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Introduction

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The (re)configuration of the Euro-Mediterranean space after the 2011 Arab uprisings: borders, politics and identity

Rosita Di Peri, Federico Donelli

1. Introduction

Political events following the 2011 uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have contributed to a new conceptualisation (and management) of border issues. The tumultuous period had a dramatic effects on Europe and the southern Mediterranean countries. On the one hand, Europe is facing a continuous redefinition of its borders, especially in the southern neighbourhood but also in the eastern part of the continent. On the other hand, the MENA countries are part of a game in which the political elites deploy sectarian identity, narratives and symbols to neutralise dissent and (re-)assert control, even on borders, spaces and places. Notwithstanding the counter-revolutionary trend, the presence of ongoing civil conflicts, along with the escalation of regional competition over the past decade, has notably changed the political and social landscape in many countries. In this context, the Euro-Mediterranean space seems more and more unstable, and its margins porous. It has become a place of new (internal and external, physical and mental) barriers and systems. European space has been besieged by a new wave of populism that is strengthening national identities and putting a strain on the European Union as a cohesive space. Meanwhile, in some MENA countries, the repression of a new wave of mobilisation in 2019 is silencing counter-hegemonic movements that could potentially cross state and community borders, as well as ethnic and religious divides.

2. Why investigate the reconfiguration of the Euro-Mediterranean space after the 2011 uprisings?

In this special issue, we deem it crucial to reflect on the reconfiguration of the Euro-Mediterranean space, particularly after the 2011 uprisings. Some trends need to be explained in order to understand this centrality. A preliminary reflection focuses on the nexus between space and politics and the politics of the space. Spaces and this is the case of the Euro-Mediterranean space have become more and more politicised. This is due to several factors: the relevance that the control of spaces assumed for both the European Union and the leaders of some of the Mediterranean countries (regulation of immigration flows and prevention of terrorist attacks); the idea that spaces (here also intended as border spaces) can be re-organised and re-assessed

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according to rules and hierarchies capable of challenging the political order(s); and an awareness that spaces are not merely geographic entities but *loci* where identities develop and transform themselves, where dissent may coagulate and practices of resistance may emerge (Di Peri 2020). This final point is more evident when we look at the post-2011 era as a period of institutional and identity fluidity.

However, the politicisation of the Euro-Mediterranean space is nothing new. Although the 2011 uprisings seem to have marked a turning point in relations between the *non* EU Mediterranean countries and EU, some key points, in our view, remain unchanged. First: Before the uprisings, the Euro-Mediterranean space had mainly been perceived (and consequently managed) through asymmetrical relationships that disadvantage the states of the southern bank. Despite the many attempts to frame these relationships over the years (*e.g.* the Barcelona Process and the European Neighbourhood Policy), the real effect of the adopted policies has not been as evident. In the vast majority of cases, scholars have shown that European projects (and funds) end up in the pockets of restricted circles and elites, boosting the network of privilege and strengthening authoritarian resilience (Teti, Abbott, Cavatorta 2017; Heydemann 2004). More broadly, they have incentivised 'relations of privilege' since the colonial era and heavily favoured European countries in commercial and economic terms (Di Peri, Zardo 2017). Despite all these problems, however, the 2011 uprisings made it possible to start a fresh discussion of the old hierarchies and debate the need to reconceive these asymmetrical relations, which have contributed to describing the European Union as an empire, on a new basis (Del Sarto 2016).

Second: The unexpected effect of the revolts, namely the increase in regional instability, greatly helped to revamp an essentialist debate promoting the idea that the post-2011 era would simply show the problems of a region predestined to chaos, violence and backwardness. This vision strengthened the idea of a "Fortress Europe": a space that needs to be preserved, strictly controlled and protected from foreign intrusions and attacks.

Third: This interpretation and its ramifications for the Euro-Mediterranean (and especially the European) space led to, on the one hand, a radicalisation of certain populist views and, on the other hand, an increase in geopolitical interpretations of the post-2011 era. This paved the way for a cause–effect relationship marginalising political explanations for social phenomena.

While it is true that the 2011 uprisings spurred a re-politicisation of the Euro-Mediterranean space, Europe–Mediterranean relations remain largely dominated by old legacies and strategies (Zardo 2019; Bauer 2015). This is more evident when one considers how the European Union has worked, especially after the uprisings, to re-border its margins. The obsessive focus on borders and the migration agreements stipulated with some neighbourhood countries to maintain control over migration flows and the arrival of refugees, as well as the countries' incapacity to manage the continuous violation of basic human rights in some detention centres, are just some examples of the attitude of ordering and re-bordering the Euro-Mediterranean space (Cuttita 2018; 2020). It is a situation that has been exacerbated by the COVID-

19 pandemic and populist discourses across the globe. This has also affected the strategies the European Union put in place to update relations between Europe and the *non* EU countries on the Mediterranean Sea. However, at the time of this writing, no substantial strategies or policies have been implemented yet.

On the other side of the Mediterranean, the countries of the southern flanks adopted a twofold attitude: On the one hand, as some scholars recently pointed out (Del Sarto, Tholens 2020; Paciello Huber 2020), this re-politicisation creates new attitudes and reconfigurations at the institutional level that can challenge, renegotiate or even stop the contractual imposition by the EU through very interesting acts of resistance. This is perfectly in line with a consolidated attitude seeking to challenge the Eurocentric perspective that has historically dominated Euro-Mediterranean relations (Di Peri, Zardo 2017). On the other hand, in the opposite direction, the counter-revolutionary forces in the vast majority of the countries affected by the revolutionary wave, except for Tunisia, have tried to capitalise on the re-politicisation of the Euro-Mediterranean space by signing agreements totalling billions of euros with the EU to manage the flows of refugees (Turkey and Libya) and using these agreements as leverage against the bloc to defend their authoritarian posture and power.

These dynamics of re-politicisation have had an impact on the redefinition of borders, which are conceived more and more as spaces to manage, control and re-adapt according to different needs: spaces that, while marginal relative to the centre, re-acquire a pivotal role not just in policy-making but also in academic circles and debates aimed at a new re-conceptualisation of the Euro-Mediterranean space.

3. Outline of the special issue

The trends we have outlined above are present to a greater or lesser degree all across the Mediterranean – from Morocco in the west to Turkey in the east – but perhaps most vividly in the core countries that the authors in this issue investigate, such as Lebanon. All the articles presented here are based on extensive ongoing fieldwork in the region supported by desk research and data collection. The issue puts the Euro-Mediterranean space and the analytical category of the border at the centre of the study. The articles examine in-between border spaces within the wider Euro-Mediterranean space. The salt lake as described by Braudel is, after all, a great space of interaction and sharing (in-)between the European shore and the south-eastern flank commonly referred to as the MENA region. As such, the long wave of uprisings and the subsequent counter-revolutions that have swept through many of the MENA countries have transformed the Euro-Mediterranean landscape since 2011. Hence, both the political-regional and socio-identity boundaries are currently extremely blurred and variable. The issue aims to provide in-depth insight into the dynamics of boundary redefinition from both a macro and a micro perspective. The concept of a border is interpreted through an interdisciplinary approach because it was considered more suitable to grasp the complexity of the phenomenon and because it reflects the authors' different academic paths.

Stefania Panebianco's article attempts to rewrite the conceptual security boundaries of the Euro-Mediterranean region by proposing an alternative analytical framework based on the concept of the Mediterranean Global South. The author joins a growing body of literature by highlighting the Mediterranean connections or "complexification of regional relations" emphasised by migratory phenomena that are increasingly being understood from a human security perspective. Accordingly, these dynamics make the Euro-Mediterranean space "a significant case study to understand world politics". In her conclusion, the author points to the renewed centrality of the Mediterranean Sea. The significance of the Euro-Mediterranean space as outlined by Panebianco is an unconventional interpretation at a time when the centre of gravity of international politics seems to have shifted eastward.

As in the study conducted by Panebianco, the contribution by Eugenia Blasetti takes a macro view of the Euro-Mediterranean region. Drawing on Lefebvre's theorisation of space as a social product that does not pre-exist human beings and on Foucault's concept of heterotopia, the author analyses the role that European migration policies and search & rescue operations carried out by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play in the socio-political construction of the Euro-Mediterranean space. By underscoring the EU's securitisation process of migration policies, Blasetti explores how NGOs have constituted an alternative space of hospitality and inclusion. As a result, the current Euro-Mediterranean social space is crossed by multiple reconfiguration processes in which both state and non-state actors are involved.

While Blasetti's study discusses European borders politics within the framework of a Euro-Mediterranean space-making process, Daniel Meier focuses on how the *European Integrated Border Management* (IBM) is being integrated into the countries on the region's southern-eastern flanks in a post–Arab uprising context. Taking Libya and Lebanon as case studies, Meier analyses how the EU manages its external borders. His study shows how the IBM and the many associated EU agencies have had poor results due to inherent constraints and a narrow-minded approach to the complex institutional framework of the states on the southern shore. The two case studies allow Meier to develop a comparison between two countries commonly classified as a failed state and a weak state. The findings reveal that the difficulties of the EU institutions in implementing the development of border management are also due to the extreme fragmentation of the local actors' institutions and the transformations of the geopolitical environment.

Stefano Fogliata's contribution also uses Lebanon as a case study but adopts a micro-level perspective focused on the dynamics of social interaction and marginality within refugee camps on Lebanese territory. The country has historically been known as a place of refuge for people of Palestinian origin (commonly known as long-term refugees), and the arrival of large numbers of displaced people from Syria since 2011 has generated new socio-spatial relations and patterns. The study, which is the result of a long period of fieldwork and participant observations, shows how, within the "current landscape of overlapping displacements", interactions

between Palestinians and Syrians on Lebanese territory spatially materialise through the camps' new geographies and mental configurations. In addition to highlighting the interconnectivity between Syrians, Palestinians from Syria, Palestinians from Lebanon, and Lebanese, the research inside and outside the Burj Al-Barajneh camp challenges the widespread trend in the literature that considers the camps in Lebanon as "spaces of exception". According to the argument put forward by the author, the hyper-mobile spatial practices that transcend the institutional discriminations have contributed to a re-elaboration of the Palestinian refugee camps into what Fogliata defines as "meaningful places of elusive contestation".

In parallel with Lebanon, the country most affected by migration flows from Syria is Turkey, which hosts almost 4 million refugees. The Turkish management of the crisis is analysed by Chiara Maritato, who highlights how the Ankara government has used the emergency to gain greater bargaining power in its relations with the EU. The author's research is developed within the framework of the two greatest challenges – migration and terrorism – that have forced the EU to rethink its relationship with third countries. Maritato's study focuses on the concept of migration diplomacy and highlights how Turkey plays a dual role formalised by the signing of the EU–Turkey Statement in 2016. On the one hand, Turkey has used crisis management to present itself domestically and internationally as a humanitarian actor endowed with a degree of "moral superiority". On the other hand, Turkey has consolidated its role as a gatekeeper able to prevent illegal migration into the EU, becoming a prominent player in controlling the EU's external borders.

Migration diplomacy is part of a broader framework of the reconfiguration of Turkish foreign policy that has increased the prominence of the Mediterranean space. The topic is discussed by Peter Seeberg, who analyses Ankara's foreign policy by taking domestic policy changes as the main determinant or explanatory factor. He argues that democratic backsliding and the general "erdoganisation" of Turkish politics have been accompanied by a neo-Ottoman narrative and greater regional interventionism. According to Seeberg, Turkish ambitions – in particular, those of President Erdogan, defined by the author as "Neo-Ottomanist" – drive a new expansionist trend of Turkish foreign policy of which the case studies (Eastern Mediterranean, Libya and Syria) are the most recent examples. The research conducted by Seeberg not only contributes to the literature on the domestic and foreign policy nexus but also highlights how Turkey's expansionist strategy has led to changing patterns of territorial control in two important ways: a "re-bordering" of in-between spaces in northern Syria and a potential restructuring of the regional power balance in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Finally, Gianluca Pastori's article analyses the geopolitical dynamics of the Euro-Mediterranean space by focusing on the role of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) in the post-2011 period. The study closes the loop opened by Panebianco and adopts a macro approach to the region, highlighting the limits of NATO's Mediterranean policy that emerged in the wake of the Arab uprisings. Pastori's research shows how the lack of a comprehensive vision for the MENA region and the security-only

approach have gradually eroded NATO's relevance in the Mediterranean arena. As a result, after a few unsuccessful attempts within the organisation to shift the strategic orientation towards the southern shore, the trend in recent years has been a re-orientation towards more traditional positions where the Mediterranean Sea is considered a marginal arena.

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Essays

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Conceptualising the Mediterranean Global South: A research agenda on security, borders and human flows[1]

Stefania Panebianco

Introduction

What does globalization tell us concerning the Mediterranean? How has the global transformation (Buzan, Lawson 2013) involved the Mediterranean? Where does the Mediterranean stand in debates on regional (dis)order (Attinà 2021)? Which are the main features of the Mediterranean Global South in the 21st century? Following the end of the Cold War, the Global South concept entered the International Relations (IR) scholarly debate to reflect global transformations and change (Korany 1994). Overcoming traditional cleavages such as the North-South divide and the East-West cleavage, referring to Global South marks a shift from a development or cultural focus to embrace more comprehensive geopolitical power relations. The term is now well-established in the literature and several scholars use it referring to regions outside Europe and North America, in Latin America, Asia, Africa or Oceania, without devoting much attention to definitions. This contribution, instead, seeks to (re)conceptualise the Global South adding a Mediterranean dimension, replacing obsolete concepts such as third world or under-developed poor South, focusing on a wider range of interconnected dimensions and issues, including climate change, environment, migration, (lack of) democracy/authoritarian resilience, viruses and pandemics, alongside security and development.

Rethinking security, borders and human mobility helps to conceptualize the Mediterranean Global South to explain where power resides. This study suggests moving beyond cores of power to zoom instead on peripheries to explore diffusion of power and power shifts within this complex area assumed as an intersection, a critical junction, between Global North and Global South. The Mediterranean is an area where things happen, where the European Union (EU) flounders, while the global powers, the United States, China and Russia (directly or indirectly) meet regional powers such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia. IR scholars apply complexity theory to address the problems of order transition (Charalampaki 2021). Ongoing conflicts and clashes, existing threats and human mobility indicate that the Mediterranean is a relevant area in this complex picture. Coordination is required,

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even (more) in times of liberal internationalism, "[c]oordination counts in international relations especially in times of turbulence, declining order, and weakening world policies" (Attinà 2021: 33). Problems on the agenda of the world political system such as climate change, maritime security, energy supply, require common action. This regional politics' analysis provides substance to ongoing debates on world politics drawing lessons from security and human flows at the EU borders.

To contribute to this Special Issue on "The (re)configuration of the Euro-Mediterranean space after the 2011 Arab uprisings: borders, politics and identity", the paper addresses the following key questions: What does border security mean? States' security and migrants' security are necessarily contradictory and mutually exclusive? To secure borders guarantees or impedes human security? And more importantly, whose security is at stake when dealing with border control?

1. Conceptualizing the Mediterranean Global South: a new analytical prism for Euro-Mediterranean Relations

During the 1990s, Mediterranean Politics scholars focused primarily on conceptualizing regional security in a multi-dimensional framework to explain the region-building processes going on in the Mediterranean. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), launched in November 1995, when the EU and 12 Mediterranean partner countries adopted the Barcelona Declaration, represented a EU-led multi-dimensional cooperation framework aiming at creating an area of peace and stability in the Mediterranean, an area of prosperity based upon a Mediterranean free trade area, a democratic and multicultural area. Within a decade the EU revised the EMP and created new cooperation platforms in the Mediterranean. In 2004 the EU launched the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), relying primarily upon the bilateral cooperation between EU and Mediterranean and Eastern Neighbours, and in 2008 it fostered intergovernmental cooperation within the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The creation of the UfM marked the passing from a comprehensive cooperation framework to a selective neo-functionalist approach focusing on specific issues (Panebianco 2010).

The *Routledge Handbook on Mediterranean Politics* edited by Richard Gillespie and Frederic Volpi (2018), "especially the chapters by Bicchi, Hinnebusch, Schumacher and Youngs" explored this variety of regional cooperation processes to conceptualise the Mediterranean, and security in the Mediterranean, via several theoretical lenses, including regionalism and international practices. This paper suggests to move further and identify a new analytical prism to better understand Euro-Mediterranean relations.

'Mediterranean', 'region' and 'security' will be explored as a starting point to conceptualize the Mediterranean Global South. The concept 'Mediterranean' has been defined in overabundant literature; history and geography as well as IR, as well as history and geography, has a long tradition in the conceptualization of Mediterranean region/area/space, etc. IR scholars have often dwelled in a dichotomy vision of the Mediterranean: peace *vs* war, instability *vs* stability, conflict *vs*

cooperation, prosperity *vs* poverty, unity *vs* fragmentation. However, a dichotomy approach does not bring any further in the understanding of the current Mediterranean scenario. Over the years, images of bridges, or conversely of walls, have been adopted to explain the contradictions of this area. Following a Braudelian approach, scholars investigated the common features of the Mediterranean; with Samuel Huntington, instead, the concept of wall emerged as the main consequence of a 'civilization clash' (Huntington 1993). Assuming, on the one hand, the Mediterranean as the 'cradle of civilizations' following the Braudelian unitary vision that stems from a geographical explanation, and, on the other, the Huntingtonian culturalist vision of the Mediterranean as the product of a 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1993) does not help the conceptualisation of the Euro-Mediterranean space. The search for unity in the Mediterranean that has characterized regional analyses of Braudelian inspiration, seems inadequate to grasp the complexity of the Mediterranean, because the Mediterranean encompasses also several sources of regional instability. The Mediterranean is a fragmented area, characterised by richness and variety. It is not a region of peace, nor a region of conflict, it can be both. Thus, Federica Bicchi (2018) suggests to overcome a dichotomy vision of the Mediterranean because the Mediterranean lays 'between unity and fault line' in a sort of grey area in-between and '[t]he essence of the Mediterranean […] seems to be this "in-between-ness" […]' (Bicchi 2018: 337). Also Meier (2020) focuses on 'in-between' border spaces in the Mediterranean, specifically in the Levant.

There is no need to invest on the unicity of this area to explain the main features of the *Mare Nostrum.* In the Mediterranean, as elsewhere, new and old challenges to security require common policies and actions (Attinà 2011). The Mediterranean can be assumed as a micro-cosmos of what happens in world politics. The Mediterranean Global South experiences regional, intra-EU and intra-neighbours' tensions. Security and insecurity play a crucial role in Mediterranean Politics research and the regional impact of the Libyan or Syrian conflicts is a most prominent issue in the research agenda. However, security challenges stem from a wider Mediterranean region, with the Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa also contributing to insecurity in a wider regional projection (Panebianco 2019a). Politically, not just geographically, the Mediterranean represents an overlapping area (an 'area in between') in a Global Mediterranean South that is characterised by a proliferation and sharing of security challenges. Focusing upon the challenges at the EU borders, it is more fruitful to define the Mediterranean as the 'common space' where the North-South and center-periphery cleavages meet (Ribas-Mateos 2015: 28), as a major crossroad for migratory flows, i.e. a critical junction between Global North and Global South.

It is actually the definition of region that requires to be reframed accordingly. Regional security challenges require adequate common strategies and the involvement of all relevant actors, state and non-state ones. It has to be assessed where power resides, which are the most powerful actors addressing challenges at the borders, considering that borders are permeable and can expand according to the issues at stake well beyond the Global North to include the Global South, in what

we call the Mediterranean Global South. There are relevant actors and processes that require a common approach to be effective in addressing regional issues such as migration. An issue-oriented framework provides a more fruitful understanding of the Mediterranean than regionalism, even in its neo-version. Regionalism does not imply a single model, it can follow different paths and degrees (Barbé and Herranz-Surrallés 2010) or feature as a case of 'open regionalism' (Joffé 2007). In the Mediterranean, it easily turns into 'volatile' regionalism (Panebianco, 2010). Yet, to understand security in the Mediterranean Global South, an issue-based theoretical framework appears more fruitful.

Considering Bicchi's notice that 'the expression "the Mediterranean" seems to be currently going out of fashion, in favour of mentions of Europe and the Middle East' (Bicchi 2018: 329), new concepts and theoretical frameworks have to be explored so to avoid that this expression disappears from the academic discourse. To recast the Mediterranean in the academic map and understand security in the Mediterranean in this age of crisis, this paper conceives the Mediterranean Global South as a critical junction between Global North and Global South, an epicentre of flows crucial to the EU, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. A wider Mediterranean region emerges from regional cooperation initiatives to address security issues that proliferate across blurred borders because of political fragility, extreme poverty and climate change characterizing the Southern Mediterranean. Irregular migration in the wider Mediterranean is a case in point, a meaningful example of borders' shifting leading to a redefinition of strategies to address border issues.

The academic debate on fuzzy borders is well established. The traditional concept of frontier implying a geographical notion incorporating administrative and political functions, thus reflecting a Weberian concept of state, does not capture the complex reality of current times. Focusing on the EU's relations with its periphery, Raffaella Del Sarto talks about the EU 'borderland' (Del Sarto 2016) and 'contentious borders' (Del Sarto 2017). The 'hybridity' among Europe, Middle East and North Africa attracts scholars' attention a lot. Key issues relating to migration, trade, energy and security render Mediterranean countries interdependent, 'creating a dense space for interaction and cooperation, and for collusion and collision', that produce practices of contestation in the borderlands (Del Sarto and Tholens 2020: 3ff.). Natalia Ribas-Mateos claims that 'borders are not limited to being a mere 'social product' or social process, but are instead alive and dynamic' (2015: 5). Migration flows across the Mediterranean continue despite of EU member states' attempts to close their borders. Migrants have an agency and people on the move corroborate the blurring of nation-state regional borders.

In contrast to the IR literature focused on (state) border control, there is other relevant literature investigating human security. In line with the IR literature on human security (Kaldor, Martin, Selchow 2007; Kerr 2010; Christie 2018), this paper suggests that as long as human security is guaranteed, state security increases, because '[b]y protecting human security, state security is also protected' (Hanlon and Christie 2016: 5). We suggest to think beyond the traditional category of state

security and explain how and why the Mediterranean went global, to become an inherent part of the Global South. In a time when the EU integration model is put under scrutiny by EU politics scholars (Börzel and Risse 2018; Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018; Schimmelfennig 2014; Schmidt 2018), we are experiencing the *fatigue* of a EU-led construction of a region (Adler, Bicchi, Crawford, Del Sarto 2006) reflecting the European neo-liberal experience, because a EU's liberal development model is currently put into question (Paciello, 2020: 5). All this considered, the present contribution adopts the concept of 'Mediterranean Global South', where the EU is just a part of it, not the prevailing one. This is an area where policy-issues are negotiated and renegotiated via a contentious interaction, where non-state actors can provide useful knowledge, individuals express their own agency and practices can be an effective feature to address security challenges.

2. A critical approach to explain expanding borders

Critical Security Studies (CSS) provide several insights to better understand Mediterranean security in current times. First of all, CSS draw on the criticism of state-centrism. Their focus is on the real distribution of power, on the on-going processes that regard the individual as the main referent object of security (Bilgin 2018). State-centrism is empirically unhelpful to grasp the nature of Mediterranean politics today, because states in the Mediterranean Global South are not the main providers of security (if ever). We intend to take the individual as the starting point for analysing security in the Mediterranean, in particular human security. And we assume that irregular migration provides a specific context to conceptualise human security. Mediterranean security reflects an area of pluralism and focusing on human security in the Mediterranean represents a challenge to get to the essence of security (Bilgin 2003). The key to conceptualize security is to address the central issue of agency to assess *who* (and *how*) manages (in)security in the Mediterranean area.

Adopting a CSS approach allows to better grasp the political implications of particular security ideas and practices for the Mediterranean. New security challenges require new analytical tools and comprehensive frameworks of analysis. This paper questions the association of the concept of security with the protection of the state, or 'national security', and suggests to take into account human security, migrants' security in particular. This concept of security is essential for the understanding of the Mediterranean in the age of migration, and to answer the crucial question: security for whom? What, or better *who* needs to be secured? How security professionals and bureaucracies practice security becomes essential in filling the *vacuum* left by state-actors in securing individuals. Mediterranean migration is a contentious issue both at EU and EU member state (EUMS) level. As the controversial quota system to redistribute migrants in compliance with the burden-sharing principle of the EU has proved, EUMS have hard times to find common solutions.

Human mobility draws the attention to human (in)security at the borders. State actors are often unable to provide security at the borders and non-state actors such

as International Organizations (IOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) intervene to address migrants' needs and fill a *vacuum*. State-led strategies are challenged by other actors, either groups of individuals such as migrants who express their agency, or IO, NGOs and CSOs, that pursue their own human security strategies (*e.g.* International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], or Search and Rescue [SAR] NGOs). When EUMS are inactive and/or ineffective, non-state actors often engage in the management of migration with humanitarian practices and prove to react quicker to the emergence (Panebianco 2019b).

Methods of problem-solving not directly related to state-action have gradually developed (and are developing) to manage migration via humanitarian practices. Security professionals and practitioners provide content to security through their words and actions. What matters is the meanings and practices of relevant political actors. The governance of migration involves different actors whose practices are valuable in terms of migrants' security. A plurality of voices and approaches are expressed by the various actors involved: political institutions (at EU, national and local level), IOs, NGOs, CSOs. Their ideational and practical choices are crucial to better understand what happens on the ground (Panebianco 2019b).

The literature on the securitization of migration has become overabundant in the last decades. Since the 1990s security discourses have dominated the academic debate on migration (see Buzan 1991; Wæver, Buzan, Kelstrup, Lemaitre 1993; Huysmans 2000; Lazaridis, Wadia 2015). The political debate in the EU has been strongly influenced by the migration-security nexus often overshadowing the humanitarian dimension of the phenomenon. Following the analytical prism suggested by CSS, this paper departs from the construction of migration as a security concern (Huysmans 2000) to focus on the humanitarian dimension of the migration phenomenon in the Mediterranean. It is the linkage between border security and human security that deserves further research attention.

The paper suggests to investigate the complexification of regional relations deriving from the actual role of those actors that play crucial functions in the provision of solutions to complex security issues. The Mediterranean Global South represents a significant case-study to understand world politics. In this area, as elsewhere, global powers play a crucial influential role in setting rules and policies, alongside with regional powers and non-state actors that perform to address security challenges. An overall comprehensive framework is needed in order to explain the intertwined facets of security, in the dual dimension of state's security and human security in the Mediterranean Global South.

The map of the Mediterranean has changed: a sort of border shift process can be ascribed to the human mobility across the Mediterranean that originated from the Sahel, sub-Saharan countries, or central Asia. However, focusing on EUMS' action does not provide an exhaustive picture of what is taking place on the ground. To better understand the Mediterranean Global South, it is useful to explore the initiatives currently conducted in the area. The regional order can only be investigated by

focusing on the regional problem-solving strategies that are conducted by state and non-state actors. Humanitarian practices are emerging as an effective alternative to states' border control. The EU has externalized the solution of relevant problems, therefore, regional initiatives tend to project the EU's role beyond the definition of European neighbourhood. The Mediterranean Global South is featured by globalization, interconnection, interdependence. Due to blurred frontiers, people move across the borders and problems extend as well over the states' frontiers. Non-state actors provide humanitarian practices and contribute to the management of human flows (Panebianco, 2019b).

3. Rethinking borders in the Mediterranean space: human security at risk crossing the borders, surfing the waves, or blocked at sea

Irregular flows from the Global South to the Global North render migration one key feature of our times. Although an emergency frame has often been applied to explain the current migration flows across the Mediterranean seawaters, Mediterranean migration is rather a structural condition of this age of migration (Attinà 2018: 50). However, over time migratory routes change according to contingent conditions. In the last 30 years, migration flows across the Mediterranean Sea have experienced various routes and exploited different entry points to Europe, depending on specific circumstances: through the Gibraltar Straits and the Adriatic in the 1990s, via the Canary Islands in the 2000s, increasingly from North Africa since 2011, and massively through the Eastern Mediterranean in 2015.

The migration crisis of the 2010s, in particular the refugee crisis of 2015, has brought to the fore issues of border control and security at the EU borders. In the decade 2009-2019 arrivals to Europe via Mediterranean routes were constantly registered; the Eastern route had a peak in 2015 and the Central Mediterranean route had a longer peak between mid-2013 and mid-2017 (source: EU infographics, European Council/Council of the European Union, FRONTEX data). In 2015 more than 1 million refugees, mainly escaping from the Syrian war, entered Europe via the Eastern route. Fences, barbwires and physical walls were then built at intra-EU borders, adding other barriers to existing legal walls. Populist discourses shaped the political debate of several EU member states, putting migration, and the fight against migration via border control, high in the European agenda (Grande, Schwarzbözl, Fatke 2019).

Since the early 1990s migration has been securitized and border security management has attracted the attention of politicians, media and public opinion (Waever, Buzan, Kelstrup, Lemaitre 1993; Huysmans 2000; Bigo 2000; Bigo, Tsoukala 2008; Balzacq, Léonard, Ruzicka 2016; Harteveld, Schaper, De Lange, Van Der Brug 2018). Yet, everyday performances of migration management suggest that securitization does not provide a fully understanding of the phenomenon and practices to address migration. 'Politicizing security' (Bilgin 2018: 69) allows instead to scrutinize security in practice. Conceptualizing security to uncover its political

characters and focusing on the contribution of myriads of security actors allows a better understanding of human (in)security. Dealing with human security implies to focus upon migrants at risk crossing the EU borders, surfing the waves under difficult weather conditions on run-down boats, or even worse when they remain blocked at sea, hostage on SAR NGOs denied disembarkation on a safe port due to EU member states' decisions at the edge of legal practices. In the literature on human security, humanitarian practices are emerging as a counterweight to security discourses on migration. IOs and NGOs reports on the inhumane conditions of migrants kept in Libyan detention camps or cruel treatment of migrants and refugees by the Libyan Coast Guard prove that border control is a controversial phenomenon.

Border control strategies and decisions are crucial to assess who is legitimate to cross the border and who is not. In current times the distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration has become difficult to be ascertained. And irregular migrants are destined to increase if entering EU member states legally at official border crossings becomes more difficult. Moreover, once they arrive in the EU, they cannot be recognised as legitimate individuals in the European territory. Migrants escape for various reasons. Scholars generally agree that migration is a global phenomenon which has multiple causes (Attinà 2018; Bettini 2017; Carling, Schewel 2018; De Haas 2011; Geddes 2015; Van Hear, Bakewell, Long 2018). Alongside people fleeing from armed conflicts and persecutions for political opinions, religion, sexual orientation, or nationality, which entitle to legal protection according to the Geneva Convention of 1951, there are also other causes forcing people to move and leave their home country, such as climate change, demographic pressure, or structural poverty.

In this age of migration, regional flows cannot be stopped. Being aware that migrants are often perceived as sources of insecurity in receiving societies, but also that the receiving communities are put under stress when faced with arrivals in high numbers, to address the issue of irregular migrants' security implies to focus on the real *locus* where migration management takes place. Mediterranean migration reveals the interdependence between sending, transit and destination countries, between societies of emigration and immigration, and suggests that common action is required to respond to globalization trends. In terms of security at the borders, it is essential to focus on one part of migrants' adventure, namely the journey to Europe, on their search for protection. But other aspects of migrants' integration (or lack of) in the destination/receiving countries are relevant.

We claim that it is the irregularization of migration that renders migration insecure, because the border regulations are inadequate to face mobility trends and render violations of border regulations almost necessary. This is true in two respects. First of all, as far as the journey is concerned, irregular migrants are in the hands of organized crime; secondly, regarding the insecurity of migrants who enter illegally into the EU, they remain in a *limbo* without registration, *i.e.* with no access to health care, nor to education, nor to job opportunities. This inevitably fosters sources of insecurity before and after their risky journeys. IOs such as the IOM or UNHCR and

Amnesty International denounce the terrible life conditions in detention centers in Libya and call for the international community to intervene so to address migrants' insecurity before getting to Europe.

If the governance of migration prioritizes border closure, it becomes irrelevant if migrants are mostly asylum seekers coming from sub-Saharan countries entitled to international protection for humanitarian reasons. Once a EUMS such as Italy or Malta refuses to disembark migrants there is no way to verify if they can apply for asylum. Faced with such high numbers of arrivals, states at the EU borders such as Italy struggle to identify asylum seekers to respect international provisions. Under the terms of Article 14 of the 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights, all people have the right to seek asylum from persecution in other states. This provision is reaffirmed by the 1951 Refugee Convention which asserts the right of all to freedom from natural disaster, civil war, ethnic, religious, and political oppression. But reality tells that international protection is currently far from guaranteed. To control the borders, EUMS do not hesitate to challenge the International law. In the Case Hirsi Jamaa et als *vs* Italia, judgement dated 23 February 2012, Italy had been condemned by the European Court for Human Rights for having violated the *non-refoulement* principle. Nevertheless, in the years 2018-2019 the former Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, adopted the so-called 'closed ports' policy which could be considered at the outskirts of legal provisions because it consisted in denying migrants' disembarkation without proceeding to their identification.

4. The EU and its neighbours: the *fatigue* of the EU as a regional player

The conceptualisation of the Mediterranean as 'Mediterranean Global South' requires a few considerations on the EU as a regional player at the eve of the 2020s. To face the variety of the regional challenges, over time the EU has adopted new cooperation frameworks or adapted the existing ones moving from the multi-dimensional regional platforms provided by the EMP, to bilateral relations framed within the ENP and issue-based cooperation fostered by the UfM. Business development and employment, higher education and research, social and civil affairs, water and environment, transport and urban development, energy or climate action are not just administrative departments of the UfM; they reflect the most relevant issues in today's intergovernmental regional cooperation, following a functionalist approach aimed at solving human beings' problems of the every-day life. In our view, it is not the philosophy behind Euro-Mediterranean relations that has changed, as Kristina Kausch and Richard Youngs had suggested (2009), but rather the approach to achieve the common goals, namely peace, security, prosperity and mutual understanding in the Mediterranean. Investing in cooperation and mutual exchange at several levels remains the EU's main goal, but the EU approach has become more pragmatic (Bicchi 2011; Huber, Paciello 2020). Structural changes bring about a different distribution of power and specific strategies have to be identified to address the citizens' real needs. Since the neo-liberal project that the EU had promoted in

the relations with third countries is not necessarily shared by the Mediterranean 'partners' or 'neighbours', as they are called within EMP or ENP, decentring analytical perspectives have been adopted to identify the different challenges and priorities set by Southern Mediterranean neighbours (Huber 2020). A decentring research agenda is emerging to unpack different priority views and security conceptions departing from EU cores to focus instead on challenges as seen in the peripheries (broadly conceived). The understanding of international migration governance in particular is privileging the viewpoints of origin and transit countries, non-state actors and include both urban and rural perspectives (Triandafyllidou 2020). To avoid euro-centric views, a plural understanding of research issues is attracting the scholarly attention.

The adoption of the ENP in 2004 had marked a shift from regionalism to bilateralism. With the ENP, the EU sought to reframe relations with its neighbouring countries to be more effective. Potentially, the EU provided the same chances and opportunities to the neighbours, but in practice cooperation progressed on a bilateral basis (Kelley 2006). For some scholars, EMP, ENP and UfM are overlapping policy frames (Cardwell 2011), but progressively the reference to democratic reforms has reduced and the multi-dimensional security concept left the way to prioritization of cooperation areas. The years 2010s started with the so-called Arab Spring and with an *élan* for democracy promotion. Within one decade, resilient authoritarianism has almost monopolised the political and research agenda. Taken hostage of the security-stability nexus, the EU too often considers that illiberal regimes can be reliable allies to contain security threats. The Arab upheavals demonstrated (first and outmost to the EU) that democratization is not a linear process; it needs to be internalized and embedded in the society at large to produce long-lasting political democratic changes (Panebianco 2012). Otherwise, protests can easily turn into resilient authoritarianism (Diamond 2002; Levitsky, Way 2002; Murphy 2008). As Schmitter and Sika argue, democratization is always an ambidexstrous process: on the one hand it triggers a universalistic set of norms and processes, but on the other it involves adaptations to the local structures (Schmitter, Sika 2017: 443).

The EU can only play a political role in the Mediterranean as long as it contributes to solve problems relevant for the citizens. If the EU is challenged at home, it cannot imagine recognition from the outside (Huber 2020). The Euro crisis first, then the Schengen crisis and Brexit have absorbed EU energies (see Biermann, Guerin, Jagduber, Rittberger, Weiss 2019; Börzel, Risse 2018; Caporaso 2018; etc.). Rising populism and Euroscepticism in Europe have made the EU introspective (Bauboeck 2018).

The debate on 'Normative Power Europe' launched by the renowned article written by Ian Manners in the early 2000s (Manners 2002), then revised at its decennial (Manners 2013), has raised concerns on the EU capacity to act as a democracy promoter (Pace 2014; Panebianco 2006). The EU promotion of liberal values such as democracy and human rights proved to be ambivalent. Stability in the Mediterranean remains a priority in the EU political agenda so to prevent security threats from affecting EU countries. It would be misleading and *naif* to assume that the EU promotes ethical stances via foreign policy. The EU-Turkey agreement signed in 2016 allows for EU borders' 'control

by proxy' (Panebianco, 2020); via a border-shifting process, EU bordering countries are mandated to manage security at the EU borders. In a similar way, the Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2017 to develop cooperation to address illegal immigration, human trafficking, fuel smuggling and reinforcement of border security, was backed by the EU as being part of the externalization of migration management to contain migration flows (Panebianco 2020: 12). Yet, the control of human mobility through EU borders' closure and agreements with EU border countries challenges the 'humane' management of migration portrayed in the European Agenda on migration (European Commission 2015) and more assertively in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum (European Commission 2020).

In the absence of a shared common approach to migration, externalisation has become one of the EU priorities in the management of migratory pressures at the EU borders (Panebianco 2020), at the expenses of the support of liberal economic and political principles beyond Europe's borders. What the EU portrays as a policy inspired by the responsibility to protect the migrants (Panebianco, Fontana 2018) can be easily translated into an externalization process short of human rights' respect guarantee on the border countries' side, as in the Libyan case. This is an emblematic example of EU cooperation with Mediterranean neighbours responsible of human rights' violations and atrocities against migrants, as reported by humanitarian organizations such as IOM or Amnesty International.

It is the nature of EU relations with its neighbours that is to be redefined and the capacity to transform its neighbours to be questioned. The EU's role in world politics and its capacity to foster a liberal political and economic model has attracted the scholarly attention for more than a decade, stimulated by the institutional reforms adopted by the Lisbon Treaty and the supposedly strengthening of the EU as an international power. Europe's slide from liberalism (Youngs 2010: 6) has become a *fait accompli* and has suggested new approaches and paradigms to frame EU foreign policy studies. More broadly, the debate on the crisis of the neo-liberal order has widely attracted the scholars' attention.

A cosmopolitan liberal model proved ineffective to face the current regional challenges. This brings to the fore, once more, the need to conceive European foreign policy as a sum of EU foreign policies, to seize the EU effective capacity to have a role to play in the Mediterranean. Not so long ago Hix and Høyland (2011: 3) pointed out the issue of EU foreign *policies*. What the multipolar global system requires today is a flexible analytical approach according to the foreign policy issues in the agenda. At the beginning of the 2020s, the liberal superpower argument that was very popular at the end of the Cold War has lost its relevance (Lucarelli 2020). Empirical research has demonstrated that only if and when third countries, Mediterranean 'neighbors' or 'partners', decide to adopt EU rules and norms because they find it advantageous, the EU can socialize them to EU rules and norms (Di Peri, Zardo 2017; Fontana 2017; Zardo 2020).

By investigating EU foreign policy/ies, scholars have retrenched from discussion on the EU's promotion of 'European values', that is a difficult role to assess both

scholarly and politically. The most notable trend in EU foreign policy is currently the declining conviction in liberal internationalism (Lucarelli 2020). The debate is centred on a sort of norm adoption selection, because 'outsiders' chose to copy only parts of the *acquis communautaire* (Wiener 2015). As the model on the external governance suggests, in some issue areas norm-sharing is produced more than in others (Lavenex, Schimmelfennig 2009). In some realms of foreign relations, *e.g.* dealing with energy security, Europe's influence comes about through the transfer of its own rules and legal norms to other countries and organizations as a form of external governance distinct from traditional concepts of power projection. Thus, the extension of EU's own values does not apply on a large scale, but only to some issue-areas, if and when conditions for norm transfer occur. This is currently the case with climate change, that has officially entered the EU political agenda under the German EU presidency and assessed at the European Council in December 2020.

Since the so-called 2015 refugee crisis, when more than 1 million refugees escaping from the Syrian conflict entered the EU via the eastern land route, the EU showed the 'organized hypocrisy' of the Common European Asylum System: despite the rhetoric on EU values to be defended also in foreign policy, the EU is investing on border control (Lavenex 2018). The burden-sharing principle that is conceived as one of the pillars of EU values has been put on a hold because the redistribution of irregular migrants has been contested by Central and Eastern EUMS states refusing to respect the redistribution quotas set by the Council of the European Union following to a proposal of the European Commission.

In line with this debate, this paper does not investigate the principles *di per sé* guiding EU action in the Mediterranean, but rather suggests to explore the content of regional cooperation, or rather the lack of. What matters more in many security aspects is the degree of unity between EUMS. Since the early 2010s, old and new security threats acquired relevance in the Mediterranean. Alongside energy security, climate change, terrorism and the rise of Daesh, migration flows have become a key political issue leading to further regional cooperation. However, tensions have emerged among EU member states, eventually contributing to domestic EU crises. The EUMS have not reacted to migration with 'more Europe', but rather with a strategic 'non-use' of Europe (Slominski, Trauner 2018).

5. Preliminary Conclusions

This paper has highlighted various dilemmas on security challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean space after the 2011 Arab uprisings. To conceptualize the Mediterranean Global South, it challenged actions and strategies that do not seem to be apt to manage effectively regional crises such as the migration one. In contrast to the IR literature focused on (state) border control, there is other relevant literature investigating human security, suggesting to focus on migrants as individuals searching for a better life and in need of protection. Alongside the language associated with the securitization of migration there is 'a humanitarian concern

expressed for the lives and well-being of 'irregular' migrants precisely as humans with the same fundamental rights as EU citizens' (Vaughan-Williams 2015: 3).

The main advantage of this contribution is the issue-oriented approach and the focus on human beings. It has allowed to highlight the effectiveness of the humanitarian practices of non-state actors involved in managing human flows in the Mediterranean. The intersection between human (in)security and mobility in the Mediterranean draws the attention on the agency of people on the move in, around and across the Mediterranean Global South. Regional issues cannot be confined within state-borders. The research agenda on security in the Mediterranean Global South includes various, complex security challenges. Critical scholarship on security well includes and extends existing studies. CSS provide promising research paths centred on human beings and processes led by non-state actors, yet rethinking of security in the Mediterranean Global South is far from accomplished. There is a clear need for further investigation, so to produce more sustainable policy-oriented research and produce applicative knowledge.

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The socio-political construction of the Central Mediterranean Sea between politics of exclusion and practices of solidarity: the role of European migration policies and SAR NGOs in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings

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Introduction

In the last decade, different geopolitical dynamics and different political and international actors have been constantly reshaping the central Mediterranean space. The political uprisings of the so called Arab Spring in 2011 and the consequent reopening of the Mediterranean frontier, the EU political response to these events and the involvement of Search and Rescue (SAR) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) since 2014, have all transformed the central Mediterranean as a socio-political arena characterised by a series of conflicting spaces in which states' political power, control on human mobility and counter practices of solidarity have constantly intertwined and clashed.

As authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya fell, in the aftermath of 2011, so did the cooperation framework established between the two shores of the Mediterranean, mainly defined by bilateral agreements ensuring regimes in North Africa as gatekeepers of migration flows towards Europe (Carrera et al. 2012). In response to this political instability, the EU's main attempt was to reinstate control and containment beyond its maritime borders, through means of externalisation and de-territorialization of border control. While pressuring new authorities in North Africa to cooperate in curbing irregular migration, and introducing new legislative proposals suspending mobility on land (Carrera et al. 2012), at sea, migrants' enduring and autonomous capacity to collectively move across the European border regime was fought through "politics of non-assistance" (Heller, Pezzani 2016:5) creating a maritime space of exclusion in the central Mediterranean.

In response to the persistent European policies of non-assistance, the launch of SAR operations conducted by independent NGOs in 2014, gradually reshaped the socio-political space of the central Mediterranean. Strongly criticising the exclusionary and securitised approach of the EU, while significantly supporting the unruly movements of migrants across the Mediterranean, SAR NGOs intervention was not only humanitarian but also social and political insofar it redefined the maritime space through principles of solidarity and political dissent. Despite their differences, SAR NGOs engagement in the central Mediterranean emerged as a form of political resistance, opening a space of dissent voices, and unlocking new spaces of counteraction in the central Mediterranean Sea (Dadusc, Mudu 2020).

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The convergence of different state and non-state actors in the central Mediterranean Sea, as well as migrants' autonomous and collective attempts to challenge the European border regime at the central Mediterranean frontier, all contributed to a continuous reconfiguration of the central Mediterranean as a place composed of different and contrasting spaces ranging from exclusion to solidarity. Constantly reproduced and redefined by the different actors involved, the spatial dimension of the central Mediterranean assumed a multi-faceted identity becoming, in Foucauldian terms, a heterotopia representing in one real place several and often incompatible spaces (Foucault 1998).

Drawing on Lefebvre's theorisation of space as a social product that does not pre-exist human beings, rather it is built and shaped by them, and Foucault's notion of heterotopia, this paper proposes to analyse the role that both European migration policies and SAR NGOs' operations have played in the socio-political construction of the maritime space of the Central Mediterranean ensuing the Arab Spring, arguing that both these actors contribute to the reconfiguration of the latter as a transnational socio-political space in which exclusion and solidarity coexist and collide within a broader context of geopolitical space-making dynamics (Lefebvre 2018). Examining the theoretical framework underpinning the paper's main assumptions, the first section will focus on clarifying and explaining the main argument. Turning to the historical and political events that occurred in the Mediterranean region since 2011, the analysis will then provide a critical examination of both European politics of border control and SAR NGOs in the central Mediterranean, in the attempt to demonstrate how they both unfold processes of reconfiguration of the latter, redefining its spatial dimension as a heterotopia in which different and incompatible spaces of exclusion, humanitarianism and practices of solidarity coexist and clash.

1. The *heterotopia* of the central Mediterranean space between politics of exclusion and practices of solidarity

The central Mediterranean Sea, far from being a neutral setting in which events simply unfold, it is rather produced and reproduced by the social and political relations (Lefebvre 2018) underpinning the complex relationship between the EU and (the space beyond) its borders. Geographically constituting the maritime area between North Africa and Southern Europe, the central Mediterranean Sea is here also conceptually understood as a "transnational social space" (Faist 2019: 7), defined by processes and practices of social and spatial differentiation (van Houtum, van Naerssen 2002), within a specific mode of production, entailing, containing, and dissimulating social and political relationships in their coexistence and simultaneity (Lefebvre 2018).

Ever since the end of the Cold War, the EU has faced the essential dilemma of where its final borders should be set (Smith 2005). With the gradual abolishment of borders within the European space, relationship with the outer space has become more problematic (Campesi 2015; Ciabarri 2020; Del Sarto 2010). As the distinction

between the inside and the outside is inherent in any production of space reproduced by practices of mobility control (Collyer 2016), the construction of the European outer space became deeply connected with increasingly restrictive migration politics (van Houtum, van Naerssen 2002). This led to the development of a "variable geometry of borders" (Del Sarto 2010:1), in which space is defined and governed through a variety of different mechanisms and actors (Bialasewicz 2012). In this context, the Mediterranean space features as the "EU borderlands, a peripheral and hybrid area of transition" (Del Sarto 2010: 2) in which the social and political traits of the Mediterranean Sea are defined through processes of bordering and practices of spatial differentiation (van Houtum, van Naerssen 2002).

In this process of border making, practices of externalisation, based on shifting the locus of border control afield from European territory (Lavenex 2006), have become the EU main policy instrument to manage undesired human migration since the establishment of the Schengen area. As externalised European border control in the central Mediterranean strongly relied on cooperation with northern African countries, when political protests burst in the southern shore in 2011 such mechanism of cooperation was severely disrupted. Political events and geopolitical reactions ensuing the Arab uprisings deeply reshaped the spatial dimension of the central Mediterranean through a multifaceted socio-political process, ranging from cooperation to conflict (Lefebvre 2018). Such social and political changes led to a general fragmentation of the central Mediterranean space in which Lefebvre's triad of space overtly emerged as the central Mediterranean simultaneously encompassed the perceived, the conceived and the lived dimension of space (Lefebvre 2018). While constituting the socio-physical material space in which migration occurred, the transnational space of the central Mediterranean also constituted a representation of space, insofar it was differently conceived by the different actors involved (Lefebvre 2018). While the EU conceived the central Mediterranean as a space of migration containment, defining the ontological distinction between what is accepted to be inside borders and what must remain outside, SAR NGOs conceived it as a space of human rescuing and, at times, of political dissent, posing solidarity rather than power at the core of social relationships. But the central Mediterranean also constitutes a space of representation, as it is shaped by those who directly live it, through their associated experiences, images, symbols, within what Lefebvre calls the space of the "inhabitants" and "users" (Lefebvre 2018:59). In this sense, the enduring, autonomous, and collective mobility of migrants (Heller, Pezzani 2016:8), despite everything, also contests European migration policies through a counter production of the Mediterranean Sea as a space of crossings and battles in which the exclusionary dimension of space is challenged and crossed.

In the socio-political construction of the central Mediterranean space, following the political events of 2011, the different perceptions of the spatial dimension of the sea strongly emerged through the different spatial practices deployed. While migrants' unruly movements produced the Mediterranean as a space of new possibilities and connections, EU migration politics and the different, at times

divergent, imaginaries and discursive framings of SAR NGOs' interventions, have strongly contributed to the reconfiguration of the Mediterranean Sea as a fluctuating space embroiling different and incompatible spaces (Foucault 1998). Representing different social and political realities, the central Mediterranean space has been redefined, in Foucauldian terms, as a heterotopia juxtaposing in one real place incompatible spaces (Foucault 1998). As described by Foucault, in fact, the heterotopic space features as a real emplacement in which all other emplacements encompassed are, at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed (Foucault 1998).

While acknowledging that Foucault's accounts of the concept of heterotopia remain briefly sketched and, to a certain extent, confusing, Johnson's interpretation of Foucault's heterotopia as a space simultaneously reflecting and unsettling other spaces (Johnson 2006) seems to better clarify the general concept. If we understand Foucauldian heterotopias as spaces where the normal ordering of things is confronted with a different ordering of things, also adopting Beckett, Bagguley and Campbell's interpretation (2017), then it seems clearer why such concept may be relevant to the present analysis. While EU migration politics produce the central Mediterranean as a space of violence and refusal, in the name of national security (Campesi 2015) ordering the maritime space according to European rules and norms, practices of solidarity and political dissent deployed by SAR NGOs overturn such ordering, supporting migrants' journeys and thus reconceptualising the central Mediterranean as a space of possibilities and opportunities (Garofalo 2017). The direct involvement of NGOs in rescuing operations challenges usual processes of space production in the central Mediterranean, re-politicising migration and border management by questioning and contrasting governmental policies (Cuttitta 2018a), while supporting migrants' autonomous mobility.

However, such re-conceptualisation does not occur homogeneously. While sharing the general motivation to alleviate suffering in the central Mediterranean, as Stierl (2017) argues, SAR NGOs understand their actions at sea differently, producing a "wide spectrum of humanitarian" (Stierl 2017: 6) spaces. The extent to which these different humanitarian spaces challenge and affect European migration policies, strongly depends on the way they conceive their mission at sea and whether their aim is merely humanitarian or also political (Cuttitta 2018a). While some NGOs aim at supporting states through humanitarian SAR operations, framing the latter as a mere pragmatic solution to limited EU and state resources and capacity (Stierl 2017), others rather overtly denounce the European restrictive border regime in the attempt to produce an alternative Mediterranean space based on solidarity and socio-political recognition of others. When NGOs intervention is offered as a merely technical and pragmatic solution, consciously distancing itself from any political debate, let alone, political dissent (Stierl 2017) framing migrants as victims that need to be saved, the humanitarian ends up reproducing stark asymmetries of power in which solidarity features as mere assistance to those in need. But when humanitarianism also embraces political dissent in the name of an alternative conceptualisation of borders, the central Mediterranean space is then redefined as a place of solidarity where migrants'

attempts to challenge the European border regime are strongly supported and become part of a real counter-production of the space of the sea.

As a result, a heterogeneous space of solidarity emerges, in which the spatial socio-political dimension of the central Mediterranean Sea appears even more fragmented, embodying the exclusionary dimension of European migration policies while also encompassing several and different modes of other space production from humanitarian assistance to political dissent. It is precisely in this production of the different political and social spaces of exclusion, humanitarianism, and solidarity that the heterotopic character of the central Mediterranean becomes manifest. The clashing and overlapping spaces (Johnson 2006) produced by EU migration policies and SAR NGOs are simultaneously entangled and in contrast with each other alongside a constant production and reproduction of the central Mediterranean space defined by an ever changing, (un)balance between the logic of exclusion and inclusion (Cuttitta 2018b). While functioning as a political excluding border zone operating as a geopolitical tool through which the EU defines its relationship with the space beyond its borders, the central Mediterranean Sea also appears as a space of humanitarian assistance, while also featuring as a political and social counter-site in which solidarity and certain types of resistance-practices (Beckett et al. 2017) to the EU border regime become possible.

Such multifaceted and constantly reconfigured identities that strongly emerged in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, define the central Mediterranean as a heterotopia insofar the space of established norms and rules is at the same time challenged and unchallenged yet strongly confronted with the production of transgressive spaces (Beckett et al. 2017) in an everlasting battle. The reconfiguration of the central Mediterranean space, occurring at different levels, embroiling different actors and complex old and new geopolitical dynamics in the region, results in a further redefinition of the space at and beyond European borders as an indefinite place, a multiplication of a series of places constantly changing (Leogrande 2019).

2. The Central Mediterranean region in the aftermath of the 'Arab Spring'

Since the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in 1995, the EU has attempted to regulate its interactions with the southern bank of the Mediterranean through a number of different policy instruments (Zardo, Cavatorta 2016) amongst which migration has always functioned as a geostrategic tool serving EU interests in the area (Collyer 2016). Following general and global trends of western liberal democracies extending control beyond their territories (Zaiotti 2016; Kent, et al. 2020), the main political strategy adopted by the Union in the governance of international migration was defined by the trans-nationalisation of migration controls (Collyer 2016: 613) through the externalisation of migration management (Bialasiewicz 2012). While establishing a variety of autonomous agencies engaged in migration management, such as the European Police Office (EUROPOL) and the supranational border control agency Frontex (Collyer 2016), bilateral agreements with northern African countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean also acquired significant

importance. While agreements with Tunisia and Egypt halted the central route of the Mediterranean and the strait of Suez, diplomatic relationships were also strengthened with Libya (Ciabarri 2020).

The Libyan case represents an emblematic case of the outsourcing and offshoring of European migration policies (Bialasewicz 2012) both before and after the political uprisings of 2011. Strongly oriented at combating criminal organizations and the smuggling of human beings, in 2003 the Italian government signed a cooperation agreement with Gaddafi's Libya (Martirano 2003) followed, in 2007, by a series of bilateral agreements which allowed for joint border patrols along the Libyan coast while providing EU funded surveillance equipment to monitor Libya's land and sea borders (Bialasewicz 2012). Agreements also focused on implementing training programmes for the Libyan Coast Guard, on the construction of detention centres for irregular migrants in Libya, and on the financing of repatriation programmes (Ciabarri 2020). Again in 2008, after a long process of negotiations, Italy and Libya signed the Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation, wich also encompassed the fight against illegal immigration. The Treaty also established that Libyan land borders were to be controlled by a satellite detection system, jointly financed by Italy and the EU (Ronzitti 2009). The 2008 agreement, which must be understood within the broader framework of a long lasting special diplomatic relation between Italy and Libya, (Corriere della Sera 2008), had an important impact on the management of migration flows in the central Mediterranean. Libya's approval to tightening control of its territorial waters, while accepting disembarkation of individuals intercepted at sea by Italian vessels (Bialasewicz 2012), translated, in fact, in the establishment of politics of pushbacks based on repatriation of migrants to Libya (Ciabarri 2020).

With the burst of political protests in 2011, known as the Arab Spring, the complex and controversial European system of border control within the Euro-Mediterranean region, was disrupted (Seeberg 2013), with a consequent increase of migration flows towards Europe. Differently from Egypt and Tunisia, in Libya, where political turmoil had resulted in a civil war, the deployment of an international military intervention contributed to further deteriorate the conflicting situation in 2014 (Morone 2015). Gaddafi's downfall, and the consequent disruption of the cooperation mechanism between Libya and Italy, resulted in Libya and the central Mediterranean becoming the primary migratory route towards Europe.

In Libya, where migration has had an important historical economic and socio-political significance, with the country traditionally hosting a significant number of migrant workers from neighbouring countries as well as from southern African states (Seeberg 2013), the war and the spread of violence had resulted in a serious increase of migration outflows due to the worsening of living and security conditions of both Libyan citizens and foreigners. Sub-Saharan migrants were particularly affected by the conflicting situation and soon became the scapegoats of the conflict and were subjected to torture, arbitrary arrests, and public killing (Morone 2015). Migrants in Libya also came from other neighbouring countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, together with Syrian refugees escaping the civil war and moving from hosting

countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey (Ciabarri 2020). When the conflict started in 2011, Libya was home to between 1.5 and 2.5 million foreign nationals, many of them refugees (Seeberg 2013). Economic migrants, belonging to those migration flows that occurred within the African region since the beginning of 2000s, following the opening of the southern frontier and the economic prosperity of that moment, also constituted an important share of the migrant population in Libya at the time (Morone 2015). Within such variety and complexity characterising the migrant population in Libya, only a small fraction of outflows from Libya was headed towards Europe. Despite the eurocentric representation of south-north migration flows, justifying restrictive European migration policies in the central Mediterranean, most migrants living in Libya had travelled there from their countries of origin looking for better working conditions. The decision to leave Libya and, in some cases, reach Europe, often solely depended on the political instability and the worsening of living conditions that followed the burst of the civil war (Morone 2015).

Such clarification is important insofar as it explains how in the Libyan case and, more generally, in the case of migration flows within the Euro-Mediterranean region, it was more difficult to distinguish between traditional categories of migration – such as economic migrants vs. asylum seekers (Morone 2015). As van Houtoum and van Naerssen notice, despite the arbitrary and abstract difference usually upheld: "it is generally acknowledged […] that it is extremely difficult to trace and categorise the many and different motivations and apparent need for people to migrate" (van Houtoum, van Naerssen 2002:129). As most people leaving Libya were not Libyan citizens, rather coming from other African countries, leaving Libya due to the worsening of living conditions ensuing the burst of the civil war, the "categorical fetishism" (Crawley, Skleparis 2018) that characterised the binary policy distinction of "in vs-out" (van Houtoum, van Naerssen 2002) only served European exclusionary purposes within the broader political mechanism of mobility selection. The political arguments put forward by the EU, underpinning the unavoidable necessity of restrictive political measures within the central Mediterranean, in order to defend the European territory, were thus deeply de-contextualised and consciously aimed at turning the central Mediterranean in a space of exclusion in which restoration of border control prevailed regardless of the historical, political and social context in which people migrated.

3. EU migration politics and the construction of a space of exclusion in the Central Mediterranean Sea

3.1 The European response to the political events of 2011

After a relatively optimistic reaction of the EU to the potential democratic shift in north African countries (Seeberg; Shteiwi 2013), characterised by: "the need for a new approach, a re-prioritisation and an introduction of new ways of working" (European Commission 2015: 2) not much seemed to change. The EU's response to the Arab

uprisings was defined, once again, by processes of externalisation of border controls (Zardo 2020) in the attempt to re-establish the EU border regime. Intensification of border control and surveillance, through the mobilisation of Frontex, and the deployment of agents from the EUROPOL (Carrera et al. 2012) were the first policy initiatives taken by the EU. Also, EU relations with third countries – be they state of origin or transit –regained centrality in political discourse (Zardo 2020), as the EU strongly pressured newly established authorities in North Africa to cooperate in clamping down irregular immigration (Carrera et al. 2012). To this end, EU individual member states quickly began to set up new bilateral agreements with post-revolutionary authorities, accelerating processes of repatriation and cooperation in the fight against illegal immigration (Attinà 2018a). The need for the EU to strengthen its external migration policy, by setting up partnerships with third countries, was also made evident in official documents of the EU Commission in which it was explicitly clarified that: "the Arab Spring and events in the southern Mediterranean in 2011 further highlighted the need for a coherent and comprehensive migration policy for the EU" (European Commission 2011: 2). As a result, dialogues on migration, mobility and security were launched with Tunisia and Morocco, and later with Egypt, in order to establish Mobility Partnerships (European Commission 2011) further institutionalising migration as a security issue (Zardo; Cavatorta 2016).

Collaboration between the two shores of the Mediterranean was also put into effect through substantial financial incentives, in a partial reconfiguration of the EU funding landscape for migration, asylum, and border policies (Zardo 2020). Funding strongly reflected the general European understanding of migration in security terms and mainly supported measures of stricter border control, the fight against illegal immigration (Hertog 2016) and the reintegration of irregular migrants (Zardo 2020). Furthermore, EU legislation was modified with the introduction of new clauses imposing restrictions on mobility in the framework of emergency mechanisms. In addition to a modification of Visa regulation, the amendment of the Schengen Border Code was also undertaken (Carrera et al. 2012).

Despite these European attempts to re-establish political control on the Mediterranean space, migration flows significantly increased in 2013, as a result of the exacerbation of the Libyan conflict and the war in Syria (Ciabarri 2020). Such escalation also reflected an increase of casualties at sea, with the Lampedusa shipwreck in 2013 being the most emblematic. The EU thus entered a new phase of the migration crisis in the Mediterranean, with the Italian government launching Operation Mare Nostrum, re-orienting European priorities in the central Mediterranean. The operation shifted the focus from politics of border control to SAR operations aiming at rescuing migrants travelling on vessels in distress and combating organized crime and smugglers (Panebianco 2016). However, Mare Nostrum soon became the object of domestic political tensions, with both the EU and partner governments condemning the operation and blaming the Italian government for endangering the Schengen system (Attinà 2018b). Also claiming Mare Nostrum to be politically and economically unsustainable, in 2014 the Italian government called for the EU to take over the

mission (Panebianco 2016). Quickly re-orienting its migration policies towards border control (Cusumano; Villa 2020a), the EU launched the Frontex's Joint operation Triton, significantly reducing the operation assets and covering a far smaller area than the previously overseen by Mare Nostrum (Panebianco 2016). In the same year, the military maritime operation EUNAVFOR (European Union Naval Force) MED Operation Sophia was launched against criminal organizations of migrants trafficking, also aiming at reducing the number of arrivals (Attinà 2016). EU institutions and governments finally restored to exclusionary migration policies, calling on cooperation with third countries to block people at their borders (Attinà 2018b) pushing the EU border further south (Zardo:2020). Following the EU-Turkey agreement in 2016, the memorandum between Italy and Libyan militias in 2017 restored the Libyan coast guard, mainly through technical and capacity building programmes (Loschi, Russo 2020), fully delegating border control and thus preventing further departures. Strongly reasserting Libyan power over its waters, the agreement also marked the establishment of an exclusive Libyan SAR zone (Ciabarri 2020). Regardless of Libya's legal framework, deeply colluded with serious human rights violations (Loschi, Russo 2020), the Central Mediterranean space was thus (re)defined through means of exclusion, within a geopolitical framework in which borders functioned as a strong strategic tool of socio-political power.

3.2 Securitisation of migration and the construction of a space of exclusion

European reactions to the political events of 2011 have often been understood through a crisis narrative approach, justifying political actions on the grounds of exceptional measures (Zaiotti 2016). However, EU politics towards migration in the aftermath of the Arab Spring rather recall general global tendencies of western liberal democracies to frame mobility in terms of insecurity (Carrera et al. 2012). The migration-security nexus, is, indeed, connected to global, social, and political transformations of border governance, in which processes of securitisation of migration draw back to wider processes of politicisation of immigrants and asylum seekers, depicted as dangerous to public order, cultural identity as well as domestic labour and market stability (Huysmans 2000). Such securitisation of migration has led to a deceptive use of the phenomenon, often situated within an erroneously homogeneous epistemic framework (Campesi 2015: 16), in which migration discourses are interrelated with a range of different political and social issues (Huysmans 2000). As a result, migration has been transformed into what Huysmans defines a "meta-issue": a phenomenon that can be referred to as the cause of many problems (Huysmans, 2000: 761).

Such securitisation also paved the way for new conceptualisations of state borders worldwide, grounded in the long-term rationale of borders being guarantors of security in a globalizing world. To this effect, borders have become socially and politically intrinsic to everyday life, affecting people and places in highly unequal manner (Popescu 2012). At the political level, this resulted in the development of

radical political strategies aimed at excluding certain categories of people (Huysmans 2000), through a general rearrangement of states' border control policies and practices transforming borders in systems of rules, grounded in processes of differentiation and selectivity (Mau et al. 2012). Territorial space, deeply intertwined with power, has thus become a device of control (Cuttitta 2007) through a deep and stark "complexification of the border" (Stierl 2017: 2) in which an array of innovative migration-control practices has emerged (Kent et al. 2020). The tendency to externalise control beyond national borders, resulting into a "spatial flexibilization" (Mau et al. 2012), is probably one of the most emblematic aspect of the overall process. So, for instance, in 1994 with the strategy of "Prevention through deterrence" the United States controlled its southern border using an array of fencing, surveillance and border guards. Similarly, Australian governments introduced boat turn backs, offshore asylum processing and maritime interception to prevent "boat people" to access Australian territory (Kent et. al 2020). Externalisation of border management is, therefore, neither a new phenomenon nor exclusively distinctive of the EU. Rather it dates back to the origins of immigration policy at the turn of the 20th century and it has experienced significant transformations since then, becoming more complex and widespread, affecting the constellation of actors involved and the nature of their relations, the technological tools they employ and the magnitude of legal and political challenges it confronts (Zaiotti 2016). Both the securitisation rationale and practices of externalisation of border control have been central to the socio-political construction of EU external borders. The redefinition of European internal borders ensuing the political construction of the Schengen area, occurred in parallel with a deep redefinition of external European borders in terms of security and control (Campesi 2015; Ciabarri 2020). As migration became deeply associated with reterritorialization of exclusion (Collyer 2016), European border management was reorganised tout court (Campesi 2015) through practices of exclusion strictly linked with space and the territory as means to differentiate between the "Self" and the "Other" (Doty 1998).

In light of the foregoing considerations, the European political response to the political turmoil of 2011 was thus situated within a complex and dynamic geography of control (Campesi 2015) in which the relationship between power and space emerged as a crucial aspect of the social and political production of European external borders. In the aftermath of 2011 European migration policies were mainly concerned with the reconfiguration of the central Mediterranean space in terms of power and control. EU restrictive migration policies, and the selective outsourcing of border control duties, in strong cooperation with sending and transit countries, all served the aim of preventing migration to Europe (Del Sarto 2016), framing the central Mediterranean as a space of closure and exclusion. Such exclusionary character was mainly based on coercive power and control, as migrants did not intentionally stop moving, rather they were forcibly and forcefully detained. Politics of non-assistance at sea (Heller, Pezzani 2016) as much as pushback practices and repatriation policies, more than deterring maritime migration, that is changing the motivations of actors,

aimed at defending external borders, limiting people's capabilities to move. (Kent et al. 2020).[1] So, for example, when on 7 June 2016 Libyan authorities, alerted by the Italian coast guard about a vessel heading north, took migrant people on board and returned them to Libya (Cuttitta 2018b), they physically and coercively prevented them to reach European soil.

Within this context, the central Mediterranean space thus became the absolute strategic and political space (Lefebvre 2018) in which borders functioned as instruments of social stratification, reproducing social hierarchies and socio-political exclusion through practices of migration control and distribution of different mobility credentials (Campesi 2015). As van Houtum and van Naerssen (2002) have argued, it is precisely through and at borders, indeed, that rigidity and openness in the governance of places becomes most clearly manifested.

4. SAR NGOs reshaping the space of the central Mediterranean Sea

In response to the European exclusionary political stance, in 2014 civil society started playing a key role in the central Mediterranean space, conducting autonomous and independent SAR operations at sea (Cusumano; Villa 2020a). Launched by the Maltese charity Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), the first one to set sail, by 2016, several independent as well as more traditional NGOs, such as Sea-Watch and Médicins Sans Frontières (MSF) also became active in the central Mediterranean Sea.

Their involvement was strongly linked to the disengagement of the EU in SAR operations right after the end of Mare Nostrum. Despite Triton and EUNAVFOR Med's outward communication, emphasising the provision of SAR, EU operations only conducted a relatively limited number of SAR operations, rather prioritising border control and anti-smuggling tasks (Cusumano 2019). Such mismatch between rhetoric and action generally reflects behavioural politics of traditional humanitarianism worldwide, in which the a-political and de-historicised humanitarian reasons (Malkki 1996; Ticktin 2006) often work as fig leaves covering states' attempts to curb irregular migration and reinforce border control (Cusumano 2019). In this sense, the humanitarian dimension of EU migration governance in the central Mediterranean reifies what Fassin has called a "compassionate repression" (2011), in which the humanitarian, deeply intertwined with power and control, becomes just another strategic tool within the overall mechanism of border control (Tazzioli 2016). As a result, for instance, the humanitarian rhetoric deployed by Italian and EU, as well as Libyan authorities, about sea operations merely served the intent to cover up practices of interceptions through rescue operations (Tazzioli 2016; Cuttitta 2018b). Similarly, in sending and transit countries, the implementation of development-aid programmes (Kent et al. 2020) as well as the engagement of UN international organisation (e.g. IOM)[2] has become a widespread practice of: "not letting people leave" (Tazzioli 2016:13).

[1] Such theoretical clarification is important because as Kent et al. argue: "labeling tactics that are forceful exercises of defence or that threaten force as "deterrence" whitewashes their true nature and blurs the line between policies that might be considered legally acceptable and those that violate liberal protection commitments" (2020: 854).

Generally framed within the humanitarian lens, the engagement of SAR NGOs at sea, has therefore raised general skepticism (Cuttitta 2017; Tazzioli 2016; Stierl 2017; Ciabarri 2020) about their capabilities to re-think and truly challenge EU migration governance in the central Mediterranean. At a first glance, indeed, the humanitarian rhetoric of saving lives at sea recalls a patronising and dehumanised approach (Camilli 2019) which depicts migrants as merely victims that need to be saved, reproducing assistance through hierarchical relations of power (Dadusc, Mudu 2020). Furthermore, the initial strong cooperation between NGOs and Italian political authorities, and the MRCC in conducting SAR operations, raised questions about SAR NGOs true intentions in the central Mediterranean.

However, like Stierl suggests (2017), the ways in which SAR NGOs conceive of and enact their intervention at sea differ considerably. While some only have a humanitarian purpose, regardless of the political implications intrinsic in the overall context, others also have a political aim to denounce the European restrictive border regime, claiming for the establishment of safe passages to Europe (Cuttitta 2018a). As self-representation and discursive framings are deeply entwined with their actualisation, the extent to which SAR NGOs actively challenge the European border regime, producing a counter space of solidarity and inclusion, beyond traditional humanitarian rhetoric, precisely depends on how they understand and frame their own interventions at sea (Stierl 2017). The political scope of MOAS for example was strongly limited. Rather than a political matter, rescuing lives at sea was understood as a pragmatic solution to the scarceness of European resources and capacity at sea. Such depoliticised approach (Stierl 2017) strongly emerged in their action at sea grounded on an uncritical: "full cooperation and collaboration with authorities on both land and sea" (MOAS) which was also made evident by the sharing of sensitive information with states, in support of their intelligence activities (Cuttitta 2018b). Also, their retirement from the central Mediterranean scene, justified on the grounds of a "decreasing need – linked to reduced flows of people – […] for our search and rescue operations" (MOAS), showed how MOAS framed the situation in the central Mediterranean Sea as a contingent, rather than structural situation, thus not engaging with the political dimension linked to the complex and controversial border regime within the Mediterranean region.

Contrarily, NGOs such as MSF and Sea-Watch strongly framed the migration crisis in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings in political terms. Their SAR operations were characterised by a deep and confrontational denounce of the European border regime, criticising death at sea as a "politically orchestrated phenomenon" (Stierl 2017:14). While aware of the risk to become: "co-opted into filling for states" (Del Valle 2016: 30), MSF strongly refused: "to let its operation become the patch up solution which would help consolidate the situation and obscure the responsibility of

[2] IOM's activities during the 2011 war in Libya, concerned with assistance to refugees and returnees as well as repatriation programmes from Libya to migrants' home countries is an example of how migration management can also occur behind the veil of humanitarian rhetoric and practices. Connected with economically dominant states, international organizations are often aimed to partake in the global fight vs. irregular migration, irrespective of migrants' own needs and desires (Brachet 2016).

politicians in the EU" (Del Valle 2016:31). Political dissent also characterised Sea-Watch intervention in the central Mediterranean. Denouncing EU: "agreements on readmission with third countries such as Turkey" defined as: "questionable and controversial under international law" (Sea-Watch), the political scope of Sea-Watch engagement at sea emerged as intrinsically embroiled in its humanitarian action. Strongly operating in a confrontational manner, Sea-Watch production of a counter space in the central Mediterranean occurred through active and outspoken political dissent, ranging from the refusal to sign the Code of Conduct[3] to demonstrative acts such as the captain of Sea Watch 3, Carola Rackete forcing entry to the port of Lampedusa in 2018, regardless of the risk of being accused of abetting illegal immigration and being arrested. The political and confrontational characters of SAR NGOs action at sea, also emerged through the conflictual relationship with Libyan authorities due to the persistent SAR activities of NGOs' vessels next to Libyan waters (Cuttitta 2018b). A series of confrontations occurred between 2016 and 2017 with Libyan authorities boarding and searching the Sea Watch vessel, shooting at, boarding, and searching for MSF "Burbon Argos" and detaining two volunteers of the German NGO Sea Eye. In May 2017, the Libyan Coast Guard, accusing Sea Watch of hindering their work, also interrupted a rescuing operation, returning 500 people from international waters to Libya (Cuttitta 2018b). Allegations of NGOs constituting a pull factor of irregular migration (Frontex 2017), initiated by the European border agency Frontex in 2016 and then also strongly endorsed by Italian political authorities and media narratives (Cusumano, Villa 2020b) also demonstrated the conflictual relationship between European migration politics and civil society engagement in the central Mediterranean, paving the way for a strong process of criminalisation of humanitarians at sea (Camilli 2019).

In the socio-political reconfiguration of the central Mediterranean space after 2011 the different ways in which SAR NGOs engaged in the central Mediterranean Sea contributed to the production of a heterogeneous humanitarian space, at times perpetuating yet also strongly contesting the exclusionary political space produced by European practices of migration control. While some NGOs, such as MOAS, intentionally refrained from politically engaging in the central Mediterranean, framing the latter as a mere "humanitarian border" (Walters 2011), the disobedient and confrontational acts put forward by other SAR NGOs contributed to a counter production of the maritime space, beyond traditional forms of humanitarianism, based on the deconstruction of European spaces of denial (Garofalo 2017), re-drawing the central Mediterranean as a space of solidarity and political dissent. Holding European migration politics accountable and responsible for border violence and policies of social and political exclusion, SAR NGOs autonomous practices of solidarity (Dadusc, Mudu 2020) supported migrants' sea crossings as legitimate enactments of their right to leave, move, survive and arrive (Heller et al. 2017), rescuing not out of compassion but out of solidarity (Stierl 2017). Within the complex Euro-Mediterranean

[3] in 2017, the Italian government, backed by the EU commission, redacted a Code of conduct for NGOs operating at sea (Cusumano; Villa 2020a) establishing "dos and don'ts" of SAR NGOs in the Mediterranean Sea.

border regime, defined by European politics of exclusion, SAR NGOs' political commitment to rescue people at sea challenged such conceptualisation redrawing the outer space in terms of solidarity, challenging the established order of things through the production of an alternative, transgressive space (Beckett, et al. 2017). Through these Foucauldian "counter-conducts" defined as: "an attempt to conduct oneself differently from the imposed way" (Rahola 2018:12), NGOs supported migrants' irregular forms of inhabiting and moving within the maritime borderland, becoming the rip to the European leash, the route and the passage tracing counter geographies of inclusion and solidarity (Rahola 2018).

Conclusion

Borders are the result of different forms of social relationship, consequence of different asymmetries of power between individual and collective subjects. Constantly present throughout human history, their forms, and the way they function have significantly changed over time (Cuttitta 2007). Far from their original conceptualisation as territorial dividing lines fixed in space and time, borders emerge today as the result of dynamic social processes and practices of spatial differentiation. They emerge as constructed socio-political spaces (Lefebvre 2018) in which their spatial and conceptual complexity is fluid and shifting (Brambilla 2015).

In the process of the social and political reconfiguration of the Euro-Mediterranean space in the aftermath of the Arab spring in 2011, the central Mediterranean space precisely emerged as fluid and shifting. The dynamic and constant reshaping of its identity, through European restrictive migration policies and SAR NGOs heterogeneous (humanitarian) practices of solidarity, resulted in the construction of a fragmented and heterogenous space in which logics of exclusion and solidarity coexisted and confronted. Established and, at the same time, continuously traversed by a number of bodies, discourses and practices constantly redefining its ontological essence and its functions, the central Mediterranean space appeared as a borderscapes (Brambilla 2015; Musarò 2019): a dynamic ontology in which reality is actively constructed, evolving, emerging and re-emerging (Brambilla 2015) between "what is and what is not yet, but could be" (Beckett et al. 2017: 5).

The multifaceted and complex spatial identity of the central Mediterranean Sea thus materialised as a heterotopia as incompatible spaces of European migration policies, SAR NGOs humanitarian practices and practices of solidarity coexisted, contrasted, and reversed each other, reshaping the maritime space as a place of exclusion, asymmetrical inclusion but also as a contested space of social negotiations and political dissent. The multiple processes of space production that occurred after the political events of 2011 constructed the central Mediterranean space as a fluctuating border space, materially established, experienced and lived, reinforced and blocked but also crossed and inhabited (Brambilla 2015).

The heterotopic character of the central Mediterranean space then lies precisely in its fragmentation and fluidity, in this idea of the central Mediterranean as a real

emplacement encompassing incompatible spaces at once. The securitised approach of European migration policies, SAR NGOs humanitarian practices and confrontational practices of solidarity meet at the border and while contesting each other, they never really supersede one another. Within this context, while the EU construction of its external borders emerges as still strongly anchored to an understanding of migration profoundly grounded on matters of national and international security, the role of SAR NGOs acquires importance insofar it attempts to challenge such political conceptualisation of borders, not only assisting migrants in distress at sea, but also engaging through active political dissent, producing a transgressive space (Beckett et al. 2016) in which EU migration policies are contested.

Exclusion, humanitarianism, solidarity, and political dissent reshape the central Mediterranean Sea through different processes of space ordering (van Houtum, van Naerssen 2002) coexisting, overlapping, feeding into each other while at the same time contrasting and confronting one another in the attempt to prevail. It is precisely in this sense that the central Mediterranean Sea becomes a heterotopia: a place outside all places, encompassing several incompatible spaces (Foucault 1998).

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EU's bordering norms in Libya and Lebanon: the impact of the local context

Daniel Meier

Introduction

EU may be a porous area when it comes to border issues, mainly on its southern and eastern flanks as unveiled by the "migration crisis" in 2015. Geopolitics is defining border regimes, possibilities or impossibilities, fluctuations and changes in border regimes as well as security issues that are most of the time related to war and terrorism while it can also address politics, economic and migration issues as well (Meier 2018). A manner to say that, in the MENA region, talking about border security management implies various level of analysis. The one I would like to investigate refers to the process of *Integrated Border Management* (IBM) originally a US concept developed in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in New York. It consists into an effort of coordination within border agencies and integration measures in order to follow international mechanisms (Hobbing 2005). The border management concerns primarily governance, authority and discourses of power more than effectiveness of the border control. It mainly underscores the local dimension of the management, with its domestic actors and their interests, exactly where I would like to explore and analyze the bordering process. According to Rumsford (2006; 2008), the labelling of such tasks as "borderwork" implies on the one hand the acknowledgement of the key role of EU's policy to define its external borders and implement them, and on the second hand the possibility for other social actors to contribute to the definition of the border through their practices. This broad definition of the borderwork allow me to explore the role played by EU's agency, international organization, state agencies as well as any other social actors intervening in the borders.

This paper intends to understand why the IBM model had poor results in some of the neighboring states of the southern and eastern flanks of the Mediterranean since the outbreak of the Arab uprisings in 2011. To do it, I chose to compare and reflect on two cases studies, Libya and Lebanon, as they display two different types of relationships with the EU and offer also two distinct political trajectories. Politically, Lebanon and Libya are introducing different states models with different EU's strategy in dealing with EU's main issues in the region: migration and terrorism. I would first refer to the model of the failed state. While it is a very Eurocentric notion whose limits have been highlighted and debated mainly regarding its state-centrism (Call 2008; Patrick 2007; Nay 2013), I will used it as a simple list of indicators highlighting the large

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impotence of state's institutions. This category describes a state that broke down and is unable to perform any service and authority on all parts of their national territory. Such major state failure appeared following a war and the subsequent breakdown of the state's capacity alongside its legitimacy. It is also a process of nation state fragmentation and the emergence of militias that are fighting for a new shaping and controlling of the state power. The failed state can be measured, following the World bank's governance indicators (Kaufmann and Kraay 2018) like "absence of political stability", "rule of law" or "government effectiveness" and the results are clearly shown in a comparison among Middle Eastern states (Cordesman 2018).

The failed state model have also been used by the EU alongside "fragile state" in order to define the nature and scope of their intervention (Gowan and Korski 2009). It is also a policy tools in the hand of EU as it conveys a possibility for the EU or any external regional or global actor which may have interests in monitoring the border management in supporting a local agency. Several objectives can be meaningful for the EU to support a local border agency: controlling the migration pressure pouring from and through failed states where there is a lack of authority, supporting a peace process through a state re-building process with empowerment of local state institutions alongside asserting EU's interests. In the MENA region, the failed state model refers to war or post-war circumstances like the one experienced in Libya, Yemen, Syria or Iraq.

The second case study refers to the model of the weak state, largely represented in the Middle East and illustrated hereafter with Lebanon. This state model has been introduced brilliantly by Migdal (1988) in order to highlight a common feature in the MENA region where societies, according to him, tended to become stronger in order to survive in front of authoritarian states, politically weak. The state's weakness stems either from the weak legitimacy of its rulers (Salame 1987) or from the fragmentation and weakness of its institutions (Knudsen and Kerr 2012). Weak states' lack of capacity has been also addressed as a key question in various field in order to assess the State in the Arab world (El-Kurd 2018). When it comes to borders, the coercive capacity of the state, its strength or weakness, can be assess by observing the extension of the state's authority to all regions and territory and its connected capacity to enforce law throughout the country.

This second model is prone to the implementation of the IBM under the lead of the EU and willing to comply with the European regulations, norms and the technical measures regarding the efficiency in border security management. In this model, the weakness of the state's political authority is a key element at stake as it defined the nature of the state's capacity towards its national territory and its borders. In Lebanon, this weakness (Fregonese and Ramadan 2016) is either institutional (reality of the state's institutions like the army, the police, the state's representatives as well as the reality state's services) or symbolic (perception of the state that strongly aggravated since the state's bankruptcy acknowledged in March 2020). A second key aspect of this model is its political and security fragmentations that are resulting from the first conditions but are rooted in history.

Both of these theoretical tools intend to bring back southern states' nature in the debate on the implementation of EU's border norms which, by definition, refer to a central authority that is supposed to be in control of its territorial borders. The various institutional actors of the security apparatus of both states will be assess through the type of cooperation developed with two key agencies dedicated to the implementation of the IBM model. I will first refer to Frontex as the main body of EU's external border management whose policy will be scrutinized in relation to the Libyan case and institutions. In Lebanon then, I will analyze the work done by the EU-funded International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in connection with the various state's security agencies acting on borders. Local actors' dynamics as well as geopolitical changing environment will then highlight, first in Libya and then in Lebanon, the evolution of EU's outsourcing processes of its external borders and the local dynamics that are highlighting a much complex picture when it comes to implement the EU border norms and externalize the borderwork.

In this paper, I will contend that EU's agency or EU-funded international institutions poor successes in the border management is due to the fragmentation of the local states. After a first part of the paper dedicated to the IBM framework in the EU and the role Frontex and ICMPD are playing in the implementation of these norms, the Libyan case will offer the scenario of a failed state with the attempt of a border monitoring by Frontex. Secondly, the Lebanese case – archetypal of the weak state – will show the limits of the implementation of the EU norms in terms of border management in such context. Both cases will highlight the key role of the local institutions, their fragmentations as well as their ability to bypass the rules.

1. the MENA towards the European Neighboring Policy and the role of two EU's and international agencies

Generally speaking, the whole Middle East region is still shaped by the Westphalian "sovereign" state approach. Most of the states' borders have been designed by the Western British and French Empires and interestingly did not change much once they became independent states, despite some attempts of unification shaped by pan-Arabism or more recently pan-Islamist ideologies. The region is also marked by a lack of successful regional organizations (Fawcett 2013) and rather rare border cooperation. The only successful regional organization, the Gulf Countries Council (GCC) did not really succeeded to avoid the dominance of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For the rest of the states, a lack of trust between regimes tend to prevent the development of further border security cooperation (Koch 2017). Recent exceptions linked to Israel need to be mentioned – with Egypt in 1978 and Jordan in 1994 – as they included a coordination on border security enforced with Israel and a subsequent growing development of databases and digital monitoring of border crossing points.

Historically, the MENA region have been confronted with illegal trade and workflow, each state trying to manage its border outposts with more or less success. Since the 1990s, terrorism became another key issue related to borders through the

spreading of Salafi jihadism, in the Maghreb (Algeria's civil war, Egypt's jihadi movements) and the global Jihadism with al-Qaida and ISIS bringing more concern in Western countries after the 9/11 attacks on New York in 2001. In the meantime, the globalization process started to connect more directly key ports and capitals of the MENA region with the rest of the world, implying a process of improvements of control on goods as well as a securitization toward the human flow (Vignal 2017). The two processes met the EU's bordering dynamics embodied by the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). According to its definition and its neighborhood policy (ENP), EU intended to expand its border regime, rules and practices also to states that will not join the EU soon (Casas-Cortes and al. 2013). Among others, the Arab states of the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean flanks are concerned. In 2010, Del Sarto's (2010) formulate the idea of the Middle East as an EU's borderlands; this vision meets other analysis that also showed that external borders of the EU tended to have been dislocated to third states (Guild 2009; Bigo and Guild 2005; Groenendijk, Guild and Minderhoud 2003).

This ENP saw the light just after the Madrid and London terrorist attacks (2004 and 2005) immediately coupling migration policies to security policies. The process of securitization has been ongoing since then with the EU's vision and norms toward its southern Mediterranean neighbors. Studies on EU's migration and security policies towards third countries build on the notion of externalization of internal Union's policies in the realm of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) department (Bigo 2006; Geddes 2005). This process implies the moving of EU's territorial borders and border controls to the periphery while "policing at a distance" thus transporting the border beyond the borderline (Bigo and Guild 2005; Balibar 2004). A process that entails a partial outsourcing of border security controls to third countries and the co-option of these governments into the management of the EU's borderlands. This externalization involves the delegation of legal and human rights responsibilities to third countries with very few attentions paid to the monitoring and enforcement of such principles. The management of such border controls is known as *Integrated Border Management* (IBM) and rely on a coordination within border agencies. The migration crisis expanded the number of undirect neighbors on the southern and eastern flanks of the Mediterranean Sea. This increasing fuzziness of EU's external borders (Christiansen & al. 2000) bears resemblance to a post-modern empire (Del Sarto and Tholens 2020; Gravier 2009; Zielonka 2006), underlining the accuracy of the empire's notion of borderlands to define with the same term territories, an imbalanced relation of power and the outsourcing of EU's border norms and practices with IBM. This crisis also shed a new light on the key importance of southern neighboring states for the EU as a net capable of withholding the massive influx of migrants (Di Peri and Zardo 2017).

Proponents of EU IBM describe it as a package of standards and technical procedures that enhance legal flows of goods and people thanks to training and equipment to perform the enforcement of stringent border control. The border management concerns primarily governance, authority and discourses of power more than effectiveness of the border control. In other word, it appears as a relation of

power and not simply as a strictly technical measures or transfer of knowledge. Moreover, the double process of externalization of border security and extension of the EU-external frontier into neighboring countries call into question the rather EU-centric approach (Andreas and Snyder 2000). The attempt that follows will try to de-center the perspective in focusing on local actors in neighboring states, Libya and Lebanon, in their relationships with two key agencies that are working on the ground. Frontex and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) thus appeared at the forefront in the implementation of the IBM process in these two Middle Eastern states and at the core of EU border externalization policies into the EU-functional regimes and practices (Casas-Cortes and al. 2013).

Founded in 2005 and established in Warsaw, Frontex's tasked with coordinating border control and management of the EU's external borders. It has the ability to enter autonomously into working arrangements with third countries thus signaling a growing Europeanization of external border control. Frontex has been understood as a midway compromise short of the formation of an EU border guard corps (Carrera 2010) and several maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea have illustrate its true nature (Panebianco 2016). Its Integrated Border Security model is based on a four tier spatialization of the border conceived as different level of action. The first and second tiers aimed at a coordination within EU members on exchanges of information and cooperation on border and customs control. The third tier is dedicated to cooperation with border guards, customs, and polices in neighboring countries while the fourth tier focuses on developing cooperation with non-adjacent third states on migration. Under the lead of the *Global Approach to Migration and Mobility* (GAMM) (2005), an intergovernmental coordination on migration that includes joint EU and non-EU Frontex patrols as well as advisory roles to help non-EU states to build capacity to manage migration and asylum. GAM marks a clear shift in expanding EU's own framing of migration and border policy beyond EU's borders.

Frontex is an institution trying to think about security as a technical but non-political task (Comand Kund 2019; Meissner 2020). But policing EU borders, by definition cannot bypass its inherently political dimension when considering that Frontex implemented political decisions (Perkowski 2021). Frontex actions is taking place in various regional formations each having "local border control regimes" which are depending on three variables: the geo-morphological qualities of the borders; power relations between neighboring destination and transit countries; the institutional capacities of member states playing EU border functions in the region (Kasparek and Wagner 2012: 188-9). With the 2011 Arab uprisings, new migration routes emerged through central and eastern Mediterranean where the EU struggled to find a reliable partner for controlling these sections of its southern borders. In the meantime, the migration crisis that occurred – also a crisis of the EU border regime – was an opportunity for an attempt at its further consolidation (Jeandesboz and Pallister-Willkins 2016) expanding the role and resources allocated to Frontex. Reid-Henry (2013) spoke of 'geopolitics of incorporation' which means a gradual expansion of the EU border toward the extraterritorial spaces and also the "creation of a border

management apparatus which is in some way superordinate to the national bodies that are locally called to enforce border controls" (Campesi 2019: 17). The 2015 migration crisis tended to consolidate Frontex's role as a proper European Border and Coast Guard with prerogatives for processing of incoming migrants and their repatriation. In parallel, the agency increased its role in a more diplomatic relationship with third countries since, according to the new regulation, it may post its liaison officers in major transit country (Meissner 2021).

By reference to the European Parliament and Council of 14 September 2016, Frontex appears as the key agency with the task to "facilitate and encourage technical and operational cooperation between Member States and third countries" (EU regulation 2016/1624). In this task, Frontex deploys liaison officers to these third countries and cooperate with local authorities in each of them, including in the acquisition of travel documents. On 10 liaison officers of Frontex based in non-EU countries, the Middle East counts only 2 of them, one in Ankara and one in Libya in the framework of the EU border Assistance mission (EUBAM) in Libya. In 2019, according to its annual report[1], the agency run its various missions with a budget of 333 millions Euros dedicated to a wide range of border tasks mainly the maritime and aerial surveillance overseas (Mediterranean, Aegean, Black, Adriatic and Baltic) and on land borders (Poland, Slovakia, Croatia and Hungary) including the spreading of new technology for border control. In 2019, an average of 1500 Frontex officers have been deployed along the EU external borders while more than 3500 of border and coast guards have been trained in order to enter in function in 2020. Illegal border crossings across the Mediterranean Sea are showing a stronger pressure on the eastern side of the sea with 82'000 events when compare to the central Mediterranean (14'000) and Western part (24'000).

Technical assistance projects can complement and enhance the agency's external cooperation work in non-EU countries. 4 mio Euros have been dedicated to a project with the African continent and thus involving Maghreb states like Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Egypt. It first aims at improving the inter-regional information-sharing with each of the national agencies and Frontex; and second the operational capabilities of partner countries to fight organized crime and assess the regular/irregular migration flows. Among the project partner, the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) is an international organization founded in Vienna in 1993 which receive an EU funding through competitive tenders. It has four specific policy areas and practices: 1) the East European axis 2) the Mediterranean Transit Migration Dialogue 3) i-Map project which is an interactive cartography tracing migration routes into EU and 4) the Migration EU expertise initiative that supports third countries to address irregular migration and implementing IBM (Casas-Cortes and al. 2013). ICMPD spread Immigration Liaison Officers along these routes, created the Migration research and management centers and is at the forefront of the outsourcing of the asylum processing centres from EU member states to the five North African countries, a process highly criticized by the UNHCR. ICMPD is also

[1] https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/frontex_inbrief_website_002.pdf

underscoring IBM's ability to fit according to the local issues thanks to the adaptation of the procedures to the specificities of each state. For instance, in Tunisia a hub for migration with a historical strong connection with Europe, ICMPD is strengthening the capacities of the Tunisian authorities to monitor, control and train border guards to control the Libyan-Tunisian border segment of 495 km long, thus improving state's good governance (See ICMPD website; Casas-Cortès and al. 2013)

Despite the rather poor implementation of IBM systems in the MENA region, it may be worth exploring more precisely how things are unfolding in two different states showing different profile: a failed state in Libya and a weak state in Lebanon. How does cooperation occur? What are their objectives and the limits? These questions may help to assess how the cross dependence works between the two agencies and these two states.

2. Libya, the limits of the externalization of the border management

Libya is one of the well-known failed state of the MENA region and a vivid example located in the Maghreb (Atilgan and al. 2017). There, a civil war erupted in the aftermath of the fall of Kadhafi (2012) and the subsequent division of the country into rival militias. Following the 2014 crisis of legitimacy faced by the General National Council (GNC) that created a division between the followers of the Army high officer Khalifa Haftar in Tobrouk and the former representatives of the GNC gathering in Tripoli, under the umbrella of Islamists militias. Finally, by mid-2016 a Government of National Accord (GNA) was mounted in Tripoli, headed by the Prime-minister Fayez al-Sarraj, under the aegis of the EU and western powers (Pusztai 2019). In other Middle Eastern examples of current failed state, like in Yemen, Syria and Iraq, the breakdown of the state was followed by a territorial fragmentation with a military confrontation between militias and the state or representatives of what remained of the state and recognized by key actors of the international community (Lynch 2017). Depending on the location and resources of such states, the investment of the international community may be high or low depending on their interests in containing/solving the war. In this perspective, the state borders may become at stake depending on the neighboring environment. For Libya, the direct link with a global player is the EU (Lindbo Larsen 2011) and more traditionally with Italy, a neighboring EU-member state.

In Libya, the relationship with the EU developed in a period when Frontex already militarized the management of the irregular migration (Vaughan-Williams 2015). Within the framework of the IBM, the massive influx of refugees in 2014-5 arriving from Syria but also from the Maghreb and Africa, crossing the Mediterranean Sea in dramatic circumstances, leaded to apprehend the migrations in the management of the external borders of the EU (Athanasopoulos 2017). Border control therefore meant the "control on cross-border crime, risk analysis, the four-tier control model including measures with the third countries, cooperation with neighboring countries, control at the external borders and within the Union" (Council of European Union 2006). A

maritime security strategy was adopted in 2014 in order to prevent the region from various threat like "cross-border organized crime, human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, traffic of arms, goods, and drug" (The Council of the European Union 2014). It appeared that Frontex with *operation Triton* was unable to stop the refugees and migrants nor avoiding the massive casualties in the Mediterranean Sea (Yavas 2017). In this framework, EU signed on 18 March 2016 with Turkey an agreement of 3 billion of euros for Facility for Refugees in Turkey (European Commission 2016) which display the characteristics of the connection between "humanitarianism and border security" in the EU's border management (Vaughan-Williams 2015: 64). With the risk of seeing refugees choosing more dangerous routes of immigration to Europe (Palm 2016).

In 2016, the EU signed with the "legitimate" government of Fayez al-Sarraj in Tripoli a program of cooperation in order to improve the capacities of the authorities for migration governance at the central and local level. It took one more year to formalize, with the Declaration of Malta of heads of states and of the European Council (February 2017), to acknowledge the need to support the Libyan coast guards as key actors of the border management (The Council of European Union 2017a) in order to avoid illegal immigration from the Libyan coasts and thus slow down the migration arriving from Africa and crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Libya. The cooperation and support are multilayered: political (like in the conclusion of the European Council meeting on 18 June 2018), financial – 46 mio euros allocated in July 2017[2] –, material (equipment, training) and formation. The cooperation is taken at the level of government (the ministries of Interior, Defense and Finance) when it comes to border security management, according to the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM)[3] report which is mapping the security sector in Libya (The Council of European Union, 2017b). The cooperation is acted at the level of the security apparatus in the framework of the Security sector reform highlighting the Libyan Coast Guards and Port Security (LCGPS) as legitimate actors to enforce the sovereignty and the Libyan State laws in the maritime Libyan boundaries. Therefore, they appear as gatekeepers of the external borders of the EU in the current migration crisis (Parks 2017).

Their role has been also enhanced by a specific Memorandum of Understanding signed bilaterally between Libya's legitimate government of al-Sarraj and the Italian government in February 2017 too. This agreement – which can be characterized as a soft law (Reviglio 2019), in other words a political tool for executive powers who intend to gain in fluidity with an hyper-simplified form of adoption beyond democratic control – reinforced the EU's declaration of Malta and set up a mechanism that committed Italy to provide an economical support for the development of Libyan

[2] See the press conference of the European Commission: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-2187_fr.htm?locale=FR

[3] This mission has been established in 2013 to support the Libyan authorities to monitor their land, sea and aerial borders and develop a long-term IBM strategy. Due to security issues, the mission was put on hold most of the year 2015. Acknowledging that implementing IBM was incompatible with the complexities of the crisis, EUBAM shifted towards containing crisis spillover in Europe thus addressing mainly maritime border issues (Loschi and Russo 2020).

regions affected by migration and provide technical and technological support to Libyan organisms to fight illegal immigration, namely border guards and coastguards from the ministry of Defense as well as other organs of the ministry of Interior to train and assist those wo will administer the detention centres. Reviglio (2019) underscores the ineffectiveness of this memorandum when examining on the one hand the lack of respect of criteria established by the international conventions regarding the protection of migrants and on the other hand the many violations and human rights in the rescue of migrants by coastguards, as well as their collusion with human traffickers.

In terms of state-building and support to a legitimate institution, the EU support probably innovate and gave a strong sign to the al-Sarraj government and its local militias to identify who are the legitimate actors and institutions in the country. Unfortunately, geopolitical interests and lack of capacity of EU member states to take a firm and unite stand reshuffled the cards, involving Russia and Turkey to support the two main rival Libyan forces on the ground (respectively Marechal Haftar and PM al-Sarraj) leading to the bombing of Tripoli during the Spring 2019 (Detsch 2019) and the involvement of a Turkish-Syrian surrogate militia, thus highlighting one of the key problem of the outsourced management of the migration crisis by the Libyan coastguards: the current fragmentation of the country and Al-Sarraj's governement lack of control of its own territorial borders. In other words, the LCGPS found themselves in a vacuum of control from the political authority and from the EU's partners – and the Italian government displayed very few interests to inquire the human rights violations of migrants as long as few of them reached the Italian shores. The coast guards have been accused of several mistreatment towards the refugees and migrants departing from Libya and human trafficking. Facing these critiques, EU's strategy was twofold: editing a Code of Conduct for the migrant-rescue work and, in the meantime, strengthened EUBAM *Sophia* mission with the Niger Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) mission to starve the smuggling business at the southern border of Libya thus drying up the human trafficking and migration flow reaching the Mediterranean shores of the country (Baldwin-Edwards and Lutterbeck 2019). This policy helped to reformulate the EU goals in Libya toward a re-establishment of the work market (which employed 1-2 mio people before the war in the oil industry) in order to stop the migration flow toward Europe and bring a sustainable progress in the peace building (Parks 2017).

Looking at the CSDP 2018 annual report that is actually targeting mainly failed states (Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, Sahelian states, etc) in border and advisory assistance missions (European Union 2019), it appears that EU's focus on rather narrow aspects of local and regional crisis, namely the border management linked to migration and terrorism threat, can bring some risk for local states and internal dynamics. As well, Italian politics' narrow interest on reducing the arrival of migrants on its own shores brought dire side effects thus showing the limits of bilateral agreements to externalize the border management to third countries. Fortunately, the EU's capacity to generate critical reports on these memorandums can also lead to a broader vision, like the

rebuilding of the Libyan labor market as a new strategy to match its security and migration interests while helping to stabilize the local dynamics and fragmentation process in the country. More than the simple reliance on the border guards, a larger policy is showing a broader interdependency between the EU and the Libyan actors at various levels of the society, not only at its borders.

3. Lebanon, IBM between the state fragmentation and the Syrian refugee issue

In Lebanon, the uncomplete process of state's institutionalization with France meddling into the Lebanese mountain since the second half of the 19th century until it got the Mandate over the "Great-Lebanon" (*Grand-Liban*) from 1920 to 1943 left the door open for alternative non-state actors – from sectarian forces to pan-Arab and Islamist groups – to have a say in politics and even gaining access to position within the state while having other agendas linked to their specific identity claim (Picard 2002). This can be observable with internal powerful actors (as movements, political parties, sectarian groups, etc.) that may interfere at the security and judicial levels, allowing some segments of the society to bypass the rules or adapt these rules to their own needs (Salloukh and al. 2015). This sort of *ad hoc* State is built on a postwar deal that is enforcing the role of sectarian groups and institutionalizing them as key actors of the *muhasasa* system (sharing the state resources). Alternatively, these powerful actors may use the security apparatus for their own goals, which can be also political, financial, and symbolic.

From the view point of EU strategy in the MENA region, all the Mediterranean states are a matter of concern for EU's security strategy and implies to get all of them involved in a cooperation with EU. Since 2011 moreover, the Syrian crisis and the subsequent massive amount of refugees seeking refuge in neighboring states but also trying to reach Europe brought the issue of the border management of Middle eastern states at the forefront of EU's agenda (Seeberg 2020). More than in failed states, EU's interest lay in implementing IBM norms and regulations in order to assert EU's interests in fields of security – encompassing terrorism, migration, economy and politics – with the key goal to bring more efficiency in the management of borders. And these objectives require training to reach a professionalization of state's agencies and border officers, a long-term capacity-building on state's borders. In Lebanon, the security cooperation with EU states' actors took shape in the aftermath of the UN resolution 1701 which marked the end of the Israel-Hizbullah 33 day-war (2006). During that decade after the Syrian withdrawal ending 29 years of domination, Lebanon became a battleground for rival influences between "the axis of Resistance" (Iran, Syria, Hizbullah, Hamas) and the Western powers (alongside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). While Iran supported for years the weaponry of the local Shi'i movement Hizbullah, various security assistance took place with US military aid alongside other donors driven by strategic interests in the region in a polarized Sunni-Shia environment (Meier 2016). Empowering the State's security apparatus, including the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) served the purposes of counter-balancing the pro-Syrian supremacy in terms of

warfare and security in Lebanon. It also helped to improve the counter-terrorism capacity to contain the spillover from the Syrian conflict, after 2011, and a better migration control over Syrians who seek refuge in Lebanon (Felsch and Wählish 2017).

The weakness of state authority and legitimacy over its territorial borders is clearly observable in South Lebanon first. The Palestinian cross-border struggle brought the LAF at the heart of the national contradiction when it had to fight against the Palestinian resistance. Few years later when the civil war started (1975), the LAF rapidly fragmented in the aftermath of the breakdown of the state. The rebirth of the state's institutions during the 1990s was jeopardize by the continuation of the territorial control of the South of the country by Hizbullah impeded any deployment of the LAF in the South, even after the unilateral withdrawal of the occupied zone by Israel in May 2000. This impotence revealed the geopolitical constraints over Lebanon, mainly the Syrian and Iranian agendas towards Israel, thus unveiling the institutionalized weakness of the Lebanese state. Things changed after the July war (2006) between Israel and Hizbullah when UNIFIL, the local UN mission, received an international backing and was reinforced from 2'000 up to 14'000 troops and started the marking of the Blue Line to secure the southern international border of Lebanon (Meier, 2016). A key moment of this expansion in the South came thanks to the UNSRC 1701 allowing the LAF to deploy up to the international border (actually the Blue Line) and banning all non-LAF weapons as a counter measure to the hegemonic control of Hizbullah over the Southern borderlands.

The weakness of the state is also observable on the Eastern and northern borderland regions too. While cross border links exists from long time before the delineation of state's borders, they continue to developed in the second part of the XXth century to the point that several villages and towns near the border were far much linked to Syrian cities like Homs, Damascus or Tartous instead of Beirut or Tripoli. There, state authority was structurally weak and its perception was defined as inefficient as almost no states' services reached these regions (Mouawad 2018). The Syrian domination after its military invasion in 1976 brought a stronger distortion over Lebanon's sovereignty up to the Syrian troops withdrawal in 2005. Still, one has to wait until the outbreak of the civil war in Syria in 2011 and the subsequent massive influx of Syrian refugees to draw attention of the Lebanese authorities over this border dyad. Thanks to the aid of UK and US, a patrolling and securing of eastern borders occurred and helped the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to strengthened its position at the national level and brought more cohesion and robustness in its shaping (Tholens 2017). The cooperation looks like material and light weapons supports including training with EU IBM in establishing a Land Border Regiments (LBR). The erection of 12 protected border observation posts including remote-control long-range cameras with night vision contributed to monitor this mountainous borderland regions in an unprecedented way while an IBM training center has been inaugurated in the military base of Rayak in May 2018[4].

[4] See https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/45718/strengthening-lebanons-border-management-safety-and-security_en

State agencies managing the security border practices are the army and its intelligence bureau. But the fragmentation of the security apparatus also affects the border management. EU IBM project targeted not only the LAF but the General Security (GS), Customs and the Internal Security Forces (ISF), the local name of the police. While Customs controlled and taxed goods, the GS is an intelligence agency controlling people entering/leaving Lebanon through land crossing points and at the airport under the aegis of the ministry of Interior[5]. ISF also depends on the same ministry but did not participate very much to the EU IBM program as it depends on other stakeholders and appears too tightly linked with the Prime minister Hariri political force (*al-Mustaqbal*). On the contrary, GS, perceived as a very professional and committed institution, has a good reputation among the internationals despite its close relationship with Hizbullah (Tholens 2017). Lebanon's migration management has emerged as a key site with many donors targeting these four security agencies, the army, police, intelligence, and customs. Among them, the Customs were a primary beneficiary of the EU IBM project but the lack of political support for this branch of the border security and internal rivalries brought more attention to the LAF, GS and ISF. The counterterrorism was among the key issue to bolster the LAF and after 2011 became part of a re-bordering process with LAF increasing its presence throughout the country. In the struggle among other Lebanese security agencies, LAF used its counterterrorism skills and material to become 'the only truly national institution' (Tholens 2017: 874; Geisser 2017) thus taking profit of international funds and cooperation to enhance its role. LAF also took the lead in a new inter-agency cooperation set up by the EU IBM, the Border Control Committee (BCC). Revealing aspect of the political weakness of the state, the BCC has no link with the political level of governance and the IBM national strategy drafted by the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) has not yet been formally endorsed by the government although it is already implemented by the four agencies. The recent political and economic turmoil faced by Lebanon in 2019-2020 brought the implementation of IBM norms and procedures at the bottom of the issues the government has to face.

Still, the range of capabilities and control the state get from this expansion of its control over the border is probably a positive outcome of the IBM cooperation, at least it enhances the state capacity and power over its national territory, which is all but only symbolic. Ultimately, it improved the image of the LAF and conveyed, among the borderlanders, an image of borderlands as safer places thanks to the return of the army troops (Meier 2020). In the meantime, Hizbullah militiamen continued to cross the border with Syria at their own convenience with weapons and through secret or private roads, thanks to their connection within the Army. It is thus highlighting a limit of the ongoing cooperation with EU and the implementation of the IBM processes. Another side effect of the process of reinforcement of the authority of the state on its borders are the restriction measures for Syrian refugees implemented by the Lebanese GS in 2015. They are therefore contributing to the securitization of the management

[5] See https://www.general-security.gov.lb/en

of the migrants/refugee issue. Another side effect of this policy has been the enforcement of a voluntarist return policy in Syria for the Syrian refugees, since 2017, despite all the risks for human violations refugees are facing (ICG 2020). These examples displayed the various adaptation that local institutions are doing of the EU IBM norms. The securitization process seems to be the key word of these norms, hardening the life for migrants but without real efficiency when it comes to the powerful actors like Hizbullah.

Conclusion

The paper intended to raise the issue of the impact of the implementation of EU IBM bordering processes on states of the Eastern and southern Mediterranean shores with a focus on two case studies, Lebanon and Libya, with two different state profile. After an institutional overview that brought to light the process of securitization at the heart of the bordering processes of EU's external borders, the paper tried to show the key role played by Frontex and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in the two states investigated, notably in the management of migration and terrorism issues. It shows in particular the rather weak capacity of these institutions to control the management of EU's outsourced policies. More specifically, it highlights the fundamental role of the local political context and the key role of local actors and their internal rivalries (in weak states) or political oppositions (in failed states). One common aspect in both Libya and Lebanon is the detrimental effect of the political fragmentation in such states, way beyond the local capacities of individual actors that can be trained and equipped. None of the technical measures seem to be sufficient to compensate the structural weakness of local institutions and states. The Libyan example also shows the importance to go beyond a state-to-state deal (with Italy) in order to apprehend the interest of the migration phenomenon within the realm of the fate of the southern state in order to expand the geographical scope of the issue – thus involving neighboring states in Africa as well as Libyan economic dynamics.

IBM's side effects are numerous but need to be related to a more globalized process of digitalization of border control procedures. Recently implemented in Lebanon, such measures could be detrimental for migrants, primarily the Syrian refugees, violently affected by the dire circumstances Lebanon faced since 2011. The electronic control over migrants, almost forced to return to their own state despite the lack of safe return guarantees, shows that procedures in the border management without democratic norms as gatekeepers are meant to work more as enlarged prisons than international protection against human rights violations. Beyond the use and abuse that local government can do of IBM electronic data bases, another ordinary side effect is underscored by Moreno-Lax (2017) when she explains that with IBM, the border is embodied by migrants: "(..) the border not only 'follows' the third-country national but infiltrates her position as non-citizen, conditioning her

possibilities of movement and settlement within the EU (…). The border thus becomes status related, sensitive to nationality, security, and other personal features" (Moreno-Lax 2017: 14). Therefore, while the hypothesis of an interdependency between the EU and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean states looks appealing, the larger scope of apprehension of these states like EU's borderlands has the merit to remind us of the importance to recall the geopolitical hierarchy of influence in the globalized world: IBM has been shaped by EU in order to protect and safeguard its interests at its external borders without any consideration of local states' specificities outside the EU.

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Rethinking urban interactions from the margins: Palestinians and Syrians between refugee camps and the cities

Stefano Fogliata

Introduction

Contemporary migrations decentralize the international order and shake the principle of territoriality (Badie, Smouts 1996) with the emergence of interacting territorialities and transnational connections. However, as social and migrant networks have become increasingly dominant in migration studies, this effect risks eclipsing the significance of space, borders and legal documents. As stated by Samers "one might get the impression that migrants are unproblematically connected across the globe without the impediment of distance and borders" (Samers 2010: 35). In this context, the condition of refugees and stateless persons urges scholars to reconsider mobility and its own legal implications at a socio-political level as well as the dimension of the "representative ideoscape" (Coutin 2003). Contextually, we should include the question of immobility, since processes of mass displacement and ongoing displacement are simultaneously characterised by different stages and spaces of immobility (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2018; Hannam et al. 2006).

Palestinian refugees represent one of the most relevant subjects in terms of mobility and immobility, as they carry a transnational "travelling discourse" that has endured since the beginning of their exile in the 1948 Nakba[1] (Said 2000). Over their decades of exile, Palestinians have endured a progressive reconfiguration of spaces in the region in the aftermath of diverse conflicts and displacements in and from numerous countries, such as Kuwait in 1991, Libya in 1996 and Iraq in 2003 (Erakat 2014). Just recently, the Palestinian community of Syria have experienced mass displacement and paid a heavy tool in loss of life and socio-economic damages due to the destructive dynamics of the ongoing war. More than half of circa 600,000 Palestinians living in Syria have been internally displaced due to the violence and the extension of the conflict and more than 100,000 have found refuge in one of Syria's neighbouring countries. Until May 2014, when arbitrary and cumulative restrictions[2] on the entry of Palestinians from Syria were imposed and at the same time tens of thousands left the region for Europe[3], Lebanon has been providing sanctuary to at

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[1] Palestinians refer refers to the mass exodus of at least 750,000 Arabs from Historical Palestine as "Al Nakba", which literally translates as "The Catastrophe".

[2] Check Amnesty International's report: "Denied Refuge: Palestinians from Syria Seeking Safety in Lebanon" (2014). https://www.amnesty.at/media/1243/amnesty-international-libanon-denied-refuge.pdf (accessed 15 April 2021).

[3] According to the "Action Group for Palestinians in Syria" (AGPS), a monitoring group based in London working on different levels with regards to Palestinians of Syria. Over 79,000 Palestinian Syrian refugees fled to Europe until mid-2016. http://www.actionpal.org.uk/ (accessed 15 April 2021)

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least half of these "double refugees" (Sachs 1989). According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 31,500 Palestinians from Syria were recorded in Lebanon during June 2016.

They inherit the "special" institutionalised policy implemented for the circa 300,000 Palestinians living in Lebanon, thus becoming an integral part of a problematic relationship between the state and the Palestinian community (Meier 2015), especially since most of these "double refugees" settled in or around the twelve Palestinian camps established across the country in 1948. Subjected to a "regimen of socioeconomic strangulation and the denial of basic human rights" (Khalidi and Riskedahl 2010), the presence of the refugees is reduced to counterinsurgency policies which treat the Palestinians as 'security' subjects, and refugee camps as juzzur amniyyat (security islands) (Hanafi 2010).

Historically, Palestinian camps - as "extraterritorial spaces" (Siklawi 2010) resulting from the Lebanese legislation– have kept on performing as safe places for thousands of undocumented migrants, in addition to people wanted by the mukhabarat (intelligence agency). Benefiting from the porous and transnational familiar connections spread between Syria and Lebanon (Carpi 2017), thousands have found shelter within the Palestinian camps. Numerous Syrian families attested that, beyond the economic convenience of cheaper living costs, the choice of moving inside a Palestinian camp is due to the provision that Lebanese military authorities do not usually exercise their coercive power inside the perimeter of the Palestinian camps[4]. Following the current influx of thousands of Syrian and Palestinians of Syria inside the camps, the social effect of "freezing the camp" for people without legal documents additionally has extended to thousands of newly displaced people.

While labelled for decades as marginalized "spaces of exception" (Agamben 2003), recent literature has focused on investigating how Palestinians transcend the link between the host state and the homeland, extending to a plurality of spaces, with 'home-camps' turning into spaces of belonging and longing even after refugees have relocated elsewhere (Gabiam and Fiddian Qasmiyeh 2016; also see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011). Among others, Peteet investigated Palestinians' political sense of place through culturally grounded practices of daily living aimed at imposing their social organization and cultural maps on the camps (Peteet 2005). Moreover, Palestinians in Lebanon experience different scales of mobility and develop a wide range of practices that extend beyond the camp's boundaries on an everyday basis (Dorai 2010).

With the arrival of numerous newly displaced people from Syria, the already-overcrowded Palestinian camps in Lebanon have once more turned into new spaces of encampment (Janmyr and Knudsen 2016). Within the current landscape of "overlapping displacements" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2012), the interactions between Palestinians and Syrians on the Lebanese territory are spatially materialized through

[4] Internal security management is exercised by the Palestinian military forces linked to the PLO, that in some cases collaborate with the Lebanese Army patrols located on the outskirts of the camps in case of military joint operations.

the new geographies and mental configurations of the camps. In this situation, the social relations with the "other refugees" deeply intertwine with the peculiar daily practices of mobility that implicate exteriority and co-presence (Dorai and Puig 2012).

Specifically, newly displaced people in Lebanon have to deal with institutionalized practices that increasingly render migrants 'irregular' or 'illegal', making their access and permanence in the country insecure and in turn putting their mobility patterns at risk. Specifically, Palestinians from Syria in Lebanon have to deal with further obstacles as regards their legal permanence in the country: at the end of 2016, more than 80 percent of the Palestinians (Chabaan et al. 2016) and 78,7 percent of Syrians (Alsharabati et Nammour 2017) were staying in Lebanon without a valid residency permit.

Strictly connected with the spatial organization of bodies imposed by authority in and around the camps, this leads to the question: how does the legal status of refugees condition their socio-spatial organization in Lebanon? In the face of evolving securitization policies and further local arbitrariness applied around most of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, the paper sheds a light on how refugees constantly negotiate their practises and trajectories by mobilizing a wide spectrum of resources and networks along diverse translocal settings in order to elusively trespass the contracting spatial dimensions in and around Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

Inspired by the research cited above, my paper investigates how the recent arrival of newly displaced communities into spaces inhabited by and labelled for decades as "long-term refugees" sheds an alternative perspective on the morphology and socio-spatial dynamics of Palestinian camps in Lebanon. The guiding question that I aim to address is: how are socio-spatial relations altered with new groups of people entering and settling in a particular geography such as a previously established refugee camp? The daily refugee-refugee relations (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016) constitute new spaces of recognition (Carpi, 2016) and alternative practices in respect with the institutionalized paradigm of hospitality as mediated by the State institutions.

Inspired by scholarship on the potentials of locality in elucidating transnational phenomena and dynamics (Levitt 2003), the paper focuses on the interplay between the host country's heavy institutional discrimination and the agency of social actors who transgress structural constraints through their mobility. After providing a reflection on the methodology underpinning my research, I start by shedding light on how Palestinians from Syria and Syrians navigate an adverse system by reorganizing the camps through new and alternative translocal networks. I initially set out the complex barriers to movement in Ein el Helweh camp in the South of Lebanon and Nahr el-Bared camp in the North before focusing in particular on the case of Burj el-Barajneh camp. Throughout, I explore how such hyper-mobile spatial practices transcend institutional discriminations, contributing to the re-elaboration of the Palestinian refugee camps into what I conceptualise as "meaningful places of elusive contestation". Specifically, I aim to expound how the newcomers switch strategies for protection by reinterpreting boundaries between camps and cities through a wide spectrum of implicit but widespread material and mental daily practices.

1. Inside the (football) field

In contrast with most research on Palestinian camps filtered through the overwhelming presence of NGOs (Hanafi and Tabar 2006) and other organizations that usually deal with foreign researchers, the informative and relational potential usually provided by established networks had to be replaced through an alternative methodology of research. As a result, the informative and relational potential usually provided by established networks had to be replaced through an alternative research methodology that implied the necessity of freely communicating without any kind of linguistic intermediaries. Benefiting from my ability to speak the Lebanese dialect together with a long-term passion and interest in football, during the first months of 2016 I began engaging with several people gathering in the only football pitch inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

Just after several months of preliminary work, I decided to focus my research in Bourj el-Barajneh camp in the southern area of Beirut, since it combines relatively easy accessibility together with a strategic and significant spatial dimension in terms of interconnectivities with its neighbouring areas. After playing for several months with tens of young Palestinian and Syrian males informally gathering at the pitch, I deepened my presence and connections in the camp by becoming part of Al-Aqsa Team, that regularly gathers four times per week and compete for the Football Refugees' League of Beirut. Established in the Eighties by Palestinians based in Borj el-Barajneh, Al-Aqsa football team is not currently organized on an exclusive national base, as many Palestinians from Syria, Lebanese and Syrian players - as well as me - were officially members of the roster.

Throughout my fieldwork, the football sphere was critical in facilitating my access to informants while at the same time overcoming relational, linguistic and logistic obstacles (Rookwood 2010). While initially intended as mere moments of fun, the participant observation I conducted among and alongside my teammates and other players at the pitch became the core of my research. In this situation, football was not conceived as a "modern sport" tied to a system of global institutions, rather as a daily "simple playing of games" (Bourdieu 1978) linked to the need for creative activity, the imaginary, and play according to the "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996).

Just recently, many recent researches about play and the production of public space have been currently focusing on Beirut, a city that provides little space for the practice of sports and is probably one of the most unfriendly playful cities. Among them, Al-Masri's ethnography (Al Masri 2016) into Beirut-based football clubs from a socio-spatial perspective shed light on the negotiation and the reformulation of the city's spaces, images and identities within the city. Through examining the sets of relations within Nejmeh club - the most famous and supported football team in Lebanon -, her research show how identities over spatial boundaries are negotiated in a city where you can hardly find very few public play for the capital's two-million citizens.

Play initiates both to negotiation and conflict, thus making the dynamics of the playing incredibly valuable, as they reveal the way in which the players (the community

individuals or groups) relate to one another, their hierarchies, power struggles and frustrations or preferences (Charif & Hafeda 2017). Football teams and tournaments offer a liminal social arena that questions most of specific literature and even the popular belief in the country, which presents clubs as internally unified communities with well-defined political if not sectarian identities (Al-Masri 2016). Throughout my fieldwork on the move by observing people's movements while simultaneously conducting ethnographic research (Urry 2007), I underlined how the complexity of the entanglement of sports and politics and the negotiations over how they are defined show broader networks beyond the conventional national, political and religious allegiances

My paper is thus mainly based on informal conversations that took place before and after football practices, in visits to my teammates' households and during matches outside the camp. Moreover, I conducted several interviews with my teammates' family members – including women – when visiting private households. These informal conversations revealed particularly relevant throughout my life and fieldwork inside the camp: my feeling of "familiarity" inside their houses especially revealed decisive to share our respective past biographies, as well as to frame the relationship outside the football sphere.

Beyond numerous informal conversations with teams' managers and coaches, I conducted twelve semi-structured interviews with Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian teammates and former players. In order to reconstruct a broader picture out of the peculiarity of my fieldwork, I conducted tens of semi-structured interviews with members of the Camp Popular Committee, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and local associations.

2. Bourj el-Barajneh and Dahiye: socio-spatial hierarchies in motion

Established in 1948 to host a few hundred refugees on the land of a small village on the southern outskirts of Beirut (Gorokhoff 1984), the camp underwent several transformations until it was heavily damaged during the Lebanese Civil War and the War of Camps (Shafie 2007). As a consequence of the Ta'if Agreement (1989) signed at the end of the Civil War, the further restrictions on the territorial expansion out of the boundaries of the camp forced Palestinians to extend vertically in order to accommodate the dramatic increase of the population.

Migration played a crucial role in the social evolution of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon (Dorai 2010: 11). A number of poor Lebanese families and migrant workers - mainly Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans and Sudanese, as well as Egyptians and Syrians - settled in the camps for their cheap rents and accessibility to the main cities (Latiff 2008).

Similarly to other Palestinian camps in Lebanon, recently Borj al-Barajneh has been providing refuge to a huge number of refugees from Syria. While numbers may be misleading in such a cluttered situation, several local and international sources unofficially estimate that 20,000 Palestinians and around the same number

newcomers from Syria (including 3-4,000 Palestinians from Syria) currently reside within the camp's parameter. The camp is currently demarcated by a road system that separates it from the surrounding Shi'a dominated neighbourhoods known as al-Dahiya (Habib 2012). All the main roads thus constitute a fundamental way to the city for the camp inhabitants: the urban margins, where refugees and migrants settle, are not disconnected from the urban dynamics of the surrounding cities (Dorai 2010).

However, through the asymmetric relation between the individual and the national institutions exercising their performativity of power at the checkpoints, refugees' agency and mobility is primarily determined by their ID status. Since most refugees from Syria have been living in Lebanon without legal residency, the pervasiveness of checkpoint starts far beyond the crossing momentum. Due to the fear of being detained or arrested at the checkpoints, many people constantly reshape and modify their own movement patterns even before performing it: "a border is not simply a physical line [...] but an interactive space whose form is determined by the person crossing it" (Allan 2014: 182).

Strictly connected with the spatial organization of spaces imposed by authority, the different legal status of "historical" and "newly displaced" refugees thus has important implications on the socio-spatial organization of this community in Lebanon (Dorai 2010: 6). My research mainly expounded the northern and eastern parts of the camp, where its margins merge with the Shia suburbs of Haret Hreik. The post-Civil War period saw more construction and an increase in population and urbanization - trends that rapidly expanded in the aftermath of the reconstruction following Israel's destruction of many areas during the 2006 war (Saksouk-Sasso 2015).

Such quartiers are recognized and detected in Lebanon as Hezbollah's stronghold, where the "Party of God" acts as a para-state pervading public landscapes, organizing spaces, and controlling movements through a hyper-visible multi-level presence. Since most of my team's football matches were held in a football field located at the core of Haret Hreik, the daily trips from the camp to the stadium in the company of my teammates were particularly relevant for investigating practices of mobility in the context of permanent strong securitization policies around al-Dahiya. Around such a super-securitized area, refugees' socio-spatial practices significantly contribute to reveal the articulations between the camp and its surroundings.

Of these occasions, the days of Aashura - one of most important Shia celebrations - traditionally constitute the epitome of these measures, with checkpoints by Hezbollah and the Army pervading the whole area. During one of these days in October 2016, I was moving from the camp to the training field in Haret Hreik with Abu Ahmad, a 31-year Palestinian from Syria who fled to Lebanon at the end of 2012. Right after crossing the footbridge over Al-Amliyah Road just beyond the entrance to the camp, a Hezbollah guard stopped us, asking: "Ento suriyeen aw falastiniyeen?" ("Are you Syrians or Palestinians?). Beyond the guard's initial surprise once I showed my Italian passport, Ahmad declared being Palestinian and we were immediately released. Informal discussions following that episode were particularly relevant in

shedding light on people's daily hurdles in a context of what I conceptualise as "hierarchical spatialities" imposed by Hezbollah around the camp.

The insights just described give leeway to formulate a notion of how performances of space excel in time and space through practices of control and regulations and de facto make borders pervasive for disadvantaged populations (Heide-Jørgensen 2014). In the specific situation of Lebanon's Palestinian camps, refugees from Syria state how they are constantly forced to reshape their own mobility patterns according to any specific location they cross. The checkpoints around the camps represent the material and psychological boundary between an inside "safe place" that risks being "frozen" from an outside that rather treats these spaces as "islands of insecurity" (Sayigh 2000). In this case, the control of the camp materialized by the physical presence of the army overlaps with Hezbollah's militias in the area, pervasively conditioning refugees' life far beyond their ordinary activities.

Numerous interviewees confirmed that the ongoing Syrian war constitutes a turning point in the relational landscape around such a peculiar area. Souheil El-Natour, a Palestinian lawyer and researcher, explained:

> Before 2011, Dahiye was perceived as a "friendly space" for Syrians moving around that space; Syrian citizens at Hezbollah checkpoints were privileged above Palestinians because [they were] considered "natural political allies". After the flow of about one million of mainly Sunni refugees, Syrians somehow turned from allies to potential enemies, especially in the aftermath of the recent terrorist attacks striking al-Dahiya. In order to regain a favourable equilibrium and minimize the dangers, Hezbollah is currently investing in its relationship with Palestinians living in the camp to prevent them affiliating with Sunni extremist movements. Among the measures adopted, Palestinians are barely stopped at the checkpoint since Hezbollah does not want to have any problems with the Palestinians as happened a few years ago[5].

Souheil refers to an armed clash in 2013 between members of Hezbollah and Palestinian young men near the refugee camp after a wedding convoy refused to allow their cars to be searched by a Hezbollah checkpoint. After one Palestinian man was shot dead by another young Hezbollah guard, the situation was pacified when some local leaders of the Party apologised to the victim's family and paid an indemnity (Rowell 2013).

3. Fostering connections around a football pitch

While allegiances and affiliations among regional actors are reshaped by the events of the Syrian war, daily mobility has been hierarchically reframed according to the national and at times sectarian membership of individuals. Palestinians of Syria stand in an equivocal situation, as they find themselves at the boundaries between a

[5] Souheil El-Natour (October 2016, 26). Personal interview, Mar Elias camp.

subjective reformulation of historical, cultural and political belonging in a precarious context dominated by institutions and authorities arbitrarily reformulating their dispositions. How do individuals navigate this system in such an entangled situation? Ahmad's personal biography sheds a light on the gap between institutional categorizations and the daily practices on the ground:

> After being stuck for two years in an unfavourable condition preventing me from working with football and creating problems for me at the checkpoint, a teammate informed me about the possibility of buying a new identity card from a Palestinian of Lebanon who left for Europe a few months before. Just through sticking my picture instead of the original one, with my documents I can now move more easily than before. Moreover, according to these new documents I am 25 years old and being younger also means that I got more chances to be employed by Lebanese teams. A few weeks ago I signed a contract with a team playing in the fourth division: 1,000 dollars every three months. It is not that much but, together with the job as a trainer, I can maintain myself just through football[6].

Although addressed from a biographical point of view, the subjectivity is not limited to an account of the person's intimate or private dimension but becomes the pretext for illustrating the structural dynamics that produce exclusion, vulnerability and marginality (Pinelli 2017). Ahmad's biography shows how "refugees creatively impose their own imprint on the space and meaning of the camps in a manner that, if not oppositional to the apparatus of control, at least serve as obstacles to its full realization" (Peteet 2005: 94). In this sense, their imaginative and practical work of transgressing the hierarchical spatialities imposed by the local authorities is neither purely emancipatory not entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation (Appadurai 1996).

Ahmad's trajectory contributes to enlighten practices and narratives of transcending the spatial marginalization imposed by both state and non-state actors. Within this process, the reformulation of his own legal position within the socio-spatial landscape does not univocally depend on individual solutions: most of the decisive contacts for the new documents unavoidably passed through his teammates. While much of the literature conceives the Palestinian camps as spaces exclusively socially organized through familiar and political relations, my fieldwork has insisted on examining alternative dimensions such as local leisure activities situated in a spatial perspective.

In this way, a football team is organized around live ritual events happening at a specific moment that generate intense moments of bodily co-presence around a specific place (Urry 2007: 234). A number of Syrians regularly frequents the football field where Al-Aqsa team usually trains inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp, together with Lebanese men mainly from al-Dahiye who choose to play there due to the cheaper rent. As stated earlier, this sport pitch became one of the most relevant areas of

[6] Abu Ahmad (October 2016, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

research for me. Due to its openness and relatively friendly atmosphere in such an overcrowded camp, it turned into a meeting point and a resource for a huge number of people.

I could observe to which extent inside this space, inaugurated in 2015, people have fostered their own social connections under the informal landscape of football. Compared with the tens of cafés and kiosks spread all over the camps, its larger spatial extension together with the "global language" of football are decisive in gathering people with diverse economic, political and social backgrounds. In this way, we are able to trace a mushrooming of translocal and cross-generational networks between "historical" and "newly" displaced people. Activities performed during leisure time often overlaps with the other daily life dimensions, providing contacts and resources going far beyond mere leisure spatio-temporalities.

While the majority of the Palestinian teams are affiliated with the local Palestinian factions and reclaim their attachment with homeland within their denomination, all of them present inside their rooster an important number of players recently came from Syria. I have focused on how the "foreign element" - namely the Syrian players who are supposed to be mostly out of the intra-factional dynamics of competition and control- shape their presence inside a Palestinian team and how such a relationship extends to the other dimensions of their daily life

Playing football inside a dynamic of football team turned into the pragmatic anti-reductionist alternative to a narrative around refugee camps mainly structured around nationalistic claims and humanitarian narratives. Focusing on the coping strategies of survival emerging between the "local" Palestinian community and the newly displaced refugees from Syria, I underlined such practices of spatial appropriation, social interaction and production of new meanings and relations starting from the margins of the camp and from the marginal aspects of ordinary life such as playing a sport in a team. At a broader level, a deeper understanding of self-organized sport activities turned into an alternative point of observation that slips away from the prevailing directives of institutional governmentality imposed upon refugee camps.

4. "I feel safe here": extending the virtual space of the camp

The dynamics evolving inside Al-Aqsa football team have shed a further light on the functionalities of such networks: for instance, about half of the team's players work together in a factory managed by Rami, the current Al-Aqsa coach. While four members of the team had already been working in Rami's factory for a long time, another four found employment right after meeting the owner on the training field. Khaled, a Syrian young man living in the camp and playing for Al-Aqsa, explains:

> Once I arrived from Damascus in 2013, I knew just a few Syrians living in the camp. After I moved to an apartment close to the football field, this has become my second home. I started playing with the Nash'iin (Youth Club) while my father was appointed as Vice-Coach of Al-Aqsa. I found a job in Rami's factory around al-

> Dahiya: he picks me up at 7.30 in the morning and I return to the camp in the afternoon. Even if we have never renewed our papers, once I started working with Rami I have had no any problems while moving outside the camp[7].

While Palestinians from Lebanon have historically developed diverse social relationships inside Dahiye, newly displaced refugees from Syria barely move around the southern suburbs due to their precarious legal status. Throughout my fieldwork, I investigated how the multi-dimensional networks developed inside a football team extend their potentialities beyond the boundaries between the camp and the neighbouring areas. In this case, the newcomers switch strategies for protection (Hajj 2016), transcending the nexus between legal vulnerability and mobility practices through a wide spectrum of communal practices of "taking the space" grounded on translocal informal networks.

For instance, numerous camp dwellers refer to al-Dahiya as the privileged area for their socio-economic activities:

> I buy just a few things in the small shops of the camp while purchasing most of the items outside: food in Dahiye is so much tastier and healthier than here[8].

Hussein's accounts configure a polycentric conceptualization of the city, reconnecting several in-between localities to other urban spaces and neighbouring areas with the social life of the camp. In this realm, as these practices of spatial rebordering contribute to reshaping "intimacy" with different places, newly arrived refugees from Syria are able to reinterpret the category of "familiar and unfamiliar spaces" (Migdal 2004).

While investigating feelings of belonging through the margins of the camp, my participation in the football teams once more contributed to shedding light on how people perform mobility and reshape commitments to a plurality of spaces. Through these lenses, outdoor-play practices should be observed as forms of spatial appropriation and reproduction (Hatem 2016) moving from marginalized and securitized spaces. In this way, beyond transcending forms of spatial marginalization, these practices contribute to reconsidering how places outside the camp interconnect with other forms of home-spaces (Gabiam and Fiddian Qasmiyeh 2016).

While assisting a match from the bench, Khalil, a Palestinian from Aleppo in his thirties, explains how:

> Despite the five-minute driving distances from my house, this field to me is like part of the camp. I work in a factory around Sabra -very close to here- and that place to me is like a camp because I feel safe here[9].

[7] Khaled (March 2017, 21). Personal interview. Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[8] Hussein (October 2016, 20). Personal interview. Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[9] Khalil (October 2016, 23). Personal interview, Beirut.

By recreating a feeling of translocal familiar belonging, even outdoor activities introduce unpredictability and consequently new possibilities of reshaping the map of the city. Indeed, through a redefinition of spaces according to their own perceptions and daily mobility patterns, refugees from Syria recreate a whole translocal area that blurs physical boundaries while moving away from the pervading and ontological "ethos of insecurity" (Gulick 1976). By rather emphasizing an effective feeling of refuge, Khalil reshapes the map of Beirut according to familiar and unfamiliar places, extending the mental space of the camp and going above the spatial marginalization intrinsic to his legal status in the country.

Concluding remarks

While most Palestinian refugee camps and their neighbouring areas have moved spatially closer due to synchronic urbanization processes, Palestinian camps have typically been analysed as physically and psychologically besieged areas. Most of the actors involved in migration issues tend to conceptualize a clear spatial distinction between so-called national spaces and refugee camps, with the latter effectively labelled as "spaces of the displaced." The production of locality in these urban formations thus faces the related problems of displaced and deterritorialized populations, of state policies that restrict neighbourhoods as context producers, and of local subjects who cannot be anything other than national citizens (Appadurai, 1996). However, throughout my work, I expound on how the arrival of "newly displaced" people from Syria within the already overcrowded Palestinian camps highlights further national hierarchizations in the link between spatial marginalization and precarious legal statuses. In this realm, the presence of Palestinians from Syria, who experience the most troubling aspects of being considered at the same time both Palestinians and Syrians, further complicates the picture and highlights new patterns related to the link between mobility and territoriality. Specifically, besides their peculiar historical connotations and current contingencies, the interconnectivities between camps and other forms of camp-spaces reveal dynamics that may be retraced in the many poor suburbs that have recently sprung up around cities in the region and beyond.

By looking at how refugees organize diverse places around the camp as a whole territory, I have aimed to illustrate the extent to which translocal networks contribute to reshape how daily practices blur boundaries between the camp and its margins. This article, and the research it draws upon, is part of the recent literature that aims to analytically de-exceptionalize the narrative about Palestinian camps in Lebanon through the subjective perspective of people inhabiting them on a daily basis (Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska 2017).

Throughout my fieldwork, my teammates helped me to enlighten how camp dwellers expand the physical and mental space of the camp far beyond the official boundaries of the camp. Such accounts push the discourse far beyond an abstract category of spatiality that seems discrete and self-explanatory between "the space

of the camp" and "the space of the city". In this instance, "space is produced by a sovereign refugee subject whose action is intentional, volitional, agential; the connection between subjective action and objective consequence is direct and causal" (Abourahme 2015: 213) and assumes what I dare to define as a collective, elusive and transgressive dimension.

While camps turn into what I defined as "meaningful places of elusive contestation" in light of international gaps in protection, national securitization policies and arbitrary measures by local non-state actors, refugees invisibly "appropriate" access to diverse locations that have been reshaped in the same manner as familiar spaces. In such a politicized and securitized context, mobility is not explicitly claimed as a political common right but, rather, is daily conquered by "just" performing everyday activities. I argue that translocal informal networks transgressing urban boundaries effectively contribute to rethink the ambivalence of reified border spaces of exclusion (Agier 2002) and consequently introduce new possibilities of reshaping the broader map of Euro-Mediterranean space. In particular, the dimension of leisure and play constitutes an alternative perspective to examine practices of spatial appropriation and the (re)production of new meanings starting from the margins.

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Claiming for Moral Superiority while Bargaining with Mobility. Turkey-EU Migration Diplomacy in the post-2016 Euro-Mediterranean space

Chiara Maritato

Introduction

The outbreak of the Syrian war in 2011 and the propagation of the Arab uprisings have triggered a new wave of migration in the Euro-Mediterranean space. Turkey's geographical proximity with the Schengen area and the mixed migratory flows that cross its territory since the 1990s (İçduygu 2015) have been crucial in reinvigorating agreements aimed at externalizing the EU border control. In the 2016-2019 EU "Global Strategy" identified by the EU diplomatic service, the Europeanization narrative has been partially shelved to leave room to two main security challenges: migration and terrorism. This process affected both the legal and operational instruments used to manage and control immigration and redefined the EU's position vis-à-vis third states (Ryan 2019; Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles 2016; Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul 2016; van Munster and Sterkx 2006). Although the Europeanization of Turkish migration and asylum policies has started in the late 1990s and has been fostered in the early 2000s, the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement – aimed to "end irregular" migration[1]– is a landmark for the EU's long-lasting externalization of borders control to Turkey. On the Turkish Foreign Ministry's webpage, the 2016 Statement is indeed presented as a "game changer agreement" and "the most stunning example of burden and responsibility sharing that Turkey has been advocating since the eruption of the Syrian crisis in 2011"[2]. The window dressing of the diplomatic jargon presents the agreement as based on cooperation and absolute gains for the two parts[3]. However, current developments reflect a more nuanced reality: Four years after the signature of the agreement, Turkey's accession negotiations are suspended[4] and the country

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[1] Press statement on the 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/ (last consulted 10 November 2020).

[2] Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Implementation of Turkey-EU Agreement of 18 March 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/implementation-of-turkey_eu-agreement-of-18-march-2016.en.mfa (last consulted 10 November 2020).

[3] About the notion of absolute and relative gains in international relations please see Powell (Powell 1991). The EU was committed to 6 billion euros by the end of 2018, the promise of an upgrading of the Custom Union, the fulfilment of the visa liberalization roadmap with a view to lifting the visa requirements for Turkish citizens and the commitment to re-energize the accession process. Here the European Commission's report "The EU-Turkey Statement Four years on": https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20200318_managing-migration-eu-turkey-statement-4-years-on_en.pdf (last consulted 15 November 2020).

[4] On March 13, 2019, the EU Parliament called on the Commission to formally suspend the accession negotiations with Turkey. www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0200_EN.html?redirect. (last consulted 15 November 2020).

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has increasingly employed migration issue, particularly transit migration and management of refugees, as an instrument to negotiate power relations vis-à-vis the EU. Hence the question: How has the management of a humanitarian crisis and the massive migration flows affected post 2016 Turkey-EU migration diplomacy?

The article relies on the concept of migration diplomacy and focuses on two deeply interconnected elements at the core of EU-Turkey diplomacy: on the one side the management of the refugee's "crisis" and Turkey's image as a humanitarian actor praised as "the country which hosts the largest number of refugees from Syria" (Korkut 2016). On the other side, the proactive role of Turkey as gatekeeper, tasked with preventing irregular migration directed to the EU. The literature that examines the outcomes of the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement emphasizes the evolution of the EU's border regime on migrants' lives and deaths in the Mediterranean (İçduygu and Üstübici 2014; İçduygu and Aksel 2014; Vradis et al. 2020). However, scholars also shine light on how Turkey's claim for "moral superiority" as it pertains to the management of refugees has been used to gain political consensus on a proactive and militarized foreign policy (Polat 2018; Korkut 2016). Polat defines moral superiority as the result of a positive self-representation and negative other representation that is constructed around three dominant discourses: the first one is based on religious solidarity, and Turkey's historical responsibility towards the territories of the wider Ottoman heritage. The second discourse is based on the negative definition of the West as xenophobic, Islamophobic and irresponsible towards refugees. The third discourse is built around a negative narrative affecting the political opponent of the Turkish government as not caring about the refugees and being rootless with regard of Islamic and Ottoman history (Polat 2018:14-15). In line with these considerations, the paper contends that Turkey's international image as both gatekeeper and a champion of solidarity and humanitarian assistance has been an asset in the attempt to galvanize a coercive migration diplomacy and redefine Turkish approach to the EU migration regime[5]. We could thus infer that the moral superiority claimed by the Turkish government reflects those various forms of contestations MENA states employ to resist and renegotiate material power asymmetries vis-à-vis the EU (Del Sarto and Tholens 2020).

The article's first section presents the theoretical framework and the methodology employed while emphasising the importance of the policy context in the development of Turkey-EU migration policy. The second section examines Turkey-EU migration diplomacy as it pertains to the management of refugees under the temporary protection provided by the Turkish state. The attention is particularly devoted to the EU praising Turkish solidarity and how this alimented a moral superiority and a binary opposition vis-à-vis the EU accused of not being able to equally welcome refugees. The third section finally casts light on how Turkey's acceptance and hosting of Syrian refugees has provided the AKP government with the opportunity not only to claim moral superiority vis-à-vis the EU but also to revisit its migration diplomacy in a more coercive way. The claim for moral superiority is undermined when it implies "threats" to send migrants to Europe and a politicization of transit migration as a bargaining tool for domestic and foreign policy goals.

[5] See Yackley 2020; Ülgen 2020.

1. Turkey's Migration Diplomacy in the post 2016 era: theoretical and methodological perspectives

Migration diplomacy, "how states employ cross-border population mobility management in their international relations, or how they use diplomatic means to obtain goals relating to migration" (Adamson and Tsourapas 2019: 116) has recently been at the core of a scholarship interested in how migration features in interstates relationships (Adamson and Tsourapas 2019; Tsourapas 2017). This notion is indeed particularly relevant to assess the current developments of what Hollifield defines the "migration state" where the regulation of international migrations is as important as providing for security of the state and the economic well-being of the citizens (Hollifield 2004). Adamson and Tsourapas affirm that states' use of diplomatic tools, processes and procedures to manage cross-border population mobility also depends on their overall power and available resources. However, the authors underline three main scopes of migration diplomacy: the first refers to state's action and considers how cross-border mobility is linked to state's diplomatic aims. This definition thus takes into consideration states' migration diplomacy vis-à-vis international actors. The second aspect refers to how states employ the management of cross-border population mobility in their international relations, that is how they use diplomatic means to obtain goals relating to migrations. The third meaning refers to the importance of the management of migration as an international issue, that is an issue that impacts on interstate interactions (Adamson and Tsourapas 2019: 116-7).

Moreover, migration diplomacy emphasizes the importance of rationalist framework in international relations according to which intergovernmental agreements that aim to regulate migratory flows are based on states' interests in absolute versus relative gains and underlines how migration is an important area of states' bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations. In this respect, Tsourapas theorizes how migration affects interstate bargaining and affirms that mobility might feature in the conduct of states' diplomacy engaging in cooperative and coercive migration diplomacy. The author underlines how, although the edges between the two notions are blurred, a "cooperative" approach in migration diplomacy is based on a bargaining aimed at pursuing mutual beneficial arrangements, while a "coercive" approach is resorting to the threat of force and unilateral actions (Tsourapas 2017: 2370).

This aspect allows to problematize migration management in the light of power asymmetries between the Global North and the Global South. The question whether and how the EU engages in strategic issue-linkage through its trade agreements has been examined in relation to the EU's nature as a foreign policy actor. In this respect, one instrument is the conclusion of bilateral readmission agreements which commit third countries to take their own as well as third country nationals who have crossed their territory while engaging in cooperation on the fight against irregular migration. While the EU has had to define alternative incentives in order to incite third countries' cooperation (Jurje and Lavenex 2013: 7), the states' instrumentalization of refugees to pursue domestic and foreign policy goals has been largely diffused: on the one hand,

the EU countries are resorting to a constellation of sailor's promises to stem new arrivals. On the other hand, third countries like Turkey enjoy their haggler position assuring Brussels they will combat border crossings towards the EU (Danış 2016).

Scholars who have focused on how non-binding norms like the 2018 Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees are accepted by the Global South emphasise how policy tools of externalization at the state and the supranational level do not only concern the extension of border control to neighbouring countries but also imply the re-shaping of structural inequalities between North and South, as well as social boundaries in destination and so-called 'transit' countries (Stock, Üstübici, and Schultz 2019).

While investigating MENA states' forms of resistance to European norms, Del Sarto and Tholens identify two types of contestation: the "explicit" resistance to the competence claim asserted by European actors and the "hidden" processes of contestation. According to the authors, these two aspects are blurred as opposition is also the result of a combination of explicit and implicit actions. Moreover, they contend that resistance may occur after an initial formal acceptance of European norms. Hence the importance of attentively contextualizing migration diplomacy: States "formally agree on European initiatives and policies, but eventually refrain from implementing these policies in the ways intended by their European counterparts" (Del Sarto and Tholens 2020: 4). The literature which analyses the EU-Turkey relations informs about how negotiations have evolved involving the exchange of funding and/or the boosting of EU integration process in exchange of the control migrants' mobility (İçduygu and Üstübici 2014; İçduygu and Aksel 2014). In the past three decades, Turkey has been co-opted into the managing of the EU's borderlands. However, it has also used migration issue as a leverage to engage in explicit forms of contestations that challenge Europe's competence to set the rules (Del Sarto and Tholens 2020). Against this backdrop, the Turkish side has turned the "refugee crisis" into a great opportunity (Danış 2016).

The article considers the period between 2016-2019 to assess how the EU-Turkey Statement has affected Turkey's migration diplomacy. The policy context alights on significant changes in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy: between 2016 and 2018, the country experienced a rapid authoritarian drift which started with the 15 July 2016 attempted coup and culminated with two years of state of emergency (Öktem and Akkoyunlu 2016). Following the 2018 currency crisis, the management of almost 4 million refugees from Syria – the majority of whom lives in big cities – has become a crucial issue for the AKP government. Over the past decade, the reception of Syrians in Turkey has been ambivalent: one sector views refugees as a burden and refuse them as an ethnic and political threat to Turkish society. On the contrary, pious and conservative sectors of the society have positively welcomed refugees on the basis of two references: the notion of Islamic fraternity between the "*ansar* and the *muhajir*", as it is mentioned in the Qur'an to describe how Meccan Muslims were welcomed as brothers by the Muslims of Medina. The second is the neo-Ottomanist argument that Turks have historical responsibility towards the peoples of the Ottoman empire (Danış 2016).

The dominant discourses constructed around a religious solidarity for Syrian Muslim brothers and sisters, the country's pride for moral superiority vis-à-vis the rich and irresponsible West has started to fade as episodes of hostility towards refugee population increased[6]. In the same period, refugees from Syria have come to the forefront as a matter of domestic and foreign policy. While denouncing the territorial presence of PKK-linked groups in Northern Syria as a national security concern, the Turkish state has launched military operations in Syria. The intervention of Turkish army has been officially justified as aimed to create a safe zone in Northern Syria to "clean the area" from Kurdish forces and allow Syrian refugees in Turkey to resettle (Adar 2020; Içduygu and Nimer 2020). From 2016 to present, the creation of a "safe zone" as a solution to relocate Syrian refugees has constituted a recurrent topic used by Turkish government as a leverage to obtain domestic and foreign policy goals (Adar 2020).

The article draws on the outcomes of the Council of the EU meetings between 2016 to 2019, the European Commission's Turkey 2018 report, the reports of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Turkey's transit migrations. The outcomes of the European Union and the United Nations co-chaired Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region" held in Brussels in 2019 and 2020 have been also examined to retrace the international community's reiterated support and "gratitude" to Turkey for its efforts in hosting refugees from Syria. The gathered data also includes official publications such as the magazine *Kırlangıç* and statistics issued by the Turkish General Directorate of Migration Management (*Göç Idaresi Genel Müdürlüğü*) under the Ministry of Interior and the publications of the Directorate of EU Affairs under the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, official reports have replaced fieldwork and interviews. However, the research could profit from online blogs and websites which engaged to raise the awareness on the critical points reached by the EU-Turkey migration diplomacy despite the Covid-19 emergency. In particular, it refers to a long ethnographic report published by activists of the online platform *Harekact* in the wake of the events which occurred following Turkey's unilateral decision to open the EU/Greek-Turkish border between February and March 2020.

2. Turkey's Moral Superiority and the Management of Refugees "Crisis"

The massive flows of refugees that reached Turkey since the outbreak of the Syrian war have profoundly affected Turkey's management of immigration. As Turkey maintains a geographical limitation of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the requests for asylum only apply to refugees originating from European countries. However, after the first year of Turkey's "open door policy" towards Syrian refugees considering they would have rapidly gone back to their country, Turkey's legislation concerning asylum and migration was carved within the European framework. However, as Danış affirms, Turkey followed a pragmatic approach trying to instrumentalize the refugees crisis for both domestic and foreign policy purposes (2016).

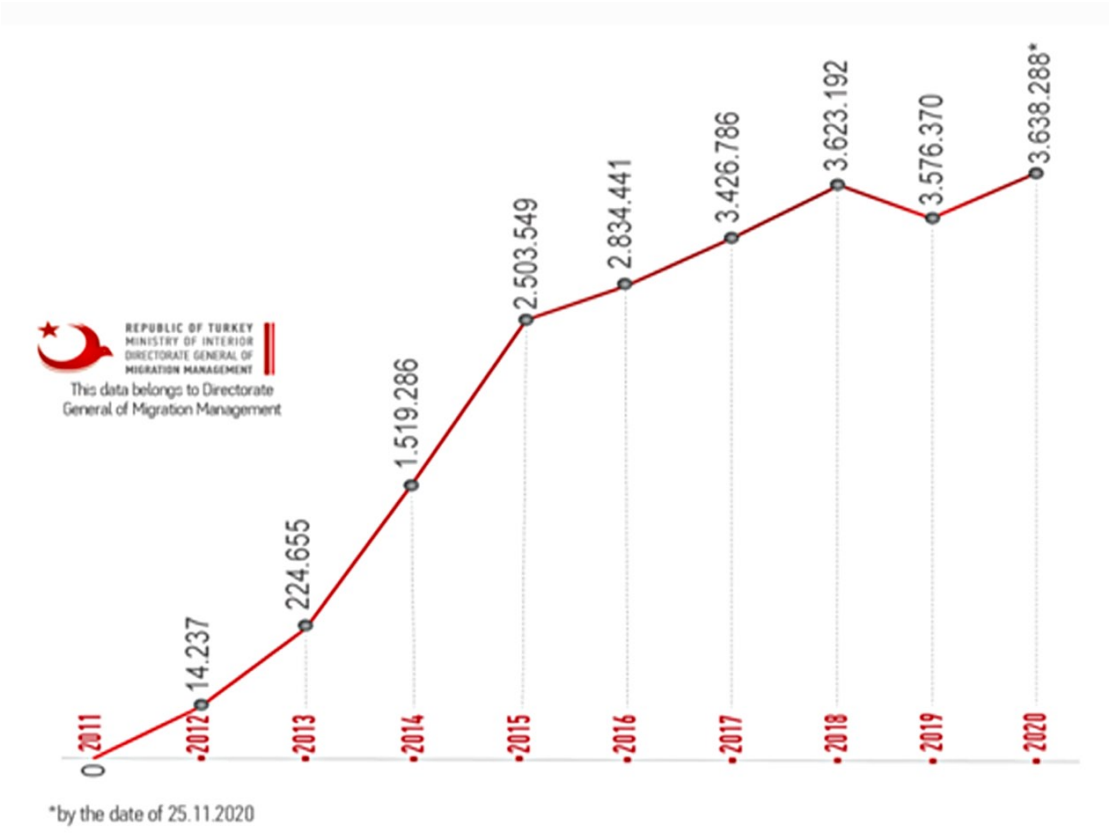
[6] See Duman 2020.

In 2013, the country adopted the Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) which granted temporary protection to Syrian refugees in Turkey and revitalized the EU-Turkey migration diplomacy (İçduygu and Üstübici 2014). As defined by the Article 91 of Law No 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, Temporary Protection "may be provided for foreigners who have been forced to leave their country, cannot return to the country that they have left, and have arrived at or crossed the borders of Turkey in a mass influx situation seeking immediate and temporary protection".

The Regulation on Temporary Protection for Syrian refugees passed in 2014 and inaugurated a new legal framework for asylum in Turkey. It affirms the country's obligation towards all persons in need of international protection, regardless of country of origins and also establishes the General Directorate of Migration Management (*Göç Idaresi Müdürlüğü*) under the control of Turkish ministry of Interior as the agency responsible for migration and asylum.

According to the data provided by the General Directorate of Migration Management, in November 2020, 3,6 million Syrians live under temporary protection in Turkey. 59,254 refugees (1,6%) are hosted in one of the seven temporary shelter centres located in five provinces: Adana, Kilis, Kahramanmaraş, Hatay and Osmaniye (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). In 2013, 224,655 Syrian refugees were hosted in Turkey, in 2016 their number reached 2,8 millions.

FIG.1 SYRIAN REFUGEES UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION IN TURKEY BY YEAR



Turkey's Ministry of Interior, General Directorate of Migration Management

FIG.2 DISTRIBUTION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES

PROVINCE	NAME OF TEMPORARY SHELTER CENTERS	TOTAL TEMPORARY SHELTER CENTERS	GRAND TOTAL
ADANA (1)	Sarıçam	21.055	21.055
KİLİS (1)	Elbeyli	8.492	8.492
KAHRAMANMARAŞ (1)	Merkez	10.550	10.550
HATAY (3)	Altınözü	2.637	9.574
	Yayladağı	3.619	
	Apaydın	3.318	
OSMANİYE (1)	Cevdetiye	9.583	9.583
Total		59.254	
NUMBER OF SYRIAN REFUGEES THAT NOT IN THE SCOPE OF SHELTER CENTERS		3.576.034	

*by the date of 25.11.2020

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF MIGRATION MANAGEMENT
This data belongs to Directorate General of Migration Management

Turkey's Ministry of Interior, General Directorate of Migration Management

In 2013, the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement officially disciplined "the rapid and orderly readmission, by each side, of the persons who do not or no longer fulfil the conditions for entry to, presence in or residence on the territory of the other side"[7]. The Agreement has been implemented in 2016 in the aftermath of the 2015 massive flow of refugees from Syria to Turkey. Against this backdrop, the EU–Turkey Joint Action Plan (JAP) of 15 October 2015 and the EU–Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 (also known as EU-Turkish Deal) have enhanced cooperation to tackle the humanitarian emergency and the political impact of refugees crisis and stem irregular migration (Ozcurumez and Şenses 2011; Karadağ 2019; van Munster and Sterkx 2006). The EU-Turkey Statement was indeed based on the following agreement: Bruxelles agreed to finance 6 billion Euros, revamp Turkish accession process and provide visa-free access for Turkish citizens. Turkey would patrol its external borders and accept the return of irregular migrants from Greece. In particular, for every Syrian returned to Turkey, the European Union pledged to resettle another in one EU country. It is relevant to underline that, similar to what Del Sarto and Tholens observe in the case of MENA states' involvement in the EU border regime, during the negotiation process Turkey has accepted the rules set by the EU and that subsequently contestations have targeted asymmetric power relations (2020: 4-5).

[7] EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement, eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0507(01)&from=EN (last consulted 3 December 2020).

While since the outbreak of the agreement the EU and the International Community has championed[8] Turkey for its efforts in hosting 4 million Syrian refugees on its territory, Turkey's diplomacy turned its massive humanitarian aid into a moral superiority stance through which voicing a binary opposition vis-à-vis the EU's lack of solidarity for Syrian refugees. This narrative is grounded on the statistics reported by General Directorate of Migration Management according to which since March 2016, only a limited number of refugees, if compared to Turkey, has been relocated in EU countries (Fig. 3). According to Polat, the AKP's discourse on Syrian refugees and its positive self-representation as the defender of all oppressed people (*mazlum*) has forged diplomatic relations with the EU while shaping Turkey's cultural diplomacy and soft power (Polat 2018: 6).

FIG.3 SYRIAN REUGEES RELOCATED TO EU COUNTRIES IN THE SCOPE OF THE 2016 DEAL

COUNTRY	TOTAL
GENERAL TOTAL	27.225
GERMANY	9.765
FRANCE	4757
NETHERLANDS	4464
FINLAND	2176
SWEDEN	2145
BELGIUM	1.344
SPAIN	754
ITALY	396
PORTUGAL	294
CROATIA	250
AUSTRIA	213
LUXEMBOURG	206
LITHUANIA	102
BULGARIA	85
ROMANIA	63
ESTONIA	59
LATVIA	46
SLOVENIA	34
DENMARK	31
SWITZERLAND	24
MALTA	17

*by the date of 25.11.2020

Turkey's Ministry of Interior, General Directorate of Migration Management

While the active solidarity towards refugees has become a constitutive component of AKP identity (Hintz 2018), it has also enabled the Turkish government to claim moral superiority both *vis-à-vis* the West and its political opponents at home. Fostering a binary opposition between a welcoming Turkish nation and the

[8] "Deep gratitude and appreciation for Syrian refugees' hosting states and especially Turkey have been addressed during the international Conferences on Supporting the future of Syria and the region organized by the European Union and the United Nations in April 2017, April 2018, March 2019 and June 2020. Meetings' main results and declarations are available: European Council – Council of the EU, Supporting the future of Syria and the region - Brussels III conference, 12-14 March 2019, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2019/03/12-14/ (last consulted 3 December 2020).

indifference of the wealthy West, Turkey was thus able to build a positive self-image as the generous host to Syrian refugees and the defender of victims, an operation that, beyond the Syrians, has been employed with the aim to present itself an anti-Western leading actor. Adar and Yenigün have defined this as an attempt to build a counter-hegemonic discourse depicting Turkey as saviour and leader of the so-called Muslim world (Yenigün 2019). This self-congratulatory language presents the refugees as victims and Turkey as a caring host, in sharp contrast with the West (Polat 2018: 8).

The dichotomous nature of this argument is particularly emphasized in Turkey's official publications on migration as well as in Conferences, Summits and meetings concerning the status of Syrian refugees in Turkey. In October 2020, the first number of *Kırlangıç* (Swallow) the Magazine of the General Directorate of Migration Management published an article by the Ministry of Interior, Süleyman Soylu. The Ministry refers to current migration flows denouncing the "deviation of countries which have been the only determinant and follower of values such as civilization, in this first global crisis they face, trying to prevent the contact of this migration with overprotective attitude and even violence." The implicit reference to the West and the "European values" allows to frame a dichotomy between the welcoming Turkey and the West. Turkey is depicted as a country that has followed a different path and "chose to manage migration not prevent migration" ("Kırlangıç" 2020: 14).

This narrative's linchpin is twofold: On the one side, it condemns the hypocrisy of Europe/West which talks about human rights and universal values but closes its doors to refugees when in needed. On the other side, Turkey's hospitality and generosity is a leitmotif which is found whenever a prominent AKP actor comments about Turkey's migration policy (Polat 2018: 9). A similar opposition is also displayed concerning the financial burden sharing as it pertains the refugees hosted by Turkey. The AKP's binary discourse which represents the West, Europe and the EU (terms used interchangeably) as 'other' has not only consolidated its political power in Turkish politics (Polat 2018: 14). Such a claim of moral superiority is accompanied with forms of reverse moralism towards Europe accused of teaching about human rights and humanitarian obligation while being unable to deal with refugees' crisis. These explicit resistance to the competence claim laid out by European actors has also contributed to shape the Turkey-EU migration diplomacy in a more coercive way. Albeit the asymmetrical power relations, Turkey could attempt to leverage the issue of migration to enhance its bargaining position vis-à-vis the EU (Adamson and Tsourapas 2019: 118). In the next section, this strategical use of migration as a foreign policy instrument will be examined as it pertains to transit migration.

3. Bargaining on migrants' lives. Turkey's Coercive transit migration Diplomacy

The 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement has also disciplined the return of "irregular migrants" crossing from Turkey into Greece back to Turkey and presented it as an overwhelmed success and a step-change for curbing the number of migrants

and refugees arrived in Greece.[9] Although the Statement has led to a drastic reduction of the crossings, the European Agency Frontex reported that unauthorized border crossings at the Eastern Mediterranean Route were 42,319 in 2017 and 56,561 in 2018[10]. The statistics of the Turkish General Directorate of Migration Management report that in 2019 454,662 "irregular" migrants have been apprehended in Turkey. However, as Danış affirms, the real effect of the readmission agreements lies in their role of deterrence: only a limited number of immigrants are sent back to Turkey (Danış 2016).

In the past four years, Turkey's role as a gatekeeper has resulted in an increasing bargaining power vis-à-vis EU institutions. The coercive approach to transit migration diplomacy is particularly evident if considering the events which occurred at the Greek-Turkish border in March 2020. The cooperative approach of the 2016 Deal by which the EU and Turkey agreed on absolute gains has been eclipsed by Turkey's unilateral escalation of tensions deriving from the politicization of migrants as a tool for reaching domestic and foreign policy goals. This aspect is particularly relevant as it invites to carefully assess those forms of implicit contestation that occur at the domestic level often in contrast to formally accepted norms or agreements. As Del Sarto and Tholens affirm, some MENA government may use their leverage in specific policy field such as migration to engage in explicit forms of contestations questioning the very definition of competence determined by the EU (Del Sarto and Tholens 2020). In September 2019 to cope with the growing discontent concerning the refugee's issue in Turkey and the landslide victory of the oppositions at the municipal elections in the country's largest cities, the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, warned he would "open the gates" to allow Syrian refugees to leave Turkey to Europe. The threat was conditional to the international community's support for the creation of a "safe zone" in north-eastern Syria. Since the first military operation in 2016, the Turkish government engaged in obtaining the EU and international community's support for the creation of a "safe zone" close to the Turkish border. The operations have been launched to curtail the activities of Kurdish groups identified as terrorists by the Turkish state which accuses them of relations with the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). Furthermore, the creation of a safe zone has been also aimed to populate the area by Sunni Syrians who would return from Turkey[11]. In this vein, during the past four years, Turkey's domestic and foreign policy issues have been instrumentally and strategically linked to migration flows.

[9] See European Commission, A Step-Change in Migration Management and Border Security, ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20190306_managing-migration-factsheet-step-change-migration-management-border-security-timeline_en.pdf (last Consulted 29 November 2020). The number of refugees arrived in Greece from Turkey in 2015 was 861,63, in 2019 74,613. Data available on the UNHCR website: data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179 (consulted on June 15 2020).

[10] Frontex website: Migratory Routes: Eastern Mediterranean Route, https://frontex.europa.eu/we-know/migratory-routes/eastern-mediterranean-route/ (accessed 16 April 2021); Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Interior, Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM) website: Migration Statistics: Irregular Migration, https://en.goc.gov.tr/irregular-migration (accessed 25 September 2019).

[11] See McKernan 2019; Seligman 2019.

The "threats" to open the border gates and let migrants enter Europe materialized on February 27, 2020, after thirty-three Turkish soldier were killed in Syria's Idlib province, the Turkish authorities announced the opening of the "gates" at the Greek border.[12] All of a sudden, 12,500 migrants reached Turkey's Edirne region and the coastal area close to Izmir in the attempt to enter Greece via land or by the sea. What happened in the hours and days immediately after Turkish authorities recklessly encouraged migrants to travel to Greece under false pretences and in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic is narrated by the activists and independent media that have been on the field. The online blog *Harekact* published a detailed ethnography written by activists who between February 29 and March 21, 2020 organized in solidarity with migrants at the Pazarkule border in Turkey's Edirne region[13]. Their long report casts light on the organization of buses from Istanbul to the Pazarkule border area, on migrants stranded in forests at the buffer zone near the border crossing and on the disproportionate use of violence by the Greek police: At least two people were killed at the Greek-Turkish border and a woman remains missing after Greek border forces reportedly fired live ammunition and tear gas against asylum-seekers and migrants[14]. The activists have also attentively reported about the role of Turkish police first in pushing migrants to reach the border area and then to transfer them back to Istanbul and to the seven shelter centres located all over the country. Migrants who were stuck at the border had been ping-ponged in camps in Turkish cities where they completed the quarantine before being allowed to resettle in Turkey.

Migrants attempting to cross the Turkish-Greek/EU border pay the risk of being pushed back by the border guards[15]. Turkey's unilateral decision was in contrast to the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement aimed to halt irregular migration by returning to Turkey one migrant for one Syrian refugee settled in the EU. When all migrants left the border zone in March 27, the Turkish Ministry of Interior Suleyman Soylu affirmed that after the pandemic Turkey will not apprehend any migrant[16]. While the February 2020 events have contributed to undermine Turkey's "moral superiority" in welcoming refugees, the EU institutions proved to be deeply committed in what Houtum defines a "war against migrants" rather than against "irregular" border crossings (Houtum 2008). The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, supported Greece in its efforts to act as a "shield" (*aspida*) to protect the EU external borders and to suspend all new asylum applications across the country for a month[17]. It is important to notice how moral superiority has been also combined with forms of reverse

[12] See 33 Turkish soldiers killed in Syrian air raid in Idlib, AlJazeera, February 28, 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/28/33-turkish-soldiers-killed-in-syrian-air-raid-in-idlib; EU 'strongly rejects' Turkey's 'use' of migrants at border, Deutsche Welle, March 4, 2020, www.dw.com/en/eu-strongly-rejects-turkeys-use-of-migrants-at-border/a-52640976 (Consulted on 22 October 2020).

[13] Please see: https://harekact.bordermonitoring.eu/ (last consulted 20 November 2020).

[14] See Stevis-Gridneff, Kingsley, Willis, Almukhtar and Browne 2020; Greece/Turkey: Asylum-seekers and migrants killed and abused at borders, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/greece-turkey-asylum-seekers-and-migrants-killed-and-abused-at-borders/ (last consulted 14 November 2020).

[15] About the notion of "risk" in border crossing see (Vergnano 2020).

[16] İçişleri Bakanı Soylu: Otobüs seyahatlerine kısıtlama getiriyoruz!, March 27, 2020, https://www.haberturk.com/son-dakika-haberler-icisleri-bakani-suleyman-soylu-hayat-yuzde-80-durdu-2627041. See also Filiz (Filiz 2020).

[17] See Rankin 2020.

moralism through which the EU is accused for selectively applying moral standards (human rights, humanitarianism, etc.). Reverse moralism and the claim of moral superiority as it pertains to the refugee's crisis thus speak to those forms of explicit resistance to the competence claim laid out by European actors (Del Sarto and Tholens 2020). Since many EU states are far from reaching high standard of solidarity and capacity to host refugees, refugee host countries in the Middle East fend off criticism for some of their own failings[18].

However, as Kati Piri, the European Parliament's rapporteur on Turkey's EU membership from 2014 to 2019, underlines, on the one hand Turkey is "tantamount to blackmail" the EU weaponizing migrants to get support to its military and political goals in Syria. On the other hand, "Turkey has shouldered a heavy burden on Europe' s behalf for very little in return"[19]. When the Deal was signed in 2016, to end refugees' influx European governments were ready to negotiate measures that were unpalatable for years such as the visa-free travel for Turkish citizens, an upgrade of the EU-Turkey Custom Union and an opening of new chapter in the stalled EU accession process. According to Piri, these promises were "unrealistic"[20].

Hence the need to "decolonize" borders' externalization and consider the counter strategies that peripheral actors activate (İşleyen 2018). Turkey is not only a passive recipient of border policies implementation, it rather interprets them and uses migration issue as a leverage to acquire visa liberalization and revive its accession negotiation talks[21] (Dursun-Özkanca 2019: 83-97; Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016). The creation of a multi-state buffer area has established a complex nexus between the EU core and each buffer state. As Zaragoza-Cristiani affirms: "the refusal to cooperate by any of the buffer states making up part of this borderland, but above all by Turkey, would inevitably provoke a domino effect, with yet more arrivals of refugees at the EU core" (Zaragoza-Cristiani 2017: 72).

The coercive use of transit migration as a leverage whereby to bargain power relations has been also combined with a denunciation of the EU's lack of human conscience and incapacity of hosting refugees compared to Turkey. In the aftermath of the events occurred at the Turkish-Greek border, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu wrote: "EU inaction on Syrian refugees is a stain on human conscience […] [Turkey] "cannot continue to protect the borders of NATO and Europe alone" [22]. He also accuses the EU and its parliamentarians of being indifferent and having compromised their prestige:

> Greek forces sprayed tear gas and fired on people at their border. Greece also illegally suspended refugee applications. The UN was critical, the EU not. People died, scores were wounded, and *European prestige* was damaged globally. [Italic is mine].

[18] See Dionigi 2017.
[19] Piri 2020.
[20] Id.
[21] In this respect, it is interesting to consider that in March 2020, to ease the desperate conditions in reception camps on Greeks island, the EU offered 2000 € to refugees who decided to voluntarily return. The campaign launched for the duration of one-month is a further step in the EU migration governance and shows how to stem irregular transit migration mostly consists in ordering and governing immobility.
[22] Çavuşoğlu 2020.

The reason of the EU lack of prestige is to be found in the EU failure "to develop a policy that projects peace, prosperity and dignity to its near-abroad, and has not worked earnestly with Turkey to achieve that"[23].

Concluding remarks

Since 2016, the EU-Turkey diplomacy has been largely focused on the management of Syrian refugees living under temporary protection in Turkey and the strengthening of border control aimed at stemming migration directed towards the EU. The EU-Turkey Statement aimed to "end the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU" has been signed and implemented while the EU-Turkey accession process was in deadlock and the opening of any new negotiation chapters frozen.

The article casts light on how the management of a humanitarian crisis and the massive migration flows have affected Turkey-EU migration diplomacy. It contends that, during the period post the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, a season of reinvigorated EU-Turkey diplomacy on matter of transit migration and refugees protection has been characterized by two related and opposed stances: on the one side the EU and international community have praised Turkey for its solidarity and humanitarian support as the country that hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees and stems migrants and refugees' flows directed towards the EU. On the other side, Turkey has built on this widely recognized humanitarian role to promote a moral superiority vis-à-vis the West. The 4 millions of refugees living under temporary protection in its territory are employed to blackmail the EU on matter that goes beyond the management of migration and relates to Turkey's security issues on the opposite (South Eastern) border.

Scholars have recently put emphasis on the Turkish government's soft power strategies and foreign policy instruments (Adar and Yenigün 2019; Keyman 2016). In this respect, future research should further investigate how the forms and the meanings of Turkey's "humanitarian diplomacy" (Davutoğlu 2013) have evolved from 2015 to present. In this vein, the mix of humanitarianism, anti-imperialism, moral superiority and blame of the West for its lack of solidarity in the management of migration has indeed contributed to shape a schizophrenic EU-Turkey diplomacy. This shaky and foggy position needs to be further investigated as it contributes to affect mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean space. The EU migration management and borders control is forging a regime of forced and precarious immobility across the Mediterranean and along the Balkan Route. However, the "irregular" border crossings shape the areas located in proximity of the border, informing about forms of bordering solidarity established from below through transversal alliances between migrants and citizens. Stemming from an approach aimed to "decolonise" borders' externalisation by focusing on the counter strategies which peripheral actors activate in the everyday, it is important to stimulate further research on bordering solidarities (Rygiel 2011; Tazzioli 2019: 151) and the activism of politicized groups composed by non-citizen migrants and citizens working alongside them in solidarity for migrants' rights.

[23] Id.

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Neo-Ottoman expansionism beyond the borders of modern Turkey: Erdoğan's foreign policy ambitions in Syria and the Mediterranean

Peter Seeberg

Introduction

The Turkish borders reflect a centuries-long transformation process from the multinational Ottoman empire to the Turkish nation-state, which after World War I found its legal base in the Lausanne Treaty signed on the 24th of July 1923. As stated in the document, "the British Empire, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Roumania and the Serb-Croat-Slovene State" formed the signing coalition of winning powers following World War I (Lausanne-Treaty 1923). The participants of the Turkish delegation to Lausanne, led by İsmet İnönü, represented the nationalist government of Turkey – to be officially proclaimed on the 29th of October 1923 (Rogan 2015: 395). The main concern of modern Turkey was to achieve recognition of its borders in accordance with its so-called National Pact (see later). However, this was only to some extent obtained, with significant exceptions for instance regarding the areas around Iskenderun and Mosul in Syria and Iraq, respectively.

This historic reality has in recent years been questioned by the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for instance when he, giving a speech at an opening of an educational facility in 2018, stated: "…the ancient cities of Iraq, Kirkuk was ours in the past, Mosul was ours" (Palabiyik 2018: 240). In addition to that northern Syria and the Greek Islands around southwestern Turkey have become 'disputed territories' (Meier 2020a) in speeches and statements by Erdoğan arguing or indicating that these territories used to be Ottoman and that Lausanne was unfair to the Turks. Furthermore, strategic interests in the seas surrounding Turkey have become a significant part of Erdoğan's foreign and security policy rhetoric, launched as a national strategy for Turkey focusing on the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, named Blue Homeland (Turkish: *Mavi Vatan*) (Talbot 2020). The areas around Turkey has been exposed to foreign policy ambitions which go beyond the Kemalist visions of modern Turkey with its emphasis on the fixed borders of the nation-state. Following the failed coup against Erdoğan and the AKP-government in July 2016 the Turkish regime has become more autocratic, and, with a severely strengthened presidential mandate behind him since the constitutional referendum in 2017, Erdoğan has over the last years pursued an ambitious foreign policy aiming at expanding the Turkish influence in the Mediterranean region (Salt 2018).

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The article in particular looks at two simultaneous cases in the Levant, where an activist Turkish foreign policy and attempts at reconfiguring Mediterranean politics affect what we, drawing on Daniel Meier's conceptual reflections related to cases in the Levant, can refer to as in-between spaces along Turkey's borders (Meier 2020b) [1]. The two cases represent the most significant expressions of Erdoğan's neo-Ottoman agenda involving Turkey in the region. The first case, representing an intervention into what Turkey sees as an important sphere of interest, and where Kurdish identity and Syrian territory are at stake, deals with the Turkish incursions into Syria over the last years with the ambitions of prohibiting a permanent existence of an autonomous Kurdish entity in north-eastern Syria and, in a wider perspective, seeking to strengthen the Turkish role in determining the future of the Levant. The second case is the Turkish intervention in 2020 in the Libyan civil war on the side of the UN-initiated government in Tripoli with Fayez al-Sarraj in charge of the Government of National Accord, and – in connection with that – the agreement on maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean between Turkey and Libya. A main interest related to this complex space characterized by only partly existing and therefore contested borders is for Turkey to gain access to offshore resources in the Mediterranean Sea, thereby strengthening Turkey's position in the competition on becoming a regional hegemon in the eastern Mediterranean.

Analyzing Turkish political strategies rebordering the Mediterranean space the article attempts to answer this research question: how and why has Turkish foreign policy developed in a more activist and expansionist direction? In short it is claimed in the following that the increasingly autocratic character of the regime in Turkey in combination with Erdoğan's neo-Ottoman aspirations constitute a significant part of the reason for the changing Turkish policies and its potentially expanding influence in the Mediterranean region, arguing that the policies not only are about exerting increased influence in the region but aim at expanded territorial control in the two contexts analyzed.

The article draws on available research on the relations between Turkey and its neighbouring countries, reports and material from relevant think tanks, international organizations, and media contributions. In addition to that the article rests on speeches by Erdoğan and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu and anonymized interviews (for security reasons) by the author collected in Turkey during fieldwork visits there over the last decade. The section below discusses important conceptual and empirical aspects of changes in Turkish foreign policy, followed by two sections which in detail analyze the above-mentioned cases, and the conclusion.

1. Increasing autocratic tendencies in Turkey, Erdoğan's neo-Ottoman aspirations and the borders of modern Turkey

Turkey was after the failed coup against Erdoğan and the Turkish Government in July 2016 exposed to a political transformation based on strategies of repression

[1] Meier defines in-between spaces as "a specific type of territoriality, located in-between borders, namely buffer zones, safe zones, no man's land and other interstitial spaces at the edges of the states" (Meier, 2020b: 274).

taking their starting point in new laws, emergency policies and intensified assaults against the political opposition, Turkish academia, media and civil society (Yilmaz and Turner 2019: 691)[2]. During the emergency period, which followed the crackdown on the attempted coup, a landing field was laid out for the transition to presidentialism, which became the result of a referendum in April 2017. In the course of the following years the Turkish state, led by a dominant Erdoğan, developed distinct autocratic tendencies. It might be difficult to point out, when these tendencies appeared. When the AKP came to power after the elections in November 2002, the development pointed in the opposite direction. The party launched political as well as economic reforms and showed respect for human rights, both concerning media and ethnic minorities (Kirisci and Toygür 2019: 4).

It didn't last; gradually a line of measures was implemented during the years 2003-2013, which limited the options and room for maneuvering for the opposition. The contours of an illiberal democracy came to the fore. Plans in 2013 of establishing a large shopping centre at the Taksim Square in Istanbul, the so-called Gezi Park project, led to protests and demonstrations. The brutal crackdown on the demonstrators sparked mass protests, which spread around the country (Cagaptay 2020: 175). The whole situation appeared as a turning point on the way towards an autocratic development for Turkey[3].

In 2014 a presidential election took place. Contrary to earlier it was based on the principle of direct elections and already in the first round Erdoğan with 51,79% of the votes won the absolute majority. He took over the presidency from Abdullah Gül, while Davutoğlu became Prime Minister. The election was criticized by foreign election observers, who in particular raised the issue of a noticeable dominance in the media by the AKP and Erdoğan[4]. The Turkish opposition was also highly critical of this, not least the Kurdish party, HDP, whose candidate, Selahattin Demirtaş, received 9,76% of the votes. In the years after the election the dominance of Erdoğan within the AK-party became more and more outspoken. He eliminated any critical voices and the rhetoric about his role both within the party and in the government gradually changed in a populist direction, claiming that he represented the people and the will of the nation (Kirisci and Toygür 2019: 5).

If Gezi Park symbolized the first significant turning point in the direction of autocracy, the attempted coup against the government in 2016 was the second. It became utilized to introduce a state of emergency, to bypass normal political channels and govern via decrees. The referendum concerning presidentialism in 2017 sanctioned reforms, of which some of the most important were: a) abolishing the prime ministry, and b) that the president could be leader of the governing party, c) could rule via decrees, d) bring forward a proposal for the state budget, e) and appoint ministers, leading government officials and judges for the supreme court (Yılmaz 2019).

[2] Informal interviews by the author with Turkish intellectuals in 2016.
[3] Interviews by the author with European ambassadors to Turkey confirmed that the coup against the Turkish regime in 2016 led to significantly increasing autocratic tendencies in Turkey.
[4] Informal interviews by the author with foreign election observers.

And following this process Erdoğan to an increasing degree made decisions himself regarding foreign policy issues and took on the role of representing Turkey in bilateral and multilateral fora, meetings in international organizations, summit meetings and conferences. In connection with these activities he reserved the right to decide if the given international contacts should be considered a threat against the nation and the sovereignty of the people – or not (Kaliber and Kaliber 2019: 9, 11).

The development in the neighboring Middle-Eastern states in connection with the so-called Arab Spring in 2011 for Turkey constituted an opportunity of focusing more on the potential in a closer Turkish-Arab cooperation. As shown by Esra and Alper Kaliber, it is relevant to distinguish between two phases in the Turkish foreign policy orientation under the AKP. A phase from 2002 to 2011 characterized by "thin populism" and a phase from 2012 and onwards, characterized by "thick populism" (Mudde 2004)[5]. In the period of thin populism Turkey was seen as the bridge between East and West: as an actor, which is oriented towards regional as well as international actors and without a clear ideological reason for its priorities. Contrary to this, in the period of thick populism, Turkey began to position itself as belonging to an Eastern civilization and defining itself negatively vis-à-vis the "Western Other" (Kaliber and Kaliber 2019: 5-12).

In connection with negotiations with the EU about an agreement on Syrian refugees a self-conscious Erdoğan put pressure on the EU-representatives and succeeded in turning Turkish policies regarding mainly Syrian refugees into strong foreign policy tools. According to the agreement Turkey would take care of more than 3,5 million refugees, against receiving 6 billion € from the EU and promises of free visas for Turkish citizens, who wanted to go to Europe (Seeberg 2018). Thereby Turkey tended to achieve a new status in its relationship with the EU, where the earlier subordination developed into a relation based on mutual dependence (Aras 2019: 48)[6].

An explanation for the autocratic tendencies, which have become a reality in Turkey, probably also has to do with the specific character of the Turkish state and its development over time, in particular regarding the deep state (Turkish: *derin devlet*) phenomenon in Turkey, as described by Robert Springborg. Springborg mentions this well-known definition from *The Economist* of the notion of deep state: "a network of individuals in different branches of government, with links to retired generals and organized crime, that existed without the knowledge of high-ranking military officers and politicians" (Springborg 2018). However, in his actual analysis of the phenomenon he uses the term as a metaphor both for such networks of influential individuals and for a specific organization like for instance the Gülen movement. For decades a well-known, but normally not in the public sphere actively intervening deep state, functioned as a guarantor for the Kemalist character of the state. It was this strong actor, which several times in the post-war period carried out coups against incumbent governments. The last time it took place was the so-called post-modern coup[7] in 1997,

[5] The populism concept and its analytical potential is discussed by Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition*, 39 (2004), 542–563.
[6] Anonymous interviews by the author with European ambassadors to Turkey confirmed the increasing level of mutual dependence between Turkey and the EU, in particular regarding the role of the refugee-question.
[7] The notion of the postmodern coup was invented by the Turkish Admiral Salim Dervişoğlu.

where the coalition-government, led by Necmettin Erbakan from the islamist Refah Partisi (Welfare Party), was dismissed. It happened without dissolving the parliament and without suspending the constitution – and after a while democracy was restored. Gradually and imperceptibly a kind of competing deep state developed, founded in the Gülen movement, which over time spread out in important sectors of Turkish society and gained significant potential power. After the AKP came to power, the party began building its own deep state, and from 2002 to 2013 they were successful, via an indirect form of alliance between the AKP and the Gülen movement, in outmaneuvering the Kemalist deep state. And in the following years an internal power struggle became a reality, culminating in the failed coup in 2016 and AKP's subsequent showdown with the Gülen movement, which ended with a defeat for the latter (Springborg 2018).

With the referendum in 2017 and the June 2018 presidential election Erdoğan, gaining 52,59% of the votes, consolidated his power. With the eliminated office of prime minister, and the additional political strength attached to the double status as president and head of the AKP, Turkey's parliamentary system was transformed into an extremely centralized autocratic regime. However, the development is far from enjoying popular backing and has not taken place without challenges for him and for the AKP.

Erdoğan is obviously trying to position himself and Turkey stronger on the regional political scene and seems to pursue goals, which can strengthen his support in the Turkish population, thereby contributing to maintain his legitimacy as president (Oğuzlu 2016). This is the case in the context of the ambitious intervention in Syria, where the decisive interest has been to roll back the Kurdish influence in the North-Syrian area og more specifically the Kurdish militias, which in connection with the battle against ISIS in Syria have worked closely together with the American forces operating there. Turkey has apparently had some success in bringing itself into an indirect alliance with both Russia and Iran, and also thereby comes closer to its goal of reducing any Kurdish dominance in Northern Iraq. Similarly, the interference in Libya, where Turkey supports the UN-initiated government in Tripoli, can be seen in a legitimacy-perspective (Skinner 2020). The different initiatives have under intensive media-coverage been presented for the Turkish population in order to promote nationalist currents (Bellut 2020). The Turkish foreign policy orientation has, in particular regarding the Syria dimension, changed from soft power to hard power – according to Jeremy Salt to a degree which hasn't been seen before in the history of the Turkish republic (Salt 2018).

It seems relevant to claim, that moving beyond the formal border visions of post-1923 Turkey is the ambition of Erdoğan. And rather than following in the footsteps of "Özal or Demirel, however, Erdoğan's vision for Turkey's foreign policy does not encompass Ankara as always being a loyal or obedient ally to the West". The goal, as described by Soner Cagaptay, is to revive the "Ottoman-era glory" for Turkey – to frame Erdoğan's vision in a neo-Ottoman narrative (Cagaptay 2020: 18-19). Neo-Ottomanism can hardly be perceived as a well-defined category but should be

understood as a complex analytical frame or concept, which has proven useful for the interpretation of Erdoğan's recent political practices. The complexity of the concept is underlined in this attempt at defining its character:

> Neo-Ottomanism is a new mindset that seeks to resituate Turkish nation-building in its Ottoman roots by recognizing the Ottoman legacy and its communities as the constitutive elements of the nation that live on in the Republic of Turkey (…) sharing the Ottoman legacy and memories, along with the achievements of the Republic" (Yavuz 2016: 444).

An important aspect of the development of neo-Ottomanism in the context of AKP-policies is the role played by Islam. Since the AKP came to power in 2002, there has been a significant rise in the number of mosques in Turkey. Diyanet sources claim that from 2003 to 2014 10,000 new mosques were erected and many old ones were renovated (Gontijo and Barbosa 2020). In a more recent context, extraordinary significant mosques on several occasions have been utilized as symbolic edifices in the promotion of neo-Ottomanism[8].

As argued by Hakan Yavuz Turkish politics is being driven by dueling visions of nostalgia (Yavuz 2020: 180). An important element in this is populism based on a close relationship between the leader and the ordinary Turks, turning the Ottoman past into an imaginary home for the believing Muslims of the Anatolian population. Neo-Ottomanism is about emotions, a longing for the well-known; inventing tradition, with the famous notion coined by Eric Hobsbawm. In the case of Erdoğan and AKP-rule Islam not only is about installing piety into Turkish society, but furthermore about utilizing religion as a way to control the masses, taking the 19th century Sultan Abdulhamid as a kind of role model. The autocratic regime of Abdulhamid was, according to François Georgeon, working "strenuously to protect Ottoman territorial integrity from European intrigue by politicizing Islamic identity and stressing pan-Islamic solidarity" [9].

In a recent attempt at defining the notion of autocracy Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt have, building on Juan Linz' work the *Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, suggested the following criteria as key indicators of authoritarian behavior: 1) rejection of (or weak commitment to) democratic rules of the game, 2) denial of the legitimacy of political opponents, 3) toleration or encouragement of violence, 4) readiness to curtail civil liberties of opponents, including media (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018: 23-24). If we focus on the period since the coup in 2016 it seems obvious that the regime of Erdoğan and the AKP very much match these criteria. In addition to that the Turkish regime has developed an "extreme example of kleptocracy and nepotism in the

[8] The opening of the gigantic Camlica Mosque in Istanbul in early March 2019 represents a recent example of this symbolic ambition. It is larger than any of the classical mosques, yet modelled after the mosques built by Mimar Sinan, the architect of Sultan Suliman the Magnificent (Cagaptay, 2020: 1-2). A maybe even more significant expression of the same ambitions was seen when Erdoğan on the 97 years anniversary of the signing of the Lausanne Treaty, 24 July 2020, reopened Aya Sofya as a mosque – thereby reversing a decision by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who turned the historical building into a museum in 1935.

[9] The reference to François Georgeon was pointed out by Hakan Yavuz (Yavuz, 2020: 147).

republican system. For Erdoğan, the state exists primarily to serve his interests as the chief executive of the state and to reward his most loyal adherents and advisers" (Yavuz 2020: 150).

Indications of neo-Ottoman practices regarding foreign policies can be seen in the frequent questioning of the Lausanne Treaty in speeches by Erdoğan, where he refers to or hints at the National Pact (Turkish: Misak-i Millî), which was a strategic plan adopted by the Ottoman Parliament in 1920, according to which "Turkey claimed territories stretching from Eastern Thrace (now part of Greece), to Cyprus, the eastern Aegean islands, parts of northern Syria, northern Iraq, the entirety of modern Armenia, parts of Georgia, and even to Iran" (Maziad and Sotiriadis 2020). In recent years, as mentioned, the focus has been on Northern Syria as an area, where the "sacrosanct" borders of Kemalist Turkey could be challenged by a Neo-Ottoman agenda (Aydıntaşbaş 2020). In the history of the Turkish Republic this mentioning of Ottoman territories, where it is indicated that these areas unjustly have been given away by Atatürk and that in principle this should lead to a reconfiguration of the current borders, has not been heard before (Yavuz 2020: 153).

2. Northern Syria and the Foreign Policy Strategies of Turkey

The borders of Syria stems from the secret Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, forming the basis for the French mandate, which lasted from 1923 and until right after the end of World War II, where Lebanon and Syria appeared as modern Arab states. The Kurds probably constitute around 10-12 % of the Syrian population, and a significant number of the Kurds live in northern Syria (McDowall 1996). The Syrian Kurds have traditionally lived in three separate areas of Northern Syria, for many years deliberately prevented from forming any kind of regionally coherent or dominant ethnic group by the repressive Syrian regime (Allsopp and van Wilgenburg 2019). The civil war in Syria following the Arab Spring in early 2011, however, changed this. The war put Bashar al-Assad's regime under extreme pressure and in order to concentrate its military holding on to the for him most important areas of Syria, namely the positions in and around Damascus and the Alawite homeland around the cities of Latakia and Tartus, al-Assad in July 2012 withdrew his troops from the Kurdish regions. Gradually local Kurdish autonomy developed in Northern Syria, causing great apprehension in Ankara (Gunter and Yavuz 2020: 87).

The war in Syria, escalating in the early summer of 2011, led in the first place to a chaotic battle between the Syrian regime, its army and security forces on one side and on the other side a Syrian opposition consisting of an incoherent and poorly armed number of local resistance groups. Early 2012 witnessed the founding of Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian branch of al-Qaida, and in late 2013 ISIS appropriated the city of al-Raqqa and turned it into the jihadist center of gravity in Syria. By mid-2014 ISIS had secured a dominant position in much of Eastern Syria, proving a disaster for the Syrian Arab rebels and thereby, indirectly, a gift for the regime in Damascus and its propaganda painting all its opponents as terrorists (Harris 2018: 15, 55). During the

period from 2011 to 2014, and in particular after mid-2012 and the withdrawal of Syrian forces, Kurds primarily under the leadership of PYD along the Syrian-Turkish border established autonomous areas or zones there, and over time the war situation in Syria produced a hitherto unseen level of 'territorialization' of the fragmented country (Meier 2020b: 273).

The development has been influenced by the Turkey-US relationship, which during the presidential period of Obama deteriorated from a relatively positive relation in the years after he came to power in 2009 to a deeply problematic reality as a result of the close military cooperation between the US and the Kurdish YPG in northern Syria (Cagaptay 2020: 109). An analysis of which forces in the region might be capable of fighting ISIS would quickly indicate, that if the US wanted to avoid a significant increase in the number of US boots on Syrian ground, they more or less were left with no alternative but to support and fight together with the YPG (Totten 2015: 8). Strategically this created a critical situation in the cooperation between the US and Turkey, which according to Cagaptay might have irreversibly ruined the ties between the two NATO-partners (Cagaptay 2020: 227).

For Turkey it was important to defeat the Kurds, not least because the connections between the Turkish government and the PKK in Turkey had turned negative as a result of the collapse of a ceasefire in 2015, following a relatively long period of attempts at improving Turkish-Kurdish relations within Turkey (Cagaptay 2020: 175). From the viewpoint of Erdoğan the political success of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) at the parliamentary elections in June 2015, which denied AKP a renewed majority, made it more opportune to enter into a political alliance with Turkish right wing nationalists (Gunter and Yavuz 2020: 91).

Over the next years Turkey launched a more aggressive foreign policy regarding northern Syria. A large military operation, called "Operation Euphrates Shield", had several different purposes. Officially the aim was to fight against the ISIS and reduce their dominance in local areas in northern Syria. But for Turkey the main ambition was, via this intervention, to secure that the areas did not fall into the hand of the YPG: If this action hadn't taken place, it might have resulted in a scenario where the Kurdish forces would be able to connect together a front of what seen from Ankara would look like a 650 kilometer-long belt across Turkey's southern border where the YPG (and indirectly the PKK) held a dominant position (Cagaptay 2020: 218). The operation started in August 2016 and lasted seven months. Seen from a Turkish point of view the operation was a success – ISIS lost influence in northern Syria and the role of the YPG in the area was diminished.

And the long-term goal, gaining expanded territorial control, thereby securing that Turkey would have a say in determining the future of Syria, was also getting closer. In the following years this ambition was expanded through further military action and diplomatic measures. In January 2018 Turkish forces in collaboration with its allies in Syria, the Free Syrian Army, launched a second attack, dubbed "Operation Olive Branch", where they entered Afrin, the westernmost, mainly Kurdish canton. Two months later they had occupied the area. The operation cost the lives of 1,500 Kurdish

fighters, 289 local civilians and 46 soldiers/FSA fighters (Gunter and Yavuz 2020: 91). It also led to significant flows of refugees away from the area, which was condemned by the Kurds and also by international human rights organizations. In the media coverage of the Turkish intervention Erdoğan referred to one of the few Ottoman victories in World War I and stated that "In Gallipoli they attacked us with the most powerful army. Now that they do not have the courage to do so, they come at us with the world's basest, bloodiest, specially trained and equipped terrorist organisations" (Economist 2018).

The action was followed, in October 2019, by a third major military operation entitled "Operation Peace Spring". Again, the target was YPG and affiliated militias in northern Syria, but also in the border region as a whole to create a 30 km-deep "safe zone", where it would be possible to resettle some of the 3,6 million Syrian refugees living in Turkey. It seems likely that it is the official Turkish understanding of the three military operations, that they should be perceived as a whole, altogether constituting a Turkish plan for the northern Syrian region, focusing on providing Ankara a strategic advantage by ending the coherence of the three YPG dominated areas (Erkmen 2020: 4). The defeat of ISIS in Syria in early 2019 was a result of efforts by several different actors. In the actual battlefield one of the most important actors was the US-supported Kurdish forces, but the Russian armed forces also played an important role. It is an interesting reality, that the Turks and the Russians share an interest in defeating ISIS, but also share an interest in reducing the influence of the YPG, especially as long as the YPG are on collision course with the Syrian regime.

A significant aspect of the Turkish foreign policy ambitions in Syria is to achieve more or less indirect alliances with other autocratic regimes in the region, mainly Iran and Russia. The alliances in themselves imply a strengthening of Turkey's strategic importance in the Levant, thereby contributing to laying a foundation for Turkish expansionism in a neo-Ottoman perspective – in the sense that the territories in which the Turkish strategic importance increases are the ones alluded to in some of Erdoğan's speeches. Another example of this could be heard is his speech at the AKP-congress in Eskişehir in February 2018, where he talked about the military action in Syria: "Those who think that we have erased from our hearts the lands from which we withdrew in tears a hundred years ago are wrong. We say at every opportunity we have that Syria, Iraq and other places in the geography in our hearts are no different from our own homeland" (Bulut 2018).

It is at the same time, however, important to be aware of the distribution of power between the three significant regional actors, having parallel interests in some cases, but different agendas in other. The so-called Astana process[10] (see below) has demonstrated that Turkey, Iran and Russia potentially seem to be the decisive actors in solving the problems in Syria, not least because they more than other players have spent significant foreign policy energy and military force to shape the political situation in the Levant (Thépaut 2020). The Astana process formally took its point of departure in UNSC Resolution 2254, which in December 2015 called for a ceasefire

[10] Astana: earlier name of the capital of Kazakhstan; renamed Nur-Sultan in March 2019.

and political settlement in Syria. In late 2016 President Vladimir Putin and Erdoğan agreed to suggest Astana as venue for Syria peace talks and a joint statement with this ambition of December 2016 also included Iran (Federation 2016). Still in 2016, a week later, a nationwide cease fire plan was agreed laying the foundation for negotiations to come in 2017. Another important agreement was reached in the spring of 2017 on the establishment of so-called de-escalation zones in Syria. The idea of the agreement was that Russia, Iran and Turkey agreed to work as guarantors for the existence of the zones, in which combat operations were outlawed alongside a no-fly zone for military aircraft. The zones should include the Idlib Province and some areas in the neighboring provinces (of Aleppo, Latakia and Hama), an area north of Homs plus some areas in central and southern Syria (TASS 2017). Turkey had soldiers on 12 different locations in Idlib and supported rebel groups loyal to Turkey there.

Attempts at moving further along the Astana track followed in late 2019, where Iran, Russia and Turkey once again met for trilateral talks. The talks, however, was disturbed by the fact that Russia and the Syrian regime had resumed their bombardments in Idlib, allegedly in response to a refusal from some of the rebel groups accepting that the regime would take over areas in western Idlib – a suggestion Russia supported (Arab 2019). In 2020 the development brought Russia and Turkey on collision course and Erdoğan insisted that they would not move back on their positions in northern Syria including Idlib. Talks in Ankara between Russia and Turkey aiming at reducing tensions in the region did not solve the problematic issues at stake.

3. Turkish visions for Libya and the struggle for territorial control in the Mediterranean

A few months after the start of the Arab Spring, in an interview in May 2011, Erdoğan emphasized the significant role Turkey intended to play in support of the demands for democratic rights by the peoples of the Middle East (Erdogan 2011). As mentioned by Yavuz, "as the Middle East dictators started to fall, Erdoğan became the most popular leader in the region" (Yavuz 2020: 230). It had for several years been the Turkish strategy to form a closer cooperation with Jordan, Lebanon and Syria and one of the tools was through economic and cultural cooperation to establish a "Levant Quartet", which then later could be expanded and include other Middle Eastern countries (Yavuz 2020: 229). However, with the brutal clampdown on the opposition by the Syrian regime, the situation in Syria soon turned into a civil war, which ruled out any development along the lines of the Turkish ambitions.

For Turkey this meant, that for some years attempts at expanding the Turkish sphere of influence in the Levant, by establishing alliances or multilateral cooperation, was on hold. As shown above, this changed with the Turkish military interventions in Syria, and in addition to that, it became possible to look for other options in the region. Around 2015 there were contacts between Israel and Turkey regarding establishing a cooperation on utilizing offshore resources in the eastern Mediterranean,

but it didn't develop into a lasting alliance. And regarding other actors in the region Turkey was maneuvering in a difficult field, up against several opponents, which seemed to have an interest in not involving Turkey. In Cairo in January 2019 Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan and Palestine created the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), aiming at working together on exploring and exploiting the offshore resources of the Mediterranean and also to distribute them where possible, hereunder to build pipelines from the place of drilling in the Mediterranean to Jordan and to Europe. Erdoğan characterized the move as a "game to imprison Turkey within its land boundaries" (Cohen 2020), indicating that his policies in the Eastern Mediterranean aim at moving beyond the borders of Kemalist Turkey. In this context the Turkish interventions in Libya became means to reach Erdoğan's geostrategic goals regarding the in-between borders of the Mediterranean seabed. Yet, the interventions in Libya also, as shown below, have their own rationale.

In February 2019 the largest naval exercise in Turkey's history was launched. It was the official ambition to test the ability to carry out coordinated operations simultaneously in the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean (Talbot 2020)[11]. It was something of a novelty that Turkey positioned itself as a maritime power, and the activism might be part of a larger geopolitical project. Indications of this can be seen concerning the energy aspects. In reality Turkey does not recognize the post-World War I arrangements in the Aegean Sea, and since those might have consequences for the use of the energy resources, minor confrontations between the potential exploiters of the resources have taken place in some instances.

As a countermove to the EMGF Erdoğan, together with Fayez al-Sarraj, representing the GNA-government in Libya, in November 2019 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) called the Turkey-Libya Maritime Delimitation Agreement (MDA) – thereby establishing a so-called Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) between Libya and Turkey (Memorandum 2019). In connection with the launching of the MOU Erdoğan stated that "Other international actors cannot conduct exploration activities in the areas marked in the memorandum. Greek Cypriots, Egypt, Greece and Israel cannot establish a natural gas transmission line without Turkey's consent" (TRT-World 2019). Erdoğan was referring to a pipeline project by Cyprus, Greece and Israel aiming at transporting gas reserves from the Eastern Mediterranean to southern Europe, which would be made difficult by the Libya-Turkey undertaking.

It seems obvious that Turkey wants to expand its activities and presence in the Mediterranean in general and in Libya in particular. Turkey, as mentioned earlier, has played an active role in the battle in Libya in 2019-20 in and around Tripoli, and is probably interested in following up on these efforts with a more permanent presence in Libya for instance in the form of a naval base or other military facility on Libyan territory (Barkey 2020). Turkey has for decades had significant economic interests in Libya and obviously wants to protect those interests. Since the 1980s Turkish workers and engineers have taken advantage of booming opportunities for Turkish business

[11] The name of the exercise was Blue Homeland, which also, as mentioned, is the name of Turkey's national strategy for Turkey regarding the three sea areas. 103 military ships and 20.000 soldiers took part in the naval operation.

in Libya. Around 10,000 Turks were evacuated during the early days of the civil war in 2011, and there are still plans and interests in resuming these activities (Cagaptay 2020: 105).

Erdoğan visited Libya in September 2011 to develop ties with the post-Qadhafi regime – and to maintain or re-establish Turkish economic interests in Libya. It is an interesting coincidence that 100 years earlier, in September 1911, the Italo-Turkish War, also known as the Tripolitanian War, took its beginning. The Ottoman empire lost Libya to Italy in October 1912, but Libya had been a part of the Ottoman Empire from 1551 and even today small groups of descendants from the Ottoman era can be found in some cities of Libya. Davutoğlu underlined the neo-Ottoman perspectives in Turkish-Libyan relations in a speech in 2011, where he stated:

> Just as the state, which was the political center of an ancient civilization, was torn apart (…) from the Tripolitanian War (…) and foundational elements of this state were psychologically and historically divided, only to be replaced by a new republic founded in 1923 as a nation-state (…) now we need to unify the elements of this broken and fragmented nation again (Yavuz 2020: 186).

The quotation underlines that neo-Ottomanism not only in recent years has contributed to forming the ideological basis for Turkish foreign policy. However, with the increased autocratization of the Turkish regime and the more explicit hard power dimensions of Turkish foreign policy as shown above, the neo-Ottoman aspirations have moved beyond a status as ideological foundation and turned into a more explicit aspect of Erdoğan's and the AK-Party's foreign policies in the Mediterranean. Davutoğlu might, as shown by Cagaptay, have influenced the conceptual trajectory of neo-Ottomanism in Turkish politics in a more obvious way than Erdoğan (Cagaptay 2020: 45). But when it became possible for Erdoğan, strengthened by the 2017 presidential referendum to intervene in an expansionist way in the context of the geopolitical conflicts in the Mediterranean, neo-Ottoman statements became efficient tools in his narrative concerning the interventions.

Conclusion

The article has attempted to show, that, inspired by Sultan Abdulhamid II, Erdoğan has launched a neo-Ottoman version of autocratic presidentialism with foreign policy ambitions of becoming a regional hegemon in the Levant and the Mediterranean. The increased autocratization in recent years can be explained from different perspectives. On one side we have internal Turkish critical and oppositional pressure, which has made Erdoğan and the AKP-regime react with growing autocratic practices. As mentioned the Gezi Park incident represented a significant turning point as to the tendency to authoritarian behavior, but the coup in 2016 with its explicit security threats against the regime more than anything else led to repressive measures, which then became institutionalized via the changes of the political system towards autocracy dominated by Erdoğan.

On the other side more immaterial and emotional elements should also be mentioned as preconditions for maintaining a certain level of legitimacy behind the AKP policies. An important aspect of this is the religious dimension, utilized as an attempt at turning the Ottoman past into an imaginary home for the believing Turkish Muslims, but also as a politicized ideological strategy for the purpose of controlling the population. As underlined by Yavuz different types of nostalgia related to the Ottoman past are being utilized in this way, both in the emotional sense and in a more direct, instrumental way, where for instance the intensive mosque-building since the AKP came to power in 2002 is a tangible example (Yavuz 2020: 240). The Sykes-Picot based borders between northern Syria and Turkey have been penetrated several times by Turkish forces in a recent context. Entering the territories in northern Syria where the Kurds, as described, during the Turkish civil war had expanded their influence and obtained a dominant position, has led to control over a Sunni-Arab-majority zone in Syria. At the same time the Kurdish dominance has become rolled back. The struggle for becoming a regional hegemon has, as regards northern Syria, left Turkey in a strengthened position. Or, as mentioned by a Turkish border-official: "this is our first experiment in establishing an order in the Middle East in over a hundred years" (Aydıntaşbaş 2020: 14).

The Turkish initiatives regarding the complex in-between border issues of the Mediterranean seabed and the offshore resources also aim at Turkish expansionism. The ambition of the policies was to go up against regional attempts, in the words of Erdoğan, at "imprisoning" Turkey behind its land boundaries. A complicated game unfolded, dealing with not too well-defined borders in the Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea. In the first place Turkey looked into the possibilities of reaching an agreement with Israel in an attempt of getting Turkey involved in the deep-sea exploration activities in the Mediterranean. When this seemed to fail, because Israel preferred to join forces with other Mediterranean states, a different strategy had to be followed, leading to the alliance with Libya, which made it possible to put pressure on the competing alliance in the Eastern Mediterranean consisting of Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, and Israel.

Hundred years after the Tripolitanian War the Ottoman legacy in Libya became the historical background for a new Turkish intervention there. In the course of the recent battle of Tripoli, which started in April 2019 with the siege of the Libyan capital by Khalifa Haftar and his Libyan National Army, Turkey, after having signed the MDA in November 2019, in January 2020 intervened militarily in Libya and saved a critical situation for the surrounded Government of National Accord and forced Haftar and his forces away from the capital. The interests in Libya on behalf of Turkey focus on possible economic contracts, trade and other business, but also on expanding the Turkish sphere of influence in North Africa. The fragmented situation in Libya, where Turkey's alliance partner is under severe pressure, underlines that the ambitions can turn out being difficult to realize. The religious dimension is a part of the game, in the sense that Turkey is up against Haftar's regional allies, one of which is Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who crushed a close ally of Erdoğan, President Mohammad Mursi, in the

military coup in July 2013. This was, regarding the ambition of establishing an alliance of Sunni-Muslim governments, something of a blow for Erdoğan, and Turkey and Egypt have since been on collision course. Another ally of Haftar, Russia, is in a geo-strategic perspective a strong adversary and an obstacle for Turkey becoming a regional hegemon in the Mediterranean.

Summing up, Erdoğan's neo-Ottoman expansionist ambitions has turned Turkey's soft power policies hard – regarding Syria, Libya and the Mediterranean. In the case of Syria, the Turkish intervention, as shown, tends to redefine the changing identities in the North-Syrian space, where the Kurds had gained influence since the Arab uprisings in 2011. Similarly, the Turkish alliance with Libya and the involvement in the struggle for Mediterranean offshore resources could imply a redrawing of (sea) borders, leading to a reassessment of the Mediterranean space and – potentially – an increased Turkish influence in what for centuries was Ottoman territory. The Turkish ambitions in the analyzed contexts have, despite significant challenges, overall tended to work out in accordance with the foreign policy goals. The expansionist strategies seem – at least for a while – actually to lead to changing patterns of territorial control in two important ways: a rebordering of in-between spaces in Northern Syria, and a potential restructuring of the regional power balance in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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The Atlantic Alliance, NATO, and the Post-Arab Springs Mediterranean. The Quest for a New Strategic Relevance

Gianluca Pastori

Introduction

In the wake of the Arab Springs, the changing Mediterranean security landscape posed to the Atlantic Alliance challenges that – on the backdrop of the transformation it was living – highlighted several problematic aspects. In the Cold War years, as guarantor of the Western security against the Soviet threat, the Alliance focused its attention mainly on the European "central theatre". Since the 1960s, it meant defending the North German Plain and the Fulda Gap. The Mediterranean dimension – albeit present – played a marginal and subordinated role. The events following 1989 only partially affected this state of things. If in the mid-1990s, in the light of the evolving strategic context, NATO tried to start forms of dialogue and collaboration with some countries of the "southern shore", the efforts that it made soon clashed with several difficulties. The enlargement toward the former Warsaw Pact members left Europe the main point of reference. The 9/11 events and the beginning of the involvement in Afghanistan (2003) led to the revision of the Alliance priorities and the re-orientation of its geographic sphere of action, gaining a new and sometimes troublesome centrality. Finally, the Ukraine crisis (2014) fuelled a rediscovery of NATO's "old" continental dimension and a revival of the "deterrence and defence" approach that, in the immediate post-Cold War period, had been mostly abandoned.

The adaptation process that these events triggered reverberated in the domestic realm. Following the gradual US disengagement (started in the early 2000s, with George W. Bush's outspoken unilateralism and culminated in the Trump administration's attacks and criticisms), the tensions among the European allies soured. Simultaneously, the Central and Eastern European countries' political and military relevance grew together with their defence budgets. As a consequence, NATO started facing new difficulties in dealing with Mediterranean security. The proliferation of regional problems and their increasingly non-military nature emphasised these difficulties. At the same time, they highlighted the contradictions of a structure searching for the antidote to its current problems in its military dimension's relaunch. In the background, there was a debate about the usefulness of NATO in the new international system and the possibility to replace it with "something different", maybe developing a more effective European security and defence identity. Unsurprisingly, the debate assumed its most heated tones on the European side. French President Emmanuel Macron's critical remarks about NATO "brain death" are

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just the most striking example. Another example is Macron's previous remarks about the need to start thinking about a "real European army" ("*une vrai armée européenne*") to provide the continent with a practical strategic autonomy from the United States.

1. NATO and the Mediterranean: a relationship with ups and downs

The geographical dimension is a pivotal element of the Atlantic Alliance. Since its establishing, it is supposed to set the limits of both its membership and its members' commitment. In other words, it defines the spatial coordinates in which apply the collective security guarantee enshrined in article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (Washington, April 4, 1949). In this perspective, the role of the Middle East and North Africa has often been troublesome. The inclusion of the "southern front" in the 1949 Treaty followed long and tiresome negotiations. On the one hand, it offered Italy the Western anchorage that several political forces were (ambiguously) looking. On the other, it did not dent the Anglo-Saxon nature of an alliance that – despite Canada's fundamental role – rested on the converge on the US and British interests. In the early 1950s, the admission of Turkey and Greece led to a partial rebalancing. In the following decade, the Harmel Report (*Report of the Council on the Future Tasks of the Alliance*, 1967) identified the Mediterranean as one of NATO's "exposed areas". However, the region remained the Alliance's "soft underbelly" at least until the end of the 1970s/early 1980s. In this period, the adoption of the so-called "Carter doctrine" contributed to enhancing its importance for the Western security, establishing a structural link with the Gulf region and somehow anticipating the future debate on the "out of area" issue (Kaplan, Clawson, Luraghi 1985; Stuart, Tow 1990)[1].

It was a relatively short-lived parenthesis, spanning over the first Reagan administration (1981-86) and the "second Cold War" period (Miles 2020). The enhancing of the US military role in the Gulf after 1979 marked the beginning of this process, which consolidated in the following years, among others, with the deployment of a new generation of intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs): the so-called "Euromissiles". The entry of the post-Franco Spain into the Alliance (1982) and the riparian countries' increased activism fuelled this new attention. In 1985, the adoption of the Italian new *Libro Bianco della Difesa* relaunched Rome's Mediterranean ambitions. In the same period, the tensions between the United States and Libya emphasised the region's role within the Western security system. However, in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev's election as Secretary-general of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union shifted the international attention on the Euro-Atlantic theatre again, opening the "summit season" of 1985-91. On the backdrop of the Euro-Atlantic détente, the previous years' tensions declined in the Mediterranean too. The process culminated in 1989-91. The "reform season" in the Middle East and North Africa – due

[1] In this sense, the geopolitical realignment that, in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, redefined the role of the Mediterranean in the framework of the Western security strategy revolved around the question of whether a "Mediterranean flank" of NATO existed as opposed to the southern one; in other words, whether the Mediterranean area was coherent enough to justify the elaboration of a common strategy in its regards (Kaplan, Clawson, Luraghi 1985: ix).

partly to the impact of the Cold War's end, partly to the physical and political decline of the first generation of national leaders (Sikal, Schnabel 2003; more critical remarks on this process are in Ehteshami 1999) – contributed to strengthening the trend.

The transformation of the Mediterranean scenario took NATO largely unprepared. With the improvement of the dialogue with Moscow, the dissolution of the Soviet Union (December 26, 1991), and the growth of the instability along the Alliance's borders (the background of the Strategic Concept that NATO adopted during the Rome Summit, on November 7-9, 1991), the reaction was projecting on the theatre the "antagonistic" model that previously shaped the East-West relations. The old cleavage was re-oriented on a North-South axis, and the "red peril" was reframed in a "green" one (Hadar 1993), although its tracts remained largely undefined. The instability in countries like Egypt and Algeria and the outbreak of the Yugoslav civil war supported this securitarian vision of the regional environment, mirrored in NATO's decision to develop a standing naval presence in the Mediterranean in 1992 (STANAVFORMED - *Standing Naval Force Mediterranean*, currently *Standing NATO Maritime Group 2* - SNMG2), instead of the existing 'on-call force (NAVOCFORMED - *NATO Naval On-Call Force Mediterranean*). Worth noting, between 1995 and 1996, also France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain developed their joint and combined military component, both land (EUROFOR - *European Rapid Operational Force*) and sea-air (EUROMARFOR - *European Maritime Force*), although on a not standing basis and limited to the discharge of the so-called 'Petersberg missions'[2] upon request of the European Union (EU), NATO, and the other international organisations.

It took until mid-decade for a new approach to emerge, with greater attention placed on NATO's role as an agent of international socialisation (Gheciu 2005). Announced in December 1994, the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue started in February 1995 with the invitations sent to Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. The following years, it was extended to Jordan (November 1995) and Algeria (February 2000), rising to seven the partners involved. The Dialogue was part of NATO's "participatory strategy" that supported several other initiatives in the same period. Among others, one can mention the Partnership for Peace program (PfP) in favour of the Central and Eastern European countries and the former Soviet republics, the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the following establishment of the Permanent Joint Council (PJC, 1997)[3] and the signing of the Charter on a Distinctive

[2] Agreed in 1992 within the framework of the Western European Union (WEU) to strengthen the organisation's role as the EU defence component and the European pillar of NATO, the "Petersberg missions" include a broad set of military activities, such as (but not formally limited to) humanitarian or evacuation missions, conflict prevention and peacekeeping missions, and crisis management, including peace-making operations. Subsequently framed within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), their scope gradually extended to include joint disarmament activities, military advice and assistance missions, and post-conflict stabilisation operations.

[3] After the crisis in NATO-Russia relations triggered by the allied intervention in Kosovo (1999), the adoption of the Rome Declaration (NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality) on May 28, 2002, replaced the PJC with the current NATO-Russia Council (NRC). Maintaining the objectives and principles of the 1997 Founding Act, the NRC was intended as a mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, decision-making and joint action, inter alia by replacing the previous bilateral "NATO+1" format with a new multilateral structure in which Russia and the individual allies could relate on an equal footing.

Partnership with Ukraine (1997). In this framework, the Mediterranean Dialogue aimed to promote confidence-building in a moment when mistrust was still high between NATO and the countries of the "southern shore"; moreover, it aimed to act as a platform for technical cooperation, delivering *ad hoc* assistance programs tailored to the needs of the different partners. The underlying assumption was the interdependence of European and Mediterranean security in a world of increasingly multi-dimensional and multi-vectorial risks and threats; the background was the post-Cold War transformation of NATO from a "simple" political and military alliance into a more ambitious security organisation with a potentially global vocation.

Despite its ambitions, the program had problems from the very beginning: among others: the emergence of more stringent priorities, the mistrust existing among the partner countries, and their intricate relations with the Atlantic Alliance. The beginning of NATO's involvement in the former Yugoslavia with Operation Deliberate Force in August 1995 and IFOR's deployment the following December are parts of the problem. Another part was the contemporary presence of other regional or sub-regional initiatives, such as the OSCE's Mediterranean Initiative, EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (the so-called "Barcelona Process"), the "5+5" initiative, or the project for an Arab Maghreb Union. Although conceived in terms of mutual reinforcement, these initiatives' proliferation eroded their effectiveness, especially in the most sensitive areas like crisis management. Twenty-five years after the beginning of the Dialogue, this is the field where the progress has been minor. For a long time, the persistence of NATO's image as a purely military alliance was a hamper. Another hamper was its perceived European and Western nature. The relevance that the Alliance devoted to the integration of the former Warsaw Pact counties supported this perception. In 1999, when Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland became full-fledged NATO members, it was in Europe that the "friendly hand policy" envisaged in the London Declaration (1990) and embodied in the PfP program attained its first results.

Against this backdrop, the 9/11 attacks and the emergence of the "projected" NATO of the 2000s led to another revision of the Alliance's Mediterranean posture, but they did not end the previous decade's openings. The Balkan engagement continued with the KFOR mission in Kosovo; in the meantime, in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Bosnia Herzegovina, the EU replaced the Alliance, starting *Concordia* and *Althea* missions in 2003 and 2004, respectively. However, the visibility that Afghanistan assumed with the beginning of ISAF (International Security Assistance Force, 2001-14) made it the real testbed for the Alliance in both operational and organisational terms. In this perspective, ISAF played a pivotal role in shape NATO's evolution and highlight NATO's limits (Hanagan 2019). The emergence of the "global NATO" also contributed to shifting the Alliance's attention away from its neighbourhood (Edström, Matlary, Petersson 2011)[4]. In June

[4] NATO's "global partnerships" are aimed at all countries that are not already part of a regional cooperation programme (Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council/Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative). The list of NATO's "global partners" (sometimes called "partners across the globe") currently includes Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia, Iraq, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Pakistan.

2004, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) tried to engage the six Gulf monarchies within the than-preeminent attention to the Middle Eastern theatre[5]. On the same occasion, the admission of seven new members to the Alliance (Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and the three former Soviet Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) reaffirmed the centrality of Eastern Europe for its future development and laid the foundations of the coming gradual worsening of the relations with Russia.

2. From 9/11 to the Arab Springs

It was a NATO looking beyond the Mediterranean borders that – between the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011 – faced the outbreak of the Arab Springs. Following the prevailing rhetoric, in its leaders' declarations, the Alliance looked favourably at a process somehow reminiscent of the Berlin Wall's fall. On this backdrop, even the intervention in Libya became the product of "a strong mandate from the Security Council and solid support from countries in the region […] a unique combination which we have not seen elsewhere" (Rasmussen 2011). In the internal realm, the intervention reframed in a multilateral context the initiative that the United States, the United Kingdom, and France had taken based on UN Security Council Resolution 1973. At the same time, while probably not fully wanted, it allowed NATO to exploit the relational network built in the framework of both the Mediterranean Dialogue and the ICI, and its experience in leading "variable geometry" coalitions of members, partners, and third countries (the "NATO+" format). However, the impression remained of "a half-hearted air campaign that lasted for months with little change to the stalemate on the ground and with increasing political frustration at the lack of progress" (Michaels 2014). In this sense, Operation Unified Protector's troubled experience highlighted the ambiguity of the Atlantic Alliance and its members when confronted with the problems of the Arab Springs. On the one hand, this ambiguity stem from the different visions of members' regional interests; on the other, it reflected the permanent subordination of the Mediterranean to other theatres.

The declining role of the United States in Europe partly explains this phenomenon. This decline has different reasons. During the first Obama mandate (2009-13), Afghanistan's weight in the Alliance's future increased as a product of the disengagement from Iraq, which, since 2003, had been the symbol of Washington's commitment in the Middle East. For the new Democratic administration, stabilise the Afghan political situation became the main aim in this theatre (Fitzgerald, Ryan 2014). On the Euro-Atlantic front, the weakening of the control that the United States exerted on NATO's dynamics, on the one hand, emphasised the already existing centrifugal tensions, on the other strengthened the trend toward a re-

[5] At present, only Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates have joined the ICI. Saudi Arabia and Oman – although they have repeatedly expressed their interest in the initiative – have preferred to maintain a more aloof position. Probably, their choice will not change despite the Atlantic Alliance's announced desire to provide further dynamism to the program, which has reached the fifteen-year mark.

nationalisation of European foreign policies that had started during the 1990s. In this context, the logic of the "leading from behind", although allowing the US to reduce its international commitment, contributed to denting its overall credibility, with foreseeable impacts on the Atlantic Alliance (Cohen, Scheinmann 2014). The Obama administration's following decisions regarding the escalation of the Syrian crisis and the emergence and consolidation of the so-called "Islamic State" confirmed this inherent weakness. Regarding the so-called "Islamic State", the same language that the US administration used has was seen as proof of its willingness to "[distance] itself from the imperative of a coherent response to the group in its local setting" (Siniver, Lucas 2016).

The conceptual elaboration of the Atlantic Alliance partly reflected these evolutions. The current Strategic Concept (adopted in Lisbon in 2010) predates the events. However, the praxis significantly evolved, especially after the Ukraine crisis and linking to its territorial implications, which favoured NATO's return to its European "core business" and relaunched the US role, although in somehow different forms. The crisis of NATO-Russia relations led, among others, to freeze the existing cooperation programs and the NATO-Russia Council's activity. This crisis gave new centrality to the East European theatre and the idea of a NATO "vigilant and prepared" somehow similar to the Cold War alliance. In its turn, this transformation of NATO's role led to a redeployment of its forces and the valorisation of the US military presence in Germany and Central and Eastern Europe. Worth noting, since 2016, this presence has markedly expanded, with a new emphasis on operational readiness, new commands, new rotational assets deployed in Poland, and new Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS) stockpiled in several countries to support the quick expansion of the forces needed to contain a new possible Russian thrust. The decision to create the so-called "Spearhead Force" (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force - VJTF) within the framework of the Readiness Action Plan was probably one of the most relevant aspects of NATO's new "eastward looking" posture emerging after the events of 2014.

At the political level, the perceived Russian threat's re-emergence contributed to increasing the Central and Eastern European allies' weight and reducing the Southern members' one. This trend was already evident in the second half of the 2000s and gave it more significant momentum. It rooted in the tensions that marred the relation between Washington of the allies of the "Old Europe" in the months immediately preceding the US military intervention in Iraq (March 20, 2003). Those tensions pushed the United States to look for a privileged – and mutually beneficial – relation with NATO's new member countries. Linking with the economic difficulties that several members lived in the first part of the decade, this led, among others, to a reduction of the Alliance's "long-arm" activities and to a new emphasis placed on the "deterrence and defence" approach that had shaped NATO's activity until the early 1990s. The adoption of such a posture ended the period of the "great missions". On December 31, 2014, ISAF officially ended. Although NATO's involvement in Afghanistan continued based on the enduring partnership agreement signed in

2010, the strength and ambitions of Operation Resolute Support were decidedly lower (11,000 men at the end of 2020 vs 130,000 men of ISAF at its maximum strength[6]). The same applies to NATO's other global engagements, which – in early October 2020 – absorbed some 20,000 people, including the force involved in the air policing activity along the Alliance's eastern and north-eastern borders.

Observers soon pointed out how marginal the Mediterranean was in this context, comparing to the other operational theatres. Due to these criticisms, in 2016, the Heads of State and Government's summit held in Warsaw approved a package of measures to rebalance NATO's asset and attention on the southern front. However, Warsaw's decisions were more the beginning of the process than its end (Lesser 2016; on the decisions taken in Warsaw see *Warsaw Summit Communiqué* 2016). Not even the beginning of Operation Sea Guardian (OSG, November 2016) fully solved the tensions. OSG had a more comprehensive mandate and paid greater attention to the Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA) aspects, but, for other aspects, it was the continuation of Operation Active Endeavour, active from 2001 to 2016 as an anti-terrorism mission. Moreover, in operational terms, it was little more than the rationalisation and expansion of the activity that SNMG2 had already started in February in the Eastern Mediterranean basin to contrast illegal immigration. In a landscape of rising tensions at the regional level and within NATO, OSG became the catalyst of the allies' problems. The French decision to withdraw its units due to the rifts with Turkey on the *Courbet* affair (July 1, 2020) was one sign in this direction[7].

In this perspective, if the Warsaw summit aimed to develop a set of instruments to recompose the cleavage among the different NATO's souls and manage more effectively the challenge of their integration, it was only partially successful. The adoption of the proposed measures was – above all – a way to defuse the tensions that emerged within the Alliance with the end of ISAF (December 31, 2014) and the decline of the out-of-area commitment, when NATO assumed a posture that some members considered too less "projected". Despite the favourable reception given to Warsaw decisions, these dynamics explain why a strategy capable of coherently composing different and – in some respects – opposing visions of security did not really emerge. The 2016 US presidential elections' result, the inauguration of the Trump administration (January 20, 2017), and the consequent weakening of the traditional US leading role strengthened the difficulties that stem from this state of things. Not even the effort to revive the so-called "360-degree approach" in the London summit of December 3-4, 2019 (*London Declaration* 2019: (4)) seems to have succeeded in providing a credible way out. Instead, the tensions that preceded the summit (and that – once again – had Turkey as a protagonist) highlighted how the Mediterranean balance remains a sensitive and contentious issue for NATO.

[6] The US presence underwent similar downsizing. In 2020 only, their numbers fell from 13,000 at the end of February to 4,000 at the end of December, with the aim of reaching 2,500 with the completion of the redeployment phase, in late January 2021. In May 2011, when the US commitment in Afghanistan reached its peak after Barack Obama's "surge", ISAF's strength was about 132,400 troops, of which about 90,000 US.

[7] According to the French authorities, on June 10, 2020, while inspecting the freighter *Cirkin* off the coast of Libya, the frigate *Courbet* was aggressively confronted by the Turkish units escorting the freighter and repeatedly targeted with the on-board weapon systems. The Turkish government denied the charge, while Paris asked NATO to investigate the incident.

3. An increasingly complex Mediterranean environment

The deterioration of the inter-allied relations was another element that affected NATO's role in the Mediterranean. On the one hand, the region seemed to attract less and less attention; on the other, tensions among the Alliance's members increased in scope and magnitude. Turkey's increasingly independent role was one of the catalysts for these tensions. With its sizeable military establishment, the country was, traditionally, one of NATO's pillars. However, since the Syrian crisis' outbreak, the distance between Ankara and the other allies became more evident, touching its climax in October 2019, when Ankara launched Operation Peace Spring (OPS) in Northern Syria against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Syrian Arab Army (SAA). Several NATO members heavily criticised OPS, which followed the withdrawal of the US forces deployed in the region. Criticisms also involved the position of NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, blamed for being "too soft" on Ankara. Canada and several European countries imposed an arms embargo on Turkey, while the United States imposed sanctions on Turkish ministries and senior government officials in response to the offensive in Syria. However, the crisis following OPS was just one of the many affecting Turkey-NATO relations in the last decade. In 2020, a new burst of the Greek-Turkish tensions over Cyprus led the countries on the verge of the military confrontation, while the exploitation of the Eastern Mediterranean oil and gas resources fed the rivalries among the riparian countries.

In recent years, a growing number of states and private subjects have expressed their interest in exploiting the Eastern Mediterranean's energy resources. The European Union and its member states look carefully at these developments to differentiate their supply lines and bypass their traditional supply problems. The United States, China, and Russia are equally interested in the issue. The entry of the Eastern Mediterranean energy resources into the service can affect the global market unexpectedly and significantly change the regional political and economic balance. The troubles that the US unconventional sector is living are another element that enhances the Eastern Mediterranean's possible role and explains the growing attention that the infrastructural projects connecting the region with the Southern European markets and some North African countries attract. From a European perspective, the Levantine basins' development could weaken the Russian-Norwegian duopoly from which – currently – most of the EU countries depend for their consumption. However, this is not a win/win scenario. On the one hand, the Eastern Mediterranean energy resources' exploitation can promote greater regional cooperation, especially among the countries more directly affected by the projects. However, on the other, the diversion of the existing flows and the emergence of new players can impact several countries and jeopardise the "geopolitical rent" they traditionally enjoyed.

One of these "victims" could be Turkey. Ankara has long understood the Eastern Mediterranean's importance for its energy ambitions and the potentially negative impact that its development could have. This state of things helps to explain the recent return of tension with Greece and Cyprus, which are actively engaged in the

EastMed project, the pipeline system linking the regional basins to their potential markets[8]. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Turkey has repeatedly tried to emerge as a possible Mediterranean energy hub and a privileged supply channel for Southern and South-Eastern Europe, exploiting its geographical location and its barycentric position vis à vis the routes coming from the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the former Soviet Central Asia. However, these ambitions only partly materialised. On the supply side, several projects failed to materialise (Schröder, Bettzüge, and Wessels, 2017); on the demand side, despite the efforts made to change this state of things, Russia remained the leading EU energy partner. The long-term deterioration of Turkey-Europe relations also adversely affected Ankara's aspirations, which now seem to turn East and South. The emerging proximity between Greece, Cyprus and Israel (who already signed several agreements to enhance their technical and economic cooperation) risks being a further limiting factor. Coupled with the increasingly ambiguous position that Russia is assuming in its dealings with Turkey, these elements could mark the end of Ankara's aspirations and limit its regional role.

In the background, there is Russia's and China's growing role in the Mediterranean basin. Since the mid-2010s, Beijing and Moscow are increasingly present in the region's political, economic and military dynamics. When presenting the #NATO2030 initiative, NATO's Secretary-General Stoltenberg explicitly mentioned China's weight in the international arena as a potentially troublesome element. In Stoltenberg's words, China's rise on the international scene "is fundamentally shifting the global balance of power, heating up the race for economic and technological supremacy, multiplying the threats to open societies and individual freedoms, and increasing the competition over our values and our way of life" (Stoltenberg 2020). For NATO's authorities, Beijing's investments in the Mediterranean are a growing source of concern[9]. The US Department of Defense already pointed out this aspect. According to a 2019 Report to Congress, "[s]ome OBOR [One Belt One Road] investments could create potential military advantages for China, should China require access to selected foreign ports to pre-

[8] The EastMed gas pipeline should connect the Levantine basin's gas fields to Europe via Cyprus, Crete, and mainland Greece. Part of a network including the *Poseidon* pipeline between Greece and Italy and the Greece-Bulgaria Interconnector (IGB), it should initially transport ten billion cubic metres per year (bcm/y) of natural gas from the offshore reserves of the Levant to Greece and from there – via *Poseidon* and IGB – to Italy and other South-Eastern European countries. In the beginning, political support for this articulated infrastructure programme was intense, especially at the EU level. In 2015, EastMed became one of EU's Project of Common Interest (PCI), benefiting from grants of about two million euros through the Connecting Europe Facility programme. The project also entered the Ten-Year Development Plan of the European Network Transportation System Operators of Gas. However, these institutional supports seem to have declined, partly due to the current European Commission's decision to invest its credibility in the European Green Deal and the ambitious goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2025.

[9] Among others, the state-owned COSCO Shipping Port has minority stakes in the ports of Bilbao, Genoa, Istanbul, and Valencia, while China Merchant Ports has similar stakes in Istanbul, Marseille, and Marsaxlokk (Malta). Moreover, COSCO is present in Port Said, at the northern tip of the Suez Canal, and China Merchant Group (through Terminal Link) in Tangier-Med, at the tip of the Strait of Gibraltar. Chinese companies have also expressed their interest in the ports of Bizerte, Ploče, Taranto, and Trieste. As far as the infrastructures are concerned, Shanghai International Port Group signed an agreement with Israel to develop and manage the port of Haifa; China State Construction Corporation and China Harbor Engineering Company are involved in the construction of the Cherchell port (Algeria), and China Harbor Engineering Company won the Israeli tender to build the new port at Ashdod.

position the necessary logistics support to sustain naval deployments in waters as distant as the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, and [the] Atlantic Ocean to protect its growing interests" (*Annual Report to Congress* 2019: 11). General Joseph Votel, the former head of the US Central Command (US CENTCOM), and Admiral James G. Foggo, the former commander of the US Naval Forces Europe - Naval Forces Africa and the Allied Joint Force Command Naples, are just two of the figures who have raised similar concerns.

The quick recovery of the Chinese economy after the COVID-19 pandemic contributes to supporting Beijing's ambitions. In economic terms, the estimated GDP growth of 3.2% in the second quarter of 2020 and 4.9% in the third goes a long way in "raising the bar" of the challenge that NATO is facing. Following the path that Greece (August 2018) and Portugal (January 2019) inaugurated, in March 2019, the Italian government signed a non-binding memorandum of understanding within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), while twelve EU countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) already participate in the Chinese-sponsored "17+1 Forum". Some of the largest Chinese companies are also active in several European and Mediterranean countries' infrastructure sector. However, also in this context, concerns about excessive exposure towards the Asian giant are growing. The European Commission repositioned China from "strategic partner" – as it has been for more than fifteen years – to "negotiating partner", while several governments have adopted measures to contain the Chinese technology's role, e.g. in the respective telecommunication networks. These decisions seem to underline how the EU is increasingly considering it necessary to find a balance in its relations with a country that – with growing clarity – is seen as a competitor in pursuing technological leadership and a rival in promoting its social and political model.

The risk is the gradual erosion of the Western role within and outside the Mediterranean. Such erosion is due to both the weakening of the Euro-Atlantic internal cohesion and the strengthening of its systemic rivals. China has significantly expanded its direct and indirect presence in many areas that remained unguarded after the end of the US-USSR competition. In the Mediterranean, Beijing deployed its full panoply, promoting the establishment of sectorial cooperation forums, investing in the infrastructure, energy, transport, and telecommunications sectors, and conducting military exercises to support the development of its maritime presence. Worth noting, several European countries have shown a marked sensibility to Beijing's soft power's seductions, especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even the Chinese authoritarian model seems to attract increasing favour, welding with the authoritarian impulses already existing in different countries. Unsurprisingly, the surveys highlight the growing awareness of the conflict between Europe's short-term economic gains and long-term dependencies in its relations with Beijing (Oertel 2020). Together with supporting a political-institutional vision essentially contrasting with EU's and NATO's values, neglecting this conflict could be, on the one side, a further catalyst of regional tensions, on the other, an instrument to promote the consolidation of Beijing's role in the Southern European neighbourhood.

4. An Alliance in the quest for its strategy?

If NATO's interests have significantly increased in recent years, the Alliance seems to have broken down in the same period. This controversial process reflected deep-seated dynamics: the complexity of the emerging multipolar international system, the vulnerability of increasingly articulated social systems, the downsizing of the role traditionally played by the United States, and the increasingly broad and uneven nature of the current 30-member-strong Atlantic Alliance. The most evident bone of contention is the definition of the principal threat(s) that NATO should contrast. In this field, the Ukrainian crisis of 2014, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of still currently undergoing low-intensity conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk played a central role. They polarised those who saw the sign of a resurgent Russian threat in these events and those who want to place greater attention on the southern front. The increasingly non-military nature of the southern front's threats adds a further divisive element to this already complex picture. Beyond its immediate effects, this situation feeds a structural cleavage between two competing visions of NATO: a vision that opposes those who favour a more "political" Alliance committed to projecting stability at a global level, and those who favour a more "military" Alliance, focused on defending the "physical" security of the European continent.

Against this backdrop, the most significant doubts concern the sustainability of an "all-round" strategy and the Atlantic Alliance's ability to cope with the commitments that this kind of strategy entails. The "360-degrees NATO" was an element in NATO's debate even before the East/South relation came to the forefront. In June 2015, for example, the final communiqué of the Alliance Defence Ministers' summit noted how "[t]o address all these challenges to the East and to the South, NATO continues to provide a 360 degree approach to deter threats and, if necessary, defend Allies against any adversary" (*Statement*... 2015: (2)). The Warsaw Summit Final Communiqué reiterated how "[o]ur efforts to enhance the Alliance's role in projecting stability will be guided by enduring principles, including a 360 degree approach, commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, complementarity with international actors, in particular with the UN, EU, and the OSCE and focusing on NATO's added value, local ownership and buy-in, partner involvement, inclusiveness, tailored cooperation, long-term commitment, prioritisation and sustainability, and overall coherence" (*Warsaw Summit Communiqué* 2016: (81)). Two years later, the Final Declaration of the Brussels Summit of Heads of State and Government of Member Countries (11-12 July 2018) reaffirmed that: "The Alliance will continue to pursue a 360-degree approach to security and to fulfil effectively all three core tasks as set out in the Strategic Concept: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security" (*Brussels Summit Declaration* 2018: (1)).

However, passing from aspirations to realisations was difficult. The centrality of the collective security clause in NATO's life traditionally places stringent constraints to the allocation of a budget that – by definition – is limited compared to the Alliance's needs. The gap between ends and means is even more critical today after the events that followed the Ukrainian crisis have relaunched the problem of Europe's territorial

security and affected the critical topic of NATO's deterrence capabilities (Frear, Kulesa, Raynova 2018). The burden-sharing issue is a problematic aspect of US-Europe relations since the 1950s. In 2014, during the South Wales summit of the Heads of State and Government, NATO's members agreed to the so-called "Celtic Manor targets" (2014), committing to allocating two per cent of their GDP to the defence budget by 2024 and twenty per cent of this sum to investment, purchasing new equipment and weapons systems. However, in converging towards these targets, the different countries have moved at different speeds. Despite the results achieved at an aggregate level (in 2020, eleven countries had reached the two per cent target, compared to three in 2014, and sixteen reached the twenty per cent target with the launch of massive procurement programmes), even before the outbreak of COVID-19 at least some of them might not be able to reach them[10]. The pandemic's economic fallout reinforced this trend, favouring a shift of resources from defence to other sectors, perceived as a more immediate need (Barrie *et al.* 2020).

The second aspect (which closely links to the first) concerns the Alliance's assets and capabilities. Since the end of the 1990s, NATO actively tried to fill the existing gaps and adapt its assets and capabilities to the ever-changing strategic scenario. The experience gained in the former Yugoslavia, and the widening gap between the United States and the European allies played a pivotal role in adopting the Defense Capabilities Initiative (Washington, 1999) and the Prague Capabilities Commitment (2002). However, in this field, too, the results did not always meet the expectations. In the second half of the 2010s, several criticisms hit the idea of setting aggregate targets to measure the Alliance's progress in closing its capability gaps. Moreover, while the force structure's reshaping proceeded quite rapidly in terms of deployability, expeditionary capabilities, and joint and combined capabilities, technological upgrade proved more troublesome. The constant emerging of new fields of intervention (such as cyberspace) exacerbated the problem. Several elements contributed to this result; among others, the time that the development of the different programs requires, the rapid transformation of the international environment, which increased the risk of obsolescence of the programs in progress, and the cumbersome mechanisms for selecting the program themselves. Some member states' resistance and the competition among different "national champions" made these problems worse, and not even the efforts to elaborate multinational programs tackled them.

The consequence of these dynamics has been a deepening of the Alliance's divisions and a new stratification of military and political power among its members. In recent years, the fear of Russian pressure has led to more lavish defence spending

[10] According to the most recent NATO's figures, in 2020, the United States, Greece, Estonia, the United Kingdom, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, France, Norway and Slovakia reached the two per cent target, while Turkey, Hungary and Croatia approached it with a ratio between 1.8 and 1.9 per cent. According to the same source, Luxembourg, Hungary, Turkey, Slovakia, The United States, Poland, Norway, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Latvia, Estonia, Italy, Spain, Romania, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Montenegro, reached the twenty per cent target, while Bulgaria approached it, with a 19.2 ratio [*Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2020)*, Brussels, March 16, 2021].

in Central and Eastern European countries and pushed their military budgets above the Alliance's average. As a consequence, their relative political and military weight increased compared to the Western and South-western allies. A similar trend affected the Scandinavian countries – both within NATO (Norway) and outside (Sweden and, to a lesser extent, Finland) – and Turkey, which capitalised on its newfound importance by seeking greater autonomy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East[11]. In their turn, these changes led to an overall weakening of the "historic core" of NATO's founding countries (the "old Europe" that the then US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld evoked in 2003) in favour of the new members. The growing divergence between the two groups' national policies fostered this process and widened the distance separating the European and the US positions. While their origins date back to the early 2000s, Donald Trump's despise of NATO and his preference for bilateral diplomacy, seen as a privileged tool to interact with its possible interlocutors, emphasised these trends. The deterioration of the US-Europe relations went in the same direction, making the transatlantic collaboration trickier.

Against this backdrop, the risk for the southern flank is of gradual marginalisation. It is a constant risk for an Alliance that traditionally focused its action on the central theatre. However, in the last ten years, it has grown more evident. At the same time, the threats have become less manageable in terms of deterrence and defence. In this perspective, the agenda outlined in the 2010 Strategic Concept – which configured the Alliance's evolution in an increasingly "political" and global sense (Ringsmose, Rynning 2011) – seems to have been shelved for the time being. One way to revive it could be the reflection launched in June 2020 with the #NATO2030 initiative. In this context, the report of the group of independent experts appointed by the Secretary-General highlights in several points the need for a more significant presence of the Alliance in the Mediterranean region, both by strengthening the preparedness and responsiveness of military structures and by "energis[ing] the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) through strengthened political engagement, capacity building, and resilience enhancement" (*NATO 2030* 2020 (12)). However, even in this case, the focus on the Mediterranean dimension seems to be mainly reactive: a means to counter the possible Russian and – to a lesser extent – Chinese efforts to exploit the region's fragilities for their benefit.

[11] According to SIPRI's figures, the estimated global military expenditure in 2019 was $1917 billion, the highest since 1988. The total was 3.6 per cent higher in real terms than in 2018 and 7.2 per cent higher than in 2010. In Europe, total military spending was $356 billion, 5.0 per cent higher than in 2018 and 8.8 per cent higher than in 2010. Military spending in Western Europe was $251 billion, up by 3.9 per cent compared to 2018 but down by 0.6 per cent compared to 2010. In Eastern Europe, military expenditure totalled $74.0 billion, 4.9 per cent higher than in 2018 and 35 per cent higher than in 2010. All seven Eastern European countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine) increased their military spending in 2019. In Central Europe, spending was $31.5 billion, 14 per cent higher than in 2018 and 61 per cent higher than in 2010. Four countries in Central Europe increased their military spending by more than 150 per cent between 2010 and 2019: Lithuania (232 per cent), Latvia (176 per cent), Bulgaria (165 per cent) and Romania (154 per cent). Poland – accounting for 38 per cent of the total for Central Europe in 2019 – increased its military spending by 51 per cent over the decade 2010-19. In the same decade, Turkish military expenditure increased by 86 per cent, reaching $20.4 billion. Between 2017 and 2018, Turkish military expenditure raised by 27 per cent, while the increase between 2018 and 2019 was 5.8 per cent (SIPRI - Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2019*, Stockholm, 2020).

Concluding remarks

Despite the greater attention placed since 2016, the definition of a credible Mediterranean strategy is still an open question on NATO's agenda. In recent years, both NATO and many observers emphasised the willingness to revive the Mediterranean Dialogue and spur collaboration on more solid and articulated bases. A similar willingness emerged about the Alliance's need to improve its understanding of the Mediterranean theatre and better engage its different regional partners were equally stressed. The inauguration, in 2017, of the NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub (NSD-S) in Naples fits into this perspective. According to NATO's authorities, the NSD-S' opening should have been the first step toward a "more Mediterranean" Alliance. However, the hub's functions – summarised in the triad "Connect, Consult, Coordinate" – and the ways and means to pursue them are still mostly undefined. The vagueness of its geographical area of competence, the multiplicity of political and military functions entrusted to it, the small size of the staff compared to the breadth of the tasks, and the constant risk of overlapping with the activities of other Alliance's bodies and structures (such as the International staff of NATO HQ in Brussels and the various SHAPE units, the Supreme Allied Command in Mons) are some of the elements that make this task complex and risk harming the instrument's functionality.

Equally critical is the function that the regional countries – such as Italy – can play. Due to its geographical and geopolitical location, Italy stands at the crossroads of many of the above-outlined problems. As part of the "old Europe" and founding member of the Atlantic Alliance, it hinges the north-south and the east-west axis. The problematic relationship between its Mediterranean and continental dimensions is a well-known trait in contemporary Italian political history: a trait that, since the end of World War II, evolved into a "three circles policy" integrating the traditional two-pronged framework with the new Euro-Atlantic dimension. This "three circles policy" does not lack ambiguities and exposes the country to multiple vulnerabilities. However, it also offers a privileged perspective to act as a link between the needs of NATO's two fonts. Due to its sensitivity to the Eastern and Southern developments, Italy can play a balancing role within the Alliance. At the same time, it can be a bridge between NATO and the Mediterranean countries. From this point of view, a more assertive approach with allies and partners could favour the emergence of a strategy taking into account the interests of both the southern and the eastern players on a broad set of non-military issues, including the management of migration flows by sea and land, the exploitation of energy resources in a security perspective and the promotion of effective political dialogue in the European neighbourhood.

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Book Reviews

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Gianmarco Ottaviano (2021), *Geografia economica dell'Europa sovranista*. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 164 pp.

Francesco Ingaravalle

Negli ultimi due anni si è assistito a un vero e proprio profluvio di libri dedicati al sovranismo: da Sergio Romano, *L'epidemia sovranista. Origini, fondamenti, pericoli* (Milano, Longanesi, 2019) a Bernard Guetta, *I sovranisti. Dall'Austria all'Ungheria, nuovi nazionalismi al potere in Europa* (Torino, add Editore, 2019), da Sergio Fabbrini, *Manuale di autodifesa europeista. Come rispondere alla sfida del sovranismo* (Roma, LUISS, 1019) a Alberto Saravalle e Carlo Stagnaro, *Contro il sovranismo economico. Storia e guasti di statalismo, nazionalismo, dirigismo, protezionismo, unilateralismo, antiglobalismo (e qualche rimedio* (Milano, Rizzoli, 2020) a Giuseppe Valditara, *Sovranismo. Un'occasione per l'Europa* (Napoli, Historica, 2020), per citarne soltanto alcuni fra i più recenti.

Il volume di Ottaviano è dedicato a una delle più importanti ottiche per comprendere il dibattito attuale: l'indagine geografico-economica del sovranismo in Europa.

Il volume si articola in sei capitoli: 1. *Geografia economica dello scontento*, pp. 3-26; 2. *Cosa succede quando si esce dall'Unione europea*, pp. 27-49; 3. *Te la do io l'Europa*, pp. 50-73; 4. *L'Europa delle regioni diseguali*, pp. 74-99; 5. *L'Europa migrante*, pp. 100-128; 6. *Padroni a casa nostra*, pp. 129-164.

L'esito del voto che ha portato il Regno Unito a uscire dall'Unione Europea "ha rivelato un paese spaccato in due, con il 51% dei votanti che ha scelto di lasciare («Leave») l'Unione Europea e il 48,11% che ha espresso la volontà contraria di rimanerci («Remain») con un tasso di partecipazione al voto del 72%" (p. 9). Ma chi è perché ha votato *Leave* o *Remain*? Il *Leave* tende a prevalere nelle circoscrizioni con minori livelli medi di istruzione e di qualificazione, maggiore tradizine di industria manifatturiera, con minori salari e maggiore disoccupazione, con maggiore crescita dell'immigrazione, "in particolare dai paesi dell'Est Europa a seguito del loro accesso nell'Unione Europea", con minore qualità dei servizi pubblici, "specialmente nell'ambito della sanità" e dove hanno più inciso i tagli della spesa pubblica conseguenti alla crisi finanziaria del 2008 e, infine, con minore partecipazione dei giovani al voto (pp. 10-11). Dati, questi, che evidenziano "la rilevanza delle ansie create dall'immigrazione e dal declino dei settori produttivi cardine dell'economia locale in un mercato sempre più globale" (p. 13), fenomeni associati spesso, nell'immaginario collettivo, a occupazione calante, stagnazione o riduzione dei salari reali, crescente disuguaglianza del reddito. Dunque, le zone più esposte agli effetti della globalizzazione hanno votato per l'Uscita dell'Unione Europea. Tuttavia, nel caso del regno Unito, l'Unione Europea ha ben

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poco a che fare con la globalizzazione; le circoscrizioni che hanno votato per l'uscita dell'Unione Europea "sono anche quelle che hanno maggiore probabilità di essere danneggiate dalla Brexit" (p.17). Infatti, il processo produttivo attuale è caratterizzato da una accentuata frammentazione geografica: le fasi intermedie della lavorazione delle merci avvengono spesso in paesi diversi a seconda di quello che i paesi stessi sanno fare meglio. Ma i benefici di questa "specializzazione" sono possibili quando "i prodotti delle lavorazioni intermedie devono poter varcare agevolmente i confini nazionali più volte in tutte le direzioni" (p. 19). Quasi il 50 % delle economie locali dipende per il 50% più di Londra dall'Unione Europea; la Brexit porterà a più alte barriere commerciali tra il Regno Unito e l'Unione Europea con ripercussioni negative proprio sulle componenti sociali che hanno votato a favore dell'uscita dall'Unione Europea. Non si tratta di un voto politicamente ponderato, ma di un voto di protesta contro le "élites di Londra e di Bruxelles" giudicate come incuranti del bene collettivo.

L'uscita dalla Unione Europea deriva da un referendum che nasce dal tatticismo politico di David Cameron, come risultato inatteso (e indesiderato); in effetti l'élite alla quale appartiene Cameron non ha ritenuto necessario spiegare i benefici derivanti dalla liberalizzazione degli scambi internazionali, né ha aperto un dibattito pubblico sulla effettiva distribuzione di tali benefici nel paese e nemmeno spiegare la differenza fra integrazione europea e globalizzazione. I benefici del mercato unico sono reali, ma "non equamente distribuiti tra i cittadini" (p. 49).

"L'Unione Europea è figlia della guerra e madre della pace"(p. 53): certamente, gli scambi inter-europei hanno disinnescato i conflitti in cui il continente era lacerato almeno dal XVI secolo. Ma non si puòmeccanicisticamente affermare che là dove si commercia non si guerreggia: tra fine Ottocento e inizi del Novecento "il commercio internazionale cresce in parallelo con le avventure imperialiste dei paesi europei, dando quindi vita a frequenti conflitti culminati nella Prima guerra mondiale"(p. 56). Però, se è vero che paesi che commerciano molto fra di loro evidenziano una bassa probabilità di conflitto militare fra di loro, "per una questione di interdipendenza reciproca", è anche vero che paesi molto aperti agli scambi commerciali internazionali hanno molti partner ,il che "riduce le conseguenze negative di muovere guerra a un singolo partner" (p. 57). L'Unione Europea dispone di un meccanismo sanzionatorio che ridimensiona le intemperanze dei singoli paesi membri. Il commercio internazionale limita anche il rischio di guerre civili: le guerre civili, infatti, provocano la riduzione del commercio con l'estero e la correlativa riduzione dei benefici per tutti i contendenti. *Va osservato, però, che queste considerazioni presuppongono dei decisori utilitaristici che agiscano senza subire il fascino degli atti demagogici con i quali tenersi in sella in patria; inoltre, trascurano il ruolo di peace-maker svolto in Europa dalla NATO lungo tutto il corso della "Guerra Fredda." La pace europea è stata, dunque, sempre "pace armata" e l'integrazione dei mercati ne è stata una funzione subordinata fino a oggi*. I danni di un "ritorno alla non-Europa", nel senso, ristretto, di un ritorno al passato CEE sono così sintetizzati: riduzione del mercato unico a un'area di libero scambio; conseguente riduzione di reddito pro-capite: riduzione media del 6,6% per i paesi membri, del 4, 4% per i cittadini. In particolare, Estonia, Repubblica Ceca, Slovacchia, Slovenia e

Ungheria perderebbero più del 10% del reddito pro-capite; minori le perdite in Europa Occidentale (Francia 3,4%, Germania 4,5%, a esempio). Questo quadro si complica ulteriormente se si considera il peso delle importazioni manifatturiere dalla Cina, soprattutto dal 1988 al 2007, il periodo che vede la creazione del mercato unico. La quota cinese nelle importazioni dell'Europa occidentale "passa dall'1% al 7%" (p. 63): nuove merci a prezzi inferiori, per famiglie e per aziende, ma anche una competizione con la produzione cinese che falcia le aziende meno efficienti. Con la crisi del 2008 viene a saltare il rapporto fra globalizzazione della produzione e della commercializzazione e redistribuzione degli "utili." Con l'allargamento a est dell'Unione Europea viene a prodursi "una forte crescita delle importazioni dagli EU 12 agli EU 15, cioè da paesi europei a salario più basso verso altri paesi europei a più alto salario" (p. 71). Così, le economie locali in sofferenza, in Europa hanno stimolato una crescita continentale della destra radicale sovranista.

Lo sviluppo economico europeo recente sembra avere promosso una maggiore disuguaglianza regionale che è la causa della "polarizzazione politica" fra "centri dominanti" e "periferie trascurate o dimenticate.

L'Europa è, certamente, terra di migranti. Tre quarti degli immigrati risiedono, oggi in Germania, Regno Unito, Italia, Francia e Spagna. Non sono visibili effetti economicamente negativi dei flussi migratori sui cittadini dei paesi di destinazione, né in termini di occupazione, né in termini di salari: nessuna variazione tendenziale in conseguenza della crescita del numero di immigrati è stata registrata.

E' un fatto che, negli ultimi anni i partiti di ispirazione populista hanno accresciuto il loro ambito di consenso in Europa. Un fatto che la dicotomia "Destra/Sinistra" non spiega: in merito alla situazione francese "i sostenitori di Macron sono di sinistra sulle libertà individuali, né di destra, né di sinistra sulla disuguaglianza, non sono populisti e sono "europeisti". I sostenitori di Le Pen sono di destra sulle libertà, né di destra, né di sinistra sulla disuguaglianza, populisti e "sovranisti" "(pp. 137-138). In Italia abbiamo un "Movimento Cinque Stelle" "sovranista per avversione ad ogni interferenza nella diretta espressione della volontà popolare" (p. 140), la Lega persegue obiettivi 'tradizionali' della destra (meno tasse e minore redistribuzione), "raccolta attorno al totem della *flat tax*", ma vuole reintrodurre la pensione di anzianità nei termini della "quota 100" (analoga, per certi versi al "reddito di cittadinanza"); di destra è anche la retorica sulla famiglia tradizionale. Sia il Movimento Cinque Stelle, sia la Lega si segnalano per l'atteggiamento critico nei confronti dell'Unione Europea. Un atteggiamento critico che presuppone quattro idee sbagliate sull'Europa: 1) che nell'Unione Europea le decisioni importanti siano prese a Bruxelles senza coinvolgimento dei governi degli Stati membri; 2) che le decisioni di Bruxelles non abbiano alcuna base democratica; 3) che non esistano decisioni europee che si debbano prendere assieme a Bruxelles; 4) che l'Unione Europea sia "un lusso che i cittadini degli stati membri non si possono permettere" (p.157). Ma è un fatto che lo scopo di base dell'Unione Europea è permettere ai cittadini degli Stati membri di fornire "beni pubblici europei"- beni che i singoli governi nazionali non potrebbero mai fornire. Ma "il valore dell'unione Europea per i cittadini dei suoi Stati membri si è ridotto al saldo di un'analisi dei costi e dei

benefici economici" (p. 163). Il che ha potenziato l'insorgere della retorica populistica anti-europea. Proprio nel momento in cui lo sviluppo e la pressione di paesi quali la Cina, l'India, la Russia, gli Stati Uniti e la Turchia, non meno che la pressione migratoria dall'Africa e dalle zone del Medio Oriente richiederebbero unità di intenti. *Cioè richiederebbe il balzo dell'Unione Europea dall'integrazione economica all'integrazione politica*.

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Marie-Hélène Hermand (2020), *Eurorégions. L'éclosion de la communication transfrontalière*. Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 223 pp.

Rachele Raus

Il volume di Marie-Hélène Hermand sulle Euroregioni analizza la costruzione di questo oggetto di discorso e le caratteristiche del discorso euroregionale in un corpus multilingue eterogeneo di documenti (scritti ma anche contenuti web) istituzionali prodotti dall'Unione europea e dal Consiglio d'Europa (cap. 2), dagli attori euroregionali istituzionali, economici e accademici (cap. 3), dalla stampa (cap. 4). Nell'ultimo capitolo, il quinto, il corpus d'analisi è costituito dai controdiscorsi tratti dal discorso sindacale, associativo e mediatico rispetto al progetto euroregionale. L'autrice studia i dati raccolti utilizzando l'analisi del discorso di matrice francese e un approccio semiotico, particolarmente utile soprattutto per l'analisi multimodale dei siti web.

La metodologia adottata consente di individuare la presenza di una vera e propria "matrice discorsiva" del discorso euroregionale, «intesa come la somma dei tratti comuni o largamente condivisi da questi discorsi» (p. 19; la traduzione dal francese è la nostra), tratti rispetto ai quali Hermand individua da un lato il discorso dominante degli attori euroregionali e istituzionali e dall'altro il controdiscorso sindacalista, associativo e mediatico.

Il primo capitolo permette all'autrice di porre il discorso euroregionale in relazione ai discorsi storici, prendendo in considerazione quello dei federalisti (i.e. l'Unione paneuropea di Coundenhove-Kalergi, il Manifesto di Ventotene, la circolazione dei sintagmi *Stati Uniti d'Europa* o l'*Europa delle regioni*) e quello delle istituzioni che hanno contribuito alla costruzione europea (ad esempio, la CECA) o alla cooperazione transfrontaliera (come il Consiglio d'Europa). Il discorso storico pone le premesse dell'analisi del discorso euroregionale, permettendo di cogliere la vaghezza concettuale della parola "(euro)regione" nel contesto europeo, che viene legittimata senza però avere una definizione chiara. Consente inoltre di riflettere sulle diverse accezioni date all'*identità* europea sulla base di tre concezioni diverse (federalista, dei capi di governo, di Spinelli).

Su queste basi, il secondo capitolo presenta il corpus euroregionale, raccolto a partire dai nomi propri ufficiali di 42 euroregioni del centinaio esistenti, dalle loro sigle o denominazioni correnti e dal termine iperonimico "euroregione". I dati sono stati raccolti in 6 lingue (francese, italiano, spagnolo, inglese, tedesco, olandese) e constano di oltre 600.000 parole ripartite in 617 documenti. A livello generale, gli enunciatori principali sono gli attori istituzionali, quelli economici e quelli mediatici e i discorsi concernono anzitutto tematiche di attualità o la presentazione delle euroregioni. Per quanto attiene all'immagine delle euroregioni ancor prima che tali attori prendano la parola, ovvero di quello che in analisi del discorso di matrice francese è definito l'*ethos* prediscorsivo, queste realtà sono caratterizzate da una concezione strumentale, volta da un lato a sottolineare la positività delle relazioni transfrontaliere e dall'altra a dare un valore esemplare all'euroregione come modello di

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politica di coesione. Anche il discorso web delle istituzioni europee (ad esempio, la rivista digitale *InfoRegio*) conferma la volontà di rafforzare un sentimento comune di appartenenza all'Europa, e perciò di coesione, tramite la narrazione positiva dell'*exemplum*.

Il terzo capitolo permette di addentrarsi nell'analisi dei discorsi della comunicazione euroregionale anzitutto tramite l'analisi del discorso delle istituzioni euroregionali, la cui finalità è quella dell'autolegittimazione. Malgrado la diversità tra le euroregioni, questo discorso si presenta come uniforme, caratterizzato dalla presenza di un discorso esperto (es. l'uso delle cifre) e privo di conflittualità. La memoria europea dà modo, inoltre, di sottolineare l'aspetto transfrontaliero di valorizzazione del patrimonio comune, contribuendo a legittimare l'euroregione come modello politico di coesione. Il progetto transfrontaliero è alla base di una logica narrativa, che pone al centro un cittadino "ibrido", "solidale" e "privilegiato" in una realtà culturale aperta al dialogo. L'elemento trasfrontaliero è sfruttato dagli attori economici euroregionali come vero e proprio rimedio per rilanciare le aziende in crisi, che possono così aggredire il mercato in una logica neoliberista evidente. L'*ethos* che si costruisce in discorso è di tipo elitario, di eccellenza economica. Qualcosa di simile caratterizza anche il discorso degli attori universitari. In tal senso, la mobilità è un fattore indispensabile per il superamento delle frontiere e la creazione di un'università transfrontaliera intesa come "marca" vera e propria, che prevede dei curricula che siano tali. La logica alla base dei discorsi e delle narrazioni resta utilitarista e neoliberista e la parola chiave è l'"adattamento". Le metafore della sperimentazione e della costruzione, già insite nel discorso europeo, vengono mobilitate per favorire un discorso di eliminazione delle frontiere nazionali e che trova nelle euroregioni un elemento fondamentale non solo per la coesione europea ma anche per rilanciare lo sviluppo delle aziende e delle università, sebbene queste ultime promuovano un discorso che a volte si rivela più umanistico e meno utilitarista.

Nel quarto capitolo, l'analisi del discorso della stampa nazionale, regionale, europea e tranfrontaliera in articoli raccolti dal 1996 al 2013 mostra la necessità anzitutto di nominare una realtà nuova e di fatto senza referente reale. La denominazione delle euroregioni è peraltro un atto amministrativo nazionale svincolato dalla memoria europea. La necessità di riformulare costantemente questi nomi tramite dei veri e propri "paradigmi di designazione", riprendendo una nozione di Marie-Françoise Mortureux, mostra la difficoltà a far conoscere queste realtà alla cittadinanza europea. A livello di *euronimia*, ovvero di creazione neologica di termini europei, la creazione di sigle o di nuovi toponimi tramite prestiti linguistici o altro meccanismo di neologia mostra uno sforzo di creatività che va oltre il tecnicismo amministrativo. In tal senso, però, la stampa finisce per restare in bilico tra la necessità di informare e la possibilità di veicolare un discorso che resta comunque elitista e che vede nelle euroregioni un elemento di sviluppo trasfrontaliero piuttosto che di riconoscimento di un'identità europea comune.

Nel quinto capitolo, Hermand riassume le caratteristiche della formazione discorsiva euroregionale, analizzando gli elementi comuni ma anche quelli di tensione tra i discorsi analizzati dettagliatamente nei capitoli precedenti. Sebbene tutti questi discorsi abbiano in comune un posizionamento ideologico favorevole alle euroregioni, essi finiscono per creare un discorso dominante che mette in concorrenza le varie euroregioni e le utilizza in relazione all'utilità dei singoli enunciatori (es. il discorso istituzionale euroregionale per la propria autolegittimazione, gli attori economici per il proprio sviluppo, le università per far valere le proprie specificità…) a discapito di un vero discorso europeo. La dissoluzione della frontiera e la promozione della mobilità permettono, inoltre, lo sviluppo di un controdiscorso sindacale, associativo e mediatico che cerca di riorientare le parole d'ordine del discorso

dominante. In questo contesto, le associazioni decostruiscono lo stereotipo frontaliero, proponendo, però, delle entità alternative all'euroregione. Si suggeriscono, perciò, altri modelli di coesione, come, ad esempio, un'Europa delle città basata sulle "città frontaliere", peraltro più legate alla memoria collettiva europea, oppure un'Europa delle regioni, che si ispira ai testi fondatori dell'UE.

Nella conclusione, l'autrice sottolinea come l'analisi abbia permesso di cogliere nel discorso euroregionale un elemento di rottura rispetto al modello antico di «territorializzazione del potere europeo sotto forma di Stato-nazione» (p. 203; la traduzione dal francese è la nostra). Nel riassumere i tratti principali della tensione tra il discorso dominante, analizzato nei capp. 2-3-4, e il controdiscorso, presentato nel cap. 5, della formazione discorsiva euroregionale, l'autrice presenta anche delle piste di ricerca future, in particolare riguardo ai controdiscorsi, all'evoluzione dei discorsi degli attori economici e al ruolo delle euroregioni come intermediari possibili verso la cittadinanza europea, specialmente grazie al loro rapporto con i media. Tutto ciò favorirebbe una migliore comprensione del discorso euroregionale, di cui ancora si conosce troppo poco, specialmente nella sua componente diplomatica di mediazione tra la cittadinanza e le istituzioni europee. Infine, Hermand auspica di tornare sulla comparazione dei discorsi multilingui da un punto di vista meramente traduttologico per poter meglio confrontare le lingue-culture nazionali rispetto a come gli enunciatori che ne se appropriano permettono o meno degli scambi reciproci.

Book Recommendations

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Giorgio Grimaldi (2020), *I Verdi italiani tra politica nazionale e proiezione europea*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 240 pp.

Il volume ricostruisce la storia della Federazione dei Verdi, con particolare attenzione a programmi e azioni elaborate in riferimento al processo d'integrazione europea. Sin dalla loro ascesa come nuovo soggetto politico, sorto dall'aggregazione di liste civiche, comitati, associazioni, movimenti ecologisti sull'onda della mobilitazione antinucleare iniziata tra la fine degli anni settanta e i primi anni Ottanta del XX secolo fino al declino degli ultimi due decenni, i Verdi italiani hanno contribuito allo sviluppo di un orientamento critico verso la Comunità europea e poi verso l'Unione europea, volto alla creazione di una federazione in grado di garantire pace, democrazia ed ecosostenibilità. In un periodo caratterizzato dalla fine della guerra fredda, da forti cambiamenti a livello europeo e internazionale e da nuove sfide politiche, economiche ed ecologiche, particolare importanza ha assunto l'attività svolta dagli eurodeputati verdi italiani nel Parlamento europeo dal 1989, prima nel Gruppo Verdi e poi, dal 1999, in seno al Gruppo Verdi/Alleanza Europea del Parlamento europeo.

Abstracts and Keywords

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Conceptualising the Mediterranean Global South: A research agenda on security, borders and human flows
Stefania Panebianco

This paper assumes the Mediterranean as a critical junction between Global North and Global South. It explores current challenges at the European Union (EU) Mediterranean borders and investigates the intertwined area at the EU borders that we call 'Mediterranean Global South'. The paper explores actors providing security in the Mediterranean Global South and critically addresses the EU capacity to manage its borders. Specific attention is devoted to South to North human flows, one of the most critical challenges to human security in current times deploying its effects well beyond states' borders.
Human flows across the Mediterranean Sea have put EU member states (EUMS), EU institutions and European societies under stress. The paper challenges those state-centered approaches that regard closing the borders as the most effective solution to acquire security and stability in Europe, and focuses on non-state actors' practices that seek to address regional problems more effectively.
The paper thus investigates the complexification of regional relations deriving from the actual role of those actors, state or non-state actors, EU and EUMS, regional and global powers, that play crucial functions in the provision of solutions to complex security issues. The EU Mediterranean borders are expanding and actors involved in securing the Mediterranean Global South are increasingly engaged in the South of the Mediterranean for the management of regional crises.

Keywords: Mediterranean, migration, securitization, Eurepean Union, borders

The socio-political construction of the Central Mediterranean Sea between politics of exclusion and practices of solidarity: the role of European migration policies and SAR NGOs in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings
Eugenia Blasetti

Drawing on Lefebvre's theorisation of space as a social product that does not pre-exist human beings, rather it is built and shaped by them, and Foucault's notion of heterotopia, this paper proposes to analyse the role that both European migration policies and NGOs' humanitarian SAR activities play in the socio-political construction of the Central Mediterranean, where the need to ensure human rights deeply clashes with the reaffirmation of the nation-state and its sovereignty, leading to the reconfiguration of the Central Mediterranean area as a space of representation, in which exclusion and hospitality coexist.

Keywords: Central Mediterranean space, EU migration policies, SAR NGOs, politics of exclusion, pratices of solidarity

EU's bordering norms in Libya and Lebanon: the impact of the local context
Daniel Meier

The EU may be a porous area that need a common Integrated Border Management (IBM) system as well as several institutions, surveillance tools and politics to monitor an inter-agency cooperation and control of its external borders. In the backdrop of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), a new role has been assigned to external states bordering the eastern and southern flanks of the EU, with a progressive process of outsourcing security check on migrants thus extending the EU state borders up to the Mediterranean states, creating an EU borderland. This paper intends to raise the question of the impact of this EU external bordering process on some Arab neighbors since the outbreak of the Arab uprisings in 2011. More particularly, the research intends to focus on two types of states – Libya and Lebanon – with poor governance in order to show the limits of the implementation of IBM in such contexts. In order to highlight these, the paper delve into the borderwork of two EU or international bodies implementing IBM norms and rules to explore their relationships with the local state institutions. They both tend to show the key importance of the local context as a crucial explanatory factor of the limits of the implementation of such norms.

Keywords: Integrated Border Management, EU, Libya, Lebanon, local context

Rethinking urban interactions from the margins: Palestinians and Syrians between refugee camps and the cities
Stefano Fogliata

The paper investigates how refugees living in camps experience different scales of mobility and develop a wide range of practices that extends beyond the camp's boundaries, exploring how hyper-mobile tactics of existence re-elaborate Palestinian refugee camps into meaningful places of elusive contestation. I expound on how refugees reinterpret boundaries between camps and "forms of camp spaces" through a wide spectrum of practices grounded on translocal and transnational informal networks.

Keywords: refugee camps, mobility, Lebanon, Palestinian, football

Claiming for Moral Superiority while Bargaining with Mobility. Turkey-EU Migration Diplomacy in the post-2016 Euro-Mediterranean space
Chiara Maritato

The article investigates the revitalization of the EU-Turkey migration diplomacy in the light of the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement. The Statement, which was aimed at stemming irregular migrations directed to the EU, contributed to strengthen the image of Turkey as a champion in hosting Syrian refugees and a trusted gatekeeper tasked with the control of the EU external borders. How has the management of a humanitarian crisis and massive migration flows affected post 2016 Turkey-EU migration diplomacy? The article contends that Turkey's claim for moral superiority on the management of refugees despite the material weakness vis-à-vis the West has been employed to galvanize a coercive migration diplomacy and redefine Turkish approach to the EU migration regime.

Keywords: Migration Diplomacy, Turkey, EU migration regime, Syrian refugees, transit migration

Neo-Ottoman expansionism beyond the borders of modern Turkey: Erdoğan's foreign policy ambitions in Syria and the Mediterranean
Peter Seeberg

The article looks at two aspects of the activist Turkish foreign policy and its attempts at reconfiguring Mediterranean politics. The first is the incursion into north-eastern Syria in October 2019 with the ambitions of prohibiting a permanent existence of an autonomous Kurdish entity in Syria and, in a wider perspective, seeking to strengthen the Turkish role in determining the future of Syria. The second aspect is the Turkish intervention in 2020 in the Libyan civil war, and – in connection with that – the agreement on maritime boundaries between Turkey and the UN-initiated government in Tripoli with Fayez al-Sarraj in charge of the Government of National Accord. A main interest related to this is for Turkey to gain access to offshore resources in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, thereby strengthening Turkey's position in the regional competition over dominance in the Mediterranean.

Keywords: Turkey, neo-Ottomanism, in-between space, Syria, the Mediterranean

The Atlantic Alliance, NATO, and the Post-Arab Springs Mediterranean. The Quest for a New Strategic Relevance

Gianluca Pastori

The geographic dimension lies at the very heart of the Atlantic Alliance: this is why the extension of the Alliance's scope has often been a divisive issue. Between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when the Soviet Union dissolved, there were efforts to develop a new Mediterranean strategy, more attentive to the emerging threats. The Mediterranean Dialogue (1994) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (2004) were the two most important tools developed to this end. None of these programs was successful. The emphasis that NATO placed on technical cooperation triggered criticism, while the partners' aloofness cooled down NATO's initial expectations. The weight of the Eastern European members and their fear of the new Russian activism favoured a return to the old "deterrence and defence" posture, which – according to the Mediterranean members – underestimates their needs and makes NATO more vulnerable. The Arab Springs and their results emphasised the weakness of NATO position and the limits of a purely military approach to regional security. The efforts started in 2016 to rebalance the Alliance have led to few results. Lacking an overall vision on the transformations affecting the MENA region, the Alliance is currently losing relevance vis-à-vis other subjects, returning to a posture that sees the Mediterranean as an appendix of the traditional central theatre.

Keywords: Atlantic Alliance, NATO, Arab Springs, Mediterranean Policy, European Security and Defence

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