Aiding and Abetting: the diversion of European development budgets to migration and security

Donors increasingly justify their development policies through the lens of their own national interests, be they political, economic, diplomatic or security-related. Following the 2015 EU-wide political crisis about migration management, the EU's response was shaped by the portrayal of migration as a security challenge with domestic implications. Combined with a hardening public opinion towards migration in the lead up to several key national elections[1], the EU created its Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), causing many development actors to question whether aid was increasingly being tied to the EU's migration objectives[2]. Based on the premise that by addressing the "root causes[3]" of migration, net migration to Europe would decrease, this political objective has taken an increasingly larger portion of EU ODA[4] and has seen a proliferation of tools, instruments and budget allocation, as well as a proposed 10% migration spending target in EU's 2021-2027 development budget proposal.

Similarly, France shifted its discourse on migration and security. In 2017, an integrated "3 D's" approach – Defence, Diplomacy and Development – was birthed out of growing interest for the so-called "security-development nexus", mainly interpreted as funding for security-related projects through ODA budgets, based on the idea that security is a crucial element for development[5]. In 2018, the communiqué of the Inter-ministerial Committee on International Cooperation and Development (CICID), which sets France's development priorities, presented ODA as a "key factor in promoting employment and professional integration, which helps to reduce incentives for people to leave through smuggling networks and, in so doing, illegal immigration"[6]. It also lists ODA as a possible way to supporting partner countries in the control and securitisation of their borders. During a plenary debate on migration in the French Parliament in October 2019, the French Prime Minister put forward the idea of conditioning ODA upon enhanced cooperation by third countries in terms of migration management.

"… our official development aid (ODA) must be, among other objectives, a lever of our migration policy (…) It is logical that the resources we devote to this help serve our migration policy: not only by dealing in the long term with the root causes of migration through economic or social projects, but also, more directly, by supporting projects aimed at developing the capacity of certain States to control their borders, to combat smuggling networks, or to modernise their civil registry. And let's be clear: it is also logical that we expect a high degree of cooperation in controlling illegal immigration from the States we support through ODA[7]."

Édouard Philippe
Prime Minister of France, 2019.

The prioritisation of migration and security in the EU's and its member states' policy making

At the peak of the migration management crisis, the EU and its member states launched the EUTF to pool resources in order to "address the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration by promoting economic and employment opportunities, as well as combating smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings[8]". The EUTF though framed as an emergency -or short-term- instrument received 85%[9] of its resources from the European Development Fund (EDF)[10], the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) which are medium-to-long term instruments supposed to address structural development challenges[11].

In July 2017, France and Germany launched the Alliance Sahel. The narrative put forward to justify its creation focuses on the need to adopt an integrated strategy to promote security in the short-term and development in the mid- to long-term. The Alliance is a partnership between the EU institutions, several donor countries and multilateral organisations[12] and G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger). Although the focus on security was minor in the first drafts of the Alliance Sahel, the Alliance Sahel secretariat confirmed that the European Commission pushed for security to become one of the six priority sectors in the Alliance[13].

Migration and security in the next EU budget (2021-2027)

Ongoing negotiations of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027, include an increased focus on migration. In addition to the new "Migration and Border Management" budget heading, under which €30.8bn is slated to go to border management, current negotiations have featured proposals for a 10% spending target[14] towards migration within the proposed development instrument (NDICI) under the "Neighbourhood and the World" budget heading. Such a target did not exist in the previous EU multiannual development budget.

Similarly, the EU budget proposal shows a new emphasis on funding for security "solutions", by increasing security, border management and defence budgets by 1.8, 2.6 and 22 times respectively[15]. The new European Defence Fund would allocate €13bn to industrial Research and Development (R&D) for new and enhanced weaponry, which is more than the entire Humanitarian Aid budget proposal (€11bn)[16]. It is notable that, despite these large shifts towards migration and security, the overall EU budget is only expected to increase by a mere 1.5% in current 2018 prices.

The mainstreaming of the EU's migration and security interests in its development policy is also visible in the on-going political dialogue taking place between African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and the EU (the so called post-Cotonou negotiations: framework of EU cooperation with ACP countries post 2020). The 2018 EU negotiating mandate contains 38 references to migration[17], compared to 8 references in the ACP negotiating mandate[18], which focuses more on legal migration and the right of movement of persons.

Changing EU aid geography: from poverty eradication to migration management

In 2016, sixteen countries[19] were identified as a migration-priority under the EU's Migration Partnership Framework[20], after which Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Ethiopia, Senegal, Tunisia and Libya were the focus for first actions or Migration Compacts[21]. Simultaneously, the EU continued to engage in high level dialogues with the remaining priority countries. These countries were specifically identified due to the fact that they are "countries of origin" or "transit" of migrants[22] coming to Europe. The European Commission continues to uphold that "EU development policy seeks to foster the sustainable development of developing countries, with the primary aim of eradicating poverty[23]", further asserting that "poverty eradication remains the primary objective of development policy under the new Consensus[24]".

However EUTF's allocations are becoming increasingly aligned with migration rather than poverty, in terms of geography. Since its inception, the proportion of EUTF funding going to migration management has dramatically increased. Despite the drop in illegal border crossing in Europe[25] (see Figure 2), the migration management thematic window got the biggest share of funds in 2018, rising from 17.3% in 2016 to 30.8% of EUTF funds in 2018[26] (see Figure 1).

To date, 16.4%[27] of all EUTF funds go to the North Africa window[28], which are countries of transit, with projects focusing exclusively on the thematic window of migration management[29]. Not only has migration management increased as a share of all EUTF approved projects, but funds have also increasingly prioritised North African countries, from 23% of total migration management funds in 2016 to 52% in 2018. Those five countries of the North African window have the highest GNI per capita of all EUTF recipient countries[30]. Libya is the country that has received the largest amount of funding under the EUTF to date[31]. Incidentally, out of the 26 EUTF recipient countries, Libya is also the country with the highest GNI per capita.

The EU claims that it supports "vulnerable and marginalised population groups at the forefront[32]" of the EUTF. Back in 2017, a report on the EUTF found that only 3% of the migration management thematic window was being used to create safe and regular migration routes, while the majority - 55% - was going to projects that aimed to "restrict and discourage irregular migration through migration containment and control[33]".

While this instrument is largely funded by long-term development funds, the evolution of the EUTF geographic and thematic allocations show the systematic and increased diversion of funds from poverty eradication to migration management, confirming a changing trend in the geography and purpose of development aid.

Figure 1

Share of thematic priority for the three geographic windows

Migration management
Employment opportunities
Resilience
Governance
Cross-cutting
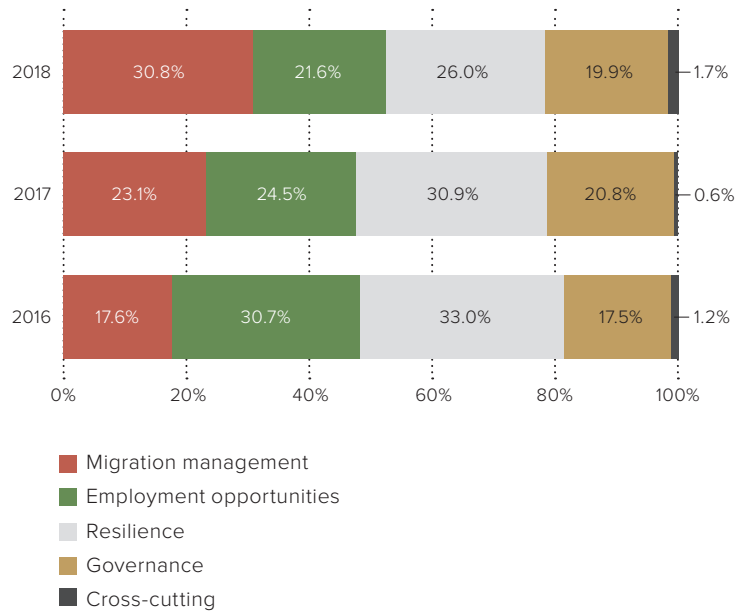
Source: EUTF Annual Reports 2016, 2017 and 2018

Figure 2

Illegal border crossings (Mediterranean Routes and West Africa Route)
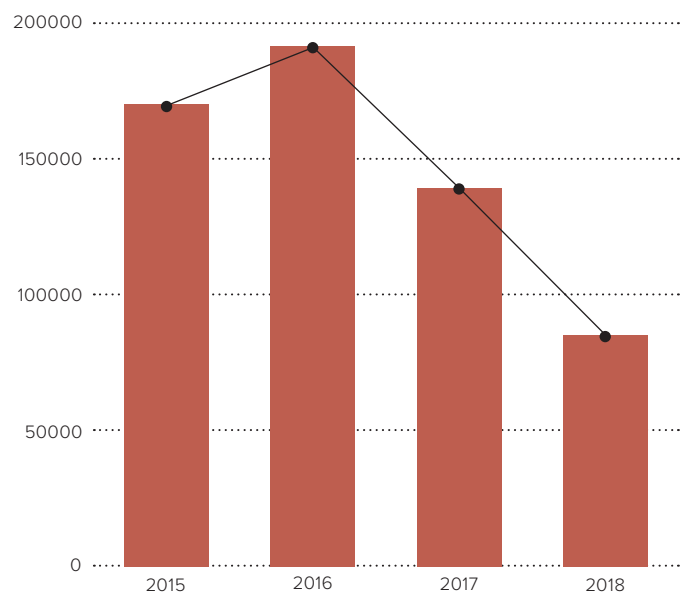
Source: Frontex. Accessed November 2019

Securitisation of aid: addressing the root causes or consequences of insecurity?

While donors' policies and development finance mechanisms increasingly address security and migration aspects, this also leads to a normative shift in the way the international community counts those expenses as ODA. In 2016, the OECD Development Assistance Committee agreed to new rules that expand the definition of ODA to a wider range of peace and security activities. This includes a variety of supports, such as: specific training of partner country military employees to help address abuses, prevent violence against women, violent extremism, improve humanitarian response and promote good governance, or of support for the additional costs where military are used as delivery agents of development services or humanitarian aid[34].

Civil society sees this shift as a risk that more ODA will be diverted from its original poverty reduction and development purposes in favour of donors' national and security interests[35]. The link between development and security also has a direct impact on the work of NGOs implementing resilience projects. In Burkina Faso, NGO staff deplored that their work under the EUTF has been contaminated by security objectives, framing resilience in much broader terms[36]. While resilience remains a focus on the ground, NGOs complained that, externally, donors communicate about this mechanism in a different way which can put them and beneficiary populations at risk. For example, NGOs were asked by the EU to provide pictures of their projects to be displayed at the G5 Sahel Nouakchott Summit in December 2018 for communication and visibility purpose[37].

> "When donors tie development efforts of NGOs to anti-terrorism, security or conflict resolution it directly threatens the humanitarian principle of neutrality to which NGOs abide. The EUTF is a good mechanism, yet it's polluted by politics. We don't want NGOs to be associated with the fight against illegal migration or terrorism."

Representative of an international NGO working in Burkina Faso, 2018[38].

In Burkina Faso, the security situation has been deteriorating particularly in the Northern region of Sahel. The government launched a "Sahel Emergency Programme" for 2017-2020[39], which is backed by the Alliance Sahel and the EUTF. The Alliance Sahel sectors of concentration for Burkina Faso have been identified by the Ministry of Economics and Finance as: water and sanitation, security and energy. However, according to a study, insecurity in Sahel has mostly been fed by the lack of investments in public services in the region, as well as the perception of abuses and exactions by governmental authorities[40]. Stakeholders argue that the emergency has been in a chronic state for decades due to weak public investments in rural areas and a dysfunctional decentralisation, which has led to high levels of unemployment and poverty in rural areas[41]. In turn, insecurity impacted on the provision of services, with more than a thousand schools closed by February 2019[42] and many health centres abandoned by health workers. Parliamentarians and civil society have been questioning the increased funds[43] allocated to military spending in Burkina Faso at the expense of investments in public services[44].

Under the EUTF Sahel and Lake Chad geographic window[45], migration management has become an even greater focus of the EUTF in 2018 at the expense of employment opportunities, resilience and governance. In 2017, migration management represented 13% of EUTF funds going to the Sahel and Lake Chad geographic window, while in 2018 it increased to 22%[46] (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
Priorities in the Sahel and Lake Chad Window
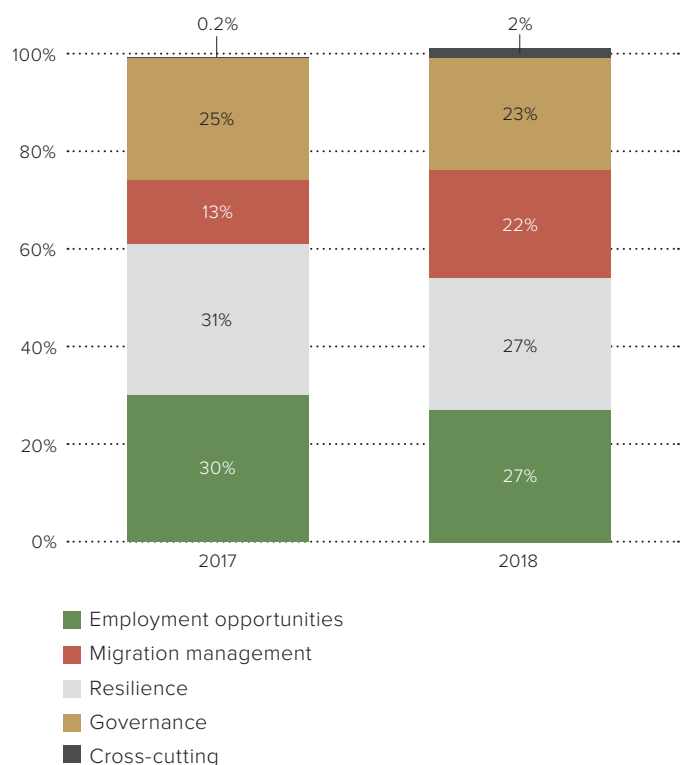
Source: EUTF Annual Reports 2017 and 2018

Similarly in Niger, we noted in our 2017 report on the EUTF[47] a warning by the IMF that "allocations for health and education were crowded out by priority security expenses, which constrained the achievement of broader development objectives[48]". Local officials from the Agadez region of Niger were complaining about the EUTF focus on limiting migration flows[49]. Since Niger is a transit country, an informal economy had evolved around the transportation of migrants. Dismantling this economy, especially through repressive measures, created unrest and increased security risks, mainly due to the absence of alternative income-generating opportunities[50]. By 2019, the EU's push for halting transportation of migrants from Agadez to Libya had plunged the local economy into chaos and many people in jail[51]. The EU effectively conditioned large sums of money to one of the poorest countries in the world upon the destruction of the migration route towards Libya and Algeria, and ultimately Europe. A law enacted in 2015[52] condemns anyone helping migrants in Niger to five to ten years in prison together with fines up to €7000[53]. The EU on the other hand, repeatedly hails the case of Niger as a success[54]. While migration on the Agadez route has decreased by 75%, the securitisation of the migration response has led to many security paradoxes[55]. Indeed, the law has mainly targeted drivers and guides, while those with political connections continue their control of smuggling networks[56]. New actors have also emerged, and new routes that are longer and more dangerous are now being used[57]. The criminalisation of migrants and those helping them cross Niger, pushed the situation underground and migrants have become more vulnerable to abuse[58].

> "The region of Agadez is an obvious case in point where the implementation of migration-mitigating policies has already resulted in more insecurity in the region. Migrants are the first and most obvious victims of this insecurity. Their stay in Agadez and their journeys through the desert have become more clandestine, more expensive, and more prone to human rights violations and hardship. Insecurity also extends to the Agadez population on account that many armed young men have taken to banditry to answer their immediate economic needs.[59]"
>
> **Clingendael Institute**
> January 2018.

Needs-driven development: opening opportunities for meaningful programming

Our country visits in Uganda and Burkina Faso clearly show that where preventing migration is not the primary objective of the EU, EUTF programming is more conducive to pro-poor programming.

Neither Burkina Faso, nor Uganda have been identified as EU migration-priority countries, because both countries have very few migrants going to Europe. This has given more flexibility for EU Delegations in country to programme funds closer to the countries' needs, and to some extent bridge the humanitarian-development funding gap.

In Burkina Faso, the EUTF allocated €184.5mn worth of fresh funds[60], in addition to the €623mn seven-year budget allocated via the National Indicative Programme (NIP)[61]. While there were concerns that the EUTF would be fully dedicated to security and migration initiatives, low geopolitical relevance of Burkina Faso on migration helped the EU Delegation's staff direct EUTF funds to where it was most needed, such as human development and resilience programmes. In Burkina Faso, only €8.3mn of the total EUTF envelope was allocated towards an IOM (International Organisation for Migration) project on improved migration management. Since humanitarian funds from the EU were diminishing at this time, these new funds were appreciated by civil society and other development experts who could continue to co-implement development programmes on a longer-term basis, providing a bridge between short-term and longer-term programmes[62].

Similarly, in Uganda, EUTF programmes have been focused on the large refugee population in the north, providing basic services, such as WASH[63] and education opportunities, in part to defuse tensions between the local and refugee populations. Only 5.8% of the current EUTF funding in Uganda goes to migration management[64]. The EU has also been able to continue projects established by community leaders, such as the Action For Fundamental Change and Development (AFFCAD), which supports youth populations living in slums in Kampala, providing internship opportunities, skill building activities and vocational trainings to empower them to enter the workforce.

Countries which are less politically charged by the EU's migration interests, such as Uganda and Burkina Faso have more freedom at the technical level to allocate the money towards supporting human development efforts.

Conclusion

When ODA is flowing through mechanisms that prioritise migration management and security such as the EUTF and the Alliance Sahel, both the geography and the thematic focus of aid are affected. Funds target regions and countries that are politically strategic with a focus on halting migration, rather than regions and sectors with the largest human development needs.

When countries are not a migration or security priority for donors (e.g. Uganda, Burkina Faso), funds tend to be more meaningfully aligned with country priorities. In the case of EU migration-priority countries, the focus increasingly tends towards migration management, missing the opportunity of addressing the root causes of poverty.

Where donor interests are elevated above country priorities in development policies, it affects their potential for being effective. The security-development nexus aims at merging security, humanitarian action and development aid, but risks blurring the lines between these actions, which creates tension for humanitarian and development actors who can sometimes be perceived as associated with armed forces.

The politicisation of aid by donors who are marketing development as a means of addressing migration and security is, at best undermining EU development priorities. At worst, those development trends are not only perpetuating the very poverty and instability that forces people to leave their communities in the first place, they can also put both implementers and local populations at risk.

ENDNOTES

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2   GHA, 2017. Misplaced Trust: Diverting EU aid to stop migration. Available at: https://bit.ly/2C6u4Ue

3   The EU does not have an official definition of what constitutes "root causes" of migration. In a September 2017 speech, Federica Mogherini (Vice President of the Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) listed the root causes as "poverty, climate change, lack of democratic spaces, violations of human rights, opportunities for life". Source: EEAS, 2017. Speech by HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament plenary session on the recent developments in migration. Available at: https://bit.ly/331gZaG

4   "The budgetary response to the 2015-16 refugee and irregular migration situation resulted in a reconfiguration of the EU funding landscape, including the establishment of new funding solutions and tools, such as Trust Funds, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey or the External Investment Plan, to leverage funding beyond the limits of the budget. Externally, the EU has made available a total of € 6.2bn to address the 'refugee crisis' in 2015 and 2016 (Knoll and Sherriff 2017: 224). Moreover, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund was more than doubled (+123%), funding for decentralised agencies increased by 86% and Emergency Assistance increased by almost 500% (European Commission 2018a: 4)." Source: ECDPM, 2019. Discussion Paper No. 250: Migration and the next EU long-term budget: key choices for external action. Available at: https://bit.ly/36i7SnR

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8   Ibid.

9   On 23 October 2019: €3,149,340,630 of EUTF funds was sourced from the EDF, €352,500,000 from the DCI, €372,045,301 from the ENI (total EDF, DCI, ENI = €3,873,888,931 or approximately €3,9bn). The total amount pledged to the EUTF thus far is €4.6bn. Figures from: EUTF website: State of Play and Financial Resources. Consulted on 22 October 2019. Available at: https://bit.ly/2WqDhjn

10 The majority of EUTF funding originated from the EDF. Source: European Commission, 2019. EUTF: State of Play and Financial Resources. Available at: https://bit.ly/31U85dH

11 Mokoro, DIA, and Geotests, January 2017. Evaluation of the 11th European Development Fund, page 6. Available at: https://bit.ly/34f3gNE

12 France, Germany, the European Union, the World Bank, the UNDP, the African Development Bank, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Luxemburg, Denmark, the Netherlands. Since the 2019 G7 Summit in Biarritz, all members of the G7 are either members or observers of the Alliance.

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28 Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia.

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GLOBAL HEALTH ADVOCATES