

Migration Management Within Security and Development Narratives: A Case Study of Bilateral Relations between Senegal and the European Union

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ABSTRACT

The 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration between African and European leaders brought migration management to the forefront of foreign policy and cooperation relations. With a focus on bilateral relations between Senegal and the European Union since the launch of new instruments linking migration and development policy, the following study analyzes the driving interests for Senegalese and European counterparts regarding the treatment of migration as a foreign policy topic and its linkage to development and security issues. The research draws on evidence from interviews conducted in 2017 in Dakar, Brussels, and Rome with representatives from the Senegalese government, the Italian government, European Union institutions, the African Union Delegation to the EU, national embassies, NGOs, and think-tanks, among others. All interviews were conducted by the author. While bilateral relations for migration management were found to be of strategic interest for both parties, this article concludes that their securitization framework places a strain on development objectives and long-term relations between Senegal and the EU, due to the EU's short-term prioritization of readmission demands and the reduction of irregular migration.

Keywords: Senegal, European Union, migration, development, securitization

Introduction

Since the attention sparked by what is commonly referred to as the “Central Mediterranean migration crisis” in 2014,¹ the insertion of migration into bilateral relations between African and European states has steadily increased through new cooperation instruments, funding packages, political statements, and diplomatic visits. During an interview at the EU Commission, an official stated: “With the new *Partnership Framework*, migration became one of the central

¹ In conjunction with the onset of the Syrian civil war and the destabilization of Libya in 2011, between 2012 and 2015, EU member states collectively observed a 294.53 percent increase in asylum applications (Eurostat 2019). We must also consider that the European Union currently hosts only 6 percent of the world's displaced population, and that migration is not a unidirectional flow toward Europe, as is often presented in studies and in European rhetoric. Despite the comparative contextualization of the EU's migration pressures, the percentage change in asylum applications toward EU member states is still generally regarded as a pertinent exogenous shock to EU policy-making, and will therefore be considered as such for the purposes of this study.

aspects in EU external policy and development work. Before it was one of many sectors. This is something that is now systematically looked at” (Interview, EU Commission DEVCO).

The 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration formally consolidated migration as a priority for European–African cooperation on trade, security, and development, and announced the *EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF)* as a development funding package aimed at tackling the “root causes” of destabilization, displacement, and irregular migration (EU Commission 2019), effectively linking the management of migration flows to development cooperation. Shortly thereafter, the *Migration Partnership Framework* was also launched as a set of bilateral agreements between the EU and five priority countries: Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, and Senegal. This article expands upon a broader research study that used Senegal as a case study to examine the issue-linkage of migration management and development policy in EU external relations through instruments such as the EUTF and the *Migration Partnership Framework*. It showed the instruments’ preliminary outcomes to be compromised within a securitized cooperation framework, both in terms of strengthening development cooperation as well as managing migration (Venturi 2018). This article examines evidence from the aforementioned research study to analyze in depth the implications of the current cooperation arrangements on migration, development, and security on bilateral relations between Senegal and the European Union. Drawing from expert interviews, a literature review, and the analysis of key multilateral and international agreements, the article will first evaluate the implications of Senegal’s domestic and international roles in managing migration flows, and the country’s cooperation history with the European Union. The study then presents and analyzes the driving interests expressed by Senegalese and EU authorities to: (1) treat migration as a foreign policy issue; and, (2) treat it through issue-linkage instruments with development policy. Finally, by introducing a securitization lens and arguing in favor of broadening the debate to a tripartite nexus of migration, development, and security in the Sahel region, the article uses this framework to present its findings on the evolution of Senegal’s relations with the EU and with Italy, an EU member state that holds a policy-driving role in the setting up of migration management instruments. While bilateral relations and cooperation on migration management are found to be of strategic interest for both parties, this article concludes that a securitization framework places a strain on development objectives and the long-term relations of Senegal with Italy and the EU, due to the EU’s short-term prioritization on reducing irregular migration and Italy’s prioritization on advancing readmission demands.

Research Methods

The article draws on evidence from interviews conducted with EU policy officials between May and July 2017. I use qualitative data from interviews with officials located in Brussels (Belgium) and Dakar (Senegal) representing the EU Delegation to Senegal, and from the European Commission’s Directorate-General (DG) for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), the EU Parliament’s Committee on Development, the European External Action Service, and High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini’s Cabinet. At the national level, officials were interviewed from the Senegalese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, the Senegalese Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Planning, the Senegalese Embassies in Belgium and Italy, as well as the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, and the Italian Embassy in Senegal. Because approaches to migration management are affected by an actor’s relative proximity to a crisis, the interview methodology was designed to engage with

EU, Senegalese, and Italian actors across locations and contexts. Differences in approach, for example, to national government headquarters compared to embassies on foreign soil are highlighted. Interview data also includes information gathered from interviews with the African Union Delegation to the European Union and with non-governmental actors such as NGOs, think-tanks, foundations, and academics.

Senegal's Migration History and Recent Developments

Senegal is historically known for the heterogeneity of its migration flows. As it is a country of migration origin, transit, and destination, Senegalese authorities work to tackle migration from the perspectives of a variety of interested parties, including the EU. Within the EU's external relations for migration management, Senegal is one of sixteen countries of priority focus and one of the five countries that signed the *Migration Partnership Framework* with the EU in 2016.

Domestically, the Senegalese government is currently strengthening its national approach to migration management. Migration is already incorporated in the *Plan Sénégal Émergent*, President Macky Sall's policy framework aimed at getting Senegal on the road to development by 2035. Senegal's migration agenda has therefore taken a strong orientation toward the migration–development nexus. For example, an official at the Senegalese Embassy in Belgium underscored the role of Senegalese youth in the country's development, and the subsequent “priority of Senegalese authorities to maintain young people at home” (Interview, Senegalese Embassy in Belgium). Furthermore, the Senegalese Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Planning is currently heading a shared institutional effort to draft the *Politique Nationale de Migration du Sénégal*, Senegal's national policy framework for migration management. Senegal's domestic migration policy developments are relevant when evaluating its foreign policy relations, its state agency, and its national interests in working with the EU on migration management.

As for their cooperation history, the EU and Senegal have been working jointly on development policy for approximately fifty years, in what an official at the EU Delegation to Senegal described in 2017 as “an excellent relationship with Senegalese authorities” (Interview, EU Delegation to Senegal). In terms of joint migration management, Senegal has a close working relationship with Spain and the European Union due to the 2005 spike in migration flows departing from Senegal for Spain's Canary Islands. Since the EUTF's launch in 2015, Senegal has been one of the largest beneficiaries of development funding from the EUTF, with a total budget of EUR 161.8 million (USD 183.7 million). EU funding finances nine development projects across Senegal aimed at tackling “root causes” of migration, ranging from employment creation and food security in regions of high emigration potential, to diaspora investment facilitation and the setup of a national biometric identification system. However, the EU's allocation of development funding within the EUTF and its renewed interest in cooperating with Senegal since the Central Mediterranean crisis have occurred in the absence of a significant spike in Senegalese migration rates to Europe between 2010 and 2017 (World Bank 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). This consideration is noteworthy because it raises questions that will be addressed in this study with regard to the evidence of and driving interest in the recent increase in bilateral cooperation between Senegal and the EU.

Mapping Senegalese and EU Interests in Bilateral Engagement on Migration Issues Within Development and Security Narratives

At an EU institutional level, significant evidence highlights the EU's push to include the management of migration in foreign policy and development cooperation relations with partner countries. In 2016, the European External Action Service, the diplomatic service of the European Union, outlined the centralization of migration in EU foreign policy: "Migration management will become an important dimension in the EU's foreign policies and instruments, ranging from diplomacy and the *Common Security and Defence Policy*, to development and climate" (n.p.). Evidence at the EU member state level points toward the stagnation of strategies for burden-sharing arrangements, and domestic reforms such as the Common European Asylum System and the Dublin Regulation, as factors that encourage an external and foreign policy approach in order to deliver responses on migration management (Interview, Open Society for European Policy). When asked about Italy's role in advancing EU migration legislation that focused on foreign policy rather than on domestic reform for integration, relocation, and resettlement, a representative from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation answered: "The more we ask for internally, the more they [EU institutions] give us externally" (Interview).

This study also uncovered evidence of Senegalese interest in including migration management as a foreign policy issue with European counterparts. An official at the Senegalese Ministry of Foreign Affairs outlined the Senegalese government's interest in engaging with the European Union on migration issues. From an economic standpoint, the official stated: "Today we are in a process of economic diplomacy. In this economic diplomacy process, it is important to favor the maximum amount of foreign direct investment" (Interview, Senegalese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad). Van Criekinge (2010) not only underscores the same point, but also further argues that the EU's need for cooperation in migration management has increased Senegal's negotiation leverage in terms of direct policies and development programming closer to its own national interests.

In addition to Senegalese and EU interest in engaging on migration in foreign relations, the specific linkage of migration management to development programming can be argued to be a path dependent on insertion into pre-existing bilateral relations. Migration management enters a pre-existing framework of historical colonial legacies and development aid structures. Models of path dependency identify positive feedback loops as responsible for ensuring the consistency of institutional arrangements. For example, an official at the EU Commission described the choice to link migration management to development funding: "I think that it has been the easiest, especially in the eyes of members. It's just been the easiest to pour [in] more money, whether that's good or bad, whether it's useful or not. One year after we see the limitations" (Interview, EU Commission DEVCO). This is evidence of a short-term and consensus-driven approach in the decision to link migration to development funding as a primary instrument for the externalization of migration management accountabilities.

Within issue-linkage, Nyberg-Sorensen, Engberg-Pedersen, and Hear raise the risk of policy divergence between migration and development objectives, asking: "Can long-term goals of global poverty reduction be achieved if short-term migration policy interests are to be met? Can partnership with developing countries be real if tackling illegal migration is the principal European policy goal?" (2002, 50). Extensive literature challenges the utilization and instrumentalization of a historically produced "development discourse" (Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002, 59). Anthropologist Arturo Escobar argues that in the post-World War II period, Western

economic and governance models were presented as the long-term goals of development programming, and that “development has achieved the status of certainty in the social imaginary” (2012, 5). Kenyan-American human rights scholar Makau Mutua interrogates the interest of foreign donor governments in Less Developed Countries (LDCs). When evaluating the international funding of human rights NGOs in Kenya during the country’s precarious wave of democratization, he notes that “donor funding is essentially the story of the historically managed development of the African state” (Mutua 2013, 158).

Lastly, in addition to the risk of instrumentalization of development programming, security objectives need to be considered when setting the stage for the drivers of EU–Senegal relations for migration management. The concept of “securitization” was introduced by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde (2013) of the Copenhagen School. Securitization delineates a process through which policy choices unrelated to security become “securitized” when actors attach a national security value to them. Since the Cold War, securitization has also affected the allocation and implementation of official development assistance (ODA), giving rise to the notion of “securitization of development.” Concerns around the securitization of ODA exist not only with regard to the agendas of donor governments, but also with regard to the use of the development funding by governments receiving aid, such as the Ethiopian and Ugandan regimes’ arguable use of Western security initiatives in the 1990s to build militarized and strongly authoritarian states (Fisher and Anderson 2015). Because the primary stated goal of migration policy in almost all developed countries is fighting irregular migration, Baggio and Zanfrini (2006, 65) identify securitization as an impediment to the constructive issue-linkage of migration and development. Indeed, the *European Agenda for Migration* states the control of irregular migration as a central objective (European Commission 2015).

In this study, security interests were expressed in interviews by EU officials, who cited irregular migration and policy pressures from EU member states as reasons for such a framework, as well as by Senegalese government officials, who cited the issues of counter-terrorism, regional migration flows, and cross-border security. In particular, when discussing the *Migration Partnership Framework*, an Italian Embassy official stated: “Increased cooperation among police forces can only be beneficial in order to avoid the most pathological outcome, namely terrorism” (Interview, Italian Embassy in Senegal). Interview outcomes therefore illustrate a significantly securitized context for cooperation on migration policy.

Within the identified Senegalese and EU strategic precursory interests in treating migration as an issue within foreign policy, the use of development funding and the centrality of security prerogatives are also shown to affect bilateral cooperation. Next, I evaluate the preliminary effects of issue-linkage instruments for migration management on bilateral relations.

Preliminary Outcomes for Senegal–European Union Relations

In light of the new instruments created after the 2015 Valletta Summit, the preliminary observations and outcomes of Senegal–EU relations focus on three issues: (1) the controversial node of readmission demands; (2) project ownership within development programming; and, (3) bilateral and continental approaches to mobility and irregular migration.

In their 2013 study, Beauchemin, Kabbajji, Sakho, and Schoumaker demonstrate the primacy of security in European border management and control objectives, and accordingly argue that diplomacy between African and European leaders is centered on European readmission demands. Building on the trend identified by Beauchemin et al. in 2013, this article further reveals that after the 2015 Valletta Summit, representatives from the Senegal and EU

institutions also identified the primacy of European national government readmission demands within EU–Senegal relations. An official from the EU Delegation to Senegal in Dakar explained, “It is important that the priority of some EU member states to send migrants back does not take hostage our relations, which are much larger and much richer than this” (Interview, EU Delegation to Senegal). An official at the Senegalese Embassy in Belgium also noted: “It is necessary to find the right equilibrium so that the focus is not exclusively on readmission and returns” (Interview, Senegalese Embassy in Belgium). The centrality of identification and readmission demands within European national security and irregular migration narratives, coupled with the absence of a significant increase in readmissions despite the new cooperation instruments (Interview, EU Commission DG HOME), is thus found to be a point of strain within bilateral relations.

Secondly, the use of development funding for migration management has generated Senegalese pushback in terms of project ownership within the activities funded by the EUTF and within the *Migration Partnership Framework*. As one interviewee stated, “What shocked me the most was that there are projects identified in Brussels, the appropriation of these projects, projects that are managed by European actors” (Interview, Open Society Initiative for West Africa). Interviews with the delegations of European member states to Senegal also uncovered concerns with regard to what was described as an “arbitrariness” of EU development funding distribution. An official at AECID (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo) noted the renewed influx of funding and interest driven by EU officials, despite the stabilization of Spain’s cooperation efforts with Senegal since the 2005 migration management crisis between the two countries (Interview). Officials at the Italian Embassy also noted that the money that Italy received from the EUTF was being managed primarily by Italian NGOs (Interview, Italian Embassy in Senegal). While all projects are now reported to have at least one Senegalese partner, significant concerns persist as to their design and the levels of local ownership, and the long-term goals for the country’s partnership with the EU.

Lastly, multiple officials repeatedly underscored the difference in the approach of African and European representatives to cooperation for migration management. An official of the African Union Delegation to the EU highlighted the African Union (AU)’s commitment to pursuing a continental policy framework based on the principle of mobility and development, rather than a focus on border control and migration management. When describing the AU’s discussions with the EU in the lead-up to the Valletta Summit, an AU official stated: “The discussion was mostly on migration...the European temple was not interested in mobility” (Interview, African Union Delegation to the EU). Furthermore, with regard to the EU’s push for bilateral rather than continental coordination, the official stated: “For now your rationale is that you are focusing on hotspot countries, but what about us involving everybody before countries become hotspots tomorrow. But if you have been dealing with the EU, you realize that the EU as an institution is not a proactive institution. Mostly all EU policies are reactive” (Interview, African Union Delegation to the EU). A representative of the Senegalese Embassy in Belgium also criticized “the tendency of the EU to separate African countries for cooperation efforts” (Interview). Overall, preliminary observations on Senegal–EU relations underscore the role of short-term issues such as readmissions, project ownership, and hotspot security within the broader long-term framework for a partnership effort.

Preliminary Outcomes for Senegal–Italy Relations

Due to the incomplete delegation of migration and asylum competencies by EU member states to EU institutions, it is necessary to also analyze Senegal’s bilateral relations with EU member states. Interview outcomes with regard to Senegal’s relations with Italy focused on the primary themes of: (1) identification and readmission; (2) legal migration; (3) politicization and the role of public opinion; and, (4) remittances.

The issue of readmissions arose as central within Senegal–Italy relations due to a push for increased collaboration on migrant identification, and inclusion of irregular migration as part of the *Migration Partnership Framework*. A representative from the EU Delegation to Senegal highlighted how the EU had facilitated a mission to Italy for Senegalese authorities to verify the conditions of Senegalese nationals, and to collaborate with the Italian government for their identification and return (Interview). In interviews, both Senegalese and Italian counterparts noted the limited utility of the Senegalese identification mission. A representative from the Italian Embassy in Senegal highlighted the absence of a “unitary position” within the Italian government on bargaining tools for the reduction of irregular migration and the need to treat readmissions delicately (Interview). Parallel to that of readmissions, observations around bilateral relations also arose with regard to the comparatively lower focus on the expansion of legal migration opportunities in Italy and EU member states, despite the *Valletta Action Plan*’s pillar on increasing avenues for legal migration. During an interview at the EU Commission DEVCO, officials underscored that EU member states have maintained control over legal migration issues: “We cannot work on legal migration apart from strengthening institutions that work on legal migration because that is not our competence.” An official from the Senegalese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad also spoke of pressuring the national authorities of Italy and EU member states to allow the legalization of Senegalese workers: “There are young people who are in an irregular status but that contribute a lot to their [European] economies...They must be legalized” (Interview). When discussing readmission and legal migration, a driving issue in interviews with Italian and EU officials was the concern for public opinion outcomes. As one representative expressed, “Elections are won and elections are lost over these issues” (Interview, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation). In response to European concerns about public opinion, an official at the Senegalese Embassy in Belgium stated, “It must [be] remembered that African leaders also have a public opinion that they need to satisfy” (Interview).

Despite the above-described issues within Senegal–Italy relations, interview outcomes also point to an overall shared understanding and commitment to the importance of bilateral relations for migration management. For example, the issue of remittances was widely cited as a primary factor of consideration within bilateral relations. For Senegal, personal remittances are the first source of foreign currency and accounted for 10.62 percent of the national GDP in 2017 (World Bank 2019d). Accordingly, the Senegalese Ambassador to Italy stated: “Italy has now become a factor of stability in Senegal” (Interview). The long-term strategic interests in managing remittances and in increasing channels for mutually beneficial legal migration are juxtaposed with short-term readmission demands, security narratives, and public opinion concerns within Senegalese and Italian bilateral relations.

Conclusion

While the insertion of migration into foreign policy relations was shown in this study to be of strategic interest to Senegal and the European Union, the instrumentalization of development discourse and practical programming, as well as the prominence of security priorities and securitization trends, were also identified as precursory factors to be considered when evaluating bilateral cooperation – not only in terms of effectiveness, but also in terms of its influence on the long-term relationship between Senegal and its EU counterparts. The centrality of short-term securitization narratives within the EU priority of fighting irregular migration and advancing readmission demands plays a primary role in cooperation relations, and is also met by strategic Senegalese economic and security interests within negotiations for migration management. Overall, the *EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa* and the *Migration Partnership Framework*, as issue-linkage instruments for migration management, play a role not only in short-term cooperation prioritization, but also in the long-term nature of the partnership between Senegal and the European Union, and must be closely analyzed as their implementation continues to unfold.

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