



The Instrumentalisation of Asylum Seekers Flux by the European Union's Neighbours: A reflection on how the European Common Migration Policy favours this instrumentalisation

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Abstract

The instrumentalisation of migration is a current topic of interest among academics and in society. Libya, Turkey, Morocco, Russia, Belarus: many countries are accused of using migration in their relationship with the European Union (EU). Yet, the phenomenon is not new. While many studies focus solely on the instrumentalisation of migration and the subsequent issue-linkages in international bargaining, this thesis analyses the more profound link between instrumentalisation and the shortcomings of the Union's common migration policy, both in its internal and external dimension. Drawing on the case studies of Turkey and Belarus, it explores how these flaws provide a favourable context for the use of migration, before examining how migration appears in the diplomacy of these states. The Schengen Borders Code allows member states to prevent secondary movements of asylum seekers within the Union, while the Dublin III Regulation enables states to send them back to the first-state-of-entry if asylum seekers manage to cross internal European Union borders. This in turn exacerbates the pressure on states located at the external borders of the Union that are already subject to significant asylum seekers' flows, hereby also aggravating the effects of the instrumentalisation of migration. Moreover, the externalisation of migration management and the use of controversial informal 'deals' to curb migration flows increase neighbouring countries' leverage. This thesis mobilises the framework of migration diplomacy to argue that, despite differences in scope, common features in terms of strategies and objectives can be observed. Be it through threats or actions, Turkey and Belarus used coercive migration diplomacies to attain broader foreign policy objectives unrelated to migration. Nevertheless, the analysis of the European Commission's proposals to combat instrumentalisation and conducted interviews of the author indicate that, despite the commonalities, the proposed measures are unlikely to be deployed against Turkey. The focus is on states that artificially create flows and do not have a strategic relationship with the EU. This has important implications as these proposals will not be able to address 'less extreme' cases of instrumentalisation similar to Turkey. Therefore, the thesis proposes ways forward to address the shortcomings of the Union's common

migration policy so as to prevent the instrumentalisation of asylum seekers or at least not exacerbate its effects.