uncertainty. Political unrest and military conflicts have led to the loss of human lives and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people […]" (Commission, 2011c).

> "[…] policies need to address the different root causes of irregular and forced migration, inter alia political change and instability" (Commission, 2014).

> "Over the past ten years, there have been significant political developments in the neighbourhood. Today's neighbourhood is less stable than it was ten years ago. […] These events have served to increase the challenges faced by both the EU and its partners, aggravating economic and social pressures, irregular migration and

refugee flows, security threats and leading to diverging aspirations (Commission, 2015a)".

Although it cannot be said that democratization stopped being a desirable goal, there is at least a perception that the EU should be cautious when supporting this process, since it may have the undesirable effect of producing more instability, and, consequently, more migration (*refugee hump*). Therefore, based on this argument, the idea of postponing the promotion of democracy and good governance to the longer-term becomes even more evident and easy to sustain rhetorically. Meanwhile, in the shorter-term, the EU can focus on addressing instability and stemming migration flows arising from it through rapid solutions.

The emphasis on promoting stability can be appreciated by looking into two key policy developments that happen alongside 2015. The first one was the launching of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons (Council, 2015a). Within the Trust Fund top priorities lies enhancing stability and governance, which should be achieved by promoting conflict prevention, security and rule of law enforcement. It is important to underline that the focus on state building here is mainly thought as a way of improving border and migration management (i.e., stemming migration), and not as a tool for promoting democracy. Most interestingly, through this policy, 'strengthening the resilience of vulnerable people' arises as a key priority that will gain increasing attention and centrality in subsequent policy initiatives (Council, 2015a). The second development worth highlighting is the fact that the ENP underwent another strategic revision during 2015, in which stabilization was reinforced as the main political priority that should be tackled across sectors, "making partner countries places where people want to build their future and help tackle uncontrolled movement of people" (Commission, 2015a, p.4).

In sum, it can be observed that within this counter-narrative the nexus between EU external migration policies and democratization contradicts what has been identified so far in the other narratives, mainly because the causal logic is completely inverted. In this case, democratization is not viewed as a solution to irregular and forced migration. Contrarily, it is framed as a potential driver (push-factor) of this problem since it can

eventually lead to destabilization (uprisings, insecurity and even conflict) in the short term and unleash an influx of forced and irregular migration (*refugee hump*) (see figure 2.6). As a result, the solutions envisioned would not pass through supporting further democratization, as sustained by the dominant narrative, but through prioritizing the stability and security in the region.

Figure 2.6: Nexus configuration between EU external migration policy and democratization of Southern Mediterranean countries (post-'Arab spring' and 'migration crisis'): democratization-as-push-factor narrative.
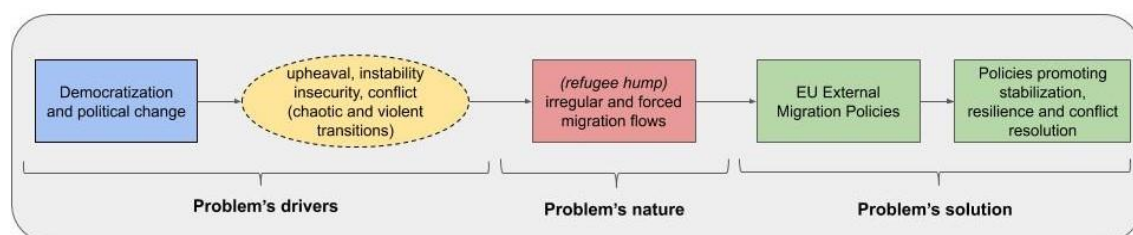
Source: Author's own elaboration.

2.4.3 Policy coherence and holistic approach

Apart from their overall configuration, the analysis has also revealed other aspects embedded in EU narratives, which exposes important assumptions about this nexus. In general, there seems to be shared claim for internal and external coherence among EU policies and mainly between migration and other relevant policy areas (Council, 2008a), such as development and humanitarian assistance. This is related to the idea that "increased migration" would have "numerous causes and effects" (Parliament, 2006a) that are complex and difficult to disentangle. For this reason, the EU, and the Parliament in particular, stresses that structural causes of migration should be addressed by holistic approach, based mainly on the Policy Coherence for Development, in order to ensure that issues interlinked with migration can be dealt with in a comprehensive manner (Parliament, 2013a, 2014a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016a).

The idea of demanding a coherent and holistic approach is mainly related to the perception of democratization and human rights as having a cross-cutting nature (Commission, 2001a, 2003b). In other words, as being closely related to other policy

fields, mainly development, conflict prevention, stability and security; all of which are also considered to play a crucial role in tackling the root causes of migration (Parliament, 2016b). On several occasions, the Commission (2001a; 2003a; 2017a) referred to this argument. Below, an example:

> "Democracy, pluralism, respect for human rights, civil liberties, the rule of law and core labour standards are all essential prerequisites for political stability, as well as for peaceful and sustained social and economic development" (European Commission 2003a).

This means that the EU perceives a strong linkage between the promotion of democracy on the one hand and the promotion of development and stability on the other. In fact, democracy is considered at the same time as a pre-condition and complementary aim for achieving these goals (Council, 2007; 2008a). The opposite is also conceived to be true, that is, economic development and job prospects, especially for the young, are considered to be of great importance to stabilise democracy (Council, 2011; European Commission, 2012a).

Finally, the EU would also be largely concerned with preventing negative impacts on democratization coming from policies in other fields, particularly the field of migration (Commission, 2001). It is also stressed in EU documents that human rights and democratization should occupy a higher position in the list of EU priorities in its relation with third countries. In fact, according to the Parliament, the EU should support democratisation and respect for human rights "regardless of the migration and asylum question" (Parliament, 2000a). For achieving this goal, it would be necessary, as appointed by the Council (2015b) and the Commission (2011f), to mainstream human rights and democracy in all EU external policies.

2.4.4 Democratic condition and conditionality

Within EU narratives, another important element has been identified, further complexifying the configuration of the between EU external migration policies and democratization of Southern Mediterranean countries. If the absence of democracy is

perceived as a push-factor of migration, the presence of democratic institutions and representative government have been perceived as pre-conditions for EU cooperation on migration with third countries. Conversely, political instability is conceived as an obstacle for cooperation (Parliament, 2000a). This condition has culminated in the broadly known 'democratic conditionality' and 'more for more' approach.

The Parliament stressed that countries beneficiaries of EU partnership should be those that "can deliver a sustainable process of democratisation, good governance, respect for human rights and economic growth and thus strengthen security and stability" (Parliament, 2011b). The Council (2012a) has also expressed that the EU should offer "more support to those partners that make progress towards inclusive democratic systems".

This means that democratisation would not only favour the reduction of migration flows but it would also increase the prospects for cooperation on migration issues between the EU and third countries. Although this has been the main argument, recently the EU issued a contrasting position. In the document launching the Partnership for Migration (2016a), the Commission stated that "Positive and negative incentives should be integrated in the EU's development policy, rewarding those countries that fulfil their international obligation to readmit their own nationals, and those that cooperate in managing the flows of irregular migrants from third countries […]". Researchers have appointed that a particular dynamic seems to be occurring in this context, i.e., the fact that the 'migratory conditionality' seems to be weakening the 'democratic conditionality' (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009).

All in all, it is interesting to notice how the political dimension – mainly the lack or presence of democracy - is a determinant element framing the cooperation between the EU and its Southern Neighbourhood.

2.4.5 A truly polarized issue?

Apart from their overall configuration and differences over time, the analysis has also revealed how EU actors (mainly the Commission, the Parliament and the Council) cast

different narratives and had divergent perceptions of this nexus and its importance within EU broader strategy.

Although it is true that there seems to be a convergence towards one dominant narrative (*lack-of-democracy-as-a-root-cause*), EU institutional bodies seem to differ in how they refer to it. In the case of the Council, it has not been surprising to observe that this body rarely makes explicit reference to this nexus; indicating that this narrative has not been a priority. Moreover, when mentioning it, the Council tends to avoid using words like 'democratization' and 'dictatorship', giving preference to less politically charged terms and repeating the ambiguous 'good/poor governance mantra':

> "Tackling the root causes of migration, for example through the creation of livelihood opportunities […] and promotion of economic growth, <u>good governance</u> and the protection of human rights" (Council, 2005).

> "The Council confirms its commitment to mobilise all appropriate instruments and policies and support efforts to address the root causes of migratory flows, in particular conflicts, political instability, human rights violations, poor socio-economic development, including lack of employment opportunities, <u>poor governance</u> and climate change." (Council, 2015a).

The Parliament, in contrast, has been much clearer when referring to this nexus. In fact, it is the main actor making straightforward statements appointing to the lack of democracy and dictatorship as important structural factors behind migration flows. Likewise, it also refers to the promotion of democratization in the Southern Neighbourhood as an essential solution on several occasions. This would be in line with the normative historical role associated to the Parliament, which would be the 'symbol of democracy' in Europe and the 'loudspeaker for basic democratic rights' (Feliu and Serra, 2015, p.30). A role that is not only externally appointed but also self-ascribed: "the key importance of the European Parliament in enhancing freedom and democracy in our neighbourhood; in this context, believes that the European Parliament should monitor closely the democratisation process in the southern Mediterranean" (Parliament, 2011a).

Moreover, the Parliament has been particularly critical and concerned with the role of other EU institutional bodies when incorporating and addressing this nexus. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining an inter-institutional dialogue on the matter, denouncing the lack of communication and feedback, especially between the Parliament and the Council (Parliament, 2011b; Feliu and Serra, 2015). It has also been critical towards other EU bodies, such as the Commission and the EEAS, calling them to make "further efforts with regard to the development and democratisation of countries of origin and to promote the rule of law, in order to tackle the problems associated with migration at their root" (Parliament, 2011a; 2016a). Finally, this body has been particularly concerned with the possible divergence of development and democratization funds towards the goal of stemming migration (2016a), such as using Official Development Assistance (ODA) for policies aimed at deterring and controlling migration (2016b).

Alongside the Parliament, the Commission has also been a protagonist in casting the dominant narrative on this matter. However, this actor seems to be more sceptical in relation to the effectiveness of policies promoting human rights and democracy on addressing the root-causes of migration. This is somehow related to the fact that push-factors are considered to be complex and unlikely to disappear (Commission, 2006). For this reason, the promotion of democracy and related values is conceived mainly as a complementary tool of migration control instead of as a central one. Moreover, despite agreeing with the Parliament in many instances, the Commission has been casting stories that might be contradictory to the dominant narrative, mainly the one relating political changes with increased migration flows (*democratization-as-push-factor narrative*).

Considering the aforementioned, it could not be affirmed that within the EU this nexus constitutes a truly polarized issue, mainly because most of the times narratives are either absent or tend to converge. Nonetheless, we can still spot some different and even contradictory stories coming from various institutional voices. This would confirm the ambivalence and inconsistencies of the EU external migration action, something that has been already underlined by the literature (Lavenex, 1999; Richey, 2013; Gueddes and Lixi, 2018). In particular, the Parliament holds a much more critical perspective when addressing the democratization-migration nexus in comparison to the Commission and

the Council, which are, in fact, the main institutional bodies in the driver's seat of the EU external migration policies. This indicates that if the Parliament was to be given its real share of power in the formulation of these policies, as stipulated in the Treaty of Lisbon, one could expect the narratives concerning this nexus to gain more prominence.

2.5 Discussion and Conclusions

Through a Narrative Policy Analysis of EU official documents from 1995 to 2018, this article explored EU stories and arguments on the linkages between EU external migration policies and the democratization of countries in the southern Mediterranean neighbourhood. In general, the analysis of coded statements and time comparison allowed for revealing how the EU (and its institutional bodies) understood the configuration of this nexus and framed the causal links between these processes, exposing EU beliefs and premises attached to it (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: The nexus between EU external migration policies and democratization: policy narrative comparison (1995-2018). Source: Author's own elaboration

Narratives	Problem's driver	Problem's nature	Problem's solution
Pre-'Arab spring' (~1995-2010)			
dominant narrative: lack-of-democracy-as-root-cause	lack of democracy, rule of law, good governance	irregular and forced migration flows	promoting and supporting democratization
First years post-'Arab spring' (~2011-12)			
dominant narrative: lack-of-democracy-as-root-cause	lack of democracy, rule of law, good governance	irregular and forced migration flows	(short-term) promoting and supporting democratization
Post-'Arab spring' and the 'migration crisis' (~2015-2018)			
dominant narrative: lack-of-democracy-as-root-cause	lack of democracy, rule of law, good governance + (intervening variable) instability and crisis	(massive and mixed) irregular and forced migration flows	(long-term) promoting and supporting democratization
counter-narrative: democratization-as-push-factor	democratization and political change + (intervening variable) instability, insecurity and conflict	(*refugee hump*) irregular and forced migration flows	promoting stabilization, conflict resolution, resilience

Firstly, the analysis exposed that despite the dispersion, divergences among EU institutional bodies and the subtle changes suffered throughout the years, the *lack-of-*

democracy-as-a-root-cause narrative has been present since the inception of the Barcelona Process. This finding confirms the idea that there is, at least rhetorically, an important normative component within EU external migration policies; something to be expected considering the EU self-perception and external projection as a normative power. However, considering the little effort the EU makes in practice to advance democracy in the region (Youngs, 2001; Bicchi, 2010), one could question if the EU would make a functional use of this rhetoric. That is, to use its internationally recognized role as a normative power for supporting higher political objectives (migration control), rather than as an end in itself (Limam and Del Sarto, 2015).

Secondly, the analysis has also uncovered some narrative shifts in the post-'Arab Spring' momentum. The most revealing one was the appearance of a competing and symmetrically opposite narrative in the context of the 2015-2016 'migration crisis' (*democratization-as-a-push-factor*). The emergence of this counter-narrative can be better understood in light of the stability-democratization dilemma that curtails and conditions EU democracy promotion in the region (Börzel et al, 2015; Börzel, 2015). This dilemma explains that despite being an explicit goal in its foreign policy, the EU does not engage in democracy promotion at all costs. On the contrary, the EU tends to prioritize security and stability over democratic change (Ibid), the 'master-frame' shaping EU actions in the region (Roccu and Voltolini, 2018).

Therefore, one could conclude that these narrative shifts occurred as a consequence of the EU growing foreign policy pragmatism towards the region in face of the wave of instability and, mainly, migratory flows unleashed in the aftermath of the 'Arab spring'. Although this per se cannot be considered as an unexpected finding, what does seem to be a novelty is the insertion of the migration variable in the democratization-stability dilemma. Throughout its history, Western powers have cast different stories to justify prioritizing stability and security over democratization (e.g. to avoid the instauration of communist regimes in Latin America). In the context of contemporary Euro-Mediterranean relations, the menace of a *refugee hump* seems to be playing such role in this equation. Thus, it would not be the risk of destabilization per se, but its association

with migration flows that would prevent the EU from engaging more proactively (or at all) in democracy promotion in the region.

The fact that such counter-narrative only became evident after the 'migration crisis' should not pass unnoticed either. Its late appearance might be related to the fact that only within this new context the arguments defended in this narrative became easier to sustain. However, even then, this narrative did not seem to become really explicit and pervasive within EU's political discourse. This is confirmed by the difficulty to find official documents where such story is expressed in a straightforward manner. Thus, it could be questioned the extent to which such narrative has been more an implicit story than an official narrative – likely to have always been present in EU policy strategy although absent from EU rhetoric.

In general, besides identifying the main narratives, the analysis has also exposed the high uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity concerning the nexus between democratization and EU migration policies. A definitive indication of this is the fact that, at least in the context of the 2015-16 'migration crisis', two antagonistic stories seemed to co-exist. This should lead us to reflect upon EU strategies for reconciling and balancing these contradictory narratives. Even though choosing to keep a certain lack of clarity in the narrative might fulfil a strategic political goal, this course of action will not prevent the EU from being accused of ambiguity and hypocrisy, something that will continue to undermine its credibility and legitimacy in terms of democracy promotion in the region (Börzel, 2015).

A further related observation has been that although it cannot be considered as a truly polarized issue, the analysis has revealed the existence of different and even contradictory stories among EU institutional bodies. Roe (1994) claims that certain levels of uncertainty ('certainties of uncertainty' as he describes it) have a functional role of enabling decision making whereas the reduction of uncertainty might freeze it. Thus, one could conclude that the levels of uncertainty and complexity contained in the narratives could be part of a political strategy for allowing decision-making in a situation of many unknowns, relative polarization and high pressure.

In methodological terms, two main backdrops of this study should be acknowledged. On the one side, the focus on written narratives and public documents as the only source of data has important limitations. This is mainly because the type and quantity of published documents clearly serves a function that is not necessarily related to EU priorities, but rather to internal, bureaucratic, and political strategies. On the other, the analysis did not pay enough attention to the subtler emotional and symbolical dimensions of narratives. This other perspective would have given more depth to the analysis in comparison to the general argumentative structures contained in the 'problem statements' analysed. This could be achieved by focusing on different analytical structures, by applying other methodologies, such as critical discourse analysis, or by interviewing political actors directly.

A final reflection would be that as in the case of the migration-development and migration-security nexuses, the migration-democratization nexus needs to be revised, mainly through the deconstruction of the purposes and interests behind it (Lavenex and Kunz, 2008). This would be possible through understanding the extent to which these policy narratives have been legitimating power relations and hierarchies, not only within the EU but also concerning Mediterranean geopolitical relations. For this, it would be necessary to study how these narratives have been currently unfolding on the ground, that is, to examine what have been the impacts of EU migration policies on the targeted countries on the South. This would be essential for further comprehension of the many stories and contradictions behind EU external migration policies, and most importantly, to understand the extent to which there is an implementation gap between EU policy narratives and EU policy practices.

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2.7 Annex

Figure 2.7 – Complete coding map
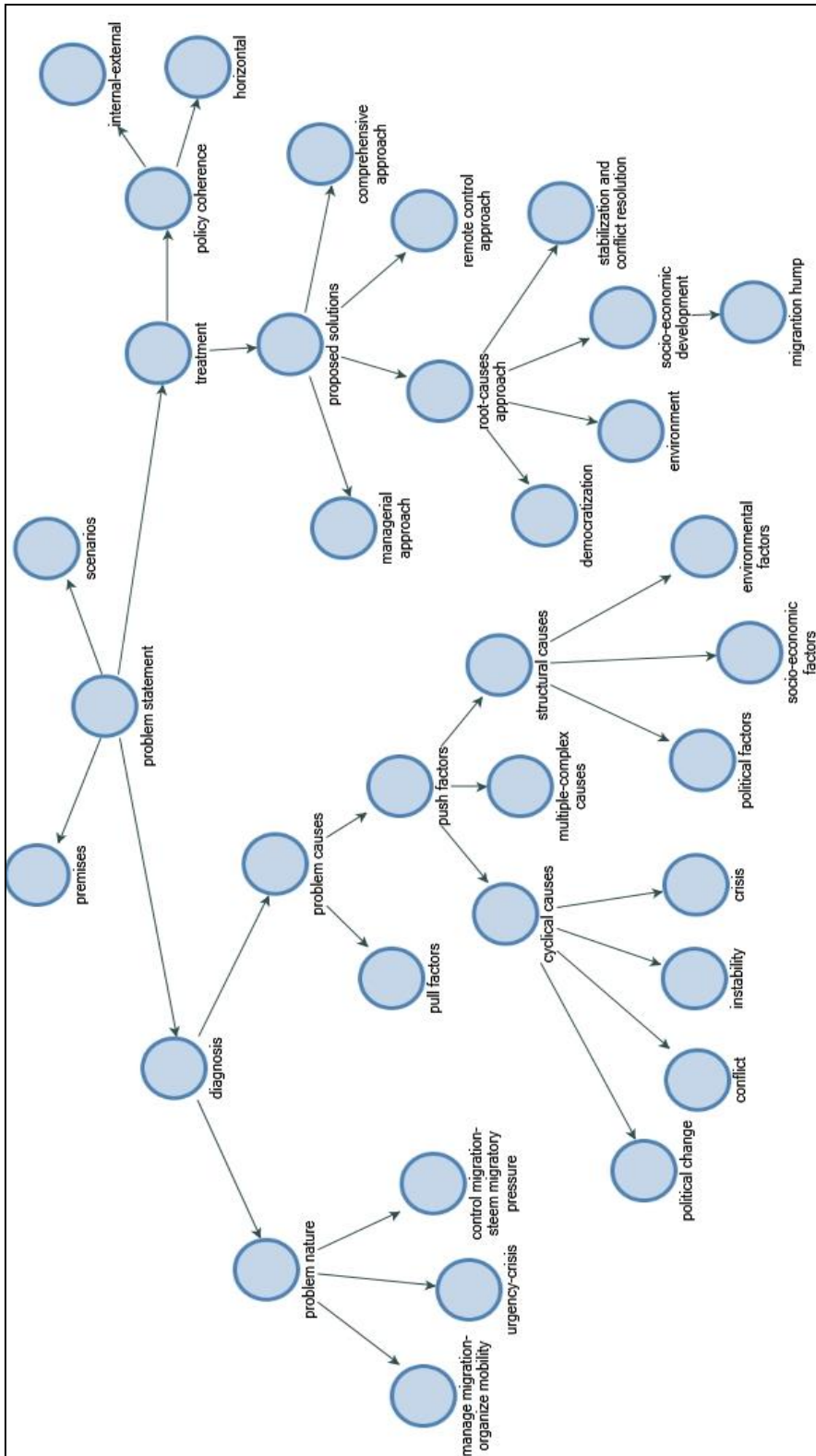
Table 2.2 – Occurrence of coded documents: problem's driver x year.

Policy documents	cyclical causes				structural causes			Total (exclusivo)
	conflict	crisis	instability	political change	environmental	political factors	socio-economic	
Year = 1995 (3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 1996 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 1998 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 1999 (1)	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Year = 2000 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Year = 2001 (2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 2002 (4)	1	0	1	0	1	1	3	3
Year = 2003 (5)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 2004 (3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 2005 (10)	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
Year = 2006 (7)	2	0	0	0	2	3	5	5
Year = 2007 (6)	2	0	0	0	2	2	2	2
Year = 2008 (5)	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	2
Year = 2009 (3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 2010 (2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 2011 (13)	2	1	2	2	2	3	5	5
Year = 2012 (4)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Year = 2013 (6)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 2014 (11)	1	2	3	2	2	1	2	3
Year = 2015 (22)	10	1	7	1	4	5	5	10
Year = 2016 (16)	5	2	5	0	4	5	6	8
Year = 2017 (13)	2	2	2	0	2	0	3	4
Year = 2018 (4)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total (143)	27	8	20	5	20	24	38	48

Table 2.3 – Occurrences of coded documents: problem's solution – democratization x year.

Policy documents classfication	democracy promotion	good governance	human rights	mobility	political change	women	youth	Total (exclusivo)
Year = 1995 (3)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Year = 1996 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 1998 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 1999 (1)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Year = 2000 (1)	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Year = 2001 (2)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Year = 2002 (4)	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
Year = 2003 (5)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 2004 (3)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Year = 2005 (10)	0	4	3	0	1	0	0	4
Year = 2006 (7)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Year = 2007 (6)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 2008 (5)	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Year = 2009 (3)	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Year = 2010 (2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year = 2011 (13)	5	6	3	4	3	3	3	7
Year = 2012 (4)	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	2
Year = 2013 (6)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Year = 2014 (11)	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	2
Year = 2015 (22)	5	7	4	0	0	0	0	9
Year = 2016 (16)	3	2	2	0	1	0	0	4
Year = 2017 (13)	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	3
Year = 2018 (4)	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total (143)	18	28	19	8	7	5	5	42

Table 2.4 – Occurrence of coded documents: problem's driver/structural causes/political factors x institutional body.

Policy documents classfication	political factors	Total (exclusivo)
Body (source) = EU Commission (53)	10	10
Body (source) = EEAS (1)	0	0
Body (source) = EU Parliament (30)	12	12
Body (source) = Multi EU Bodies (21)	1	1
Body (source) = EU and Member States (2)	0	0
Body (source) = European Council (14)	1	1
Body (source) = EU Council (28)	2	2
Total (149)	26	26

Table 2.5 – Complete list of EU Official documents

	Subject	Ref./Type	Year	Body (Source)
1	Advances made in combating illegal immigration	10009/2	2002	Council of the EU
2	Co-operation with third countries of origin and transit to jointly combat illegal immigration	02/03/9917	2002	Council of the EU
3	Thessaloniki European Council Presidency conclusions	11638/03	2003	Council of the EU
4	The Hague Programme: strengthening freedom, security	16054/04	2004	Council of the EU

	and justice in the European Union			
5	Brussels European Council Presidency Conclusions	15914/1/05	2005	Council of the EU
6	Brussels European Council Presidency Conclusions	16879/06	2006	Council of the EU
7	Brussels European Council 21/22 June 2007 Presidency Conclusions	11177/1/07	2007	Council of the EU
8	Freedom, Security, Privacy - European Home Affairs in an open world - Report of the Informal High-Level Advisory Group on the Future of European Home Affairs Policy ("The Future Group")	11657/08	2008	Council of the EU
9	Brussels European Council Presidency Conclusions	16616/1/07	2008	Council of the EU
10	Brussels European Council Presidency Conclusions	15265/1/09	2009	Council of the EU
11	The Stockholm Programme – An open and secure Europe serving and protecting the citizens	17024/09	2009	Council of the EU
12	Council Conclusions on the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility	9417/12	2012	Council of the EU
13	Relations avec le Maroc: projet de plan d'action Maroc pour la mise en œuvre du statut avancé (2013-2017)	17584/13	2013	Council of the EU
14	Joint declaration establishing a Mobility Partnership between the Kingdom of Morocco and the European Union and its Member States	6139/13	2013	Council of the EU
15	Council conclusions on "Taking action to better manage migratory flows"	Press 10/10/2014	2014	Council of the EU
16	Declaration conjointe etabilissant un partenariat de mobilite entre la Tunisie, d'une part, et l'Union Europeenne et les États Membres Participants	N/A	2014	Council of the EU
17	Draft Council Conclusions on the implementation of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility	8443/14	2014	Council of the EU
18	Council Conclusions on Migration	12880/15	2015	Council of the EU
19	Council Conclusions on the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015 – 2019.	10897/15	2015	Council of the EU
20	Informal meeting of EU heads of state or government on migration	Statements and Remarks 673/15	2015	Council of the EU

21	Outcome of the Council Meeting 3391st Council meeting Foreign Affairs and Development	Press 36	2015	Council of the EU
22	Special meeting of the European Council, 23 April 2015 – statement	Press Release 204/15	2015	Council of the EU
23	Valletta Summit on Migration - 11/12 November 2015 - Action Plan	Action Plan	2015	Council of the EU
24	Council conclusions on the EU approach to forced displacement and development	PRESS RELEASE 240/16	2016	Council of the EU
25	Council Conclusions on Tunisia	13056/16	2016	Council of the EU
26	External Aspects of Migration	9111/16	2016	Council of the EU
27	Malta Declaration by the members of the European Council on the external aspects of migration: addressing the Central Mediterranean route	Statements and Remarks 43/17	2017	Council of the EU
28	European Council Conclusions	PRESS RELEASE 421/18	2018	Council of the EU
29	Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Tunisia, of the other part	L 097	1995	EEAS
30	Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part	L 70/2	1996	EEAS
31	Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an Association between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Arab Republic of Egypt, of the other part	L 312	2004	EEAS
32	EU/Morocco Action Plan	Action Plan	2005	EEAS
33	EU/Tunisia Action Plan	Action Plan	2005	EEAS
34	Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an Association between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, of the other part	L 265	2005	EEAS
35	EU/Egypt Action Plan	Action Plan	2007	EEAS
36	Migration presents a complex challenge but we must never forget human dimension	Press	2017	EEAS
37	The EU and the External Dimension of Human Rights Policy	COM (95) 567	1995	EU Commission

38	Democratisation, the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance: the challenges of the partnership between the European Union and the ACP States	COM (98) 146	1998	EU Commission
39	European Union's Role in Promoting Human Rights and Democratisation in Third Countries	COM (2001) 525	2001	EU Commission
40	Integrating migration issues in the EUs relations with third countries	COM (2002) 703	2002	EU Commission
41	Paving the way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument	COM (2003) 393 final	2003	EU Commission
42	Reinvigorating EU actions on Human Rights and democratisation with Mediterranean partners Strategic guidelines	COM (2003) 294 final	2003	EU Commission
43	Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours	COM (2003) 104	2003	EU Commission
44	European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy Paper	COM (2004) 373	2004	EU Commission
45	A strategy on the external dimension of the area of freedom, security and justice	COM(2005) 491 final	2005	EU Commission
46	EU Strategy for Africa: Towards a Euro-African pact to accelerate Africa's development	COM(2005) 489 final	2005	EU Commission
47	Migration and Development: Some concrete orientations	COM(2005) 390 final	2005	EU Commission
48	On the European Union Development Policy "The European Consensus"	COM(2005) 311 final	2005	EU Commission
49	Priority actions for responding to the challenges of migration: First follow-up to Hampton Court	COM(2005) 621 final	2005	EU Commission
50	Tenth Anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: A work programme to meet the challenges of the next five years	COM (2005) 139	2005	EU Commission
51	On Policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration of third-country nationals	COM (2006) 402 final	2006	EU Commission
52	On STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY	COM(2006)726 final	2006	EU Commission
53	The Global Approach to Migration one year on: Towards a comprehensive European migration policy	COM(2006) 735 final	2006	EU Commission
54	An area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen	COM (2009) 262 final	2009	EU Commission

55	Delivering an area of freedom, security and justice for Europe's citizens Action Plan Implementing the Stockholm Programme	COM(2010) 171 final	2010	EU Commission
56	A dialogue for migration, mobility and security with the southern Mediterranean	COM (2011) 292	2011	EU Commission
57	A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean Neighbourhood	COM (2011) 200	2011	EU Commission
58	Communication on Migration	COM (2011) 248 final	2011	EU Commission
59	Evaluation of EU Readmission Agreements	COM(2011) 76 final	2011	EU Commission
60	Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change	COM (2011) 637 final	2011	EU Commission
61	New response to a changing neighbourhood	COM (2011) 303	2011	EU Commission
62	The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility	COM (2011) 743	2011	EU Commission
63	Supporting closer cooperation and regional integration in the Maghreb: Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia	JOIN (2012) 36	2012	EU Commission
64	The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations	COM(2012) 492 final	2012	EU Commission
65	Maximising the Development Impact of Migration: The EU contribution for the UN High-level Dialogue and next steps towards broadening the development-migration nexus	COM(2013) 292 final	2013	EU Commission
66	An open and secure Europe.	COM (2014) 154	2014	EU Commission
67	Neighbourhood at the crossroads – taking stock of a year of challenges, Brussels, 27 March 2014	Press Release	2014	EU Commission
68	Report on the implementation of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility 2012-2013	COM(2014) 96 final	2014	EU Commission
69	A European Agenda on Migration	COM (2015) 240	2015	EU Commission
70	A European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, Valletta, 12 November 2015	Fact Sheet	2015	EU Commission
71	Joint Foreign and Home Affairs Council: Ten point action plan on migration, Luxembourg, 20 April 2015	Press Release	2015	EU Commission
72	Managing the refugee crisis: State of Play of the	COM(2015) 510 final	2015	EU Commission

	Implementation of the Priority Actions under the European Agenda on Migration			
73	Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy	JOIN(2015) 50 final	2015	EU Commission
74	The European cooperation with Africa on migration, Brussels, 9 November 2015	Fact Sheet	2015	EU Commission
75	Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy	JOIN (2015) 6	2015	EU Commission
76	Valleta Summit: European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa	Fact Sheet	2015	EU Commission
77	First Progress Report: on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration	COM(2016) 700 final	2016	EU Commission
78	On establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration	COM (2016) 385	2016	EU Commission
79	Second Progress Report: First Deliverables on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration	COM(2016) 960 final	2016	EU Commission
80	Strengthening EU support for Tunisia	JOIN(2016) 47 final	2016	EU Commission
81	A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action	JOIN(2017) 21 final	2017	EU Commission
82	Fifth Progress Report on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration	COM(2017) 471 final	2017	EU Commission
83	Fourth Progress Report on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration	COM(2017) 350 final	2017	EU Commission
84	Migration on the Central Mediterranean route Managing flows, saving lives	JOIN(2017) 4 final	2017	EU Commission
85	On the Delivery of the European Agenda on Migration	COM(2017) 558 final	2017	EU Commission
86	Progress report on the European Agenda on Migration	COM(2017) 669 final	2017	EU Commission
87	Renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership	JOIN (2017) 17	2017	EU Commission
88	Third Progress Report on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration	COM(2017) 205 final	2017	EU Commission
89	Proposal for a Ccouncil Decisions authorising the Commission to approve, on behalf of the Union, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and	COM(2018) 168 final	2018	EU Commission

	Regular Migration in the area of immigration policy			
90	Report on asylum-seekers and migrants – action plans for countries of origin or transit. High Level Working Group	A5-0057/2000	2000	EU Parliament
91	Report on the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council in view of the European Council of Thessaloniki on the development of a common policy on illegal immigration, smuggling and trafficking of human beings, external borders and the return of illegal residents (COM(2003) 323 - 2003/2156(INI))	A5-0419/2003	2003	EU Parliament
92	European Parliament resolution on the EU common immigration policy	P6_TA(2006)0386	2006	EU Parliament
93	Joint Motion for a European Parliament resolution on the EU common immigration policy	RC\632558EN	2006	EU Parliament
94	European Parliament resolution of 26 September 2007 on the policy plan on legal migration	P6_TA(2007)0414	2007	EU Parliament
95	Report on the Policy Plan on Legal Migration	A6-0322/2007	2007	EU Parliament
96	Report on policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration of third-country nationals	A6-0323/2007	2009	EU Parliament
97	Migration flows arising from instability: Migration flows arising from instability: scope and role of the EU foreign policy	P7_TA (2011) 0121	2011	EU Parliament
98	Report on migration arising from instability: scope and role of EU foreign policy	A7-0075/2011	2011	EU Parliament
99	Joint Motion for a Resolution on migratory flows in the Mediterranean, with particular attention to the tragic events off Lampedusa	RC\1007512EN	2013	EU Parliament
100	Migratory flows in the Mediterranean, with particular attention to the tragic events off Lampedusa	P7_TA(2013)0448	2013	EU Parliament
101	Situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration	P8_TA(2014)0105	2014	EU Parliament
102	European Parliament resolution of 10 September 2015 on migration and refugees in Europe	P8_TA(2015) 0317	2015	EU Parliament
103	European Parliament resolution of 7 June 2016 on the EU 2015	P8_TA(2016)0246	2015	EU Parliament

	Report on Policy Coherence for Development			
104	European Parliamentary Research Service - European Neighborhood Policy	Briefing	2015	EU Parliament
105	Extraordinary European Council meeting (23 April 2015) - The latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies.	P8_TA (2015) 0176	2015	EU Parliament
106	Opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration	2015/2095(INI)	2015	EU Parliament
107	European Parlamentary Research Service - Growing impact of EU migration policy on development cooperation	Briefing	2016	EU Parliament
108	European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2016 on the EU Trust Fund for Africa: the implications for development and humanitarian aid	P8_TA(2016)0337	2016	EU Parliament
109	Report on human rights and migration in third countries	A8-0245/2016	2016	EU Parliament
110	Report On the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration	A8-0066/2016	2016	EU Parliament
111	The situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration	P8_TA (2016) 0102	2016	EU Parliament
112	Study: The Joint Africa-EU Strategy	EP/EXPO/B/DEVE/FWC/2013-08/Lot5/17	2017	EU Parliament
113	European Parliament resolution of 18 April 2018 on progress on the UN Global Compacts for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and on Refugees (2018/2642(RSP))	P8_TA-PROV(2018)0118	2018	EU Parliament
114	Motion for a Resolution on the Progress on the UN Global Compact	B8-0184/2018	2018	EU Parliament
115	European Council meeting (28 June 2016) – Conclusions	EUCO 26/16	2016	European Council
116	European Council meeting (28 June 2018) – Conclusions	EUCO 9/18	2018	European Council
117	Tampere European Council 15 and 16 October 1999 Presidency Conclusions	N/A	1999	European Council
118	Laeken European Council 14 and 15 December 2001 Presidency Conclusions	SN 300/1/01 REV 1	2001	European Council

119	Seville European Council 21 and 22 June 2002 Presidency Conclusions	13463/02	2002	European Council
120	European Council 23/24 June 2011 Conclusions	EUCO 23/1/11 REV 1	2011	European Council
121	Extraordinary European Council 11 March 2011 Declaration	EUCO 7/11	2011	European Council
122	European Council 1/2 March 2012 Conclusions	EUCO 4/3/12 REV 3	2012	European Council
123	European Council 24/25 October 2013 Conclusions	EUCO 169/13	2013	European Council
124	European Council 26/27 June 2014 Conclusions	EUCO 79/14	2014	European Council
125	European Council Meeting (15 October 2015) – Conclusions	EUCO 26/15	2015	European Council
126	European Council meeting (25 and 26 June 2015) – Conclusions	EUCO 22/15	2015	European Council
127	European Council meeting (20 and 21 October 2016) – Conclusions	EUCO 31/16	2016	European Council
128	European Council meeting (28 June 2016) – Conclusions	EUCO 26/16	2016	European Council
129	European Council meeting (19 October 2017) – Conclusions	EUCO 14/17	2017	European Council
130	Final Declaration of the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, 27-28 November 1995	EU 11/1995, at 136.	1995	Multi EU Bodies
131	Euro-Africa Partnership for migration and development - Rabat Declaration	Declaration	2006	Multi EU Bodies
132	The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership - Political Statement and Action Plan - Lisbon Summit	16344/07 (Presse 291)	2007	Multi EU Bodies
133	First Action Plan (2008-2010) for the implementation of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership	Action Plan	2008	Multi EU Bodies
134	Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, Paris, 13 July 2008, at 1. - Paris Declaration	Declaration	2008	Multi EU Bodies
135	Third Africa-EU Summit, 29/30 November 2010 - Tripoli Declaration	Declaration	2010	Multi EU Bodies
136	Joint Africa EU Strategy Action Plan 2011-2013	Action Plan	2011	Multi EU Bodies
137	Third Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development - Dakar Declaration	Declaration	2011	Multi EU Bodies
138	Euro-Africa Partnership for migration and development - Rome Declaration	Declaration	2014	Multi EU Bodies
139	Fourth EU-Africa Summit 2-3 April 2014, Brussels - Declaration	Declaration	2014	Multi EU Bodies

140	Fourth EU-Africa Summit 2-3 April 2014, Brussels - Roadmap 2014-2017	Action Plan	2014	Multi EU Bodies
141	Valletta Summit on Migration - 11-12 November 2015 - Political declaration	Declaration	2015	Multi EU Bodies
142	Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy	Declaration	2016	Multi EU Bodies
143	African Union and European Union Summmit 2017 29-30 November 2017 Cote d'Ivoire Summit	Declaration	2017	Multi EU Bodies

3. HINDERING DEMOCRACY THROUGH MIGRATION POLICIES? THE NEXUS BETWEEN EU EXTERNAL MIGRATION POLICIES PRACTICES AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF MOROCCO

3.1 Introduction

Since its first inception during the Tampere Council in 1999, democratization has been devised as an important element of EU external migration policies (Faustini-Torres, 2020). Within the EU narrative, lack of democracy has been mainly conceived as a root-cause of migration and the democratic development of southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs) as a central and favourable condition for EU goals of stemming migration at the source (Ibid). This implies that, at least in rhetorical terms, the EU intends to impact positively on the democratization of these countries, either through its traditional tools of democracy promotion or within the framework of EU external migration policies (in particular, through the so-called 'root-causes approach'). At the same time, however, processes of democratization in the neighbourhood have also been conceived by the EU as a push-factor of migration (Faustini-Torres, 2020). According to EU narrative, these processes are highly uncertain and risk producing more instability, and, consequently, increased migration flows in the short-term (an effect also known as refugee hump) (Dandashly, 2015). This sort of argument would be behind EU reluctance to invest harder in democracy promotion in the region, opting for stability and keeping migration under control (Börzel and Van Hüllen, 2014; Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016). Even if less explicit and pervasive, this counter-narrative gained ground mainly within the context of the 2015-2016 'migration crisis' (Faustini-Torres, 2020).

The existence of these two contradictory narratives explains and reflects on the high complexity and ambiguity concerning EU assumptions and expectations about the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs, i.e., about how these two macro processes of international affairs intermesh and impact each other. Such inconsistency is in part related to the fact that the EU has been entrapped for decades under the stability-vs-democratization dilemma (Khalifa-Isaac, 2013; Börzel, 2015), which would be one of the major policy impasses the EU faces in its external action

(Kostanyan, 2017). Therefore, this sort of inconsistency is very likely to be found not only in terms of EU policy narratives but also EU policy practices. The gap between EU rhetoric and practice has been analysed and exposed by many authors (Bicchi, 2009, 2010; Dimitrovova, 2010; Völkel, 2014; Kostanyan, 2017). In fact, according to Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi (2020, p. 7): "migration governance is known to be a field where norms and practices diverge dramatically". Having this background as the main point of departure, this article proposes continuing to explore the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs by focusing on *policy practices,* that is, on the processes of policy implementation and their effects on the ground. The turn to policy practices is done in two stages.

The first step consists in suggesting a theoretical framework to empirically analyse the practical nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratisation of SMCs. This is done through a process of bridge-building, that is, by putting together three streams of research that deals with inter-state and intra-state relations and how they intertwine: (a) the external dimension of democratization; (b) the external dimension of autocratic resilience and (c) the politics of international migration. Based on their combination, the article sets forth two arguments about the mechanisms linking these two processes.

The first argument centres on the inter-state dimension and contends that migration, as a matter of high politics and a significant international and perceived security issue, should be studied as a *linkage* of extreme relevance for Euro-Med relations, capable of changing motivations and strategic calculations of actors at both shores of the Mediterranean and influencing their *leverage* over each other. The second one – focused on the intra-state dimension - defends that the externalization of EU migration policies might impact the *regime's organizational power*, influencing power positions and modifying the incentive structures of the domestic actors in SMCs, being potentially an important tool for autocratic resilience.

The second step consists in applying the suggested framework to Morocco and assessing the validity of arguments for this case-study. Two main reasons motivated this choice.

On the one hand, Morocco has been constantly targeted by EU external migration policies and has been 'cooperating' with the EU in the management of migration flows for the last 25 years at least. In fact, this country is the main EU partner in North Africa, the most active member of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the primary recipient of aid in the region (Kausch, 2009; Catalano and Graziano, 2016). On the other hand, even if King Mohammed VI adapted the democratic demands made during the Arab uprisings, that did not represent a radical step towards political change. In fact, authors refer to Morocco as a case of stalled democratization (Cavatorta, 2015). Besides, and for this reason, Morocco has also been a target for EU policies when it comes to democracy promotion, at least in rhetorical terms.

Therefore, the analysis focuses on Morocco mainly because it constitutes a paradigmatic case among SMCs (Den Hertog, 2017, El Qadim, 2010). Moreover, is taken as a representative case to capture possible regional dynamics, learn lessons and serve as a pathway for researching similar ones. The case study relies on a content analysis of different sources of qualitative data: EU policy documents, NGOs' reports, empirical literature, and newspaper issues. The timeframe considered for the analysis has been restricted to the years 2015-2020 for simplifying data collection and analysis and due to the salience of events around these years. Since empirical research on authoritarian regimes might be challenging and evidence hard to trace, it is important to underline that this analysis does not aim at giving definitive answers or proving links of causality. Instead, it seeks to provide a greater sense of the mechanisms that link externalization and democratization and drawing hypotheses. Most importantly, is expects to get us closer to understanding the extent to which there is a gap between EU policy narratives and policy practices and how deep and wide it might be.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

What are the theoretical links between the externalization of EU migration policies and the democratization of SMCs? The main goal of this session is to suggest analytical frames and conceptual tools for empirically analysing the nexus between these two macro processes of international affairs. This is done by bridging different fields of study that

have remained rather apart. On the one hand, I focus on the literatures of democratization and autocratic resilience, and mainly those works that look at the interplay between international and domestic factors (Burnell and Schlumberger, 2010). On the other hand, to account for the migration dimension, I rely on works that look at the interplay between migration and interstate relations. In sum, the theoretical framework combines three streams of research: (a) the external dimension of democratization; (b) the external dimension of autocratic resilience and (c) the politics of international migration.

3.2.1. The external dimension of democratization: looking outside-in

Although democratization is mostly perceived as a "domestic affair par excellence", (Schmitter, 2004) the literature has increasingly acknowledged the importance and effect of the international dimension on impeding or enhancing democratization processes (Huntington, 1991; Whitehead, 2001; Teorell, 2010; Brown, 2011). Most importantly, the last two decades have seen the appearance of several works that look outside-in (Leininger, 2010; Burnell and Schlumberger, 2010), explaining how external actors and factors might influence internal political processes (Yilmaz, 2002; Levitsky and Way, 2005, 2006, 2010; Tolstrup, 2009, 2013; Hill, 2016).

The seminal works of Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2005, 2006, 2010), and their linkage-leverage model, were determinant to advance knowledge in this area. According to them, two main factors would explain variations in Western influence on political change: *leverage* and *linkage*. *Leverage* refers to the external actors' capacity to exert pressure on regimes and, at the same time, to the regimes' ability to withstand outside influence. Then, it is a variable that accounts for the difference of power between those seeking (external actor) and resisting (target state) democratic change (Tolstrup, 2014). Leverage can be exerted through a variety of means, such as political conditionality, sanctions, diplomatic pressure and in the most extreme cases, military intervention. Moreover, three main factors are appointed as determining the level of leverage: (i) target states' size and military and economic strength, (ii) the existing of competing issues on Western foreign policy agenda (e.g., national security, immigration etc.) and (iii) an alternative regional power that can support the country.

Linkage refers to the density of a country's ties to external actors. In Levitsky and Way model[22], it is conceived as a structural variable, being the product of geography, historical factors (e.g., colonialism) and geostrategic alliances. Although they are divided in six main categories– i.e., economic, intergovernmental, technocratic, social, informational, and civil society – they usually have a cluster effect (Hill, 2016). The main role of linkages would be to channel influence by affecting the motivations of decision makers. Most importantly, linkages would increase the effectiveness of leverage (Levitsky and Way, 2005). In fact, the authors emphasize that leverage alone is unlikely to cause democratization. Conversely, "where linkage is high but leverage is relatively low, external democratizing pressure will be diffuse, indirect, and slow-moving, but it may nevertheless be substantial" (Ibid, p.387). The rational then is that the higher the linkage, the greater the effect of leverage.

The contribution of Jacob Tolstrup (2013, 2014) is also particularly relevant here. In his model, he combines the macro-logic of structural determinants (leverage and linkages) with the micro-logic of domestic actors' agency (gatekeeper elites). According to him, far from being the mere object of external influence, *gatekeeper elites* can develop and maneuverer linkages, being "at least as important as geography, history and culture – they can both condition the relationship given by structural factors and create linkages on their own, independently of structural preconditions". In other words, they could facilitate or constrain ties to external actors "based on their main values and/or strategic calculation of both the internal and external costs and benefits of political change" (Tolstrup, 2013, p.717).

He identifies three main kinds of gatekeeper elites: (i) ruling elites (the core group that is in day-to-day control of the state) (ii) opposition elites (leaders of political parties, movements, or NGOs that want to replace the incumbent regime) and (iii) economic elites (leaders of heavyweight business corporations) (Tolstrup, 2014, p.127). Even though the density of linkages could be, in principle, influenced by any gatekeeper elites, Tolstrup

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[22] The main limitation of Levitsky and Way model is that it has not been sought to contemplate countries within the MENA region, which includes those considered in this work. However, this limitation has been challenged by the work of J.N.C. Hill (2016), which demonstrated that such model could be applied to study the democratization of Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania) – opening the possibility for other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to also be considered.

considers that ruling elites – e.g., presidents, prime ministers, high officials – usually have more power for doing so. Examples of how the elites that hold power might influence/change linkages abound: through approving external assistance, applying for foreign credit or economic assistance, through curtailing (or encouraging) freedom of movement, and through deciding to upgrade or downgrade their countries activities in the various international commitments.

In sum, in Tolstrup's model, the structure (*leverage* and *linkage*) and actors (*gatekeeper elites*) continuously interact in iterative sequences (See Figure 2). An important consideration is that leverage would be determinant in setting the stage for the other relations, meaning that in a scenario of power asymmetry, stronger external actors would have advantage in influencing the target state, being more difficult for gatekeeper elites to shape the linkages. However, he also underlines that the success of elite gatekeeping is highly dependent on the linkages in question, of how important they are and if and how (fast) they can be changed.

Figure 3.1: Model of how external actors can influence democratization.
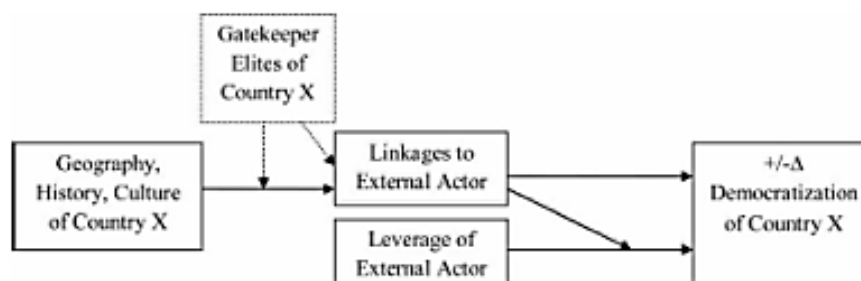
Figure 1. Model of how external actors can influence democratization.

Source: Retrieved from Tolstrup 2013.

3.2.2 The external dimension of autocratic resilience: looking inside-out

The work of Tolstrup (2014) clearly put forward the idea that target states are not passive actors in this political game and linkages can be exploited by gatekeeper elites not only to avoid external pressure but also to guarantee their survival. In fact, in another work he explained that "the push for democracy is not a one-way process; instead, the push is counterbalanced and resisted with every means possible by autocrats, who wish to remain

in power" (Tolstrup, 2009, p.925). Thus, apart from looking outside-in to understand external influence on democratization, it is important to invert the focus and look inside-out, that is, to pay closer attention to the intra-state dimension and how domestic actors might act and react to external variables (Pace et al, 2009).

The literature on autocratic resilience is of critical importance in this sense, since it explains how authoritarian regimes tend to resist, to fight for remaining in power and adapt in an environment with increased pressure for democratic reform (Heydemann, 2007, Schlumberger, 2007, Ambrosio, 2009). Behind this lies the idea that "to stay in power dictators have to dissuade an amorphous and ever-shifting assortment of individuals, groups and communities from challenging their rule" (Levitsky and Way, 2010 p. 56). At the same time, they must "persuade a range of figures, organisations, and constituencies, on whose support they depend, to remain loyal and committed to their cause" (Ibid), which by and large implies the creation of regime legitimacy (Gilley, 2009). Therefore, "only by holding the capacity to quell opposition and reinforce elite cohesion can a regime withstand the external and internal pressures for change, and only this way can authoritarianism be consolidated" (Tolstrup, 2009 p. 934).

The most important variable within this dimension seems to be what Levitsky and Way (2010) have coined as the *regime's organizational power*. This variable would be determined by three capabilities of unequal importance (from higher to lower): coercive state capacity, ruling-party strength and, last and least, control of the economy. Both coercive capacity and party strength are determined by two criteria: scope and cohesion. Scope is decided by the breadth and depth of a security apparatus or party. Cohesion is decided by the strength of purpose and degree of unity exhibited by a security apparatus or party. Discretionary control of the economy is decided by the amount of influence a regime has over vital sectors of the economy and sources of finance.

Within this variable, the *coercive state capacity* is considered as one of the most important features of authoritarian resilience (Way and Levistky, 2010). According to Way and Levitsky (ibid), this capability mainly refers to the effectiveness and experience of the security forces (such as the military, police, gendarmerie, intelligence). In general,

effective coercion would depend on funding, equipment and training as well as robust chains of command. Moreover, a regime would withhold a high capacity when it has a 'large, well trained, and well-equipped internal security apparatus with an effective presence across the national territory'. It implies that the better able a regime is to physically defend itself the better its stability and chances of survival.

The literature considers that international factors may influence these variables of autocratic resilience both in direct and indirect ways (Burnell and Schlumberger, 2010; Tolstrup, 2009). An example of direct effect would be when actors aim at influencing the country's electoral regime and the elite's effective power to rule. Conversely, indirect effects would be more related to impacts on the *coercive state capacity*. Likewise, different kinds of sanctions and foreign policy instruments could also influence the regime indirectly – including democracy promotion per se, which is appointed as having the direct effect of enhancing or stabilizing autocracy (Khakee, 2017). Apart from that, it is important to bear in mind not only how external elements might work in pro of autocratic resilience but mainly "how authoritarian MENA regimes and opposition actors induce external actors, and specifically the EU, to perceive and react to their respective situation" (Pace et al 2009, p.8). In other words, to how domestic actors might resort to the international sphere to improve and keep their position within the internal political game.

3.2.3 The politics of international migration: looking at the interplay between migration and interstate bargaining

Finally, to account for the migration dimension, I resort to the literature that looks at the interplay between migration and interstate bargaining, that is, at the politics of international migration. Kelly Greenhill (2010) in her seminal work "Weapons of Mass Migration" has been one of the first to study the use of displaced people as an instrument of foreign policy, a feature she perceives as relatively common in world politics. Some years later, to conceptualize how cross-border population mobility affects the conduct of states' diplomacy (Tsourapas, 2017, 2018), Adamson and Tsourapas (2019) coined the concept of *migration diplomacy*. This term refers to "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" (Ibid, 2019, p. 17). In this sense, EU's attempt to 'externalize' migration control towards third countries would provide several examples of migration diplomacy (Adamson and Tsourapas, 2019).

As in the case of traditional diplomacy, migration diplomacy would be shaped by the interests and existing power relationship between states (ibid). However, instead of looking into economic and military indicators, here is the position of the country in the migration system that would determine their interests and power, that is, if they are countries of destination, origin, or transit of migration. This does not imply that a country must stick to only one position in their migration diplomacy nor that this is immutable over time. In fact, countries may hold simultaneous positions in the web of migration and adopt different strategies depending on their foreign policy interests, bargaining power, etc. (Adamson and Tsourapas, 2019).

The authors also underline that migration diplomacy relies largely on a process known as *issue linkage* (Adamson and Tsourapas, 2019), that is, the simultaneous negotiations on two or more issues aiming for joint settlement (Tsourapas 2017). This means using migration as a means for the pursuit of other goals, be them security, economic or diplomatic ones. In fact, one of the main contributions of their article has been to emphasize how countries in the Global South are able to use migration diplomacy as issue linkage as much as stronger states in the Global North. Additionally, they differentiate between two sort of migration diplomacy that countries in the Global South might engage in: coercive and cooperative migration diplomacy.

The first type would imply mobilising the 'threat of migration' (Greenhill, 2010; Andersson and Keen, 2019) through promoting or facilitating irregular movements. The second one involves playing the 'efficiency card' (Cassarino and Del Sarto, 2018) through showing compliance and repressing migratory flows. In both cases, countries of origin and transit would be capable of applying a 'reverse conditionality' to gain leverage and obtain concessions from the 'host state', inverting the initial hierarchy (Völkel, 2020)

in the 'border security gaming' (Andersson and Keen, 2019). In other words, through mobilising the 'menace of migration' or the 'promise of compliance' they would be able to subvert the balance of power and obtain EU concessions, which comes mainly in the form of moral/political and/or economic/material support (Adamson and Tsourapas, 2019; Zardo and Cavatorta, 2018).

Overall, the main contribution of the migration diplomacy concept would be to further confirm the importance of the management of cross-border mobility for the realm of international politics, a variable capable of producing tensions and opportunities for leverage and issue-linkage for both weaker and stronger countries in global politics (Adamson and Tsourapas, 2019; Tsourapas, 2018).

Table 3.1 Theoretical framework: summary of main concepts and variables.

	CONCEPTS-VARIABLES	DEFINITION	ELEMENTS
INTER-STATE DIMENSION	*Migration diplomacy*	The strategic use of migration flows as a mean to obtain other aims, or the use of diplomatic methods to achieve goals related to migration. Two types: coercive and cooperative.	Position of countries within the web of migration chain: (1) Country of origin (2) Country of transit (3) Country of reception
	Leverage of external actor	Amount of pressure the external actor can put on a Regime and the regimes' ability to withstand outside influence.	Three main factors would determine the level of leverage of the external actor: 1. Strength of regimes' economy and state structures 2. The existence of competing issues on the external actors' foreign policy agenda 3. The existence of alternative regional power that can support the country politically, economically, and militarily (power patron or Black Knight)
	Linkages to external actor	The density of a country's ties to Western countries and regional organizations such as the EU.	There would be six types of linkages: 1. Economic linkage – trade flows, credit, and investment 2. Intergovernmental linkage – bilateral and diplomatic ties as well as participation in alliances, treaties, and international organizations 3. Technocratic linkage – share of elites educated abroad and/or has professional ties to foreign universities or multilateral institutions. 4. Social linkage – tourism, migration, and diaspora networks. 5. Information linkage – cross-border telecommunication, Internet connections, and foreign media penetration. 6. Civil society linkage – ties to international NGOs, international religious and party organizations, and other transnational networks.
INTRA-STATE DIMENSION	*Gatekeeper elites of target state*	Domestic actors that would hold the key to turning the volume of an external actors' pressure up and down.	Three types of gatekeeper elites: 1. Ruling elites (the core group that is in day-to-day control of the state). 2. Opposition elites (leaders of political parties, movements, or NGOs that want to replace the incumbent regime). 3. Economic elites (leaders of heavyweight business corporations).
	Organizational power of target state	Regime's ability to sustain itself.	Three dimensions: 1. Coercive state capacity: effectiveness and experience of the security forces. 2. Ruling party strength: cohesion, reach and mobilisation capacity of the ruling party. 3. Control of the economy: the amount of influence a regime has over vital sectors of the economy and sources of finance

3.2.4 Setting the arguments: how externalization meets democratization?

The insights, analytical frames and conceptual tools provided by these three areas of academic knowledge combined can enlighten our theoretical understanding of the mechanisms linking the externalization of EU migration policies and the democratization of SMCs. The key variables in the framework have been organized in Table 3.1 and divided in two overarching dimensions - international/inter-state and domestic/intra-state (see Table 3.1). This does not imply that the dimensions and variables are independent of each other, on the contrary, they are closely interrelated and influence each other. In fact, the main assumption behind this framework is that "the national and the international are mutually constitutive and so best understood as 'two sides of one coin'" (Burnell and Schlumberger, 2010). However, such division allows for more clarity when applying it to empirical analysis. Therefore, this article sets forth two arguments, each related to one of the proposed dimensions.

Even if migration has been considered within the category of *social linkages*, this type of connection has not received much attention by the literature of democratization and autocratic resilience. According to Tolstrup (2013), for instance, *gatekeeper elites* would not be capable of substantially affecting cross-border movement, only in the case of totalitarian regimes such as North Korea. Here I argue differently. As the literature on politics of international migration and the migration-foreign policy nexus suggests, I contend that migration should be considered as an important *linkage* in international relations in general, and Euro-Med relations in specific, capable of changing motivations and strategic calculations of actors at both shores and influencing their *leverage* over each other. Moreover, apart from having a potential effect on its own, it would have even more when clustered with other economic and intergovernmental linkages through processes of *issue-linkage* that are common-place in migration diplomacy.

On the one hand, migration might shape EU's capacity to exert pressure towards Southern Mediterranean regimes. In other words, depending on how it is perceived and handled, migration might condition EU attitudes and capabilities to promote democracy in the region. On the other hand, migration might influence target regimes' ability to withstand

outside influence, mainly because it could be used as bargain tool to gain and even invert the leverage over external actors and make the policy process responsive to their needs. Several authors from the field of EU external action underline that this shift in the balance of power from the core to the periphery is expected in certain areas of cooperation (Dimitrovova, 2010). Lately, migration seems to have become one of this selected policy fields – alongside the provision of natural resources and the fight against terrorism – in which weaker countries can exert an inverted leverage on the stronger EU (Völkel, 2020, Pace et al, 2009). In this sense, migration diplomacy could represent an important source of power for *gatekeeper elites* in SMCs.

This last idea is connected to the second argument, which is that the externalization of EU migration policies might impact the *regime's organizational power*, influencing power positions and modifying the incentive structures of the domestic actors in SMCs. Although several authors acknowledge the empowerment of neighbouring countries through migration diplomacy (Cassarino, 2005, 2012; Wunderlich, 2010; El Qadim, 2010; Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016), only few have been concerned with the implications of that power enhancement to their internal political game and democratic development (Demmelhuber 2011; Akkerman, 2018; Prestianni, 2018; Koch et al, 2018; Andersson and Keen, 2019; Völkel, 2020). This is mainly because the states targeted by these policies are usually taken as black boxes, disregarding the fact that they are composed by different actors with different aims. In fact, actors negotiating with the EU on matters of migration control tend to be part of state *ruling elites* and as such, cannot be considered as representing the interests of the entire country (Lemberg-Perdesen, 2017).

Thus, here I argue for the importance of looking inside the state black box and questioning who within the domestic political game is being empowered/disempowered by this process. It could be hypothesised, for instance, that if those empowered are part of the ruling elites it is likely that they will use this advantaged position to hinder any attempt of democratization. In other words, that both EU political/moral and material/economic concessions obtained through cooperative/coercive migration diplomacy might end up serving as a resource for autocratic resilience and work in pro of the stability and survival SMCs regimes.

3.3 Research Design: Methods and Data

Based on a documentary analysis of different sources of qualitative data, this research consisted of applying the theoretical lens suggested to the case of Morocco and assessing the validity of the arguments to the case presented. All data has been coded and analysed using the Software *Nvivo* and following a deductive strategy based on the variable, concepts and elements identified and summarized in Table 3.1. The presentation of the analysis reflected the bi-dimensional logic behind the theoretical framework being divided into international/inter-state and domestic/intra-state dimensions.

As mentioned in the introduction, the analysis did not aim at appointing links of causality, but rather at disentangling the mechanisms and drawing hypotheses about how the externalization of EU migration policies intertwines with the democratization of Morocco. This is not only because evidence on authoritarian regimes is hard trace and would likely require the employment of other sort data and methods of analysis, but also because most policies analysed are still in the implementation phase (European Union, 2019 – EUTF Second Monitoring Report), being in general too soon to provide any definitive answer. However, the analysis presented here is deemed as a resourceful source of information for indicating trends, designing scenarios, and replicating in other case studies.

3.3.1 Data sources

The analysis was based on a broad range of qualitative data. One of the main sources of data were policy documents pertaining to the EU-Morocco cooperation framework. In concrete, I considered documents from two policy frameworks that nowadays are the main source of EU migration policies funding towards Morocco: the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). For the ENP I resorted to documents related to ENP funding and progress reports. Within the EUTF framework, I considered the "action documents" of the 12 projects implemented in Morocco (5 from the regional window and 7 implemented solely in Morocco – See Table 3.2 in the Annex) as well as the available monitoring reports. Apart from that, I also

consulted EU informative documents such as policy factsheets and press releases. Complementary primary sources consist of reports from reputable civil society organizations and newspaper articles, from both Moroccan and international press. Finally, I also resort to the empirical literature since the Moroccan case has been thoroughly analysed in the fields of migration and democratization – and this study intends to fill a gap precisely by bridging the two.

3.3.2 Timeframe: 2015-2020

The policy analysis has considered a time span of 5 years, in concrete the years 2015-2020. This period has been chosen based on two main rationales. First, due to pragmatic reasons, since reducing the period of analysis allowed for more precision in the collection, tracking and presentation of data. Second, and most importantly, because of the salience of political events occurred within these years and the opportunity to provide a first-hand analysis of their relevance for the nexus studied here.

3.4 The Case of Morocco: Brief Contextualization

3.4.1 Externalization of EU migration policies towards Morocco

Mainly due to its strategic geography, Morocco has been perceived by the EU - and has been presenting itself - as a major ally in the European attempt to stem migration at the source by externalizing migration control. Even if traditionally Morocco has been conceived as a country of origin (De Bel-Air, 2016), it has been progressively transformed into a transit country for Sub-Saharan migration and, more recently, as a '*de facto*' destination country (Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi, 2020). This reality combined with the rise of migration as a security issue within European discourses and affairs have been transformative of EU-Moroccan relations, which throughout the last decades have revolved mainly around this topic.

The externalization of migration control towards Morocco is inserted within a broader cooperation framework which inaugurated with the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995 (El Qadim, 2010). Since then, several all-encompassing agreements

have been fostering EU-Morocco relations in the field of migration, such as the Association Agreement (2000), ENP Action Plans (2004, 2013-2017) and the Mobility Partnership (2013). Specially under the ENP, Morocco became a privileged partner of the EU - being the largest recipient of financial aid among its members[23] - and cooperation on 'illegal migration' became an ultimate priority (Bilgin et al, 2011).

The fact is that Morocco has been and continues to be a long-lasting and privileged partner for the EU. This does not imply, however, that Moroccan cooperation has always been easy. So far, the EU has been unsuccessful in pushing forward in Morocco important policies for its externalization strategies such as the conclusion of an EU Readmission Agreement (EURA) (Belguendouz, 2005; Wolff, 2014)[24], even after more than fifteen rounds of negotiations and the conclusion of a Mobility Partnership in 2013 (Abderrahim, 2019), and has made no progress in its attempt in closing the temporary disembarkation arrangements (Andersson and Keen, 2019). This opposition illustrates how Morocco should not be considered as a mere object of EU external migration policies but instead as a subject with capacity of action, negotiation, and interests (El Qadim, 2010). In fact, the externalization of EU migration policies towards Morocco, far from being a simple case of policy transfer, is closer to a 'border security gaming' (Andersson and Keen, 2019), in which actors in both sides use migration diplomacy and issue-linkage strategies based on their own interests and values, to make the policy process responsive to their needs.

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[23] European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations: http://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/morocco_en

[24] Despite Morocco's resistance to sing an EURA, it has nonetheless signed several bilateral agreements with individual member states (such as Spain and France). According to the literature, the conclusion of bilateral agreements would be, on the one hand, consequence of the lack of advancement in the supranational arena (when the mandate was handed to the EU in 1999 it taken for granted that the EU would hold more leverage than individual member states) (Wolff 2014) and, on the other hand, it might be also within the reasons why Union-wide readmission agreements have not succeed (Cassarino, 2010; Abderrahim, 2019). The fact is that readmission agreements moved more and more towards informal agreements and way from the EU framework.

3.4.2 Morocco's competitive authoritarianism and stalled democratization

Even if the constitution describes Morocco as a parliamentary monarchy, most experts argue that the country should be better defined as a competitive authoritarianism[25] (Hill, 2016, Szmolka 2010, 2014). Although Morocco has an elected bicameral parliament and supposedly free elections, there is an informal governance structure, represented by politicians, businessman and families around the King (the '*Makhzen'),* that has a great influence in the most important social, political, and economic affairs of the Kingdom (Feliu and Parejo, 2012; Hill, 2016).

At the time Mohamed VI came to power in 1999, replacing his deceased father Hassan II, there have been expectations of political change in the country, which has been perceived as a good example of democratic reform (Kausch, 2009). The Arab spring in 2011 brought an important reform in the Constitution as a response to the demands of civil society, mainly echoed through the February 20 Movement (M20F). Although relevant, most analysts agree that Morocco emerged basically unchanged from the Arab Spring despite serious and sustained unrest (Hill, 2016; Parejo, 2015). Lately, the emergence of protest movements such as the "Hirak al Rif"[26] in 2016 or the "Boycott movement" (Masbah, 2018) in 2018, seem to have ended the already fragile narrative of democratic transition in this country (Bogaert, 2018). Mostly, these movements draw attention to the fact that the conditions that led to the M20F in 2011-12 – substantial unemployment and economic inequality, high corruption, and an unresponsive political system – did not fade away (Cavatorta, 2016). Therefore, most authors refer to Morocco's democratization as a case of 'permanent democratic transition' (Maghraoui, 2011) or 'stalled democratization' (Cavatorta, 2015).

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[25] In this type of hybrid regime, although some democratic aspects are adopted, "electoral manipulation, unfair media access, abuse of state resources, and varying degrees of harassment and violence skewed the playing field in favour of the incumbents" (Levitsky and Way, 2010, p. 3). Other terms have also been used to classify the Moroccan regimes, such as "hybrid regime" (Khakee, 2017; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2015) or a "liberalized autocracy" (Brumberg, 2002).

[26] The protests started in the city of Al Hoceima as the consequence of the death of Mohsen Fikiri, a fish vendor that was crushed to death in a garbage truck when he was trying to recuperate the product that the police had confiscated earlier. After this incident, protests spread to Morocco and increased their demands, which include more development in the Rif region. The region suffers from socioeconomic grievances and inequalities in comparison to the rest of the country. Moreover, the Rif is a historically marginalized region, since independence it has endured administrative, economic and cultural marginalization. (Benjattab, 2017).

Different dynamics and actors have been identified as influencing and explaining (the lack of) democratization in the country. Within the domestic dimension, the involvement of the ruling elite (the *Makhzen)* as the main actor leading the transition in the country (El Hachimi, 2014) is deemed as highly counterproductive (Cavatorta, 2005; Maghraoui, 2004; Hill, 2016). In what concerns the role of *opposition elites*, this has been somewhat limited since most political parties are related to the regime (Hill, 2016). Moreover, Moroccan civil society organizations have a problem of 'de-politicization' and prevalence of good governance discourses, which have made them incapable of being a real force of democratization in the country (El Hachimi, 2014). Within the international dimension, the West in general, and the EU in particular, is appointed as refraining from exerting too much pressure in the country, opting rather for a stabilisation strategy and applause policy. All these factors combined seem to have contributed to the situation of stalled democratization within which the country has been inserted for years without a clear way out.

3.5 Case Analysis

3.5.1 Migration as high linkage: hampering the external actor leverage while empowering the target regime (the inter-state dimension)

The first argument that will be applied to the Moroccan case centres on the inter-state dimension and contends that migration flows between the EU and SMCs should be considered as a key *linkage* capable of altering the external actor *leverage* (in this case the EU) vis-à-vis the target state (in this case Morocco), and the latter ability to withstand outside influence. Therefore, in this section I provide an analysis of (i) how the development of EU external migration policies might be shaping and influencing EU capacity and willingness of promoting democracy in Morocco and of (ii) how Morocco ruling elites might be empowered by its cooperation on migration control, making the policy process responsive to their needs.

3.5.1.1 Hampering the external actor leverage: EU foreign policy goals at odds

According to the theoretical framework, the existence of competing issues within the external actors' foreign policy agenda is one of the elements that may hamper its *leverage* vis-à-vis the target state. In the case of the EU, two essential components of its foreign policy seem to be at odds: the goal of controlling migration, on the one hand, and the goal of promoting and supporting democratization, on the other (Cassarino, 2012; Noutcheva, 2015; Bauer, 2015). In other words, despite *high linkages* in all other elements and structural power asymmetries the EU may see its capacity and willingness to influence Morocco's democratization diminished due these competing issues in its foreign policy agenda.

There is a broad consensus in the literature that, historically, the EU has taken a position in Morocco that "little democracy is better than none", being very unlikely to pressure hard for further democratization (Kausch, 2009; Khakee, 2010). Nowadays, the EU's interest and priorities in the migration field seem to bear great responsibility for that stance. As mentioned before, Morocco has been a long-standing partner in many EU practices related to migration control. Such dependence and the need to assure the effective implementation of migration policies, have made the scholarly argue that, to the greatest, extent the EU has been inclined to prioritize the *status quo* in this country over democratization (Hill, 2016). Several aspects of EU-Morocco relations and the practices of externalization throughout the last five years seem to corroborate this argument.

In general, EU policies in the field of democratic assistance have been deemed either unsuccessful or counterproductive (Khahee, 2017), mainly due to the EU's interests in achieving goals related to security and stability (Pace, 2009; Seeberg, 2009; Van Hüllen, 2012). When it comes to the promotion of democracy through migration policies, the story does not seem very different, mainly due to the prioritization of migration control over policies tackling lack of democracy in the country. Even when in 2011 the EU aimed to promote more mobility as a way of supporting the country's democratization process, mainly through the conclusion of a mobility partnership in 2013, it ended up using it as a tool for leveraging the negotiation of a readmission agreement (Abderrahim, 2019). In

general, it seems that most policies implemented fall under the so-called remote-control approach (Carrera et al, 2015). This means that despite its rhetoric focused on tackling the root-causes of migration, the EU short-term policies focused on stemming migration and securitizing the Moroccan border have been the highest priority (den Hertog, 2016). This argument can be better illustrated by the analysis of EUTF pro   jects.

From the seven projects implemented exclusively in Morocco, only one (EUTFM04 – Regional migration policy) is framed under the overall objective[27] of "improved governance and conflict prevention", which aims to support improvements in overall good governance through the promotion of conflict prevention, addressing human rights abuses and enforcing the rule of law[28]. The other six projects fall under the theme "improved migration management", which has as main objective the development of national strategies to manage migration, improve capacities to prevent irregular migration and fight against trafficking in human beings[29]. Within the regional sphere all five projects are dedicated exclusively to the theme "improved management of migration".

Moreover, among EUTF projects, six[30] are committed to the integration of migrants and the improvement of their overall situation, all of which have been approved throughout 2016 and 2017. At first, this could be perceived as a demonstration of the EU's willingness and compromise with the promotion of good governance and human rights in the country. However, a deeper look into the projects casts some doubts about the EU's real intentions. On the one hand, the areas and issues addressed by the projects have already been appointed as being ineffective in terms of bringing about significant political change[31], being related with matters that are considered as too technocratic or depoliticized (Carothers, 2000, Khahee, 2017). On the other hand, although civil society is involved in these projects, in only one (TFM03 – Vulnerable migrants) NGOs are

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[27] EUTF projects are connected to four broad areas of intervention: greater economic and employment opportunities, strengthening resilience, improved migration management and improved governance and conflict (See: https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/thematic_en)

[28] See: <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/thematic/improved-migration-management>.

[29] See: <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/thematic/improved-migration-management>.

[30] In concrete: EUTFM01 – Live together without discrimination, EUTFM02 – Juridical empowerment, EUTFM03 – Vulnerable migrants, EUTFM04 – Regional migration policy, EUTFM08 – Regional development, EUTFM09 – monitoring and evaluation.

[31] Even though Freyburg (2012) found this kind of projects to be effective in improving the democratization of migration governance.

directly financed through an open call, giving real chance for non-mainstream actors to participate.

It is important to notice that the budget of all the aforementioned projects together amount to a total of € 27.6 million which seems an anecdotal support when compared to € 184,9 million dedicated to migration management and border control – a sum almost seven times bigger. Such budgets seem like a clear indication that most of the EUTF money for Morocco has been destined to improving the capacity, mainly in terms of material, training, and personal, of the Moroccan state and the bodies responsible for controlling its borders and deterring migration flows towards Europe (mainly the Ministry of Interior and security forces).

A final indication of EU diminished leverage vis-à-vis Morocco would be that apart from not pressuring hard neither through common policies of democracy assistance nor through migration policies, the EU seems to be rewarding the country for its cooperation on migration and 'democratization'. In fact, it seems that Morocco remains the main EU partner not *because* but *despite* lack of advance in democracy in the country. Under the discursive framework of the ENP, for instance, Morocco would not be entitled to the positive conditionality principle (the "*more for more*" approach), according to which the more a country advances in democratic terms, more support it will receive from the EU (Catalano and Graziano, 2016). However, this country became a privileged partner and the largest recipient of EU funds mainly after the Arab spring and despite its poor performance in advancing (ibid). Thus, instead of applying a democratic conditionality (Govantes, 2018), the EU has been giving preference to rewarding this country with economic/political and material support for its cooperation in migration control.

In several policy documents the EU praises Morocco for its advancements in terms of democratization – which seems to be in line with its 'applause policy' (Hill, 2016; Graziano and Catalano, 2016). An example is how the EU refers to the Moroccan democracy in its biggest EUTF project in terms of funds, the EUTFM07 – Budget support, that has a budget of € 101.7 million. Within the section "Fundamental values", the following statement can be found:

> "Morocco is a constitutional monarchy, rooted in a traditional society, in full evolution. *The 2011 Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco is exemplary*, […] The establishment of a *parliamentary democracy*, confirmed by the appointment of a Head of Government by the King, is also a pledge of the sustainability of a political regime whose stability is also based on spiritual values." (Own translation and emphasis).

Thus, ignoring the evidence provided by the literature, experts, and reports, the EU refrains from making any reference to Morocco's backsliding on human rights and basic freedoms (Graziano and Catalano, 2016; Andersson and Keen, 2019; Uzelac, 2020), the consecutive downward trend arrows in its democratic status since 2017 (according to Freedom House scores[32]) or the lack of improvement in the Western Sahara dossier. Moreover, the EU avoids engaging with the opposition or taking part in polemic matters, such as with Islamic parties (Cavatorta, 2005, 2009) or the issue of the Western Sahara (Cavatorta et al, 2008), something that has become evident by its silence regarding the recent protests triggered by the movement 'Hirak al Rif' and regime harsh crackdown towards protester, journalists, and activists (Ben Jellou, 2018).

In sum, the analysis indicates that the EU has a clear strategy related with its migration diplomacy vis-à-vis Morocco that passes through compromising its priorities and goals in terms of promoting democracy in this country in order to assure cooperation and the implementation of its policies. This suggests that the development of EU external migration policies might be hampering EU leverage, that is, its capacity and willingness of promoting democracy in Morocco.

3.5.1.2 Empowering the target regime: migration as bargain coin for Morocco's ruling elites

As explained in the theoretical framework, linkages are not only created by structural factors, but can be initiated, developed, and attempted to be reduced/increased by *gatekeeper elites* (Tolstrup, 2013). Although it is true that Morocco has been collaborating in initiatives and policies that most of times serve uniquely European

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[32] Available at: https://freedomhouse.org/country/morocco/freedom-world/2017

interests, authors argue that this country has not acted as a passive player. On the contrary, they provide evidence of how Moroccan gatekeepers (mainly the ruling elite) have been taking advantage of the increased bargaining power provide by the *high linkage* on migration to withstand outside influence, exert an inverted leverage over the EU and make the policy process responsive to their needs (Cassarino, 2005; El Qadim, 2010, 2015; Wunderlich, 2010; Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016; Koch et al, 2018). In broad lines, what the literature suggests is that ruling elites in Morocco have been empowered by the 'border security gaming'. The analysis of externalization practices in Morocco throughout the years 2015-2020 provides several examples of how this empowerment is unfolding.

To make its demands and interests heard by the EU, Morocco has been combining two types of *migration diplomacy*: (a) cooperative, by presenting itself as "*bon élève*" (good student) and playing the "efficient card" (Cassarino, 2005) and (b) coercive, by threatening to easy migration controls or haltering migration cooperation (Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016). In both cases, Morocco relies largely on a strategy of *issue-linkage,* being even conceived as a master in "packaging" (Werenffels, 2018). In fact, according to Werenffels (2018, p.32) "Morocco's handling of mixed migration flows is […] an expression of central national interests", including political (i.e., strengthening the monarchy's international legitimacy, push calls for political transformation into the background and recognition of Western Sahara as Moroccan territory) economic (i.e., financial and development aid) and material (equipment, information exchange and capacity building for its security forces) goals.

When Morocco engages in cooperative migration diplomacy it usually underlines its efforts and ability to manage migration, to conduct border surveillance and its willingness to accept the readmission of migrants (Wolff, 2008). Several interviews given by the director of the Directorate of Migration and Border Surveillance (DMBS), Khalid Zerouali in 2018 and 2019 elucidate the cooperative strategy played by Morocco. In these interviews, the director of the DMBS underlined the work done by Morocco in 'securing' the EU (Telquel, 2018). The 'proof' of Moroccan efficiency is given mainly through numbers. In an interview to the Moroccan press "Media24" in October 2018, Zerouali stated that:

"During 2018 and until mid-October, around 68,000 attempts at irregular emigration were aborted, of which around 11,000 concerned Moroccan nationals. In terms of dismantling the criminal networks active in the smuggling of migrants, 122 networks were dismantled, and more than 2,200 boats of different types were seized." (Berrada, 2018).

The following year he gave an interview to the Spanish newspaper "elDiario.es" making similar statements: "Last year we avoided approximately 90,000 arrivals to Spain. From the beginning of 2019 until May 15, about 25,000 have been stopped. This year we have dismantled 50 networks. In 2018, we dismantled 230 networks." (El Diario, 2019). Although these are the official statistics presented by the Ministry of Interior, NGOs in Morocco affirm that the authorities largely manipulate these numbers to make it look like the country is under great migratory pressure and to demonstrate that it is playing the role of gendarme (AMDH, 2018). In its report, the NGO AMDH explains that the numbers are increased mainly due to counting the same migrant two or several times.

Regardless of numbers being real or not, Zerouali insists in Moroccan proactivity in this field, affirming how it has been 'doing its homework without waiting someone to come to its help'. Nonetheless, he also affirms that the country has already mobilised all resources it has and would need a budgetary support to keep the proper functioning of the mechanisms implemented (Telquel, 2018), which would suppose a cost of more than € 200 million per year to the government (El Diario, 2019).

Even though Morocco relies largely on cooperative migration diplomacy in its relationship with the EU, it does not refrain from using coercive strategies and mobilise the threat of migration to achieve its goals. The episodes surrounding the Western Sahara crisis that traversed EU-Morocco relations during 2016-2019 provides a clear example of that. To understand the transcendence of such a crisis it is important to bear in mind that both the management of the Western Sahara conflict and the maintenance of good relations with the EU are two structural priorities of Rabat's foreign policy (Fernández-Molina, 2017) – with both having a connection with migration issues (Den Hertog, 2017).

Such a crisis was triggered by a series of decisions from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in 2015-2016 ruling that the Western Sahara fell outside the scope of Morocco's Association Agreement (Lovatt, H. 2020). This meant that no EU-

Morocco cooperation agreement could be applied to this non-autonomous territory, including agricultural and fishery agreements (GADEM, 2018). Apart from leading to a lengthy legal battle (Fernández-Molina, 2017), the ruling of the CJEU led to the deterioration and even complete blockage of EU-Moroccan relations (Fernández-Molina, 2017; GADEM 2018).

The ruling has been perceived by Morocco as an attack to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. As a result, it resorted to issue-linkage strategies and inverse conditionality, issuing threats to the EU regarding their migration control cooperation. In fact, declarations from the Minister of Agriculture and Maritime Fisheries, Aziz Akhannouch, were very straightforward in its threats of allowing the 'resumption of migratory flows' towards Europe (Uzelac, 2020): "'How do you [Europeans] want us to do the job of blocking African emigration if Europe does not want to work with us today? [. . .] Why are we going to continue to act as gendarmes?' (Otazu, 2017 quoted by Fernández-Molina, 2017).

Some observers consider the successful storming of the border walls in Ceuta in February 2017 as being related with these statements (Werenfells, 2018). In fact, these episodes have been surrounded by the progressive increase of illegal migration flows coming from Morocco, with numbers in 2018 being by far the highest in a decade (See Graphic 3.1). Of course, this change in the trend cannot be deemed as the work of the Moroccan regime. This growth has been mainly associated with the difficulties that migrants encountered in crossing the Central Mediterranean and the internal political events unfolding in the country, mainly the "Hirak al Rif" protests. Regardless of its origins, the upsurge in migration flows added more fuel to the already intricated EU-Morocco relations, affecting their priorities and negotiating powers.

Figure 3.2: Illegal border crossings on the Western and Central Mediterranean route (sea and land) in numbers.
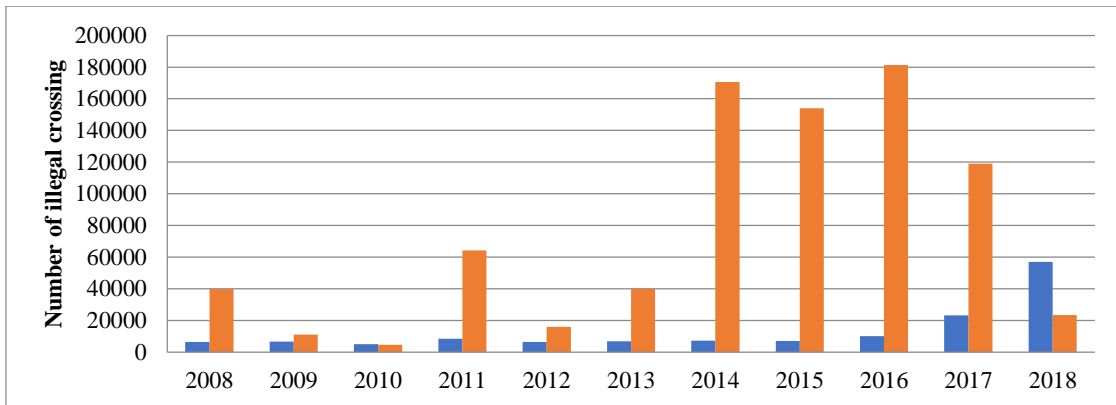
Source: Own elaboration with data from the FRONTEX website.

The final decision came in February 2018, when the CJEU considered the fisheries agreements as valid if it did not apply to the Western Sahara. The result was considered as fairly satisfying by the Moroccan government. In fact, the signing of a new fishery agreements in 2018 (GADEM, 2018) and the acceptance of amended agricultural and fisheries agreements that extend to the Western Sahara by the European Parliament in 2019[33] (European Commission, 2019a) marked the beginning of a new era of EU-Morocco relations and the resume of political and financial exchanges, mainly in the field of migration. The results for the EU have also been considered beneficial since already in 2019 it has seen a decrease in the number of arrivals from Morocco, indicating that the agreements and measures taken by Morocco were being effective.

All in all, both types of migration diplomacy seem to have worked for empowering Moroccan ruling elites', as will be further explained in more detail in the following section. In fact, the two largest EUTF projects in terms of budget, amounting to €44 million and €101,7 million each, have been approved after those episodes and declarations. Moreover, in the action document of the project EUTFM07 – Budget support the EU estimates a budget of €3,5 billion for Moroccan authorities for the period of 2020-2017, which means € 435 million per year on average. Such numbers indicate that the EU is betting high in keeping Morocco as a close and long-standing partner.

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[33] The EU, Morocco, and the Stability Myth.

To conclude this part, it is important to underline that, as explained by Tolsrup (2013), the success of elite gatekeeping is highly dependent on the linkages in question, of how important they are and if and how (fast) they can be changed. The case of Morocco emphasizes how the migration linkage between this country and the EU has been used by ruling elites to endure outside influence and exert an inverted leverage to enforce its own agenda over the EU. Although it is true that gatekeeper elites cannot directly create migration flows, since they are mostly the result of complex drivers, it is undeniable that they can change the flows, or at least manipulate EU perceptions over them. As Zardo and Cavatorta (2018) put it "the bigger the perception of volatility", the bigger the leverage of neighbouring authoritarian countries (Zardo and Cavatorta 2018), regardless of the migration threat being real or not.

3.5.2 EU externalization and Morocco cooperative/coercive migration diplomacy: a tool for autocratic resilience? (the intra-state dimension)

The second argument that will be tested in the case of Morocco focus mainly on the intra-state dimension and how the externalization of EU migration policies might impact (directly or indirectly) the *regime's organizational power*, influencing power positions and modifying the incentive structures of the domestic actors in SMCs. Thus, this part of the analysis consisted of taking seriously the quest for opening the state black box and enquiring who within the domestic political game has been empowered/disempowered by the externalization 'border gaming' and the extent to which it could serve as a tool of autocratic resilience for the Moroccan regime.

3.5.2.1 Boosting the regime's organizational power

As abovementioned, the King Mohamed VI and the ruling elites (the *Makhzen)* occupy a central gatekeeper position within the Moroccan domestic political sphere (Wunderlich 2010), being the principal power and actor dictating the rules of the game – and leading most of the democratic reforms in the country (Kausch, 2009; Feliu and Parejo, 2012; Hill, 2016). At the same time, since the palace has the control over the 'sovereign ministries", such as Foreign Affairs, Interior and Defence (Wunderlich 2012) as well as

the security forces, the *Makhzen* is also a key actor in the negotiation and implementation of EU external migration policies in the country. Apart from the King himself, the Ministry of Interior in particular is considered as the central actor in EU migration policies within this country (Idid) [34].

This means that the same ruling elite that is gatekeeping and blocking the democratization process within Morocco is also the main gatekeeper in the negotiation and implementation of EU external migration policies in the country. This indicates that the domestic actors that are being empowered by the process of externalization and the migration diplomacy it involves are mainly those who are less interested in prompting a regime change in this country and will likely use such advantaged position to strengthen its power position as a resource for autocratic resilience, i.e., in pro of the stability and survival of the regime.

At least three types of concessions (i.e., political/moral, economic and (iii) material/logistical) obtained through the 'externalization' border gaming would have the potential to contribute (mainly indirectly) to the stabilization and reinforcement of the regime organizational power in its three dimensions, i.e., party strength, control of the economy and coercive state capacity.

(i)   Political/moral concessions: increasing ruling elites' legitimacy

When it comes to political/moral concessions there are two topics that are considered as essential for Morocco internal and external legitimacy: political recognition of its autocratic regime and its autonomy for Western Sahara (Hill 2016; Fernández-Molina 2017; Werrenfles 2018). On the one hand, and unlike to other types of authoritarian regimes, Morocco's competitive authoritarianism is very sensitive to international

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[34] Within this ministry, two important bodies in terms of migration control should be underlined. On the one hand, the Directorate of National Security (DNS), responsible for the Moroccan National Police that control authorized crossing points with the support of the Auxiliary Forces. On the other hand, the Directorate of Migration and Border Surveillance (DMBS), "responsible for the operational implementation of the national strategy to combat human trafficking networks and border surveillance" (Elmadmad, 2007, p.39). Other security bodies, such as the Royal Army, the Royal Marine and the Royal Gendarme are also closely involved the control of migration in the country (Ibid).

opinion, and maintaining good relations with the West (Hill, 2016, p. 168). On the other hand, keeping its authority over the Western Sahara is a contentious issue mainly because it means the control over the territory and its resources. Moreover, the counterinsurgency campaign against the Polisario in the 1970, remains as part of the security forces imaginaries and is broadly responsible for the non-materials ties that maintain its high cohesion (Hill, 2016, p. 157).

The previous section already provided several examples of how the EU has been granting political recognition to the Moroccan regime, either through praising it for being a democratizing force in its policy documents – when evidence shows otherwise – or by refraining from criticizing human rights and democratic backsliding in the country – despite reports from NGOs and democracy indexes insisting on their gravity. Two additional examples of this sort of legitimacy concessions should be made for stressing this point.

The first one has been the granting of Advanced Status for Morocco in 2008. As the first and only Arabic country to receive such status[35] this has been considered as a 'gift from heaven' for its capacity of boosting the regime's international reputation. Moreover, it would enable a closer association with the EU, which means more aid and economic benefits to the country (Kausch, 2009). Although at a different scale, the second example indicate that something similar would happen with some European countries (in concrete Germany and Belgium) attempting to consider Morocco a "third safe country", that is, a place where asylum seekers could be quickly and safely returned to (Concord, 2018). Euromed Rights (2018) has been following the topic closely contending that giving these countries such 'safe' status "means that no risk of persecution exists in principle for nationals of that country or foreign nationals, and that their human rights are effectively respected, including the right of asylum".

In what concerns the autonomy of Western Sahara, Morocco seems to have succeeded until now in maintaining its stance on it. Despite the many unfavourable rulings by the CJEU the EU has broadly remained apart from this contentious 'internal affair'.

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[35] Now being also negotiated with Tunisia.

According to Lovatt (2020): "Yet while the EU does not recognise Moroccan sovereignty over the area, it has not adopted the UN's characterisation of it as an occupied territory. Instead, the EU has labelled Western Sahara as a "non-self-governing territory 'de facto' administered by the Kingdom of Morocco" – conjuring up a legal concept that does not exist in international law".

In sum, Morocco seems to have succeeded in silencing the EU on human rights, democracy, and self-determination – all of which could potentially contribute to maintain and even boost the ruling elites' power both internally and externally.

(i)   Economic concessions: sustaining ruling elites' modernisation agenda

When it comes to economic concessions, these would come mainly in the form of monetary aid, either directly related with migration funds, like the EUTF, or other sort of financial instrument/incentive, such as the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). As in the case of political concessions, economic provisions could also have the effect of enhancing ruling elites' power, legitimacy, and control over the economy.

An example could be the EU recent announcement of a new financial package to Morocco worth € 389 million, with € 289 million destined for boosting Moroccan reforms and inclusive development and 101.7€ million as direct budget support for border management (European Commission, 2019b). The ENI for the period 2014-2017 had an indicative budget of €728-890 million only for this country, which includes money for migration control but also all other sorts of projects (EEAS/European Commission 2014). Morocco has also been a beneficiary of the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) that so far financed ten projects totalling € 203.8 million, including the largest solar power station in Africa in Noor, Ouarzazate (EU Fractography – Morocco, 2016).

All this sort of resources and investment would be an important tool for the Moroccan regime controlling the economy but mainly sustaining its domestic modernisation agenda and developmental discourse. Since Mohamed VI acceded to the throne, the King has engaged in a series of economic and political reforms to fit with his rhetoric that the

country was entering a "New Era" (Darif, 2012). By investing in modernisation and economic liberalisation, the monarchy created a new source of legitimacy based on political and economic effectiveness (he even entitled himself "Monarch of the Poor" (ibid). According to Bogaert (2018, p.9): "whereas Hassan II ruled with an iron hand, Mohamed VI rules via holdings, funds and new state agencies. The result is not less authoritarianism, but rather authoritarianism with a different face: new institutions, new planning methods and new (global) relations of power". This means that the regime needs resources for keeping its image of modernising country as a key source of internal power and legitimacy.

The problem is that most of the funds supposedly directed to support the country's development and tackling deep structural problems such as inequality and unemployment, have been expended in big projects, such as the solar power station mentioned above, and other related to improving the country physical infra-structure (Khakee, 2017), such as Moroccan highways (Hatim, 2020). However, none of these investments would have helped improve the country's Human Development Index, which continues to be among the lowest Arab Countries. Moreover, since the *Makhzen* is widely perceived as benefiting economically from its closeness to the palace (Ibid) this also raises suspicion of corruption and misuse of funds. This kind of concern has already been raised in a report from the Migration Policy Centre emphasizing that the unconditioned nature and lack of transparency of certain financial aids – such as the EUTFM07 Budget support – could translate into a blank check for governments and lead to more corruption (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012).

(ii)   Material/logistical concessions: strengthening the coercive state capacity

Apart from economic concessions, the externalization of EU migration policies implies the provision of substantial material, logistic and capacity building support to Morocco, mainly for its state and security apparatus. The literature has already shown particular concern with the effects of this type of support in strengthening the coercive state capacity of authoritarian regimes (Demmelhuber, 2011; Baird, 2016; Koch et al 2018; Akkerman, 2018; Andersson and Keen, 2019; Völkel 2020). As explained in the theoretical

framework, this dimension is paramount for autocratic resilience. In the case of Morocco, the regime's high organizational power relies largely on this dimension (Hill, 2016). In fact, both the military and the regime security forces are considered as central for the Moroccan regime (Dorado-Nogueras, 2011).

The externalization of EU migration policies to Morocco, especially within the remote-control approach, involves a large provision of material and logistical support. An analysis of some projects financed under the EUTF provides several examples of what sort of material support the EU is providing to Morocco. The EUTFM08–Regional development (€30 million), for instance, plans the provision of equipment such as: IT infrastructure for collecting, archiving, and identifying digital biometrics, acquisition of vehicles as well as surveillance, intervention and communication equipment for the different field units, and the necessary equipment for aerial surveillance. In a similar line, EUTFM07–Budget support (€ 101,7 million) aims to enhance the management of land and sea borders, and airports, by helping Morocco to continue modernising the means available to it, including using new technologies and exchanging best practices with the EU agencies, Frontex and Europol. Finally, the project EUTFM05–Integrated border management (€ 44 million) also refers to the same sort of investment, mentioning even that the DMBS and the Auxiliaries Forces would be the main bodies to benefit from the new equipment and infra-structure – which include the already approved acquisition of 384 vehicles on the value of € 26 million (Secretaría de Estado de Comunicación, 2019) (See table 3.5 in the Annex).

Overall, the rationale behind these projects seems to be the same: to improve the material and human capacity of the Moroccan security and administrative bodies responsible for the management of migration and border control in the country. The acquisition of these materials and the enhancement of capacities *per se* is no indication of strengthening of the country's coercive state capacity nor that it will be used as a tool for autocratic resilience. However, the analysis of externalization projects and practices indicate that, in the case of Morocco, such strengthening is either already unfolding or, if not, it is certainly a risk to be bear in mind.

On the one hand, there is the risk that such securitization would be in detriment of migrant's rights. Several reports from NGOs have denounced the increase of violence against migrants in the north of Morocco coinciding with the considerable transference of funds and equipment from the EU (AMDH, 2017; GADEM, 2018; Prestianni, 2018). In fact, throughout June and August 2018, in the context of the negotiations of the fishery agreement (concluded on 23 July 2018), numerous violent interventions of the Moroccan security forces to remove foreigners far from this area have been registered (GADEM 2018). Moreover, the violent attacks in the summer of 2018 increased considerably in comparison with the previous year, passing from 92 episodes to 340. The outcomes of these operations seem to be equally heavy: mass arrests and forced displacements - including minors and pregnant women - human rights violations, violence, etc (AMDH, 2018).

The other risk is associated with the potential misappropriation of funds and equipment by the regime (Koch et al, 2018). This is mainly because the 'security forces' financed by the EU to control migration in Morocco are the same forces responsible for the regime's coercive state capacity, that is, security and administrative bodies such as the Ministry of Interior, the Auxiliary Forces, the Directorate of National Security and the DMBS. According to Way and Levitsky (2010), effective coercion would rely largely on funding, equipment and training. Since the EU is providing precisely that kind of support through its migration policies, the possibility of dual use of these resources for internal repression and control should be at least accounted for. However, only one (EUTFM12–Dismantling criminal networks) among the twelve EUTF projects analysed, mentions this sort of risk even if describing it as being a low risk.

In contrast, scholars and NGOs have been concerned with this possibility. In an article, Wunderlich (2010) explained how the Moroccan Interior Ministry wanted to use the money provided by the EU following its own priorities, which would be more related with the increase of Moroccan troops in the Western Sahara than with controlling the northern and western coast. Despite being politically contentious in Brussels, the EU refrained from requesting monitoring of the fund mainly to assure cooperation (Wunderlich, 2010). Another article published by Wolff (2008) also questioned the

ethical challenge posed by the export of Border Management technologies, such as biometric control, to authoritarian regimes. Her main concern is related with the use of this technology for other sorts of civil controls and repression that not only for managing migration. Since Moroccan coercive power relies largely on low intensity-operations, that is, on the harassment, intimidation and persecution of regime's opponents and critics, it could be argued that this sort of technology could largely contribute to these operations if misused.

In fact, a report from Oxfam (Uzelac, 2020, p.7) calls attention to the fact that "despite the official narrative that presents this as support for combating irregular migration, both the quantity and sophistication of the equipment in use strongly indicate that this is in fact multipurpose funding". Moreover, NGOs also stress the lack of accountability and transparency with the funds, especially when they are already in the hands of actors. According to the ONG AMHD (2017): "European funding relating to the migration file (unlike other development funding) seems to be the only funding that the EU delivers to Morocco without putting in place any control and monitoring mechanism for this expenditure […]".

In sum, the case of Morocco provides several indications of how the externalization of EU migration policies might strengthen the regime security forces and ability for internal repression – the coercive state capacity - to the detriment of migrants' rights and Morocco's own citizens. Mainly, it sheds light on the fact that the transformation of Morocco into Europe's gendarme does not come without important and concerning internal consequences.

3.5.2.2 Opposition elites' disempowerment

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that by giving preference to state ruling elites as the main cooperation/negotiating actors in Morocco, the EU might be potentially sideling the opposition elites, mainly the independent civil society. This would be concerning for two main reasons. First, this could mean less engagement and resources for perhaps the most reformist actors within this society. Second, this lack of support and disregard poses these actors in a difficult position for challenging and criticizing abusive behaviour of the

regime, mainly in the field of migration (Baird, 2016). Therefore, apart from potentially increasing the power of ruling elites through political, economic and material means, EU cooperation on migration could also decrease the power of opposition elites. Most authors believe this tendency is unlikely to change since even after the "Arab Uprisings" the EU continues to see ruling elites as the main interlocutors of migration control cooperation (Demmelhuber, 2011; Dandashly, 2018; Zardo and Cavatorta, 2018). In fact, this can be further confirmed by the minimal relevance given to civil society organizations in the twelve EUTF projects for Morocco analysed here.

3.6 Discussion and Conclusions

This article's main goal has been to explore the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs by focusing on the analysis of policy practices. By suggesting a theoretical framework and applying it to the analysis of the case of Morocco, it provided theoretical and empirical insights about how these processes might intertwine and relate to each other on the ground. Although empirical research on authoritarian regimes might be challenging and evidence hard to trace, the analysis of the Moroccan case indicates that EU externalization of migration control is likely to be negatively affecting the development of democracy in this country, either through stabilizing or reinforcing its autocratic structures. This can be perceived by looking into the main findings of the analysis summarized in table 3.2.

Overall, by looking into main research findings it could be argued that even if within its external migration policy narratives, the EU has had an intention to have a positive impact in terms of democratization, the continued externalization and mainly the securitization of EU migration policies seems to be producing (or at least have the potential to produce) negative effects on the democratic development of Morocco. In fact, the case-study presented broadly indicates that, when it comes to practices, the nexus between EU external migration policies and democratization of SMCs seems to go in the opposite direction as the main narrative casted by the EU. As expected, this would point to the existence of an implementation gap, that is, a gap between EU discourses casted in its policy documents and the implementation and consequences of its policies on the ground.

Table 3.2 – Summary of findings: the 'practical' nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of Morocco. (Author's own elaboration).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK		THE CASE OF MOROCCO
Argument	Concepts-variables	Main research findings
Migration, as a matter of high politics and a significant international and security issue, is likely to be linkage of extreme relevance for Euro-Med relations, capable of changing motivations and strategic calculations of actors at both shores of the Mediterranean and influencing their leverage over each other.	*Migration diplomacy*	Both the external actor (EU) and the target regime (Morocco) seem to use migration diplomacy and issue-linkage strategies based on their own interests and values. The EU avoid pressuring Morocco to democratize, opting for stabilization strategy and a reward policy, to fulfil its (short-term) migration goals. Moroccan ruling elites have been instrumentalizing migration to exploit EU's interests and priorities (applying cooperative and coercive diplomacy) as a (long-term) strategy to credit and stabilize the regime.
	Leverage of external actor	The development of EU external migration policies might have been hampering EU capacity and willingness of promoting democracy in Morocco mainly due to competing issues in EU foreign policy agenda.
	Linkage to external actor	The migration linkage between EU and Morocco might influence the external actor's leverage and might be used by gatekeeper ruling elites in target states to endure outside influence and exert an inverted leverage, making the policy process responsive to their needs. Ultimately, it indicates how migration is a linkage of great importance for EU-Morocco relations.
The externalization of EU migration policies might impact the regime's organizational power, influencing gatekeeper elites power positions and modifying the incentive structures of the domestic actors in SMCs, being potentially an important tool for autocratic resilience.	*Gatekeeper elites of target states*	The 'externalization border gaming' is empowering Moroccan ruling elites (the Makhzen), who are likely to use the advantaged position provided by high linkage on migration as a tool for autocratic resilience. At the same time, EU preference for ruling elites might have the potential effect of disempowering opposition elites.
	Organizational power of target state	At least three types of concessions derived from the 'externalization border gaming' might contribute (mainly indirectly) to the stabilization and reinforcement of the regime organizational power: (i) political/moral (ii) economic and (iii) material/logistical. The first two would reinforce the regime internal and external political legitimacy and control over the economy. The last one would mainly reinforce the regime's coercive state capacity.

In addition, it is important to notice that such a gap seems to be a deep and wide one. It would be a wide gap mainly because the policy narratives and practices seem to be

completely contradictory. Its depth would be related to the fact that by strengthening autocratic forces in SMCs, the EU could be reinforcing the same drivers of migration that its policies intend to tackle, inter alia: lack of democracy, good governance and human rights (Andersson and Keen, 2019; Prestianni, 2018). In other words, EU policies would be not only failing to address the deep structural drivers of migration but would be likely to be reinforcing it, risking worsening rather than solving the migration challenge (Abderrahim, 2018) in the long-term. This implies that closing this gap would require a complete revision of EU foreign policy towards SMCs, especially regarding the normative agenda guiding it.

Although this lack of compatibility between EU policy practices and narratives could be expected it is no less important. This is mainly because the first step towards tackling a gap passes through confirming its existence. Of course, more research would be necessary to confirm the hypothesis raised by this work and provide the necessary evidence. However, the theoretical frameworks, arguments and explanations presented can serve as a solid starting point for future work on the topic. Moreover, this analysis confirmed that far from simple, the relations and mechanisms linking externalization and democratization are also complex when it comes to practices, something that had already been observed in EU policy narratives (Faustini-Torres, 2020).

It is also important to underline that although the analysis considered mainly the EU as an aggregated actor, the role of EU member states in the externalization process towards the Mediterranean in general and Morocco in particular, should not be neglected. This is mainly because member states have been key implementing partners of the EU through its cooperation agencies, such as AECID, FIIAP, ENABEL, Expertise France, GIZ and so on, something that becomes clear with the analysis of EUTF projects in Morocco. This could be an indication that in this case member states involvement in externalization policies seems to work more in consonance with overall EU foreign policy goals than in contradiction with it. However, it could be questioned whether the involvement and central role exerted by member states (such as Spain and Germany) in the implementation of EU external migration policies might be within the reasons why EU policy narratives and practices greatly differ, something that have been already hypothesized in the

literature (Zajac, 2015). If taking the case of Spain, for example, this country seems to have clearer and immediate (realist) interests in cooperating with Morocco for keeping migration under control than with fostering democracy in consonance with EU rhetoric and normative identity. Considering this, future research should consider and compare the role of individual member state externalization policies vis-à-vis southern Mediterranean countries, and the extent to which it contradicts or reinforces EU policy narratives and practices.

Finally, it is important to punctuate that this research does not intent to claim that the implementation of EU external migration policies can by itself explain a process of regime change, neither that it can trigger processes of democratization or autocratisation in SMCs. It is in general difficult to disentangle and isolate the impact of external factors on these processes. However, after this first analysis it becomes clearer how EU External migration policies and democratization processes might intertwine, mainly by creating challenges and opportunities for ongoing processes in these countries. For this reason, I would argue that such variables should factored into the analysis when seeking to understand the impact of the international dimension of the democratization of SMCs. As explained by Pridham (2000), the impact of the international environment on democratization varied with different time and contexts. If during the Cold War the main 'issue' was the establishment of communist regimes in Latin America, in the context of contemporary Euro-Med politics, migration seems to be among the key 'issues'. All in all, it should be certainly perceived as a linkage of significant international transcendence, capable of shaping these countries inter and intra-state relations.

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3.8 Annex

Table 3.3 - Complete fist of EUTF projects in Morocco (2015-)

Title	CODE	EUTF contribution	Implementer	Theme	Adoption date
Vivre ensemble sans discrimination: une approche basée sur les Droits de l'Homme et la dimension de genre	EUTFM01 – Live together without discrimination	5 500 000.00	AECID	Improved migration management	16/12/2016
Empowerment juridique des personnes migrantes	EUTFM02 – Juridical empowerment	4 580 000.00	ENABEL	Improved migration management	04/12/2017
Assistance aux personnes migrantes en situation de vulnérabilité	EUTFM03 – Vulnerable migrants	6 500 000.00	NGOs	Improved migration management	06/07/2018
Déploiement des Politiques Migratoires au Niveau Régional	EUTFM04 – Regional migration policy	8 000 000.00	ENABEL	Improved migration management	13/12/2018
Soutien à la gestion intégrée des frontières et de la migration au Maroc	EUTFM05 – Integrated border management	44 000 000.00	FIIAPP	Improved migration management	13/12/2018
Coopération Sud-Sud en matière de migration	EUTFM06 – South-South cooperation	8 613 500.00	GIZ	Improved migration management	23/05/2017
Appui aux actions des autorités marocaines contre les réseaux facilitant les flux migratoires irréguliers	EUTFM07 – Budget support	101 750 000.00	Kingdom of Morocco	Improved migration management	10/12/2019
TOTAL: 178.943.500,00 €					
Regional projects (North African Window)					
Regional Development and Protection Programme in the North of Africa		9 900 000.00 (20% to Morocco – 1 980 000)	Save the Children, IOM, MSF	Improved migration management	16/06/2016
Formulation of programmes, Implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and Communication activities	EUTFM09 – monitoring and evaluation	5 200 000.00 (20% to Morocco – 1 040 000)	ICPMD	Improved migration management	23/05/2017
Border Management Programme for the Maghreb region (BMP-Maghreb)	EUTFM10 – BMP Maghreb	55 000 000.00 (50% to Morocco – 27 500 000)	ICMPD together with the Italian Ministry of Interior	Improved migration management, Improved governance, and conflict prevention	06/07/2018

Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa	EUTFM11 – Labour Migration governance	25 000 000 (33% to Morocco – 8 300 000)	ILO, IOM, GIZ, ENABEL	Improved migration management	13/12/2018
Dismantling the criminal networks operating in North Africa and involved in migrant smuggling and human trafficking	EUTFM12 – Dismantling criminal networks	15 000 000 (20% to Morocco – 3 000 000)	UNODC	Improved migration management	01/08/2019
TOTAL REGIONAL PROJECTS: 41.820.000,00 €					

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the available data on EUTF documents and website.

Table 3.4. Material acquired by FIIAPP for Morocco under the project EUTFM05 – Integrated border management.

#	TYPE AND QUANTITY	VALUE
LOT 1	230 tropicalized 4x4 vehicles,	€ 13,800,000
LOT 2	10 4x4 vehicles with ambulance configuration	€ 520,000
LOT 3	100 4x4 pick up vehicles	€ 5,500,000
LOT 4	10 4x4 water tanker trucks	€ 1,650,000
LOT 5	8 gasoline tanker trucks	€ 1,320,00
LOT 6	18 4x4 platform trucks	€ 2,610,000
LOT 7	8 refrigerated trucks	€ 600,000
TOTAL	384 vehicles	€ 26,000,000

Source: Spanish Ministry Council 2019. Available at:
<https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/referencias/Paginas/2019/refc20190705.aspx>.

4. DECENTRING EU FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS: HOW LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE THE EFFECTS OF EU EXTERNAL MIGRATION POLICIES ON THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF MOROCCO?

4.1 Introduction

How EU external migration policies impact the democratization of Morocco? Preliminary research suggests that the externalization of EU migration policies towards Morocco and the "border security gaming" (Andersson and Keen, 2019) it involves, might be affecting this country's democratization negatively, acting as a challenge rather than an opportunity for this political process (Demmelhuber, 2011; Akkerman, 2018; Werenfels, 2018; Andersson and Keen, 2019). Three main hypotheses/explanations have been raised to why this outcome might be taking place[36]. First, because EU external migration policies seem to hamper EU leverage, that is, its willingness and capacity to actively promote democracy in the country (h1). At the same time, these policies would be likely to favour the maintenance of core socio-political structures and empower ruling gatekeeper elites (the *Makhzen)* (h2) whereas disempowering the opposition elites, mainly the civil society and democratic forces and values (h3). Thus, it has been hypothesized that the actors that are being favoured by the externalization of EU migration policies are mainly those who are less interested in prompting a regime change in the country and will probably use this advantaged position as a tool for autocratic resilience.

The literature has also considered that such outcome, in case of being confirmed, would largely contradicts the EU's own normative ambitious and policy narratives (Demmelhuber 2011). In fact, the latter mainly frames democratization as a favourable condition for stemming migration on the source (Faustini-Torres 2020). Such contradiction would indicate and reflect the existence of a policy gap between EU pro-democracy rhetoric and practices, something already observed and extensively discussed

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[36] This article is mostly inspired by the outcomes and hypotheses raised in chapter 3: "Hindering democracy through migration policies? The nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of Morocco".

by scholars (Youngs 2001; Bicchi, 2010). In this article, I propose continuing to explore these hypotheses by considering another (yet missing) layer of the reality within the policy process, that is, the perception of local stakeholders in Morocco. Three main rationales motivated this choice.

Firstly, the externalization paradigm was built upon the premise of supposing a work of cooperation (Boswell 2003) and even partnership (Strange and Martin, 2019) among multiple actors, mainly southern Mediterranean countries of origin and transit of migration. However, more than once, EU external migration policies have been accused of being unilateral, hierarchical, and top-down (Reslow, 2012) and broadly disregarding the perceptions and reactions of most stakeholders in the target countries, particularly civil society actors (Stock et al 2019; Pastore and Roman, 2020). In fact, the absence of this perspective in migration policymaking might explain why many EU policies in this field are considered as highly ineffective when not directly counterproductive.

Secondly, even though it is true that third countries have not been passive actors in the "border security gaming" (El Qadim, 2010; Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016; Adamnson and Tsourapas, 2019; Vökel 2020), it should be noted that such actors are usually state elites that do not represent the interests of their populations (Lemberg-Pedersen 2017). To avoid such methodological nationalism would be even more relevant considering that most of these countries have an authoritarian or hybrid-regime (Akkerman, 2018). Finally, migration tends to be perceived as an uncontroversial topic in countries of origin and transit, when evidence shows that tensions and cleavages exist between different sectors of society related to this cooperation (Pastore and Roman, 2020; Johansson-Nogués and Rivera Escartin, 2020). Overlooking the aforementioned aspects could hamper the possibilities of cooperation, resulting in lack of ownership and leading to unsatisfactory results (Pastore and Roman, 2020). Most importantly, this could lead to gaps in migration governance (Triandafyllidou, 2020)

Therefore, this article argues for the necessity and added value of decentring and multi-levelling (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, 2013, Keukeleri and Lecocq 2018, Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis 2020; Triandafyllidou, 2020) the analysis of EU foreign policy impacts by

engaging with the perspective of local stakeholders in target states. In particular, it proposes exploring the impacts of EU external migration policies on the democratization of Morocco by looking through this prism. In other words, it aims at assessing how different social and political actors – that embodies different roles in the EU-Moroccan migration governance – critically evaluates these policies and its effects on the country.

The analysis is mainly based on empirical data gathered from fieldwork in Morocco during February and May 2019, in which multiple stakeholders (decision makers, implementing partners and the independent civil society) have been interviewed. Other sources of qualitative data, obtained through desk research, have also been considered to complement and contrast the data obtained in the field, such as: official policy documents, reports, academic literature, and newspaper issues. The inclusion of other sources of data is in part related to implicit difficulties and limitations of carrying fieldwork on migration in authoritarian contexts. All data has been put together and coded in the software *Nvivo*. The analysis followed a qualitative content analysis technique (Schreier, 2012), which allows for systematically assessing meaning through a combination of deductive and inductive approaches. This is important because even if the starting point of the analysis has been the hypotheses raised by the literature, the outcome will mainly rely on the categories and explanations found on the data.

The article starts by discussing the place of local stakeholders within EU external migration policies, and the necessity of adopting a decentred and multilevel perspective if willing to understand their effects on the specific contexts where they are being implemented. In a sub-section, I give particular attention to EU-Morocco cooperation on migration and the role of local migration stakeholders within this context. Then it presents the research design, explaining the processes of data collection, coding, and analysis. The following and main section is dedicated for presenting the analysis and findings, there is, for displaying how local stakeholders in Morocco perceive the impact of the externalization of EU migration policies on this country's democratization. Here the main goals are to understand the extent to which these actors' perceptions confirms/disconfirms the hypotheses and identify if other hypotheses and explanations can be raised. Moreover, I pay particular attention to the difference and similarities among stakeholders'

perceptions by intersecting their viewpoints. In the conclusions, I discuss the implications of the findings to the broader debate on the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of southern Mediterranean countries and the policy gaps that might arise between EU policies, narratives and stakeholders' perceptions.

4.2 What Place for Local Stakeholders' Perceptions in EU External Migration Policies? Towards a de-centred analysis

The relevance and central role given in this article to the perceptions of local stakeholders for studying the impact of EU external migration policies is inspired by three main assumptions. Firstly, international migration remains a highly contested concept, involving a multiplicity of actors – countries of origin/destination, civil society organizations, migrants, international organizations – with different stances and interests (Triandafyllidou 2020). Secondly, externalisation policies are part of the international migration governance (Stock, 2020), which should be broadly understood as a multi-level and multi-governance process (Lavenex 2016; Caponio and Jones-Correa 2018). Moreover, within this multi-level migration governance, the role of local actors has been increasingly studied and acknowledged (Caponio et al, 2019; Roman, Pastore, Ponzo, Harrami, & Lahmidani, 2017). Finally, this work follows the paradigm shift proposed by the decentring agenda that claims that only by engaging and learning from others' perspectives, which includes non-European and non-state actors, it would be possible to overcome Euro-centric and state-centric hegemonic views embedded in EU foreign policy analysis (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, 2013, Keukeleri and Lecocq 2018, Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis 2020, Triandafyllidou, 2020). Here I claim that such change of lenses would be not only pertinent but necessary for studying the effects of migration policies in authoritarian countries in the Global South.

As mentioned in the introduction, the externalization of EU migration policies has mainly prioritized unilateral and top-down strategies of policymaking and implementation, despite its rhetoric of cooperation and partnership (Reslow 2012). This would go against the general understanding that international migration governance, especially in the Mediterranean setting (Roman, Pastore and Ponzo 2017), involves a variety of views and

contrary interests (Kipp and Koch, 2018), and a multiplicity of actors (Zapata-Barrero 2020). Despite EU's proclaimed efforts to include these actors[37], the literature argues that, to a great extent, the civil society in countries of origin and transit continues to be largely excluded (Pastore and Roman, 2020) from both the formulation (Concord 2018) and implementation phases (Castillejos, 2016). In fact, their relevance is considered to be even "decreasing under the new instruments such as the EUTF – only 22 per cent of the EUTF funds allocated so far have gone to NGOs" (Kipp and Koch, 2018, p.16). Moreover, they also underline that most EU funds go to implementing organizations – which are usually member states' developmental agencies.

The failure to include local stakeholders has not only been perceived at the level of EU policymaking but also in terms of research. One of the main critics towards researchers comes from postcolonial studies, which argues that the literature has broadly failed to take serious account of actors from the South, that is, to study them not as mere objects but also subjects (El Qadim 2010, 2015). Such Eurocentric vision would impede researchers from perceiving the agency of all actors implicated in the externalization process (Ibid). In fact, according to the decentring agenda, such failure would be related with the difficulty to acknowledge and disengage from Europe's colonial past (Keukeleire and Lecocq, 2018; Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, 2020). This would be particularly important when it comes to the construction of borders, since in this case the Colonial past of the 'Fortress Europe' enforces, such as Italy and France, seems to be a salient pattern (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, 2020).

Even if still limited, the interest for this sort of perspective has grown, with many authors studying the empowerment of third countries through externalization (Wunderlich 2010; Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016; Koch et al 2019; Völkel 2020) or how they have been reacting and contesting such process (Stock et al 2020). However, apart from overcoming Eurocentrism, another challenge to include local stakeholders' perspective passes through conquering methodological nationalism and acknowledging the existence of different actors with different aims within states (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2017). Thus, beyond considering Global South as a subject, it would be necessary to distinguish between

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[37] https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/about_en

different scales of state agency (ibid). Most importantly, it would be crucial not to disregard the lack of democracy, rule of law and good governance that are characteristic of most southern Mediterranean countries (Szmolka 2017). In fact, Johansson-Nogués and Rivera Escartin (2020) have concluded, by studying the case of Tunisia, that the lack of inclusion of non-elite actors could have consequences beyond migration governance and even cause turbulence in democratic transition and inconsistencies on EU democracy assistance.

However, migration tends to be broadly perceived as an uncontroversial topic in 'sending' and 'transit' countries, when evidence shows that tensions and cleavages might arise between different sectors of society related to migration and mainly cooperation with the EU (Pastore and Roman 2020). This is certainly a relevant intake for countries such as Tunisia that have recently passed through an important political change in which several new actors have been incorporated in the political scenario – which becomes evident by the high number of works studying this case (Dini and Guisa 2020; Pastore and Roman 2020). However, I argue that this perspective should be considered even more relevant in a context of competitive authoritarianism, such as the case of Morocco. In this kind of authoritarian regime, the controversies and cleavages might be not only part of everyday politics but instead another piece in the game of autocratic resilience.

Finally, authors such as Triandafyllidou (2020) also argues for the necessity of adopting "a multi-dimensional de-centring perspective that acknowledges that there are multiple 'centres' and multiple 'peripheries' from which to reconsider migration governance policies and discourses." The application of the "local turn" (Caponio, Scholten, & Zapata-Barrero, 2018) in migration and Mediterranean studies, that is, the change from state-centric views to incorporate local perspectives, would be an important dimension in this process of decentring. In fact, there is a growing stream of research that considers the perspectives and interests of different local stakeholders (Pastore and Roman 2017; Mouthaan 2019) as well as how these policies are being contested in countries of origin and transit (Stock et al 2019).

Considering the above, this article expects to contribute to this literature by providing a decentred perspective of the effects of EU external migration policies on the democratization of Morocco. Doing so implies listening to and engaging with the viewpoint of local actors in Morocco, in attempt to provide a de-colonized and at the same time multilevel and local perspective of these policies on the place where they are being implemented.

4.2.1 The case of Morocco

The Moroccan case is well known for the triple role that this country embodies within the migration web and EU migration governance, that is, for its simultaneous role as a country of origin, transit and progressively, also destination (de Haas 2016). At this interface, Morocco has become (and still is) one of EU main partners in the Southern Mediterranean, enduring more than twenty-five years of almost uninterrupted 'cooperation' and owning the second largest cooperation portfolio on migration among its neighbours (European Commission, 2019). The progressive transformation of Moroccan migratory profile has certainly determined the nature of its cooperation with the EU but also the migration policies developed within this country. The involvement of Morocco in EU external migration policies has resolved mainly around two approaches.

On the one hand, EU-Morocco cooperation on border surveillance and migration control is perceived as the most productive area of cooperation and a model for other external borders (Carrera et al 2016), if conceived purely in numeric terms (den Hertog 2017). In fact, many authors point to the fact that irregular entry from Morocco to the EU has been significantly reduced throughout 2005-2015, especially when it comes to the *pateras (ricked boats)* phenomenon[38] (Cassarino 2006; Triandafyllidou 2014; Wolff 2014). These specific practices involve institution and capacity-building, mainly for security forces, information exchange and the introduction of technology as well as military means (Bilgin 2011; Carrera et al 2016). Examples of these practices abound, such as the fencing and patrolling of the border between Morocco and Ceuta and Melilla or in the

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[38] However, some authors appoint that the number of boats has not been reduced and that the cause of such decrease is related to diversion of irregular migration towards other routes (Haas 2008).

Mediterranean in cooperation with Frontex, and the introduction of the SIVE system in cooperation with Spain. For participating in these sorts of practices and repressive measures that Morocco has been many times, and against its will, conceived as Europe's *gendarme* (Belguendouz, 2003; Wolff, 2008; Wunderlich 2010). Cooperation in this area has also fostered the introduction of new migration legislation in the country, in this case Law 02/03, which is believed to be quite restrictive and has not been revised since its implementation sixteen years ago (Stock 2020).

Although the fight against irregular migration and border control have been, by large, the main areas of cooperation, the EU has been also funding projects in Morocco which tackle other fields such as migration governance, migrants' rights, and root-causes. On the one side, this is related to the EU's own ambition to promote a comprehensive and normative approach within its externalization strategies (Boswell, 2003; Faustini-Torres 2020). On the other side, this is connected to Morocco's transformation into a destination country (in part because migrants become stuck, being unable to pursue its journey towards Europe – or return to their countries of origin Gaibazzi et al. 2017) and its own demands and strategies in these areas (Natter 2014, 2015). Some examples of programmes include those tackling the socio-economic integration of migrants, students' mobility, diaspora development (Carrera et al 2016) as well as projects confronting racism, promoting the legal empowerment of migrants and the protection of the vulnerable. In what concerns migration governance, it should be underlined EU support to the new Moroccan migration law of 2013, known as the National Strategy on Migration and Asylum (SNIA) (Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi 2020; den Hertog 2017).

In one way or the other, the transformation of Morocco in a country with numerous functions within EU migration governance, the multiplication of funding and the growing importance of migration within this country's political landscape, have also led to a considerable increment in the number and diversity of local migration stakeholders. In other words, it resulted in the appearance of a variety of actors with diverse interests and needs to cover the demands related with this emerging policy field.

On the field of international cooperation, several international organizations installed in the country in order to contribute to the migration dossier, such as International Organisation for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the EU delegation as well as member states' cooperation agencies, such as the Belgian Cooperation Agency (ENABEL), the Spanish Agency of Developmental Cooperation (AECID) and the German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ). Within the Moroccan government, several bodies were created to fulfil new roles in migration management, such as the Directorate General of the National Security (DGSN), which was created within the Ministry of Interior in 2003. The abovementioned stakeholders are considered as central implementing partners of EU policies in the country. The associative field has also grown considerably in the last two decades (Khachani 2010), especially in the field of migration (Jacobs, 2013), which is partially connected with the progressive agenda fostered by Mohammed VI after he replaced his father (Kausch, 2009). These last actors have become of key importance mainly for their role as aid providers for migrants in all kinds of services, such as health, human rights, legal rights, antidiscrimination, etc. (Stock 2020) as well as for their role in monitoring policy implementation and denouncing human right's violations.

In sum, EU-Morocco cooperation on migration has been fundamentally characterized by multilevel governance and the intersection of a multiplicity of stakeholders with divergent points of view, interests, and approaches. However, considering the mostly state-centric nature of cooperation in this field it is very unlikely that a convergence of interests of all the participating stakeholders occur (Oxfam, 2020). Moreover, the authoritarian nature of the Moroccan regime makes it even more improbable that the interests set at the highest levels will align with all stakeholders involved in the process, especially with the civil society and the population of this country (Wunderlich, 2010). Considering this scenario, I argue for the necessity of looking into the impacts of EU external migration policies on this country through the prism of local stakeholders' perceptions.

4.3 Research Design: Data Sources and Methods of Analysis

4.3.1 Data sources and field work in Morocco

The analysis was based on data collected through extensive fieldwork in Morocco during February and May 2019, in which I conducted eighteen face-to-face semi-structured interviews (of 1-1,5 hours long approximately) with local stakeholders involved in the migration governance in Morocco. Table 4.1 below summarizes the types of stakeholders considered, their definition and their main role in the externalization governance. More detailed information about each of the interviewees (including gender, type of actor, interview code and date) can be found in Table 4.2 in the annex. This division has been inspired by the debates portrayed in the previous sections.

Table 4.1: Typology of local stakeholders

Name	decision-makers	implementing partners	independent civil society
Definition	Actors from the Moroccan government that are directly involved in the process of negotiation, development, and implementation of EU migration policies in Morocco	Actors that have been directly involved in the implementation of EU migration policies in Morocco	Actors from the civil society and the press that have been monitoring and evaluating the implementation of EU migration policies in Morocco
Role	Deciding/implementing	Implementing	Evaluating/monitoring
Actors	• Moroccan government • Institutional actors • EU-delegation	• International cooperation agencies • International governmental organizations • International foundations	• Non-governmental organizations • Activists • Experts • Press

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The choice of interviewees intended to cover a wide range of stakeholders with different interests and roles, and to provide a balance among the three different types. However, stakeholders representing the independent civil society have been overrepresented in the sample, mainly for their accessibility and willingness to discuss the object of study overtly. At the same time, decision-makers were more difficult to reach. In part, this is related to the fact that migration in Morocco, as in other Arabic countries, is dealt at high levels of the executive, which are quite inaccessible, such as the King himself and other 'sovereign ministries', like the Ministry of Interior or the Directorate of National Security. In addition, this is also connected to the fact that migration is a contentious and security issue in the country. These challenges related to empirical research on authoritarian contexts are shared by some authors (Tsourapas, 2014, 2018; Glasius 2018) that considered different strategies to overcome them.

One share strategy followed has been to guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of interviewees, which is also according to qualitative ethical standards (van Liempt and Bilger 2018). Apart from not displaying their names and organizations I also decided to not present their location, since some informants would be too easily identifiable. Moreover, in order to build an environment of trust, interviews were not recorded and there are no transcripts, just the notes.

The interviews aimed at capturing local stakeholder' perceptions, that is, to assess how they critically evaluate the practices and implementation of EU external migration policies in Morocco, the implication of the Moroccan government and their consequences for the democratization of the country. Most interview questions were guided by the research question and the hypotheses. However, other questions regarding stakeholders' opinions about the country's overall social/political context were also included. Some examples are the following: (a) How is the cooperation between EU and Morocco in terms of Migration control? (b) Why does Morocco cooperate with the EU? (c) The EU declares that it considers lack of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights as a 'root-cause' of migration, do you consider that the EU does enough or does something at all in the country to address these problems? (c) What do you think about the current state of Moroccan democracy, would you say it has improved or deteriorated in the last years

(since 2011)? It is important to underline that interviews were adapted depending on the type of stakeholders, if decision-maker, implementing partners or independent civil society.

Although central, interviews were not the only source considered. I also did participant observation in the World Border Security Congress in 2019 held in Casablanca during 19 and 21 March 2019, where I had the opportunity to hold informal conversations with participants, including representatives of the Moroccan government. Finally, in order to overcome the lack of saturation provided by the sample of stakeholders, as well as to complement and contrast their perceptions, the field work was combined with desk research. Here, I considered data from reports and official policy documents as well as newspapers issues and empirical literature.

4.3.2 Qualitative content analysis

The analysis of the collected data followed a qualitative content data analysis technique, a method that consists in systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data (Schreier, 2012). The process passes through selecting from the data those aspects of meaning that are connected to the research questions through a coding frame. For this reason, the coding process involved two cycles (Saldaña 2013). The first one, *descriptive coding*, consisted of summarizing the data in different topics with the main goal of having a clearer idea about what type of information it contained. The second one, consisted of doing a *pattern coding* (Miles and Huberman, 1994), which means going more in depth in the process of data analysis. Here the focus was on finding the emergent themes, causes and mainly explanations, in the data. This sort of coding allows identifying the 'outcome' and the 'why', which would be the bases of conforming the 'perceptions' that this study investigates.

The process of coding was guided by both inductive and deductive approaches, combining concept-driven and data-driven categories. Qualitative content analysis, although systematic, allows for certain flexibility, it is mostly an iterative procedure, and the coding frame can be modified throughout the analysis.

The first coding frame was determined by the three hypotheses identified by previous research to explain why EU external migration policies might be negatively affecting the democratization of Morocco (See figure 4.1 and detailed description of each hypothesis below).

Figure 4.1: Primary coding frame for analysing local stakeholders' perceptions.
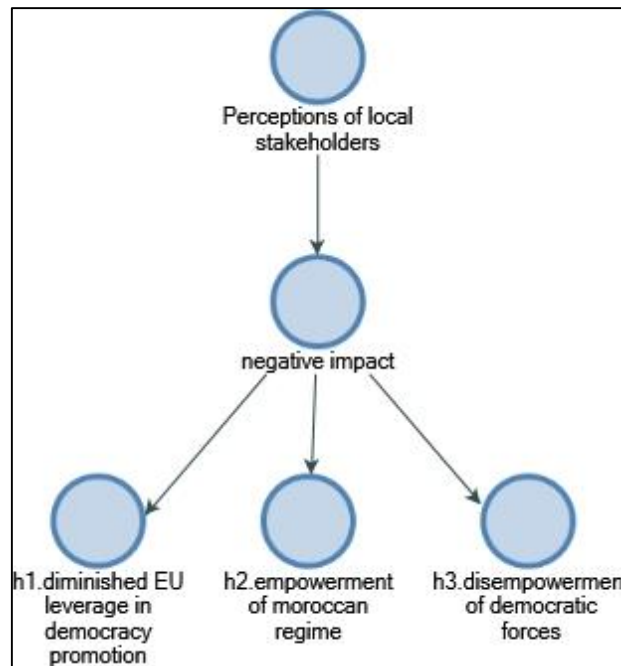
- *H1: "Diminished EU leverage in democracy promotion"*
  The externalization of EU migration policies might be hampering EU capacity and willingness to actively promote democracy in Morocco, either through traditional tools (such as conditionality or policies of democracy assistance) or through migration policies (under the so-called root-causes approach), mainly due to the prioritization of migration control within its foreign policy agenda.

- *H2: "Empowerment of Moroccan regime"*
  EU-Morocco 'cooperation' on migration control, and mainly EU high dependence on the latter for fulfilling this goal, might be empowering Moroccan ruling elites, which are likely to use this enhanced position to maintain and consolidate their authoritarian power.

In concrete, three types of concessions obtained through the "border security gaming" could potentially work in pro of the legitimisation and consolidation of the regime: (a) political/moral (related with its internal and external political legitimacy); (b) economic (related with its control over the economy and resources) and (c) material/logistic (related with its coercive state capacity, that is the strength and capacity of its security bodies).

- *H3: "Disempowerment of democratic forces"*
  By giving preference to state ruling elites as the main cooperation/negotiating actors in Morocco, the EU might be side-lining the opposition to the regime, that is, the most reformist actors within this society, mainly the independent civil society.

These hypotheses were the starting point for the analysis. However, as announced, the coding frames and categories identified evolved (see figure 4.2 in Annex) based on stakeholders' different perceptions, through contrasting their viewpoints and the identification of new concerns and explanations provided by the data analysis, as will be further detailed in the next section.

4.4 Analysis: Local Stakeholders' Perceptions on the Nexus Between EU External Migration Policies and Moroccan's Democratization

The main idea behind the analysis was to portray as authentically as possible the perceptions of the different stakeholders interviewed. Before describing the main findings, I would like to highlight some general observations extracted from the analysis.

Firstly, although it is true that divergences of perspective were found mainly across different types of stakeholders, some minor divergence of views could also be found within the aggregated categories. However, overall, and despite their different roles in the migration governance, the analysis uncovered more convergence of perspectives than would be otherwise expected. The only exception would be the stance of decision-makers, and mainly the Moroccan government, which has been the most contrasting one. In fact, one main observation has been that, overall, most actors perceive EU external migration

policies as a challenge for Moroccan democratization. In other words, most interviewees see externalization as having negative consequences for this process. This would be an indication that local stakeholders' perceptions broadly confirm the general hypothesis raised by previous research.

Secondly, although all hypotheses have been equally discussed with stakeholders in the interviews, the first one "EU low leverage on democracy promotion" was by far the least coded in the analysis. This could reflect stakeholders' broad scepticism about EU democracy promotion efforts and normative ambitions in the country. That is, it could be interpreted that they simply did not have much to say about that. In contrast, the other two hypotheses, and especially "disempowerment of democratic forces" received greater attention by stakeholders, who provided several explanations and information on the matter. This could be in part due to the overrepresentation in the sample of stakeholders from the independent civil society, actors that would hold a more critical stance against EU migration policies and the Moroccan government. However, instead of perceiving this as a shortcoming I took it as an indication that this hypothesis is important and should be further investigated by future research considering the explanations provided. Moreover, civil society voices tend to be the most marginalized in migration governance, therefore this study would be an opportunity for them to resonate.

Thirdly, apart from exposing how stakeholders perceive the impact of EU external migration policies on the democratization of Morocco, the analysis also revealed another important aspect of this nexus that was not within this study's initial goals. Mainly, stakeholders disclosed their views on how lack of democracy, repression and human rights' abuse are related with recent immigration movements from the country, allowing us to make an even deeper reflection about the policy gaps in EU migration governance.

Finally, even though the hypothesis and analysis treated the EU mainly as an aggregated actor, Moroccan stakeholders raised several times the role of EU member states in the process of externalization, considered as being the ones "making the calls", particularly big member states (Interview-EXP2), such as: Spain, France, and Germany. Spain is considered by far as being the main sponsor/lobbyist and protector of Morocco in the EU

(Interviews EXP2, NGO3, NGO4), being also the most visible one both through the EU framework and bilateral cooperation (Interview NGO3). The literature has already underlined how Spanish-Moroccan cooperation on migration control is regarded as an important model for the region (den Hertog 2017, Koch et al 2018) and how border management is above all an affair between the two countries.

France has also been pointed out by interviewees as an important actor in terms of externalization of migration management, competing and sometimes even acting in contradiction with the EU and other member states (Interview NGO3). However, in this case cooperation would be mainly bilateral and for this reason more difficult to trace (Ibid). Stakeholders have called particular attention to the growing involvement of Germany in externalization affairs, which have worked mainly through the deployment of huge investments in Africa (a sort of Plan Marshal for Africa launched in 2017), including in Morocco, to make pressure and gain leverage in migration control (Interview IF1, NGO1). Apart from being a big donor in terms of development cooperation (Interview IF1), Germany has also been making important investment in terms of security and other polemic initiatives, such as promoting Morocco as a safe country of origin (den Hertog, 2017, p.16). Overall, even though stakeholders perceive member states as central actors in the externalization process, which might be even more visible in the implementation process, they still perceive their policies and involvement as being part and related to a bigger process, which is fostered and promoted by the EU. This information is particularly relevant considering the decentring theoretical framework applied to this research. The finding that member states might still be making the calls appoints that the European project and action abroad is much closer to member states colonial past than the 'virgin birth' envisioned when it was funded (Nicolaïdis, 2015).

4.4.1 EU low leverage on democracy promotion: lack of credibility and incoherent practices

As mentioned above, in general terms, local stakeholders have demonstrated being very sceptical about the EU normative approach towards Morocco. As summarized by a member of an international foundation, "EU (normative) is not credible" (Interview-IF1).

This lack of credibility and distrust of EU's real intentions was shared among most interviewees, who related EU low leverage on democracy to three main issues.

Firstly, they considered the EU normative approach as not credible because priorities are being placed on policies that do not favour the development of democratic values, practices, and actors. Moreover, since the EU's main concern is with containing migration and assuring the cooperation of Rabat, it promotes mainly securitized policies of migration and border control and not policies targeting the 'root-causes' of migration. As underlined by one member of an international cooperation agency: "If the EU cares about the democratization of Morocco? No, the EU only cares about its own interest, which is 'that migrants stay in their countries', nor saving lives, nor any other kind of policies" (Interview-COOP1). Such interests would mainly refer to the fight against migration and terrorism (Interview-ACT1), both of which put a great pressure towards Morocco to keep the border closed (Interview-IF2).

Still about this matter, some interviewees highlight that EU's insistence in securitizing the fight against migration and transforming the country in its *gendarme* would be in contrast Morocco's recent effort to build a progressive and human rights-based migration agenda. As mentioned above, since 2013 Morocco's migration policy has been guided by the National Strategy on Migration and Asylum (SNIA), which introduced a more humanistic approach to the issue in Morocco and the promise of a new law on migration and asylum. Even if the SNIA has been developed with the budgetary and technical support from the EU (Interview-GOV2) (which is believed to have been fostered within the framework of the Mobility Partnership Interview-NGO3), the influence and pressure from the EU in guaranteeing its implementation has been limited (interview-COOP1). In addition, some interviewees mentioned that such strategy would also work in pro of EU restrictive policies, "either because the borders are reinforced, and the migrants cannot leave or because they chose to stay, because they can stay regularly in Morocco" (Interview-NGO3)

However, several stakeholders, from decision-makers to civil society members, underlined that despite advancing some rights for migrants in the country (mainly through

two regularization programmes in 2014 and 2017), the general feeling is that the whole process is stalled and that the promise of a new migration and asylum law is unlikely to be fulfilled any time soon (Interview- GOV2, EXP2, NGO3, GOV2). Moreover, as explained by a member of an international cooperation agency: "Passing an asylum and migration law would go against the EU's control objectives, immigrants would be free to move and stay in Morocco. The deterrence policies of the Moroccan police, to expel immigrants from the north to the south (a recurrent practice), would not work in this context". Therefore, the current situation of political immobility seems to be a win-win game for the Moroccan government and the EU, with both being able to play with a double and, most of times, contradictory discourse without making real advances in terms of normative practices.

Second, interviewees underlined that the EU avoids pressuring too hard for democratization, engaging with social movements, or criticizing the country's human rights violations. A member from an international foundation mentioned how the EU has not made any no official statement about violations of migrants' rights perpetrated in the north of Morocco, and mainly in the city of Nador alongside 2018 (AMDH, 2019). Such silence is believed to be in contradiction with EU normative approach (IF1). According to a member of a Moroccan NGO:

> "Officially the EU doesn't say or react in any form towards this type of violation or in fact towards any kind of violation against human rights at all perpetrated in Morocco. These matters are way too sensitive for the EU to make a statement or react. They are very sensitive issues; it is connected with the King and the EU does not want to jeopardize its relations. There has been no reaction to the protests in the Rif (Interview-NGO3)".

This last statement refers to a cycle of demonstrations that erupted in the Rif region during 2016-2017, especially in the city of Al Hoceima, representing the biggest protests the regime faced since the "Arab uprisings" in 2011 (Larramendi and Thieux 2018). Several observers and NGOs reported a high level of violence against protesters as well as the imprisonment of activists and demonstrators (Benjattab 2017; AMDH 2017; El Salto, 2018b). In this same line, another member of an NGO stated that: "The EU is worse than

in 1996, it has dropped its human rights optic. Before, there was a "sub-commission of human rights", from 2015-16 on this commission ceases to exists" (Interview-NGO1).

Finally, stakeholders also link EU lack of leverage on democracy promotion with the nature of funding given to Morocco. On the one hand, an expert from a Moroccan think tank (Interview-EXP2) explained how since 2011 (at least) the EU use of democratic conditionality has dropped considerably. In fact, nowadays, the EU would make no linkage between the money given within EU-Morocco cooperative frameworks and the democratization of the country. On the other hand, stakeholders highlight the lack of accountability and transparency of migration funds invested through EU projects in the country. Decision-maker stakeholders mentioned that there is 'a lot of money' for different sectors (Interview-IGOV2) and that it is likely that it is not only for security purposes (Interview-GOV1), however, that his would be very difficult to confirm without being capable of following how the money is being expended. A member from a Moroccan NGO (Interview-NGO2) posed a similar question: "How the money is expended? The only financing of the EU that has no control is the money of migration and the EU is happy about that even if there are more deaths in the Mediterranean". According to another interviewee, most money would end up in the hands of the Ministry of Interior and there would be no transparency from the government of Morocco about how this money is being used (Interview-COOP1).

A study by Den Hertog (2016) about EU migration funding concluded that an incoherent and fragmented funding landscape would be a "normal and inevitable condition of EU governance in this field", in which different the priorities of different stakeholders need to be reconciled. However, he underlines that the challenge rests precisely on the compatibility between financial accountability and EU rules, principles, and commitments, which in principle should include a compromise with democracy promotion and human rights.

Overall, stakeholders' perceptions seem to be in line with the hypothesis raised by previous research. Their explanations underline mainly the EU lack of credibility and incoherencies when promoting democracy in the country, something that has been already

extensively discussed in the literature of EU democracy promotion (Pace et al 2009; Seeberg 2009; Khakee 2017). Finding that local stakeholders also evaluate EU normative approach within migration governance to be failing should be enough reason for redesigning its policies from the scratch.

4.4.2 Moroccan regime empowerment: trading migration for legitimacy, money and equipment

Overall, stakeholders in Morocco seem to broadly agree with the hypothesis and explanations raised by the literature (Wunderlich, 2010; El Qadim, 2010, Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016; Werenfels 2018), which contends that the Moroccan regime is being empowered by the 'border security game' played with the EU and mainly by the later dependence on Morocco to keep migration under control (Freyburg 2012). Moreover, they overwhelmingly see this as a source of legitimisation and consolidation of the regime. However, such a view would go against the perceptions of the Moroccan government regarding the nature and reach of EU support to its endeavours in migration management.

According to most interviewees, Morocco would be broadly aware of its advantaged geographical position and its key role within EU migration governance. Therefore, it would use migration cooperation as a bargain coin to obtain different kinds of concessions from the EU, such as improving its economy or managing other strategic issues in internal and external affairs (Interview-ACT1; Interview-NGO3). In other words, by making use of the 'migration dossier', Morocco would be able to exert pressure over the EU, using it as a negotiation tool to elaborate better demands (Interview- EXP2). Since the EU does not want to lose Morocco's partnership on this field, most of the time it ends up acceding to the regime's requirements. This would be mainly because when the government wants, it threatens with opening the door and letting migrants cross towards the EU.

Several stakeholders argue that Moroccan demands are broadly related to two main themes: (1) money and equipment, and the (2) Western Sahara and fisheries agreements. A member from an NGO commented that "if Morocco is satisfied in these issues, then

the EU can assure a cooperation on migration control" (NGO3). On the one hand, most stakeholders agree that Morocco receives a great quantity of money in the form of financial aid, being this one of the main motivations behind its willingness to cooperate. As more than one interviewee has put it, it is 'all about money'. In this same line, Morocco would also demand equipment, capacity building and transference of technology for its security forces, claiming the high effort deployed to secure their borders and their need of budgetary support to keep the good work (Telquel, 2018). In informal conversations I held with members from the Moroccan government in the Border Security Congress they made it clear that the government was investing heavily in border and security technology claiming that it has a big border and needs to deal with complex threats. Such an investment presupposes of course, a high cost.

On the other hand, interviewees also contended that Moroccan uses its leveraged position to pressure the EU for the fishery agreements and for gaining weight for its political stance in the Western Sahara (Interviews: COOP1; PRESS2; NGO2; EXP2). In relation to this, they refer to the ruling of the European Union Court of Justice in 2015 against Moroccan Sovereignty in the Western Sahara. According to an interviewee these unwelcomed statements made Morocco feel like being "stabbed in the back", creating many tensions between the EU and Morocco during the following years (Interview-EXP2). As a reaction, Morocco took an uncooperative position and even threatened the EU with opening its borders (Interviews: IF1 and NGO1) until a favourable solution was reached regarding the fisheries agreements (Interview-NGO3). An interviewee made an interesting observation, claiming that despite these threats, the EU would have few mechanisms to actually control migration (Interviwe-EXP2). However, some reports from NGOs working on the field explain that the Moroccan government also manipulates numbers and statistics to make its threats/cooperation credible to the EU (AMDH 2019).

In addition to these pressures and threats, interviewees considered that, to a large extent, Morocco seeks concessions through adopting a more cooperative instance, that is, through showing its work and effectiveness in controlling the border, tracking human traffickers and stopping flows (Interview-NGO2). One member of a local NGO explains that even when there is a 'suppose' lack of money, the Moroccan government continues

to do its work quite well – "it needs to prove it can secure its borders" (Interview-NGO3). Overall, policymakers' stakeholders perceive Morocco as a very cooperative and generous actor vis-à-vis the EU, even though not being entirely satisfied with cooperation and the funds provided to sponsor the 'fight' against migration. Such unsatisfaction would be not only related to financial resources but to the division of responsibilities. An interviewee from the press explained how Morocco would prefer a policy of shared responsibility between destination/origin/transit countries (Interview-PRESS2). This affirmation would be in accordance with a statement given in an interview by Khalid Zerouali, the director of the Moroccan migration and border surveillance services: "Regardless of migration, for us border security is the responsibility of all countries. Border security is indivisible, all countries must contribute so that the fight against cross-border crime is an effective fight" (El Diario, 2019).

Finally, and perhaps, most importantly, several stakeholders, mainly from the independent civil society have shown particular concern with the different sorts of concessions given to the Moroccan regime in exchange for migration control and its enhanced position of power. They consider these concessions as problematics for two main reasons – both tightly related to the lack of democracy that characterizes the regime.

The first one is related with the large quantity of money given to the Moroccan government and the problem of high corruption that prevails in the country (Interviews COOP1 and PRESS2). Stakeholders consider that, within such context, it would be very difficult to trace how the money is being spent and in particular if it is being used for repressive purposes. In fact, the second concern is related to the use of equipment and technology obtained to control migration, to persecute and repress even more migrants and the population as whole (Interview-NGO2). According to a member of an NGO: "they use the money to buy material and repress the people. Have you seen the material they have and use against protesters?" (Interview-NGO1). A member from another NGO recalled that the "Auxiliary Forces" (a body within the Ministry of Interior), is the main responsible for controlling migration, being sustained by the EU with money and equipment. However, this same material that is allegedly for migration control would have been used for the repression of social movements, such as the case of Hirak

(Interview-NGO2). On a different level, the technology of surveillance used by Morocco in the control of migration, which in general is European Technology, would also be used to follow activists on Social Media and track their phones (Interview-ACT1). This would also be the case of the introduction of biometric technology, using the excuse of controlling migration to apply it on other civil processes (Interview-EXP1). The introduction and extended use of these technologies would contribute to complement the EU's already sophisticated system of (soft and social) control over its population (IF1).

All in all, also in this case, stakeholders' perceptions seem to broadly confirm the hypothesis. In general, local actors broadly perceive the externalization of EU migration as working in pro of the consolidation and even expansion of the regime's power either through raising their legitimacy in political issues or through the provision of financial resources and equipment that are likely to be used against the country's own population and democratic values. Their stance on the problems related with high corruption in the country and the double use of technology are particularly strong points in explanations and should be further investigated.

4.4.3 Disempowerment of democratic forces

This hypothesis has been, by far, the one with more consensus among the independent civil society, which provided two main explanations to why democratic forces in Morocco might be disempowered by the process of externalization. Firstly, they referred to the fact that the civil society in the country is being broadly side-lined, having an increasing difficulty to access funds or participate in the processes of migration policymaking and implementation. Moreover, the fact that its members are being constantly persecuted by the authorities would also represent a great challenge for the work they develop. Secondly, these stakeholders underlined the increasing deterioration in human rights in general and migrants' rights in particular in the country. The arguments made by these stakeholders contradicts both the stance of the Moroccan government that it is taking a more humanitarian approach on the topic of migration and the EU rhetoric of fostering the involvement of civil society in the implementation of its policies.

4.4.3.1 Civil society side-lining: unequal access to funds and persecution

Interviewees first observation in this regard considered the low participation of the Moroccan civil society within the development and implementation of migration policies in the country. As stated by a member of a cooperation agency: "Civil society in Morocco is very frustrated in general, it does not receive money or support" (Interview-COOP1). Moreover, he also mentioned that this would be contradictory considering the great amount of money available and the high number of associations working on the matter. However, there would be at least two explanations for this situation. The first one is related to the nature of funding provision. In general, the international organizations, such as OIM, and development cooperation agencies, such as AECID, are the ones receiving a great part of the funds. The statement of a member from a local NGO summarizes very well the situation portrayed by stakeholders:

> "Regarding the involvement of civil society. It is very complicated to access the funds of the EU, it requires a lot of knowledge and the fulfilment of their requirements, which most small NGOS that work on migration cannot. Moreover, they don't need a big budget, and the EU usually works with big numbers, they don't have small projects of 50 thousand euros, 200 thousand, which is usually what associations need. [...] Most of the fund comes now from the EUTF. And they are very difficult to access. [...] So usually big organizations, or those that the EU choses directly are the ones that receive the funds." (Interview-NGO3).

Other interviewees also referred to the high corruption in this field, claiming that most NGOs are not trustworthy. One member of an international non-governmental organization mentioned the example of Oujda. According to him, "after 2014, the EU have supported 25 different projects in the city, which meant sending *a lot* of money to NGOS that are not necessarily credible (around 70%) and that have no experience or no competence for dealing with the issue" (Interview-INGO1). Another concern raised by civil society stakeholders is related with the intrinsic risk of involving NGOs in the work of externalisation and migration control in Morocco, risking compromising their work and core purpose (Interview-NGO2 and INGO1). A member of a governmental institution also agrees with this point, claiming that it would be difficult to remain autonomous when

money is at stake. In this line, they need to fight to impose their own interests and maintain the goals of their own institutions and that not all organizations would be equally equipped to hold their position (Interview-GOV2).

The second reason for the side-lining of organizations is not so much related to financing but with political stances. Several interviewees underlined that there would be two main kinds of non-governmental organizations in Morocco: those that work pro-regime, that is, that have been co-opted, and that are more independent and hold a critical stance towards the regime (Interviews IF1, NGO2, INGO1). This last type is considered to be broadly excluded from cooperation with the EU, that simply does not take them into account (Interview NGO1, IF1). In contrast, both the EU and Morocco give preference to those that are close to the government or that new and have been directly created for that purpose (Interview, NGO2, INGO1). This led one of the interviewees to raise the following question: "In the EU discourse the civil society has always been the protagonist, but which actors from civil society are actually getting involved and receiving funds? Civil society that advocates for changes?" (IF1).

Apart from being largely side-lined in the context of migration governance, another problem raised by stakeholders regarding the disempowerment of democratic forces is related to the increasing persecution (Interview-NGO1) and surveillance (Interview-IF1) of civil society and its members. As highlighted by some of them, mainly since 2011 several organizations find themselves "under great stress" (Ibid), relating problems to function properly and obtain funds despite not being directly attacked. In fact, not only civil society members would be persecuted and prevented from working[39], but also journalists and researchers and activists would have a hard time doing their job in certain areas of the country[40], especially in the north (Interview-NGO2). At this point, this interviewee considered it pertinent to clarify what made the government so afraid of

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[39] When I arrived at the headquarters of the organization for the interview one of its members had just been arrested by the police. He was released later that same day.

[40] According to Euromed Rights (2015): "Since July 2014, the number of legal proceedings brought against certain civil society organisations has risen in Morocco doing research on migration in Morocco. On 11 June 2015, two Amnesty International researchers were arrested and expelled from the country. In October 2015, the activities of Human Rights Watch were suspended. Likewise, many foreign journalists were given no response after asking to report on the migration situation in Morocco, or were refused entry to the country with their journalism working equipment".

activists and journalists. There would be two main explanations: (i) the gravity of human rights' violations perpetrated at the border and bordering cities and (ii) in order to hide the real statistics about migration so the Moroccan government can keep playing the border game vis-à-vis the EU on its own terms and justify the incommensurable amount of money and disproportionately sophisticated equipment received to control migration. As stated by an NGO member: "The government wants to be the only interlocutor with the European Union, especially in terms of statistics" (Interview-NGO2)".

4.4.3.2 Violation of migrant's and human rights

The other facet of the disempowerment of democratic values is related with stakeholders denouncing the increased violence, abuses and human rights violations committed against migrants in the country, mainly in its Northern region. Interviewees mentioned mainly this new policy of displacing (deportation) migrants from the north to the south of Morocco (Interview-IF1, INGO1). According to a member of a local NGO: "If before migrants were dislocated towards the border with Algeria, through Oujda, in 2015 there was a change and they started to dislocate people within the country, from the North to the South. And there is nothing in the law that justifies that, there is no possible way of justifying this kind of measures" (Interview-NGO3). Such practices would involve a great amount of violence and human rights violations, especially of vulnerable people. Faced with such accusations, the director of the DMBS, Khalid Zerouali, insists that these operations are according to the Moroccan law 03-02 (El Diario, 2019) – which foresees the right to prohibit certain areas for those who do not have a residence card – and that they seek the protection of migrants by preventing them from getting into the hands of trafficking networks (Telquel, 2018).

Apart from that, stakeholders also underlined the continued "hot *refoulements*" (Interview-IF2). Here, the Morocco stance is like the previous one, they argue that the government does not practice expulsions but only voluntary return in coordination with the IOM. However, NGO members maintain a quite sceptical stance of the Moroccan government (Interview-NGO3) as well as IOM work on this matter (Interview-NGO2). Finally, despite Morocco claims that it has no "CIES" (a type of prison for "irregular"

migrants) in the country, civil society stakeholders have denounced the unlawful detention of migrants in commissaries/gendarmeries that would work as clandestine centres for the imprisonment of migrants (Interview-NGO2, NGO3).

Stakeholders also underlined that the severe violations of human rights in Morocco would not be exclusive of the migration field. One activist makes special reference to the events surrounding the demonstrations in the Rif, which have been met with severe repression from the government and the unprecedented arrest of activists and protesters (Interview-ACT1). As a result, there would be, now, more political prisoners than ever. Despite this, he also mentioned how not even faced with this evidence the EU has made an official pronouncement about the situation in the region and human rights violations committed by the Moroccan government.

To conclude this part, it could be argued that, as in the previous case, the perceptions of stakeholders on this topic broadly confirms the hypothesis by indicating that perhaps the most reformist sectors of the country are being either side-lined, deprived from resources, persecuted or imprisoned. In other words, they explain that the externalization of EU migration policies towards Morocco is depriving democratising forces from both moral and material resources for opposing the current regime. The explanations given by stakeholders enriches the hypothesis and opens many possibilities for research. In particular, it broadly validates the importance of considering the perceptions of the civil society when investigating the impact of policies, particularly in authoritarian contexts. This would be mainly because they provide a unique perspective not only about the impact of the policy per se but also on the possibilities of monitoring and denouncing their effects.

4.4.4 Migration drivers and solutions

4.4.4.1 Lack of democracy as migration driver

Apart from revealing local stakeholders' perceptions about the impacts of EU external migration policies on the democratization of Morocco, the analysis also exposed how

they perceive another dimension of the nexus between these two policy processes, that is, how democratization is related with the drivers and solutions of migration.

When considering the above-mentioned issues, several interviewees argued that structural and conjectural political conditions in Morocco would be among the main drivers of migration in the country, especially recent migratory movement of young Moroccans. According to an activist (Interview-ACT1) for instance, there would be two kinds of Moroccan Migrants: activists/students afraid to go to prison and young people that do not see any future in Morocco. In this same line, other interviewees also mentioned that they would leave either for security reasons (Interview-NGO4) or due to the absence of life prospects in the country (Interview-PRESS2). Although economic reasons (crisis, unemployment, bad governance, corruption) are also mentioned as being an important driver of migration, stakeholders mostly agree that lack of democracy, repression, human rights violations, is increasingly becoming the main reason for migrating. They mentioned that, overall, frustration with the political system among the population is really high, and that people feel that they live in a cage/prison (Interview-COOP1). As a result, Moroccans would leave looking mainly for freedom.

The political reasons are believed to be manifested especially within young people from the Rif. During 2017, there was a considerable increase in the number of migrants crossing the Western Mediterranean route, that mainly covers the migratory route from Morocco to Spain. Among these migrants 7.311 out of 35.500[41] would be of Moroccan origin, and specially from the Rif region. This made the media and academics, as well as some of my interviewees associate these flows with the repression of the regime towards the 'Hirak al Rif' movement during 2016-2017 (El Salto Diario, 2018a[42]; Werenfels 2018). However, other causes have been appointed, such as the high level of unemployment and the restoration of the mandatory military service by Mohammed VI[43]. As is always the case with migration, it is likely that more than one factor is triggering

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[41] Ara.cat, 03 October 2018. "Repressed by Morocco, Rifians flee in boats".
[42] See also: The Guardian, 2018: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/01/moroccos-gag-on-dissent-in-rif-region-fuels-exodus-to-europe ;
El Salto Diario, 2018b: https://www.elsaltodiario.com/fronteras/de-las-calles-del-rif-a-la-patera-la-muerte-antes-que-la-rendicion
[43] Ibid.

these movements. However, the repression against their demonstrations, the lack of political solution to the problem mixed with a historical political frustration with the regime are being singled out as the main drivers this time (AMDH 2017). A final observation regarding this theme made by two interviewees is related to the facility that these migrants encountered to leave the country in a time when Morocco was harshly restraining the movement of African migrants towards Europe. Their hypothesis is that the Moroccan government would implement a double border policy, one for 'dissident' Moroccans, and another one, for African migrants. To the first group, the Moroccan government would implement a policy of *"laissez faire laissez aller"*, that is, a strategy of using migration as a safety-valve for alleviating social and political tensions by letting 'hot assets' (activists, protesters, journalists) leave the country. To the second group, it would employ 'business as usual' migration control aligned with its role of Europe's *gendarme* (Interview-ACT1; Interview-COOP1)

4.4.4.2 What solutions then?

Considering these drivers of migration, interviewees argued that the solution to the 'migration problem' would pass necessarily through improving life conditions in Morocco. However, this should go beyond development aid focused on economic growth and modernisation. As explained by a member of an international foundation:

> "[cooperation should focus] on important things like corruption and good governance, that ultimately could actually influence migration flows (in terms of push factors) since more development does not lead necessarily to less migration, on the contrary. However, conflict reduction, increasing security, democratic governance, and tackling political crises could have a more profound effect in stemming migration from the source." (Interview-IF1)

Therefore, it could be interpreted that they perceive the advancement of democracy in the country as positive for tackling the migration issue. However, apart from that, they also mention the need for a change in migration discourses in both sides of the Mediterranean; mainly because EU policies and perceptions on migration have highly conditioned and influenced migration flows and migration policies in Morocco (Interviews-EXP2; ACT1).

4.5 Conclusions

In an attempt of decentring EU foreign policy analysis, this article explored the impact of EU external migration policies on the democratization of Morocco through the prism of local stakeholders' perceptions. Drawing on several interviews held with different political and social actors, the analysis revealed how they evaluate and explain the effects of these policies on the democratic development of the country. Overall, the results exposed that local stakeholders broadly perceived externalization as having a negative impact on the Morocco democratization, representing a challenge rather than an opportunity for this political process. Moreover, all hypotheses raised by previous research – (h1) Diminished EU leverage in democracy promotion, (h2) Empowerment of Moroccan regime, and (h3) Disempowerment of democratic forces – have been validated by their perceptions, providing additional information and explanation for better understanding the mechanisms behind them.

On the one hand, stakeholders consider that EU priorities are not being placed on practices that would favour the development of democracy in Morocco. Since the EU's main concern is with containing migration and assuring the cooperation of Rabat, it avoids pressuring too hard for democratization, engaging with social movements, or criticizing the country's human rights violations. Moreover, it promotes mainly securitized policies of migration and border control and not policies targeting the 'root-causes' of migration. On the other hand, several interviewees perceive EU migration policies towards this country as counterproductive, contributing to boosting authoritarian forces and practices. In order words, they claim that they would favour an already repressive, undemocratic, and corrupted context at the expense of migrants and human rights, the work of NGOS and civil society organizations and the population as whole.

Moreover, apart from providing a broader understanding of policy impacts, the analysis also uncovered another aspect of the migration-democratization nexus. Mainly the fact that most local stakeholders perceive lack of democracy, repression, human rights abuse etc. as a key driver of immigration in the country, especially among the youth and residents of the Rif. As a result, they also perceive democratization as a 'solution' to the

migration 'problem' – as well as to many other problems in the country, such as human rights violations.

The outcomes of this research lead to two concluding reflections. The first one is related to the existence of points of contradiction and convergence between EU policy narratives and the perception of local actors. There would be contradiction since there seems to be a wide gap between EU policy narratives and the perceptions of local stakeholders, that is, in terms of the declared policy intentions and their perceived effects on the ground. Whereas within EU normative ambition and narratives lies the intention of producing a positive effect on democratization, stakeholders perceive the effects of these policies as being mainly negative, going in the opposite direction of the EU's rhetoric. Conversely, there would be convergence of their viewpoints when it comes to the drivers and solutions of migration since both EU policy narratives and local stakeholders perceive lack of democracy as a root-cause of migration. Therefore, these two perspectives see democratization as a favourable condition for diminishing migration flows on the source. This would further elucidate the problematic behind this perception gap, since it reveals that the EU is not entirely wrong in its intentions, but it is failing considerably in its practices.

The second one is related to how this study further confirms the importance of decentring and multi-levelling the analysis EU external migration policies impacts by considering the perspectives of local stakeholders, and mainly non-state and non-elite actors, such as the civil society. This is mainly because their perceptions are also a reflection of EU engagement or lack of engagement with these actors. The more civil societies are silenced and excluded from the policy process the wider the gap between EU narratives and the realities unfolding on the ground. However, it should be questioned the extent to which EU blindness towards this other actor is likely to be a product of ignorance or a strategic choice. The interviews held with stakeholders in Morocco left the impression that if you want to be part of the game, receive funds and political support, you ought to play both EU and Moroccan games. Such dynamic would leave an important sector of the society (civil society), especially in terms of democratic balance and accountability, unarmoured and with little space for manoeuvre – something that would be detrimental not only for

Moroccan democratization but also for the EU itself as a defender and promoter of democratic values.

At the same time, however, an important shortcoming of this research is related to the lack of representation of Moroccan governmental stakeholders. Although I claim that a greater attention should be given to non-elite actors and civil society, in an attempt of decentring and multi-levelling the analysis, such moves would imply necessarily giving more agency for governmental actors in third countries as well. In the present analysis the views of these stakeholders have been clearly underrepresented. Their proper inclusion in the analysis (which would suppose amplifying the number of interviews with members of government/ministries/political parties) could open a space to complexify and better understand the perception of state elites in third countries and their involvement and cooperation with the EU in terms of migration control.

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5. CONCLUSION

"We need to revise policies that go against our development goals, as sometimes happens in trade policy and agriculture. But we also need a good policy on democracy and promoting human rights. In the past, the Community and the Member States have cooperated with third countries on stopping migrants and not on human rights. [...] Now is the time to change that. I am very happy to hear that you agree with me that we urgently need to change to a more human rights-based approach. We should not forget that stability is not the only thing people want and need. Stability without democracy is not a sustainable way forward. Stability plus poverty does not offer any prospects. Stability is important, but it is not the only thing that matters. (Keller, debate on EU Parliament, 2011).

"[...] just as in other border regions, the EU prefers to cooperate with dictatorships, rather than with those who try to escape from them" (Höppner and Zeitz, 2017).

"Our victims know us by their scars and by their chains, and it is this that makes their evidence irrefutable. It is enough that they show us what we have made of them for us to realize what we have made of ourselves. But is it any use? Yes, for Europe is at death's door". (Fanon, 1963, p.13).

In this concluding chapter I would like to answer the following question: what multi-layered reality about the nexus between EU external migration policies do the different articles portray and what normative reflections do they lead us to make? In the first part, I summarize the outcomes of each of the three articles, underlining their main contributions and how they add to the understanding of this nexus from a different heuristic angle. My rationale is to identify and discuss the gaps between the different layers. In the following section, I provide a brief self-evaluation of the overall research, pointing out the main empirical, methodological, and theoretical shortcomings, but also considering the new avenues of research it sets forth. The final part is dedicated to a reflection about the potential impact of this research for the EU broad normative policy agenda.

5.1 Overview of the Three Articles: Identifying the Gaps

This research is a first attempt to disentangle the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of Southern Mediterranean countries through a qualitative multi-layered analysis in which different perspectives and levels of analysis have been considered. In concrete, three main layers have been explored: policy narratives, policy practices and local stakeholder's perceptions. The main goal has been to identify how these two macro-processes of international affairs intertwine, that is, to unfold and expose the relations that emerge and are constructed between these two policy fields. In the next paragraphs, I summarise the articles' main findings and discuss their relations with the policy gaps mentioned in the introduction, namely: implementation gap, evaluation gap and perceptions gap (See page 27-28 of the introduction and also the figure 1.1 on the page 27 for more details).

The first article (Chapter 2: Another nexus? Exploring narratives on the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of the Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood, p.50) is dedicated to the analysis of EU policy narratives on the topic. Through a Narrative Policy Analysis of EU official documents from 1995 to 2018, this article explored EU stories and arguments on the linkages between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs. In general, the analysis of coded statements and time comparison revealed how the EU (and its institutional bodies) understood the configuration of this nexus and framed the causal links between these processes, exposing EU beliefs and premises attached to it. Mainly the analysis exposed that the *lack-of-democracy-as-a-root-cause* narrative has been present since the inception of the Barcelona Process. This finding confirms the idea that there is, at least rhetorically, an important normative component within EU external migration policies; something to be expected considering the EU self-perception and external projection as a normative power.

On the other hand, the analysis has also uncovered some narrative shifts in the post-'Arab Spring' momentum. The most revealing being the appearance of a competing and symmetrically opposite narrative in the context of the 2015-2016 'migration crisis'

(*democratization-as-a-push-factor*). According to this narrative, democratization is not perceived as a solution to the migration problem but rather as a driver of it. In general, the analysis has exposed the high level of uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity concerning EU narratives casted about the nexus between democratization and EU migration policies. A definitive indication of this is the fact that, at least in the context of the 2015-16 'migration crisis', two antagonistic stories appeared to co-exist. This should lead us to reflect upon EU strategies for reconciling and balancing these contradictory narratives and the hidden goals behind sustaining them.

This first article served as a first step towards the second one (Chapter 3: Hindering democracy through migration policies? The nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of Morocco, p.101), which shifts away from the rhetoric world to focus on the policy practices unfolding on the ground. For this reason, both the second and third articles concentrated on the case of Morocco. The second article analysed the 'practical' nexus between EU external migration policies and democratization in two steps. First, by suggesting a theoretical framework to empirically explore this nexus. This was done by bridging concepts, explanations, and analytical tools from three streams of research: (a) the external dimension of democratization, (b) the external dimension of autocratic resilience and (c) the politics of international migration. Based on the combination of these three fields of knowledge the article sets forth two arguments regarding mechanisms linking the externalization of EU migration policies and the democratization of SMCs. The first argument contends that migration should be considered as an important linkage in international relations in general, and Euro-Mediterranean relations in specific, capable of changing motivations and strategic calculations of actors on both shores of the Mediterranean and influencing their *leverage* over each other. The second defends that the externalization of EU migration policies might impact the *regime's organizational power*, influencing power positions and modifying the incentive structures of the domestic actors in SMCs, potentially being an important source of autocratic resilience.

The second step consisted of applying this framework and arguments to the analysis of EU practices in Morocco. Focusing on the last five years (2015-2020) and following a

deductive strategy, the study of the Moroccan case was based on a documentary analysis of different sources of qualitative data, mainly: EU policy documents, empirical literature, NGO reports, and press releases. Although empirical research on authoritarian regimes might be challenging and evidence hard to trace, the analysis of the Moroccan case revealed that the implementation of externalization strategies vis-à-vis this country is likely to be negatively affecting its democratization. This would be mainly because such policies seem to hamper EU leverage towards Morocco, that is, the willingness and capacity of this external actor exerting pressure and promoting democracy in this target state. Moreover, the development and implementation of EU external migration policies in Morocco seems to favour the maintenance of core socio-political and economic structures and reinforce the role of ruling elites (mainly the King and the *Makhzen*) and the coercive state capacity whereas disempowering opposition elites. Thus, it looks like the actors that are being favoured by the 'externalization process' are mainly those who are less interested in prompting regime change in the country and may use this advantaged position to keep its power and hinder any attempt of democratization. In other words, externalization may be used as a tool for the regime's autocratic resilience.

Therefore, even if within the narrative of the EU external migration policies there is an intention to have a positive impact in terms of democratization, the continued externalization of EU migration policies has the potential to produce negative (even if unintended) effects on the democratic development of SMCs – especially if the EU continues to focus on its securitized approach and refrain from investing seriously in tackling structural political and socio-economic challenges faced by these countries. Ultimately, the findings from the analysis of the Moroccan case broadly indicate that, when it comes to practices, the nexus between EU external migration policies and democratization of SMCs seem to go in the opposite direction as that of the main narrative cast by the EU.

This would be the first indication that of the existence of a gap between EU policy narratives and EU policy practices, that is, of an **implementation gap**, which far from being modest, seems to be deep and wide. As suggested by the case of Morocco, it seems that the EU is not only incapable of having a positive effect in the democratization of

SMCs through the externalization of migration policies but is likely to be jeopardizing this process through its implementation. Moreover, by reinforcing the same drivers of migration it aims to tackle (inter alia: lack of democracy and good governance, human rights abuse, and political instability) these policies might even have counterproductive effects since they risk further fuelling migration in the longer term.

The existence of this gap should not be treated as unexpected. In fact, several authors refer to the existence of such a gap in EU foreign policy towards the Mediterranean (Bicchi, 2009, 2010; Dimitrovova, 2010, Völkel, 2014, Kostanyan, 2017). Something that would also reflect an inherent conflict in the core of the EU between values and interests (Barbé and Johansson-Nogués, 2008), norms and practice (Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi, 2020), both common-place in the fields of migration policy and democracy promotion. Instead, this should lead us to the question of why the narrative persists if the policies practices and impacts suggest otherwise? As emphasized in article two, democracy/democratization continues to be included in most agreements, policy documents and action plans as goals to be pursued by the EU in its policies more than two decades after the externalization strategy came to fore and despite the existence of alternative narratives.

One hypothesis shared already in article one suggests that the EU could be making an instrumental use of the narrative (Roe, 1994), that is, making use of the normative approach not as an end itself but to obtain leverage and support its realpolitik agenda (Limam and Del Sarto, 2015) and (David and Guerrina, 2012) supporting higher political objectives, such as migration control. On the contrary, Crawford (2015) suggested that the EU might have intentions to promote norms and values in these countries but end up being outmanoeuvred by autocratic governments. The latter would be also benefiting from the rhetoric of human rights and democracy promotion. This would suggest the existence of a kind of 'unspoken compact' between states at both sides of the Mediterranean to maintain the rhetoric without serious attempts of actually implementing it (Crawford, 2015). Finally, other factors could be considered such as the capabilities-expectations gap (Hill 1993), or the gap between EU international and projected identity and the interests of member states (Zajac, 2015) and their colonial past. In fact, the

decentring literature argues that persistent Eurocentrism also bears responsibility for what is seeing as a critical gap between discursive promotion of democratisation and 'strategic patience' when it comes to siding with the stability of MENA authoritarian regimes, a neo-colonial double standard that harms EU legitimacy in the region (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis, 2020).

The last article (Chapter 4: Decentring EU foreign policy analysis: How local stakeholders perceive the effects of EU external migration policies on the democratization of Morocco? p.153) analysed an additional layer of this nexus by considering the perception of local stakeholders in Morocco. Based on data gathered from extensive fieldwork in Morocco during 2019, in which different multiple local stakeholders involved in the country's migration governance were interviewed, the article revealed how they perceive and critically evaluate EU migration policies in the country and its impacts on the country's democratic development. In general, their assessment of EU external migration policies impacts on Morocco democratization is mostly negative.

On the one hand, local stakeholders are in general very sceptical about EU normative approach towards the country. They consider it as not credible since priorities are being placed on policies that do not favour the development of democratic values, practices and actors. Since the EU's main concern is with containing migration and assuring the cooperation of Rabat, it avoids pressuring too hard for democratization, engaging with social movements, or criticizing the country's human rights violations. Moreover, it promotes mainly securitized policies of migration and border control and not policies targeting the 'root-causes' of migration. In fact, most local stakeholders agree that both political and socio-economic conditions in Morocco are behind migration flows towards Europe and that the EU bears some responsibility for this situation.

On the other hand, several interviewees, mainly from the independent civil society, perceive EU migration policies towards this country as counterproductive, contributing to boosting authoritarian forces and practices. In order words, they would favour an already repressive, undemocratic, and corrupted context at the expense of migrants and human rights, the work of NGOS and civil society organizations and the population as

whole. Despite this, some stakeholders, especially among decision-makers and implementing partners, also emphasize that Morocco is not entirely satisfied with cooperation and the funds provided to sponsor the 'fight' against migration. Moreover, they considered that Morocco is trying to build a progressive and human rights-based migration agenda that would be in contradiction with demands for being EU's gendarme.

In general, this last article revealed that the analysis of EU policy practices and the perception of local stakeholders broadly coincide. This finding uncovers that what I labelled **evaluation gap** seems to be absent when it comes to the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs. Even if it is true that the different stakeholders interviewed have slightly different perceptions about the impacts of EU external migration policies in Morocco's democracy, which is related to their role in the migration governance system and Moroccan politics, they largely assess EU effects on this area as being negative.

To this it should be added that there seems to be a wide gap not only between EU policy narratives and policy practices but also between EU narratives and the perceptions of local stakeholders, something that I labelled a **perception gap**. It is interesting to notice that the perception gap exists mainly due to the dissonance between EU declared intentions and what seems to be the actual impact of its policies on the ground. However, when it comes to framing the 'problem cause', EU policy narratives and local stakeholders' perceptions seem to reconcile, both sides frame lack of democracy as a driver of migration in the southern Mediterranean neighbourhood.

The existence of a perception gap and the absence of an evaluation gap confirms the idea that if the EU is willing to develop policies that are coherent, effective, and sustainable to the local context where they are being implemented it should take seriously the involvement of local stakeholders in the process of development, implementation, and evaluation of such policies. Moreover, the identification of these gaps further settles the importance of looking into this nexus through a multi-focal perspective, allowing different realities to be assessed, exposed, and interposed. I argue that a picture of this reality composed solely by the empirics unfolding on the ground – something that would

be defended by positivism – would be poor and incomplete. In this work, I took perceptions and narratives as constitutive parts of the empirical reality and the policy process. The result is a much more complex picture in which different layers come together.

Figure 5.1 intends to summarize the different layers identified by displaying in a structured manner the array of relationships that arises when considering the nexus between EU external migration policies and democratization of SMCs from three different perspectives. The different coloured arrows in the diagram represent and superpose how the different dimensions analysed understand the relation between these macro international processes. At least ten relations should be underlined. The first one **(1)** is that lack of democracy, good governance and rule of law are conceived as structural push-factors of migration within EU policy narratives and according to the perception of local stakeholders in Morocco. The second **(2)** explains that (the perception of) increased and constant migration flows triggers the development of EU external migration policies with two main approaches: root-causes and security. This can be observed in both EU policy narratives and practices. Moreover, even if considering a different approach, local stakeholders still believe that the EU should collaborate with Morocco in handling the migration issue.

A third **(3)** observation that arises concerns how the security approach is prioritized by the EU practices mainly because it is perceived as a successful strategy for tackling migration flows in the short-term – an observation that holds some part of truth in terms of numbers **(4)**. Within EU policy narratives the EU aims at a comprehensive approach in which both - the root-causes and security approaches - are balanced. The perception of local stakeholders is mixed, whereas local authorities prioritize the security approach other actors, mainly from the civil society, perceive such approach as disproportionate and ineffective for dealing with the issue in Morocco. The fifth **(5)** relation contends that the policy practices implemented through the security approach may have the consequence of stabilising and even fuelling authoritarianism in Morocco. Most local stakeholders also perceive this approach as having negative consequences of EU external migration policies in the country. This also means that these practices could have the

consequence of reinforcing the structural drivers of migration that the EU, in its policy narratives, wanted to fight in the first place, i.e., lack of democracy, good governance and rule of law, risking causing more migration flows in the long run – this relation is represented by the dotted arrows **(10)**. Local stakeholders in Morocco have shown particular concern with this risk.

One of the main consequences of prioritizing the security approach in its policy practices is that the root-causes approach remains mainly rhetoric **(7),** failing to promote democratization and to address structural drivers of migration as contended in EU policy narratives – as represented by the arrow **(8)** – which has also been the perception of most local stakeholders in Morocco. At the same time, however, democratization (mainly political change) is also perceived as a potential source of migration (refugee hump) in EU policy narratives, further justifying EU reluctance in investing in long-term solutions when it comes to practices **(9)**. In part, the increase in migration flows that followed the Arab uprisings and the protests in the Rif would corroborate this EU assumption, however local stakeholders do not seem to make this association in these same terms. They believe the origin of these flows is rooted in structural conditions in the country as well as a policy of "*laissez faire laissez aller*" employed by the Moroccan government as 'safety valve'. The final relation **(10)** contends that since structural push-factors of migration are not being tackled and might be even reinforced, there is the risk that EU policy practices fuel more migration in the long-term. Local actors in Morocco share this perception and concern. This last arrow is more linked to scenario building than with a real observation and for this reason is represented by a dotted arrow. Moreover, this would help distinguishing it from the relation that started the cycle **(1)** and further elucidating a potential vicious circle.

Figure 5.1: Diagram flow representing main relationships on the nexus between EU external migration policies and the democratization of Southern Mediterranean countries.
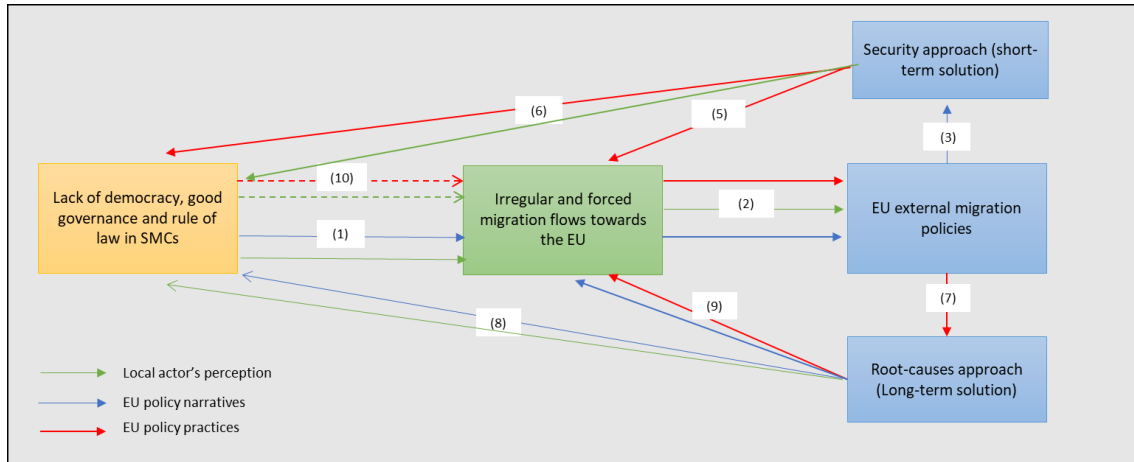
Source: author's own elaboration.

In summary, three main overall conclusions can be drawn by looking into this diagram and the reality it portrays. Firstly, that the existence of a link between EU external migration policies and the democratization of SMCs is undeniable. Secondly, that far from being linear, such connection is complex and multifaceted. Finally, it brings to the forefront the need to further emphasize and investigate this nexus.

5.2 Empirical, Methodological, and Theoretical Shortcomings

As any academic research, the work presented has limitations in terms of the analytical choices, methodological shortcomings, both in terms of data collection and analysis as well as regarding the background theories, i.e., theoretical limitations. The first limitation would be related with the analytical choice of treating the EU as a unitary actor. Even though it has been a justified choice it implies, nonetheless, several limitations. Geddes and Lixi (2018) argue that particularly when 'going abroad' with its migration policies and instruments, the EU is not a monolithic actor, contradicting the idea that policymaking at this level occurs without controversies and ambiguities and that the EU is a coherent and unified actor. In fact, EU different institutional bodies would often have different understandings of migration and of the challenges it poses, thereby developing their actions based on different priorities (Ibid). Lavenex and Kunz (2008, p. 441) for instance portrayed "the tensions between more rights-based approaches promoted in

particular by supranational actors in the EU and more repressive ones promoted by intergovernmental actors in the Council and elsewhere", implying that actions from different EU institutional bodies might be contradictory.

Likewise, bilateral relations between EU member states and non-member states in terms of migration are common-place, and they also tend to compete among each other and have conflicting interests in their foreign policies. This would have important consequences for EU external migration policies, particularly in the case of EU policies vis-à-vis the Mediterranean, since their low effectiveness might be precisely due to inconsistencies between the EU's international identity (and normative values) and the national (realist) interests of its Member States, whose foreign policy are based on 'hard interests' (Zajac, 2015, p.65-66). However, bilateral relation between EU member state and non-member states do not seem to only hinder EU cooperation (such as in the case of Readmission Agreements). Authors argue that they could actually facilitate cooperation between the EU and its neighbourhood (such as in the case of Spain-Morocco cooperation) (den Hertog, 2017) and even lead towards policy convergence (Wunderlich, 2010), such as it could be seen in the great mobilisation of funds behind the EU Trust Fund for Africa in 2015 (Zardo 2020). The literature indicates also how, on the one hand, certain EU member states acts as sponsors of non-member states within the EU to get them more funds (as in the case of Spain and Morocco and Italy and Libya), and on the other, how member states use EU funds to carry on their own agendas in the neighbourhood in terms of migration control (as in the case of EU-Morocco shared border management).

Therefore, to treat the EU as an aggregated or disaggregated actor – considering or not the interests and actions of member states and different institutional bodies – can have important analytical consequences, especially when it comes to analysing the implementation of policies and its relations with other policy fields. Considering the EU as an aggregated actor, as done in the work presented, might have the risk of ascribing responsibilities to an actor that may lie in a different place and process. However, it should be acknowledged that even if the analysis managed to differentiate between member

states and EU policies, the line that separate them seems to be tenuous and difficult to trace.

Another shortcoming is related with the narratives analysed in article one. Here, again, the only actor considered has been the EU as an aggregated actor. This would be limiting in the sense that it would prevent us from identifying other narratives and even creating new ones, something that the Narrative Policy Analysis framework applied would account for. Moreover, as mentioned above, EU institutional bodies and member states might have their own agendas and even implement divergent policies unilaterally, something that could have different effects on the composition of EU overall policy narratives.

Still within the empirical limitations it should be mentioned what I consider to be an important, although also understandable, shortcoming of this work. In broad terms, the research presented does not explore nor present a thorough review regarding the empirical link between migration and lack of democracy. Even if this has not been the focus of the work, it leaves unanswered the question of the extent to which EU narratives and local actors' perceptions have some foundation in the empirical reality when they affirm that lack of democracy triggers migration from SMCs. The idea that more development would lead to less migration has already been ruled out by the scholarly (de Haas et al 2020) with the effect being quite the opposite. However, most EU policies and narratives continue to deny this evidence. This could be precisely the case of nexus between migration and democracy, although in this case there seems to be more agreement behind the idea that repression, conflict, and instability may fuel migration (Castillejos, 2016). In any case this is an important dimension of this nexus and ought to be further explored.

Some **methodological limitations** should also be emphasized. In terms of data collection, the narrative analysis carried out in the first article could have been broadened by considering other data sources for triangulating and confirming the narratives identified in the policy documents, mainly interviews with political actors involved in their elaboration. Likewise, article two would have benefited enormously from the collection of more substantial data. Regarding data analysis in particular, the use of other methods for tracing the evidence and connecting it with the theoretical framework would have

allowed the presentation of more substantial findings in this work. Even though an effort is made to present some evidence, it is not enough to provide a definitive answer on the matter. I believe that a historical intake on the matter using process tracing combined with counterfactual thinking would have allowed me to make stronger statements concerning the arguments presented.

A bigger concern in methodological terms is related with the field work carried out for the third article. In general, field work in authoritarian contexts can be a great challenge, especially when dealing with sensitive issues such as migration and when this issue is securitized by the country's elite (Tsourapas, 2017). As put by Glasius (2018, p.183):

> "Empirical research on authoritarian rule requires extensive contextual knowledge, risk management, and trust-building (Glasius et al., 2017; Goode and Ahram, 2016; Koch, 2013). Inferentially, it often rests on indirect evidence, triangulation, and interpretation of the strategies and aims of its primary object of investigation".

Apart from the difficulties it brings to the proper collection of data it also displays tensions between ethics and objectivity. It is hard to keep objectivity when you arrive at the headquarters of an NGO and the interviewee mentions that a member and colleague has just been arrested. Moreover, you need to find a balance between keeping transparency and at the same time protecting the identity of responders (Tsourapas, 2014). However, instead of treating such challenges as a barrier for analytical clarity I considered it as an opportunity for learning and understanding my subject of study. As posed by Tsourapas (2014):

> "If anything, fieldwork provides a deeper appreciation for how subjects understand social reality, and enables researchers to better integrate such understandings into their own register. It is this aspect that makes fieldwork so imperative for comprehending core issues of political science".

On top of that, there are issues particular to the migration research context, such as the fact that it is a highly politicized issue, and as such would "require particular ethical awareness that cannot be sufficiently addressed by standardized guidelines" (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz 2020). In my case, other factors like age and gender also seemed to

have limited making the most out of the field work. It definitively compromised my work in certain areas of the country and the capacity to reach and interview some actors, especially those in close relation with the authorities at the Palace.

However, this is nothing that has not been done before through different means and methods. Although certain limitation will always exist, I believe that more time, resources, and experience would have contributed to improving the quality of data collected in Morocco, and mainly to be able to better represent Moroccan governmental stakeholders and their visions on the matter. In terms of data collection strategies, at least three approaches could be tried to access governmental stakeholders' perspectives. The first strategy would be to follow the same methodology pursue in article three of finding contacts but with more time and resources that would allow accessing higher level contacts in the Moroccan government (something that is still not assured). A second approach could be tried in other to make the connection with higher level members of the government more assured, which would be through enrolling in an internship in an Embassy or cooperation agency from an EU member state or even with the EU delegation. This strategy was used by the researcher Nora El Qadim in her PhD (El Qadim, 2015), in which she analysed the negotiations between the EU/France and Morocco on Readmission Agreements. During her field work in Morocco, she did an internship in the French consulate. This sort of approach could allow researchers getting closer to government members for possible interviews as well as doing participant observation.

Still, neither of these strategies assure researchers obtaining the answer and interviews desired, since they might not be allowed to disclose information or might still have the interviews denied. Moreover, these approaches can also put the researcher in a position of vulnerability due to sensitivity of topic. In order to overcome these difficulties, a third strategy would be to combine either of the aforementioned approaches with process tracing. This methodology was successfully implemented by Zaragoza-Cristiani (2016) in his PhD thesis to analyse and clarify the evolution of the Spanish-Moroccan relationship and migration control cooperation. His main source of data was article journals published from 1990 to 2016. A similar strategy could be used for accessing and contrasting the

perspective of Moroccan governmental stakeholders, trough analysing media sources as well as governmental official documents and discourses.

Apart from using other strategies of data collection, the analytical framework could also be better explored to provide a more accurate representation of Moroccan governmental stakeholders. The most indicated pathway in this case would be to make better use of the variables presented in the framework presented in article two. Mainly, I believe it could have been useful to interview and analyse the position of other gatekeeper elites instead of considering only the government, such as the political opposition and the economic elite. These distinctions could have been clearer and better explored in article three. Of course, this would demand having access to other actors and using some of the data collection strategies mentioned above.

As a final shortcoming of the work presented, I would like to mention what I believe to be its main **theoretical limitation**. Considering that the externalization of EU migration policies towards its neighbourhood is yet another chapter in the history of Global North and the Global South (EU-Morocco) relations, the thesis could have certainly benefited from pursuing a post-colonial approach. In general terms, post-colonialism predicates that in order to understand the emergence of the international system and the functioning of the current world order it is crucial to take into account the interaction between Europe and those it colonized, that is, of considering colonialism and imperialism as well as new colonial forms of power (Gruffyd-Jones, 2006; Seth, 2011). Moreover, the post-colonial approach is particularly critical to the incapacity of mainstream IR of listening and incorporating voices from outside the core. As explained by Roxanne Doty (1996, p.2) in her book "Imperial Encounters":

> "Arguably one of the most consequential elements present in all of the encounters between North-South relations has been the practice of the representation of the South, by the North. This does not refer to the "truth" and "knowledge" that the North have discovered but rather to the ways in which regimes of "truth" and "knowledge" have been produced".

Although it is true that articles two and three incorporate this Global South perspective and a decentring strategy by taking into serious account the agency and perceptions of

actors in Morocco, as Nora el Qadim did in her work (2010, 2015), something that is deemed necessary for decolonizing the study of IR and EU foreign policy, this has not been done in a systematic manner or having the post-colonial approach as background. Thus, here this shortcoming is also presented as a new and necessary avenue for future research on the topic.

5.3 The Way Forward: What is Next for Research?

There are at least three research questions and empirical challenges that this thesis leaves unaddressed and that should be considered for future research. The first two are more related with the reactions and consequences that the existence of this nexus would bring for the EU: (a) the first one relates to the existence of policy gaps and how the EU addresses them and the second is (b) linked with feedback loops, that is, with how EU external actions in this field might be backfiring on the EU and its institution. The final question is related with the applicability of the work presented to other cases beyond the case of Morocco.

The first question is related to the **policy gaps identified and with how the EU addresses them**. The awareness of their existence would lead to at least two additional questions: (1) to what extent is the EU aware of the existence of these gaps? And (2) why do they remain unaddressed? This might be related to the fact that most studies and policy evaluation mechanisms focus on policy effectiveness, that is, on framing the subject in terms of success or failure in relation to the policy objectives (Czaika and de Haas, 2013). In fact, this seems to be a common occurrence in the field of EU external performance, in general (Tömmel, 2013; Burlyuk, 2017), and externalisation policies, in particular (Stock et al, 2019). Apart from misleading (Prestianni, 2018; Andersson and Keen, 2019), the biggest problem with this focus seems to be the tendency to neglect policies' broader effects and particularly their unintended consequences. In other words, its propensity to disregard the "outcomes of purposive action(s) which are not directly intended by the actor" (Burlyuk, 2017, p.1012). Therefore, future work should look carefully at the broader and unintended effects of EU external migration policies on democratization of

SMCs and inquire why such effects are taking place and the extent to which they could be prevented, anticipated, or minimized (Ibid).

A connected line of enquiry would consist in questioning how **EU external actions in this field are backfiring on the EU and its institutions**. Definitively, what would be the feedback loops of EU performance on the migration field abroad regarding EU democracy and democratic institutions? What are the internal costs of these external actions? The rise in state authoritarianism is far from being a feature exclusive of countries in the southern shore of the Mediterranean. The case of Hungary is a clear example of democratic downgrading in a country that continues to implement harsh policies towards migrants despite the European Union Court of Justice ruling against the legality of its action and pressures from both EU member states and the Commission[44] (BBC, 2020. In this sense, it should be questioned the extent to which EU external migration policies would be a symptom and/or a cause of a crisis of EU fundamental principles and laws. For this it would be necessary to open the black box and consider the broad range of actors involved in the elaboration and implementation of EU external migration policies and narratives.

Finally, the last line of research suggested concerns the **applicability of the work presented to other cases beyond the case of Morocco**. The analysis of policy practices in article two and stakeholders' perceptions in article three, focused on the case of Morocco highlighting it as representative case to capture possible regional dynamics, learn lessons and serve as a pathway for researching similar ones. This means that a natural course for future research would be to apply the frameworks used to different case-studies in the region as well as doing comparisons between different countries. Through analysing different cases-studies – including Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria – Koch et al (2018) concluded that the impact of external EU migration policies differs depending on the political, economic, and social contexts in which the partner countries are embedded. Moreover, these authors underline that despite variations, interests in the preservation of power and legitimation strategies play a formative role in all regimes' responses to offers of European cooperation. This indicates that to a certain extent, all

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[44]See: https://freedomhouse.org/country/hungary/freedom-world/2020

SMCs are considered to have been empowered by the process of externalization being potential interesting case-studies. An alternative would be comparing the case of Morocco with countries in other Mediterranean sub-regions such as Turkey or Jordan. Finally, it would be highly relevant to pose the same questions and test the validity of frameworks and arguments beyond the Euro-Mediterranean region, such as the case of the United States and Central America.

5.4 What Policy Recommendations Can Be Inferred From the Research Findings? Setting Forth a New Normative Policy Agenda for Euro-Med Relations

As I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, this research has been broadly inspired by a normative assumption, that is, by the idea that democracy is currently accepted as the best political system available, being a desirable outcome that countries and societies should aspire to. Such a belief is also a core value within the EU, which claims to be pledged to its promotion in its internal and external affairs. Since this research has been triggered by a normative reflection it makes sense to also end with one. Having this in mind, this last session inquires how the nexus between EU external migration policies and democratization of SMCs fits within the EU normative agenda, asking what lessons can be drawn and what would be the future perspectives.

The idea of Europe as a normative power was broadly introduced by the work of Ian Manners (2002) which contends that the EU embodies a series of principles and shared beliefs (inter alia: liberty, peace, democracy) that are part of its identity and that makes it act in a normative way. Many authors agree with Manners in that the EU presents itself to the world as a normative and benevolent actor promoting democratic principles worldwide (Meyer, 2007; Crawford, 2015; Abdalla, 2016), as in a "messianic quest for the internalization of liberal democracy abroad" (Pace, 2009, p.39). Since Manners wrote this seminal work the debate about the EU normative role has grown and complexified being closely followed by scholars in the field of international relations. However, whereas some authors are convinced that the EU will remain as a normative

power in the future (Manners 2008), others have been more sceptical about EU capacity and willingness to enforce norms in the international system.

When it comes to Euro-Mediterranean relations specifically, several studies indicate that EU foreign policy towards this region has been guided by a strong normative component and that democracy is an 'essential-element' at the core of most regional policies and agreements (Baracani, 2005; Cassarino, 2012; Hollis, 2012; Pace, 2014). At the same time, however, most authors underline that when it comes to practices, the EU has broadly failed to enforce its normative agenda in the neighbourhood, pointing to a gap between EU pro-democracy rhetoric and practice (Youngs, 2001; Bicchi, 2010). In general, authors perceive that security, political stability as well as migration, commercial and energy interests, end up being placed over the goal of promoting norms such as democracy (Youngs, 2001, 2009; Crawford, 2015; Noutcheva, 2015). A practical example would be the EU move from the multilateral form of governance within the Mediterranean to a bilateral one. Within this approach to cooperation, Mediterranean external policy has been mainly dominated by asymmetrical power relations and conditionality, more characteristic of the realpolitik (Zapata-Barrero, 2020a, p.48).

EU predilection for security and strategic goals has been thoroughly analysed in the literature of EU external action (Noutcheva, 2015; Abdalla, 2016; Provenzano, 2016) and EU democracy promotion (Hollis, 2012; Youngs, 2011; Börzel and Van Hüllen, 2014; Dandashly, 2018). According to scholars, the EU has been entrapped for decades under the stability-vs-democratization dilemma (Khalifa-Isaac, 2013; Börzel, 2015), which would be one of the major policy impasses the EU faces in its external action (Kostanyan, 2017). Such dilemma is tightly connected to the well-known debates about the inherent conflict between EU values and interests, that is, between EU's normative and realist identity. Although still relevant, some authors argue that this dichotomic view of the EU is simplistic and even inadequate, claiming that the EU should be viewed as a pragmatic or simply an international actor (Hardwick 2011), willing to make a strategic use of its norms and values (Liam and Del Sarto, 2015) and adapt its engagement depending on the targeted country and domestic actors involved (Dandashly, 2018).

The research presented here seems to contribute to this debate in the sense that it confirms that also in the field of migration, EU external action has been guided by the clash between norms and interests, with complex consequences for all parts involved. In addition, it also feeds into the debate about the gap between EU rhetoric and practices. Most importantly, this work has provided indication that EU external action in the field of migration is likely to be producing negative consequences in its attempts to promote democracy in the neighbourhood. Mainly, it has exposed the contradictions, risks and unethical concerns that arise from EU close cooperation with elites in authoritarian SMCs in an attempt to keep migration under control at all costs.

Overall, it seems that the outcomes of this research broadly contribute to the "process of disillusionment" of the Barcelona process (Zapata-Barrero, 2020a) and the shared feeling that EU normative agendas are receding into the background. Although necessary and informative, these reflections should not divert us from taking a step back and asking more deep and important questions, that is: what is informing the EU normative agenda and what should it look like? In other words, they should not prevent us from questioning and reassessing the EU normative agenda on itself and not only its implementation. It should be acknowledged that such a reflection would presuppose a deep and complex debate that falls beyond the limitations given by the few words that composes the conclusions of this thesis. However, I believe two brief reflections could at least contribute towards opening a debate.

The first consideration is related to the necessity of breaking up with the 'Eurocentric view of this normativity' (El Qadim, 2010), a vision from which EuroMed politics has not managed to emerge from so far (Zapata-Barrero, 2020a). Even the *root-causes approach*, which is deemed to be the normative dimension of EU external migration policies, is based on an immobility assumption. In other words, even within this approach migration is perceived as a negative endeavour by suggesting that populations in the southern shores on the Mediterranean should stay put and that such "evil" could be tackled at its roots (Koch et al, 2018). This would be in line with the idea fostered by Haddadi (2004) that EU engagement in human rights and democracy promotion would be more related with broader understanding of its own security than with an end in itself.

This means that the EU normative agenda, especially in what concerns migration, should be reconsidered from its core, aiming mainly to overcome its Eurocentric, colonialist, and racist assumptions.

The second and final consideration is related to how this wheel could be broken, that is, where to look for the "start button" of such normative renovation. An easy answer would be that the key lies within Europe itself. However, this would mean entering again in a Eurocentric dynamic that puts the continent in a hierarchical position vis-à-vis its neighbours whereas disregarding, at the same time, the 'other' capacity of influencing and inflicting change in Europe. Thus, here I follow new lines of thought that claim that a new paradigm and normativity for Euro-Med relations can only be created through a bottom-up, regional and human centric approach. This would be possible precisely by getting away from the Eurocentric, short-sighted visions of states and their elites and centring on other actors such as cities (Kutz and Wolff, 2020; Zapata-Barrero, 2020b) and their populations (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaïdis 2020) at both shores of the Mediterranean to construct a new and real neighbourhood normativity in which all its people are deemed as equally entitled to the right to move and live freely.

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